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CHARLES
PAPASOFF

COAT
COOKE

AND THE **NOW**
ORCHESTRA



UPDATES ON: VANCOUVER • MONTREAL
JAZZ LITERATURE **CD REVIEWS** OF BIG BANDS,
PIANISTS, RE-ISSUES, TRADITIONAL & CURRENT MUSIC

CHARLES PAPASOFF

FOGHORN LIGHTHOUSE

A Randal McIlroy Interview

If the lungs don't get you, the eyes will. On stage or off, Montreal baritone player Charles Papasoff pins you with his commitment. You could call it fierceness, except that the hard trio music being played in this Winnipeg room is warmed by robust melodies and open stretches for contemplation. Moreover, the eyes beneath that imposing bald dome are twinkling and the laugh is genuine. He's a nice guy, and practical too.

The idea that he's waving the standard for a burly instrument traditionally used as a doubler's voice is quickly qualified. "I'm a baritone player," he states during a break in his club date at the 1997 Jazz Winnipeg Festival, the first stop on a Canadian tour. "It's just that surviving in '97 sometimes means having to do more than one thing. It's not only music; it's generally. You look at anybody. Everybody's sometimes working more than one job."

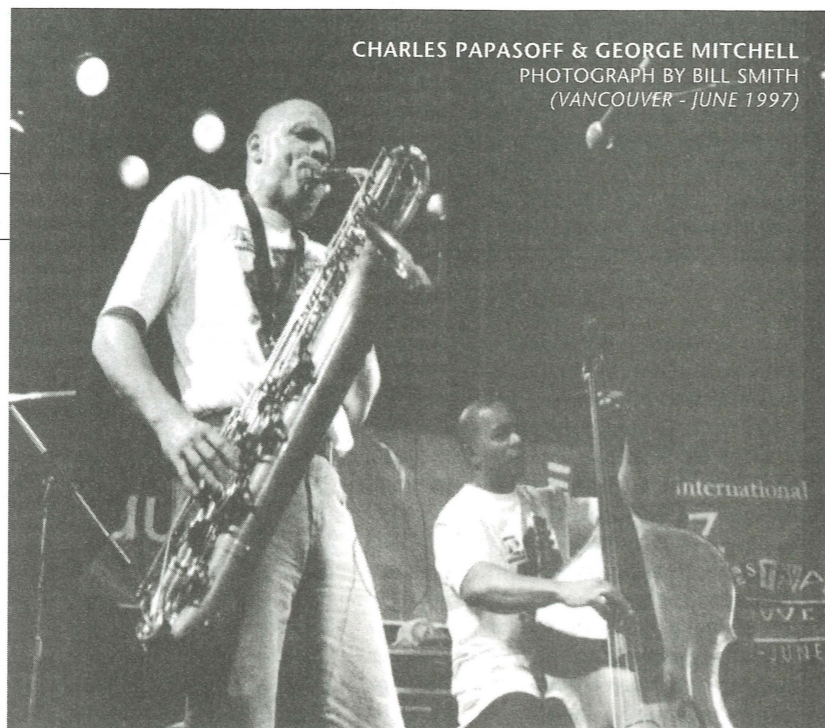
FOR PAPASOFF, now 40, the realization that baritone is his home horn came early. At least part of the credit goes to Shane Nestruck, one of his early teachers, who now lives in Winnipeg and plays the low end for the classical saxophone ensemble, Saxology. "Baritone's my first instrument," says Papasoff. "There are a lot of factors that came into it, but Shane's probably responsible.

"I'm playing more than one horn, and it's a pleasure. I enjoy playing music. It could be on the table" — he raps a quick tattoo — "but baritone is my axe."

He's learned to diversify. Instrumentally, Papasoff blows the range of saxophones, clarinets and flutes (although he adds with a laugh, "Doesn't mean I'm any good at anything"), and for other jobs he works keyboards and guitar as well. Those other jobs range from working with dance and rock to a busy second career in soundtracks.

"I do mainly French stuff, out of Quebec. Some TV stuff. None of them were big hits (but) some were actually quite good. *Je ne t'aime pas* was a very nice short film."

Do those jobs leave room for blowing?



CHARLES PAPASOFF & GEORGE MITCHELL
PHOTOGRAPH BY BILL SMITH
(VANCOUVER - JUNE 1997)

Nonetheless, he drove home the power and the versatility of the instrument with International Baritone Conspiracy, an international sextet with Hamiett Bluiett, Jean Derome, Christian Gavillet, David Mott and Bo Van Der Werf. Their live recording on Victo from the 1996 Festival International de Musique Actuelle de Victoriaville far transcends the novelty factor of six baritone saxes a cappella, thanks to sturdy section playing, fine solos and supple writing.

It started once Papasoff began confirming friendships with baritone players around the world. "After a while I found a brotherhood, where people would exchange (ideas) and get together, just for the pursuit of the instrument.

"The instrument is not gonna survive into the next century if people don't play it. You want it to be played for the instrument to progress, so the only way to do that is to promote the instrument by exchanging between the players and getting the level of proficiency higher, and getting music written for the baritone saxophone so there are composers who will write for the instrument so there will be music to play. The chances of survival will be bigger.

"It's a bit of that, the survival thing, and a bit to learn from friends and to see what six baritone players would sound like." □

That depends on the assignment, he replies, adding, "No matter what I do, it can only be myself. I can't pretend to be someone else." He smiles. "It's a version of me."

The version on stage is tough but tender. In two sets that draw heavily from his superb new CD, *Painless* (on his own Nisapa label), Papasoff is all over his big horn, with a fullness and range that compare favourably to John Surman. However, Papasoff has a harder attack and his own way of digging deep into the meat of the melody. His soprano is equally keen. Drummer Martin Auguste and bassist George Mitchell are ideal partners, their flexibility muted only slightly by an unsympathetic mix and less than generous acoustics.

Amazement over the great modern baritones invariably comments on the unexpected litheness of the instrument. Papasoff says it's all a matter of perspective. "It's an instrument like any other," he says. "The air chamber is a little bigger, so if you're used to the width of the air chamber..." He serves a fitting analogy. "If you're used to driving a big truck, you can still drive it through traffic and not kill anybody."

MONTREALITIES

SCENES & SOUNDS OF A CITY

By Marc Chénard

IN AN AGE where things come into existence without having a tangible presence, virtual reality is not only a modern-day buzzword, but a new order for the times. In art, for instance, new forms of creativity have emerged as totally abstract constructs devoid of concreteness, even immediate spectator contact. In the case of music, audio recordings have been a virtual reality long before the term ever came into vogue. And one could argue the same for film. Given the state of development reached by new interactive media and a simulated immediacy of experience which ensues from it, somehow the urge to experience a performance first hand is stilled. After all, with a decent sound system in our living rooms, many of us are content to enjoy our own private concerts, unfettered by chatting or wheezing neighbours. Given this state of affairs, it's no surprise then that the live music scene of today pales in comparison to those of earlier times. In many cities where nightclubs literally lined streets, now only a handful of them present regular stage acts, others now long gone or turned into bars with numbing top-40 fare blaring over speaker systems.

Such has been the fate of the music scene in the city of Montreal. Once renowned for its night life, the city has seen its live music scene dwindle over the years. Whereas there were almost a dozen clubs with some jazz on a regular basis right up till the late 70's, nowadays they just about cover the fingers of one hand — though the current situation is in fact brighter than it was, say, four or five years ago. Add to that, persistent economic doldrums and political uncertainty, and it would be easy to conclude that Montreal is a musical wasteland.

Far from oblivion, the reality (virtual or otherwise) belies such a conclusion. On the one hand, it sports one of the biggest jazz happenings in the world, the ten-day early July extravaganza of the **FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DE MONTRÉAL**. As its organizers channel all their energies into this single jazz event they do precious little else in the rest of year (except to prepare next year's bash). As for the club scene, it concentrates on local acts, with the occasional appearance of a guest soloist from Toronto or New York, at best for a

two night weekend stand. As the jazz fest's machine gears up in Springtime, there is the usual seasonal spate of clubs boarding the jazz bandwagon, only to jump off as the party winds down for another year. Another major irritant is the lack of space devoted to jazz in the local media: and when there is, a newspaper staffer more or less interested in the music is handed the assignment to write a pre-concert plug (with nary a concert review to be read the day after). But is Montreal really any different from other mid to large size urban communities on the continent?

Despite such a gloomy picture, Montreal's jazz scene has not withered away: instead, it has found some new outlets. One of these has been a program of events billed as "Saison Jazz Montreal". From its beginnings five years ago, when its shows mainly focused on local groups, the series has now shifted its priorities to American acts. But, once again, the local scene has to keep scuffling around for the few gigs offered in those rare places which present the music on more or less of a regular basis. Fortunately, Montreal is brimming with musicians of high calibre and who cover a broad range of styles, some even quite unique. Not only that, but the city's jazz scene is quite unlike any other in the country, if not the continent. And one of the reasons for that is tied in to its cultural specificity.

At the heart of the matter, the French-English duality cannot be overlooked. Whereas most musical communities in other cities are primarily organized along generational lines, the linguistic factor does have an added impact. On the one hand, the English music community has developed a community of players very closely related to the established models of the American jazz mainstream. Both English-language universities, **McGILL** and **CONCORDIA**, act as catalysts, their jazz education programs spearheaded by a number of Americans expatriates.

The Francophone community, for its part, lacks the same calibre of training in its own universities. Nevertheless, musicians of this milieu make up for this in a number of musically creative approaches, some more conventional, others quite eclectic. Leading the way in this latter category is a

collective of musicians who have documented their work on their own "Ambiances magnétiques" label. Very much influenced by the progressive rock wave of the 70's, their music draws on the extended forms of 20th Century music, a rhythmic impetus from jazz, the openness of free improvisation and the abstractions of pure sound experimentation. For want of a better term, their music has been dubbed as "musique actuelle", a term best known to readers of this publication from the annual festival in Victoriaville. Two musicians in particular have achieved a level of international recognition, the first being guitarist **RENÉ LUSSIER** (also a composer of note) the other being saxophonist-flutist **JEAN DEROME** (profiled respectively in issues 219 and 258). Of note as well are the ever inventive and ubiquitous drummer **PIERRE TANGUAY**, the clarinet improviser and frequent film composer **ROBERT M. LEPAGE**, trombonist extraordinaire **TOM WALSH** (the city's top slide man to this writer's ears and others, too) as well as composer and electric bassist **PIERRE CARTIER**. Closer to the art-rock aesthetic are saxophonist-singer **JOANNE HÉTU**, sampler player **DIANE LABROSSE**, percussionist **DANIELLE P. ROGER** and turntable whiz **MARTIN TÉTRAULT**.

Beyond these players, there are many more noteworthy players whose interests are more closely aligned to the mainstream jazz idiom. Baritone saxophonist **CHARLES PAPASOFF**, for one, is a first rate player, not just locally but nationally. A recent spate of recordings in the last three years has cast him in settings as diverse as a free-bop trio, a musical score for a ballet, a couple of movie soundtracks and, not the least, his sextet of baritone saxophones (including Hamiett Bluiett), presented at the Victoriaville festival in 1995 and released on its own label (see review of the "International Baritone Conspiracy" in issue 272). Two more neo — or post-boppers if you wish — are bassist **NORMAND GUILBEAULT**, whose pianoless quintet featuring a front-line of clarinet, trombone and trumpet won the 1994 Jazz Competition organized by the FIJM, and pianist **JEAN BEAUDET**, an individualist whose style ranges from Powell to Monk to Bley and beyond. >>>>>

The jazz mainstream has a very strong foothold in this city. Of the instruments heard most prominently in town, the guitar has no shortage of practitioners — a rather obvious choice in this age of rock and pop. Of the veteran players, there always is the legendary **NELSON SYMONDS**, back on track after a serious heart operation a year ago. At 62, he has only been recording since the beginning of the decade, best heard on a pair of discs headed by altoist **DAVE TURNER**. Also a legend of the strings is the inimitable **SONNY GREENWICH**, a musician who enjoys a degree of international recognition amongst jazz aficionados. Inspired by the spirituality of John Coltrane, his once emotionally intense forays have subsided into mellower moods of late, as evidenced on his self-produced discs on the Cleo label. In their footsteps, there are oodles of plectrum pickers, ranging from the very straight ahead to the unavoidable masses of fusionists. Running a close second to the guitar is the piano and it has its fair share of traditionalists, from the well-known **OLIVER JONES** to the overlooked **WRAY DOWNES** and on to more established modernists like **LORRAINE DESMARAIS** and **STEVE AMIRAULT**.

Returning to the academic scene for a moment, it is quite stubbornly anchored to the values of the musical mainstream. In fact, one should distinguish two levels here, the first being the instructors and faculty, the second, its graduates.

To name only a few of the former category, there are McGill University's **KEVIN DEAN**, a died-in-the-wool hard bopper out of the Kenny Dorham mould, and Polish expatriate pianist **JAN JARCZYK**, a consummate harmonicist with definite rhapsodic leanings. In its other English counterpart, Concordia University, the jazz studies program is headed up by Ellington and Mingus scholar **ANDREW HOMZY** and trumpeter **CHARLES ELLISON** — a charter member of Henry Threadgill early small band, Air. On the collegiate scene, there are a number of prominent local performers as well, pianist **LORRAINE DESMARAIS** and trumpeter **JOE SULLIVAN** being the most notable names here.

For over a decade, those institutions have been churning out more able bodied musicians than the scene can handle. Not unexpectedly, this breed of younger talents may have the basic wherewithal, but few have yet to show some vision beyond the role models assimilated in their studies. Musicians like alto saxist **RÉMI BOLDUC**, reedist **JENNIFER BELL** and her husband, trumpeter **BILL MAHAR** (co-directors of the half-repertoire and almost big band Altsys) are not only products of that system but as instructors themselves, they have become part of it as well. Of other graduates gigging around town, tenor saxophonists **KELLEY JEFFERSON** and **JOEL MILLER** are slowly building their careers, the latter having been awarded the prize during last

Summer's jazz competition at the FIJM. To add to the list, trombonist **KELSLEY GRANT** is an up-and-comer as are pianists **ALEX CLEMENTS** and **TILDEN WEBB**, with a nod to the fine-toned sopranoist **MONIK NORDINE**.

To round off this list, there are the marginal, or unclassifiable, whose visions do not really fit neatly in any of the previous categories, but whose original approaches still enrich the scene. Two examples here are the guitarist **RAINER WIENS** — a sonic explorer who taps and strums while altering the timbres by sliding sticks under his fretboard, and drummer **MICHEL RATTÉ**, a philosopher-king of post free-jazz improvisation.

Of course, many more names can be added to the list here, but suffice to say for now that the Montreal scene, for all of its woes and lack of audience support, is still capable of producing some of the most creative and challenging music in the country while providing a fair amount of consistent mainstream talent. Also important in this development are the better opportunities given to musicians nowadays to self-produce, as evidenced by the incredible proliferation of artist-created labels — an obvious consequence of today's affordable mechanical reproduction technologies. In this age of virtuality, Montreal's jazz scene has in effect become more audible than visible, a reality that is better suited for the mind's ear than its eye. □



I don't really care what "infrastructure" means to you; the term is now used all over the place, in such a way that my Webster's definition — "permanent installations required for military purposes" — is obviously clueless. Myself, I define it as a structure of relationships — and that's something I think about a lot.

Take Guy-Gustafsson-Strid for example. I heard a very impressive concert by this trio last summer in Vancouver, but I find that I think less about the music — even though I reviewed it in a recent CODA — than I do about the infrastructure that supported it.

And a crummy infrastructure it is. Internationally acclaimed as a genius trio, on this trip from Europe the ensemble played in exactly two cities, thousands of kilometres apart, Chicago and Vancouver. Talking to Guy during his visit he described his previous effort with Evan Parker and Paul Lytton — a genius trio if there ever was one — to make their way down the coast from Vancouver to San Francisco, weighing the economics of playing in tiny clubs that usually present folk singers and rock bands, a prospect that, combined with the usual problems of crossing the US border, was just too daunting to undertake.

This is not just an avant garde problem. Our local music society just brought in Don Thompson's trio with Buff Allen and Ken Lister. With months of advance planning the trio managed to arrange exactly two gigs: Don's home town of

ACTUELLE

REVIEWS BY DAVID LEE

STRUCTURE AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Powell River and the Pender Harbour School of Music in Madeira Park, a town so small that people drive past it, even through it, without knowing that it's there. No Vancouver concert, none in Victoria.

Meanwhile, CODA has just asked me to confine my CD reviews to about fifty words per recording — because so many CDs are coming out that they can't keep up with them. Where the hell are all these people playing? The music is healthy, the infrastructure is manic-depressive.

For months now — months in which working on two very different books, helping to organize a small-town jazz festival, playing bass on some extremely corny gigs and trying to make a living have all been small parts of life's wonderful daily adventures — I have been trying to write a "Women in Jazz" review for CODA.

Women in Jazz. At first it seemed irresistible to use the title's sheer banality as a fulcrum to contrast women's small, if growing role in improvised music with larger female tendencies to emphasize, nurture and cooperate — just what's needed in improvisation. To probe the incongruity of minority female involvement in an essentially feminine pursuit. However, that very incongruity gutted the attempt. "Women in jazz" are still enough of a minority to place the leading female improvisers on the same level as their male colleagues. In other words, when artists have transcended categories, to insist on returning to those categories to interpret their work can only belittle them.

The French double bassist **JOËLLE LÉANDRE** seems to have burst on the scene in the last few years, but she has been active in contemporary music for over twenty years. Her newness is a gap in the infrastructure — an illusion created by a burst of recording activity, but how else would North Americans ever know about her? She is very much in the league of bassists such as Barre Phillips, Barry Guy and Peter Kowald, for whom jazz is only part of a large individual vocabulary in which theatre has at least as significant a role.

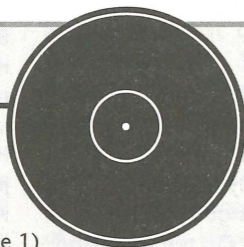
The theatrical element as well as the feminine element is nowhere more to the fore as in "Les Diaboliques," (**LES DIABOLIQUES, INTAKT CD 033**) Léandre's collaboration with pianist **IRÈNE SCHWEIZER** and vocalist **MAGGIE NICOLS**. The music ranges from sheer abstraction to nouveau cabaret, with Léandre's rippling and sensuous bass touching and supporting the ever-delightful Schweizer as well as Nicols, whose role as "vocalist" encompasses singer, actress, poet and trance medium conveying wishes of the departed. A similar range of sensitivity, if not styles — the music is consistently far more abstract — is demonstrated on **18 COLORS / LAUREN NEWTON / JOËLLE LÉANDRE (LEO CD LR 245)**, a duet for double bass and voice.

PALIMPSESTE (HAT ART CD 6103) is a dynamic and highly effective pairing of Léandre with pianist **ERIC WATSON**, whose romantic yet clear-eyed and percussive playing at times brings to mind Anthony Davis. Yet my favourite among these disks turns out to be **PASCAL CONTET / JOËLLE LÉANDRE (GRAVE GRCD 1)**.

If you grew up associating it with school recitals and Lawrence Welk, there is no musical renaissance more surprising than the re-emergence of the accordion. Pascal Contet's background seems overwhelmingly classical and academic; he lectures at the Bern Conservatory, and the only names I recognized among the many cited in his brief c.v. were Vinko Globokar, Pierre Boulez and Joëlle Léandre. For all that, his approach to improvising on the accordion is sexy and exciting, and so is his duet with Léandre. Against her fluid free improvisations his instrument pits extremes of pitch and timbre bending, as much like the squeezebox of the tango, the bandoneon as like an accordion. Imagine if Astor Piazzolla had accepted an invitation to Company Week. In a saner, better world it would have happened — there's that infrastructure problem again — but surely the Contet/Léandre duet is the next best thing. □

PHOTOGRAPH BY LAURENCE SVIRCHEV

OFF THE RECORD



AMBIANCES MAGNÉTIQUES

LA BASTRINGUE MIGRATOIRE (Volume 1)

HOURRA POUR LA BASTRINGUE (Volume 2)

Samplers of the artists of this label. Nicely packaged, budget price and good cross-sampling, too. Good place to start for any newcomer to this label.

PIERRE CARTIER - Les Fleurs du Tapis

Lyrical but as jazzy a group as you'll get on this label with two saxes bass and drums. A 1989 session just issued for this first time.

LA VIE QUI BAT - Chèvre

Delicate free improv in the Derek Bailey-John Stevens lineage courtesy of René Lussier and Pierre Tanguay. No pyrotechnics here, but plenty of timbral and sonic detail. A companion volume of more structured pieces entitled "Chevreuil" is due for release by early 1998.

LES DISQUES NISAPA - Distribution Analekta

CHARLES PAPASOFF - Painless

Post bop with baritone maestro Papasoff and regular cohorts, bassist George Mitchell and drummer Martin Auguste.

LES DISQUES DU SILENCE

RÉMI BOLDUC - Fable

Altoist Bolduc measures himself with New Yorkers Ben Monder (guitar), Mark Johnson (bass) and Canadian expatriate Owen Howard (drums). Mainstream modern but somewhat tentative sounding.

NU JAZZ RECORDS

JOE SULLIVAN - Rumors From The Soul

Mid-sixties hard bop in a late 1990's wrapping. Good writing and blowing but no real surprises either.

STEVE AMIRAULT - Reflecting Images

Finely honed Jazz Piano trio... right down the pike.

DSM RECORDS

FRÉDÉRIC ALARIE - Basse Section

An unusual quartet with bass, bone, tuba and drums. Nice attempt at getting away from tried and true formulas, but lacking a bit in edge or instrumental fireworks.

JEAN BEAUDET - Musiques intérieures

A two-tiered program ranging from quasi-bop revisitations to neo-free form explorations.

RECOMMENDED READING: John Gilmore's book, "Swinging in Paradise" Véhicule Press 1988.

JOHN BUTCHER

AN ARTICLE BY JON MORGAN

THE LATE BRITISH drummer / bandleader John Stevens had a keen eye for talent. In 1992, Stevens, whose Spontaneous Music Ensemble had through the years enlisted the talents of saxophonists Evan Parker and Trevor Watts, guitarist Derek Bailey, bassist/cellist Kent Carter to name but a few, was seeking a replacement for violinist Nigel Coombes. After attending one of John Butcher's performances, it became immediately apparent to Stevens that this soprano/tenor saxophonist was ideal. For Stevens, Butcher was a natural selection, for the saxophonist's own music resembled the ideals of Stevens' pioneering SME, in which conscious measures were taken to establish a distance between their art and that of the jazz tradition. Instead, emphasis was being placed on the individual's re-evaluation of their roles as players, both as soloists and in ensembles, as well as the examination of the instrument's capabilities outside the lineage of the established techniques. Furthermore, Stevens unabashedly dynamic personality ensured that Butcher's venture would be worthwhile.

"I think John was phenomenal at bringing together two often incompatible things," Butcher recalls. "He could generate terrific propulsion and momentum, and at the same time, leave space, both literally and conceptually, for the music to be an interactive, group activity, where the players didn't have to adopt roles."

Initially, the Butcher edition of the SME performed as a quartet with guitarist Roger Smith and flautist Neil Metcalfe. However, the last handful of concerts were done as a trio of Stevens, Butcher and Smith, as documented on *A New Distance* (Acta 8). Even though performances for the SME were



PHOTOGRAPH BY BILL SMITH (Vancouver Festival, June 1997)

infrequent, Butcher learned an important lesson about musician / audience interaction.

"In concert he had a manner that forced the audience to concentrate on the smallest details. The circumstances around some of the gigs were not ideal, but when it came to the music, he communicated the feeling that this is what we're doing at this moment, and it's important. At the last SME concert, he'd had some transport problems and only brought his pocket trumpet, no drums. I thought it would be a difficult gig but his sense of the uniqueness of playing music that evening made it magical."

BY THE TIME BUTCHER and Stevens met, the 43 year old saxophonist had already developed his unique style which he has used to assert himself as one of the most original saxophone voices of the late 20th century. Not merely content to find a niche within the developments of Evan Parker, Steve Lacy and Anthony Braxton, Butcher has opted to choose his own path.

"I'm not a good post modernist," Butcher admits. "My own route into improvising was quite convoluted, but I was very drawn to the idea of trying to start from scratch. Part of this was a way of trying to deal with my musical enthusiasms at a subconscious level and not explicitly refer to them in my own playing. I love a lot of jazz, but for a European of my age it makes no more sense to work with those models explicitly than to try and write songs like John Lennon."

PART OF ME LIKES TO START A PIECE AND NOT KNOW WHAT IT'S GOING TO SOUND LIKE AND PART OF ME WANTS COMPLETE CONTROL.

PLAYING BOTH the soprano and the tenor saxophone, Butcher finds that his choice depends largely on the situation. "I think each instrument suggests its own music and approach. I prefer the tenor for more polyphonic playing and for trying to work with different ideas simultaneously. It's also better for working supportively in a group, rather than in the foreground, and has an enormous range of dynamics and attack. The soprano is easier to integrate into a group as a voice of its own, but is more prone to clichés. It has a superficial agility which I need to guard against. In solo concerts I often actually find the soprano more challenging, because you have to invent something as an alternative to the richness of the tenor."

FINDING HIS OWN VOICE on his instruments can be attributed to being largely self taught. While attending some rudimentary summer jazz schools as a piano player, Butcher was mostly interested in chord changes. He was also attending many British jazz concerts and slowly being introduced to improvised music. However, it would be several years before Butcher would cave in to the seduction of "new music."

"I think the 70's in London was a good time musically, with many of the exiled South Africans playing, and people like John Surman and Tony Oxley around. Also, you could go to what was ostensibly a jazz concert and find Derek Bailey somewhere on the bill. This was how I first came across the English improvisation scene, which I didn't really follow then, but it nagged away at the back of my mind for a few years. My involvement with jazz was really a learning activity. I felt both jazz and composition had largely run their course, and improvisation was clearly where people were creating something new."

AFTER SEVERAL YEARS of conventional saxophone playing, Butcher found himself seeking a more existential role, consciously avoiding solo statements, playing underneath other instruments, and in general, trying to alter the role to which the saxophone was traditionally limited.

"In leaving my student jazz days behind, I tried to improvise by discarding 90% of what the saxophone usually does. I learned a lot looking for replacements. After a few years of this I felt I could bring other material back, but transformed with different connotations," Butcher explains. Both of Butcher's solo discs, 1991's *Thirteen Friendly Numbers* (Acta 6) and 1996's *London And Cologne* (Rastacan 26) document his solo saxophone developments.

WHILE SOMETIMES a risky venture, for Butcher, the art of solo performances can be rewarding. "Some of the best bits come when you're playing near the edge of your control and knowledge. On the saxophone there's quite a thin line, physically, between getting a miserable squeak or a fabulous chord. When the music's working, I think it creates its own connections and shapes that are more interesting than ones you might have tried to consciously impose. Could I play a melodic line that didn't suggest a particular idiom but wasn't pointlessly abstruse?"

FOR BUTCHER, the real challenge is the fine line that exists between spontaneous creation and preconceived settings. For him playing solo incites a mental tug-of-war between playing what he already knows and instant composing. "This ties in with what I think solo improvisation should avoid, that is, being a sequence of routines or a presentation of techniques. If you're interested in using new instrumental sounds there's a danger of just playing a rather decadent set of aural treats. Much of the adventure in European improvisation has come from players advancing through the feedback between their musical and instrumental imaginations. However, I don't want to draw the listener's attention to the mechanics of what is going on and, because I'm so intimate with my own musical material, I have a tendency to move away from what I know will easily work. Like most musicians, I presume, I practice to try and achieve complete control of what I want from the instrument. This is so I can then hopefully release that part of my thinking in performance and just

worry about the music. In a sense the performance is 90 percent preconceived except for the actual music."

ON THE TWO SOLO DISCS Butcher delves into the process of over-dubbing and multi-tracking. Originally stemming from an aversion to saxophone quartets, Butcher's initial explorations involved the sonorities of one player recorded multiple times, significantly different compared to the embouchures and oral cavities of four different players. "Since then the works had two main strands, using synthesis, like the first part of *Bells And Clappers* on *Thirteen Friendly Numbers*, and amplifying and revising an improvisation each time you add a new part, like *Two Up, Two Down*, from *London And Cologne*. Recently I've been using multi-tracked pieces on tape to improvise to in performance. The problems here are leaving enough out of the tape to make a live voice feel necessary, and how do you deal with one partner not interacting." Due to its preconceived nature, such an approach lands Butcher in between composition and improvisation. However, the saxophonist seems uninterested in such distinctions. "Many Improvisers are in fact such strong stylists that their music overlaps what's normally expected from composition."

IN A GROUP CONTEXT, he is a much sought after partner, equally adept at listening and knowing when to adapt. "How players relate, ideally, works on many levels at once; or at least varies moment by moment. The important thing, for me, is to let your decisions/reactions come out of listening. I think group improvisation should force the individual players beyond their own conceptions. I value pieces that couldn't really have been imagined by any particular player. I tend to like the kind of group interaction where any one of the players could, if they wanted to, change the direction of the music at any instant and it would still make sense."

AS AN ALTERNATIVE to performing with one standard group, Butcher is part of many projects, periodically playing with several cooperative aggregations.

NEWS FROM THE SHED
JOHN BUTCHER

"You can sometimes actually experiment and push things more in a long-term group. I rather like regular groups that don't perform very often. There's a lot of shared experience, but methods haven't become formalized."

HIS TRIO, with violinist Phil Durrant and guitarist John Russell, with whom he started Acta records in 1987 to release their *Conceits* recording, has been loosely working together for thirteen years, yet the playing still proves stimulating. "I'm still fascinated by trying to work with two acoustic string players, and ostensibly melody instruments. The saxophone can feel very primitive in such company," Butcher explains.

RECENT RECORDINGS have featured Butcher in the company of vocalists. *Respiritus* (Incus 21) is a duo with Vanessa Mackness, while *A Mouthful Of Ecstasy* (Victo 41) finds the saxophonist as part of the Phil Minton quartet with pianist Vevan Weston and percussionist Roger Turner. "I especially like working with the voice, Vanessa Mackness brings a very direct emotion to the music, and connotations that aren't touched on in instrumental improvisation. For some people it sounds too personal. Of course, Phil Minton is *the* vocal innovator and any group with him is a pleasure.

OTHER COLLABORATIONS include the octet Ensemble, with pianist Chris Burn. "*Ensemble* (Acta 5) tries to address some of the ever-present problems of large group improvisation, like the more players, the more every piece sounds the same." *News From The Shed* (Acta 4) adds percussionist Paul Lovens and trombonist Radu Malfatti (with whom Butcher has appeared on Malfatti's *Ohrkiste* (ITM 951103)) to the trio of Durrant and Russell. Frisque Concordance, a quartet with bassist Hans Schneider, pianist Georg Grawe and drummer Martin Blume is heard on *Spellings* (Random Acoustic 1). Also, a document of Butcher's trio with Derek Bailey and tubist Orren Marshall, *Trio Playing* (Incus 28), was recently released, keeping Butcher's musical itinerary full. Nevertheless, Butcher welcomes the opportunity to play with new players.

"You have to allow for, in my terms a probably increased failure rate, but improvisation isn't about presentation of product."

BUTCHER TOURED North America this past summer, playing in various collaborations and impromptu groupings with Grawe, bassist Barry Guy, percussionist Raymond Strid, reed players Mats Gustaffson and Luc Houtkamp, and percussionist Gert Jans Prins during Vancouver's jazz festival, percussionist Gino Robair in San Francisco, cellist Matt Turner in Milwaukee and with cellist Fred Lonberg-Holm, trombonist/guitarist Jeb Bishop and violinist Terri Kapsalis in Chicago. Continuous opportunities to play with new players, in new settings, probably accounts for Butcher's optimism regarding the creative improvised music scene. "I think that some musicians have shown that if their discoveries in 'free' playing go deep enough, there's a whole lifetime of music to make. The challenge is not to dilute the original motivation in the face of lack of money, media indifference and vagaries of fashion."

AS AN ARTIST, Butcher is not discouraged by occasional setbacks, still approaching the music one development at a time, learning something new at every step, without compromise. "I like the idea of trying to do everything you want on one instrument. I think having to struggle communicates and throws up things you can't foresee. And not just instrumentally, I'm drawn to the sensual and emotional qualities of music but want to avoid the clichés they so often come with. Part of me likes to start a piece and not know what it's going to sound like and part of me wants complete control. In general, I hope not to recover too much old ground and to avoid quick solutions."

A prospect that holds much promise for enthusiasts of creative improvised music, indeed. □

ABOUT THE WRITER: *Jon Morgan* writes for several publications including *Cadence*, and is working on a collection of interviews, essays and reviews to be published in 1998. He resides in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA.

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COAT COOKE INTERVIEWED

My parents were both very musical, my mum sang in the Winnipeg Philharmonic Choir, she also played piano, my dad played a bunch of instruments, cello, viola. Every Sunday at our house, he would have his quintet over and they would play Mozart quintets; there would be cello, viola, flutes, clarinet. That was normal around my house, music all the time. By osmosis, the influence just crept in, like life isn't normal unless you have these things in it.

This positive cultural encouragement in my house made me curious about art and the effect it has on your life. I started picking up the guitar in the sixties, that was my first instrument; I had a not so great teacher who made it seem really difficult. So I thought I would go to an instrument that just had one note at a time. I started playing the tenor in my midteens and after almost thirty years, it's home for me. I've been playing alto for about seventeen years, clarinet and flute were later additions, also baritone. You get the craving to express different things with your voice, and the ranges of those instruments give you that ability.

The first music that really turned me around was Jimi Hendrix. Hearing his music, those first three records, opened up the possibility of sound for me, his whole technique of layering sound, using feedback. The first Coltrane I got into was Meditations, that and Ascension were my first two real loves. From there, I got turned on to Pharoah Sanders who became my inspiration to start playing the saxophone. His sound was everything, just incredible, he and Trane were all I listened to for the first five years of playing.

There was so much in the music for me, I listened to Coltrane's out stuff and just thought, oh yeah he's just doing what Hendrix is doing, it didn't seem more complex or inaccessible. I didn't understand everything I heard, but I could feel where it was coming from emotionally, it just hit me where I lived. Monk was also a hero to me through those years, and still is. Monk is the essence of simple beautiful sculpting, I think of Rodin's sculptures, these strong beautiful lines, clear gorgeous shapes of sound, pure vision.

When I moved here (Vancouver) I started meeting people like Paul Plimley and playing in the local scene that Lisle Ellis and the NOW guys started. They started in 1977 and I caught up with them in 78, working with the CORD Orchestra. That was boggling, one of the most exciting things I've ever been involved with. I learned so much, it was the foundation for my understanding of how to work in large ensembles. It also directed my research at that time, listening to large and small ensembles, people like the Art Ensemble of Chicago who were exploring compositional improvisation.

Just as large an influence for me is the music of James Brown, and George Clinton, Public Enemy, Prince, since I began to think more about putting music on tape, all these things come in, like Varese and the pioneers in that line too, different things feed into each other. I started exploring sampling recently, more out of an awareness of how people are hearing things in the world right now. People do this naturally, in a room with the TV on and the radio playing while they're talking on the phone, you know, five things going on at once in a polytonality (laughs). I've always heard multiple keys going on at the same time, it doesn't seem at all strange, and I think now people are accepting that more, the fast pace of change, things going on simultaneously in different keys.

We have worked with a lot of people over the years: Marilyn Crispell, Freddie Studer, Hans Koch... quite different things, there are a lot of people who have their own approach to how they would use a large ensemble. I'm always curious about how people respond given the situation of a seventeen piece ensemble. By engaging with people of

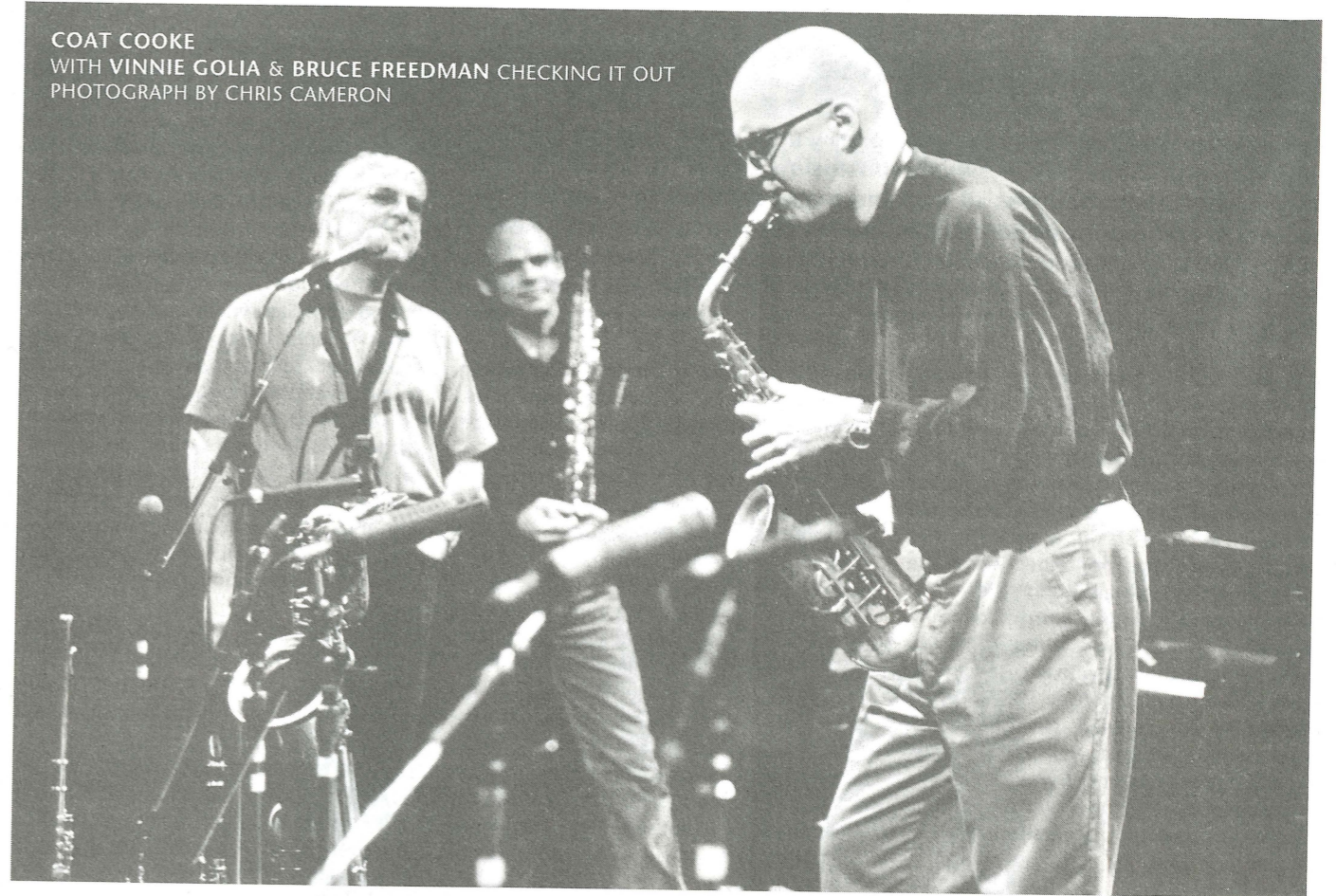
very different sensibilities, like Barry Guy and René Lussier, it is a chance for us to learn from them what their take is on it and what their process is. By engaging in other peoples processes it enriches your own.

It's about opportunity and educating myself and getting exposed to other people. I feel blessed that I've had the chance to work with George Lewis. Seeing someone like George and how he treats the ensemble with such complete respect as people and as artists, he knows how hard it is to be an artist especially in this music — which isn't particularly acknowledged in the world, that generosity — I've learned a great deal from that, never mind the fact he is just one of the heaviest trombone players in the world, also a great composer. We talked about everything.

It's the same thing with Barry Guy who started the London Jazz Composers Orchestra, it must be thirty years ago now, it's a tremendous opportunity to get a chance to work with someone who has tried that many different kinds of pieces and ways of developing a large ensemble, to get to talk to him about that process and to be inside what he creates. René Lussier and Pierre Tanguay come to us with their own unique perspective on sound which is a blend of Quebecois folk tradition, rock, new music and tape music, all these different things put together, totally different than these other aesthetics, with incredible discipline and beautiful choices. The decision of who to invite is based on wanting to work with people that I really want to work with. With Ron Samworth and me, that's kind of our vision with which we get to put our stamp on the ensemble.

Ron and I first started playing together in 1985. He played with my group Lunar Adventures for six, seven years. During that time what we developed besides the music was the process. Playing a lot but also talking about the music, about where we were trying to get to, the whole process of discovery and the respect of

COAT COOKE
WITH VINNIE GOLIA & BRUCE FREEDMAN CHECKING IT OUT
PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRIS CAMERON



listening to each other, that really has translated well into the two of us co-leading NOW. We talk through ideas until we get a clear understanding of what's going on, we make choices that reflect our shared vision of what we would like to be able to do. It takes time to have these decisions evolve, but that's how it ends up working, a lot of discussion.

It helps that Ron and I have played together a lot. We've collaborated with improvising for dance for nine going on ten years and that informs a lot about our choices for improvising... it's shaped both of our aesthetics a fair amount I'd say. We started that in about 1987, it was just happenstance that through one of the dancers I wound up talking with Peter Bingham the artistic director and we just started doing regular sessions with EDAM. They do a thing called Forced Issues in the spring and fall which featured works in progress from around the community, and we would play the show just totally improvised.

As we went more into research we would meet two or three times a week and work with the dancers. We found as we did more work and research with the dancers that improvising dancers have different things that work, in terms of what works with the body, and in terms of communicating between the dancers, the same way that certain things work with musicians in communicating within the music. We started to think about what worked with music and dance, what devices musicians used that would work well with dancers. We started to develop a language.

As in a lot of music it's in pairing away the extraneous, a lot of times it was learning to use silence in the right ways, using that sparseness and clarity. That less is more also filters into my writing, there was composed music from Ron and I and a drummer named David Macanulty for a show called Dream Tigers, six dancers and three musicians, it was largely composed through listening to it, you wouldn't know it. It's

been a really exciting process for me to work with the dancers because with that discipline, there is such a different aesthetic. You have to examine what you are doing and how it effects the work. That kind of examination really enriches your other work.

My vision for the future involves new influences in an active way; I feel drawn to go back east and be involved in what is developing there in Toronto and New York. Europe beckons to me in a lot of ways too, NOW has many connections there that have developed over the years, in Amsterdam, Germany, and Switzerland. I am hoping next year to do some work in London but we'll have to wait and see. I already have my hands full, starting a production company with a friend I met a couple of years ago, and I want to start producing some of the younger players.

There's so much to learn and be exposed to, it's just an endless pleasure to be able to do that.

>>>>>

HEAR IT
NOW NEW ORCHESTRA WORKSHOP'S 20TH ANNIVERSARY

Retrospectives and birthday parties are risky undertakings: good for a few surprises and hopefully a sweet conclusion. NOW Orchestra's 20th Anniversary celebration was all that and more, an affair that capped two decades of creative music here on the west coast. The surprises came when HEAR IT NOW premiered new commissioned works from guests Paul Cram, Vinnie Golia, and George Lewis as well as from NOW directors Coat Cooke and Ron Samworth.

What NOW still represents is the spirit of discovery and exploration. It is amazing to think of the genesis of a music community here in Vancouver, the music and energy something that was dreamed and realized by a circle of musicians, listeners, and artists in a process that became synergistic. The connections made under the NOW umbrella during the festival were memorable, like the return of founding member Paul Cram whose tenor saxophonics in tandem with alto/tenor Coat Cooke tore up the house. Their Sunday afternoon improvised set before an unsuspecting audience will pass in NOW legend. Another moment was the elation created by Cooke's *Wowow* with its howling vocal chorus, a refrain repeated throughout the event.

Brass Roots opened Thursday's bill at the Roundhouse, Brad Muirhead's low brass pulling multi-reed Graham Ord and baritone saxophonist Mike Braverman into the deep end, with support rhythms that combined drummers Dennis Burke and Jim McGillveray. Double threat piano/saxophone Ross Taggart and trumpet Bill Clark generated bright sounds on *Number Of The Beast*. Muirhead's time turns the funky second line sound into something elastic and springy. NOW history came up in the set as the Roots played a Mingus composition debuted at their first show ten years ago at the now long gone French Cultural Centre.

The music created by NOW Orchestra has a sound of its own, a telepathy moving through each improvisation/action, the speed of the process caught in an acceleration of becoming, the compositions as free as the improvisations themselves. During the nightly free sets after the formal composed programs, the music was eventful, flowing. Ron Samworth, Kate Hammett-Vaughan, Peggy Lee, and George Lewis opened the free program by bringing the focus of the music inward, the sounds intimate and personal to the moment. KHV's vocals continue to change, conjuring

Japanese or Siberian singing, a growling presence in tandem with Lewis' trombone. Peggy Lee's work here as a soloist made clear her foundation as an improviser. A later set featured Paul Cram meeting Saul Berson, the haunting blues of two saxophones, with interpolations of Dylan Van der Schyff and Paul Plimley.

George Lewis displayed masterful technique on his horn all weekend, warming to the task of dealing with the large ensemble by conducting his classic theme, *Endless Shout*. Lewis' laid back manner and humour were a delight for the audience and band, though he was deeply serious in his direction of the music, opening an extended tonal setting on *Shadowgraph* that set the pace for some challenging new music over the weekend.

Vinnie Golia's longtime interest in NOW helped pull the unit into the public eye (via his 9 Winds imprint). His breakneck *Ted Williams Calls The Mick And Renders Touch Sensitivity Useless* must have been a nightmare for the ensemble to work out in a few rehearsals though in performance they navigated his work with clarity, the horns and rhythms thundering to a complete stop on a dime. Golia's playing was also exceptional, his reeds felt like essential components of the ensemble's palette.

Paul Cram's *The Tyranny Of Interest* gave the west coast a rare look at the reedman's ensemble writing, the unit in twos and threes through its main sections, with its hypnotic polyphony of three clarinets (Cram, François Houle, and Vinnie Golia). As Cram finished a solo that brought to mind Hawkins and Ayler, Vinnie Golia stood beside him shaking his head as though to say, not much more you can say there. Cram's playing throughout the improvised sets kept the energy level high, the hornman rarely getting far from the stage area before being corralled into another impromptu sound painting.

The Yellow Sound, Ron Samworth's nod to

the artist Wassily Kandinsky, exposed the composer's modernist thinking featuring soloists Vinnie Golia, George Lewis, and Saul Berson. Samworth's writing featured Berson's alto ghostly over an almost New Orleans vamp derailed by Paul Plimley's piano undercurrent. The piano in the depth of the orchestras texture was fresh air, giving the music an unsettled feeling. Dylan was far enough back that his sound spread out right for Samworth's take on the Blaue Reiter Almanac, the rhythms of the orchestra moving air around, creating a deep swell of sound. Everything became enhanced, like flowers drunk on the oxygen in the room. Dirge horns in stop-time section led into a John Korsrud solo, itself dissolving into cluster tones from clarinets and flutes bringing in that colour yellow so clearly, a real tang to it, finally closing with George Lewis solo over conducted ensemble.

Coat Cooke's *Wowow* showed off the wealth of improvising talent in NOW's ranks. The section work of Bill Clark with John Korsrud was seamless. Clyde Reed's subtle shading behind Golia and Cram segued into Peggy Lee and Paul Plimley in a short passage of beautiful stillness, a desert music. The bop-inflected third section of the piece shook loose a handful of possibilities; the duo of Ralph Eppel and Dylan Van der Schyff, Brad Muirhead's punchy solo, Paul Blaney's sustaining the drive of Vinnie Golia's raucous baritone solo.

After three nights of heavy music, Sunday's program the Wild Card Session surprisingly was full of energy and creative drive, the players looking worse for wear but the music still formidable. Graham Ord and Bruce Freedman's reed work throughout the session was absorbing, as was Gregg Simpson's powerhouse drumming alongside Blaney and Reed.

After a series of quintets had taken the stage, the afternoon finale with all musicians on stage at once began as a free-for-all blowing session. Just as it edged towards anarchy, the session ended with a blast of conduction, first John Korsrud, then after a time Vinnie, and later George, the audience revelling in the sound of so many musicians pulling out all the stops. Tony Wilson played his wild card late in the day. In the final moments as the orchestra spiralled out into space, the guitarist quoted Ornette Coleman's *Lonely Woman*, the only composed work performed that day. Its effect was akin to Monk's famous axiom, Lift the Bandstand, a moment not soon forgotten. □

COMPACT DISC REVIEWS

MINATURES IN A JEWEL CASE

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RECENT REISSUES There are all kinds of musical stimulation in this collection of reissues, and one is sorting the genuinely durable from the period pieces.

STEPHANE GRAPPELLI

Sweet Georgia Brown
Black Lion BLCD 7602
(54:42/ 58:24 / 72:53)

This set simply boxes three available CDs recorded in London in 1973. It's all tuneful and romantic. Duets with pianist Alan Clare emphasize the violin's melodic melancholy almost to a fault, while a reconstituted Hot Club of France recalls the speed and vibrancy of Grappelli's early recordings. The highlight is a virtuosic quartet with Roland Hanna, George Mraz and Mel Lewis illuminating *Parisian Thoroughfare* and other great material.

COLEMAN HAWKINS

Encounters **BEN WEBSTER**
Verve 314 521 427 (46:53)

The two tenor titans were still in their prime in 1957, and their wonderfully grained sounds are now an exalted antidote to Robert Altman's Kansas City. Oscar Peterson and Ray Brown provide vital support in a program of ballads, blues and swing tunes that are all one might expect, surmounting the occasional stiffness of Alvin Stoller and the irrelevance of Herb Ellis. Hawkins' honk-whistle combination on *Blues For Yolande* is a great moment in tenor sonics.

BEN WEBSTER Meets **OSCAR PETERSON**

Verve 314 521 448 (36:46)

There's more larger-than life tenor playing in this 1961 session that emphasizes the ballads that were Webster's forte. His sound and phrasing were unique, and this is another reminder that Peterson has been a great accompanist, as sensitive as he is



CLIFFORD JORDAN

Cliff Craft
Blue Note 56584 (43:30)

Jordan, Art Farmer, and Louis Hayes were all members of Horace Silver's 1957 quintet when they were joined here by Sonny Clark and George Tucker. Bop was still hardening, and *Confirmation* and *Anthropology* add to the period flavour. The band doesn't have the distinctive mark Silver would have put on it, but high spirits and determined swing prevail. Jordan's sound is gorgeous on *Sophisticated Lady*, and Clark stands out.

JACKIE MCLEAN

Swing, Swang, Swingin'
Blue Note 56582 (38:15)

Blue Note created a remarkable consistency, but their best dates resulted from the chemistry and cohesion of strong soloists and sometimes impromptu rhythm sections. Five standards, *Stablemates* and a McLean

expansive, while Brown's masterful bass lines fit Webster's playing perfectly.

CHARLES MINGUS Mingus Three
Roulette CDP 57155 (38:23)

The great bassist and his perennial drummer Danny Richmond make a fine trio with Hampton Hawes, as Mingus tests the limits of the beat with his lumpy, combustible swing and Hawes is masterful in the pure bop idiom of Bud Powell. *Summertime* gets some interesting atmospheric added, including piano strings, but generally it's the drive and edge inventiveness that distinguish these bop blues and standards.

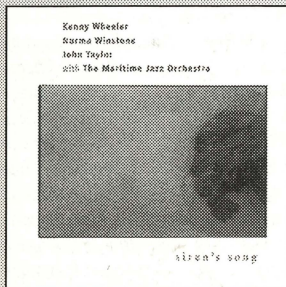
blues provide the groundwork for a very strong quartet session from 1959, the critical axis running from McLean to drummer Art Taylor. McLean swings incredibly, with his unique sound making deeply personal statements of *What's New* and *I Remember You*.

GRANT GREEN The Complete Quartets with **SONNY CLARK**
Blue Note 57194 (70:11/ 64:54)

The real question is why this first-rate 1961-62 material only began to surface in 1979. The guitarist and pianist were both elemental players, and this generous package presents their clean-edged music

Kenny Wheeler/Sonny Greenwich "Live At The Montreal Bistro"

In 1993, trumpeter **Kenny Wheeler** and guitarist **Sonny Greenwich** formed a quintet, which also employed the musical services of the excellent pianist **Don Thompson**, bassist **Jim Vivian**, and drummers **Joe LaBarbera** and **Barry Elmes**. This fine recording is culled from two different performances, in 1993 and in 1997 at the Montreal Bistro jazz club.

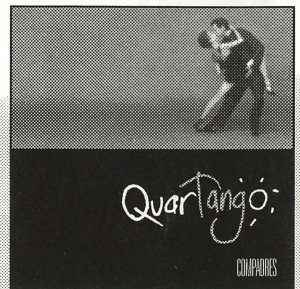


Kenny Wheeler/John Taylor/Norma Winstone with The Maritime Jazz Orchestra "Siren's Song"

On this superb new recording, Wheeler is joined by vocalist **Norma Winstone**, pianist **John Taylor** and the **Maritime Jazz Orchestra** under the direction of **Greg Carter**. One highlight of the recording is that the compositions (except for one by Taylor) are entirely by Wheeler - a joyous occasion indeed, as his wonderful writing has been insufficiently recorded.

Quartango "Compadres"

"For Quartango, the tango is neither the dance known by that name nor any of the mundane symbols associated with it," explains **René Gosselin** when asked to define the work of the group of which he and pianist **Richard Hunt** are the founding members. "By integrating all the knowledge western music has given us, we distance ourselves, happily, I might add - from the stereotypical and rigid forms established by tango aficionados." This recording also features flutist **Robert Cram**.

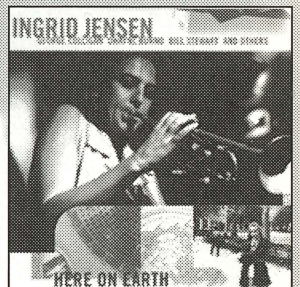


Billy Bang "Bang On"

Billy Bang - buoyant, gritty and melodic; the energy he is able to generate from a violin, an instrument that has struggled so hard for its voice in the jazz arena is startling, unnerving and reassuring simultaneously. From Bang's violin comes everything we know about black music and a lot we have yet to learn about rhythm, subtlety and swing.

Ingrid Jensen "Here On Earth"

Hailing from Cedar, British Columbia, trumpet lady **Ingrid Jensen** is among the most noteworthy rising talents in jazz today. "Here On Earth" is the follow-up to Ingrid's Juno Award winning "Vernal Fields." On this new album, Ingrid's mature and muscular playing is powered by such great sidemen as **Gary Bartz** on alto saxophone, **Bill Stewart** on drums, **George Colligan** on keyboards, **Dwayne Burno** on bass and **Jill Seiffers** on vocals.



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