

contemporary European experimental scene will want (La Legende des Voix, 21 rue 8 Mai 1945, 37270 Montlouis, France) — Scott Lewis

● **MATT "GUITAR" MURPHY:** *Way Down South* I'm sure the memory most have of Matt Murphy is as the second guitar behind Blues Brothers John Belushi and Dan Aykroyd. The irony of that whole execrable mess was that it overshadowed a couple of decades' worth of line work, including a stint in Murdy Waters' mid-'60s band. So I was shocked and stunned to find this to be Murphy's first solo effort — and it's real cool. Low key, no bullshit, 12-bar laments and shuffles, it's a wonderfully understated recording that features Murphy's stinging, Albert Collins-styled guitar slinging (check out "Buck's Boogie" and "Thump Tyme") and a wonderfully supportive backing band. What makes this special, however, is that Murphy is recording with his brother Floyd for the first time since they were session cats in the '50s, and this six-string sibling rivalry seems to bring out the best in both of them. Matt's soloing cuts like a broken beer bottle; Floyd's cleaner, folkier, but no less entrancing. Since Matt's not the most commanding blues vocalist (truth is, at his best moments he's merely serviceable), the accent is on instrumentals, and when they get motorvatin' on stuff like "Matt's Guitar Boogie #2," they can really create a ruckus. A fine record by a quiet, long overlooked talent. (Antone's, 2928 Guadalupe, Austin, TX 78705) — John Dougan

● **MUZSIKAS:** *Blues For Transylvania* Although a part of Romania since 1919, Transylvania was under Hungarian control for a millenium before that, and Hungary's folk music has remained there, despite decades of brutal repression by Romanian regimes. Although Muzsikas is based in Budapest, Transylvania is their spiritual home, and on their third American release they render traditional tunes from that region and Hungary with their typical intensity. If you like very traditional Eurofolk (e.g. Celtic), this shouldn't be hard for you to appreciate, even though it's a bit more dissonant and primarily modal — not much harmony to speak of. The musicianship is exemplary and vocalist Marta Sebestyen as compelling as ever. Instruments include violin, viola, bass, tamboura (sounds like a low-pitched mandolin), hurdy-gurdy, bagpipes, and the oboe-like bombard. There's lots to discover here; for example, on some of the tunes they seem to be playing behind the beat. Throws you off at first, then it grows on you. That's true for Muzsikas in general. I don't know if this album is more accessible than the others, or if I'm just getting used to Hungarian folk, but the more I listen, the more I like it. (Hannibal, 100 Jersey Ave., New Brunswick, NJ 08901) — Bart Grooms

● **NEUMA:** *New Music Series Vol. 2* This collection of compositions for solo instruments (excepting one guitar and harpsichord duet) is an interestingly varied program that certainly makes demands of listeners. The composers work from an academic art background (they nearly all have university connections) and of them, Luciano Berio is the best known name. His "Sequenza II" for harp avoids ethereal clouds of music in favor of an earthy, dissonant mood. The most striking work, though, is Giacinto Scelsi's "Five Incantations," which consists of five short (slightly over two minutes) movements of alternately furious and meditative piano that achieve a kind of arrogant mysticism. Robert Cogan's "Utterances" is an unordered collection of quotes from various writers that a soprano vocalist arranges before tackling their wildly varying music. Digital sound is put to good use for the lengthy silent passages in Nancy Barney's "Strings of Light" or the extreme volume changes of Brian Ferney-

hough's flute workout "Cassandra's Dream Song." This is a strong collection of contemporary music that rarely gets the attention it deserves. Future volumes in the series will focus on piano and flute music. (Neuma, 71 Maple St., Acton, MA 01720) — Lang Thompson

● **THE NEW ORCHESTRA WORKSHOP:** *The Future Is NOW* This collection of six compositions is not actually by the Vancouver, B.C.-based Workshop, but rather by groups led by NOW members, making it something of an anthology of the improvisational music scene in western Canada. It contains two pieces inspired by Ornette Coleman: "Harmolodic Highlander," by Lunar Adventures, is a sort of folk melody pushed along by Ron Samworth's slide guitar, and the group Unity's piece, "Lookout," owes its inspiration to Coleman's Double Quartet days. My favorite is "Tibetan Tears of Joy and Sadness," by the band Chief Feature, which opens with a brief melodic statement from trumpeter Bill Clark and tenor saxophonist Bruce Freedman, slides into a free improv section, and then goes into a slow, bluesy march. This disc shows that Vancouver has a rich improvisational music scene, the NOW doing for western Canada what groups like the AACM and BAG have done in American cities. The one bummer about this disc is that its packaging requires quite a bit of detective work to find out who's playing on which compositions. (9 Winds, Box 10082, Beverly Hills, CA 90213) — John Baxter

● **THE NEW-YORK COMPOSERS ORCHESTRA:** *The NYCO is/was* a fluid assembly of jazz musicians and composers, featuring such luminaries as Wayne Horvitz, Robin Holcomb, Bobby Previte, Marty Ehrlich, Tim Wieselmann, and Ray Anderson. They invite comparisons with NYC's Zorn/Sharp axis, for while Zorn, Sharp, and their ilk favor slabs of raging deconstruction, the NYCO's tendency is toward brainy, intricate reconstruction. Not that there's anything effete about the music; it just aims for something other than the jugular. The opening track is illustrative. Based loosely on a riff from the Reverend Wilkins' "Prodigal Son" (later ripped off by the Rolling Stones), it sets up a swirling, hypnotic counterpoint that quietly tries to turn itself inside out. The ensemble voicings are deceptively conventional, but this is like no big band music that you've heard before. The group's treatment of the old pop-blues warhorse "Fever" is also edifying. I cringed when I saw this one listed, but the arrangement mostly hints at the original, without ever losing it entirely. Holcomb's "Nightbirds: Open 24 Hours" is characteristically haunting, strange, and vaguely European. Horvitz' "The House That Brings a Smile," dedicated to the late Richard Manuel of the Band, suggests the depth and breadth of his influences. A truly splendid collection. (New World, 701 7th Ave., NYC 10036) — Bill Tilland

● **NEW YORK NEW MUSIC ENSEMBLE:** *Various Works* The New York New Music Ensemble has distinguished itself as one of the more prominent contemporary chamber ensembles around, with over 100 first performances to its credit, including numerous commissions. It's not surprising, then, that they are represented here by three works composed for them by Charles Wuorinen, Joseph Schwantner, and Susan Blaustein. In "New York Notes" Wuorinen displays his usual formal rigor, with the conventional fast-slow-fast sequence of movements achieved not by varying tempo but by changing note values. He pairs related instruments — flute/clarinet and violin/cello — for duets that are set off by virtuoso solo flights for dramatic effect. Schwantner's "Music of Amber" is the most evocative of the three, with haunting winds over a toy piano ostinato doubled by tuned metal percussion. The rhythmic cells

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