



Columbus, Ohio USA
Return to Homepage www.shortnorth.com



Fritz the Nite Owl Jazz

This is an Archive

Short North Gazette columnist 1999 - 2009
So what's he doing now?

The latest episode of "**Nite Owl Theatre**" and Nite Owl merchandise can be found at FritzLives.com

Visit www.fritzlives.com

email niteowltv@yahoo.com

Read a June 2012 profile on Fritz in [**614 Magazine**](#)

Read a March 2, 2012 profile on Fritz in [***The Lantern***](#)

Read a October 31, 2006 profile on Fritz in the [***Chillicothe Gazette***](#)

Here is some YouTube stuff: www.youtube.com/watch?v=y_bMYwNPnoE&feature=channel_video_title

Want to learn more about this guy? <http://m.homestead.com/m.html>

Jazz Review Archive (below) 1999-2009

December 2009

HOLIDAY CDS NEW AND OLD COMBINE TO MAKE THE SEASON MERRY AND BRIGHT!

Cheery Ghost of Christmas past visits the Nite Owl on 50th On-Air Anniversary

As the old song states “funny how time slips away...” Not only has another year slipped by, but the Ghost of Christmas Past materialized from the mind-mists of yesteryear to remind me that this year, I wrap up 50 years of broadcasting jazz and writing about it in Central Ohio. Mid-November of 1959, when I started my first on-air gig on WMNI-AM, seems like only yesterday. It was followed by air-work at numerous other stations, radio and TV, along with writing newspaper jazz reviews. I’ve enjoyed almost every minute, never considered it a job, and have always been pleased and grateful for the support of the listeners, viewers, and readers. So my thanks and best wishes to all of you. Couldn’t do it without you!

Holiday jazz was/still is one of the highlights of the gig. Each year, I look forward with enthusiasm to hear how the many creative jazz artists will bring new dimensions and approaches to my favorite carols.

A few of my all-time highlights over the years (I dig ‘em even in July) are “England’s Carol” (aka: “God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen”) by the Modern Jazz Quartet, “Merry Christmas Baby” by Etta Jones, “Silent Night” by Kenny Burrell, “I Bought You A Plastic Star For Your Aluminum Tree” by Michael Franks, “Happy Holidays” by Manhattan Transfer, “The Christmas Song” by Nat King Cole, “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” by harpist Corky Hale, “Twas The Night Before Hanukkah,” by Cantor Kenny Ellis, “What Are You Doing New Year’s Eve?” by Nancy Wilson, and “The Nutcracker Suite” by Les Brown, to name a very few. You can definitely count on hearing these, as you have in the past, along with many others, new and old, on my shows this season, including:

Carla Bley: Carla’s Christmas Carols (WATT/35 Records-BOO13428-02)

Boundless imagination combined with masterful technical prowess, have established **Carla Bley** as one of the most innovative, exciting, freewheeling, idiosyncratic, unpredictable, theatrical and sometimes-irreverent, solid-jazz pianists on the planet. She earned and sharpened her formidable chops with such innovative players as vibist **Gary Burton** and bassist **Charlie Haden**. She’s equally adept as a player, composer, arranger, or leader, fronting a small group or big band. Whatever the style – be it straight-ahead, swing, bop, post-bop, free, or avant-garde – Carla handles it with ease, style, and unlimited creativity.



‘Tis no wonder then that her venture into the realm of familiar holiday music is fresh, new, unusual, unpredictable, interesting, and a captivating listening experience. Her superb arrangements are augmented by the bass of **Steve Swallow**, and the **German Partyka Brass Quintet**, whose members provide trumpet, flugelhorn, trombone, French horn, and tuba, along with glockenspiel, chimes, and bass trombone. The overall sound combines the best of jazz, traditional and classical. Heavy swingers are counterbalanced superbly with the more peaceful, introspective approaches.

“The Christmas Song,” “O Tannenbaum,” “Away in a Manger,” and Carla’s original, “Jesus Maria” are treated with elegant reverence, while her expanded excursion into “God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen,” combines Dickens with the Duke. ‘Tis one of the many highlights in the

program. You'll go a long time before you hear a more playful and fun-filled version of "Jingle Bells," featuring the festive sounds of the brass quintet, solidly grounded by the oom-pa-pa of the tuba. The program concludes with Steve Swallow's performance of "O Holy Night" on electric bass, leading into an inspirational, contemplative "Joy to the World."



Alexis Cole: The Greatest Gift (Motema Records: MTM-26)
Variety, innovation, creativity, warmth, and holiday cheer are the hallmarks of this festive collection by **Alexis Cole**. She's a contralto, which is the deepest female singing voice. Characterized by a rich, smooth, velvety elegance, she brings all of those qualities to this holiday treat, which combines eight religious traditionals with three pop standards and two originals.

Her mellow voice is augmented on various tracks with combinations of a solid jazz sextet, strings, and three vocal groups: **St. Paul Children's Choir**, the **St. James Quartet**, and

the **Broadway Kids Singers**.

Highlights, both vocal and instrumental, abound throughout, including a nostalgia-inducing "Christmas Time Is Here," a gently swinging "Away in a Manger," and her churchy, bloozy original, "Jesus is the Best Part of Christmas," which features some great sax by Don Braden, and answers the question, "What Does Christmas Mean To You?"

In addition to the superb music, sales of the album benefit World Bicycle Relief, which provides access to healthcare, education, and economic opportunities to needy countries. The collection has a strong local connection: Producer Todd Barkan and featured violinist Christian Howes, are both originally from, and worked prolifically, in Columbus.

Corky Hale: Harp! The Herald Angels Swing (Laser Light # 12-536)

If there is one instrument that is superbly suited to the sounds of the season and to jazz, it is the harp, heard frequently in classical music but infrequently in pop and other secular forms. Harpo Marx, Dorothy Ashby and Deborah Henson-Conant are three of the best-known harpists; they are joined by Corky Hale, who also excels on piano and celeste, which she also adds to this thoroughly enjoyable program.



Her overall sound could best be described as "Olde English swing," conjuring visions of The First Christmas, combined with the worlds of Tiny Tim, goose and figgy pudding for dinner, Ralphie's Red Ryder BB gun, and an elegant, modern jazz club on Christmas Eve.

While every track is a wintry-winner, I particularly enjoyed her bright, easy-swingin' harp versions of "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" and "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town," which were balanced with reverent-remembrance by the combination of celeste and piano on "Auld Lang Syne/New Years Eve."

November 2009

SINGER SETS ROMANTIC MOOD AND CONJURES JOHNNY RAY **Give the gift of jazz for the holidays**

For the reasonably organized, take-care-of-business-promptly people, this column will be timely, and possibly of interest for those who have jazz aficionados on their holiday gift list and are seeking suggestions. For the procrastinators, it could be a last-minute bailout, finding an

enjoyable, timeless gift of jazz.

So, for both groups, read on.

Due to the many approaches, styles, and sounds in jazz – from simple swingers to the more complex and sometimes unusual, coupled with any given listener's personal preferences, your purchasing problem can be difficult. However, over the years, in this column and on my radio show, I've only written about and aired jazz CDs that I personally enjoy; CDs that may not be the "greatest-ever-recorded," but nonetheless have a "timeless, undated" quality that will continue to please for years to come. If you're online, check out the numerous selections I've written about since 1999 and still recommend at shortnorth.com. If you're not online, here are a few recent releases that should please a wide range of listeners.

The Heart and Soul of Mel Carter (CSP Records-42239-8)

Mel Carter, who operates in the upper-baritone register à la Jon Hendricks, presents a program of romantic jazz that explores all the elements of "love found, love savored, love lost." Backed by a septet throughout, he's as big and bright or intimate and emotional as dramatized by the lyrics.

The title track, "Heart and Soul," is rivaled only by "Chopsticks" as the one song that just about anyone can pound out on the piano. I, as one of those pounders, had forgotten that the song, as originally written by Hoagy Carmichael and Frank Loesser, is a laid-back, gently swinging celebration of finding that special someone. Carter recaptures the real sentiment and mood.

At the other end of the emotional spectrum is "Cry," a song I hadn't thought about or heard for years; a huge hit with teens in the early 1950s, a song that gave singer Johnny Ray international fame. People today still remember that parents in those days were shocked and perplexed by Presley; they've forgotten that these same parents displayed equal dismay for Johnny Ray, aka musically as "Mr. Emotion." That bit of pop-music trivia aside, this update by Carter evokes all the heartache and despair experienced in the lyrics "If your sweetheart sends a letter of goodbye, it's no secret you'll feel better if you cry..." A bit corny, granted, but still a melancholy and memorable meander down melody lane. Some great guitar by **Grant Geissman** and alto sax by **Fred Jackson** up the jazz ante from the original instrumentation. This was my favorite track on the album.

Other superb selections include modernized versions of Arthur Prysock's "I Worry About You," Alice Faye's 1943 Oscar-winning "You'll Never Know," Dinah Washington's "If It's the Last Thing I Do," and Buddy Johnson's "Baby I'm Yours." If mellow male jazz singing is the thing, you won't go wrong with this.



Chuck Owen and the Jazz Surge: The Comet's Tail (Mama Records: MAA-1038)

This collection presents a cooking-on-all-burners 17-piece jazz orchestra, the Jazz Surge, directed by **Chuck Owens**, performing new, internationally created arrangements of compositions by the late, legendary saxophonist **Michael Brecker**, who was equally revered by fans of fusion, mainstream, and post-bop. He was a major player on the jazz scene ever since his work with Horace Silver in the 1960s, leading to a double-Grammy win in the '90s. Building on the work of John Coltrane, Brecker's hard-edged tone and creative approach established him as one of the important influences on modern tenor men.

To amplify this superb tribute to his musical contributions, the Surge-roster adds such well-known Brecker collaborators as his brother **Randy** on trumpet and flugelhorn, **Joe Lovano** and **Dave Liebman** on saxophones, **Mike Stern** on guitar, **Mike Mainieri** on vibes, and **Danny Gottlieb** on drums, to name a few.

A roaring, uptempo scorcher, “Peep” opens things up and sets the mood for the seven powerhouse performances that follow, all ranging in length from 6 to 12-plus minutes. “Slings and Arrows” sustains the excitement and features some torrid tenor work by **Jack Wilson**, along with dynamic drumming by Gottlieb. Counterbalancing these and other rousers are such moodier and introspective pieces as “How Long ‘Til the Sun,” highlighted by the flugelhorn playing of brother Randy, and “Everything Happens When You’re Gone,” featuring sensitive sax by Lovano.

While not the CD for new jazz listeners, this will surely please those who enjoy the edgier, more-complex approach.

The Reese Project: Eastern Standard Time (In The Groove Records:CD-1006)

I’ve heard some unusual instrumentations before, but this was a combination that was completely new – a quartet featuring fresh flute and mellow cello out front, played by **Tom** and **Laurie Reese** respectively, backed by guitar and drums, amplified by a guest percussionist. The overall sound is bright, airy, refreshing: the selection of songs an imaginative mix of originals and standards.



“Just Friends” is one of those favorites that has been recorded innumerable times by musicians of all inclinations. Familiar as it is, the briskly imaginative take here makes it as modern as tomorrow, and also establishes the unique sound created by the group, which works equally well on their bloozier, more melancholy version of “When Sunny Gets Blue” and their latin-lite take on “Black Orpheus.”

The bright, happily moving “Heads-Up and Gone” is highlighted with the rarely heard sound of “swingin’ cello,” which contrasts dramatically with the more traditional “cello noir” approach used on “Moment in Blue.”

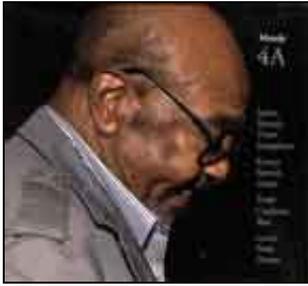
October 2009

OLD PROS NEVER DIE, THEY JUST PLAY AWAY
Sax Legend, Bass Baron, Guitar Genius, and Vibrant Vocalist Outstanding in October

If there was an All-Star Hall of Fame for saxophone players, “Old Pro” James Moody would be a charter member. On the national scene since his days with the Dizzy Gillespie Band in the mid-’40s, Moody’s great sense of time, warm personal tone, improvisational skills, and ability to absorb and master the new trends and approaches to jazz as they appeared over the years have kept him in the front ranks for well over 60 years. His rendition of “I’m in the Mood for Love” in the early ‘50s was a big hit, which became even bigger after the King Pleasure vocalese version “Moody’s Mood For Love.” Young saxmen and singers still “borrow” quotes from both versions.

This experience, imagination, and formidable technique are infinitely evident on his latest release:

James Moody: Moody 4A (IPO Recordings)



This set was recorded on the first day of a two-day session. Hence the title, *Moody 4A*. Day two of the session will be released in the foreseeable, logically titled *Moody 4B*.

Backed by his long-time bass player, **Todd Coolman**, along with special guests **Kenny Barron** on piano and **Lewis Nash** on drums, the Moody 4 quartet brings new life and verve to a group of jazz classics and familiar standards. The opener, "Secret Love," gets a "Blues March" approach in which Moody's rapid-fire improvisations include snippets from Grofe's "On The Trail" and Gillespie's "BeBop."

Kenny Barron's brisk "Voyage" is counterbalanced perfectly by a dreamy, romantic rendition of "Round Midnight." Other innovations include a piano-sax duet on "East of the Sun," a gently exotic, erotic, bossa-based tryst with "Stella By Starlight" and a straight-ahead romp with Benny Golson's "Stablemates." Things wrap up in waltz time with an easy-swingin' "Bye Bye Blackbird."

For the multitudes of Moody minions of all ages, *Moody 4A* is dynamic proof that this Old Pro still has the creative chops, creativity and mastery of his instrument to rival (or outplay) anyone on the bandstand today.

Brian Bromberg: *It Is What It Is* (Artistry Music: ART-7019)

Like most non-musicians, I assumed there were only two types of bass: acoustic and electric. Never did I dream there were so many versions-variations of the instrument until I heard this CD. On this set, **Brian Bromberg**, one of the most talented and renowned bass players on the planet, unleashes and uses his full arsenal.

The listener will hear the tenor bass, 5-string bass, 4-string bass, hollow body piccolo bass, solid body piccolo bass, upright bass, fretless bass, steel string acoustic piccolo bass, BSX5 string electric upright bass, nylon string acoustic piccolo bass, and steel string solid body piccolo bass with overdrive guitar sound. Whew!! Not only does Bromberg use all of these instruments, he frequently uses three or more per track. Bassists will love, learn, and borrow from this CD for years.

In addition to his bastion of basses, he's backed on various tracks by groups ranging from quintets to a 13-piece big band, boasting such well-known heavyweight guests as Gerald Albright, Rick Braun, Randy Brecker, George Duke, Jeff Lorber, Eric Marienthal, Dave Weckl, and Patrice Rushen, to name a few.

While I thought that there were some outstanding guitar solos on the CD, the liner notes informed me that "There are no guitar melodies or guitar solos on this recording. All melodies and solos that sound like guitar are played by Brian on piccolo basses, which are basses with strings that are tuned to the register of a guitar."

Granted, while all of this sounds to be "tech-talk," the CD cooks from open to close. A funky big band opens things up with a rousing version of the title track, followed by, three tracks later, a mellow, introspective 6-piece group with strings. Add a short tenor bass solo, a 12-piece outing on the TV theme from "Sanford and Son" a few easy strollers, and some laid-back loungers leading to the closer, a 10-piece band havin' funky fun on "Slap Happy."

Joe Beck and Laura Theodore: *Golden Earrings* (Whaling City Sound: WCS- 049)

In all the years I've been writing this column, I've never re-reviewed a CD I had written about before.

But, there's a first time for everything. So, once again, I'll mention this outstanding jazz-guitar-vocal-collaboration of **Joe Beck** and **Laura Theodore**, which I covered in the February 2008 issue of the *Gazette*. Check out shortnorth.com for specific details.



This superb CD was initially released on a small, not overly well-distributed label. Thus, not many people were able to find it, buy it, appreciate it. Fortunately, it is now available on a major, easily accessible label.

This was the last recording for late guitar genius Joe Beck, whose playing is, as usual, outstanding – amplified admirably by the creative jazz vocal interpretations of the four-octave-ranged Laura Theodore. If you appreciate great guitar and sensational singing, you'll enjoy this CD, which is a homage to the collaborations of Peggy Lee and her guitarist husband, Dave Barbour.

The title track is from a 1947 movie starring Oscar-winner Ray Milland and the iconic Marlene Dietrich. The movie, not a musical, involved gypsy espionage in World War II. Murvyn Vye sang the title song, which became a super hit internationally when covered on record by Peggy Lee shortly thereafter.

As a bit of trivia for the movie mavens in the crowd, Milland won the Best Actor Oscar in 1945 for his powerful performance in the Billy Wilder film "The Lost Weekend," which also won for Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Screenplay.

September 2009

GUITAR, BASS, AND BIG BAND CDS STAND OUT IN SEPTEMBER! Diversity dominates and defines the many sounds of jazz

In columns past, I've bemoaned the fact that one particular instrument or sound usually dominates the many monthly promotional CDs I receive for use on my radio show and this column. For whatever reason, be it intelligent design or cosmic coincidence, far too often I get too much of the same thing at the same time. One month it's nothing but piano trios, another month female vocalists, trumpeters, saxmen, organists, Latin, whatever. Makes putting together a radio show or jazz review column a challenge of creative complexity – how not to broadcast or write about music that's all of one type. Granted, it's easier than lifting cement blocks off a truck in 99-degree heat, but it is a challenge.

Fortunately there are exceptions to everything and the releases I review this time around represent a marvelously varied collection of musical sounds, group sizes, approach, and complexity. So, assuming you enjoy a reasonably wide range of jazz styles, chances are one or more of these will stimulate your jazz sensibilities.

Grant Geissman *Cool Man Cool* (Futurism Records: FR-2054)



While you may not recognize the Geissman name as fast as you would that of Wes Montgomery, Barney Kessell, George Benson, and others, you will recognize much of his work. He is the co-writer with Dennis C. Brown for the underscores on the hit CBS series *Two and a Half Men* for which he co-wrote the show theme, which earned him a Grammy Nomination.

You've also heard his guitar playing and writing on such popular shows as *Monk*, *Mad Men*, and *Dawson's Creek* to name a very few. A quick Internet search on his name will tell you more about this phenomenal guitarist than you probably want to know. In addition, many sites provide more than an ample sample of his

dynamic musicianship.

On this, his 15th CD, he utilizes all of his talents: writing, playing, arranging, and producing. The result is a highly diverse presentation of jazz styles and sounds: scorching bebop, Latin, ballads, shuffle blues, and organ-fueled funk, to name a few. In addition, in the course of 14 tracks, he utilizes, depending on the needs of the songs, groups that range in size from his basic quintet up to guest-laden nonets.

Added to the wide range of sounds, he includes guest stars galore. Among the legendary players who appear hither and yon, are such familiar jazz heavyweights as **Chick Corea**, **Chuck Mangione**, **Tom Scott**, **Patrice Rushen**, **Russell Ferrante** and others. Superb liner notes and individual track personnel credits allow you to see how many players are involved and who they are.

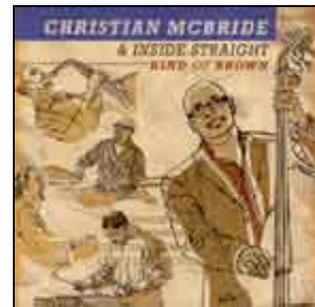
Geissman states the concept and title track of the production quite succinctly: "Cool Music I like to play; Cool People I like to play with." This cool minor blues opener is followed by the greasy, gospel-funk-fortified "Chicken Shack Jack," featuring the big-toned, soulful sax of Scott (Tom, who appears again later).

"Chuck and Chick" is a Latin-flavored waltz showcasing the talents of guests Chuck Mangione, Chick Corea, and Russell Ferrante, pianist and founder of The Yellowjackets, who gets more solo space on the next track, "Even If..."

Unpredictability, surprise, and variety follow, with excursions into the '30s with tuba, gypsy violins, and accordion; exotic jungle Polynesian-Hawaiian, Nyaw-leans, calypso, bop, and shuffle-swing are also well-presented in this outstandingly diverse collection.

Christian McBride and Inside Straight *Kind of Brown* (Mack Avenue: Mac-1047)

McBride is an All-Star, Hall of Fame, heavyweight bass player who has impressed modern audiences for over two decades. He currently serves as the co-director of the New York City Jazz Museum of Harlem. He has played Columbus a number of times to both critic and audience raves, and has led or appeared on countless CDs produced by the most prestigious players ever.



For this outing, he put together an unusual quintet comprised of bass, drums, piano, sax, and vibes, which he leads dynamically through an imaginative, well-balanced blend of 10 tunes, including seven of his originals.

The group name, Inside Straight, refers to both a difficult-to-get, usually winnable poker hand, and a homage to the title of the last CD produced by the legendary Cannonball Adderly.

"Brother Mister" is a medium tempo, funky opener and sets the mood for the music to follow. He explores the lyrical on "Starbeam," visits the blues on "Used 'Ta Could," waltzes the group

through “Uncle James,” and soars his way, all stops out, for the ultra-up-tempo flagwaver “Stick And Move.”



Mark Buselli *An Old Soul* (Owl Studios: OWL-00130)
While the powerhouse 16-piece Buselli-Wallarab Jazz Orchestra is featured on this CD, the production this time around is primarily the work of arranger, conductor, trumpeter, flugelhornist **Mark Buselli**. Co-leader and trombonist **Brent Wallarab** appears on only one track and left most of the work to his compadre, Buselli.

For this set, Buselli, director of jazz studies at Ball State amplifies his big band with a 13-piece string section and vocalist **Kelleen Strutz**, who lends her powerful or subtle voice to five of the 11 selections.

Things open up with a rousing rendition of the standard “My Shining Hour,” followed by an easy-walkin’ Buselli original, “135 B. Chiswick,” showcasing Mark’s flugelhorn and terrific work by bassman **Jack Helsley**.

A moody-but-melodic “Chelsea Bridge” is counterbalanced perfectly by the hard-swinging “Artificial Bebop,” which conjures Woody’s “Four Brothers” and later works by Supersax. Of particular interest and appeal is the Charles Mingus classic “Fables of Faubus,” usually performed in an almost dirge-like tempo, but here as an up-tempo, colorful, and humorous romp.

August 2009

SEPTUAGENARIAN SINGERS-SWINGERS EXUDE ENERGY AND EXPERIENCE David “Fathead” Newman, Johnnie Bassett, Elli Fordyce, all in their 70s, still young in sound and style

It was the late, great Bette Davis who once summed up the challenges of aging, when she proclaimed “Getting’ old ain’t for sissies!” She was referring to the multitudes of seniors, who, despite numerous health and other problems still remain active in volunteer, charity and church work, golf, tennis, swimming pools, dance clubs, travel tours and more.

In the entertainment world, one earful of singers Johnnie Bassett and Elli Fordyce and sax-legend David “Fathead” Newman – all in their 70s – prove her point. Sissies they ain’t – hall-of-fame, industrial-strength, hard-core jazz swingers they are – as exemplified by their current CD presentations. A new listener, not familiar with their bios, would assume, based on their power, prowess, energy, and musicianship, that these were well-established young pros, probably in their mid-30s. Their advantage is that they offer the energy of the young, augmented by the musical techniques- experience-wisdom gained by years of performing.

Johnnie Bassett: *The Gentleman is Back* (Mack Avenue: SLY-3003)

Johnnie Bassett has been on the blues-jazz scene for over 50 of his 73 years. His hard drivin’, soulful singing and guitar style combines the energy of jump blues, Delta roots, and citified jazz/blues. Over the years, he’s backed up or performed with such legends as Tina Turner, Jimi Hendrix, John Lee Hooker, Smokey Robinson and many others.

This current CD, his first since 1997 for a variety of reasons, is a prime example of his musical approach. As he explains, “I like jump-type stuff because it gives you energy. The people need upbeat music to help take them



to a better place. I know I do, that's why I play upbeat blues."

He couldn't have described the overall effect of this presentation better.

His basic trio of B-3, bass, and drums is augmented on nine of the 11 tracks by the jazz power of The Motor City Horns (two trumpets, sax, and trombone) and other special guests. The program is an invigorating blend of grooves. "Keep Your Hands Off My Baby" has that good-time party feeling; "A Woman's Got Ways" and "I'm Lost" are moody and soulful; the streetwise wisdom of "Nice Guys Finish Last" is sage advice for bachelors lookin' for romance ("...I know a woman's needs come first – and nice guys finish last.")

Granted, Ray Charles owns "Georgia On My Mind," but Johnnie's version is one of the best runner-ups.

My personal favorite, which I dedicate to all the voluptuaries, size 8 and over, is the sly, humorous-but-accurate "Meat On Them Bones." Those who appreciate the art of Rubens, Cabanel, Titian, and Reni will know whereof he sings. As most musicians know, "You can't lose when you play the blues!" Listeners will discover "They can't lose when they add this energizing, timeless CD to their collections.



"David "Fathead" Newman: *The Blessing* (High Note: HCD-7195)

Originally an alto sax player, David "Fathead" Newman began his professional career with local groups while still in high school. Due to the many R&B gigs at that time, he added tenor and baritone sax to his arsenal. However, in 1952, after two years in college, studying theology and music, he left to work with T-Bone Walker. In 1954, he joined the Ray Charles Band on Bari, but soon, due to his strong beat, big warm tone, personal and funky stylings, became the star tenor player. So much so that in 1959, Atlantic Records produced his first album, *Fathead: Ray Charles*

Presents 'Fathead,' followed by many other albums for Atlantic.

Twelve years with Charles led to 10 years with Herbie Mann and other performances with such diverse artists as Aretha Franklin, B.B. King, Eric Clapton, Dr. John and others. In 1980, he went completely on his own as a leader and recorded numerous award-winning and popular albums.

The Blessing, sadly, was his last. He recorded it in December 2008, and went to that "Great Jam Session In The Sky" in January 2009. Hearing the CD, however, one would not have suspected his health had gone bad. The strength, energy, musicianship, imagination is evident on every track.

Backed by vibes, piano, guitar, bass, and drums, he opens with a walkin' bluesy Milt Jackson tune, "SKJ," followed by two sensual, sub-toned romantic ballads, "Someone To Watch Over Me," and one of the best instrumental versions of "As Time Goes By." Steve Nelson on vibes is outstanding on both. A bit of bossa, bop, noir, introspection, and inspirational Newman-flute round out the diverse and enthralling program.

Elli Fordyce Sings Songs Spun of Gold (Fordyce Music: FM-002)

Elli Fordyce doesn't rush into things. A veteran and respected jazz singer in cabarets, live theatre, film, and TV, (with career-interruptions here and there, ie: an auto-truck accident, recovery, family concerns, etc.), she finally got around to recording her first CD last year, at age 72. Its incredible popularity led to this CD in which she combines all of her formidable talents to bring fresh warmth, swing, style, and artistic jazz sensitivity to 17 "songs spun of gold."



The introspective longing she evokes on "Wee Small Hours" is as evocative, intimate and lonely as an Edward Hopper painting, counterbalanced perfectly by the optimism, verve, and swing of "Pick Yourself Up." Her captivating voice, jazz sensibilities and interpretations, wide variety of tunes, and superb support from her musicians make Fordyce a formidable force in the front rank of jazz vocalists today. For more info on this sensational septuagenarian-singer-singer, check out www.ellifordyce.com.

July 2009

MILES, MINGUS, BRUBECK CLASSICS: EXPANDED AND EXCITING IN NEW FORMAT!

Legacy Editions sure to please new and old listeners alike

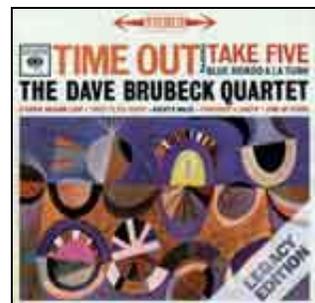
Hosannas to the Creative Power-Elite at Columbia Records who came up with the new "Legacy Edition" CD concept for many of their trendsetting, timeless, iconic, classic jazz releases. This concept presents the original single CD versions of these recordings – but now expanded, amplified, and augmented with previously unreleased tracks from the original recording sessions, longer versions of the original selections, verbal interplay between the musicians and producers, false starts on some, material that provided the initial concept for the originals, and much more. The result is a longer, more-complete two-disc set sure to please aficionados of the original vinyl releases as well as those who are experiencing these classic performances for the first time.

At this point however, an admonition, advice, warning to those interested in buying these releases. Be *sure* to see the words "LEGACY EDITION" printed on the front cover art, which is otherwise completely identical to the original single vinyl/CD release. Your pal, da Owl, don't want you to end up with another single CD copy of an album you already have.

The series started a few months ago with the presentation of *Kind of Blue* by Miles Davis (reviewed in our April Edition). It continues superbly with "Legacy Editions" for three of Columbia's most popular, innovative, timeless recordings ever – by Dave Brubeck, Charles Mingus and, coming-back-for-seconds, Miles Davis.

Dave Brubeck: *Time Out: Legacy Edition* (Columbia-Legacy-88697-53434-2)

Among its many innovations, *Time Out* was an exploration of unusual time signature experiments. While up to this point (1959) most jazz time was played 4-beats-to-the-measure, Brubeck presented music in such hitherto rarely used time signatures as 5/4 in the classic track "Take Five" (by the way, *not* written by Brubeck but by his Altoman, Paul Desmond), 9/8 in "Blue Rondo à la Turk," and many other beats for other selections.



Time Out was the first jazz album to sell over one-million copies,

and best represents the classic Brubeck sound and approach: clean, spare playing with the light, airy, icy-blue Desmond alto over Brubeck's elegant, modern chords.

The expanded Legacy Edition contains the basic Brubeckians – altoman **Paul Desmond**, bassist **Eugene Wright**, and drummer **Joe Morello** in almost an hour's worth of previously unreleased material from recordings at various Newport Jazz Festivals. To my ears, the expanded, looser versions of "Take Five" and "Blue Rondo" heard here far surpass the originals on *Time Out*. Why Columbia never released these sessions before is a mystery to me. They are sensational and present Brubeck at his best!

While advanced, sophisticated, and unusual for its time in the late '50s, this CD (unlike the others listed below) is an excellent introduction to newbie-listeners unfamiliar with the wide range and appeal of modern jazz. As an added bonus, the retail/commercial copies of the Legacy Edition include a DVD of the performances, not included with my radio sample. However, since it's Brubeck, Desmond et al, I can only assume it's great – making for a superb audio-video presentation, and definitely a collectors' item.



Charles Mingus: *Mingus Ah Um: Legacy Edition* (Columbia-Legacy-88597-53436-2)

This was the first Mingus CD I purchased after being introduced to him by Jean Shepherd (narrator, writer, performer in the magnificent movie "A Christmas Story") on the Mingus CD *The Clown* (Atlantic-1260, vintage 1958 – whatever). It is considered by most Mingus aficionados as one of his five most representative and singular recordings.

Mingus, an outstanding bassist, composer, and bandleader, wrote music too individualistic for categorization. However, it is instantly recognizable upon hearing. It combines all of the stormy, emotional, dissonant, churchy, atonal, dissonant, past-present-and-future sounds of jazz. It is a combination of Duke Ellington and free jazz, unique in voicing, turbulence, intensity and changeability.

Among the many innovative sounds one will experience in *Ah Um* is the double-time drumming of **Dannie Richmond** in the churchy-shouting "Better Git It In Your Soul," the satirical, minstrel show vaudevillity of "Fables of Faubus," and the blues-ballad homage to sax-legend Lester Young in "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat," highlighted by an outstanding solo by tenorman **Booker Ervin**.

This new Legacy Edition contains three bonus tracks and three alternate takes from the original *Ah Um* release, along with the complete, related-in-sound-approach-style-and-concept album *Mingus Dynasty*, which includes a bonus track from that production.

Cumulatively, the various groups heard range from seven to nine players, and feature superb work and solos by such well-known all-stars as saxmen **John Handy**, and **Shafi Hadi**, vibist **Teddy Charles**, pianists **Horace Parlan** and **Roland Hanna**, trombonist **Jimmy Knepper**, and others.

Miles Davis: *Sketches of Spain: Legacy Edition* (Columbia-Legacy-88697-53435-2)

This was the third collaboration between Miles Davis and arranger-conductor Gil Evans which presents, once again, Miles as the only soloist, augmented by an orchestral setting. Unlike the first two sessions, this one is more classically oriented, and swings less. The compositions are all Spanish/Andalusian flamencos, melancholy melodies filled with longing and loneliness, yet with a blues-jazz undertone that accommodates the unique Davis sound.



This Legacy Edition contains the original album plus all the outtakes, rehearsal and alternate takes of the music, and in one instance a track, "Teo" featuring the Davis Quintet: **John Coltrane, Wynton Kelly, Paul Chambers, and Jimmy Cobb** – a creation from 1961, that strongly resembles Miles' future solo approach, phrasing, and melodic content used later on *Sketches*.

While not the album to introduce one to the music of Miles Davis, this Legacy Edition is sure to please the serious collectors who found *Sketches of Spain* to be one of his most emotionally involving works.

June 2009

TEENAGE SAX-MISTRESS, VETERAN B-3 BURNER, TOWERING TRUMPETER DOMINATE CURRENT JAZZ CDS!

Artists blend golden age jazz basics with 21st-century innovations

Whatever your preferences in jazz, chances are, one or all of these recent releases will light your fires, immolate your imaginations, burn your backsides with their inspirational innovations on the many, diversified, ever-changing-evolving sounds and approaches to jazz.

Three highly diverse musicians, in age, instrumentation, and style, offer jazz listeners of yesterday, today, and tomorrow a multitude of jazz sounds that are sure to please even the most critical and discriminating ears.

Grace Kelly: *Mood Changes* (PAZZ: 16-9)



This is the fifth and finest CD yet produced by Ms. Kelly, the 16-year-old sax-ation who started her professional recording career at age 12 in 2004. Her second CD, at age 13, a two-disc set, *Times Two*, debuted a year later. *Every Road I Walked*, presented in 2006, gave her the first of her ASCAP Foundation Awards and an invitation to perform with the Boston Pops. You can read my review of this recording in the May 2007 issue of the *Short North Gazette*. Her fourth outing *GRACEfulLEE* found her co-starring, and holding her own, with alto-sax legend Lee Konitz, one of her idols and influences.

On *Mood Changes*, she continues to expand her triple-threat talents as a musician, singer, and composer, adding tenor and soprano saxes to her arsenal of instruments, and on two tracks, a deeper, more mature approach to her vocalizing and writing, particularly on her original introspective composition "But Life Goes On." She wrote four originals for the 10-song album, the others by such as Lennon-McCartney, Bill Withers, Rogers & Hammerstein to name a few.

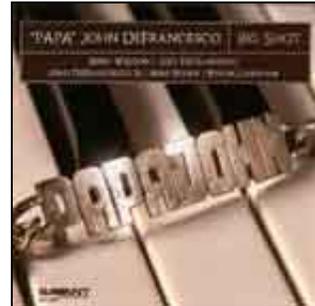
Her debut on tenor sax is equally mature and impressive. Her composition “Tender Madness” blends romance, sadness, and softness. A bossa-based “It Might As Well Be Spring” not only showcases her ease as a vocalist but also a light, breezy sax-sound that reflects her homage to Stan Getz, another influence in her development.

She opens the set with an upbeat original “Happy Theme Song” which establishes her abilities as a hardcore, industrial-strength swinger on her primary axe, the alto sax. It also introduces the solid swing of her backing musicians on various tracks: trumpet, piano, bass, guitar, drums, and trombone.

While every selection is enjoyable, I particularly liked the jam session, high-speed, party-vibe the group evoked on “I’ll Remember April,” the slow, dancin’-romancin’ groove of “Ain’t No Sunshine,” and the the upbeat 7/4 romp on the CD closer, “I Want To Be Happy.”

“Papa” John DeFrancesco: Big Shot (Savant: SCD-2098)

There have been a number of famous “family” jazzmen, with internationally iconic names such as Adderly, Marsalis, Montgomery, Harper, and Heath, to name a few. Included on the list is DeFrancesco, headed up by patriarch “Papa” John who headlines this set on a burnin’ B-3, aided and abetted by sons, Joey (probably *the* B-3 man on the scene today) on acoustic and electric pianos, and John, Jr., who holds his own on guitar with “the ol’ man” and “famous brother.”



Add a tenor sax, bass, and drums, and you have an organ-led sextet that burns the joint down on a smokin’ set of organ classics and original works. Granted, this ain’t one of the “10 Greatest Jazz Albums of All Time,” but it is timeless – a delight to hear today and equally pleasing for the foreseeable decades.

Things open up with an easy-walkin’ “Red Top,” a classic of the genre written years ago by Gene Ammons. The groove is relaxed, danceable, and funky. Joey on electric piano ups the tempo on his intro to The Doors “Riders on the Storm,” which has Papa and tenor bringing a quiet rumble to the proceedings. The title track is funky and cooks up to its name, with “Nola” equaling it in tempo and fire. “Down Home,” one of four tracks written by guitarist John, is a classic slow blues.

Big Shot by the DeFrancescos is ample proof of the adage, “The family that plays together, stays together.”

Sean Jones: The Search Within (Mack Avenue Records: MAC-1044)



Admittedly, more readers on seeing the name “Sean Jones” will think of the Cleveland Browns’ player recently acquired by the Philadelphia Eagles to replace Brian Dawkins for the upcoming ‘09 season. So be it. The name’s the same – but there’s another Sean Jones, a musician, who’s as formidable on trumpet as his counterpart is on safety.

On this, his fifth album, Jones balances the inward with the outward, a superb blend of introspection, philosophy, and straight-ahead jazz.

The title tune is in three sections. It opens the album and sets the mood, reappears midway to elaborate, and closes the set with introspection and reflection.

Along the way, you’ll enjoy an ultra-up-tempo workout on “Transitions,” an equally exciting quintet version of “Sean Jones Comes Down,” a noir ballad, “The Ambitious Violet,” inspired by poet/philosopher Khalil Gibran, a waltz, with vocal, dealing with unreturned love, “Letter of

Resignation,” and a playful, time-changing R&B romp “Sunday Reflections.”

Adding to Jones’ trumpet, the basic group includes tenor and alto saxes, piano, bass and drums, with special guests on harmonica, flute, and percussion, and on one track, a vocalist. While this is not the album I’d use to introduce a novice to the world of jazz, it is a performance that will prove to be enjoyable, intriguing, and worth hearing to those familiar with the form.

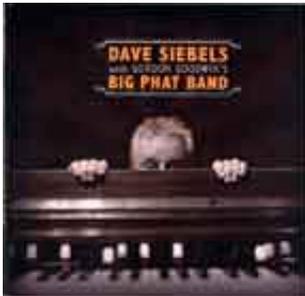
May 2009

BURNIN' B-3 + BIG PHAT BAND = TOTAL JAZZ EXCITEMENT! Rarely heard combination scores on every track!

Granted, this is not the first time the flame and fire of the B-3 has co-starred with the bold energy of a roarin’ big band. Organ masters such as Jimmy Smith, Hank Marr, Bobby Floyd and numerous others have added their talents to the big band sound on many occasions. And, while the combination has been heard before, it hasn’t been heard that often, nor on a regular basis. B-3’s generally stick with a trio or quartet lineup; big bands usually are self-contained units with an occasional guest-vocalist or instrumentalist to add to their sound.

So, as a fan of both the B-3 and the big band, this latest team-up is a winner in every respect: a CD that will easily pass the test of time and provide great listening for years to come.

Dave Siebels with Gordon Goodwin’s Big Phat Band (PBGL: 786052-8111-2)



Dave Siebels is an outstanding keyboardist, arranger, composer, and Emmy Award winner for his TV musical scores. As a player, he’s worked with such heavyweights as Ray Charles, B.B. King and Joe Williams, to name a few.

Gordon Goodwin’s Big Phat Band features 18 first-rank jazz artists, including **Eric Marienthal**, **Grant Geissman**, **Wayne Bergeron**, **Andy Martin** and others, including leader-pianist-saxman Goodwin, who already has 11 Grammy nominations on his musical resumé.

The set opens big, bold and brash, with rousing interplay between the B-3 and the band. Everyone goes all-out – on every note and run. Superlative solos by guitarist Geissman and tenorman **Brian Scanlon**, along with tight ensemble work by all, makes this track an intense introduction to the musical excitement to follow.

Funk follows on track two. Streetwise and urban, it’s outstanding in its unison ensemble work, along with down-and-dirty drum and bass, and a honkin’, bar-walkin’ solo by altoman Marienthal.

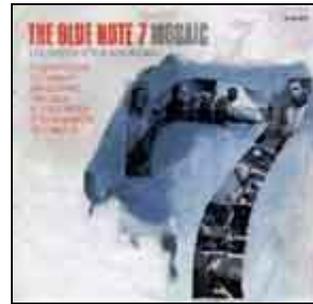
Track three proves what every musician knows: “You can’t lose when you play the blues!” It’s a happy, walkin’ blooz groove which evolves into a rompin’, stompin’ workout for the band and trombonist Andy Martin.

Works by Neil Hefti, Stevie Wonder, along with original compositions by Siebels keep the set enjoyable and unpredictable. A powerhouse presentation of Lalo Schifrin’s “The Cat,” while great at almost four minutes, should have been at least twice as long – one of the few times when “less-is-more” gives way to Mae West’s admonition, “You can’t get too much of a good thing.”

The Blue Note 7: Mosaic (Blue Note: 50999-2-28123-2-2)

70 years have passed since Alfred Lion and Frank Wolff founded the internationally known and respected Blue Note Record Label, famous for discovering, promoting, and recording great artists playing pure jazz.

To commemorate their 70th Anniversary, the label put together a septet of all-stars to create this dynamic tribute: **Nicholas Payton** on trumpet, **Steve Wilson** on alto, **Ravi Coltrane** on tenor, **Peter Bernstein** on guitar, **Bill Charlap** on piano, **Peter Washington** on bass, and **Lewis Nash** on drums.



The eight compositions selected are equally impressive, with works by such stellar Blue Note artists as Cedar Walton, Joe Henderson, McCoy Tyner, Thelonious Monk, Herbie Hancock, Bobby Hutcherson, Duke Pearson, and Horace Silver.

The set opens with the title track, “Mosaic,” a spirited rouser composed by Walton and a major hit for Art Blakey’s Jazz Messengers. Everyone cooks on this, with outstanding ensemble and solo contributions by all.

Joe Henderson’s “Inner Urge” is rhythmically inventive, balanced nicely by the grace and beauty of McCoy Tyner’s “Search For Peace.” The variety continues with a sprightly outing on Monk’s “Criss Cross,” ultimately wrapping up with a brisk, funky workout on Horace Silver’s “The Outlaw.” The other selections are lilting and poetic, bloozy shuffles, latin, and noir-moody, making this a jazzily righteous way to say, “Happy 70th Anniversary, Blue Note!”

Just a Little Taste: Al Hood Plays The Writing of Dave Hanson (ahood@du.edu)



“Grace, elegance, peace, beauty, introspection” are words that describe this outstanding program. Notice that the word “boring” does not appear.

Granted, this is not the CD you’ll put on the player for your next brawl; it is however one that will satisfy completely when you need some music to enhance your Garbo-ish “I Vant To Be Alone” moods and moments.

Essentially, the CD is a trumpet lead in front of a 10-piece string orchestra. On various selections you’ll hear trumpeter **Al Hood** and pianist **Dave Hanson** as the only out-front soloists, while on others, they’re joined by bass, drums, oboe, flute, French horn, clarinet, and saxes. This is “orchestral jazz,” a form, while used occasionally, is neither commonplace nor standard for either players or listeners.

Trumpeter Hood instantly acknowledges his trumpet influences, and evokes them all, which explains the CD title, “Just A Little Taste.”

A languid, lush’n’lazy homage is paid to trumpet legend, Clifford Brown on the CD opener, “I Remember Clifford,” the jazz classic written by Benny Golson. “Pure Imagination” follows. It’s a bright, buoyant visit to “Willie Wonka’s Chocolate Factory” and rivals the megahit from that show, “The Candy Man.”

Shimmering strings and mellow flugelhorn highlight “In The Wee Small Hours of the Morning,” while “Ceora,” a composition by trumpet legend Lee Morgan evokes both Morgan and Brown.

The title track is the only up-tempo track on the set: a boppish, exuberant romp that features an impressive, swinging “brass choir” sound in some sections.

April 2009

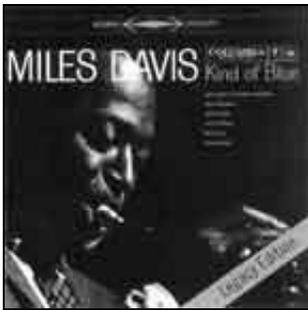
CLASSIC MILES, GOODWIN SWING, WRIGHT-EOUS SAX HIGHLIGHT APRIL JAZZ RELEASES

Diversity of discs offers jazz for every listening taste

Usually da Owl jazz-grousing bemoans the fact that for some reason, the international CD producers tend to release similarly instrumented or themed albums at the same time. So, one month, I'll get new CDs featuring nine trumpet players, another month, 15 guitar trios, another month, eight sax players, seven bop bassists, six Latino sextets, and a piano in a pear tree – all of which make programming my Sunday show a difficulty. I can't, and don't want, any one instrument, style, tempo, or sound to dominate my meager three-hour airtime.

Surprisingly, enjoyably, the March-April releases proved to be different in that, for once, a wide range of styles, instrumentations and jazz concepts arrived at the intergalactically renowned Nite Owl Jazz Entertainment Megaplex and Pleasuredome. Three of the best, most-diverse were ...

Miles Davis: Kind of Blue (Legacy Edition) (Columbia/Legacy: 88697-45885-2)



This timeless CD is universally regarded, respected, and revered by jazz critics and audiences alike. It is the best-selling jazz album ever and rated #12 in "Rolling Stone's 500 Greatest Albums of All Time." The music is spontaneous, with an expressive, sustained mood, great solos by all, evoking instant communication with first-time and traditional jazz listeners alike.

More importantly, this is the CD that essentially moved jazz beyond bebop. It introduced the new concept of modal jazz to a vast audience; a CD that in style, approach, construction, sound, and new musical concepts has influenced just about every jazz

player, critic, composer, educator, and listener ever since.

Recorded in March 1959, it features Miles' first great sextet featuring **Cannonball Adderly** on alto, **John Coltrane** on tenor, **Bill Evans** or **Wynton Kelly** on piano, **Paul Chambers** on bass, and **Jimmy Cobb**, now the only surviving member of the group, on drums.

This two-disc "Legacy Edition" is an affordable alternative to the expensive, lavishly designed 12-inch-slipcased box-set of the *Kind Of Blue 50th Anniversary Collectors Edition* presented last year.

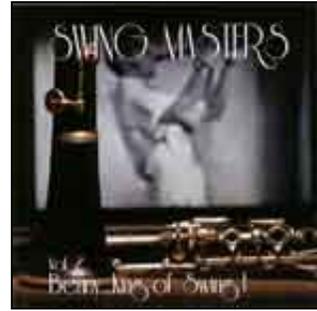
On Disc-1, the five tunes that made up the initial 1959 vinyl release are presented as on the original, along with the addition of a complete, slightly longer, alternative take on "Flamenco Sketches," followed by such extras as a series of studio sequences for the original five titles and one "false start" for "Freddie The Freeloader."

Disc-2 goes back to sessions recorded in 1958, featuring, now rightfully united for the first time on one CD, the only studio recording sessions made by this iconic sextet. As an added bonus, there's a "previously released in unauthorized form" 17-minutes-plus version of "So What," (minus Cannonball) recorded in Holland in 1960.

Undeniably, this Legacy Edition is a CD that should be a part of every jazz collection.

Swing Masters: Vol. 2: Benny – King of Swing (Dare Records: DRR-200202-2)

The jazz style known as swing was the most popular music of the mid-'30s to late-'40s. It had been around for a while before it was propelled into national popularity by the **Benny Goodman Band** in a 1935 performance at the Palomar Ballroom. It was big band jazz in the black style à la **Fletcher Henderson**, **Earl Hines**, **Benny Moten** and others, in those days, primarily known only to audiences in Harlem, Kansas City, and Chicago. Goodman, plus radio, college students, ballrooms and national concerts all contributed to his title as "King of Swing." The music was smooth, driving, flawlessly played, highly disciplined jazz at its best.



These same qualities are evident in this homage program by the Swing Masters, a 13-piece band, six of whom were members of various Goodman Bands, including leader-clarinetist **Ken Peplowski**, who dynamically re-creates the fragile tone, liquid sound, blooziness, and upper-register wail originally so easily presented by Goodman-the-Great.

The charts are very close to the originals – tweaked, changed only slightly, to add a dash of 21st-century ambience to the original '40s swing sound – the result being both authentic '40s with the overtly dated elements removed.

Fourteen of "Benny's Biggest" are included in the set, the highlight being an almost 12-minute version of the Louis Prima composition "Sing, Sing, Sing," an instant, internationally revered showpiece at Goodman's 1939 Carnegie Hall appearance, primarily due to the drumming of **Gene Krupa**, whose takes on that tune are still quoted today. Drummer **Chuck Redd** faces and answers the Krupa challenge with power, style, and imagination – keeping Krupa constant but adding a few modern touches of his own.

Nancy Wright - with the Tony Monaco Trio: *Moanin'* (Chicken Coup Records: CCP-7013)



I've been a fan of the tenor-sax/B-3 quartet for as long as I've had ears. So it was great to hear this debut CD from **Nancy Wright**, an Ohio native, who originally waitressed at Gilly's in Dayton on weeknights, but sat in as guest-tenor sax for the big name jazz players who performed on weekends.

Her tenor personifies that big-toned, warm, sexy-sensual, booze-drenched sound so familiar to fans of Houston Person, Gene Ammons, and Ben Webster, to name a few of her influences.

She soulfully shows her prowess on blues, ballads, bop, and boogooloo on 10 trax, four of which she wrote, the others by such outstanding composers as Bobby Timmons, Gigi Gryce, Cole Porter and others.

She's aided and abetted on this superbly swingin' program by CD-producer **Tony Monaco**, who burns on the B-3, **Robert Kraut** on guitar, and **Louis Tsamous** on drums.

February 2009

JAZZ WITH FRITZ: 50TH YEAR ON COLUMBUS RADIO! Timeless CDs reverently recalled, remembered, recommended

Possibly, perhaps, perchance it was the L-tryptophan in the Thanksgiving turkey, the rush of the holidays, or even, maybe, an overdose of dark-chocolate-infused cookies and candies that caused me to overlook my most recent career chapter: namely, the start of my 50th year on Columbus radio this past November, with jazz always a major part of my airwork.

In the course of those years, I played music in a variety of formats: pop, rock, Top-40,

classical, adult-contemporary and folk to name a few. However, whatever the format, even on TV, I was always able to work some jazz into it or had a separate “stand alone” jazz program on the side. My current show, “Nite Owl Jazz” started its 8th year on Smooth Jazz WJZA-WJZK-FM in January and will start its 18th consecutive year on the air in Central Ohio in mid-April.

While jazz, as with most other art forms, has changed and evolved over the years, there are countless albums that are timeless – albums that sound as fresh, new, and good today as when they were originally recorded. I’ve heard, shared, and played many of these for my audiences.

Here are a very few of the older great “sounds-recalled” CDs that you’ll still enjoy today, listed by artist, CD title, label, and catalogue number. Bear in mind, however, I’m not saying these are the greatest jazz albums ever recorded, only that these were terrific listening back then, are now, and will be 10 years from now.



Teddy Edwards: Good Gravy (Contemporary OJCCD-661-2 (S-7592))

Teddy Edwards, along with Dexter Gordon and Wardell Gray, was one of the top three young tenor sax players of the late '40s. Teddy's “tenor duel” with “Long-Tall-Dexter” was a milestone in jazz and helped give both players legendary status. While many other tenor men were “inner-directed” and seemed to “play for themselves,” Teddy was always communicative; when he plays it seems like he’s talking to you.

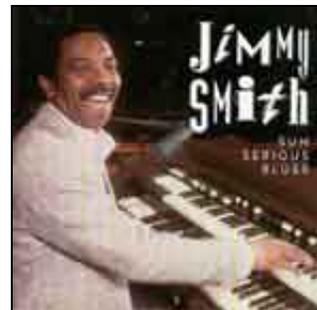
While just about any of his albums are worth having, *Good Gravy* from 1962 is my favorite. The opening title track, written by Teddy (as were three others), was used as the theme for many of my radio and TV shows. It “walks” warmly in a medium groove and sets the tone for the varied jazz delights that follow, including four brisk swingers, a Latin-lope, and two sensual ballads: “Stairway to the Stars” and one of the most gorgeously played versions of “Laura” ever recorded. On various tracks he’s backed by such jazz heavyweights as **Phineas Newborn, Jr., Danny Horton, Leroy Vinnegar** and **Milt Turner**.

As a side note, Teddy’s label, Contemporary, is outstanding. Just about everything they produced-released was “A-plus-with-clusters” in content, production, sound.

Jimmy Smith: Sum Serious Blues (Milestone-MCD-9207-2)

As with Teddy, there ain’t no such thing as a **Jimmy Smith** CD that’s not worth hearing.

He always has his “mojo/roog-o-later” workin’ and cookin’ to da max. From the many superb Smith sessions available, I have a fondness for this one. ’Tis somewhat unusual in that it is one of the CDs that present the B-3 burner fronting a 10-piece all-star band, featuring such hall-of-famers as **George Bohanan, Oscar Brashear, Buddy Collette, Phillip Upchurch, and Andy Simpkins**, to name just five. In addition, in the eight-song program, there are three bluesy vocals, one of which is sung by Jimmy himself.



You’ll go a long time before you hear a more impressive, good-time sound than the title track.

It opens big, with everyone wailin’ and walkin’ for eight minutes of solid swingin’ jazz, highlighted by Smith’s smokin’ B-3, tight ensemble sections, and outstanding solos. If you ain’t clappin’ your hands, tappin’ your foot while this is playing, check your pulse, you may have died.

While each of the eight lengthy tracks is a winner, I had a particular fondness for Jimmy's soulful vocal on "Hurry Change, If You're Comin'," his classic organ solo on his original composition "The Sermon," **Mick Martin's** harmonica work on "Moof's Blues," and the hiply humorous **Marlena Shaw** vocal on "You've Changed."



Greg Abate Quintet: Featuring Richie Cole: Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde (Candid-CCD-79715)

Greg Abate and **Richie Cole** are household names in the world of jazz, but not beyond. Both are heavyweight, hall-of-fame Bebop saxmeisters in the front rank; both have innumerable audience and critically acclaimed recordings and live performances to their credit.

On this set, recorded live at Chan's, a Chinese restaurant in Abate's hometown of Woonsocket, Rhode Island, in 1994, the two saxmen present blues, ballads, and bop as they should be played and heard.

Abate demonstrates his prowess on soprano, alto, tenor, bari, and flute throughout the program, while Cole burns strictly on alto. They roar-soar on dueling altos through the blazing opener, "Fast Lane Rhythm," which gives each incendiary solos and tight unison collaborations. It's bop at its best, rivaled easily by their work on their two-alto bop-tized workouts on "Chan's House of Jazz" and "Parallel." These are my two favorite trax on the album, both showing unmistakable Charlie Parker influences.

A taste of West-coast Blue-Bop, some loping-Latin and two romantic, sensual, steam-the-windows, fog-your-lenses ballads contribute to the overall variety and "listen anytime" appeal of this crowd-pleasing performance. 'Tis good that the hometown Woonsocketians got to hear it live; equally good that Candid Records had the taste and foresight to record and release it for everyone, everywhere, to enjoy for years to come.

January 2009

SWING SOUNDS FINE TO START '09!

Hampton, Goodman, and Krupa honored in new series

In the early days of dance-jazz, it was two-beats-to-the-bar with strings and sweetness. However, by the late-1920s, audiences wanted an edgier, smoother, more sophisticated sound. So, two beats increased to four, and the groups now featured horns, syncopation, improvisation, and other innovations. Due to the smooth-but-exciting rhythms, the music became known as "swing."

It was equally enjoyable as music for dancing or just listening. ("I give it a nine and you can dance to it.")

This new sound fascinated audiences from the beginning, but a 1935 Palomar Ballroom appearance by Benny Goodman propelled the style to national renown and popularity. From the mid-1930s until the early-fifties, swing eclipsed all other types of music in audience acceptance and sales. This was the only time when the people ranked jazz as America's most popular music.

In addition, elements of swing influenced numerous singers, including Sinatra, Torme, Lee, Cole, Eckstein, Bennett, London, and such current artists as Lavay Smith, Brian Setzer, Royal Crown Revue, and Squirrel Nut Zippers.

Granted, swing hasn't held a top position in music for over five decades, but it still has a respectably sized audience of all ages who enjoy its sound, style, and evolution over the years. These are the people who will thoroughly thrill to the "new-for-the-New-Year" Swing Masters Series, which pays tribute to the timeless sounds of the swing greats.

The series is unique in many ways. In addition to re-recording the numerous hits, many of the seven musicians who make up Swing Masters actually performed with the legendary musicians honored in the recordings.

Three individual CDs introduce the series. The Swing Masters pay homage to the music of Benny Goodman in *Vol. 2: The King of Swing*, available January 13, followed by *Vol. 3: Gene Krupa: Jazz Pioneer* on February 10, and the currently available:



Swing Masters: Vol. 1: Happy Birthday: Lionel Hampton (DARE Records: DRR200200-2)

Lionel Hampton first recorded with Louis Armstrong in 1930. He was the first musician to improvise and record on the vibraphone and gained international fame as a member of the Benny Goodman Band in 1936. Throughout his career, he was universally recognized as a jazz pioneer, legend, icon, innovator, and leader in the world of swing. He performed actively until his death at age 94 in 2002, but his musicianship lives on, as heard on this lively collection.

Veteran vibist **Chuck Redd**, a member of the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra, has the honor and challenge of re-creating the Hampton sound, approach, and style. He does this easily, breezily on each of the 15 tracks, romping his way through some of Hampton's most exciting and memorable solos, as heard on "Flying Home," "Airmail Special," and "Runnin' Wild," to name just three. He's mellow and bloozy on the Hampton-composed "Red Top," light, hip, and humorous on Lionel's "Hey Ba Ba Re Bop," which features a classic vocal by group-guest **Janis Siegal** on loan from Manhattan Transfer.

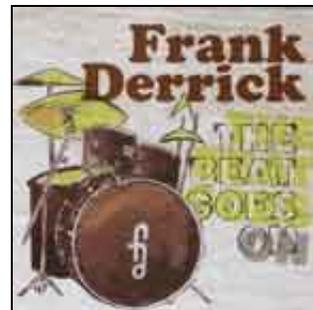
The authenticity of the solidly swingin' Hampton sound is ensured in that four of the seven musicians were members of Lionel's band: **Ken Peplowski** on clarinet and tenor, **Warren Vache** on trumpet, **Frank Vignola** on guitar, **John Bunch** on piano. Along with vibist Redd, the group features the bass and drums of **Pete Coco** and **Rich Zukor**. Added guests include violinist **Aaron Weinstein** and vocalists **Mark Kibble** of Take 6 and **Jane Monheit**.

If swing's your thing, you'll go a long time before you hear better than this.

Frank Derrick: The Beat Goes On (JazzedMedia: JM-1035)

'Tis rare to encounter a jazz album that covers so many of the jazz bases: blues, ballads, bop – big band, Latin, swing – and group size. In its 12 tracks, this CD easily does the job.

In an unusual twist, six tunes are performed by a powerhouse 17-piece big band, the other six by an all-star quintet: the common denominator being the leader, drummer **Frank Derrick**. Saxman **Billy Ross**, trumpeter **Melton Mustafa**, pianist **George Caldwell**, and bassist **Chuck Bergeron** are just a few of the heavyweights who contribute.



The selections honor Derrick's drumming idols, Buddy Rich, Art Blakey, Max Roach, and Roy Haynes. As with the Hampton CD above, Derrick doesn't just copy his influences, rather, he evokes their sound and approach, while adding his own personal innovations.

The set opens with a blistering big band blast on "And Away We Go," the theme for a TV

show, performed by Rich. The quintet counters with an imaginative outing on the Derrick-composed "Conquest," which conjures Blakey. Brubeck's "Blue Rondo Ala Turk" balances the 9/8-time with its 4/4 transitions, and adds a fresh feel to this jazz classic.

The title track by Sonny and Cher cooks on all burners, and is one of my favorites – equaled by the modern dance work by Richard Rodgers, "Slaughter On Tenth Avenue." I first saw this work, at age 14, danced by Gene Kelly and the spectacularly cantilevered Vera Ellen in the classic 1948 MGM musical "Words and Music." I fell instantly in love with Vera in her yellow t-shirt and slit skirt, along with the music. While Derrick can't duplicate Ms. Ellen, he easily handles the 6/8 time with the swing, mystery, and excitement of the original.

December 2008

NEW HOLIDAY JAZZ DECKS THE HALLS WITH SWINGS SO JOLLY ! Current crop of CDs great for giving or adding a festive sound to your home

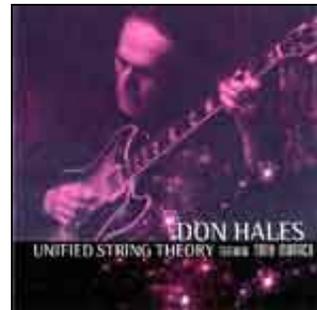
Good Grief! I just wrapped up my Holiday card-sending and gift-giving for Christmas 1996, and already it's time to do it again. One of these years I may catch up (but not bloody likely, as da Owl don't like to rush into things).

Nevertheless, for those of you who are more practical, punctual, and in-the-present, here are a few jazz CDs that will please any jazz lover on your gift list. All are recent albums issued in the last month or two, so chances are excellent that your recipient does not have them.

Jazz-guitar fanatics will go bonkers for:

Don Hales: Unified String Theory (Chicken Coup Records: CCP 7011)

Don Hales is, and has been for years, one of Central Ohio's semi-hidden jazz treasures. A guitarist with champion chops, 'tis a puzzlement that he's not been recorded more often. So be it. On this swingin' session, he displays, on all eight tracks, his complete mastery of the fretboard.



Backed by B-3 burner **Tony Monaco**, who produced the CD, along with **Andy Woodson** on bass, **Kris Keith** on flute and tenor, and **Matt Wagner** on drums, Don displays his incredible prowess as he glides and romps his way through a superb selection of six Hales-composed originals and two semi-standards by others.

Mood, tempo, style, and approach vary track-to-track, giving the set an exciting and unpredictable variety. In addition, all the players get ample space to display their considerable talents as sidemen and soloists.

Among the many highlights are the opener, a straight-ahead swinger, "Strawberries-Raspberries," followed by a light, funky bossa "Seaweed Song," featuring fabulous fluting by Keith along with the fluid fingering of Hales and an easy-flowing groove by all. "Breath of the Blues," which closes the set, is a superb, nearly 11-minute-long exploration of one of the jazz basics.



Big band enthusiasts will go a long time before they hear a better collection than:

Gordon Goodwin's Big Phat Band: Act Your Age (Immergent Records: 281147-2)

This 17-piece powerhouse, led by pianist-saxman **Gordon Goodwin**, is fast becoming one of the most critically acclaimed and popular big bands on the planet. In this 12-song program, they roar or purr their way through songs written by such heavyweights as Herbie Hancock, Maurice White, Kern &

Harbach, Chick Corea, and Dave Grusin, along with six originals by Goodwin.

The many full-band ensemble passages are totally tight and exhilarating, amplified by superb solos by such renowned players as **Eric Marienthal**, **Lee Ritenour**, **Chick Corea**, **Nathan East**, **Andy Martin**, **Wayne Bergeron** and on one track, courtesy of magic, or perchance modern recording technology, the legendary, late-great-piano-colossus **Art Tatum!**

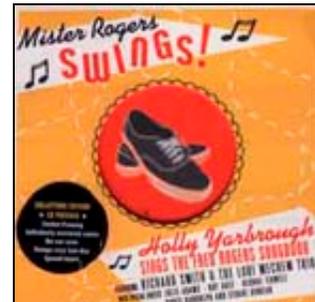
Every track is outstanding. Among my favorites are a rousing, carousing re-meeting with "Watermelon Man," the funky title track, "Act Your Age," and the foot-tapping, finger-snapping "Backrow Politics."

In addition to the CD, the set includes a DVD, which contains the complete musical program with on-screen liner notes, live concert videos featuring some music not heard on the CD, track-by-track commentaries with photos, interviews with some of the musicians and much more. As a jazz audio-video gift to a big band booster, or as timeless enjoyment for you, this CD and DVD can't be beat!

Children of all ages will thoroughly enjoy:

Mr. Rogers Swings! Holly Yarbrough Sings the Fred Rogers Songbook (Vintage Discs.com)

This absolutely charming collection includes 16 of the favorite songs written by, and featured on The Mr. Rogers TV Show. Backed by a superb nine-piece band, with outstanding jazz arrangements, singer Holly Yarbrough brings new life and goodwill to these marvelous compositions written by Fred Rogers. From the opening "Won't You Be My Neighbor" to the closing "It's Such a Good Feeling," the easy-going amiability and warmth of Mr. Rogers is re-established with swing and style.



As for new takes on some of your traditional Holiday favorites, both religious and popular, try:



Typhanie Monique, Neal Alger & Friends: Yuletide Groove TYME-002

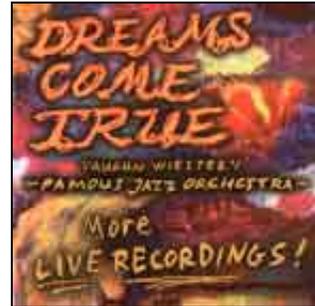
While singer **Typhanie Monique** and guitarist **Neal Alger** usually perform as a duo, this outing finds them in a variety of groups, ranging from their basic duo to sextet. In addition to covering 10 of the more familiar carols, they also add such rarely heard but no less-holiday-oriented songs as "Happy Christmas (War Is Over)"

by John Lennon and Yoko Ono, performed in a funk-groove style, featuring the always-exciting B-3 of guest **Tony Monaco**. "Someday At Christmas," by Stevie Wonder, is set in a soulful-groove by the duo, who become warm and cuddly on "A Merrier Christmas" composed by none other than Thelonious Monk. The CD closer, "Goodnight, Wherever You Are," features some fine vocal support from Monaco, who also "plays pretty for the people" with a dreamy solo.

A full sextet romps on “Rockin’ Around The Christmas Tree,” but gets sassy and salsa-splashed for “Santa Baby,” which also boasts some superb trumpet work by guest **Victor Garcia**. “The Little Drummer Boy” is street-wise, jazzy, and hip-hop, thanks to the beatboxing of guest JAQ, while the Charlie Brown favorite, “Christmas Time Is Here,” is both mellow and bright. A quartet swings for “We Three Kings,” and the weatherperson’s meteorologically correct terminology for a frigid forecast, “Baby It’s Cold Outside.”

November 2008

FAMOUS JAZZ ORCHESTRA MAKES DREAMS COME TRUE FOR BIG BAND LOVERS! Master chef/orchestra leader Vaughn Wiester cooks creatively on latest live recording



“Dreams Come True” is not only a great title for this rousing, recently released recording by the Famous Jazz Orchestra, it’s also an accurate three-word description of FJO leader, **Vaughn Wiester’s**, musical career which began while a high school student in Mount Vernon, Ohio.

There, thanks to his music teacher **Bob Bechtel**, Vaughn was introduced to the sounds of big, bold brass and innovative chords as created by **Stan Kenton**. He continued his musical journey as a trombonist in the Navy.

He returned to life as a landlubber in 1968 and enrolled as a music major at The Ohio State University. In addition to his studies, he played professional-paying gigs with the Dave Workman Blues Band and many other local and regional groups.

In 1972, he became a player-arranger for the Jazz Arts Group (now the Columbus Jazz Orchestra), then led by its founder, **Ray Eubanks**. This was followed by a two-year stay as a player and arranger for the Woody Herman Band in 1974. While with Herman, he performed on two internationally released albums and arranged other charts, which included a highly acclaimed arrangement of the Charles Mingus classic “Duke Ellington’s Sound of Love.”

Returning to Columbus, he performed, taught, and arranged for the Dave Wheeler Contemporary Music Workshop. In 1977 he joined the faculty at Capital University, teaching courses in jazz arranging and jazz history. He also directed Capital’s award-winning Big Band Sound Big Band. This 17-year run was interspersed with playing and arranging for the world-renowned Terry Waldo Ragtime Orchestra.

Wiester was inducted as an Honorary Member of the national music fraternity, Phi Mu Alpha, in 1992, the same year he founded the Famous Jazz Orchestra, which was applauded by big band aficionados in countless appearances, the most notable being a continuous 11-year run (every Monday night) at the Columbus Music Hall, owned and directed by Becky Ogden. You’ll hear and feel the energy and excitement of these Music Hall performances, recorded live this year and last, on:

Dreams Come True: Vaughn Wiester’s Famous Jazz Orchestra: More Live Recordings! (CoJAZZ-CJ-1038)

Briefly, the CD’s title reflects Vaughn’s optimistic “Dreams-to-Reality” beliefs in that three of the tracks are arrangements-commissions specifically created for him and the FJO by **Bill Holman** (one of Wiester’s musical heroes/major influences), Bill Matthieu, and Roland Paolucci who co-commissioned to Holman a composition titled “Theme And Variations #3.” The complete “Dreams Come True” story is fully recounted in Wiester’s informative liner notes, which also include the 22-piece orchestra’s roster and the outstanding soloists on each of the 14 tracks.

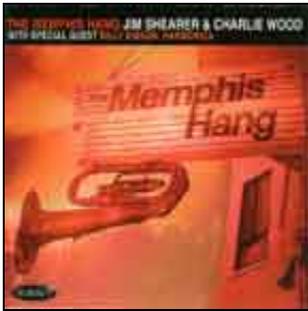
The mood, tone, and thrust of the set opens with an industrial-strength swinger, “Boo Boo Be Doop.” This is a tune that Bill Holman wrote for Stan Kenton in 1952, which he restored exclusively for the FJO. Missing from the musical scene for nearly 50-years, it cooks on all burners, with great ensemble passages and individual solos.

The tempo mellows a bit for “Wailin’ In The Woodshed,” from the Woody Herman bandbook, but roars again on the straight-ahead Thad Jones composition, “Interloper.”

Suffice it to say, every track is a winner, but special mention must be made about “Theme and Variations #3.” This unique composition features varying tempos and moods and is full orchestra throughout, with no solos whatever. It had its premier performance in Columbus, with the iconic Bill Holman himself leading the orchestra.

For the big band fanatic on any of your gift lists, birthday, anniversary, holiday, whatever, this is the perfect present.

As a final note, the Famous Jazz Orchestra can be seen, heard, enjoyed live every Monday night, 7:30 to 11 p.m. at the Columbus Maennerchor, 966 South High St., in German Village.



The Memphis Hang: Jim Shearer and Charlie Wood Summit Records: DCD-502

As the lowest-pitched brass instrument, the sound from both the tuba and the sousaphone is essentially the same – warm, full, and rich – providing the low, bottom-end range for all types of music.

The main difference between a tuba and a sousaphone is the shape. The tuba resembles an extra-large baritone horn. It is arm-held if the player is standing, or rests on one’s lap or a tuba-stand if the player is sitting. The sousaphone is larger, wraps around the player’s body and is supported by one’s shoulder, making it much easier to hold and play.

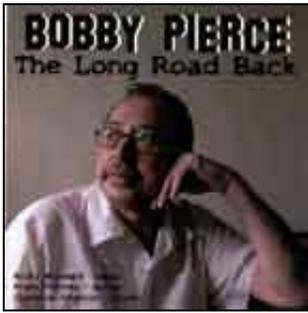
Generally, the tuba is most often used in classical concert music, Dixieland, traditional German-folk and other forms. The sousaphone, while it could (and often, does) participate in the same types of music, is most often found in marching bands. Thus, it will ALWAYS be a sousaphone that “dots the i” in the script Ohio. So much for The Owl’s tuba-sousaphone overview.

Rarely is the tuba used as a lead instrument. But, there are exceptions to everything, and it’s the tuba that frontlines this totally swinging set for which tuba-leader **Jim Shearer** put together an unusual sextet, comprised of himself on tuba, co-leader Wood on B-3 and vocals, trumpet, harmonica, guitar, and drums. It expands to a septet on one track with acoustic bass.

The overall sound is quite unlike anything you may have heard in other jazz combos, but it works in all cases. Imaginative tuba solos highlight every track. The 11-selections range from Thelonious Monk through Big Bill Broonzy to Leonard Bernstein/Steven Sondheim. Now that’s variety, which the group handles with breeze and ease!

September 2008

BURNING B-3 BY BOBBY PIERCE SETS ORGAN-JAZZ FANS AFIRE! Central Ohio keyboard master releases his first new CD in 34 years



While he's been absent from the Central Ohio music scene for over three decades, most long-time local jazz fans are still in awe of and enthusiastically remember **Bobby Pierce**, organist, pianist, keyboardist, composer, and singer.

Bobby's Columbus roots and musical education run deep: a piano-playing mother, private local lessons, formal schooling along with music at St. Dominic's, Champion Jr. High, and Columbus East; his first local recording and airplay on WVKO Radio in his early teens; B-3 and piano gigs at all of the Central Ohio jazz clubs in the mid-60s through the early-70s and a dash

beyond.

He and his boyhood, neighborhood pal, the late great pianist **Geoff Tyus**, spent many of their teen hours at the Lyon & Healy Music Store experimenting with the B-3. Geoff (with formal keyboard education at OSU and subsequent fame, started his studies as a young adult, after his stint as a Navy Seal) always acknowledged Bobby as his primary inspiration to pursue music as a career.

Similarly, Bobby never hesitates to mention and honor his many mentors, teachers, inspirations: **Mr. Lanier** at Champion Jr. High, **Ted Turner** at East in the early years, along with Central Ohio's B-3 giants **Hank Marr**, **Don Patterson**, and **Uncle Dave**, to name a very few who generously gave advice, technical tips, moral support and inspiration in helping Bobby develop his own unique sound and approach.

A few loose, possibly-not-consecutive adventures on his road since leaving Columbus include military service, road trips as an organist, pianist and/or vocalist with such jazz giants as James Moody, Sonny Stitt, Gene Ammons, along with uncountable studio backups for Etta James, Benny King, The Four Tops, Joe Williams, Dionne Warwick and others, which ultimately led to his first international album as a leader in 1972, *Introducing Bobby Pierce* on Cobblestone Records, followed in 1974 with New York on the Muse label.

International tours with Ernie Andrews, Eddie Harris and Henry Franklin, studio work as a player for O.C. Smith, Harry "Sweets" Edison, Teddy Edwards and Joe Sample, movie and TV appearances as an on-screen performer or soundtrack musician in many shows, including *Living Single*, *Red Shoes Diaries*, *The Rat Pack*, *Nutty Professor 2*, and *Becker*, along with countless other live performances and musical projects have filled his years since leaving Columbus. As he states in his CD liner notes, "It would take another thirty-four years to tell you where I've been."

Thus, while active musically, he's not recorded a set featuring himself as leader, arranger, creator til now, 34 years after his initial albums from '72 and '74. The results of this long-overdue resurgence as a headliner can be heard and enjoyed on:

BOBBY PIERCE: The Long Road Back (Doodlin Records: DR-008)

Backed by a trio of tenor sax, guitar, and drums, Bobby works his way through four of his original compositions and four familiar standards. The opener, "Bobby's Back," is an easy-strollin', feel-good blues romp. Guitarist **Frank Potenza** and tenor man **Ricky Woodard's** happy solos are punctuated perfectly by Pierce-ing accents and fills before Bobby takes center stage and shows his considerable skills with some rapid multi-note improvisations and sustains which he manipulates with ease. It's a great opener and moodsetter for the excitement to follow.

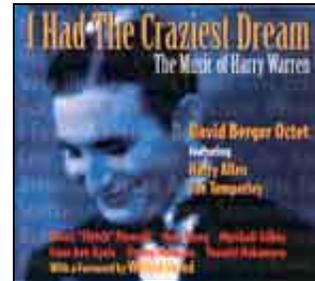
The tempo picks up for "One for Duff and Dink," highlighted by Bobby's unique chording and a crisp drum solo by **Clarence Johnson**. "Frenchie" combines earthy, soul-funk with hard bop, which contrasts nicely with a heartfelt, sensual, pensive treatment of "The Good Life." I've heard many fine versions of this tune; Bobby's is one of the best. The CD's title track cooks

from note one, with all players at their fiery best.

One of my favorites is Stevie Wonder's "Seems So Long," the only vocal in the eight-song set, a romantic reminder that Bobby can sing with the best. This is timeless B-3 quartet jazz at its grooviest. Let's hope we don't have to wait another 34 years for a sequel!

DAVID BERGER OCTET: I Had the Craziest Dream: The Music of Harry Warren (Such Sweet Thunder: SST-2206)

It takes great arranging to make an eight-piece group (an octet) sound like a small big band or a big small band, but that's exactly what **David Berger** and his Sultans of Swing do in this listener-friendly collection of incredibly familiar tunes by **Harry Warren**, one of the songwriter-icons included in The Great American Songbook. A pop (as opposed to a jazz) composer, most of his creations easily lend themselves to solid jazz interpretations, as demonstrated in this delightful collection.



The set opens with a bright, modern take on "Jeepers Creepers," a song Louis Armstrong originally sang to a racehorse in a long-forgotten movie cartoon. It's followed by a romantic instrumental version of "You'll Never Know," the Oscar-winning song for 1943, which became the theme song for the awesome actress-singer Alice Faye.

The CD teems with highlights galore: a swinging but relaxed "I Had the Craziest Dream," a noir visit to the "Boulevard of Broken Dreams," the warm and touching trumpet work of **Brian "Fletch" Pareschi** on the melancholy "Serenade in Blue."

Who'da thought "The Gold Diggers' song (aka: "We're in The Money") would work as a BeBop flagwaver, or that "I Only Have Eyes For You" could evolve into such a straight-ahead swinger? And, even Judy Garland would admit you'll go a long time before you have a groovier ride "On the Atchison, Topeka and the Santa Fe," with Berger's easy, chugging, locomotive lope. This one's for you AAO (All Aboard Ohio). Newbies and Nostalgia-buffs alike will definitely want this one in their CD collections.

August 2008

WILLIE & WYNTON: BROTHERS IN BLUES! Two diverse musical icons meet in rarely explored jazz-country



Awesome amazement was an understatement when I opened my latest packet of CDs from Blue Note Records this month. People in my presence said they could actually HEAR my eyebrows rise in surprise. High on my list of unexpected collaborations was this CD:

Willie Nelson – Wynton Marsalis: Two Men with the Blues
(Blue Note 50999-5-04454-2-4)

However, since the sub-theme of my Nite Owl Jazz radio show is "E-X-P-A-N-D your musical horizons – take the blinders off your ears – for what's new in Jazz for the 21st Century," I put my "you-gotta-be-kidding-with-this" attitude aside.

I gave the CD an attentive and open-minded listen and was delighted with the musical results: an intriguing and enjoyable visit to the hitherto relatively unexplored soundscape of jazz-country – a mix that was equal parts down-home Nashville, uptown New York City, and Bourbon Street New Orleans, all drenched in the basics of the blues, aided and abetted with a slather of swing, a minimum of melancholy, and a helping of humor.

The CD is a recording of an event called “Willie Nelson Sings The Blues.” It was part of the “Singers Over Manhattan Series” presented in January 2007 by Jazz at Lincoln Center, for which Wynton Marsalis is a major producer-programmer.

This was a historic summit meeting of diverse American Music icons, Willie and Wynton, two of the most significant figures in modern-day country music and jazz. Both are multiple Grammy and other award winners; both are regarded as artistic innovators and leaders in their respective fields; both discovered a common ground in the basic American music, the blues. Hence, this concert.

On stage for the event were Nelson, in his “outlaw” basic-black Southwestern threads, along with his longtime sideman, harmonica-virtuoso **Mickey Raphael** in a suit. They were accompanied by the always elegantly attired Marsalis and his equally spiffy-suited quartet: pianist Dan Nimmer, bassist Carlos Henriquez, drummer Ali Jackson, and saxman Walter Blanding. Their music blended as well as their sartorial sensibilities.

The opener, “Bright Lights, Big City,” sets the mood of big-city-meets-country. Wailing harmonica, cool trumpet, raunchy sax, and a dash of boogie woogie add to Willie’s vocalization and bluesy guitar. The mood changes to smoky and sensual for the Nelson-composed “Night Life,” with Wynton at his warmest in a blues-ballad mode, synergized by Raphael’s high and lonesome harmonica. “Caledonia,” usually a big band flag waver, gets a cooler and more restrained treatment, while “Rainy Day Blues” is walkin’ and boppish, with Blanding’s sax taking us to 52nd Street, and a Tower Of Power horn section.

Two Hoagy Carmichael classics, “Stardust” and “Georgia On My Mind,” are songs that have been performed by hundreds of other artists, but Nelson, with his intimate and heartfelt interpretation, makes them his own.

“Basin Street Blues” gets a classic treatment by all. Willie rivals every jazz-blues singer ever to perform the classic “Ain’t Nobody’s Business.” In addition to his half-talkin’, half-singin’ rendition, he gets some added vocal interaction from Wynton. Add a “Texas-tenor” solo to the delight, and you get a great intro to the happy, inspiring, Gospel-grooved set-closer, “That’s All.”

Other than the innovative, unexpected pairing of the primary participants, no new musical grounds were presented. However, if you like Willie, Wynton, country, jazz, and/or blues, you’ll like this set. It’s “in the pocket,” timeless, listen-and-enjoy-anytime: a solid, enjoyable collaboration first track to finish!

THE STEIN BROTHERS QUINTET: Quixotic: (JazzEd Media: JM-1034)

My Owl-Ears have always been open to the bright, buoyant sounds of BeBop, marvelously presented by two newcomers to the world of Jazz: the **Stein Brothers**, in this, their debut recording, reminiscent of, and influenced by such groups as led by Art Blakey, Horace Silver, Bird, Diz, Bud, and Barry Harris, one of their mentors, to name a few.



These bop-based brothers add a slightly new twist to the music of their predecessors. Instead of a frontline of trumpet and sax, they present a two-sax lead with Asher Stein on alto and brother Alex on tenor. Their approach varies to a degree: Asher on alto is lighter, more-ethereal, as opposed to the more-soulful, sensual-tenor of brother Alex. This variance adds immeasurably to the overall group sound.

They’re backed by pianist **Mferghu** (I haven’t the vaguest as to how his name is pronounced, but so what? The guy knows how to manipulate a keyboard.), bassist **Doug Largent** and

drummer **Joe Blaxx**. In addition, four of the other tracks feature guest appearances by trumpeter **Duane Eubanks** and trombonist **Jonathan Voltzok**, who add even more depth and variety to an already great-sounding group. Seven of the 12 tunes are never-before-heard originals by the Steins and Mferghu, along with standards by The Gershwins, Arlen-Mercer, and others.

The opening title track, "Quixotic," combines the fire of Latin with the ice of cool, which lets the listener know that even though the concepts are historically traditional, the performances and arrangements are 21st Century.

Trumpet and trombone join the quintet for a breezily boppish interpretation of the Barry Harris composition, "And So I Love You," followed by one of the best instrumental versions of George Gershwin's "Embraceable You," featuring a sensual, soulful, steamy, sub-toned tenor open by Alex.

As with Willie and Wynton, no completely new sounds are presented here, but as with the aforementioned, this debut CD will easily stand the test of time and be an uplifting, musically mood-enhancing jazz experience for years to come.

JULY 2008

FEATHER TICKLES JAZZ BONE AND FUNNY BONE: Swing, satire, and lyrical hip humor highlight her new CD

Some singers discover the world of jazz as they grow; others are born into it. Singer **Lorraine Feather** is one of the latter. Her father, Leonard Feather, is world-renowned as a jazz writer, reviewer, and music producer. His *Encyclopedia of Jazz* is one of the definitive and most-often-used reference books on the subject. Her mother, Jane, was a professional big band singer whose roommate in the early days was Peggy Lee. The legendary Billie Holiday is her godmother. The established stars, the young lions, the jazz leaders of the future were regular visitors. To her, "jazz" and "home" were synonymous.

Theatre courses at Los Angeles City College prompted her return to NYC to pursue an acting career. She toured, did a few off-Broadway shows, and eventually appeared in the Broadway production of *Jesus Christ Superstar*. However, her major role in the World of Theatre was that of unemployed actress and waitress in innumerable restaurants, which motivated her to give singing a shot. From that point on, it was a slow but steady rise into the world of professional musicians.

Along the way, she sang backup for Petula Clark and Grand Funk Railroad, made her recording debut on an album for Concord Records, wrote original lyrics for such instrumental jazz classics as Ellington's "Rockin' in Rhythm," the Yellowjackets' "Ballad of the Whale," and Horace Henderson's "Big John's Special," which was featured in the Goldie Hawn, Kurt Russell movie *Swing Shift*.

Her lyrics for Disney movies and television, PBS, MGM, and other diverse productions (such as the opening ceremonies for the 1996 Summer Olympics) earned for her seven EMMY nominations over the years.

Her singing career paralleled the success of her writing, with movie soundtrack vocal contributions to Warren Beatty's *Dick Tracy*, Bette Midler's *For The Boys*, and many others, numerous club and concert appearances, along with at least seven outstanding CDs, the latest being:

LORRAINE FEATHER: Language JazzEd Media: JM-1032

While most other jazz songs and singers deal with "love-found, lost, remembered," Feather's

lyrics explore areas, problems and situations never before dealt with in song. The opener “Traffic and Weather” is a bright, brisk, tongue-in-cheek salute to that ubiquitous, inseparable pair heard on just about every morning radio show on the planet. A funky beat with ultrahip lyrics, delivered in Lorraine’s crisp, swingin’ style, counterbalanced nicely by guest Tierney Sutton, make this one a standout.

The subtle, somewhat laid-back “We Appreciate Your Patience” incorporates every mind-numbing, frustrating cliché rendered by those automated, computer-generated humanoids one hears while on “hold” waiting for a live customer service rep.

Sports clichés as a metaphor for life, misplaced car keys, waitressing, and the passing nature of fame are other familiar contemporary problems lyricized by Lorraine in her hip, humorous, and jazzy style.

For balance and variety, Feather adds a few guests along the way, including Yellowjackets’ pianist, **Russell Ferrante**, and Manhattan Transfer’s **Cheryl Bentley** and **Janis Siegel**. And, in a more traditional mode, you’ll be emotionally touched by the bittersweet memories evoked in “I Love New York at Christmas,” the beauty of an elegant waltz evoking Strayhorn-Ellington, “In Flower,” and the romance of the closer, a gorgeous love ballad, a duet with pianist **Michael Lang**, “Making It Up As We Go Along.”



CNY JAZZ ORCHESTRA: Then, Now & Again CNY Jazz

Orchestra: cny-102

The Central New York (CNY) Jazz Orchestra was established in 1996 in Syracuse as a not-for-profit regional jazz orchestra to serve as a year-round provider of jazz to the Upstate and Central New York populace, with concerts, workshops, cabaret, festival and scholastic presentations.

It took ‘em 12 years, but this powerhouse big band recently released their debut CD. And what a big band treat it is! An assemblage of 17 jazz heavyweights, swingin’ their way through

a 10-tune collection of originals and standards.

Considerate of your personal big band favorites – Basie, Herman, Jones-Lewis, Ferguson, whoever – here’s a CD that will please just about any taste.

Who’d a thought, or better yet, (conjure the Don Adams/Maxwell Smart voice) “Would you believe” the theme from TV’s *Get Smart* could lend itself to such a dynamic jazz presentation? It does indeed, complete with quotes from other TV themes of the times. A delight in all areas.

The Miles Davis/Ron Carter tune “Eighty One” features a trombone lead and a shimmering brass choir in an easy mid-tempo lope, which contrasts nicely with the melancholy elegance of the Gershwins’ “I Loves You Porgy,” highlighted by a show-stopping trumpet solo by **Jeff Stockham**, backed by blues-drenched ensemble sections by the entire band.

The theme from NPR’s “All Things Considered” swings solidly, as does the moving, multi-textured “Shimmer,” featuring fantastic French Horn jazz by the aforementioned Jeff Stockham, well-known as a member of the T.S. Monk Octet.

Everything on this CD is a winner, but, for da Owl (unashamedly addicted to romantic-nostalgia), I melted at their laid-back closer, “Mister Sandman,” done in that easy, Basie “Li’l Darlin’” groove. This track alone was worth the price of the album.

JUNE 2008

LOCAL PLAYER TIM CUMMISKEY EXPANDS THE TRADITION OF GREAT JAZZ GUITAR

Legendary Hank Marr in his final recording

Unlike the trumpet, clarinet, piano, and drums, the guitar was not originally used as a leading or solo instrument in the early jazz bands. It was considered by most groups, regardless of size, primarily a rhythm instrument, but, thanks to its more sophisticated, mellower sound, was a logical replacement for the usually raucous, tinnier-sounding banjo.

It was Paris in the early '30s when a Belgian guitarist, **Django Reinhardt**, combined his Gypsy folk roots, the string band format of European popular music, and American jazz to create a unique sound that presented the acoustic guitar as a leading instrument. He was regarded as jazz musician of his time, equally outstanding whether demonstrating his explosive speed on the up-tempo swingers or his tender elegance and introspection on ballads. His outstanding technique was made even more-memorable in that he had lost two fingers of his left hand some years earlier. He was one of the earliest artists to be internationally known by his first name only. Woody Allen's 1999 movie, *Sweet and Lowdown*, featuring a memorable jazz-guitar soundtrack, dealt specifically on the impact Django had, worldwide, on the jazz guitarists of the day.

While Django was unique and astonished the jazz world with his acoustic guitar, it was the development of the electric guitar amplifier in the mid-'30s that allowed the guitar to stand out from the roar of big band brass and reeds, and rival them with sizzling solos and improvisation.

A few others had experimented with the potential of the electric guitar early on, but **Charlie Christian** is the musician generally regarded as the first and most influential innovator on the instrument. As a member of Benny Goodman's Sextet in 1939, he was the first to feature single-string solos, experiment with new harmonies and sounds. When bebop arrived shortly thereafter, Christian made the electric guitar a major solo instrument that could phrase like a sax, or equal a pianist's right hand.

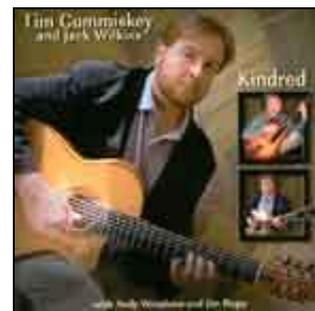
His prowess, concepts, and techniques influenced countless others, each of whom added their own creativity to expand the sound and versatility of the instrument. These included **Barney Kessell**, whom many regard, even today, as the most rhythmically vital guitarist in modern jazz. **Jim Hall** and **Joe Pass** added elements of classical elegance and introspection; **Wes Montgomery's** innovative use of his thumb instead of guitar pick gave him considerable speed, the nickname "The Golden Thumb," a softer, rounded, bluesier sound, and the ability to improvise in octaves.

In addition, 93-year-old **Les Paul**, regarded by most as "the father of modern electric guitar" played jazz occasionally, but his technical innovations and new recording techniques contributed immensely to the evolution and popularity of the instrument, and have been used to some degree by just about every amplified player to date.

These Christian-and-Paul-influenced guitarists and their descendants continue to inspire the best players of today.

One of these is **Tim Cummiskey**, a Central Ohioan known nationally as a highly talented player, equally at ease as a leader or sideman, in small groups or large. In addition to his performance abilities, he is also an educator, currently a member of the Jazz Studies faculty at The Ohio State University School of Music. He conducts numerous guitar clinics, contributes articles to *Downbeat*, *Jazz Improv*, and *Just Jazz Guitar Magazine*. His book "Learning Tunes Workout," published by Mel Bay is available at Amazon.com.

He has been the leader on three CDs, the two most recent being:



THE TIM CUMMISKEY TRIO : Redeeming The Time – Hank Marr and Jim Rupp; TIM CUMMISKEY AND JACK WILKINS: Kindred – Andy Woodson and Jim Rupp



These two CDs vary considerably in sound and setting. Both however, demonstrate Cummiskey's total command of the instrument, his formidable technique, improvisational abilities, and his skills as either a leader or sideman.

Redeeming the Time is earthy and blues-drenched. Cummiskey balances his mellower, bluesier sound with his brighter, crisper attack. In addition, this CD has historical significance in that it is the last session recorded by the popular and iconic B-3 legend, the late, great **Hank Marr**, who, not surprisingly, is magnificent throughout. Both are supported by the dynamic drums of **Jim Rupp**. Cummiskey brings all of his jazz guitar concepts to this, one of the historically great B-3 configurations. Outstanding tracks, showing the harmonic challenge for Hank and Tim are heard on "Invitation," "Inner Urge," and their soulful, bluesy, co-written original, "Hank's Riff."

Kindred is brighter and more sophisticated due to the two-guitar front line, with guest-guitarist Jack Wilkins challenging, supporting, interchanging ideas with Cummiskey. Wilkins has been in the front ranks of jazz for over 40 years. Influenced by Reinhardt, Christian, Montgomery, and Pass, he's known for his flawless technique and imaginative chordal approach, which counterpoint dramatically with Tim's single line improvisations and chord explorations. Bassist **Andy Woodson** lays down a great bottom rhythm line, abetted again by the drums of the rousing Rupp. Outstanding tracks include "Like Someone I Know," and "Body and Soul," which demonstrate the interaction and empathy between the two players. This is one of the great jazz guitar duo recordings ever!

Both CDs present a solid, varied selection of tunes: jazz swingers, pop standards, and originals. If great jazz guitar is your passion, Cummiskey and company will satisfy to the nth!

MAY 2008

THREE AMERICAN JAZZ MASTERS OUTSTANDING AS GUEST STARS Senior Citizens Jones, Heath, Hampton still swing like they're in their twenties!

While the mass public is probably not familiar with their names, just about every jazz fan on the planet recognizes these three longtime Hall of Fame performers: pianist Hank Jones, saxman Jimmy Heath, and the elegantly christened Locksley Wellington Hampton, best known by his nickname "Slide," (which describes his profession) – one of the few left-handed trombonists in the universe.

All three have been big favorites with critics and audiences on the national/international jazz scene for well over a half-century; all three have been leaders or powerhouse sidemen on innumerable albums; all three have won countless awards, including multiple Grammy nominations, and most-prestigious of all, being named a "Jazz Master" by the National Endowment of the Arts.

They are all from musically oriented families, but only Jones and Heath have immediate family members who also enjoy mass national/international renown. The two younger brothers of Hank Jones – Thad, a trumpeter-composer-arranger big band leader, and Elvin, a super-drummer with such as Charles Mingus, Gil Evans and Miles Davis – easily rival their brother Hank in critical and audience acclaim.

Similarly Jimmy Heath's older brother, Percy, is revered as the bassist for the incomparable MJQ (Modern Jazz Quartet), while his younger brother, Al, was a phenomenally successful

drummer in numerous groups, including those of the Adderly Brothers and John Coltrane. Jimmy's son, Mtume, was percussionist for Herbie Hancock, and later, led his own successful urban contemporary-funk group, self-named "Mtume."

Hank Jones is one of the few pianists equally at home in swing, bop, and pop. His imagination, taste, effortless technique, and perfection-of-touch make him a favorite as a leader of his own groups, a sideman with such legends as Charlie Parker and Artie Shaw, and an invigorating, inspirational accompanist to numerous vocalists, including Ella Fitzgerald, Billy Eckstein, and currently, Roberta Gambarini, a relatively new singer, with whom he now co-stars, supports, and accompanies on:

You Are There: ROBERTA GAMBARINI & HANK JONES

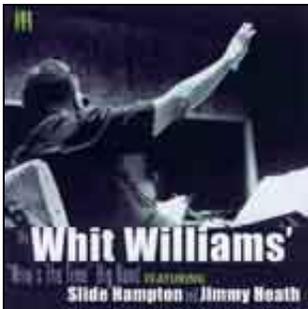
(Emarcy-80010622-02)

Gambarini, born and raised in Turin, Italy, began as a clarinet player at age 12, but due to her clear alto voice, and inherent jazz talents, switched to singing shortly thereafter. Less than five years later, she was performing nationwide in countless Italian performance venues, winning numerous awards and popular acclaim. A two-year scholarship to the New England Conservatory in Boston was followed by club dates in NYC, and her debut CD, "Easy To Love," Grammy nominated as "Best Jazz Album of the Year" in 2006.



On this, her sequel, she and Hank, as a duet only, easily equal the jazz qualities of the former. They simply selected 25 of their favorite standards, show tunes, and ballads; set up Roberta's mike next to Hank's piano as in a live club performance, and recorded 14 of them, with no isolation booths, no headphones, and no overdubs. Once their combination of music and voice begins, the jazz magic starts, and listeners are transported to a timeless Audio-Nirvana of romantic, beautiful, haunting jazz at its best.

While every track is outstanding, I particularly favored "Stardust," "Deep Purple," and "You're Getting To Be A Habit With Me" – three of my all-time favorite slo-dancin'/romancin' tunes which I enjoyed so dreamily with my high school dates, as played so sensually by the bands at Valley Dale in the early '50s. Ain't love grand? And so is this CD.



WHIT WILLIAMS: Now's the Time Big Band (MAMA Records-MAA1033)

Since 1959, when I started doing jazz shows on radio in Columbus, the listeners have always responded enthusiastically to the sound, power, and excitement of big band jazz, whether from already established, well-known names such as Basie, Ellington, Ferguson, and Rich, etc. to the newer, or hitherto-unknown ensembles, such as the Whit Williams *Now's The Time Big Band*, whose debut CD, featuring Slide Hampton and Jimmy Heath, is well worth hearing and adding to your collection.

Williams, a multi-talented saxman for over 50 years, heads up this roaring 17-21 piece big band based in Baltimore since 1981. As tight and talented as this ensemble is, one wonders why Whit waited so long to put it on record. But, for whatever his reasons, the wait is worth it, as this cookin' CD demonstrates, first track to last.

Heath's sax soars sensationally on the first five selections, while Slide's trombone is tasty, tantalizing and terrific on the remaining five. Williams also takes an occasional solo hither and yon to display his talents.

Heath's tenor is solid and easily recognized on the bossa-based "Una Mas" and the easy-strollin' "I Remember Tangle." Slide is smooth and slippery on the easy-jazz-waltz "The

Radiator Man Is Well,” a highly spirited “A Day in Copenhagen,” and the jazz-noir “Diana.”

Other highlights include the rousing opener, “This Is What It Is,” highlighted by a bold bari-sax solo, and the closer, a whimsical, sometimes dissonant Monk classic “Little Rootie Tootie.”

Whit, Jimmy, and Slide are the well-established, well-known seniors of the group. Their inspiration is obvious in the tight ensemble and solo work of the younger players, most of whom are also given ample opportunities to show their skills.

Williams composed three of the 10 selections; Heath provided three; Hampton, two; Monk and Dorham one each, giving the overall programming of the album an always-surprising, unpredictable diversity of mood, tempo, and rhythm.

APRIL 2008

SILVER SHINES ON RECENTLY DISCOVERED FESTIVAL TREASURE Young quintet is impressive, exciting as 1958 Newport Festival closer

For over 50 years, pianist **Horace Silver** has maintained a solid position in the front ranks of jazz. He is one of the few jazzmen who excels in all areas – as a distinctive and dynamic player, innovator, bandleader, composer, and arranger.

His national career began in 1950 when he went on the road with saxophonist Stan Getz. Subsequent work with Terry Gibbs, Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young and others added to his audience recognition.

However, his association in the mid-fifties with drummer Art Blakey led to his international renown. Their collaborations and experimentations created a new style of jazz known as “hard bop,” an earthy, pulsating fusion of bebop, rhythm ‘n’ blues, and Gospel music, which helped coin the term “funky.” It was an effective counter-balance to the hip-but-cerebral sounds of the then-popular “cool” and West Coast forms. This mode also contributed to evolution of such diverse styles as soul, acid, and free jazz. Talk about an influence!

In 1956, he left Blakey to form his own quintet, which over the years started the careers of many now-famous players, including saxmen **Hank Mobley** and **Junior Cook**, trumpeter **Blue Mitchell**, and drummer **Louis Hayes**, to name a very few.

Silver compositions such as “The Preacher,” “Song for My Father,” “Filthy McNasty,” and many others easily jumped from the jazz charts to the pop charts and became standards. Over the years, Silver and his groups exemplified that jazz could be fun, danceable, innovative, imaginatively stimulating, and diverse. In the ‘70s, he introduced a sound (best described as “cosmic philosophy”) which still maintained his signature funky undertones. His autobiography, *Let’s Get to the Nitty Gritty* (University of California Press), released in late 2006, reveals “everything you wanted to know about Horace but were afraid to ask.” Which brings us to an early-Silver treasure never before released:

Horace Silver: Live at Newport '58 (Blue Note Records: 0946-3-98070-2-4)

While auditioning jazz tapes at the Library of Congress last year, jazz writer Michael Cuscuna discovered this Newport performance by Silver, supervised by George Avakian, who was then associated with Columbia Records. Heading to the Columbia vaults, Cuscuna discovered a pristine three-track master of this early, historic Silver performance of July 6, 1958, which ultimately resulted in the Blue Note release in 2008.



From the opening announcement by Willis Conover to the conclusion of the set, 45 minutes later (when almost all other groups were given only 20 minutes), listeners were exposed to, and enjoyed the sounds of hard bop in its infancy, performed by one of the earliest and most exciting Silver Quintets, featuring trumpeter **Louis Smith**, tenorman **Junior Cook**, bassist **Gene Taylor**, and drummer **Louis Hayes**. This group, only together for a short time, played peerlessly, proving them an exciting choice as the festival's closing band, demonstrating once again, the old show biz adage, "You save the best for last!"

Their opener, "Tippin" is a brisk 13-minute swinger that gives each player ample solo room to show off their phenomenal chops. "The Outlaw" has a Latin influence, as does "Senor Blues," a massive hit for Silver then and now. It's a sly, funky, minor blues that's infectious fun, followed by their festival closer, "Cool Eyes," which later became the group's theme song.

Hard-core jazz aficionados and jazz newcomers alike will find this Silver a timeless treasure.



Bruce Eskovitz Jazz Orchestra: Invitation (Pacific Coast Jazz: PCJ-75100)

Superb arrangements, outstanding musicians, and the ability to handle any jazz style or tempo with dynamic solos and energized ensemble sections make this San Diego-based orchestra one of the best in the West. With just 10 players, it easily qualifies as a "Big Small Band" or "Small Big Band." Whichever label you choose, this ensemble sounds like a lot more than just 10 guys. In addition to evoking the power and sound of the traditional big band (usually 16 players or more), it's equally impressive when utilizing the spry agility and intimacy of smaller groups.

Bruce Eskovitz, the saxophonist-leader, wrote seven of the 10 tunes, with **Bronislau Kaper**, **Herb Ellis**, and **Freddy Hubbard** supplying the rest. In this collection, the orchestra covers the jazz bases: blues, ballads, and bop, along with some sassy salsas, mellow strollers, churchy-shouters, swingin' shuffles, and moody jazz-noir. Tempo, rhythm, and style vary track-to-track, adding immensely to the overall listener appeal.

This is one of those rare CDs on which every selection is a winner. The horn section gives "Red Clay" a big, impressive opening, followed by their statement of the melody as the rhythm joins in. Solid solos by trombone, trumpet, guitar and sax give way to an industrial-strength horn interlude and an electric bass solo that builds to the band's big finish.

Eskovitz on sax, is dark, subtuned, and breathy on the bloozy-noir standard "Detour Ahead," while the band evokes the sad, melancholy and introspection of the tune's theme, "love about to be gone." This is jazz for late-night slo-dancing—romancin' at its sultriest.

If a San Diego trip is a part of your future plans, make time to hear this band live! If not, get this CD, or do both and hear jazz at its best.

MARCH 2008

TEENY DON'T LOSE WHEN SHE SINGS THE BLUES!

The blues are one of the basics of almost all types of jazz and popular American music. Their origins can be traced back to around 1850. Mass popularity began in 1914 with the writing and performing of W.C. Handy's "St. Louis Blues." In both the pure form and/or variations, the blues were soon regarded as the lifeblood of jazz, equally at home in Dixieland, ragtime, swing, bop, post-bop, and avant-garde. They reached into the classical realm with the Paul Whiteman Orchestra concert performance of Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" – and were the definitive ingredient of the first rock and roll.

Numerous instrumentalists and singers contributed to popularity and acceptance of the blues in the early days: Fletcher Henderson, Louis Armstrong, Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith, to name a few .

However, there were many others who, while enormously popular for a short time, were under-appreciated and less recognized than they should have been. Two of these were singers **Big Mama Thornton** (Willie May Thornton) and **Big Maybelle** (Mabel Smith) who enjoyed brief fame in the '50s and a few years beyond.

Big Mama Thornton was the first to record the Leiber-Stoller classic "Hound Dog" in 1953. While her rough, gritty, haughty, funky rendition was a big hit for her nationally, her fame was short-lived due to the Elvis-showier, more-frenzied, and humorous version three years later. Other career highlights included the writing of many passably popular songs, a memorable performance at the 1964 Monterey Jazz Festival, and her 1984 inclusion in the Blues Hall of Fame.

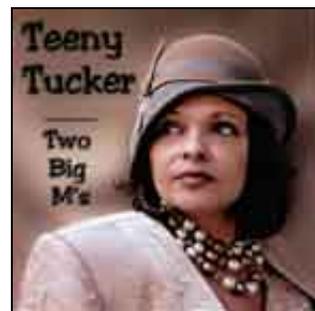
Big Maybelle's voice was warm, deep, and gravelly. She was outstanding as a traditional blues shouter and was one of the premier blues singers of the '50s. In 1955, she was the first to record a hit version of "A Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On," produced by a young Quincy Jones, only to have it eclipsed by the showier, more-frenzied, over-the-top performance two years later by Jerry Lee Lewis. She wrote a few songs, was a hit at the Apollo, outstanding at the 1958 Newport Jazz Festival, and was featured in the Award-Winning Film *Jazz On A Summer's Day*.

Long-overdue homage, recognition and respect is paid to these two talented ladies on the currently available CD:

TEENY TUCKER: Two Big M's (TeBo Records)

Teeny, a Central Ohio resident, is a rising star in the international world of blues. Her professional career started in 1996 with a crowd-pleasing appearance at the famed Apollo Theatre, followed by outstanding performances at major blues festivals, nationally and internationally, overwhelmingly praised by both critics and audiences.

She was "born to the blues." Her father was the renowned blues-singer-pianist-composer Tommy Tucker who wrote and first recorded "High Heel Sneakers," a pop-classic that's been performed by Elvis, the Beatles, the Stones, and even Zsa Zsa Gabor, to name some of the over-200-plus-versions produced.



On this, her third CD, Tucker wrote the title track, which she performs both in song and spoken word. The lyrics capsulize the careers of Mama and Maybelle, who "never won a Grammy, never went Gold" and had "hits which someone stole from you." She's earthy, soulful, sincere, superbly supported by background singers Mary Lusco-Ashley, Paula Brown, and Jackie Tate.

Her “Hound Dog” is slower, raunchier, and more ironic than the Elvis version and features a wailing harmonica solo by David Gastel. “Unlucky Girl,” one of the five Thornton compositions in the set, is a briskly moving tune that showcases Teeny’s big voice and grasp of rasp. She slows down for “Bumble Bee” and evokes all the not-too-subtle nuances of the humorous double-meaning lyrics of the now-gone lover who “got the best ol’ stinger of anybody I ever seen.”

On “Whole Lotta Shakin’,” she easily matches the excitement generated by Jerry Lee Lewis, but without Lee’s excessive pounding. Her “easy now” section of the song is one of the best I’ve ever heard, subtle, sexy, swingin’ – a dynamic contrast to the uptempo flash which dominates the song.

Maybelle’s rousing “Rockhouse” demonstrates her confidence and high spirits, balanced nicely by the medium-tempoed “Ramblin’ Blues,” in which she easily portrays the woman who’s movin’ on from a man with “low down dirty ways.”

Teeny’s terrific on every track, as are background singers and musicians guitarist **Robert Hughes**, bass-guitarist **Robert Blackburn**, keyboards and B-3-driver **Vernon Hairston**, **David Gastel** on harmonica, alternating drummers **Jeff Peters** and **Tom Sawyer**, and tambourine-shaker **Mary Lusco-Ashley**.

You’ll go a long time before you hear a better set than this. For more information on Tucker, go to www.teenytucker.com. ‘Tis well worth the browse.



David ‘Fathead’ Newman: Diamondhead High Note HCD-7179

A master of all things saxophone, including the flute, “Fathead” has been infused with the blues from his early years with T-Bone Walker and Ray Charles. Since then, he’s expanded his horizons and now easily breezes through all forms of jazz, pop, Latin, you name it. But, whatever the style or genre, an element of the blues is present – sometimes subtle, but more often overtly obvious.

On this, his umpteenth career recording, he’s backed by an all-star quartet of jazz veterans: trombonist **Curtis Fuller**, pianist **Cedar Walton**, bassist **Peter Washington**, and drummer **Yoron Israel**. Collectively, they wail their way through a varied selection

of originals and standards.

The title track is an uptempo, toe-tappin’ blues-Boogooloo, which contrasts nicely with the easy swing of the standard, “Can’t We Be Friends?” Flute is foremost on a moody, introspective take on “New York State Of Mind,” followed by a brisk, bop-based blues by Walton, “Cedar’s Blues.”

While no new ground is broken here, this is a CD that will appeal to both the hard-core jazz fan who enjoys hearing five hall-of-famers work out on a variety of songs, and to jazz newcomers looking for an easily-accessible-and-enjoyable introduction to the music.

To paraphrase the headline, “YOU can’t lose when you HEAR the Blues!”

FEBRUARY 2008

PEGGY LEE, A HEP B-3, AND A SINGER WHO'S SAXY

Peggy Lee enjoyed international superstardom as a jazz and pop singer for most of her nearly 50-year career, which spanned the greatest and most glamorous era of American music.

Downbeat voted her “jazz vocalist of the year” in 1946; Einstein loved her; Duke Ellington dubbed her “The Queen.”

She was a Grammy winner, an Oscar nominee, appeared regularly on the music pop charts from 1941-1972, sold over 20 million records, and influenced countless future performers. Her sultry voice and sophisticated appearance were aptly described as “platinum cool.”

While she no longer holds the public ear like she did during her many peak-performing years, her name and talent live on. In 2006, the best-selling biography, “Fever: The Life and Music of Miss Peggy Lee,” by Peter Richmond appeared almost simultaneously with her posthumous award-winning CD, *Peggy Lee Sings Leiber and Stoller*, which was reviewed in my *Gazette* column for May 2006.

This CD provided the basis for the world premier of the onstage musical, “Reflections,” a bio of the singer, which debuted in September 2007, starring Laura Theodore as Peggy. Laura continues her homage to Lee on her newest CD:

Laura Theodore and Joe Beck *Golden Earrings* (Bearcat Records: 2007)

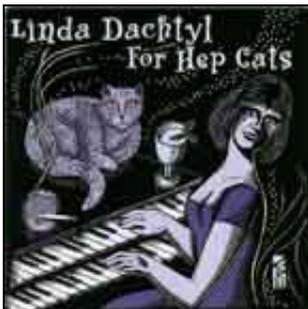
Laura’s concept for this set was to focus on the hit tunes written and performed by Lee and her husband, guitarist Dave Barbour, along with a few other hits which they did not compose. She asked world-class jazz guitarist Joe Beck to be her co-star in the recording, a 21st century take on the Peggy Lee songbook.



For the set, Joe used a guitar he invented, the Alto Guitar, which allows him to play the bass part and the chords at the same time! ‘Tis a unique, never-before-heard sound and concept, adding immeasurably to the musical originality of the album.

Together, Laura and Joe form a dynamic duo as they cruise their way through this 15-song collection. They’re pensive and introspective on the opener, “What More Can a Woman Do?” on which Laura uses her outstanding 4-octave range. Joe shows his Gypsy-jazz prowess on the title tune from the 1947 movie “Golden Earrings,” while Laura demonstrates how Lee kept her version of this song on the pop-charts for nearly 20 weeks. On “Fever,” both are sultry, passionate, and physical, while “Don’t Smoke in Bed,” is languid, bittersweet, and good advice when ending a love affair. As a change of pace, the humorous, hit novelty tune “Mañana (“Is Soon Enough for Me”), boasts clever lyrics, sure to please the procrastinators in the crowd.

On this CD, as with her previous recordings, Theodore continues to impress any and all listeners with her superb voice, interpretation, originality, creativity, musicality, and performance.



Linda Dachtyl: *For Hep Cats* (Chicken Coup Records: CCP: 7010)

It’s no secret that da Owl loves organ combos. Over the years, I’ve enjoyed the very best, by such giants as Jimmy Smith, Hank Marr, Don Patterson, Jack McDuff, Jimmy McGriff, and Tony Monaco, to name a few.

However, back in the summer of 2006, after hearing her debut CD, “Blue Bop,” I added to my list of Masters of the Medium Linda Dachtyl whose new CD continues the musical excitement she generated on her first.

Guitarist Robert Kraut and drummers Jim Rupp or Cary Dachtyl form the basic trio, which is aided and abetted by instrumental and vocal guest artists galore. Saxman Gene Walker wails

on five of the 10 tracks, while vocalists Jazzmary, Larry Smith, and Lady Nikki Scott score on one track each.

This set, while still blues drenched, expands the musical variety with selections that include a street-hip take on “One Mint Julep,” the evolution of music on her original composition, the up-tempoed “Les Chats Bleus,” a church-based, McGriff original, “Turn Blue” with its undertones of Miles’ “All Blues,” and a romp on the innovative Monk classic, “Straight, No Chaser,” which features a terrific opening solo by Kraut.

Vocalist Larry Smith adds hip-humor to Willie Dixon’s “Little Red Rooster;” Jazzmary is sensual and exotic on Nina Simone’s “Do I Move You?,” while Lady Nikki Scott evokes all the emotion of love found-love lost on “Since I Fell for You,” featuring the smoky, sub-toned accents of Gene Walker.

Linda is superb in every department, on every track. Her solos soar, her unison playing is tight, her supporting fills like Baby Bear’s porridge – not too hot, not too cold, but just right!

Pattie Cossentino: Invitation (PC Jazz Records
www.pattiecossentino.com)

On this, her debut album, Pattie proves her prowess on all the saxes (soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone), a flair for flute, and solid stylings as a vocalist. She’s backed by a quintet consisting of trumpet, trombone, piano, bass, and drums, all of whom shine, whatever the mood, style, or tempo.



Cossentino and Company open things up with a rousing bop-based “Doug’s Minor,” on which Pattie demonstrates her mastery of the tenor, with a straight-ahead, no-holds-barred solo and solid unison work with the group.

On the Sonny Rollins instrumental classic “Doxy,” she wrote original lyrics which capture the essence of the song, while showcasing her jazz vocal abilities, which are also dynamically displayed on seven of the 11 tracks, three of which show her abilities on flute, and one each for alto and soprano.

Overall, the CD encompasses a good sampling of vocal and instrumental jazz, including straight-ahead, standards, Latin, and swing – definitely an impressive introduction to a new rising star in the always-evolving world of jazz.

JANUARY 2008

GOOD VIBES START A GREAT '08

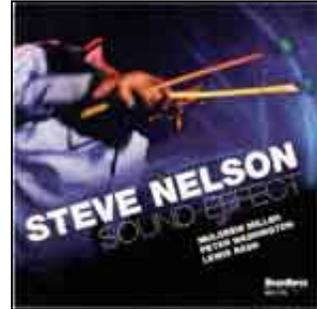
A silvery-crystalline tone describes the unique sound of the vibraharp or vibraphone, more popularly known as “vibes.” The music produced ranges from mellow and warm to swinging and aggressive. ‘Tis equally exciting and unique whatever its setting.

This electrically enhanced version of the xylophone came to America in 1916 and was used primarily as a novelty instrument. It entered the jazz world in the ‘30s courtesy of **Lionel Hampton**, a member of the Les Hite Band, then fronted by Louis Armstrong.

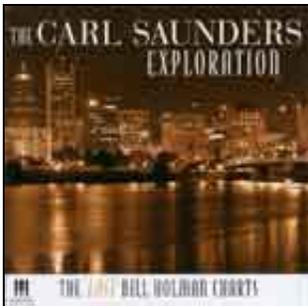
After leaving Hite, Hampton led his own groups for a while and attained “Star” status in the late ‘30s as a member of the Benny Goodman Quartet. “Superstar” status arrived in 1942 with Hampton’s new big band and its recording of “Flying Home,” featuring a still-remembered, still-quoted, excitingly propulsive vibes solo by the leader. His solid beat, superb musicianship, and tremendous energy kept him in the front ranks of popular musicians throughout his life.

With Hampton as their influence, other vibes stars emerged, each bringing a unique approach, sound, or style to the instrument. Red Norvo was noted for his lyricism without vibrato. Milt Jackson was the first to introduce vibes to be-bop. In addition, he used softer mallets, varied the electronics and produced a softer, more lyrical and emotional tone. Terry Gibbs and Teddy Charles were equally at home in swing or bop; Cal Tjader added Latin jazz to the repertoire; Gary Burton brought fusion to the sound, and later, with pianist Chick Corea, polished steel and ivory into the “new cool,” while Bobby Hutcherson used an approach that was inspired by the improvisations of saxophonist John Coltrane.

One of the newer masters of the mallets is **Steve Nelson** whose new CD, **Sound-Effect** (High Note Records: HCD-7175) presents the sound of good vibes to make '08 start great. Using 4 mallets and a feathery-light style and sound, Nelson and his “hall-of-fame-sidemen” pianist Mulgrew Miller, bassist Peter Washington, and drummer Lewis Nash breeze their way through three originals by Nelson, along with five standards by such well-known jazz composers as Freddy Hubbard, Ahmad Jamal, and A.C. Jobim.



A briskly strollin' “One Thin Dime” opens things up, and the guys let themselves have some foot-tappin’ fun. The mood changes to exotic and mysterious with another Nelson original, “Song For Tina,” which conjures images of perhaps a sensually beautiful Princess of some mythic time and place. “Desafinado” is pure jazz, Brazilian bossa style, which has lost none of its romance over the years. “Night Mist Blues” is exactly that: an easy, late-night blues written by the great pianist Ahmad Jamal, and one of my favorites in the set. The title track, “Sound Essence” is a seductively romantic ballad with “jazz-noir” overtones.



The Carl Saunders Exploration: *The Lost Bill Holman Charts*
(MaMa Records: MAA-1032)

There are a few quadruple threats in Jazz: Bill Holman is one of them. He's a tenor man of the first rank, an imaginative composer, a popular bandleader, and most importantly, a jazz orchestra arranger, second to none. His arrangements for the big bands of Stan Kenton, Shorty Rogers, and his own groups are innovative, powerful, timeless, and still studied and analyzed by musicians, professionals and students alike. Andre Previn described him as “... a first-rate saxophonist, but his true instrument is the orchestra, and he plays it with musicianship,

honesty, and brilliance.”

While the bulk of his arrangements were for big bands and orchestras, he occasionally wrote for small groups. One project in the early '80s involved 11 new arrangements of standards and originals (five by Holman, one by Saunders) for the rarely used septet instrumentation, which many feel is the jazz equivalent of the string quartet. Unfortunately, the project never materialized, and the charts were filed and forgotten – until rediscovered in 2005 by Carl Saunders who instantly resolved to record them.

Saunders, a trumpeter of enormous range, strength, power, and imagination, used his existing all-star septet, aptly-named “The Exploration,” to bring the music vibrantly to life. The charts, written almost 30 years ago, sound like they were penned tomorrow. They are challenging in every musical area: concept, approach, style, and rhythm.

The standard, “Three Little Words,” opens things up with a fresh deconstruction and recomposition of this familiar tune. Pianist Christian Jacobs and Saunders-the-leader both provide outstanding solos, as they also do on many of the other tunes.

Dizzy Gillespie's bebop classic, "OW!" is infused with surprising countermelodies that weave intriguingly, excitingly around the original line. "Mahogany Run" adds Calypso to the mix, with some smooth trombone work by Andy Martin, whose warm, fluid tone on "We'll Be Together Again" is perfectly suited to this Frankie Laine classic. Tenorman Pete Christlieb shines on Jerome Kern's "Dearly Beloved" and others, while the deep baritone sax of Bob Efford highlights the beautiful Duke Ellington tune "All Too Soon." A rock-solid bassline is an essential for the Holman original "Scratch." Bassist Kevin Axt is up for the challenge, and comes through like a champ. The septet expands to an octet, with the addition of guest flutist Sam Most on three of the selections. In every department, this CD is a winner!

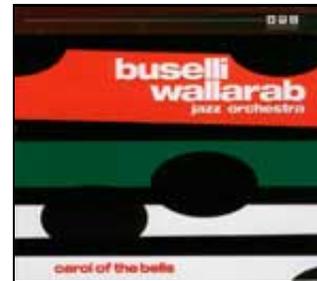
DECEMBER 2007

GIVE YOURSELF A JAZZY LITTLE CHRISTMAS

Make your spirits bright. Good jazz sounds put your troubles out of sight. So give yourself, and the jazz fans on your Gift List, one of these albums and enjoy your holidays even more.

Buselli-Wallarab Jazz Orchestra: *Carol of the Bells* (Owl Studios: OWL 00101)

Here's a 12-song collection of holiday favorites, both religious and popular, that will brighten the season for anyone to whom you give it, or add enormously to the sounds of joy at your place as the Big Day approaches.



The 17-piece Buselli-Wallarab Jazz Orchestra is one of the most dynamic and popular big bands in the nation. It is co-founded and led by Mark Buselli, head of Jazz Studies at Butler University, and Brent Wallarab, lead trombonist for the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra. Joined by many of the top jazz artists in the Midwest, the band sparkles with tight ensemble sections and exceptional soloists working their collective talents on some of the most creative, surprising and satisfying holiday arrangements ever recorded.

The five instrumental tracks showcase the band's power and versatility. "O, Tannenbaum" avoids the ponderous, somber treatment usually given. Here it swings with an easy elegance sure to please listeners and dancers alike. Kinda' suggests the way Basie woulda' done it. "Jingle Bells" combines a New Orleans streetbeat with traditional swing, while Vince Guaraldi's "Christmastime is Here" and "Skating" bring to mind Charlie Brown and the gang from the first "Peanuts" TV special. The title track, "Carol of the Bells," initially stately and formal, evolves into a subtly swinging, powerful experience.

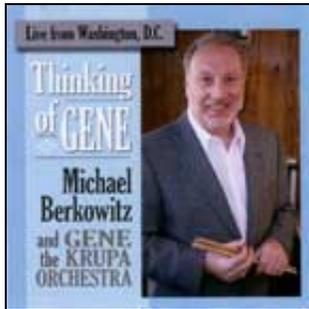
As impressive as the instrumental tracks are, I really flipped over the seven vocals, sung by the phenomenal Everett Greene. To me, he's one of the very best "talent-deserving-much-wider-exposure," male jazz vocalists on the scene today.

Surprisingly, he began his jazz singing career in his mid-60s after retiring from a lifetime day job as a machinist laborer at International Harvester in Indianapolis. His deep, smooth baritone à la Mr. B, Arthur Prysock and Barry White makes most other singers sound like they belong in the Vienna Boys Choir. He's what male jazz singin' is all about. Had he been able to start his career in the late '40s, early '50s, he'd be a giant, a jazz icon today.

His surprisingly blues-drenched version of "Silent Night" evokes the solemnity of the occasion, while giving the song jazz potentials rarely before explored. Definitely, a new evocative take on this oft-recorded favorite. "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" and "The Christmas Song" get easy, strollin' treatments. Conversely, "Joy To The World" effervesces with the excitement and exuberance of this joyous religious day. And granted, while the wonderful

Wilson (our own Nancy, that is) owns the female vocal rights to “What Are You Doing New Year’s Eve,” Greene can lay claim to the male version.

I’ve heard and enjoyed an abundance of jazz-oriented Christmas albums; this is one of the very best.



Michael Berkowitz and the Gene Krupa Orchestra: *Thinking of Gene* (Sea Breeze-SBJ-2143)

This CD will cause explosions of delight to any jazz friend-or-fiend to whom you give it. On the other hand, after hearing it, you may decide to keep it for yourself and send the friend a fruitcake. Whatever. Suffice it to say, whoever gets this outstanding set will love it and play it repeatedly for years.

The legendary Gene Krupa was the first drummer in jazz history to achieve national and international acclaim after his appearances as a main guest-attraction with Benny Goodman.

His featured performance and drum solos on Goodman’s “Sing, Sing, Sing” in 1941 are still quoted and used by many modern drummers in the 21st Century. As Buddy Rich once said, “If it wasn’t for Krupa, there wouldn’t be any of us today.”

Krupa’s first big band as a leader ran from 1938-1943. It was enormously popular due to such stars as Roy Eldridge and Anita O’Day. He also worked in gigs with Goodman, Dorsey and others before reforming and leading a new version from 1944-1951. His steady, relentless beat, ever-improving technique, showmanship, and dynamic personality contributed enormously to his sustained popularity over the years. So much for the brief bio and history of Krupa.

Drummer Michael Berkowitz was first inspired by Krupa at age 4; met him and became friends at 16. Who’d a guessed that 35 years after Gene’s passing in 1973, Berkowitz would now be the leader of the current Gene Krupa Orchestra?

Using modern arrangements, which are extremely faithful to the originals, Berkowitz and his 16-piece band easily evoke that great ‘40s swing-sound, yet burst with the fire that defines the best of big band jazz today.

Krupa’s theme and intro, “Starburst,” is, to me, the most exciting show opener-ever! It is as dynamic here as when originally recorded. The same can be said for the 12 other selections. This is timeless music that will keep the spirit and sound of Krupa alive for years to come – and introduce him to new fans who never had the thrill of seeing or hearing him perform in person.

NOVEMBER 2007

RICH RIDES AGAIN!

It’s hard to believe that Buddy Rich has been absent from the jazz scene since going to that Big Rehearsal Hall in the Sky in 1987. But the music he produced in his lifetime is powerful, exciting, creatively excellent, timeless. Rich was one of those few artists who continually pleased the mass public and persnickety jazz critics alike.

Born in 1917 to vaudevillian parents, Rich began appearing on stage at an early age. In 1921, at age 4, he had his own solo act called “Traps the Drum Wonder.” At the peak of his kiddie career, he was the second-highest paid child entertainer in the world.

His adult jazz career began in 1937 with Joe Marsala at the famed Hickory House. By 1939,

Rich, now dubbed “The Boy Wonder Of The Drums,” was with the Tommy Dorsey Band, which featured a new young singer named Sinatra. Gigs with Dizzy Gillespie, Charley Ventura and Louis Armstrong followed, along with movie appearances in such ‘40s films as *Symphony of Swing*, *Ship Ahoy*, and *How’s About It*, to name a few.

After forming his first band, he toured extensively, gaining more fans wherever he appeared. And, unlike most jazz musicians, he was a favorite on mass-audience TV talk shows due to his enjoyably caustic humor and provocative-but-comfortable interaction with such hosts as Johnny Carson, Mike Douglas, Merv Griffin, and Dick Cavett.

His recordings were phenomenally successful, and as far as anyone knew, all were completely catalogued and available. Until now.

Turns out that in the late ‘70s, Rich approved the recording of many of his live on-the-road appearances, which were never produced as recordings available to the public. Fortunately, these performances were re-discovered, and are now available on the CD titled:

Buddy Rich: Time Out (Lightyear-LTY-54799)

Fronting a 17-piece powerhouse he named “The Killer Force,” Rich and his compadres roar their way through a collection of some of his favorite tunes. The results are exciting big band jazz at its best!

From the dynamically swinging opener, “Goodbye Yesterday,” through the breakneck performance of the title track, the band never lets down. The ensemble sections soar; the many super-solos by Rich and his bandmates are sensational. Track-lengths vary from 2 minutes to well over 11. Rich gets ample space in all, as do such musical heavyweights as saxmen Bob Mintzer and Steve Marcus, trombonists Rick Stepton and John Mosca, trumpeters John Marshall and Dean Pratt, to name a few.

The liner notes don’t indicate exactly where and when these performances took place, but who cares? The recording quality is excellent, and the band never sounded better. A “must have” for all Rich and big band aficionados.

Pete Mills and Tony Monaco: Fresh Spin (Chicken Coup Records: CCP-7009)

Those of you familiar with my jazz radio shows since 1959 know that I have a tremendous liking for tenor-organ combos. Thus, it’ll come as no surprise that I’m gonna rave about this new locally produced gem by tenorman Pete Mills and B-3 burner Tony Monaco, aided and abetted by such heavyweights as guitarist Pete McCann, drummer Jim Rupp, and on three tracks by bassist Andy Woodson.



While eight of the 11 tracks are original compositions by Mills, the set also includes one each by guitarist McCann, whose “Crooked Cheese” is funkified-to-damax, while Horace Silver’s “Diggin’ on Dexter” swings with an easy elegance. In a complete change of pace and mood, Mills and McCann team up for an evocative duet interpretation of Billy Stray-horn’s “A Flower Is A Lonesome Thing,”

Bop, blues, a waltz, and a couple of burnin’ flagwavers by Mills add to the variety and excitement of this outstanding collection, which displays the superb musicianship of our local jazzmen. For those of you with out-of-Ohio jazz fans on your Holiday Gift List, this would be a much appreciated album, which might not be readily available in their area.

Kenny Burrell: Have Yourself a Soulful Little Christmas (Verve: B0000764-02)

This was one of the earliest all-holiday music albums produced by a jazz artist. Originally recorded and released as a vinyl by the Cadet jazz label in 1966, it remains one of the best.

Fortunately, it is still readily available on CD on the internationally distributed Verve label.

'Tis unique in that the overall feel is festive, joyous, inspiring, swinging, bluesy, and soulful – a 12-song collection of both religious and popular carols, performed by master-guitarist Kenny Burrell, backed by a full orchestra, arranged and conducted by Richard Evans.

Subdued and stately horns introduce “The Little Drummer Boy” who then turns out to be a funky little swinger, which contrasts nicely with the gentle lullaby performances of “Away in a Manger,” and “Silent Night.” The rarely heard “Mary’s Little Boy Chile” gets a Latin flavor, while my all-time holiday favorite, “God Rest Ye, Merry Gentlemen,” is light, rollicking, and Dickensian. My leanings for the blues are satisfied by “Merry Christmas, Baby” and “Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas.” The remaining five tracks are equally pleasing to both ear and soul.

OCTOBER 2007

Two pairs equal four aces in jazz CDs!

A pair of never-before-heard-releases, combined with an outstanding pair of locally produced CDs, make this an aces-high, winning month that will delight jazz fans, while depleting their wallets.

Billy Taylor & Gerry Mulligan: Live at MCG (MCGJ-1025)

I’m continually amazed at how outstanding jazz performances, live or in-studio, can be recorded, then lost, misplaced, misfiled, forgotten, or just never released by the Power Elite in charge.

Such is the case for this CD recorded in concert in 1993 at the MCG (Manchester Craftmen’s Guild) in Pittsburgh. It presents two of the world’s legendary players, pianist Billy Taylor and baritone-saxman Gerry Mulligan, in an exhilarating, timeless program of pop-and-jazz-standards and originals.

The combination of just piano and baritone sax, seems, on the surface, an unlikely pairing. Yet, it will come as no surprise that these two masters pull it off easily. Both were in top form for the event: they complement, anticipate, react to each other’s innovative phrases; they musically chuckle, chortle, guffaw at each other’s musical jokes.

While every track is jazz at its best, I particularly liked the ‘40s swing sound they got on “Stompin’ At The Savoy,” their shared musical heritage and off-stage friendship on “All The Things You Are,” the sensual elegance of “Body And Soul,” and the ultra-modern takes on their individual compositions, “Line For Lyons,” and “Capricious.”

Overall, it’s breezy, easy listener-friendly jazz, a good introduction for those not familiar with the form.

Charles Mingus Sextet with Eric Dolphy: Cornell 1964 (Blue Note Records-0946-3-92210-2-8)

Had not Sue Graham Mingus, wife of the legendary bassist, discovered this tape, which apparently no one knew existed, a dynamic and historic performance would have been lost forever.

The Cornell Concert was performed almost a month before the Mingus Town Hall Concert, which, until now, has been regarded as the debut and pinnacle for this outstanding sextet, featuring Mingus on bass, Dolphy on alto, flute, and bass-clarinet, shortly before his untimely and unexpected death, along with trumpeter Johnny Coles, tenorman Clifford Jordan, pianist Jaki Byard, and drummer Dannie Richmond.

This two-disc set presents each of these players at their best. The selections include compositions by Ellington, Strayhorn, Waller, and Mingus. Most are exceptionally long and allow for superb soloing by every member of the group. The Mingus classics, "Fables Of Fauvus" and "Meditations" are around a half-hour each. Even such familiar tunes as "Take The 'A' Train" and "Jitterbug Waltz" get longer-than-usual explorations and expositions: great for the in-home listeners, not-so-great for radio jazz programmers who have limited air-time and an over-abundance of great jazz they want to share.

As opposed to the Mulligan-Evans set above, this CD, while excellent in all areas, is *not* the CD to introduce jazz to those not familiar with the music.

Gene Walker: Friends (Xtra Large Records)

The CD title says it all: the Wailin' Walker and his sensational sax, accompanied by many of his musical friends, in a program paying homage to another friend, the late-great Etta Jones.

For this swingin' set, Walker used the finest rhythm sections from Columbus and Cincinnati, along with special guests, guitarist Wilbert Longmire and vocalists Jeanette Williams-Brewer, Gloria Cole-man, Bill Caffie, and one of my long-time favorites, Everette Greene, a singer out of the Mr. B School of Jazz Singing, a vocalist who makes most other male singers sound like sopranos.

Among the many outstanding performances are "Mike Coleman's Blues," a tribute to "Hiz Honor," the first African-American Mayor of Columbus; the easy-swingin' "One For Naldo" dedicated to Naldo Monaco who keeps the Walker-Sax in superb playing condition; "Everybody's Somebody's Fool" featuring superbly sensual vocalizing by Jeanette Williams-Brewer; and "Don't Go To Strangers" rendered romantically by Everette Green.



Bobby Floyd: Notes To and From My Friends (Chicken Coup Records: CCP-7008)

As Jon Hendricks often said, "You want to know the roots of jazz? Go to church!" And it was in church, where his Mother played, that the young 5-or-6-year-old Bobby Floyd started his musical career. And that soulful, bluesy, rocking, rejoicing church-feel, subliminally and/or overtly, is heard in all of these selections, which either honor or feature his many friends, mentors, and B-3 idols.

Bobby opens with a rompin', stompin' good-time sound on his original, "Get On Board," backed by his basic sidemen, drummer Reggie Jackson and guitarist Derek DiCenzo.

This good groove continues throughout, with a testifying, churchy rendition of Hank Marr's "Your Basic Gospel Song," amplified by the sanctimonious sax of "friend-guest" Bryan Oleshki, followed by the incomparable Jeanette Williams-Brewer who gives a surprising, up-tempo, bossa-version of "The Nearness Of You." Quite a departure from the way the song is usually sung, but it works!

Add another Floyd-friend, Gene Walker and his big-toned, sensual sax for a bloozy, easy-strollin' rendition of Don Patterson's "Hip Cake Walk," and you're hearin' one of the best tracks on the set.

If swingin', timeless, feel-good jazz lights your fires, gets your fingers snappin', and toes tappin', this is the CD for you.

SEPTEMBER 2007

Say the word “bassoon” to anyone who’s not familiar with classical music. Chances are they won’t have a clue as to its meaning, even though they’ve probably heard and enjoyed this unusual-looking-and-sounding musical instrument more times than they’ve realized.

Hopefully, this column will help bring some well-deserved fame, popularity, and public awareness to this often-overlooked musical heavyweight and the talented musicians who play it.

As a concert musical instrument, the bassoon evolved into its present form in the mid-1800s and has been used ever since. Most symphony orchestras (the Columbus Symphony Orchestra included) usually utilize two bassoons and often a third playing contrabassoon.

Due to its double reed, difficult fingering, and unusual shape, the bassoon is probably the most difficult woodwind instrument to learn to play. On the plus side, it has a warm, dark, sometimes-ominous, reedy/woody tone as well as a lively, vibrant singing sound, both comparable to the male baritone voice. This versatility of tonal character and range allow it to perform a melodic as well as a bass role.

Melodically and popularly, know it or not, you’ve already enjoyed the bassoon – in the lyrical, seductive solos in Ravel’s *Bolero* (used effectively by Dudley Moore in his romantic tryst with Bo Derek in *10*), the deep, humorous musical “voice” of the grandfather in *Peter and The Wolf*, and in the overture to *The Marriage of Figaro* to give a few examples.

Other ventures by the bassoon in its attempts to gain awareness and popularity in our overall culture include its prominence as the center of interest in the 1870 Degas painting, *The Orchestra at the Opera House*; its occasional use in Paul Whiteman’s Jazz Orchestra of the ‘20s; the eclectic experimentations of Yuseff Lateef and Chick Corea in the ‘60s; Frank Zappa’s endorsement as one of his all-time favorite instruments; a prominent part in Smokey Robinson’s “The Tears Of a Clown”; and Michael Gulland’s bassooning in the progressive rock band Gryphon. Saxmen Illinois Jacquet and Frank Tiberi now double on it occasionally. These forays notwithstanding, the bassoon still has an uphill battle in eventually getting a cover feature on *Rolling Stone*.

Hopefully, this new CD will help it achieve this treasured musical goal.



Daniel Smith: The Swingin’ Bassoon (Zah Zah: ZZCD-9824)

Daniel Smith is the world’s most-recorded bassoonist, a multiple musical award winner in a variety of categories, the only bassoonist performing and recording in both the classical and jazz fields. Classical musicians and fans regard him as the “Galway and Rampal of the Bassoon,” while the jazzmeisters refer to him as the “Gerry Mulligan of the instrument.”

On this, his third jazz recording, he demonstrates, swingingly, melodically, and dynamically just how well the instrument is suited to jazz. This is a major achievement in that, unlike most other jazz players who had idols or influences to lead, guide, and inspire their playing (ie: trumpeters had Louis, Miles, Chet, Maynard, etc., saxmen quote Bird, Prez, Getz, Coltrane, et al., pianists listened to Fats, Monk, Errol, Bud, Bru, you get the idea), Smith had no one to help him develop. He had to go it alone, which he did most successfully as you’ll hear on this remarkable CD.

Leading a quartet, Smith and compadres work their way through blues, ballads, bop, swing, Latin, pop, noir, to name a few of the styles they explore dynamically, creatively, uniquely.

There are highlights galore. On “Scrapple from the Apple,” Smith re-creates, note for note, Charlie Parker’s up-tempo tour-de-force solo; he captures the mood and swing of Dorsey’s Theme, “I’m Getting Sentimental Over You,” gets a big band feel on the Basie Orchestra

classic “Hay Burner,” exudes the good humor and whimsy of Monk’s “Well You Needn’t,” evokes the noir-beauty and melancholy of Ellington’s “Mood Indigo,” and captures calypso on Sonny Rollins’ “St. Thomas,” to name a few.

This is truly the CD for the jazzfan who thinks he’s heard everything!!

Charles Mingus: The Clown (Rhino: R275590)

Prior to this album, released on vinyl in 1957, I had never heard of Charles Mingus. My loss. Fortunately, I was a regular listener to Jean Shepherd’s radio show in NYC, and it was he who hipped me to this incredible musician and creative artist.

Shepherd (who wrote and was the narrator for the enormously popular Holiday Movie *A Christmas Story*, in which Ralphie gets his Red Ryder B-B gun), ad-libs a narration to the Mingus title composition, “The Clown.” ‘Twas my first hearing of the spoken word improvised to music, a form that evolved into “Word Jazz,” which Ken Nordine performs so magnificently.

Mingus heads up a powerful quintet which includes Shafti Hadi (Curtis Porter), Jimmy Knepper, Wade Legge, and Danny Richmond, who give exceptional early performances of such Mingus classics as “Haitian Fight Song,” “Blue Cee,” and “Reincarnation of a Lovebird,” the totality of the vinyl album when originally released.

The CD version includes two more Mingus classics, “Passions of a Woman Loved” and “Tonite at Noon.” These tracks were recorded at the same session, but did not appear on the vinyl.

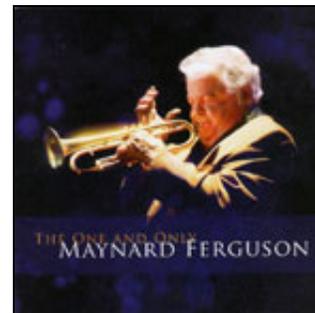
JULY 2007

While the date and tune are lost in the twists and turns of my vastly overcluttered memory banks, I do remember that I first heard the sensational trumpet of **Maynard Ferguson** back in the early ‘50s when he was a member of the Stan Kenton Orchestra. As a one-time trumpet player, I wasn’t remotely aware that such high notes could be hit on the horn as Maynard hit so easily. Thus, I coined the word “Maynardsphere” to describe the upper-upper register into which the MF trumpet soared so easily. Since then, a plethora of players have used these notes creatively and successfully, all thanks to Ferguson, the first to fly there. He continued to generate this excitement throughout his career in a variety of settings. He was equally effective in a big band or small group (quartet, quintet). For the last few years, he led a small big band – or a big small band, a 12-piece group he christened “Big Bop Nouveau.” Their latest, and final CD is ...

The One and Only Maynard Ferguson (www.maynardferguson.com)

This powerhouse CD was recorded in late July 2006.

Surprisingly, unexpectedly, sadly, Maynard died less than a month later on August 23. He didn’t know this was going to be his last recording; he just knew it would be one of his best. And that it is. In the course of the nine tracks, he and the group work their way dynamically through a collection of five updates on some of his old favorites and four originals, one by his son-in-law, pianist Christian Jacob, titled “Lost Horizons,” a showcase for piano and trumpet. Among the many highlights are the thoroughly modern arrangements on such well-known standards as “Without A Song,” which swings like mad, “Besame Mucho,” boasting a super-funky horn feature and a searing trumpet duet by Maynard and Wayne Bergeron, and “Ain’t No Sunshine When She’s Gone,” with a groove that combines some Art Blakey with Gil Evans, and a shout chorus with Maynard soaring over the top. The uptempo “Dr. Fox Ph.D.” celebrates the honorary doctorate given him by Rowan University, which also created the “Maynard Ferguson Institute of Jazz.”



The title also refers to MF's nickname, "The Fox," which was given to him early in his career as a member of the Birdland Dream Band. While most listeners usually associate him with his high notes, they frequently forget that "da Fox can play pretty too," as demonstrated by his mellow flugelhorn on a new composition, "Vita Bella," and his intimate trumpet work on "Darn That Dream." Among the more-than-60 albums recorded during his life, this last one ranks in the upper echelon. It can be purchased only through his Web site, listed above.



Eileen Howard: Street of Dreams (www.singouteileen.com)

Central Ohio theatregoers know **Eileen Howard** as an exciting and imaginative actress; Central Ohio jazz aficionados know her as one of the most creative and swingin' singers ever to vocalize on the local jazz scene. This, her second CD, showcases the marvelous Howard voice and her superb interpretation and meaningful presentation of lyrics. It also demonstrates her songwriting skills, with two of the 13 songs being Eileen originals. Backed by such heavyweight jazzmen as Richard Lopez on piano, Roger Hines on bass, Matt Wagner on drums, and Michael Cox on sax and clarinet, Eileen brings a fresh approach to such

familiar, but not overdone songs as the title track, on which she ups the tempo considerably and effectively compared to the original. She handles easily the tricky rhythms of Dizzy Gillespie's "A Night In Tunisia" and swings with a subtle Latin beat on the rarely recorded Chick Corea composition, "Open Your Eyes You Can Fly." Midway through the set, she shows "You can't lose when you sing the blues" and gives a performance of "Everybody's Cryin' Mercy" that rivals that of the song's composer, Mose Allison. Other highlights include Dave Wheeler's relaxed arrangement of "A Kiss to Build a Dream On," which Eileen performs with leisurely elegance, while her intimately romantic rendition of "The Nearness of You" gets some extra-sensual fills and accents from tenorman Michael Cox.

Kenny Burrell: 75th Birthday Bash, Live! (Blue Note Records: 0946-3-74906-2-4)

Kenny Burrell's mellow, bluesy tone and loose, easygoing solo style are equally at home in a roaring jazz ensemble or an intimate group. No wonder he was Duke Ellington's favorite guitarist. On this, his 99th album, recorded live on his 75th birthday, he performs in a variety of settings. The first six tracks feature the impressive 18-piece Gerald Wilson Jazz Orchestra, while later selections find him leading a sextet, quartet, and trio. Talk about versatility! He even sings on two tracks. The program covers most of the jazz bases – blues, ballads, bop, and bossa, to name a few – with compositions from such jazz Hall-of-Famers as Ellington, Davis, Shorter, Gillespie, Strayhorn and more. Guest artists include Joey DeFrancesco burnin' on the B-3, Hubert Laws tootin' his flute, and Herman Riley swingin' on sax. This is timeless jazz at its best – a CD you'll enjoy for years to come!



JUNE 2007

Most hardcore audiophiles believe that vinyl recordings sound "warmer" than CD recordings. They may be right, although I've never been able to hear the difference, assuming one exists.

On the other hand, everyone agrees it's next to impossible to play a vinyl recording in a car while driving. Thus, in getting CD versions of some of my favorite older jazz vinyls for car-play recently, I discovered an advantage that many CDs have over their vinyl counterparts, which is: one often gets more music on the CD version of an album than appeared on the original vinyl.

The CD frequently includes performances that, for a number of reasons (usually time and

recording space), were not included on the original vinyl release. These “extras” may be longer unedited versions of the tunes as originally recorded, additional songs, and/or some alternate takes on various songs. In some cases, two separate, individual vinyl albums may appear on one CD release. Such is the case with...



Two Classic Albums From Mel Tormé: at the Red Hill and Live at the Maisonette (Rhino-CCM0074-2)

One of my all-time favorite jazz albums is *Mel Tormé: Live at the Maisonette*. Amazingly, this incredible set was never reproduced as an individual CD. However, thanks to the work, research, and facilities of **Mike Depew** at Ace In The Hole in The Kenny Center, he came up with this CD that features not only *Maisonette*, but as an added bonus, the equally-unavailable-as-a-single-CD album *Mel Tormé at the Red Hill*. This single CD combines both albums in their entirety, yet costs no more than a single CD. Talk about a bargain!!

Even more pleasing was Rhino’s creative concept in combining these two albums on one CD, which presents Mel at his best – in live performance – in two different decades and settings: At the Red Hill in 1962 with a trio, and *Maisonette* in 1974 with a dynamic 15-piece jazz orchestra led by powerhouse trumpeter Al Porcino.

Highlights on *Red Hill* include an uplifting “Shakin’ the Blues Away,” along with 11 timeless standards, on three of which Tormé plays piano as he sings.

Maisonette is an outstanding combination of great songs, incredible vocalizing, killer arrangements and solos by the musicians, all connected and interspersed with Mel’s casual commentary – a session so “live,” there should be a cover charge just for listening.

On “Route 66,” he combines Ella, scat, and “Rag Mop,” as he “motors west, takin’ the highway that’s the best...” The band is jet-powered on this one and soars stratospherically “...all the way, from Chicago to LA.”

The showstopper, however, is Tormé’s tribute to the Gershwins, a 16-minute homage to the best of George and Ira, featuring 17 of their most popular songs. As Mel puts it, “...this is the medley to end all medleys...it runs ‘til Christmas Eve.” Tormé earned a Grammy nomination for his arrangement on this track, and it alone makes the album worth the money.

Jazz Themes from the Wild One: Leith Stevens (Bear Family Records: BCD-16-393-AR)

As usual, Brando stole da’ show in this, the world’s first and best biker flick from 1954. Thus, some of the other outstanding elements of the film are usually overlooked when discussing the movie, such as the humorous-but-menacing performance by Lee Marvin, and the outstanding West Coast jazz soundtrack composed by Leith Stevens, performed by his All-Stars group, which ranged from 8 to 15 players. Stevens corralled the best of the West for his musical score: Shelly Manne, Russ Freeman, Bud Shank, Maynard Ferguson, Shorty Rogers, Bob Cooper, and Jimmy Guiffre, to name a few.



The original soundtrack album, released by Decca shortly after the film debuted, was a 10-inch vinyl and included 8 tracks from the movie score. This fairly recent German-produced CD version adds four more tracks from the movie, along with four variations, recorded later by Shorty Rogers and His Giants, an 18-piece “Who’s Who” of West Coast Jazz Heavyweights, including Bill Holman, Joe Mondragon, Bill Perkins, and many of those from the Stevens’ group.



In addition, the CD includes a 50-page booklet, which synthesizes the movie, gives cast and credits, assorted promotional materials and photos galore from the original film.

As for the music, it's West Coast jazz at its best. Not only does it synergize the action on-screen, but each track stands excitingly on its own musically, evoking, but not needing the visual accompaniment.

If you've not yet seen the movie, rent it at your earliest. After that, relive it whenever, with this dynamic soundtrack.

This Is My Beloved: Arthur Prysock (Verve-827-012-2)

The "True Romantics" in our readership will love this CD, a dramatic recitation by Arthur Prysock, originally released in the late '60s. While nothing has been added to the original vinyl release, the content is timeless, dramatic, heartfelt, and worth hearing.

Prysock, a jazz baritone out of the "Billy Eckstein School," uses his incredible voice to enliven this narrative free-verse poem by Walter Benton. Accompanied by a sensitive, occasionally jazz-and-blues-infused-score by Mort Garson, the album is a must for all who enjoy poetry, jazz, and the evocation of "love found and shared, love lost but remembered."

MAY 2007

The multiple Muses of Music, Performance, and Composition generously bestowed their gifts upon the newly born **Grace Kelly** of Brookline, Mass., back in 1993. Apparently, Ms. Kelly (no relation to the late actress-Princess of Monaco) wasted no time in accepting and using the gifts as soon as she was able. By age 11, Grace was already recognized nationally as an outstanding alto-saxophonist, singer and composer, had performed with some of the foremost jazz artists of the day, and recorded her first nationally released CD.

Since then, she has performed at Carnegie Hall, Tanglewood and numerous other East Coast jazz clubs. In addition, she was a winner in the International Chamber Music Ensemble Competition, won *Down Beat* magazine's 2006 Student Music Awards as a Jazz Soloist, Composer, Pop/Rock/Blues Soloist, and "Outstanding" Jazz Vocalist. In her spare time, she created two more nationally released albums, *Times Too* in 2005, and her latest, offered (at age 14) last month:

Grace Kelly: Every Road I Walked (PAZZ 14-6)

Kelly's talents as a saxophonist and composer are evident from the first notes of the briskly moving title track, a sophisticated original composition written for trumpet and saxophone.

She follows with a thoroughly modern take on "I'll Remember April," featuring a lively Latin beat and an intriguing build-up of instruments as the song progresses.

On "East of the Sun (West of the Moon)," she unveils her vocalizing. Nothing about her vocal sound indicates her youth. Maturity, confidence, an understanding of the lyrics, and a great jazz sensibility are hallmarks of this impressive performance, which also features another formidable sax-solo on the bridge.

She's equally impressive in all areas throughout the album, which features four more of her originals along with works by such familiar composers as Monk, The Gershwins, Harold Arlen,



and Lennon-McCartney, to name a few.

Grace Kelly is a name to remember, a triple threat jazz performer we can enjoy as she continues to grow, both in age and creativity.



Mark Flugge: In Love, In Blue (markflugge.com)

Many musicians tend to stay in similar, familiar settings for all their recordings. Thus, it's no surprise that most of their CDs sound essentially the same. The songs change, but that's about it. This philosophy, while valid, safe, and popular with their fans, is just one approach to producing a CD; an approach so far avoided by pianist Mark Flugge, whose attitude seems to be "...and now, for something completely different."

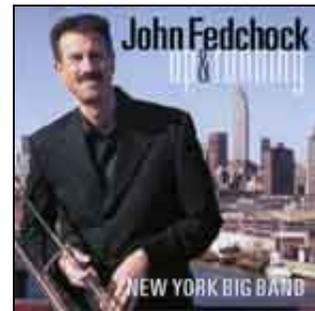
His first CD as a leader, *February's Promise*, found him in a quintet setting with trumpet and sax support, in a program of his straight-ahead jazz compositions. The format, style, and overall sound changed for his second recording, *Familiarity*, in which he was accompanied only by guitar and bass.

This variety of setting, sound, and approach continues on *In Love, In Blue*, a diverse selection of Great American Songbook standards, including Ellington's "Prelude to a Kiss," in which he evokes the romance, the excitement the song title suggests. "Misty" is even more languidly longing than the Garner original, while on Buddy Johnson's "Since I Fell for You," he instrumentally retains the bloozy melancholy of "love found, love lost" heard in the original vocal version by Billy Eckstine. Two of Mark's originals are also included in the program.

Classically trained, the Flugge fingers fly with ease and imagination through a variety of piano jazz styles throughout the set, including the liveliness of stride, a bit of bop, more than a dash of blues, introspection, reflection, romance, all of which appear in his finale, a unique rendition of Gershwin's "Rhapsody In Blue."

John Fedchock New York Big Band: Up & Running (Reservoir Music: RSR-CD-188)

Trombonist-arranger-composer John Fedchock has been popular with Central Ohio jazz audiences since the late '70s when he was earning his degree in Music Education and Jazz Studies at Ohio State University and a member of the award-winning OSU Jazz Ensemble.



He is a graduate cum laude of The Woody Herman Band (Woody called him "My right hand man" along with other accolades) and a 2003 Grammy Nominee for Best Instrumental Arrangement.

While he's currently living and working on the East Coast as the leader of the internationally acclaimed New York Big Band, he still returns to Central Ohio for occasional gigs and sit-ins with local groups.

Up & Running is his fourth CD for the Reservoir Music label. Like its predecessors, his 17-piece band swings hard, first note to last. The ensemble work is tight and powerful, yet his arrangements leave ample room for plenty of top o' the line soloing by such heavyweights as saxmen Rich Perry, Mark Vinci, and Gary Smulyan, trumpeters Scott Wehdholt and Barry Reis and pianist Allen Farnham, to name a few.

Needless to say, John-the-leader allows himself some space to stretch out and display his great technique, highlighted by his lush, warm tone; swift, smooth slide manipulation; and elegant, sophisticated phrasing.

Four Fedchock originals are intermixed with six jazz standards by such Hall-of-Fame jazzmen as John Coltrane, J.J. Johnson, Sonny Rollins, and Elvin Jones. Big Band for the 21st Century

don't come any better than this.

APRIL 2007

Surprise – the unusual– the unexpected – the unique: these are some of the fringe elements of jazz that I enjoy immensely. Hearing a completely new approach to a song that I've heard hundreds of times before; hearing an instrument usually not associated with jazz swingin' like mad and mixing perfectly with the more traditional horns; hearing an outstanding performer whose origins and interests seem, on the surface, to be incompatible with a liking for or a talent for jazz performance; these, and many more instances are just a few examples of the inherent-but-unpredictable jazz elements mentioned in the opening sentence. Here are some current CDs that display some of these qualities.

Julian Yeo: Old New Borrowed Blue (www.julianyeo.com)

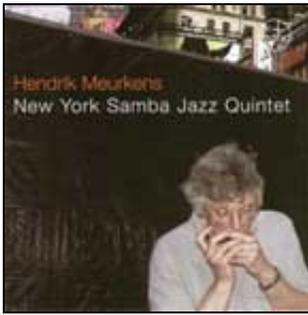
Julian Yeo is a young Asian from Australia, with a Ph.D. in accounting. He is currently a professor at Columbia University where his research focuses on the relationships between accounting information and stock prices. With a background and specialty like that, he's certainly not the guy I'd expect to hear as a retro-jazz-vocalist with a unique "new-old" approach often described by New York music critics as "Woody Allen-ish." He's also one-of-a-kind in that he's dynamically 21st-century savvy, while at the same time authentically reminiscent of those megaphoned, straw-hatted singers of the '20s and '30s, à la Vallee, Jolson, Astaire, et al.

Backed by a solid piano trio, Yeo works his charming, delightful, musical way through a collection of classics by such Tin Pan Alley composers as Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, Rodgers & Hart, Mercer & Arlen, Goodman & Webb, and Duke Ellington to name a few.

The whole set is happy, hip, upbeat, and refreshing. My favorite tracks include his sly, wry, tongue-in-cheek rendition of "Let's Misbehave," the passionate intimacy he exudes on "Fever," and the leisurely elegance he brings to "Stompin' at the Savoy."

Russell Gunn: Plays Miles (High Note: HCD 7161)

Trumpeter Russell Gunn performs an astonishing and accurate homage to **Miles Davis** on this unusual set. 'Tis surprising and unique in that Gunn doesn't SOUND like Miles (there's not a Harmon mute used on any track), but he still captures the spirit, concepts, rhythmic feel, placement of notes, and essence of the late, great Davis, using only an open horn with its bright, clear intonation throughout. Another surprise is the absence of a saxophone as a complementary front-line horn. One of the characteristics in describing the music of Miles Davis is the mention of the many great saxmen who performed in his bands: legends such as John Coltrane, Cannonball Adderley, Wayne Shorter, to name just three. For this presentation, Gunn is backed by the **Elektrik Butterfly Band**, composed of keyboards, bass, drums, and percussion, yet they channel the sound and approach of such legendary Davis sidemen as Wynton Kelly, Ron Carter, and Tony Williams. All of the selections are standouts, although I had a particular fondness for the tightly waltzing "All Blues," the funky-noir of "Blue in Green," the Mid-East groove of "Nardis," and the relaxed strollin' of "New New Blues." If you liked Miles, you'll appreciate this unusual, but accurate session.



Hendrik Meurkens: New York Samba Jazz Quintet (ZOHO: ZM-200701)

A clarinetist who doubles on sax and flute surprises me not, nor does a drummer who's equally adept on congas or bongos. However, it does surprise me when I hear a musician who is equally adept and exciting on two completely diverse instruments. Such a musician is Hendrik Meurkens, who is outstanding on both vibes and harmonica, each of which require a completely different physical approach to playing, as well as written music that varies as drastically. Nonetheless, Meurkens has mastered the physical and mental challenges of both instruments quite well, and displays his formidable skills as a vibist and "harmonicat"

equally on this lively collection of exhilarating, contemporary Brazilian jazz, recorded in performance at Cecil's Jazz Club, in West Orange, New Jersey. This was my first exposure to Latin jazz performed on harmonica; I was surprised and delighted at how smoothly it swung, what excitement and dynamics the instrument's clear, clean sound added to the marvelous collection of bossas, sambas, choros, and boleros. Five of the tunes were familiar, written by such well-known composers as Jobim, Donato, Vernon & Gershwin; the other four were originals by Meurkens. Meurkens is backed by **Jed Levy** on tenor sax and flute, **Helio Alves** on piano, **Gustavo Amarante** on bass, and **Adriano Santos** on drums, all had ample time in the solo spotlight, which they used imaginatively, expressively, and satisfyingly. As with all well-produced albums, variety abounds – in tempos, instrumentation, concept, performance, and mood. A lively "Flor De Lis" blends superbly with the exotically sensual "Prague In March," which features a gorgeous combination of harmonica and tenor. This contrasts excitingly with the brisk chorino, "Mimosa," showcasing the good vibes produced by Meurkens on that instrument. Harmonica and flute, another unusual instrumentation, synergize splendidly on the spritely choro, "Menina na Janela." Latin jazz aficionados should definitely add this to their collection.

MARCH 2007

"Good Time Jazz" is one of the mainstays in the many, diverse, unpredictable sounds of jazz. It may not be musically innovative, historically significant, or groundbreaking, but it is a joy to hear – a timeless sound that lifts the spirits, brightens the mood, puts a smile on the face, a spring in the step. And, most of the time, you can dance to it. Such is the case for the happy, swingin' new release by Harry Connick, Jr.

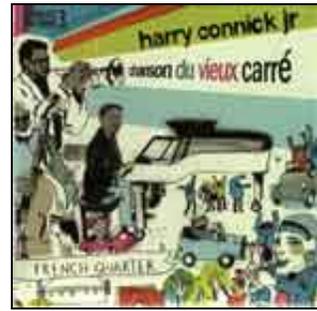
Harry Connick, Jr.: Chanson Du Vieux Carré (Marsalis Music /Rounder: 749460-0002)
Connick is, in the world of sho-biz talent, a multiple threat. He's a sensational singer, a powerful pianist, an accomplished actor, and, as this set shows, he's also an awesome arranger, confident conductor, outstanding orchestrator, and, on three of the 12 tracks, a classy composer.

Leading a 17-piece big band, he takes a number of the most popular, well-known, two-beat Dixieland standards, adds more than a splash of swing, a bit of street-beat, funk, and bop, to come up with a sound that's completely original, quite unlike anything heard before. And, surprisingly, although there are three vocals on the set, Harry doesn't sing a note, first track to last.

Things start off with a boisterous big band version of Louis Armstrong's "Someday You'll Be Sorry," showcasing the Connick piano, the Leroy Jones trumpet, and Craig Klein trombone. This one romps, non-stop, first note to last – Satchmo woulda' loved it!!

He lets the good times roll as he and the band pound through “Panama,” goes, Latin-lite for one of his originals, “Ash Wednesday,” and moody-melancholy for his title track.

He maintains this variety throughout – happily romping his way through such “hot jazz” classics as “Bourbon Street Parade,” “Fidgety Feet,” and “That’s A Plenty,” while being a bit more leisurely on “Petit Fleur,” “New Orleans,” “Mardis Gras In New Orleans” and more.



It’s a most enjoyable session, sure to please jazz listeners of all tastes. As an added bonus, proceeds from the CD will go to provide housing for displaced musicians and other families in New Orleans. Great Jazz for a Great Cause. It don’t get much better than that!

Brian Bromberg: *Downright Upright* (Artistry Music: ART 7012)

Acoustic bass is a tough instrument to play. It requires formidable finger strength and dexterity, a solid sense of music, knowing that in most cases, it’s a supporting instrument that complements, synergizes, keeps time, and supports the front line players, who usually get the solos, notoriety, and audience acclaim. Plus, one’s gotta love it to play it, considering its bulk and the inconvenience and physical strength it takes to lug it from gig to gig.

Bassist Brian Bromberg takes all of these factors in stride, and has emerged as one of the premier players of the instrument. In addition to his immense musical prowess, he uses a bass that is over 300 years old. The mind boggles when conjuring the multitude of fingers and musical sounds produced by this majestic instrument over the years.

This is a CD that should appeal to jazz listeners of all tastes, along with professional bass players, teachers and students of the instrument, as Bromberg works his way through a collection of timeless jazz standards and originals, aided and abetted by such heavyweight guest artists as trumpeter Rick Braun, saxmen Kirk Whalum and Boney James, keyboardists George Duke and Jeff Lorber, and guitarist Lee Ritenour, to name a few.

Herbie Hancock’s sensually exotic “Cantaloupe Island” opens the set, followed by a nicely contrasting, soulful rendition of the Joe Zawinul classic, “Mercy, Mercy, Mercy.” This ear-pleasing variety continues throughout the entire ten-piece set, which includes such jazz favorites as Les McCann’s funky “Cold Duck Time,” and five Bromberg originals, all of which provide ample solos by the guest artists, along with exciting, innovative, melodic solos by the leader himself.

Kerry Strayer Quartet: *Play it Where it Lays* (Kerry Strayer Pdns: CD0601)

www.KerryStrayer.com

This is straight-ahead jazz for the 21st century at its best. Headlined by leader Strayer on the baritone sax (“da Ol’ Stovepipe”), it also features one of the last recorded performances by Hall of Fame piano man Frank Mantooth, who shines on the easy-strollin’ opening track, “3265 Central,” which features an intriguing Lennie Tristano line.

While the credits list “Quartet,” the session is, for the most part, a Quintet, with many of the tracks showcasing guest-tenor man Gary Foster, who was a teacher/mentor to Strayer in his student-days at the Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music.

A variety of sounds, tempos, and styles keep this interesting and enjoyable through all ten tracks. I particularly liked Strayer’s boppish original, “Jammin’ At The Kirk,” based on the chord changes of “Pennies From Heaven,” the easy-walkin’ re-visit to Johnny Hodges’ “Blues O’Mighty,” the soulful sound of Hank Mobley’s “Funk In A Deep Freeze,” the melancholy romance of Ellington’s “All Too Soon,” and the briskly swingin’ update on Jimmy Knepper’s “Bertha The Dragoness,” a delightful variation on “Sweet Georgia Brown.”

FEBRUARY 2007

February, while neither the ending of winter nor the onset of spring, still has much to distinguish it from the other months. In addition to being the shortest month of the year, it's the only one that gets an extra day added every four years.

It's also set apart by two enormously popular holidays: President's Day, on which many schools and offices are closed, and Valentine's Day, on which True Love and Romance reign supreme – augmented by chocolate delights, flowers, greeting cards, baubles, bangles and beads, along with shiny-sparkly gifts galore, lacy red hearts, and one of the world's great love songs, "My Funny Valentine."

The song, written by Rodgers and Hart for their 1937 Broadway Musical "Babes in Arms," was first sung by Mitzi Green. The song was an instant hit and gained even more popularity when it was sung by Judy Garland in the 1939 movie version.

Over the years, it's been performed superbly by most of the greats: Frank, Bing, and Ella, Mel and Tony, Barbra and Dolly, Elvis Costello, Chaka Khan, Rufus Wainwright, and even Matt Damon in the 1999 film "The Talented Mr. Ripley." Talk about timeless!

But, for most listeners, the definitive version belongs to jazz trumpeter/vocalist **Chet Baker**. He first recorded the tune as an instrumental single in 1952 when he was the trumpeter in **Gerry Mulligan's** famous pianoless quartet. His haunting, glassy, and vaguely sinister tone stole the show and helped to establish the emerging sound of "cool."

Two years later, Baker, now fronting his own quartet, released the album *Chet Baker Sings* on the Pacific Jazz label. His vocal styling, similar to the ethereal, lonely, romantic-but-vulnerable sound evoked by his trumpet, was a major departure from the romantic renditions by other male singers, past and present. Women loved not only his voice, but also his boyish, brooding, sensitive good looks. A frequent female response was that Baker reminded them of Brando or Dean, had Marlon or James been able to sing.

It was the hit of the set and became his "signature song," which he included in many albums and live appearances thereafter. Four of his best renditions can be heard on the following CDs:

Chet Baker: Deep in a Dream (Pacific Jazz: 7243-5-35937-2-8)

Billed accurately as "The Ultimate Chet Baker Collection," this CD features his two original versions of the tune, the instrumental with Mulligan, and his subsequent vocal. Both, while short, at under 3 minutes each, are as moving and sensually romantic today as when first recorded.

The other selections cover the years through 1965 and feature Chet's trumpet and vocals equally. Two previously unissued tracks are also included. 'Tis a superb overview of Baker at his best.

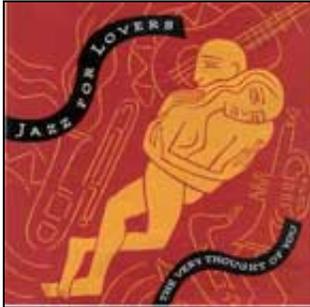
Chet Baker in Tokyo (Evidence: ECD-22158-2)

This marvelous two-disc set was recorded in 1987, less than a year before his death. Baker was in top form both instrumentally and vocally. His version of "Valentine" runs nearly 14 minutes and is a masterpiece in both areas. If I had to pick my favorite version of the song by anyone, anytime, this one would top the list.

Everything else on the set is equally well-done. His nearly 8-minute version of Elvis Costello's

“Almost Blue” is another ballad standout, proving once again, that as a singer and/or trumpeter his sound and style were one-of-a-kind.

On the up-tempo instrumental numbers, Baker is crisp, clean, bright, and lyrical, with all selections bearing Chet’s easily identifiable sound, approach, and melodic organization. While never regarded as a great technician among trumpeters, his performances here are top-o’-the-line and should cause numerous listeners to re-examine the Baker trumpet chops. He’s dazzling on “Seven Steps To Heaven” and West-coast breezy on “For Minors Only,” to name just two of the many superb selections included in this two-hour concert.



Jazz For Lovers: The Very Thought of You (Legacy/Columbia: CK-66954)

If there’s a romantic interlude, liason, special time with a special someone on your Valentine’s Day horizon, be sure to include this all-star anthology CD in your plans. It features 10 of the mellowest love songs ever written, performed by a veritable “Who’s Who in Jazz.”

For example, Chet Baker re-teams with Gerry Mulligan in an octet setting for nearly nine minutes of instrumental “Funny Valentine” magic. Recorded in concert at Carnegie Hall in 1974, the performance also features memorable ensemble and solo work by **Bob James, Ron Carter, Harvey Mason, John Scofield, Dave Samuels** and **Ed Byrne**.

I don’t know about you, but I still get lost in love whenever I hear Erroll Garner’s “Misty,” regardless of the Clint Eastwood film. Garner, who wrote the tune, is backed by a full orchestra, and his unique piano style evokes every iota of intimacy the memorable melody provides.

The sensual sax of **Stan Getz** whispers, teases and reminds us of love discovered as he purrs his way through “I’ve Grown Accustomed to Her Face.” Trombonist **Bob Brookmeyer**, pianist **Herbie Hancock**, vibist **Gary Burton**, bassist **Ron Carter**, and drummer **Elvin Jones** add their talents in this guaranteed-to-fog-your-lenses, steam-your-windows performance.

Paul Desmond, Thelonious Monk, Miles Davis and more contribute to this “I’m In The Mood For Love” slo-dancin’, romancin’ collection.

JANUARY 2007

“Ring out the old, swing in the new!” That’s the 2007 theme, approach, and essence of two new recently released CDs by two of the best-known names in Central Ohio jazz: The Columbus Jazz Orchestra and singer Kelly Delaveris.

The Columbus Jazz Orchestra *The Colors of Jazz*
(jazzartsgroup.org)

This is the debut CD for the Columbus Jazz Orchestra under the artistic direction of trumpeter **Byron Stripling**. And what an exciting debut it is, highlighting the power and dynamics of a roaring big band at its best while showcasing the individual talents of its individual members, along with the incredible diversity-variety of sounds, styles, and approaches the Orchestra commands. ‘Tis a complete overview of things past, present, and to come by this artistic treasure of Columbus.



The set opens with a joyous, foot-tappin' romp, celebrating "Sweet Georgia Brown," sung exuberantly by leader Stripling, who also adds his formidable trumpet chops to the mix. This leads easily into a Latin-lite version of the Gershwin's "'S'wonderful," featuring the talents of alto-flutist, **Kris Keith** and flugelhornist, **Jim Powell**.

"I Found A New Baby" gets a drummin' "Sing Sing Sing" flavor from **Bob Breithaupt**, while "Amazing Grace" is infused with the blues, courtesy **Bobby Floyd's** B-3 and the soulful tenor of **Michael Cox**. Wayne Shorter's classic, "Infant Eyes" waltzes elegantly and sets the mood for the **Vaughn Weister** arrangement of the Ellington-Strayhorn ballad "Something To Live For," evoked soulfully by vocalist **Dwight Lenox**.

A bit of swing, a smidgeon of soul, and a nod to New Orleans, precede the title track, "The Colors Of Jazz," a dynamic three-movement suite, commissioned and written especially for the CJO by the renowned jazz composer-arranger **John Clayton**. Nearly 15-minutes long, it features outstanding ensemble work by the entire Orchestra and powerhouse soloing by Stripling, Floyd, Cox and **Pete Mills**.

You'll definitely start '07 with a swing in your step if you add this one to your CD collection early on.



Kelly Delaveris: *My Gift* (chicksingerkcd1@aol.com)

A mellower, more romantic approach to the New Year is taken by vocalist Kelly Delaveris, recently voted "Best Jazz Singer in Columbus" by a Columbus Dispatch Readers Poll.

This marvelous 18-song collection was created specifically by Kelly to benefit Cancer Research, and all proceeds from the sale of the album will go to that cause. For more information on this aspect of the CD or to make a purchase, call (614) 906-4700 or check www.achristmastocurecancer.org. Kudos to you La Belle Delaveris.

In addition to her commitment to this worthy project, listeners will enjoy great jazz, as the album is a showcase for Kelly at her best. In this 18-song, swing-easy set, she blends and smoothly intermixes her two favorite styles: breezy and sensual selections from The Great American Songbook and subtly smooth renditions of Brazilian Jazz in the original Portuguese, all aided-and-abetted by the very best of our local musicians.

Her son, **Nikolas**, along with **Sean Fergus** and **Jim Rupp** back her on the Songbook selections, which include an up-tempo "Old Devil Moon," an introspective "Darn That Dream," and a yearning "So Many Stars," to name a few.

The Brazilian tunes, by such legendary composers as Luis Bonfa and Antonio Carlos Jobim, include solid instrumentation by **Brett Allen**, **Chris Berg**, **Danny Agular**, and **Joe Nelson**.

Put 'em all together, and they spell "great listening for this year – and many years to come!"

Papa John DeFrancesco: *Desert Heat* (Savant: SCD-2075)

If you're lucky enough to be going to the big OSU Championship game in nearby Glendale, Arizona, on January 8, and you're in the mood for some great jazz before and after the game, be sure to check out the local listings to see if Papa John is performing in the area.



While his son Joey (who's performed frequently in Columbus) is better known internationally, it's Joey's father, Papa John, who taught him how to drive that powerhouse Hammond B-3 so dynamically, emotionally, and excitingly. Papa recently moved from Philly to Phoenix (apparently he has a thing for living in cities whose names start in "Ph" and pronounced as "F").

In an unusual and novel instrumental twist, son Joey performs on electronic keyboards throughout, replacing Papa's usual guitar accompaniment. This gives the whole album a drastically different sound from that of the usual B-3 combo, which is usually amplified by either guitar or sax.

The set opens with the easy-walkin', blues-based title track and works its way through an eclectic collection of tunes that include a wide variety of moods, styles and tempos. Funk 'n' Fusion are covered solidly by the Eddie Harris composition "Cold Duck Time" and the Jeff Lorber work "Tune 88."

There's a surprisingly bouncy version of the French hit "What Now My Love" which contrasts dynamically with Papa's searingly intense rendition of the traditional "House Of The Rising Sun."

For slow dancin', romancin', you'll go a long time before you hear anything more sensually seductive than Papa's take on "I'll Close My Eyes." Play this track during your next romantic interlude and all things will go your way.

DECEMBER 2006

First of all, my best wishes to you and yours for a Happy Holiday and a sensational 2007, along with my thanks for your interest, input, and response to this column and the radio show.

A bit of trivia: I recently learned that the world's first shopping center was the Country Club Plaza opened in Kansas City in 1926. By 1929, they held their first Plaza Lighting Ceremony, a tradition that has continued 'til now.

In 1996, baritone sax player Kerry Strayer was tapped to put together a music and entertainment program, which was heavily influenced by one of KC's main traditions, jazz.

A marvelously festive, jazzy overview, re-creation, and documentation of the jazz elements of those programs was recently recorded and released as...

The Kerry Strayer Orchestra Christmas in Kansas City (KSP-0602)

This Happy Holiday set features Strayer's hard-swingin' 17-piece orchestra, vocalists **Kevin Mahogany**, **Lisa Henry** and others, along with the **John Knox Presbyterian Kirk Choir**, in a compilation of 15 familiar carols that will bring cheer to even the Scroogiest.

Henry is superb in her blues-drenched version of Charles Brown's "Christmas Comes But Once A Year," while Mahogany's at his up-tempo best on "Sleigh Ride," and "Santa Claus is

Coming To Town.”

The Choir is mellow and reflective on “We Wish You A Merry Christmas,” while everyone cooks on “The Most Wonderful Time of the Year.” Definitely have this one in your CD player for any and all of your holiday get-togethers.



Various Artists: *Jazz Yule Love II* (Mack Avenue Records: MAC-1029)

Talk about variety! This set ranges from The Chipmunks to Tchaikovsky. In between you'll enjoy such diverse experiences as “O Holy Night,” played solo trumpet by Sean Jones, “Let It Snow,” by the Bud Shank Quartet, a rompin’ “Jingle Bells,” by Gerald Wilson’s 18-piece band, Oscar Brown Jr.’s look-ahead to “Another Year,” a bit of Bach by guitarist Oscar Castro-Neves, and a Dickensian “God Rest Ye,” by The Hot Club of Detroit to name just a few of the winners included.

Etta Jones: *Christmas with Etta Jones* (Muse Records: MCD 5411)

The late-great Etta Jones could sing the Yellow Pages or obits and I’d give it 5-stars-with-clusters. Her holiday CD, released in 1990 is one of my most-played, most-enjoyed albums any time of the year.

Backed by such jazz Hall-of-Famers as **Houston Person** and **Bill Easley** on tenors, **Johnny Coles** on trumpet, **Randy Johnston** on guitar, **Stan Hope** and **Horace Ott** on keyboards, Etta romps her way through such favorites as “The Christmas Song,” “Ring The Bells,” “What Are You Doing New Years Eve,” and a host of other holiday favorites.

While every track is jazzily bluesily wreathed in mistletoe and holly, her version of “Merry Christmas, Baby” is outstanding. I play it – and enjoy it – even in July.



Geoff Tyus: *Happy Piano Holidays* (TYU1995CD)

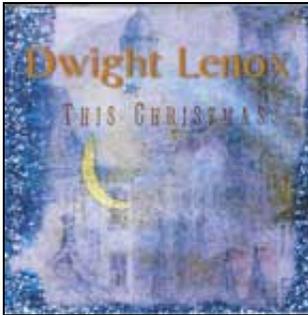
Should your winter travels take you to nearby Naples, Florida, be sure to check out one of Central Ohio’s most talented pianists, Geoff Tyus, currently performing at the Naples Hyatt. While you’re there, be sure to pick up a copy of his outstanding Christmas CD.

Utilizing his classical training, jazz experience, and prowess on acoustic piano, electronic keyboards and synthesizers, Geoff has created a timeless holiday treat. The 10 selections are an inspiring combination of religious and secular favorites, and include a completely new composition, “In Santa’s Workshop,” which captures the cheery spirit of Santa’s Helpers as they happily build, build, build the toys for kiddies around the world.

“Jingle Bells” and “Winter Wonderland” are swingin’ jazz trio excursions; “Greensleeves” and “Ave Maria” are outstanding examples of solo acoustic piano.

My favorite track, however, is his completely new take on “Good King Wenceslas-Deck The Halls,” in which he intertwines, plays simultaneously, and incorporates such diverse elements as jazz visits to Bourbon Street, 52nd Street, a dash of Dickens, a bit of concert bravado and much more. You gotta hear it to believe it!

If Naples isn’t on your agenda this season, this CD and his many others can be ordered at geofftyus@comcast.net



Dwight Lenox: *This Christmas* (Dwight@dwrightlenox.com)

Dwight's always-swingin', jazz baritone voice has been a crowd pleaser for years. He handles blues, ballads, bop, and pop with equal ease, so it's no surprise that this collection of 11 holiday favorites is a frosty delight in every respect.

Backed by pianist **Dave Powers**, drummer **Reggie Jackson**, trumpeter/ fluge hornist **Lee Savory**, and a horn section, Dwight, cheerily or reverently (as the song requires) touches all the bases in this festive program.

The set opens with a happy big band version of Donny Hathaway's "This Christmas," slows down a bit for Vince Guaraldi's Charlie Brown original, "Christmas Time is Here," which blends smoothly into a reverently funky "Do You Hear What I Hear?"

Lee Savory is mellow-melancholy-to-the-Nth on the moving "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas," and the set closes with a spritely waltz-time, straight-ahead jazz version of "The Most Wonderful Time Of The Year." A most wonderful CD indeed!

NOVEMBER 2006

Fusion is the term applied to the new jazz/rock approach that made its appearance in the late '60s and became the "jazz sound of the '70s."

Basically, its concept was the infusion of jazz with the raw power of rock rhythms and song structure, electronic instruments and effects, elements of the avant-garde, a smattering of soul, more than a dash of dissonance, and frequently an air of foreboding and mystery.

The compositions, often long and wandering, featured propulsive rhythms, tonal colors, instrumental textures, electronic timbres and simplified melodies that dominated the more traditional jazz structure of chords, melodic improvisations, and familiar rhythms. Essentially, everything about the music was new.

A diverse selection of musicians contributed to its evolution. In 1967, after leaving **Stan Getz**, vibist **Gary Burton** became one of the first to synthesize jazz, country and rock into something more than jazz with touches of other styles. **Eddie Harris** and his electric sax (Varitone) made a contribution, as did **Herbie Mann's** Memphis Underground, **Jimi Hendrix**, and such hard-to-classify bands as **The Fourth Way**, **Soft Machine**, and **Frank Zappa**, to name a few of the experimenters.

The "official" fusion sound was touched upon in the 1969 Miles Davis album *In A Silent Way*. Davis followed this preview with the breakthrough fusion album, *Bitches Brew*, which combined all of the ingredients mentioned above into a mind-expanding, musical-mystical experience that was completely new – a sound that excited, delighted audiences and critics alike.

The way was paved for the many fusion bands that followed. One of the best was Weather Report, a quintet co-founded by **Wayne Shorter** and **Joe Zawinul** in 1970.

Described by many as "The Band of the Decade," Weather Report enjoyed a 15-year run in its various incarnations. A marvelous overview of their ever-evolving sound can now be enjoyed on:

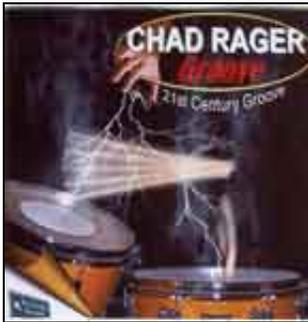
Weather Report: *Forecast: Tomorrow* (Columbia/Legacy 82796-93604-2)

This three-disc boxed set is a treasure for those who've wanted "The Best Of Weather Report" all in one collection. The tracks are arranged chronologically so one can hear the ongoing changes in their musical concepts, innovations, and personnel.

Shorter and Zawinul are featured throughout, joined over the years by such jazz heavyweights as **Miroslav Vitous**, **Alfonse Mouzon**, **Peter Erskine**, **Victor Bailey**, and the legendary, late-great **Jaco Pastorius**.

Appetizers include individual selections by **Miles Davis**, **Wayne Shorter**, and **Cannonball Adderly**, followed by the main course: 34 of Weather Report's best studio recordings, including two previously unreleased studio tracks and a previously unreleased 13-minute live-performance of "Mysterious Traveler."

As an added bonus, there's a two-hour DVD capturing Weather Report in a 1978 concert featuring Jaco on bass. This alone is worth the price of the set.



Chad Rager Groove: 21st Century Groove (Strokeland Records SR007CD)

It takes only seven words to describe **Chad Rager**: "a dynamic drummer of the first rank." And this description perfectly defines his latest release, 21st Century Groove recorded live at Mills James Productions in Hilliard.

Chad, a 1972 graduate of Columbus North High, worked our local scene for years as a player, teacher, and clinician. He currently resides in Illinois and fronts Groove, a powerhouse octet that produces an energized big band sound with the intimacy and

individuality of a small group.

His drumming reflects his early influences: the power of Krupa, the technique of Rich, the dynamics of Bellson, and the musicality of Roach. To these, he adds his own innovative concepts and strengths, thus creating a percussive punch that's unique – and his alone.

This is exciting, foot-tappin', finger-snappin' foreground jazz at its most-intense – definitely not the CD for use as background at your next tea party, intimate dinner, or romantic interlude. Every track cooks-on-high, from the opening "Sing, Sing, Sing," to the closing "Whipping Post." In between you'll enjoy pulse-pounding performances from the songbooks of Monk and Nestico, along with a few Rager originals.

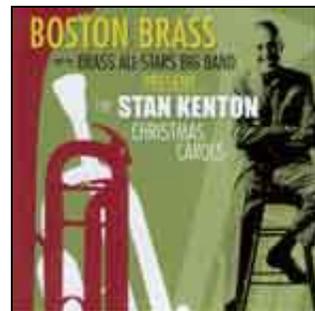
For more info and sound samples, visit: www.chadragergroove.com

Boston Brass & The Brass All-Stars Big Band: The Stan Kenton Christmas Carols (Summit Records DCD-464)

As Lambert, Hendricks, and Ross used to sing as they paraphrased POGO: "Deck Us All with Boston Cholly – Fa la la la and Kalamazoo!" The Christmas Jazz is descending upon us.

This Boston Brass CD-update of Kenton's 1961 Christmas album is one of the best you'll ever hear.

Using the original Kenton arrangements, the carols are built around brass instrumentation using four trumpets, four trombones, and four French Horns (which replace the traditional Big Band sax-section), drums, percussion, piano, and bass. The results are a joyful blend of jazz, classical, a dash of Dickens, Olde English, and Victorian. All that's missing is a Yule log to light while you listen.



Of the 13 selections included, 10 are religious, three secular. The only minor fault I find with the album is its length, about 44-minutes, which gives short shrift to some of my favorites, ie, "God Rest Ye," at 1:38 and "Wenceslaus," at 1:49. That aside, this set will definitely add a warm glow to your holiday festivities.

OCTOBER 2006

"What's NEW in Jazz for the 21st Century" is the subtitle for my weekly radio show. 'Tis a reasonably accurate description in that the show features primarily new CDs by the still-living performing-recording jazz heavyweights, Hall of Famers, and young rising stars on today's jazz scene, along with their new compositions and new updated arrangements of older familiar tunes.

This format/concept, however, does not exclude the long-dead iconic legendary performers and their works. These are an important, necessary element of the program, and as such are featured regularly.

This is made possible by the sensational, ongoing research and work by most of the recording companies who continually go to their vaults and search out the classic, long-gone, but well-remembered past performers and performances. These may be re-edited, sometimes re-mixed with previously unreleased tracks added, or simply re-issued as CD versions of the original vinyls or acetates.

Quite frequently, they put together new combinations of previously issued works, create "Best of" CDs or combine many artists on anthology or theme albums. These releases, while containing old music from a variety of sources, are, as far as I'm concerned, new CDs, and thus qualify as "What's New in Jazz for the 21st Century."

Many jazz purists regard these new re-issues, compilations, collections, anthologies with disdain. I consider them a gift for today's jazz listener with limited-buck\$ to enjoy the best of the past at an affordable price.

With that preamble, I'll recommend:



Miles Davis: *Cool & Collected* (Columbia/Legacy 82876-84784-2)

Here's a set that will please all Davis fans, new and old. It features an overview of Miles' highlights from his Columbia years, 1956-1985, along with a newly remixed, previously unreleased track, and a selection, "Generique," from his rarely heard 1957 movie soundtrack album.

The 13 tracks feature Miles in performance with many of his legendary sidemen: **John Coltrane, "Cannonball" Adderley, Wayne Shorter, Bill Evans, Red Garland, Herbie Hancock, Paul Chambers, Ron Carter, John Scofield, Jimmy Cobb, and "Philly Joe" Jones**, to name a few of the giants with whom Miles recorded in those years. Naturally, a track with Miles and The Gil Evans Orchestra is part of the package.

The selections are programmed for "sound" rather than chronologically. This presentation provides the listener with the enormous variety of the overall Davis approach and style, as opposed to a step-by-step evolution. A "must-have" CD for all "Miles Maniacs" – and "NEW for the 21st Century."

Richie Cole and The Alto Madness Orchestra: *Risë's Rose Garden* (Jazz Excursion JEX-103/104)

I've raved about **Richie Cole** twice before in this column (January and June 2006). But, while not yet a household word, Cole is a phenomenal alto-saxman with a dynamically creative outlook and presentation.

In this double CD collection, he continues to expand on his exploration of making a small group (an octet) sound like a big band (16-players and more). As in his previous outing, *Back On Top*, he is overwhelmingly successful.



His unique arrangements and instrumentation logically and creatively combine the best of the powerhouse, driving big band sound with the more intimate, individual sound of a small group. Thus, the listener gets the best of both approaches to modern jazz in a wide range of styles that include blues, ballads, bop, latin, swing, and noir.

The collection of 10 originals and 8 standards includes such diverse composers as Charles Mingus, Kurt Weill, Eddie Heywood, and Dimitri Tiompin.

Among the many outstanding tracks on this set, I particularly liked his version of the melancholy Mingus classic, "Peggy's Blue Skylight" with superb trumpet soloing by one-time-Mingus-sideman, **Jack Walrath**, his relaxed rendition of "Canadian Sunset," the surprisingly swingin' take on "Speak Low," and the great late-'40s swing-band sound on his original composition, "Night In Toyoma."

While definitely not the greatest jazz album ever recorded (and aficionados could argue endlessly on that subject), this is a timeless jazz presentation that will give pleasure for years to come.



Big Phat Band: *The Phat Pack* (Immergent Records 284404-2)

Columbus listeners have the good taste to thoroughly enjoy the sound of a real big band. Thus, they'll overwhelmingly enjoy this dynamic, driving 18-to-23-piece ensemble, headed up by tenor sax-pianoman **Gordon Goodwin**.

Whatever your preference, The Big Phat Band covers all the bases in the course of this highly varied 13-song collection of originals and standards. Listeners can swing, dance, laugh, and romance, tap their feet, reminisce, mellow-out, whatever their

mood.

There are guest-soloists galore, including **David Sanborn**, **Eric Marienthal**, **Dianne Reeves**, **Eddie Daniels**, **Wayne Bergeron**, **Grant Geissman**, **Andy Martin**, and more.

Take Six appears on one track, "It Was A Very Good Year," which evokes the 4-Freshmen with Kenton – one of my favorites on the set. I could go for a whole album with this sound.

As an added bonus, the CD comes with a DVD on which viewers/listeners will enjoy the complete album in surround-sound and stereo, concert videos, solo transcriptions, audio commentaries, photos, bios, games, and much more.

SEPTEMBER 2006

In the late thirties, countless big bands toured the land as America danced its way out of the Depression. World War II cut into their travels and personnel but not their popularity, thanks to their regular appearances in movies, on radio shows, USO specials and the numerous remote broadcasts from the legendary night clubs, ballrooms, and dance hall pavilions of the nation.

However, as the postwar years progressed, America's pop music tastes changed rapidly and drastically, causing the number of regularly traveling big bands to diminish proportionately. Those that remained traveled less, performing instead, for the most part, on musical TV shows (Gleason, Martin, Como, Carson, etc.), PBS specials, at annual national-international jazz festivals and in theater-concert hall, arena-stadium settings where people listened, not danced.

Fortunately, their appearances in the recording studios did not diminish. Therefore, the pulsating, exciting big band sounds – now more orchestral and complex – are still available for all to enjoy.

This evolution in sound and approach, from the traveling swing-jazz big band of the late thirties to the essentially reinvented modern jazz concert orchestra of today, is dynamically demonstrated by...



The Paul Cacia Jazz Orchestra: *Legacy – The Last Sessions* (Empressario 5500) www.paulcacia.com

Paul Cacia, a trumpeter of the first rank, spent 14 years putting this spectacular session together, which was completed in late 2005. Over the course of the project, four world-class jazz arrangers and 25 Jazz Hall of Fame guest soloists participated. For some of the artists, this was their last recording, making the CD title even more relevant.

As Cacia explains, “This album presents a variety of styles and formats that show the versatility and diversity that a big band is capable of in the concert jazz orchestra idiom.”

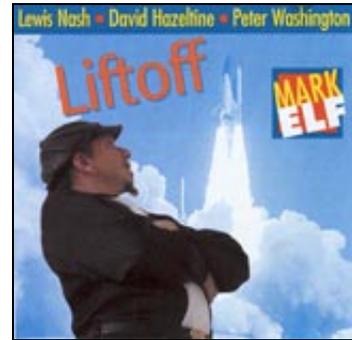
“Take The A Train” gets a traditional, danceable swing treatment, with a powerhouse arrangement by Ernie Wilkins, highlighted by solos from such notables as “**Snooky**” **Young**, **Don Menza**, and **Paul Smith**. Leader Cacia demonstrates his powerful “high-note chops” on trumpet with a romping “Stormy Weather” arranged by Sal Nistico. Central Ohio’s late, great trumpet master **Harry “Sweets” Edison** is smoothly, slyly showcased as he and the band back guest vocalist **Jennifer Wood** on an ultra-hip rendition of “Why Don’t You Do Right?”

Pete Rugolo’s written-and-arranged “Overtime” is classic West Coast big band – reminiscent of all those great sounds generated by Kenton, Holman, and Rogers in the mid-fifties. Soloists on this track include such legends as the brothers **Candoli (Pete and Conte)** on trumpets, **Don Menza**, **Pete Christleib**, and **Gabe Baltazar** on saxes, **Bill Watrous** on t-bone, **Louis Bellson** on drums, and many more. ‘Tis my favorite track on the album.

Whatever the selection, whatever the style, this is hard-core, straight-ahead jazz that will please, excite, and satisfy big band/jazz orchestra aficionados of all ages.

Mark Elf: *Liftoff* (Jen Bay Records: JBR 0011)
www.markelf.com

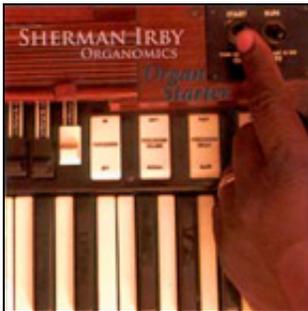
On the jazz-guitar scene, the **Mark Elf** star has continued to rise for over the past ten years. Each outing, each CD surpasses his previous efforts. His single-note runs and chording easily rival the best of the masters; his imagination, creativity, and daring add immensely to his unique sound and approach.



Among the many elements setting this CD apart from most other current guitar-jazz albums is Mark's rediscovery and use of the baritone guitar, aka, the old, no-longer-available Dan Electro 6-string bass guitar. Mark had used one of these in his earlier days, liked the mellower, deeper sound, and decided to include it on this CD.

Alas, none was available, so he ordered the parts so he could build one. Turned out, he couldn't. But he had a compadre who could, and did, and the results are enjoyably heard on two of the 10 selections.

Backed by a trio of jazz heavyweights, **David Hazeltine** on piano, **Peter Washington** on bass, and **Lewis Nash** on drums (with the addition of percussionist **Daniel Sadownick** one one track only), Elf finesses his fretboard in an exciting variety of eight originals and two standards, one of which being a mellow, most-satisfying treatment of Bob Hope's theme, "Thanks For the Memory."



Sherman Irby Organomics: *Organ Starter* (Black Warrior Records: BW-1003)

If you've heard any of my jazz radio shows since 1959, you know I'm a nut for sax-organ combos. So, it'll come as no surprise to you that I was knocked-out thrilled by this new set, headed up by the fearsomely fiery alto man **Sherman Irby**, complemented by the B-3 grease dripped by **Fred McFarlane**, deep-fried (on various tracks) by guitarists **Saul Rubin** and **Bruce Edwards**, drummers **Willie Jones III** and **Alvester Garnet**, and blooz-in-ated vocally, on one track only, by **Wycliffe Gordon**, who sings as opposed to showing his more-renowned skills as a trombonist.

Irby, who currently holds first alto chair in the prestigious Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, is equally at home in any jazz setting. On this set, he shows his versatility in selections that include blues, ballads, bop, and bossa, along with a dash of modal. What more could one ask?

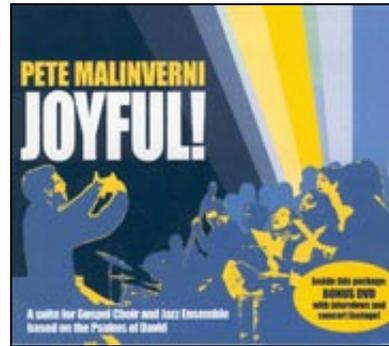
AUGUST 2006

To know and understand the origins, roots, and evolution of jazz, rock, blues, hip-hop, rap, funk, soul and quite a bit of pop, one must, in the words of Jon Hendricks, "Go Back To Church!" The power and influence of gospel church music on all these forms of music is undeniable and ever-present in the works of such Hall of Fame jazz artists as Ray Charles, Les McCann, Ramsey Lewis, Charles Mingus and myriads more.

This is dynamically demonstrated for all to hear and enjoy in an exciting new release:

Pete Malinverni: Joyful! (Artists Share-AS0047)

For this completely original suite for gospel choir and jazz ensemble, based on the Psalms of David, composer, pianist, conductor, **Pete Malinverni** combines short sermonette narrations by the **Reverend Frederick C. Ennette, Sr.**, **The Devoe Street Baptist Church Choir of Brooklyn**, and a jazz quintet featuring **Steve Wilson** on alto sax, **Joe Magnarelli** on trumpet and flugelhorn, **Todd Coolman** on bass, **Dwayne Broadnax** on drums, and himself on piano.



Malinverni chose the Psalms of David for the text. These were written by King David as songs of praise, supplication, joy, and mourning. Their poetry and power speak relevantly and truthfully even now. He then composed the music – an exciting, heartfelt blend of gospel music and choir, narrations, and thoroughly modern jazz improvisations. The results are revelatory, inspiring, dynamic – sure to please both churchgoers and jazz club patrons.

As an added bonus, the musical CD disc is complemented by a DVD, directed by Oscar-winner **Maryann De Leo**, which documents, with interviews and performances, the concepts and background leading up to the live recording at the New York Conservatory of Music in October 2005.

You'll hear "Hallelujah!! Amen! and Oop-Bop-Sha-bam!," along with the warm rustle of your greenbacks hitting the collection plate as the Owlette-ushers passeth amongst ye.



Nancy Kelly: Born To Swing (Amherst Records: AMH-4422-2)

The album title says it all! Here's a splendid selection of sensational songs, sung by one of the best in the business. **Nancy Kelly** has a bright, clear voice, a natural jazz feel, the talent, dynamics, drama, insight, and humor to make all of these reasonably familiar tunes sound brand new – as if they were written tomorrow!

Backed by an all-star quartet, highlighted by the fills, accents, and teasings of tenorman **Houston Person**, Kelly swings her way through compositions by such diverse composers/lyricists as Harold Arlen, Billy Joel, Cole Porter, Jimmy Webb, Rodgers and Hart, Jimmy Van Huesen, Vincent Youmans, Michelle LeGrand, and more.

She's introspectively moody on "New York State of Mind," joyfully exuberant on "I've Got The World On A String, achingly reflective on "Didn't We," bluesily seductive on "Let's Talk Business," and humorously hip on "Let Me Off Uptown" – my favorite track on the album, which infectiously and enjoyably runs through my mind in those many moments when my brain is orbiting Zontar.

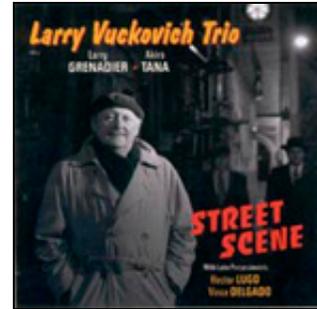
Larry Vuckovich Trio: Street Scene (Tetrachord Music-684)

The piano trio is probably the most-basic instrumentation in jazz, and there are countless creative combos currently on the scene. One of the best is led by **Larry Vuckovich**, featuring veterans **Larry Grenadier** on bass and **Akira Tana** on drums.

Vuckovich, a Yugoslavian-born pianist, came to the U.S. at age 14, was mentored by and studied with Vince Guaraldi, was the pianist-of-choice for Mel Torme and performed frequently with Jon Hendricks, Clark Terry, and Count Basie, to name a few of the other heavyweights

with whom he was professionally associated.

His sound is distinguished by a “softer” touch than most, giving the listener a meaningful, introspective experience in his approach to a ballad, yet bops with the best of ‘em on the up-tempo outings.



On this musically diverse set, he impressively demonstrates all of his abilities. For the flagwaving, foot-tappin’ crowd, he wails his way through such bop-based swingers as Sonny Clark’s “News For Lulu,” in which he integrates more than a dash of the funky “Comin’ Home Baby” feel; adds a medium-tempoed Bud Powell-approach to the standard, “Come Rain Or Come Shine,” and a unique, fiery, Mambo-fied rendition of “As Time Goes By,” on which he includes the peppery-percussion of guest artists Hector Lugo on congas and Vince Delgado on bongos.

Jazz Noir is the approach for “Street Scene,” evoking the lonely, melancholy mood of Metropolis in the wee hours. The impressionism of Bill Evans is evident in “Blue In Green,” while a homage to Errol Garner’s rich, full use of the piano range is heard on “It Could Happen To You.”

His originals are equally inventive. He combines Slavic, blues, Balkan, and classical elements in his tempo-shifting “Blue Bohemia Suite,” which features a briskly swinging quote from Dvorak’s “Slavonic Dances #22,” followed by a minor blues section and ending as a jazz waltz. “Dexter’s Mode” captures the harmonic format used by the great saxophonist, Dexter Gordon, while “Scandinavian Waltz” pays tribute to the beauty of Scandinavia where he lived and played in the ‘60s.

JULY 2006

“It don’t mean a thing if it ain’t got that swing!” That was the qualification for jazz by Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn in the swingin’ ‘40s; ‘tis equally true today. Swing goes through you, exciting the soul, stirring the blood, causing fingers to snap, toes to tap, bodies to dance, makin’ ya feel good all over! If you don’t react that way, check your pulse, you may have died.

With that preamble, it’ll come as no surprise that swing is the common denominator for the CDs reviewed this month.

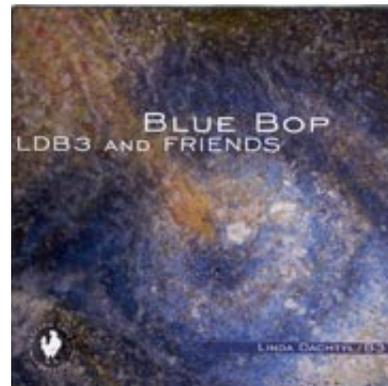
LDB3 and Friends: *Blue Bop* (Chicken Coup Records: CCP-7003)

The “LD” in LDB3 stands for **Linda Dachtyl** who continues the burnin’ B3 Columbus traditions set by Hank Marr, Don Patterson, and Tony Monaco (who produced the session on his newly formed Chicken Coup label).

On this debut CD, Linda and her compadres touch all the bases in the B3 bandbook: blues, ballads, bop, a bit of funk and Monk, a dash of Latin and some dreamy romance.

The varied selections include compositions by such legendary organists as Hank Marr and Jimmy McGriff, which contrast dynamically with works by Irving Berlin, Oscar Hammerstein and Jerome Kern.

Aiding and abetting LD’s B3 tour-de-force are such well-known locals as saxmen **Gene Walker** and **Bob Frascotti**; guitarists **Tom Carroll**, **Giles Ponticello**, and **Sean Carney**;



drummers **Jim Rupp** and Linda's husband, **Cary Dachtyl**.

While every track is a winner, I particularly liked the organ-tenor interplay on Monk's "Well You Needn't," the bluesy "Bridge To Shangri-La," with some raunchy bar-walkin' tenor by Gene Walker, and the old-style, slow dancin'-romancin' elegance of "Tenderly."

For more info on Linda, who's been active on the Columbus music scene since 1982 as a music teacher in high schools, colleges, and universities, a percussionist with the Columbus and other symphony orchestras, and a member of various pop-music groups. Visit www.dachtyl.com

Marilyn Harris: *Round Trip* (Wrightwood Records: WRCD-1569)

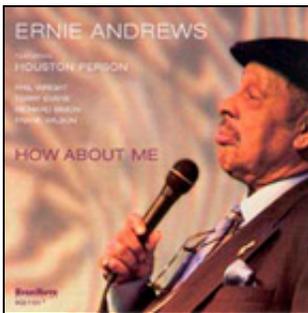
Were there a Cole Porter Award for hip, witty, sophisticated, relevant lyrics, jazz composer, pianist, singer **Marilyn Harris** would win it easily – as brilliantly displayed in this outstanding collection.

She jazzily lyricizes an intriguing spectrum of subjects ranging from "The Wisdom of Sam Kinison" (of monologue "Go Where The Food Is"), an insight into a fading musical star, the ups and downs of gambling on life and love, contemplations of how she'll be remembered when she's gone, a basic guide to Bop-101, the concept of "Cool" (in a duet with guest, Bob Dorough) and much more!

Her versatile voice goes from silk to raunch with ease. It's backed phenomenally by the 19-piece L.A. Jazz All-Stars Big Band, featuring powerhouse unison and solo work by such jazz heavyweights as trombonist Bill Watrous, tenorman Pete Christlieb, trumpeter Warren Luening, acoustic bassist Chuck Berghofer, and guitarist Jim Fox, to name a few.

If new, never-before-heard, big band swingin'-singin' songs, sung by a jazz-vocalist of the first rank lights your fires, this is the CD for you!

For more information on the phenomenal Marilyn Harris, visit: www.marilynharris.com



Ernie Andrews: *How About Me* (High Note: HCD-7151)

Ernie Andrews is one of the few remaining jazz vocalists to come out of the influential Billy Eckstein School of Black Baritones. His voice, like that of the legendary "Mr. B," is deep, soulful, moving, bluesy, sensually romantic, inspirational.

At age 78, he sounds like he's in his late-20's as he croons his way through such blues-drenched selections as "It's Monday Everyday," a major hit for the late-great Al Hibbler, "River's Invitation," by the always phenomenal Percy Mayfield, "The More I See You," a mid-'40s smash for Sinatra-rival Dick Haymes, and

the title track, a biggie for Julius LaRosa, a winner on "Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts" (the predecessor, along with the "Horace Heidt Show" of "American Idol").

Adding to this outstanding, updated tribute to the songs and singers of the '40s and '50s, is the quintet backing, which features insinuatingly sensual fills, embellishments, and accents by tenorman Houston Person.

The Russ Freeman Project: *Crossings* (Peacock Records: www.peacock.com)

Russ Freeman was one of the mainstay pianomen on the West Coast Jazz scene. He was the pianist of choice for drummer Shelly Manne, and recorded/performed frequently with such

West Coast heavyweights as Chet Baker, Art Pepper, and Shorty Rogers.

He composed a multitude of songs for these smaller quartet/quintet groups, but always had the wish to see them expanded and arranged for a big band setting.

Unfortunately, this wish never materialized in his lifetime; fortunately it finally became a reality when his widow, Carolyn, selected trombonist/composer Nathan Tanouye to arrange nine of Freeman's more notable compositions for a standard big band setting of five saxes, four trumpets, three t-bones and rhythm section. This grew into an orchestra that included a vocalist, flutes, oboe, 10-strings, harp and percussion. The end results are phenomenal: West Coast Big Band Jazz for the 21st Century at its best!

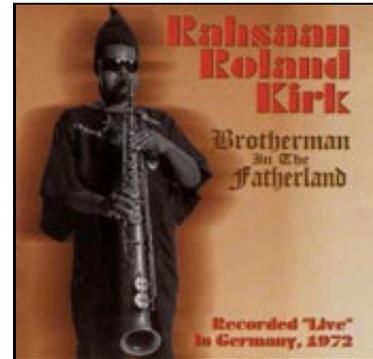
JUNE 2006

May was marvelous for jazz collectors, aficionados, listeners, fans, and local musicians. Early in the month, all had the opportunity to experience two rarely heard or never-before-released CDs by two Giants of Jazz, along with a duo of outstanding new productions by local musicians.

Rahsaan Roland Kirk: Brother in the Fatherland (HYENA Records-HYN 9347)

'Tis a mystery as to how such an exciting, creatively unique, people-pleasing performance by an internationally renowned jazz genius from Pennsylvania Avenue in Columbus, Ohio, could have been "misplaced, misfiled, overlooked, forgotten, lost, etc." for so many years, and therefore NEVER-BEFORE-ISSUED.

Unfortunately, the ultra-hip-and-humorous liner notes shed absolutely no information on why this was so.



Fortunately, however, the recordings were discovered and this outstanding concert is now yours to enjoy for years to come.

The music is outstanding in all areas. Recorded live at the Funkhaus in Hamburg, Germany, in March 1972 (three years before Rahsaan's first debilitating stroke in 1975), it captures Kirk at his peak: as a musician, performer, innovator, entertainer, showman, and Jazz Hall-of-Fame artist.

In the course of this 69-minute concert, Rahsaan covers all his "Kirk's Korners": his mastery of multiple instruments (tenor sax, flute, nose-flute, manzello, stritch, clarinet), his daringly dynamic dissonance, his romantic, mellow, introspective approach to a ballad, a bit of singing (although Frank, Mel, Tony, et al. felt no challenge in this area), and his enormous prowess as a swingin', innovative Tenorman of Titanic Proportions, as displayed on the 17-minute concert closer, "Blue Trane."

For more information on Rahsaan, his life, attitudes, talents, foibles, and honors, read his fascinating bio, "Bright Moments," by John Kruth, reviewed in the *Short North Gazette* column for May 2000, which can be seen in my "Jazz Columns" section at www.shortnorth.com

Richie Cole meets Art Pepper: A Piece of Jazz History (Jazz Excursion-JEX-102)

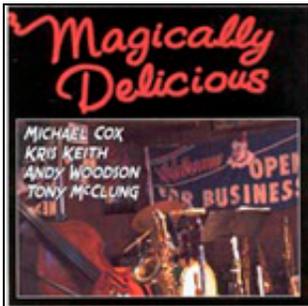
This phenomenal session was produced by jazz connoisseur-historian-critic-writer **Dr. Herb Wong**. It was the first and only recorded interplay between world-class alto saxmen Cole and Pepper and was recorded just a few months before Pepper's untimely death in 1982.

The original vinyls were released by Palo Alto Records under the title of *Return To Alto Acres*. Sorry to say, the set was essentially a “limited edition” and had an extremely limited distribution. Thus, only a very few Cole-Pepper fanatics ever had a chance to hear, buy, or enjoy this dynamic, historic collaboration.

By the time the session took place, both players were regarded as “top o’ the heap” alto players, although Pepper’s unique sound and approach gave him an edge in critical response, name recognition, and audience favoritism.

That notwithstanding, both players are in top form on every track. They interplay, innovate, and inspire each other at every moment. The tracks featuring both of them on alto will scorch the paint off the walls – as will their other inventive excursions on which Cole adds a bit of baritone (his first recording with “The Stovepipe”) while Pepper wails away on his equally magnificent clarinet.

On the local scene, two of Central Ohio’s most creative and exciting musicians, bassist **Andy Woodson** and vocalist **Dwight Lenox**, released CDs, both of which easily equal or surpass anything presented on the national-international scene. The CDs are available at a few local outlets and the Web sites listed below the titles.



Andy Woodson: *Magically Delicious* (andywoodson.com)

Woodson’s powerful, lyrical upright bass drives, inspires, and underpins every selection on this diverse and swinging session. It’s highlighted by an unusual pianoless quartet, featuring saxmen **Michael Cox** and **Kris Keith** who bring bass clarinet and flutes to their arsenal, while **Tony McClung** provides the fire and punch on drums, electronic percussion, and banjo. With instrumentation and a lineup like that, you know from the start you’re not gonna be hearing warmed-over incarnations of too-often-recorded jazz standards.

Excitingly new interpretations on semi-familiar compositions by such well-known composers as Charles Mingus, Lennon-McCartney, Joe Henderson, Clifford Brown, and Thelonious Monk are augmented by never-before-heard originals by Woodson, Cox, Keith, and McClung.

Dwight Lenox: *Gershwin and Friends* (dwightlenox.com)

Lenox lends his lean, leisurely baritone to six of the Gershwins’ greatest, along with swingingly enjoyable elaborations, excursions on tunes by such diverse composers as Rogers and Hammerstein, Bill Withers, Joe Cocker, and Ralph McDonald. Overall, it’s vocal jazz at its best.

He’s backed by a powerhouse septet, which features such well-known Central Ohio musicians as trumpeter **Lee Savory**, trombonist **Tom Tasker**, tenorman **Brian Coon**, baritonist **Bob LeBeau**, pianomen **Ed Cottle** and **Clint Morse**, bassist **Sylvester Sample**, and drummer **Guy Remonko**, all of whom get their moments to solo and shine throughout the proceedings.

While every selection is a winner, I particularly liked Dwight’s take on “Summertime,” which features trumpeter Lee Savory in some nicely Miles-muted moments, along with Bill Withers’ “Just The Two Of Us,” and Joe Cocker’s “The Letter,” both of which feature a Stax-Tower of Power horn section punching things up.

MAY 2006

Theirs was an unlikely combination of singer and songwriters, yet it produced numerous internationally popular hits. The singer had her first national exposure and fame with Benny Goodman in 1941, was voted *Down Beat Magazine's* "Best Female Jazz Vocalist" in 1946 and earned an Oscar Nomination as Best Actress in 1955. She enjoyed enormous popularity as a jazz, blues, and pop singer throughout her long career.

The songwriters, on the other hand, came on the scene in the fifties and were linked primarily with writing hits for The Coasters and Elvis Presley. They were regarded by musicians as "The Rodgers and Hammerstein of Rock and Roll," but went on to scorch the stage in 1995 with "Smokey Joe's Café," the longest-running musical revue in Broadway history.

The singer was Peggy Lee; the composers were **Jerry Leiber** and **Mike Stoller**. Their musically memorable collaborations were unique, varied, unpredictable, and timeless, as you'll hear in the newly released:

Peggy Lee Sings Leiber & Stoller (Hip-O-Select Records: B-0004169-02)

While not a jazz album in the strictest sense, this highly diverse blend of musical settings, themes, and styles exudes a subliminal jazz sense, amplified by Lee's inherent jazz feel, voice, and phrasing. The songs are not presented chronologically. Instead, they are programmed to progress from one to another in terms of mood, content, and instrumentation. This unusual creative touch adds immeasurably to the overall impact of the entire set, which also includes selections that have never before been released.

Things start off with their first teaming in 1962: a roaring, big band treatment of "Kansas City," arranged and conducted by **Quincy Jones**, a reminder to listeners that Lee could "belt 'em out with the best!"

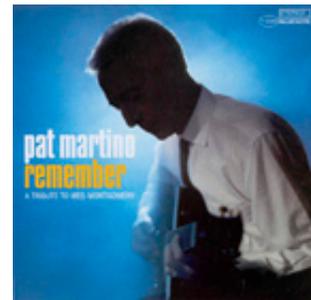
The jazz feel continues as Hall-of-Fame Bassist **Ray Brown** makes his always swingin' statements on the humorous "Some Cats Know," based on a punch line from comedian Slappy White.

Other highlights include a quintet-backed version of "I'm A Woman," and 10 selections from their rarely heard album, *Mirrors*, which all three consider their best work. The CD closes with the enormously popular, "Is That All There Is?," (which Capitol Records did not want to release, feeling it was "too weird." It went on to win a Grammy).

Pat Martino: Remember: A Tribute To Wes Montgomery (Blue Note Records: 0946-3-11226-2-0)

The CD title gets right to the point. Here's a collection in which one world-class jazz guitarist pays homage to another. Martino and Montgomery were contemporaries as they rose to international jazz stardom.

Stylistically, they differed. Martino was faster, more driving and complex, whereas the late, great Montgomery had a rounder, warmer, bluesier tone and a more lyrical approach. Both shared the ability to combine chordal structures with exceptional linear, single note runs.



They also shared tragedy in their personal lives. Wes died prematurely of a heart attack at age 43 in 1968, while some years later, Pat suffered a brain aneurysm, which left him with virtually no memory. He had to completely relearn to play the guitar, which he did, surpassing even his earlier prowess.

Elevating this album above most other "tribute" collections is that Martino does much more than just copy the Wes sound-and-style riffs and runs. Rather, he evokes the creative intuition

and spirit, thus giving each tune an individual Montgomery presence – a vibe that permeates the entire set.

Adding to the overall excellence are the remarkable piano solos of **David Kikoski**, the always-brilliant basswork of *John Patitucci*, the deft drumming of **Scott Alan Robinson**, and the powerhouse percussion of **Daniel Sadownick**. Together they bring a 21st-Century impression of what Wes would sound like today as they swing their way through five Montgomery originals, along with compositions by Milt Jackson, Carl Perkins (original writer-performer of many subsequent Elvis hits), Sam Jones, and others.

This is innovative, exciting jazz guitar that will definitely zing the strings of your heart.

Bill Watrous, Pete Christlieb & the Gary Urwin Jazz Orchestra: *Kindred Spirits* (Summit Records: DCD-448)

Gary Urwin is an Oberlin College graduate currently living in Los Angeles and leading one of the baddest big bands on the planet. With 23 to 27 pieces strong (depending on the track and the musical requirements), the Gary Urwin Jazz Orchestra features a superb combination of young lions and jazz veterans such as trombonist **Bill Watrous**, saxmen **Pete Christlieb** and **Kim Richmond** and trumpeters **Bobby Shew**, **Wayne Bergeron**, and **Warren Luening**, to name a few. English horn and harp, rarely heard in the big band format, are also included.

Collectively, they cook their way through a diverse selection of well-known jazz and pop standards, ranging from “Lester Leaps In” and the “Theme From Chinatown” to “Danny Boy” and “I’ll Be Seeing You.”

Intermixed with these, you’ll enjoy compositions by Miles Davis, Wayne Shorter, Neil Hefti, Bobby Troup, Kurt Weill, and Urwin himself. Fresh, innovative arrangements and dynamic, powerful solos make this a “must have” for any big band aficionado.

APRIL 2006

In the “Jazz Singers’ Hall Of Fame,” most of the First Ladies of Jazz are still household names and still known simply by their first names: Billie, Ella, Carmen, Sarah, Julie, June, Nina, to name a few.

In addition to their outstanding musical talents, these ladies had the advantage of having had enormous exposure to a mass audience on commercial radio and TV. Back in the days before radio consultants, restricted, specialized formats, and 20-song playlists, it was not unusual to hear Elvis and Ella, The Beatles and Billie, Carmen and Cash all in the same hour on the same station. This, obviously, was a big help in making their names and abilities reasonably recognizable to a majority of the listening and album-buying public.

Unfortunately, this is an advantage none of the current mainstream jazz singers have today. Only Diana Krall and Diane Schuur come close to enjoying the “recognizability factor” attained by their predecessors. And yet, there are numerous, superbly talented performers working and recording today whose names and talents are deserving of much-wider recognition. Here be a slight sampling for your consideration.

Charmaine Clamor: *Searching For The Soul* (FreeHam Records)

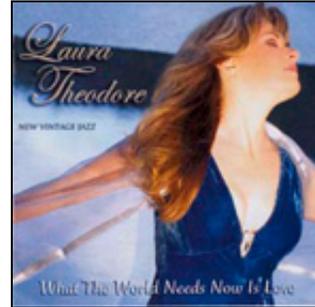
Charmaine is a contralto, singing in the lowest ranges of female vocalizing. This register adds enormous warmth, intimacy, sensuality to all of her selections and makes this one of the very best “Jazz for Slow-Dancin’ Romancin’ for the Wee-Hours” CDs ever recorded. “Soulful” is how one of the many callers described her when I debuted her on my show.

Her selection and interpretation of tunes is impeccable. You'll fall in love with whomever you're with as she purrs her way through "The Nearness of You," backed only by acoustic piano. You'll re-experience "love found, love lost" with "Since I Fell For You," featuring easy slides into her upper ranges and a quartet setting with some smoky, sexy sax by Glen Garrett.

My highlight however is "You'll Never Know," the timeless, Oscar-winning love song sung by Alice Faye in 1943's *Hello Frisco, Hello*. 'Tis a pity that elegant, classy, sophisticated, memorably melodic songs like this no longer have a chance with the tin-eared, PC-obsessive voters who select the Oscar-winning songs of today.

Laura Theodore: *What The World Needs Now Is Love*
(Bearcat Records: OC-6054)

As a singer, Cleveland-born-and-raised Laura Theodore has it all. A dynamic four-octave range that allows her to soar, crystal coloratura clear into the Maynard-sphere and then power-dive into the growling grit-and-gravel of the gutter, effortlessly and believably, with no glitches, gaps, gulps or gasps in the transition.



What's more, she has the imagination and daring to explore new, meaningful interpretations of well-known lyrics and give them fresh, innovative excitement and relevance; she has an inherent "jazz-sense" that permeates and electrifies her every performance, which she aptly describes as "New Vintage Jazz."

Backings include "doing-it-the-hard-way" with acoustic bass only on one track, a trio on a few others, and Julien Purefoy's Big Band on most. Whatever the setting, La Belle Theodore is outstanding. Sensational tracks include the Big Band-powered opener, "Some Of My Best Friends Are The Blues," a pulsating, sensual update on Peggy Lee's "Fever," and an intimate, longing rendition of Clint Eastwood's composition, "Why Should I Care?"

For free audio samplings of all her CDs, along with a bio, photos, reviews, online purchasing info and everything else you might want to know about this singing sensation, visit: www.lauratheodore.com. 'Tis browsing that will both pleasure and illuminate.

Michelle Latimer: *Sings & Plays* (Cool Note Records-CN 001)

As the CD title so accurately suggests, Ms. Latimer is a double dynamo in the world of jazz. She's both a swinging, imaginative jazz vocalist *and* a jazz trumpet player of the first rank. Many listeners will be hard-pressed to decide whether her singing overshadows her trumpet playing or vice-versa. As for me, she's outstanding and dynamic in both areas.

Both her voice, singing style, and trumpet playing are bright, clear, open, and full-toned, although on a few occasions, she effectively adds a bit of that ethereal "Chet Baker romantic-wisp" to both her singing and playing. It's just enough to bring a bit of surprise and variety to the total listening experience; it's particularly effective on her hauntingly exotic version of the bossa-nova classic, "Corcovado," which is one of my favorites, and used frequently on my radio show. I also had a fondness for her superbly unusual and imaginative take on "Over The Rainbow," on which she sings the rarely heard verse, while treating the universally familiar chorus to an instrumental outing, ala Baker.

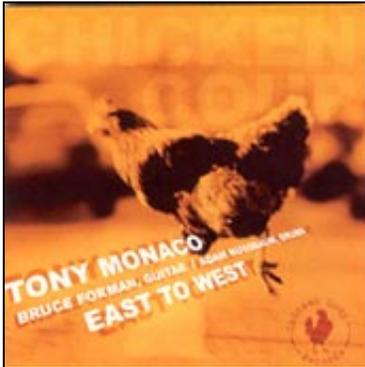
Of the 11 tracks on the CD, three are strictly instrumental, one is vocal only, with quartet backing, and seven are a combination of voice and quintet. Statistics aside, Michelle Latimer is a powerhouse jazz singer, trumpeter, performer – well worth hearing.

MARCH 2006

Jazz Organ, as we know it today, had its beginnings in 1955 when the Hammond Organ Company introduced their revolutionary vacuum-tubed B3 model, which could best be described as 400 pounds of wood, metal, ivory, and grease. It featured two keyboards, four sets of drawbars, 96 tone-wheels, an oil-lubed motor, all combined on a heavy wooden frame. The required Leslie Speakers and mikes were separate units. Thus, it was a “potential hernia-in-a-box” to lug around if you were one of the musicians who chose to drive it.

It took **Jimmy Smith**, after a year of experimentation and practice, to create a totally new jazz sound and physical approach to playing. He thus introduced the B3 organ to modern audiences as a leading jazz instrument, capable of producing a wealth of innovative, exciting jazz, which easily rivaled the horns, reeds, acoustic keyboards and other instruments. Smith not only experimented with the nuts-and-bolts-mechanics of the instrument, he also developed the dexterity to play a walking bass line with his feet, a chordal accompaniment with his left hand, and solo melody lines, similar to sax, trumpet, and trombone lines, with his right. Added to this, he fused gospel, R&B, deep blues, bebop and hard-bop into the enormously popular “soul-funk” groove, known today as “acid-jazz.” Over the years, he inspired, mentored, taught, and befriended countless others, including Central Ohio’s **Tony Monaco** who pays homage to the late, great Smith on his newest CD:

Tony Monaco: *East To West* (Chicken Coup Records: DCD 7001)



This is Tony’s sixth CD. Like its predecessors, every track burns with passion, imagination, improvisation, variety, and musicality. Monaco wrote the uptempo opener, “I’ll Remember Jimmy,” as a tribute to Smith, and searingly evokes Smith’s original “Chicken Shack” sound and style. Guitarist **Bruce Forman** and drummer **Adam Nussbaum** add more than a dash of fuel to the musical fires – and continue to do so on the remaining nine selections. The mood and tempo change to mellow and cool for the gently laid-back bossa, “O Barquino.” The boys are delightfully light-and-polite on this one.

The pleasant surprises continue as guest-tenorman **Byron Rooker** joins the group and adds his always-smokin’ sax to another cookin’ Monaco original, “Rudy and The Fox.” Rooker also shines on two more tracks, a samba-fied treatment of **Charlie Parker’s** “Donna Lee,” and a steamy-dreamy, “perfect for slow dancin’- romancin’” version of Benny Goodman’s “Don’t Be That Way.” Tony, Bruce, and Adam share the “late-nite, after-hours” mood. Of all the superb selections on the CD, this was my favorite. The trio’s versatility continues as they breeze through another Monaco original, a bluesy-breezy waltz, “Roz da’ Cat.”

This is the first CD release for Monaco’s newly formed jazz label, “Chicken Coup Records,” whose name also pays homage to Smith and his enormously popular “Back at the Chicken Shack” album early in his career. The label will focus on keyboard players. Work is already underway on forthcoming releases by Linda Dactyle and Dave McKay.

Somewhere up in that Great Rehearsal Hall in the Sky, the original B3-Groovemeister, The Incredible Jimmy Smith, is smiling.

Carol Robbins: *Jazz Play* (Jazzcats JCTS-105)

I've been a fan of harp music ever since Harpo would stop all of the madness and merry mayhem in a Marx Brothers movie for his harp solo. So, other than Harpo, the harp 'twas an instrument most at home in symphony orchestras, art galleries, and tea rooms. Thus, you'll never find one in a marching band.

However, due to its piano-guitar-vibes characteristics and sound, it's ideally suited to jazz – but, unfortunately, has very few players. **Dorothy Ashby**, from Detroit, who recorded for Cadet Records in the '60s, is/was the only jazz-harpist I'd ever heard – until this new CD by Carol Robbins arrived on the OwlDesk in mid-February.



In this marvelous 13-song collection, harpist **Carol Robbins** showcases the swinging elegance, excitement and versatility of the instrument in settings that range from duet-with-guitar (Larry Koonse) to sextet with sax, trumpet, guitar, bass, and drums, and all combinations in between.

Things open up with a strollin', bluesy, jazz-noir Robbins quintet original, "Buddy's Bite," featuring trumpeter **Steve Huffstetter** in a magnificently muted-Miles-mode, followed by a swingingly relaxed solo by Carol, complemented by guitar, bass, and drums. The renowned saxman **Bob Sheppard** sat this one out but has some great moments in subsequent selections, most notably in Robbins' stately "Darcy's Waltz," the blazingly uptempo "Tangier," the boppified "The Cribbler," which features outstanding work by the whole sextet, and Jerome Kern's standard, "I'm Old Fashioned."

Blues, ballads, bop, latin, waltzes, and a smidgeon-of-swing add to the variety and sophistication of this incredibly original, innovative, and classy set. This is one of those very few CDs that commands your attention as foreground listening – yet is perfect for those moments when you need soothing background sounds to ease the tensions of the day.

FEBRUARY 2006

Had MGM musical superstar **Lena Horne** never made a movie, her overwhelming musical talents and ability to overcome enormous social and cultural problems alone would have propelled her to the international stardom and iconic status as an artist and role model she enjoys today.

Her professional career started in 1931 at age 14 as just another club singer and dancer in Harlem. Two years later, she was one of the rising stars at the legendary Cotton Club, where she was mentored, guided, and advised by such jazz legends as Duke Ellington and Cab Calloway. Before long, she was the resident star attraction.

Movies followed in 1938, along with gigs as the singer in Charlie Barnet's swing band. She finally made her breakthrough performance in 1943 in the all-black movie-musical "Stormy Weather." Her singing of the title song became her musical signature and was a mega-hit with audiences of all races, but did little to help her deal with the racial bigotry, ignorance, and intolerance of the times. Even into the late '50s when she was internationally renowned and revered as an artist, she, like all of the other African-American supertalents of the day, was denied rooms in the hotels in which she sang, along with uncountable other indignities and insults. But, she persevered – and ultimately, conquered.

She left movies for the most part in 1956 and concentrated on her music – in clubs, cabarets, TV variety shows, recordings, and on stage, returning to movies rarely.

She was outstanding as Glinda The Good, in “The Wiz” in 1978 and made two TV appearances in 1994 in “A Century of Women” and “That’s Entertainment III.” Rave reviews followed her every appearance/performance.

Her autobiography, “Lena” co-authored with Richard Schickel covered her career through 1965, while “Lena Horne: Entertainer” by Leslie Palmer (with an introduction by Coretta Scott King) covers her life through 1989. Both are, like Lena, infinitely interesting and inspiring!

Among her numerous accomplishments and awards since then, she was inducted into the Big Band and Jazz Hall of Fame in 1991.

Which brings me to my featured CD of the month:

Lena Horne: Seasons of a Life (Blue Note 724349426528)

This outstanding album is a 10-song collection from sessions that Ms. Horne recorded between 1994 and 2000, most of which have never before been released. Although in her late 70s and early 80s, Lena sounds like a marvelously mature version of her 1943 Stormy Weather self. The voice is crystal clear, powerful, moving, emotional, innovative, dynamic, and above all, believably true to the lyric she’s singing.



She’s surrounded, inspired, backed magnificently by some of the best jazzmen on the planet: guitarist Rodney Jones, drummer Akira Tana, saxophonist Donald Harrison, while on two incredible never-before-released tunes, “Chelsea Bridge” and “Willow Weep For Me,” she duets with Herbie Hancock at his acoustic piano best. As magnificent as these two tracks are, one wonders why the Power Elite Record Company Executives kept them under wraps and on the shelf for so long. And, did Lena and Herbie record other songs at this session? If so, when can we hear them? Inquiring minds – and those with gourmet tastes in superb music – need to know!

Other treasures in this gem-of-an-album include her 1994 unreleased update of “Stormy Weather” and a subtly swingin’ “Singin’ In The Rain,” which lovingly quotes the familiar Gene Kelly vamp and happy, romantic charm. All that’s missing is the umbrella.

Here’s lookin’ at you, Lena!

The Scott Whitfield Jazz Orchestra East: Diamonds For Nat (Summit Records-DCD-437)



This is the 3rd Summit session for trombonist Whitfield and his 13-15 piece corps-du-cookers, which include jazz-hall-of-fame guest artists Vincent Herring on alto and Marvin Stamm on trumpet.

Collectively they pay tribute, homage to Nat Adderley, the cornet-trumpet-playing composer brother of the legendary Cannonball Adderley. All of the tunes in the set were written by Nat, an advisor, mentor, and friend of leader Whitfield in his novice days.

They roar their way through almost 9-minutes of Adderley’s most popular and well-known composition, “Work Song.” Outstanding solos by Herring, Stamm, Whitfield, and pianist Kenny Ascher contribute mightily to the overall power and dynamics of the tune.

Adderley’s second-most-renowned and popular composition, “Jive Samba,” is a pulse-

pounding, up-tempo Latin romp that's perfect for a big band treatment. Herring gets another shining solo spot as the band and other soloists add fuel to the fire.

Change-of-pace, surprise, innovative arrangements, improvisation, and superb programming are other outstanding features of the album. "Hummin'" features the tuba (rarely heard in mainstream jazz these days), while "Plum Street" highlights "dueling baritone saxmen," and "Roses For Your Pillow," a slow-dancin' ballad, reminds us once again, what mellow, smooth, and romantic sounds the trombone can make when played by a pro such as Whitfield.

JANUARY 2006

My mother was a classically trained pianist and teacher who could – and did – play everything well. As a teenager, she earned money as the pianist and singer in her Uncle John's Dance Band. As such, she not only had to learn and master the pop tunes of the early '20s, but also had to be proficient in the folk music of the Finns, Swedes, and Italians, the dominant population of her northern Minnesota home. With such a diverse ethnic mix coming to their dances, the band had to be able to play just about anything requested. And they did! Thus, a good time was had by all.

While studying the classics at Northwestern, she continued to play in local dance bands, as well as logging many hours as the pianist in a silent movie theater. After graduation, she became an elementary school music teacher and also gave private lessons in our home.

Give her any sheet music and in a few minutes, she'd be playing it. If the printed score was unavailable, "hum a few bars, and she'd fake it." Classical, jazz, show tunes, pop – she played it all, depending on her mood of the moment or whatever was requested from family and friends.

My brothers and I grew up with great piano sounds as a normal part of everyday living, so I'm always delighted when an exciting new piano CD arrives for use on my radio show. One of the best currently available is:

Alan Broadbent: Round Midnight (Artistry Music ART 7005)

Pianist Alan Broadbent, a two-time Grammy winner, is no stranger to diverse jazz keyboard stylings. He cooked with the Woody Herman Big Band, displayed West Coast Cool with Chet Baker, explored the avante-garde with Charlie Haden, to name a very few of his numerous and varied musical settings.

This latest collection is totally improvised piano jazz at its best – a superb combination of melody, swing, experimentation, imagination, and taste. Backed by two jazz heavyweights, bassist Brian Bromberg and drummer Joe LaBarbera, the trio demonstrates their underlying jazz philosophies: "It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing!" and "Never the same way once!" as stated by Duke Ellington and Shelly Manne, respectively.

They bring new excitement to Dizzy Gillespie's "Groovin' High," some easy strollin' on the bluesy Broadbent original, "Journey Home," and a haunting sense of beauty and loneliness on the Thelonious Monk title track.

I particularly liked the trio's take on Leroy Anderson's "Serenata." I hadn't heard this tune for ages, so 'twas like meeting an old friend again, reminding me of the old Jack Paar Tonight Show on which it was one of the recurring, oft-used themes played by Paar-pianist, Jose Melis. My piano-playin' Ma woulda loved this! I think you will too!

Richie Cole & The Alto Madness Orchestra: Back on Top (Jazz Excursion: JEX-101)

The challenge altoman Cole set for himself on this set was “how can I get a big band sound, using only seven players?” Fortunately, his composing, arranging, and conducting skills were equal to the task, resulting in one of the most innovative, exciting, and pleasure-inducing CDs ever.

While the basic big band uses four trumpets, four trombones and five saxes, along with piano, bass, and drums, Cole is able to replicate that sound, that feel, that drive, that power, with only two saxes (alto and tenor), a trombone, trumpet, guitar, bass, and drums.

Amazing, but true!

This dynamic septet powers its way through ten Cole originals – covering most of the jazz bases: blues, ballads, bop, and swing. While all of the tracks are first-rate, the late-night, ultra-mellow “Relaxin’ At The Candlelight,” pushed all of my “Jazz for the wee-small-hours” buttons, so you can be sure of hearing it frequently on my radio show.



Ladd McIntosh Big Band: Temptation
(www.LaddMcIntosh.com)

However, if it is the dynamic, pulsating, foot-stompin’, finger-snappin’, danceable sound of a real 18-piece big band for the 21st Century you’re cravin’, this is the CD for you!

Ladd McIntosh, a formidable force on the local jazz scene in the mid-to-late-sixties, is a graduate of the Ohio State University School of Music. While there, he was the leader of the OSU Jazz Ensemble and led that group to numerous national and international collegiate jazz band awards.

Teaching, movie scores, and uncountable playing, arranging, and leading gigs on the West Coast followed his departure from the Central Ohio music scene.

His bio, credits, and CDs, available for sale, can be found on the Internet link listed above.

On this set, Ladd and his troops roar their way through an 11-song collection of great American standards. Spectacular McIntosh Arrangements and ensemble work, combined with outstanding solos on all instruments, make this a collection that ranks with the very best big band albums you’ve ever heard.

DECEMBER 2005

When I was a kid, I started thinking about Christmas – and the goodies I’d be getting-and-giving – in late July. Unfortunately, as an adult, I usually start to think about the giving-and-getting around December 23.

Hence, this column, which may be of interest to those of you who have jazz-aficianados on your Gift List this year. While there are thousands of great jazz CD’s currently available, here are a few that I think will please just about anyone who’s hooked on jazz.

King Cole Trio: Transcriptions (Blue Note 72435-60184-2-6)

Here’s a fantastic 3-CD boxed set, which offers to Cole Collectors a total of 71 tunes, most of which have never before been released or available to the general public.

Seems that in the late ‘30s to late ‘40s, a lot of record companies felt that if listeners could hear a current musical hit for free on the radio, they would not go out and buy the record.

To compensate for this attitude, and to provide radio stations with recordings of their best artists for airplay, the recording companies brought the artists into the studios for informal, relaxed recording sessions, offering different versions of the hit tunes available on records, which they then released to radio stations as “Transcription Services” for broadcast airplay, but not for sale to the public.

This collection covers all of these special Transcription sessions recorded by The King Cole Trio between 1946 and 1950, along with an informative fact-and-photo-filled booklet. It's ballpark-priced at about 55 bucks, and worth every penny.

While there are many of Nat's always-mellow, always-swinging vocals on the set, the real interest is in the abundance of superb instrumentals by the Trio. Most folks forget that Nat was one of the most swinging, innovative, exciting, creative pianists ever to hit the jazz scene. This set is a phenomenal reminder of just how great his piano chops were.

Houston Person: All Soul (High Note-HCD-7146)
Smokin', strokin', steamy, sultry, sexy sax very well describes the sound and approach of long-time Hall-Of-Fame Saxman Houston Person. And, on this latest collection, in a sextet setting, he covers all the jazz bases magnificently.

He cooks his way through compositions by Miles Davis, Ray Brown, and Hank Mobley; fogs your lenses and steams your windows with his sensual, slow-dancin' grooves on tunes by Percy Mayfield and Chip White, and covers a lot of other jazz bases and tempos in between.

I'll put it this way: if there's a jazz-sax fanatic on your gift list, anything by Houston Person will be appreciated.



Westwind Brass: Jazztet (LMP-3905)

I've only been a jazz fan since the Big Band Days in the early '40s. In those years, I've heard and enjoyed a multitude of diverse jazz innovations and concepts. The Westwind Brass, in 2005, introduced me to a completely original sound and combo-construction I'd not heard before.

This quintet, composed of two trumpets, a French horn, trombone, and tuba is truly original and exciting. It has a “classical music” feel, but swings like mad. The solo improvisations are outstanding; the unison playing, spectacular.

Music teachers, brassmen and students, marching band conductors and players will thoroughly enjoy this group as they bring new jazz dimensions and excitement to works by Dizzy Gillespie, Oliver Nelson, Chick Corea, Bix, Monk, and more!

As an added, innovative bonus, the set also includes their original, “Four Pieces for Brass Quintet,” based on Bulgarian Dance Rhythms, 9-beats-to-the-bar.

As Monty Python would say, “And now, for something completely different –”This is it!!

Jackie Coon: The Joys of New Orleans (Arbors-ARCD-19119)

Dr. John and the Lower 911: Sippiana Hericane (Blue Note-0946-345637-2-2)

In addition to being terrific jazz for all ears, these two CD's were produced specifically to financially aid and assist the jazz musicians and residents of Katrina-crushed New Orleans. All proceeds from the sales of these two discs will go to The Jazz Foundation of America, the New Orleans Musicians Clinic, and The Voice of the Wetlands. Since both Arbors and Blue Note are well-known, highly respected names in the world of Jazz, I'm readily willing to

assume that their intentions are honorable and will be carried out – as promised on the cover copy of the albums.

Jackie Coon, a Flugelhornist and vocalist, leads a 7-9 piece group through a 14-song collection of legendary New Orleans standards. Included among the compositions are such Hot Jazz favorites as Jelly Roll's "Winnin' Boy Blues," Spencer Williams' "Basin Street Blues," Irving Berlin's "Alexander's Ragtime Band," and many others, all with the happy feel, street beat, and timeless sound identified with New Orleans Jazz.

Dr. John's set showcases his pulsing, pounding piano and emotional vocals on a 7-song set of mostly original tunes. His soulful vocal on "Sweet Home New Orleans," and funky instrumental groove on "Storm Warning," alone are worth the price of the album.

NOVEMBER 2005

A superb example of "What's New In Jazz For The 21st Century" can be heard today on a recent, never-before-released CD, recorded almost 50 years ago. The music was performed, recorded, filed, and forgotten by just about everyone – until it was accidentally discovered in the vaults at the Library Of Congress in January 2005.

What an historic, memorable, musical jazz-treasure it is – a 1957 Thanksgiving-Night Concert performance, now readily-available, titled:

Thelonious Monk Quartet with John Coltrane at Carnegie Hall (Blue Note Records-0946-3-35173-2-5)

From the jazz historian's point of view, the performance is unique for a number of reasons. For openers, John Coltrane was the saxophonist for Monk for less than nine months, and very few recordings exist of his participation in this quartet. In addition, both were at the peak of their improvisational, creative, and performing skills. Both were intensely focused for the Concert, (Friday, November 29, 1957), which featured separate and different shows at 8:30 p.m. and Midnight, both of which are presented on the CD. While this was Monk's first appearance at Carnegie, Coltrane had performed there twice before – with Diz in 1949 and Miles in 1955.

As for the music, it is magnificent throughout. The sound quality, as recorded by The Voice Of America, is excellent. The opener, "Monk's Mood" is a sensually somber dialogue/duet between Monk and 'Trane, followed by the romping "Evidence," at which point the duo is joined by bassist, Ahmed Abdul-Malik and drummer, Shadow Wilson, both of whom shine throughout both performances.

All of the tunes but one are by-now-familiar Monk originals, such as "Epistrophy," "Blue Monk," and "ByeYa," (to name three of the nine songs performed). Overall, the group covers all the moods and grooves of timeless jazz: ballads, blues, and bop-swing, Afro-Hispanic, and avant-garde-ala-Monk.

The New York Times describes this set as "a momentous musical find..." On hearing it, I'm sure you'll agree. The informative fact and photo-filled, 24-page liner-notes booklet is an added bonus. It won't surprise me when this CD wins the Grammy for "Jazz Album Of The Year."

Sold separately, a companion CD titled:

Evidence: Thelonious Monk Quartet with John Coltrane at Carnegie Hall (Blue Note Records-0946-3-41088-2-9)

This is an hour-long audio-documentary-panel discussion, excellently produced by WBGO-FM. It could easily be subtitled, "Everything you wanted to know about Monk, Trane, The Concert, The Search, but were afraid to ask."

Hosted by actor Joe Morton, it also includes such jazz-related commentary on the relative-obscure of Monk in 1957, cabaret cards, The 5-Spot Jazz Club, 'Trane's "Sheets Of Sound" concepts, a wealth of musical excerpts illustrating the various points, and more – even including such trivia that balcony seats cost a whole two bucks.

The panelists include the artists' sons, T.S. Monk and Ravi Coltrane, along with Coltrane historian, Lewis Porter, who started the search for the tapes in 1996, Larry Applebaum, the Library of Congress Archivist who found them in 2005, and Bruce Lundvall, president of Blue Note, who released them last month.

Five Spot owner, Iggy Termini, and Five Spot waiter, Charles Turyn, among others are also included in the discussions.

You don't have to be a jazz fanatic to enjoy this – it will appeal to anyone with even the most casual interest in the history of jazz.

Barbara Morrison: Live at the Dakota (Dakota Live LLC)

Barbara Morrison, who has played Columbus a few times in years gone by, is one of the few vocalists who could sing the Yellow Pages or Obits and I'd give it 5-stars and 4-Thumbs Up. She's earthy, real, sassy, swingin', sensual, blues-drenched, and epitomizes everything great jazz singing is all about.

This diverse set, recorded at the Dakota Jazz Club in Minneapolis, splendidly showcases her enormous vocal talents, jazz-sense, humor, imagination, musicality, and outgoing personality. I only wish I had been in the crowd when she wailed her way through such winners as the soulful, hauntingly-wantingly "Please Send Me Someone to Love" and the rollicking "Take The A-Train."

"They Call Me Sundown (I do my best work after dark)" is "da-blooz-on-wry" at its best! Delivered Morrison-style, it's sure to bring a smile to even the most morose listener. And for Liberace's closer, "I'll Be Seeing You," she emits a movin'- groovin' glow even without his candelabra.

Backing her up is the smoky, steamy, sensual sound of tenorman Houston Person, who fills, accentuates, complements, inspires her vocals throughout. Blues-based pianoman, Junior Mance, and the rock-solid rhythm work of bassist Earl May and drummer Jackie Williams make this a first-class example of jazz singing at its best.

OCTOBER 2005

From the deep, dark forests of Central Wisconsin and frozen tundra of Northern Minnesota (a hundred miles north of Duluth) in my youth – through the mania of Manhattan and concrete canyons of Columbus in my later years – Big Band Jazz has been a consistently constant source of pleasure to da Owl's ears.

The Count, The Duke, Miller, Shaw, Goodman, and Krupa in the early years have been joined by Mingus, Rich, Pearson, Paich, McIntosh, Weister, The CJO and so many others as the decades rolled by.

Thus, 'tis a continuing pleasure that Big Band Jazz remains so vibrantly alive and well in 2005 – swingin' as hard and excitingly as it did in Grandma and Grandpa's day – but with modernized new dynamics, arrangements, instrumentations, improvisations and approaches that keep it in the front ranks of popularity for the jazz listener of today.

Gerald Wilson Orchestra, *In My Time* (Mack Avenue 1025)

The Gerald Wilson Orchestra: *In My Time* is a prime example of 21st Century Big Band Jazz

at its best, in which six-time Grammy-nominee Wilson combines West Coast “Cool” with New York “Urbanity” in a rousing 10-tune set that includes his brilliant, never-recorded, three-part original composition, “The Diminished Triangle,” commissioned earlier this year.

“So What” by Miles Davis and “Love For Sale” by Cole Porter are the only two non-Wilson compositions on the CD, and they’re handled as freshly as though they had been recorded tomorrow.

His powerhouse 18-20 piece orchestra includes such well-known musicians as guitarist Russell Malone (who performed in Columbus not too long ago), Jon Faddis, Sean Jones, Jeremy Pelt, Jerry Dodgian, Renee Rosnes, Peter Washington, and Lewis Nash.

Swing, power, elegance, and grace, along with tight orchestral ensemble work and outstanding solos, are among the elements that’ll keep your CD-laser-light shining on this one for years to come.

The Bill Holman Band, *Live* (Jazzed Media-JM1007)

Easily rivaling the Wilson set is The Bill Holman Band Live. This is Holman’s first CD since 1997, showing that Bill don’t rush into things; he takes his time and gets everything right, tight, and together before he records and releases.

This set, recorded in concert, has all the good-time feel of the original live performance. Holman comments and kids around, intros and outros the band, the selections and soloists, among whom are such well-known players as Carl Saunders (a trumpeter who could bring down the walls of Jericho), Hall-of-Fame trombonist Bob Enevoldsen, and saxmen Lanny Morgan and Bob Efford, to name a few of the 16 cooks in the band.

In addition to the five new Holman compositions, listeners will enjoy his innovative, fresh arrangements of some more-familiar tunes by Lennon-McCartney, Charlie Parker and Frank Rosolino.

Lalo Schifrin, *Kaleidoscope: Jazz Meets the Symphony #6*, (Aleph Records 034)

And, for those whose ears demand something even bigger, much bigger than the standard 16-22 piece jazz band, I’ll recommend Lalo Schifrin: *Kaleidoscope: Jazz Meets the Symphony #6*, on which Schifrin continues his harmonious exploration of the interaction between the form and sound of classical composition with the swing and improvisation of jazz.

Backed by the Sydney (Australia) Symphony Orchestra, augmented by three outstanding jazz soloists (bassist Christian McBride, trumpeter Gordon Rytmeister, and trombonist James Morrison) Schifrin arranges and conducts his troops through a magnificently varied program that includes New Orleans, Be-Bop, Classical (Villa-Lobos, Fauré, Copeland) Show Tunes (Rodgers, Gershwin) and four of his originals.

As with the Wilson and Holman CDs, every track here is a winner! The classical symphonic orchestrations are powerful and impressive; the jazz improvisations outstanding and relevant, with every element interacting logically, swingingly, excitingly. The Sydney Symphony swings so hard they’ll probably start calling themselves “Symphony Sid” for any future jazz-oriented outings.

I particularly enjoyed Schifrin’s original “Jazzette,” a three-piece mini-suite featuring piano, bass and trumpet, with explosions of brass figures, McBride’s dialogues with woodwinds and pizzicato strings, Rytmeisters “Maynard-sphere” trumpet, and a wailing trombone exit by Morrison.

Another highlight was Richard Rodgers’ “Slaughter On Tenth Avenue,” which reran in the theatre of my mind, the dynamic dancing of Gene Kelly and the vastly underrated dancer-actress Vera-Ellen who performed it in the 1948 MGM musical *Words And Music* – a bio-pic of

composers Rodgers and Hart available on VHS and Laserdisc, and a “must-have” film for those of you with a fondness for the great movie musicals.

SEPTEMBER 2005

So much new jazz – so little time to hear it all – so little money to buy it all. ‘Tis a problem for the average bloke on the block, who’s encumbered by limited listening-time and limited funds, but who still wants to get some of the best of what’s currently being produced.

Hence, this column, which will highlight and hip you to just a few of the better CDs currently available, with label and catalogue number in parentheses, and, in some cases, the artists’ websites, most of which contain musical samples of their work, along with equally interesting photos and bios.

Myanna *One Never Knows, Do One?* (Bridge City-2104)

If hot sax lights your fires, you’ll definitely want to check out: Myanna, *One Never Knows, Do One?* (Bridge City-2104). On this, her third CD, she cooks her way through a varied R&B/jazz-funk set that displays her earthy, sizzling sounds on soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone – in settings that range from quartet to octet.

While all of the tracks are first rate (a rarity in even the best albums), I particularly liked “Chillin’ At The Lake,” a bluesy, briskly walkin’ alto romp, backed by a fiery B-3, and the always-dynamic drumming of guest artist, Bernard Purdie, who appears on 5 of the 9 tracks, including her original, up-tempo, boppish composition, “Road Rhythm,” a showcase for her fiery tenor.

For more information on this talented lady, visit myanna.com

Bucky Pizzarelli and Frank Vignola *Moonglow* (Hyena Records-TMF-9339)

At the other end of the spectrum is “Gentle Jazz,” jazz that’s ideal for late-night liaisons, romantic interludes, quiet introspection, and/or peaceful relaxation.

Guitar virtuosos Bucky Pizzarelli and Frank Vignola are masters of these moods, and evoke them effortlessly, beautifully on *Moonglow* (Hyena Records-TMF-9339), a compilation of jazz-guitar duets, featuring 16 of the most popular, sentimental favorites and standards from the Great American Songbook.

The 79-year old Pizzarelli, on 7-string electric, and the 39-year old Vignola, on a 6-string archtop, combine their talents elegantly.

While both can swing hard with the best players on the planet, their aim here is to seduce, not showboat. Needless to say, they are on target throughout.

Vignola’s bright, crisp tone is complemented sensually by Pizzarelli’s warm, almost-pianistic accompaniment, as they color the familiar compositions with blue notes, Latin accents, unhurried flurries, and other easy-going personal touches.

“Moonlight Serenade” put me in a Miller Mood (both Glen and in bottles); “Deep Purple” had me slow-dancin’ once again at Valley Dale in the early ‘50s while a student at North: “Moonglow” re-ran the falling-in-love of Kim Novak and William Holden in *Picnic*. Pick any song on the set, and I had a marvelous memory to go with it. I’m sure you will, too!

Sammy Figueroa *And Sammy Walked In* (Savant SCD 2006)

Cha-chas, songos, salsas, bossas, mambos, and other Latin lilts are enhanced, flavored, and made even more-peppery and exciting with subtle-but-tasty dashes of bop, blues, boogaloo, and funk on *And Sammy Walked In* (Savant SCD 2006), a saucy CD headlined by Hall-Of-Fame Latin Percussionist Sammy Figueroa.

While he's already appeared on countless other CD's as the sideman-of-choice when a Latin beat is needed, this set marks his recording debut as the leader of his newly formed 6-piece group, The Latin Group Explosion.

"Explosion" in this case is "Understatement to the Nth!," as Sammy's sextet blasts forth with a pulse-pounding, up-tempo song, "Syncopa O No," which showcases Sammy's congas, and blazing trumpet work by John Lovell, who scintillates on most of the 10-track set.

"Niko's Dream," a smooth cha-cha, slows things down just a trifle, highlighted by a big, combined sound that suggests more than 6-players at work.

I particularly liked "Eugenology," an up-tempo, bop-flavored romp featuring the electric bass-work of Nicky Orta, along with outstanding percussion from Sammy on congas, and Gotz Kujack (admittedly, don't sound too-Latin) on drums.

Keeping things balanced in mood, tone, and tempo is the relaxed, introspective bossa, "Mirage," which blends beautifully the sax of Tyler Kuebler and trumpet of John Lovell. Even more laid-back is the slow-cha, "Swimming Gaia," on which pianist, Michael Orta, is given room to ruminate, roam, explore, and work his magically musical contributions throughout.

Listeners who are not familiar with Latin-jazz, will find this an approachable, enjoyable introduction to the music, while those already familiar with the form will find it equally exciting, and an outstanding addition to their collection.

MAY 2000

Bright Moments: The Life and Legacy of Rahsaan Roland Kirk, by John Kruth 328 pp. New York: Welcome Rain Publishers, \$28.95

What I didn't know about a true musical genius, born and raised in Columbus, would fill a book - and finally has. *Bright Moments: The Life and Legacy of Rahsaan Roland Kirk*, by musician/writer John Kruth (Welcome Rain Publishers, 225 West 35th St., New York, NY 10001) is a fascinating and inspiring biography of an authentic musical phenomenon.

Ronald Theodore Kirk (b. 1936 /d. 1977) first made music at age five by blowing through a garden hose around his home on Pennsylvania Avenue in "Flytown" (now The Short North). He went on to become an internationally respected performer, artist, composer and musical innovator, who should be ranked among the legends of Modern American Music, but isn't - not even here, in his home town, which is essentially unaware of his existence and the enormous contributions he made to Black Classical Music/Jazz and World Culture.

Hopefully, this book will correct that error, and proper civic recognition will evolve. A street (Rahsaan Row), an intersection (Kirk's Korner), a plaque, a statue in Goodale Park (his old neighborhood), a permanent, easily visible public display of some kind is definitely long overdue.

"Bright Moments" is the ideal title. The words served Kirk not only as a philosophy and way of life, but also as a wellspring of love, humor and inspiration, a greeting, farewell, commentary, reaction, and composition/recording that, in 1973, introduced the then teen-aged Kruth to his future subject matter.

To create this portrait, Kruth interviewed scores of people associated with Kirk throughout his life. Family members, fellow musicians, friends, fans, business and medical associates provided a wealth of anecdotes and reminiscences, which abound with love, humor, admiration, and occasional criticism. Quincy Jones, Allen Ginsberg, Eric Burden, and Ken Kesey are but a few of the famous contributors.

Overall, Kruth's construction is more musical than chronological. A theme is stated, followed by variations that support, expand, explain, substantiate, summarize and reprise.

The themes (with such provocative titles as: Echoes of Primitive Ohio, Hip Chops, Blind Man's Movie, and Over The Hump To Eulipia, etc.) deal with particular aspects of Kirk's life, such as his unique creative approach, performing prowess on over 50 diverse instruments, encyclopedic knowledge of music, critical and audience reactions, the enormous physical and social obstacles encountered and overcome to create his art, among others.

The variations are supplied by the recollections, reactions, and commentaries by those interviewed. Thus, for example, the reader can understand why Kirk's amazing ability to create legitimate music by playing three horns simultaneously was both a help and a hindrance on his musical odyssey or how he dealt with a stroke that paralyzed one side of his body (Kirk's solutions? He redesigned his instruments and learned to play with one hand.)

While Kruth is an admitted admirer, he doesn't hesitate to document Kirk's "Dark Moments": the occasional ability to put both feet in his mouth as easily as three horns; the pride and stubbornness that would often overshadow sound business, personal, and health advice from contemporaries, friends and family; the outrageous pranks that sometimes bordered on painful, are among the shortcomings described.

Bright Moments: The Life and Legacy of Rahsaan Roland Kirk is recommended reading for all young-adults and older. It is a realistic, intriguing portrait of a supremely talented but under-appreciated artist in the creative worlds of music, art and entertainment; it provides inspiration to all, regardless of career or interests, who deal with the complexities and challenges, peaks and valleys of everyday life in the 21st Century.

MARCH 2000

Some years ago, singer Jon Hendricks was asked where one would go to find the roots of Jazz. Hendricks' answer was revelatory: "Go to church!" – an answer that also works for the roots of Rap, Hip-Hop, R&B, Soul, Funk and a host of other popular music styles that ultimately evolved from the early work songs and spirituals sung in African-American churches for well over a century.

This lineage is magnificently presented on the latest CD by tenor saxophonist David Murray. Titled ***Speaking in Tongues*** (Justin Time Records: JUST 118-2). it also features the magnificent voice of Fontella Bass.

The fire, fervor and faith are stated immediately in a rousing rendition of "How I Got Over," an uptempo R&B/Jazz version of the popular spiritual that's fueled jointly by Murray's testifyin' tenor, a bold and meaningful vocal by Bass and some rockin' B-3 by Jimane Nelson.

A relaxed shuffle groove is set by Nelson and trumpeter Hugh Ragin on "Nobody Knows The Trouble I've Seen," which Bass and Murray build to a "shout Hallelujah!" finale.

Funk is the factor in Murray's original instrumental composition. Missionary, which boasts a shouting Stax-like horn section, some blues-drenched tenor by David and powerhouse backup by the entire septet.

Highlights abound on each of the eight selections: Murray's masterful bass clarinet on Amazing Grace, Bass' blend of jazz/spiritual vocalizing, superb soloing and ensemble performances throughout.

You want to hear the evolution of Jazz? Get this CD.

Benny Goodman at Carnegie Hall - 1938 - Complete (Columbia/Legacy C2K 65143)

Talk about re-meeting old friends! These were the first vinyl LP records I ever bought, way back in 1954 when phonographs were powered by steam. This concert was originally issued as two

individual albums - each of which cost \$3.97. At my 75-cents-an-hour salary as an usher at The Clinton Theater, it took me almost 11 hours to earn the money for the set. But, when I consider coin spent for pleasure gained, it was truly a brilliant purchase!

While my original vinyls are still in pretty good shape, I hadn't played them much in the last 20 years, so you can imagine my joy at seeing them re-issued late last year as a 2-CD set.

Surprise was added to the mix when I learned that this new re-issue was presenting the concert in its entirety for the first time! I had never before known that the original two vinyls (released in 1950) had been edited and did not contain all the music recorded that historic night, January 16, 1938. Thus, the addition of the word "Complete" on the spine of the double jewel-case.

In addition to hearing "new" previously unreleased material by one of my all-time favorite bands in a truly historical concert (it was the first time Jazz had ever been heard in the Halls of Carnegie), the set also contains audio commentary on the event and verbal reflections on some of the selections by Goodman himself.

Jazz historians will be absolutely thrilled by the new and expanded liner notes (which in some cases correct what was said on the originals) also included. Everything you ever wanted to know about that history-making night of jazz - and more - you'll find in the handsome fact and photo-filled 38-page booklet that's part of the set.

As for the music, suffice it to say it's 2-hours of swing at its peak! You'll hear jazz played by a roaring big band, swingin' combos, and dynamic solos by such all-star legends (even in their own time) as Goodman, Harry James, Count Basie, Teddy Wilson, Gene Krupa (drummers today are still quoting his Sing, Sing, Sing rhythms), Cootie Williams, Bobby Hackett, Lester Young, Johnny Hodges and countless others.

The set retails for around \$25.00 - an even better bargain today than I enjoyed in the Fifties - one that'll pleasure you for years to come!

NOVEMBER 1999

I have a slight tendency to procrastinate. Thus, when I finish my holiday shopping, wrapping, mailing and giving this year, I'll be able to close my books on Xmas '92. However, to help those of you who manage to stay reasonably current with The Holiday Season, here are some newly released CDs that should please the jazz fans on your gift list.

JAZZ: The Definitive Performances / Various Artists (Columbia/Epic/Legacy: J2k 65807)

This double-disc set features 33 of the most important and famous jazz performances ever recorded. Programmed chronologically, it starts with the 1917 release of Indiana by The Original Dixieland Jazz Band, and concludes with a selection from the 1997 Pulitzer Prize Winning oratorio, Blood On The Fields, by Wynton Marsalis, the first time the award was ever given for a jazz work. In between, the major jazz works of each decade are splendidly represented by such renowned artists as Bessie Smith, King Oliver, Louis Armstrong, Art Tatum, Benny Goodman, Charles Mingus, Duke Ellington, Dave Brubeck, and Thelonious Monk, to name a very few.

A superbly researched and written 64-page history of jazz is also included, making this a set that will be appreciated by both the newcomer to jazz and those already familiar with the

music.

David "Fathead" Newman: Chillin' (Highnote: HCD 7036)

Depending on when you read this, Mr. Newman is about to appear, or has appeared, at The King Arts Complex, Saturday, November 6. On this, his latest release, he once again demonstrates his mastery of woodwinds, breezing through four selections on his bluesy-warm tenor saxophone, two on soprano, and one each on alto and flute. He's backed impressively with vibes, piano, bass, and drums throughout, while his son, Cadino, scores well with two vocals.

AUTUMN JAZZ Various Artists (32 Jazz: 32155)

Jazz that feels just right as the seasons change is the theme for this relaxed set, which features ten of the best-known jazz artists performing an equal number of all-time American Music standards.

The aforementioned David 'Fathead' Newman opens things up with one of the most gorgeously rendered versions of I Wish You Love I've heard in my 40 years as a Columbus DJ. The same can be said of Kenny Burrell's guitar stylings on My One and Only Love, Richard "Groove" Holmes' B-3 work on These Foolish Things, and Bobby Hutcherson's good vibes on Chelsea Bridge. Definitely warm jazz for cool nights!

JAZZ FOR LOVERS Various Artists (Prestige: PRCD-5001-2)

While somewhat similar in mood to AUTUMN JAZZ, the temperature goes up a few degrees on this collection. The album title lets you know exactly what you'll get - romantic jazz at its steamiest - performed by a "Who's Who In Jazz."

Gene Ammons and his plush, big-toned tenor set the mood perfectly with a tender treatment of Gershwin's Someone To Watch Over Me. Miles Davis follows with a reflective I See Your Face Before Me, which leads to The Modern Jazz Quartet's sensual interpretation of All Of You. The other seven selections, by such as Art Farmer, Coleman Hawkins, and Tommy Flanagan, maintain the smokily seductive atmosphere, which will add immeasurably to any romantic rendezvous for you and your companion d'jour.

The Count Basie Orchestra SWING SHIFT (Mama: MMF 1027)

Look up "swing" in any hip dictionary and it'll say, "dig da Count!" - Basie, that is. And, while The Count may be wailing away in that big concert hall in the sky, his legendary Orchestra swings on, now directed by trombonist/arranger, Grover Mitchell, who's been with the band nearly 40 years. He guides his troops skillfully through eleven new compositions and three standards, all of which retain the essence of Basie: dynamic swing, easy authority, a solid rhythm section and room for blues of all shades and varieties. Pick any ten seconds from any track and it's clear that the tradition, power and dynamics of Basie are vibrantly alive and thriving as the millennium approaches.

OCTOBER 1999

Divine Inspiration is a concept that, thanks to the new Albert Brooks movie, "The Muse," is enjoying a renewed popularity even though it has proven its reality since time immemorial. For example, it had to be Divine Inspiration that provided the idea and the courage to an unremembered ancestor who first ingested the liquid produced by fermented grain flavored with the juice of juniper. His creativity gave us gin.

Similarly, 'twas Divine Inspiration that caused a guy named Adolph SAX to invent the saxophone in the mid-1840's. The name SAX, phonetically, and when applied to his invention, suggests the gamut of pleasurable emotions from mellow-cool to blazingly intense - concepts that would be less impressive had the horn been created by Adolph Sox. "Soxophone" just don't make it. And, 'tis no cosmic accident that S-A-X is a mere vowel away

from another of mankind's more enjoyable experiences.

His invention, however, was not an overnight success. A few classical composers such as Mahler and Debussy wrote for it; popular composers utilized it primarily as a novelty instrument where it would have remained had not Divine Inspiration, in the late Twenties, touched Coleman Hawkins, who thereupon pioneered and popularized its use in jazz as a solo instrument rivaling the trumpet, clarinet, and piano as lead-instruments.

Since then the horn has hosted a multitude of exceptionally creative players on all its forms: soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone. While Lester Young and John Coltrane are probably the best-known among tenormen, there are scores of other heavyweights who have been in the front ranks for years. Among these are Teddy Edwards and Houston Person.

Edwards' 1946 solo on "Up In Dodo's Room" was significant in the evolution of swing-to-bop playing, being the first that didn't come from either Coleman Hawkins or Lester Young; Person, from the early Sixties, explored new dimensions in the horn's blues-drenched sensuality. Together, these two titans of tenor continually give great sax.

TEDDY EDWARDS and HOUSTON PERSON: *Close Encounters* (High Note HCD 7002)
Teddy Edwards' leaner and more-intense tone contrasts superbly with Houston Person's plush romanticism. Their solos allow each to speak in his own voice and evoke emotion and excitement by complement rather than conflict. Both have a blowing good time on the witty, uptempo opener, "Twisted," which leads to the change in mood for "Blue and Sentimental," on which each gives an insightful interpretation of the words in the title. The optimism of "Pennies From Heaven" sets the stage for the rollicking raunchiness of "Night Train," long a favorite of the Legendary Ladies of Strip. "The Breeze and I" gets a brisk Latin treatment, while two of the world's great love songs, "Ghost of a Chance" and "Little Girl Blue" are prime examples of ballad playing at its best.

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *The Best Blue Note Album In The World . . . Ever* (Blue Note 7243-5-20070-2-8)

Yes! (Thanks to Divine Inspiration, you've just read the world's shortest CD review.)

TED PILTZECKER: *Unicycle Man* (Equilibrium EQ-7)
The combined physical skills of a drummer and pianist are needed to master the vibraphone. Ted Piltzecker has an abundance of both, along with superb compositional abilities, as you'll hear on this good-vibes excursion, which also features splendid solo and ensemble work from Bob Mintzer, James Williams, Dave Meade, and Harvie Swartz.

Piltzecker, who was active on the Columbus jazz scene in the early Seventies, will rejoin George Shearing for a South American Tour next month.

BARBARA MORRISON *Visit Me* (Chartmaker Jazz CMG-5030)
Barbara Morrison, a jazz vocalist without peer when it comes to belting out blues, burners and bop, shows her romantic side on this intimate set that simmers with sensuality and sass. Her laid-back, smoky stylings are some-times earthy, sometimes elegant. Her subtle swing keeps the music in the foreground gently enough to hold your attention, while adding immeasurably to any kick-back-and-relax mood.

SEPTEMBER 1999

The great music of Charles Mingus (1922-1979) transcends the boundaries of time and space; it is as vibrantly alive now, at the onset of the 21st Century, as when first composed and performed in the Fifties through the Seventies. His legend and musical legacy are sustained magnificently by the abundance of his original recordings still available and the new versions

of his masterpieces produced by the Mingus Big Band, under the supervision of his widow, Sue Mingus.

BLUES AND POLITICS: Mingus Big Band (Dreyfus Jazz: FDM 36603-2)

The title can be taken literally, as the musical content focuses on such political issues as Freedom, Intolerance, Racism, War, Life and Death. The set opens with a previously unreleased Mingus Quintet performance and narration of *It Was A Lonely Day In Selma, Alabama*, recorded in concert at the Tyrone Guthrie Theater in 1965. This segues seamlessly into the Mingus Big Band version of *Freedom*, which features narrations by Mingus (over-dubbed) and his son, Eric. The music and prose evoke "today," even though written over 30 years ago.

Haitian Fight Song, a staple of the Mingus bandbook for years, is as angry, turbulent, and driving as ever in this new arrangement by Sy Johnson. A young Russian bassist, Boris Kozlov performs the opening cadenza power-fully, using Mingus' own *Lion's Head* bass, which was both challenging and inspirational. Some superb ensemble performances by the 18-piece band and outstanding solos by Alex Foster (soprano sax), Randy Brecker (trumpet), John Hicks (piano) and Jonathan Blake (drums) capture the intensity of the composition.

The mood changes to one of serenity with *Goodbye Pork Pie Hat*, written by Mingus to commemorate the death of Lester ("The Prez") Young in 1959. The spirit of Lester is evoked marvelously by tenorman Seamus Blake.

Don't Let It Happen Here and *Meditations For A Pair of Wire Cutters* combine classical, jazz, and a minor blues simultaneously: *Pussy Cat Dues* is a medium-tempo "feelgood" swinger. *Little Royal Suite*, one of Mingus' most challenging compositions, wraps the set up as a 16-minute tour-de-force for the band, with memorable solos by Alex Sipiagin, John Stubblefield and Vincent Herring on trumpet, tenor and alto respectively.

MOSAIC SAMPLER: Various Artists (Blue Note: 7243-5-21052-2-9)

Twenty years of jazz are covered by this splendid collection, which presents a wide range of styles and players, from the traditional sounds of Jack Teagarden in the Forties to the early free-jazz explorations by Andrew Hill in the Sixties. Along the way you'll enjoy some early June Christy, a previously-unissued *Discontented Blues* featuring Duke Ellington on electric piano (in 1955!), and the always-swinging Count Basie working out on a Quincy Jones arrangement.

Liddledabilduya, a West-Coast cooker by alto-man Bud Shank contrasts nicely with *It's Wild*, a study in focused excitement by tenor-titan, Illinois Jacquet. *Whisper Not* show-cases the talents of a young, not-yet-20, Lee Morgan in one of his earliest outings as a leader for Blue Note. There's mellow Jazz cello by Fred Katz with The Chico Hamilton Sextet on Duke's *In a Mellotone* and searing alto by Curtis Porter (Shafi Hadi) on Hank Mobley's uptempo salute to *Mighty Moe and Joe*.

While all eleven of the tracks are winners, I particularly like *Iranic*, an innovative exploration into jazz experimentation by reedman/composer Jimmy Giuffre, who subtly combines Middle Eastern flavorings with West Coast Cool. This is the kind of jazz you'd hear coming out of Village Coffee Houses in the late Fifties; the kind of jazz that backed many a beatnik poet on both coasts and all-points in between, wherever there were enough hip ears to gather and enjoy. Jack Sheldon is featured on trumpet and encourages the conversational aspects of jazz improvisation.

For the newcomer to jazz, this collection provides a listener-friendly introduction to the music; for the long-time fan, it's a rewarding revisit with some old friends.

AUGUST 1999

JUMP, JIVE, AND WAIL: Big Bands of the Nineties

At its peak in the Forties, Big Band Jazz enjoyed the same mass popularity that Rock and Country do today. Back then, just about anyone, teenager or adult, could rattle off musicians' names, their instruments and for whom they played, as quickly as they could name their favorite ball players or movie stars.

While that aspect of Big Band Jazz has changed over the years, the excitement generated by the music hasn't. The Big Bands of The Nineties still have the power to make the average listener "Jump, Jive, and Wail," tap the foot, shake and shout.

In addition, today's Big Band fans have infinitely more of the music available anytime, anyplace, due to the advances in recording technology, playback facilities, and music distribution. At best, the fans of yesteryear could choose from maybe 20 or 30 two-sided singles a month, with an average length of three-or-four minutes per side, while modern listeners can choose from an abundance of Big Band CD-albums, each at least an hour in length. Here are three I think you'll like.

GREGG FIELD: The Art of Swing(DCC/Lauren Records DZS 172)

In this powerhouse set, drummer Gregg Field pays homage to one of his earliest employers, the legendary Count Basie. But, rather than just clone The Basie Band, Field commissioned six new arrangements by another of the Count's men, Sammy Nestico. He then assembled 21 of the world's best jazzmen (Snooky Young, Pete Christlieb, Chuck Berghofer, and Pete Jolly, to name a few) to bring them to life.

The Blues Machine sets the groove for things to come. It's uptempo but not a burner; it highlights the band's tight ensemble playing, yet also allows for a bit of trio action and individual solos by trumpet and trombone.

Mood, tempo and instrumentation vary throughout the course of the 11 tunes, which include a few standards, blues and burners - all of which bring truth to the title - and showcase the best in "Swing for the 21st Century."

THE LESLIE DRAYTON ORCHESTRA: By Request (New Perspective Jazz NPJ-41011-2)

Leslie Drayton, a bandleader, trumpet player, composer and arranger, has been on the scene for well over 20 years. Until this CD, however, I was not familiar with his music, which was my loss.

This collection features 13 of his most popular works (hence, the title), which originally appeared on three albums he produced in the early '80s - but sound like they were recorded last week.

Four different groups, ranging in size from 16-to-21 members, are presented; all are jazz heavyweights: Al Aarons, George Bohannon, Thurman Green, Buddy Collette, Chuck Rainey and the previously-mentioned Snooky Young, to name a few. Flute, guitar, and French horn are also included.

The straight-ahead big band swing is not only blues-drenched, but also spiced tastefully with bop, funk and soul (as on Love Is A Four-Letter Word, which features a gospel-tinged recitation by guest-vocalist, Oma Drake). Barbara Morrison, who played Columbus this past spring, gives dynamic performances on her two guest-shots, Stormy Monday and When Will You Be Mine?

The set starts with a roaringly-descriptive flagwaver, Rush Hour Traffic, and covers all the big band bases thereafter.

VARIOUS ARTISTS: Oscillatin' Rhythm (Capitol Jazz CDP 7243-8-21090-2-0)

This album's subtitle, "Great Swing Hits In Hi-Fi" lets you know what you're going to get. As Swing enjoyed a renewed popularity in the Fifties due to LP and Hi-Fi recording technologies, Capitol (and Roulette Records) had the imagination, good taste and business savvy to sign some of the legendary Big Bands to re-record many of their great hits, which showcased the incredible tonal range, timbres and subtleties, not heard on the original releases.

Benny Goodman, Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Glen Gray, Harry James, Billy May, and Ray Anthony are represented by two-cuts each; Les Brown, with one. All swing like mad; all are great for dancing; all are classic big band sounds.

JULY 1999

Stuff They Don't Teach You In Music Schools:

When the Classical composers of legend such as Chopin, Bach, Prokofiev, and others performed for the Crowned Heads and Royalty at the lavishly appointed Palaces and Concert Halls, they used their given first names: Frederic, Johann and Sergei, respectively.

However, at Bophaus Bavaria, the local after-hours jazz joint, they preferred their more musical monikers: "Chops," "Bag-O'Blues," and "Pops," respectfully - names bestowed on them while members of The Miles Mozart Classical Big Band, which also boasted such heavyweights as "Chick" Tchaikovsky, "Vodee-Oh" Wagner, "Duke" Debussy, "Slam" Sibelius, "Monk" Moussorgsky, "Bopster" Van Beethoven, and "Rim-Shot" Rimsky-Korsakov, to name a few.

Highlights of these sessions were impromptu jazz variations on their best-known compositions. Recording had not yet been invented, so these versions of the world's great classical music vanished and have been unheard for countless years - until now.

Somehow, someway, pianist/trumpet player/arranger Randy Waldman, while stuck in traffic, was suddenly and mysteriously inspired to do a jazz version of "Rim-shot's" Flight of the Bumble Bee which led to the production of one of the most innovative and exciting concept-CD's ever recorded:

THE RANDY WALDMAN TRIO: Wiggged Out (Whirlybird Records 9855)

The rousing good humor of Peter And The Wolf gets things off to an exciting start. Homage is paid to the original composition, while giving guest soloists Michael Brecker and Freddy Hubbard plenty of room to show their considerable improvisational chops. Minuet In G boasts a brisk trumpet solo by Waldman, who later leads the charge in a powerfully-swinging Ride Of The Valkyries. Arturo Sandoval's flugel-horn puts a spirited buzz in Flight Of The Bumble Bee and subsequently salsas sensationally on a latin-laced Beethoven's 5th! Classical and Jazz fans alike will love this one!

JACKY TERRASSON: What It Is (Blue Note 7243-4-98756-2-3)

Pianist Jacky Terrasson, who has wowed Columbus jazz audiences on a number of occasions, also dips into the classics on this, his latest, most-musically diverse offering.

While it's the last track on the CD, Terrasson's take on Maurice ("Ravin' Mo") Ravel's Bolero is, by itself, worth the price of the album. Pulsing with the hypnotic insinuations, romance and drama of the original, Terrasson's subtly-swinging jazz variations build to a powerful and satisfying climax on this universally-revered composition.

Larger groups and a wide-range of instruments (as opposed to his more-familiar trio setting) give him room to stretch out and explore an extensive variety of tempos, moods, and styles, including straight-ahead, latin, noir and more. Guitar, flute, sax, harmonica, sound effects, keyboards, and a vocalist appear on selected tracks, all of which contribute convincingly to

this creatively unique and enjoyable set.

STEPHANIE NAKASIAN: French Cookin' (V.S.O.P. Records #79)

A classical touch is given to this splendid CD by vocalist/lyricist Stephanie Nakasian, whose out-standing voice and dynamic jazz presence are complemented marvelously by an instrument used regularly in symphonic music but rarely in jazz - the French Horn. With a mouthpiece about the size of a dime, it's a difficult instrument to play, which probably explains its extremely limited use. That's too bad because its mellow sound, somewhere between trumpet and trombone, sounds great on everything from uptempo burners to dreamy ballads - particularly when played by a master such as Bobby Rutch, whose main gig is with The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center (New York).

In addition to her imaginative concepts on instrumentation, Nakasian shines as a singer on this CD, which features challenging arrangements and a variety of moods, all of which she handles with ease. She's funky on the title track, with its Killer Joe/Horace Silver feel; ethereal and dreamy on Billy Strayhorn's impressionistic ballad, *Isfahan*; rambunctious on Bob Dorrough's *When You Get There*; a hard-bop belter on Sonny Rollins *Pent-Up House*.

Nakasian's voice and interpretations, spiced generously with Rutch's rousing French Horn, make *French Cookin'* a jazz-gourmet delight!

JUNE 1999

Duke Ellington

Duke Ellington loved "jazz, the music," but disliked "jazz, the word." He felt the term implied musical limitations: that due to its early slang usage, the music was classified strictly as "pop" in the public mind and not worthy of consideration as "serious" music.

He need not have been concerned. Due to his extraordinary abilities as a pianist, composer, arranger and band-leader, Ellington's music has been taken seriously since his start as a professional in the twenties. That it has been universally popular with the public throughout his 50-year performing career and beyond makes him unique among twentieth century American musicians.

In addition to his "pop" hits, he composed and recorded concert music, tone poems, ballet and symphonic scores, suites and movie themes - nearly 2,000 works in all.

His compositional concepts are studied at universities and conservatories worldwide; his scores are archived at The Smithsonian; the music itself is enjoyed by people of all ages in concert halls, gin joints, restaurants, theaters, homes, cars, parks - anywhere great music can be heard, performed or appreciated.

This year celebrates "The Ellington Centennial," the 100th Anniversary of his birth (April 29, 1899). Thus, a wealth of his music, some of it unavailable for decades, is being re-issued on CD by most of the labels for whom he recorded. There's also an abundance of his works newly recorded by others.

Here are a few suggestions:

THE BEST OF THE DUKE ELLINGTON CENTENNIAL EDITION: The Complete RCA Victor Recordings (1927-1973) (BMG/RCA 0902663459-2)

As an overview of The Ellington Genius, this 18-song sampler, compiled from a monumental 24-CD Boxed Set, presents The Duke at his peak, in a wide range of settings, from 1927 through 1966. Along with powerhouse performances of mostly familiar tunes by his famous sidemen (Blanton, Webster, Hodges, Bellson, Anderson, Gonsalves et al), there are a couple

of rarities: Duke with Tommy Dorsey and His Orchestra on *The Minor Goes Muggin'* and Duke with the Esquire All-American 1946 Award Winners (Louis Armstrong, Don Byas, Sonny Greer, etc.) on *Long, Long Journey*.

DUKE ELLINGTON MEETS COUNT BASIE (Columbia/Legacy CK 65571)

Why it took so long to get these two noblemen of jazz together in a recording studio is anybody's guess. Nevertheless, in 1961 both pianists, backed by their full 16-piece orchestras, showed up at The Columbia Studios and blew the walls down.

Impressive as the 1962 vinyl release was, it can't compare to this newly-released CD update, which includes the entire session, with all tracks restored to their as-recorded lengths. In addition, there are seven bonus tracks (two originals plus five alternate or rehearsal takes) and a bit of bandstand-batter.

From the opening *Battle Royal* to the closing alternate take of the same tune, this collective 32-piece power-house is big band swing at its ultimate for well past an hour! Everyone cooks at high intensity on the best from the Ellington and Basie songbooks: *Take The A Train*, *Corner Pocket*, *Jumpin' At The Wood-side*, and *One More Once* to name a few. The Duke and The Count enjoy numerous keyboard duets and exchanges; all of their renowned sidemen get to show their chops.

Another plus is the fact-filled booklet that accompanies the disc. A complete play-by-play of the session is described; how it came about; who solos when and where; and naturally - the original liners.

THE ULTIMATE ELLINGTON: The Crown Project (Monarch Records: MONA 1019)

This newly-recorded program of 11 Ellington Classics is performed masterfully by The Crown Project, five musicians and three singers, all heavyweights in today's jazz world.

La Plus Belle Africaine, with its modal sounds and semi-rondo form, alludes to Duke's fascination with African music and is highlighted by the soprano sax of Dave Ellis. Vocalist Janis Siegel, of Manhattan Transfer fame, swings her face off on *I'm Beginning To See The Light* and *I Ain't Got Nothin' But The Blues*; Terrell Stafford gives a history of jazz trumpet on *Echoes Of Harlem*.

As one of the many tributes to Ellington now available, it evokes The Duke's creative spirit and is among the best.

May 1999

Theatre of Your Mind

In *Taxi Driver*, Travis Bickle guides his cab through the nearly deserted concrete canyons of New York City late at night, while his voice-over narration reviles the denizens of modern society: in Chinatown, private eye Jake Gittes once again experiences tragedy and failure due to the unexplainable nature of this always-mysterious Los Angeles location. In both films, the characters, action, mood and dynamics of the scenes are intensified subtly and linked permanently in the viewer's memory by the haunting jazz-noir music on the soundtrack. If you enjoy movie replays in the Theater Of Your Mind, you'll love:

TERENCE BLANCHARD JAZZ IN FILM

 (Sony Classical SK 60671)

Everything about this collection is first-rate! The new arrangements by Terence Blanchard successfully evoke the essentials of the films selected yet stand on their own as powerful jazz compositions, which can be appreciated fully whether one knows the film origins or not.

Blanchard's trumpet fronts a septet, which features outstanding solo and ensemble work from

such well-known players as Joe Henderson, Donald Harrison, Steve Turre, Kenny Kirkland, Reginald Veal and Carl Allen. Full orchestras complement the performances throughout, adding immeasurably to the texture and scope of the works.

Alex North's music for *A Streetcar Named Desire*, the first major motion picture jazz film score, opens the pro-gram, which also includes compositions by Andre Previn, Duke Ellington, Quincy Jones, Bernard Hermann, Elmer Bernstein and Blanchard himself, for films such as: *Man With The Golden Arm*, *Anatomy Of A Murder*, *The Pawn-broker* and *Clockers* to name a few.

Jazz In Film is now on tour and will play Columbus at the Wexner Center on Oct. 16. Until then - enjoy the CD now!

CHRIS CONNOR WARM/COOL: The Atlantic Years (32 Jazz 32108)

In the Fifties, it was cool to dig Kenton. In the process, we expanded our musical minds, discovered new jazz concepts and met an abundance of great jazz musicians and vocalists, one of whom was Chris Connor. True, she had been on the performing and recording scene since the late-Forties, but it was with Stan Kenton that she achieved international fame and stardom.

Like so many of the greats - Billie, Ella, Dinah, Sarah, and Carmen - Chris had unerring jazz instincts, which produced splendid and often-unexpected interpretations. She always swung - forcefully, when belting out flagwavers or subtly, when caressing intimate ballads. She was equally at home in front of a powerhouse big band or any solo instrumentalist.

This 40-song set features songs from her 12 classic Atlantic albums recorded between 1956 and 1962. The music was selected by Connor and the CD producers, Joel Dorn and Will Friedwald. It highlights her splendid voice in a wide range of settings, tempos and moods, backed by a galaxy of jazz stars: Maynard Ferguson, The Basie Band, Lucky Thompson, Clark Terry, Oliver Nelson, Phil Woods and Ralph Sharon to name a very few of the "Who's Who In Jazz" performing on this superb double-disc collection.

PAUL DESMOND TAKE TEN (RCA Victor/BMG 09026-68690-2)

To this day, the Paul Desmond sound on alto sax is unique: liquid, airy, sensuous, sophisticated, crisp, virile, and wry, with a direct, melodic approach to soloing. Surprisingly, he had no imitators during his lifetime, nor have any emerged since. Not surprisingly, this smoothest-of-all altomen is rarely, if ever, heard on "Smooth Jazz" radio.

While best-known for his work with The Dave Brubeck Quartet in the Fifties and Sixties, Desmond did record a few sessions as a leader. This set was his second for RCA, on which he fronts a pianoless quartet featuring guitarist Jim Hall, drummer Connie Kaye and Bassists Gene Cherico, George Duvivier, or his Brubeckian bandmate, Eugene Wright.

As with every note he ever blew, his performances are flawless and show-case the Desmond Alto magnificently. The title track, *Take Ten*, was Paul's follow-up composition to *Take Five*, the international jazz hit he wrote for the Brubeck Quartet. Mysterious, Near-Eastern and bluesy, it glides provocatively throughout. Four exciting excursions into the realm of Latin jazz (including the exotic *Theme From Black Orpheus*), along with four standards (including a romantically lyrical *Nancy*, and a bop-flavored *Out of Nowhere*), and two alternate takes not used on the original vinyl complete this extraordinary album.

APRIL 1999

Jazz Basic

You can always tell jazz snobs and purists - but you can't tell 'em much! Particularly when it comes to the earthy, body-shakin' sounds of a groovin' sax-organ combo. Somehow, this jazz basic is just too simple, common, undignified, and unsophisticated for their supercilious tastes. Jazz that's fun, Jazz that's danceable, Jazz that requires no more than letting it enter the ears and permeate every pore of the body is abhorrent to them. Thus, those people will have no interest in reading about the latest CD working this familiar soul-jazz turf.

HANK CRAWFORD/JIMMY MCGRUFF: Crunch Time (Milestone MCD-9287-2)

This is the seventh collaboration overall for altoman Crawford and Hammond B-3 organmeister McGriff, their fifth for Milestone. Like their previous efforts, it's a jammin' blend of blues, swing, funk, soul, and gospel, definitely shaken, not stirred.

Crawford's churchy and muscular alto still wails with the best, while still showing the influences of his lengthy stay as Musical Director for Ray Charles. McGriff's abilities to contrast melody and improvisation on the top keyboard with a rock-solid bass line on the bottom continue to keep him on the top shelf of heavyweight B-3 drivers.

Add such heavy groovers as guitarists Melvin Sparks and Cornell Dupree and drummer Bernard "Pretty" Purdie, and you have a combination that's going to be a good-time, pick-me-up anytime you lend them your ears.

The title track is a brisk, happy blues which contrasts nicely with the soulful ballad, Don't Deceive Me, and their churchy, blues-infused treatment of Horace Silver's classic, The Preacher. There's some honky-tonk, funk, and tin pan alley also included, which keeps the set always-interesting, never-predictable.

THE COUNT BASIE ORCHESTRA: Count Plays Duke (MAMA MMF-1024)

Another one of the basics in jazz is The Count Basie Orchestra, a band that's done nothin' but swing hard from the day they started back in the Thirties. On this year's Grammy Winning CD for Big Band Jazz, Musical Director / Trombonist Grover Mitchell leads the 19-piece orchestra through a first-time-ever program of Duke Ellington Classics.

And, though the music may be all Ellington, the sound is pure Basie. There's no imitation of The Duke anywhere; everything's The Count: The mindset, the musicianship, the style. Bitingly crisp arrangements by Allen Ferguson make these 13 universally familiar classics brand-new all over again.

Duke's definition of Jazz, It Don't Mean A Thing If It aint Got That Swing, never roared more powerfully, while Take The A Train, usually an uptempo trip, rolls leisurely on its way to Sugar Hill way up in Harlem. This track alone is worth the price of the CD.

32 GEMS FROM 32 JAZZ: Various Artists (32 Jazz: #32102)

So much Jazz, so little money - what ya gonna do if you want to have a good overview of the best in Jazz on a limited budget? The Owl suggests: look for "Anthology" or "Best Of" CDs like this one: a 3-disc collection featuring 32 heavyweight musicians working their way through 32 memorable performances - hence, the title.

The compilation features music originally released on the Muse, Landmark, and Atlantic labels between 1965-1995. A veritable "Who's Who In Jazz" is represented. There's hard-core Bop and Post-Bop by Phil Woods, Richie Cole, Woody Shaw, Joe Henderson and Herbie Hancock, mellow ballads by Al Cohn, Zoot Sims, and Charlie Rouse, blues by Johnny Lytle, Houston Person, and Ron Carter, funk with Les McCann and Grant Green, grits 'n 'grease with Willis Jackson, cutting edge with Rahsaan Roland Kirk and Pete LaRoca Sims, vocals by Etta Jones, Mose Allison, and Ernie Andrews, to name just a few of the styles and artists covered.

For the newcomer to Jazz, it's a terrific introduction to the music; for those already familiar with

the sounds, it's a joyful meeting with old friends again.

MARCH 1999

The song was well over 70 years old but sounded like it had been recorded tomorrow. It was *Lover Come Back To Me*, first performed in the 1928 Sigmund Romberg/Oscar Hammerstein II Broadway musical, *New Moon*, which also introduced the world to such other gems as *Softly, As In A Morning Sunrise* and *Stout Hearted Men*. All were hits from note one; all enjoyed a rebirth of popularity thanks to Nelson and Jeanette in the movie, released in 1940; all have been played, sung, and recorded countless times ever since.

Over the years, these ears have logged innumerable "hears" and variations of *Lover Come Back To Me*; thus, to encounter a version so completely new and enjoyable at this late date was an upper of cosmic proportions.

Thank The Eddie Higgins Trio, on the newly released CD, **Haunted Heart** (Sunnyside Records SSC 1080 D).

Pianist Eddie Higgins, renowned for his minimalist approach, light touch, and elegant, sophisticated sound, states the familiar melody with airy Latin rhythms, which soon evolve into captivating improvisations and fleet explorations of the tune's music, mood, and structure. Along the way in this nearly 7-minute journey, he delightfully drops in quotes from such disparate sources as *Chattanooga Choo-Choo* and *Eleanor Rigby*. (Hey look - I told you up front it was new and original!)

This track alone makes the CD worth having. That the other selections are equally inventive, refreshing, and enjoyable just adds chocolate chips and sprinkles to the icing already on the cake.

In addition, the album has a Columbus connection. It was produced by Todd Barkan, who has earned international acclaim as a Jazz Producer since his graduation from Bexley High.

ECHO OF A KISS

Another plus includes the beautiful album-cover oil painting by Meredith d'Ambrosio - an artist who goes on to prove that she can sing, compose, and arrange as well as she paints on her new release, *Echo Of A Kiss*, the 12th CD she has recorded for Sunnyside (SSC 1078 D).

Love discovered, love enjoyed, love lost, and love remembered are her themes, while the wide-ranging moods of youthful innocence, adult experience, recollection and reflection are captured perfectly by her expressive voice. Her originals, along with standards by Rodgers & Hart, Jerome Kern, Duke Ellington, Bill Evans and others, contribute to the overall success of the work. I particularly enjoyed her *King Pleasure/Moody's Mood*-take on *Chance With A Ghost/ Ghost of a Chance*.

One of her original watercolors graces the cover. Surprisingly, no mention of her painting prowess appeared in the liner notes. However, this element of her talent may have been documented in her previous CDs.

SILHOUETTE OF AN ERA

Another terrific vocalist on the scene is Charly, whose new release, *Silhouette of an Era* (*Revelation/ Chartmaker Jazz PDP-1120*) is an out-standing collection of solid standards, sung and swung in a "Real Jazz for the 21st Century" Style!

Backed by an exceptional 12-piece band, Charly cooks with blue-flame intensity on such flagwavers as *Just One Of Those Things* and *How High The Moon*, or she simmers

seductively on such intimacies as Embraceable You, and my favorite selection, I'll Close My Eyes, which she sings so potently and sensually it should carry a warning from Tipper Gore.

MY ROMANCE

A similar label should also be applied to My Romance, the latest from tenor-titan, Houston Person (High Note HCD 7033). Person, who can wail his way through uptempo burners with the best of 'em, shows only his romantic side on this outing, a showcase for his rich, warm, sexy tone, which at times almost evapor-ates into wisps of velvet smoke. All of the tunes are ballads, taken at langor-ous to medium tempos. Performed by lesser artists, they'd put you to sleep. Fortunately, Person is so creatively adept at blending melody and improv-isation, you'll think about going to bed, but not because you want to sleep. I featured this on my Valentine's Day show and the phone rang off the hook with "Who's that?" and "Where can I get it?" etc. - which, thankfully, shows the high level of musical taste that exists in Columbus.

FEBRUARY 1999

The ice-locked landscape of Central Ohio gave me a few extra days at home last month with nothing specific to do. The thrill of hearing sleet bounce off windows matched the excitement of daytime TV; I wasn't in the mood to start reading a new book or haul out the watercolors, pastels, and colored pencils and begin painting again.

As in the past, when confronted with ample blocks of time to fill, I decided to hang with a pair of my all-time favorite jazz friends, whose music inevitably transformed the plateaus of boredom into peaks and valleys of excitement, passion, memories, appreciation, and good cheer.

MILES DAVIS: *The Complete Birth of the Cool*

I started things off with a new version of **Miles Davis: The Complete Birth of the Cool** (Capitol Jazz: CDP 7243-4-94550-2-3). Here's a jazz classic that's as fresh and innovative in '99 as when it was originally recorded in '49! Miles and eight other young lions of the time (Gerry Mulligan, Lee Konitz, Kai Winding, J. J. Johnson, John Lewis, Max Roach, and Kenny Clark, among others) propelled a nonet that combined the excitement of a small combo with the greater range and coloration of a large group. French horn and tuba, instruments not usually associated with modern jazz, were included on all tracks for a unique and surprisingly rich blend.

More importantly, from a musician's point of view, the arrangements were the first to perfectly balance the written and the improvised, the planned and the spontaneous. For the jazz fan, the unison and solo playing were daz-zling and the band swung like crazy!

But, even though they set the pattern for the West Coast Jazz of the 50s, they were considered too far-out and the group disbanded in less than a month.

While these tunes have been around as singles, 10-and-12-inch LPs, or CDs for years, this "Complete" version, remastered and re-issued in 1998, contains a never-before-released, 45-minute broadcast from Symphony Sid's Royal Roost, "The Metropolitan Bopera House," - a huge treat for us nostalgia freaks, who still remember the thrill of bringing in a "remote," complete with static, from some exotic night spot in one of The Glamour Capitals of the world.

The audio quality has been upgraded from previous releases (although the set still has that old, pre-hi-fi sound, which was state-of-the-art in the 40s). The liner notes are updated, informative, and entertaining. If you have only one Miles CD in your collection, it should be this one.

ART PEPPER+11: *Modern Jazz Classics*

Another favorite that's always a psyche-booster is **Art Pepper+11: Modern Jazz Classics (Contemporary OJCCD-341-2)**. From the opening burner, Move, to the equally intense alternate take on Charlie Parker's Donna Lee, Pepper displays the fire, imagination, technical abilities, and emotional approach that set him apart as one of the truly unique voices on alto saxophone. Along the way, he also displays his virtuosity as a power-house tenorman and breezy clarinetist.

His sidemen are all heavyweights (i.e., Pete Candoli, Bob Enevoldson, Richie Kamuca, Bill Perkins, Russ Freeman, etc.): all get plenty of solid solo space thanks to the spontaneous-sounding arrangements by Marty Paich, which cover works by Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, Sonny Rollins, Jimmy Guiffre, and Horace Silver, to name a few.

No matter what your taste in jazz - be it bebop, swing, or soul, big band, fusion, funk, you name it - this is a CD that will continue to please every time it's played - regardless of weather.

JANUARY 1999

Some of the best jazz on the planet is made and played right here in Columbus. Two of the new CD's I'm recommending this month are prime examples.

PETE MILLS MOMENTUM

Pete Mills, a local tenorman, makes his CD debut as a leader on this hard-core, straight-ahead set, which features superb musicianship, an abundance of original compositions, and a diversity of styles and tempos.

Assisting Mills in this solid effort are locals **Mark Flugge** (piano), **Doug Richeson** (bass), Aaron Scott (drums), and Jim Powell (trumpet). Guest artists on a few tracks include **Paul Tardiff** (piano) and **Ray Codrington** (trumpet). All get ample solo space and use it impressively.

The CD is unusual in that every track is a winner and the selections are sequenced to build intensity while avoiding predictability. Thus the breezily swinging opener, "Waiting For Spring," leads logically, but surprisingly, to the smooth Latin groove of "Nine Lives," followed by "You're The First," a bluesy-but-walkin' tune that conjures the compositional style of the legendary Thelonious Monk.

The title track, "Momentum," is aptly named. You literally feel movement while the song plays. Intense, driving solos by Mills, Codrington, Tardiff, and Scott propel the song, start to finish.

A gentle, peaceful ballad, 3 Of Us, has all the guys playing pretty, which contrasts nicely with Mills' uptempo version of Al's Tune, which he dedicated to the memory of his compadre and fellow tenor sax player, Al Goelz.

Given the quality and diversity of the music it was hard to pick a favorite track, but since that's a head game I've always enjoyed playing, I had to do it – and the nod went to an uptempo burner with bop overtones, "Is It The 31st Yet?," which generates heat thanks to Powell's blazing trumpet.

This is Real Jazz at its best. Do your ears a favor and pick up a copy at Borders, Stanton Sheet Music or Columbus Percussion.

SATURN SWINGS

If it's raunchy, good-time, jumpin', jivin' swing your body craves, let your CD-laser light shine on *Saturn Swings*, the latest from the creative minds, voices, and gear of **Honk, Wail And Moan**, one of the most inventive groups ever to make music.

Steve Perakis, Brian Casey, and Mark Greenwood provide the bass, trombone, and vocals, aided substantially by **Erik Augis** (piano), **Kris Keith** (tenor), **Larry Marotta** (guitar), **Tim Perdue** (trumpet), **Jim Seitz** (bari and tenor), and **Lisa Clark** (background vocals).

"Real Jazz, Real Swing for the 21st Century" describes this hard-driving collection that's equal parts swing, rickey-tickey, New Orleans Funeral, and "Hey Bob-A-Ree-Bop!"

Humor, sometimes as subtle as an anvil coming through a plate glass window, permeates the set in melody, lyric, instrumentation, and performance. Titles such as "These Drinks are Working," "Don't You Methyl With My Ethyl," "Rat Finks," and "Scientists Discover Nightlife on Mars," give an idea of the mindset at work. Terrific musicianship and raucous vocals that invite you to sing along bring it all together as great jazz for listening, partying, and dancing.

If you don't find yourself tappin' your foot to this one, check your pulse, you may have died.

© 2005-2010 Short North Gazette, Columbus, Ohio. All rights reserved.