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308 James Finn Trio
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311 John O'Gallagher w/Masa Kamaguchi-Jay Rosen
312 Marco Eneidi - Lisle Ellis - Peter Valsamis
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320 Trio-X: Joe McPhee - Dominic Duval - Jay Rosen
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395 Kalaparush McIntyre 4tet

Gaetano Letizia – Guitar & Compositions
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Orange Sunset 4:52
Blue Monosphere 4:26
Wandering 3:26
Punch Drunk 3:23
Chartreuse 6:19
Expanding Reality 4:55
Back & Blue 5:37
Paradise Found 4:18
Genocide 5:39

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Contributors

JAMES BENNINGTON (Feature, Jazz Stories / Interviews) *has collected oral histories and photographs of several artists, mainly published by Cadence Magazine and Modern Drummer Magazine. Bennington is also a drummer/ bandleader recording for SLAM (UK), Cadence Jazz Records/ CIMP/ CIMPoL (NY), Unseen Rain (NY), OA2 (Seattle), and his own ThatSwan! label (Chicago). Once mentored by Elvin Jones, Bennington celebrates nearly 30 years in the music field. He is a Dream Cymbals and Gongs Artist and is based in Chicago.*

PATRICK HINELY (Features, Jazz Stories, a Photo History) *makes his living as a photographer and is based in Lexington, Virginia. He has been photographing and writing about musicians since 1971.*

LARRY HOLLIS (Album Reviews) *is a devout zen baptist, retired saxophonist & militant apathist. His work has appeared in mostly indie publications, liner annotation and Cadence for over three decades. Flanked by his books, records and videos, he lives an insular life in his hometown of Oklahoma City.*

ROBERT IANNAPOLLO (Album Reviews) *has been writing for Cadence for over 25 years. He also writes for New York City Jazz Record and ARSC Journal. He works as the circulation manager at the Sibley Music Library at the Eastman School of Music and considers himself lucky to be around all that music.*

BERNIE KOENIG (Album Reviews) *is a professor of music and philosophy at Fanshawe College in London, Ontario, Canada. He had two books published includinig Art Matters (Academica Press 2009). He is a drummer/vibist currently performing in a free jazz group and in an experimental group with electronics and acoustic percussion.*

FRANK KOHL (Album and Concert Reviews) *was born and raised in NY and is a professional guitarist living in Seattle. He is a graduate of Berklee College Of Music and has six CDs as a leader. Some of his recordings include Bassists Steve LaSpina, Michael Moore and guitarist John Stowell. Frank has performed at many notable jazz clubs and festivals from NY to Seattle.*

JEFFREY D. TODD *is Associate Professor of German and French at Texas Christian University. He plays saxophone locally in the Dallas / Fort Worth area, and is a lifelong jazz fanatic.*

SHEILA THISTLETHWAITE (Short Takes) *is a journalist and music publicist based in Saskatchewan, Canada. Her articles on the arts have appeared in publications in Canada and the U.S. She has been a board member, and has worked as a publicist and as executive director for jazz festivals in Calgary, AB and Kelowna, BC.*

KEN WEISS (Interviews, Photos, Short Takes) *has been documenting the Philadelphia jazz and experimental music scene with photography since 1992 and has written the Cadence Short Takes column since 2003 as an attempt to defeat the conventional adage that, once played, the music is "lost to the air." He has also completed numerous interviews for Cadence and Jazz Inside Magazine.*

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN CADENCE

acc: accordion
as: alto sax
bari s : baritone sax
b: bass
b cl: bass clarinet
bs: bass sax
bsn: bassoon
cel: cello
cl: clarinet
cga: conga
cnt: cornet
d: drums
el: electric
elec: electronics
Eng hn: English horn
euph: euphonium
flgh: flugelhorn
flt: flute
Fr hn: French horn
g: guitar
hca: harmonica
kybd: keyboards
ldr: leader
ob: oboe
org: organ
perc: percussion
p: piano
pic: piccolo
rds: reeds
ss: soprano sax
sop: sopranino sax
synth: synthesizer
ts: tenor sax
tbn: trombone
tpt: trumpet
tba: tuba
v tbn: valve trombone
vib: vibraphone
vla: viola
vln: violin
vcl: vocal
xyl: xylophone

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FRONT COVER
Clockwise from upper left

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Carla Bley
Steve Swallow
Andy Shepherd
James "Blood" Ulmer
Jamaaladeen Tacuma
Mary Ford
Les Paul
Gene Paul
Pete Brown

Inside This Issue

CADENCE MAGAZINE EDITORIAL POLICY

Established in January 1976, Cadence Magazine was a monthly publication through its first 381 issues (until September 2007). Beginning with the October 2007 issue, Cadence increased in number of pages, changed to perfect binding, and became a quarterly publication. On January 1, 2012 Cadence Magazine was transferred to Cadence Media L.L.C.
Cadence Magazine continues as an online publication and one print issue per year. Cadence Media, LLC, is proud to continue the policies that have distinguished Cadence as an important independent resource.
From its very first issue, Cadence has had a very open and inclusive editorial policy. This has allowed Cadence to publish extended feature interviews in which musicians, well known or otherwise, speak frankly about their experiences and perspectives on the music world; and to cover and review all genres of improvised music. We are reader supported.

Cadence essentially always has been and remains "the best independent magazine of Jazz, Blues, and Creative Improvised Music that money can't buy."

Short Takes - Philadelphia

PHILADELPHIA, PA: Bill Orcutt [founding member of infamous noise rockers Harry Pussy] is always a popular draw in town and 3/26 hit at Solar Myth [Ars Nova Workshop} was especially eventful with the world debut performance of his new minimalist composition "Music for Four Guitars," a work that is the "culmination of years ruminating on Classical music, Captain Beefheart/Magic Band miniatures, and the strident minimalism of composers like Steve Reich." The just released album version features a quartet of overdubbed Orcutt's own playing but the touring presentation featured 4 able bodied guitarists – Orcutt, Ava Mendoza, Wendy Eisenberg and Shane Parish. The project took 2 years to come to fruition as Orcutt wrote the pieces and then asked Parish if he could transcribe them. Parish said he wrote an 85 page transcription and then pared it down to size. Each guitarist had to learn their parts and the day before the first concert there was a long rehearsal. Early on during the performance, Orcutt announced, "Hey, what the fuck? It's our first time, whatever that means." He also explained after a noodling section – "Here's the thing, you know the record, as good as it, is only 30-minutes long and we're contractually obligated to play for 60-minutes so there has to be a bit of extrapolation." No apologies were necessary although for those coming to hear anything reminiscent of Orcutt's noise Rock past had to be nonplussed. Earplugs were still a good idea, especially for those in the front, but this work is from the leader's softer, more intricate side. The music meshed together well with pleasing melodies and some counterpoint although, understandably, there were times of struggle with the new work. The closest Orcutt got to his more typical groaning string work was on a short solo [taken right after he acknowledged the need to fill a full hour]. Late set, when Orcutt took to the mic again, his bandmates suggested he tell a dirty joke to which he answered, "Yeah, I don't really have anything." Of note, this was Mendoza's first appearance in town since the pandemic…Honoring Joey DeFrancesco: A Celebration of Life & Music at the Philadelphia Clef Club of Jazz & Performing Arts on 4/1 was a heartfelt sendoff to the five-time Grammy nominee, multi-instrumentalist, innovator, producer, and radio personality who was raised in the suburbs of Philadelphia and mentored by resident organists Shirley Scott and Trudy Pitts before he was old enough to drive. The night began with words from Gloria, DeFrancesco's wife, who did her best to hold back tears while talking of her lost love. Older brother and Blues guitarist, Johnny DeFrancesco, followed and was on point in illuminating what it was like to be around Joey. "With Joey, there was no bullshit when you met him…His humility was upsetting [to me] at times. You know you're King Kong but he'd meet other musicians and he'd [flatter them about how good they were]…If you never met Joey, if you felt [him] in his music - you met him." Bassist Christian McBride spoke by way of a recorded video – "I will miss being around Joey and laughing for no reason, that's how friends are." Lovett Hines, Artistic Director/Founder of the Music Education Program of the Philadelphia Clef Club of Jazz & Performing Arts since 1985, recollected his first meeting with the late star as a youth who sat at the piano with dangling feet that were too short to touch the floor and blew him away with a Jazz standard during an audition for schooling. Hines also recalled a more recent encounter at the Clef Club when DeFrancesco asked to use the space to rehearse for a recording

Short Takes - Philadelphia

4/1 Honoring Joey DeFrancesco - Lucas Brown Jerry Weldon Terell Stafford
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

3/26 Shane Parrish - Ava Mendoza - Wendy Eisenberg - Bill Orcutt
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

4/21 - Jamaaladeen Tacuma
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Short Takes - Philadelphia

4/21 - Plunky & Oneness of Juju

4/14 - James "Blood" Ulmer
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

5/31 Matt Lavelle William Hooker
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

with the same band that played in tribute to him this night - Lucas Brown (org), Jerry Weldon (ts) and Anwar Marshall (d). Hines was happy to accommodate but made the mistake of turning on the heat and not the air conditioner that July day, the hottest day of the year to that point. He wanted it known that DeFrancesco never complained about the excessive heat. Brown, Weldon and Marshall performed "Shangri-La," "Bésame Mucho," and "Love Letters," which included the night's highlight – a searing Brown organ solo. Trumpeter Terell Stafford came out to augment the trio for a bit, including a piercing performance of "Old Folks." Stafford, current Director of Jazz Studies at the Boyer College of Music and Dance at Temple University had his Temple University Jazz Band perform for two songs to the delight of many proud parents in attendance. DeFrancesco had appeared with the student band in the past, including Dizzy's in NYC. Fittingly, proceeds from this event went towards The Philadelphia Clef Club Summer Jazz Camp. It wasn't mentioned during the event but karma had it that Brown played Jimmy Smith's old organ which Smith's wife had gifted to DeFrancesco who then donated it to the Clef Club…83-year-old Jazz/Blues legend James "Blood" Ulmer had a 2 night residency at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) on 4/14-15. It was his first time in Philly in over 20 years {last gig was with Jamaaladeen Tacuma and G. Calvin Weston at defunct club Tritone which used to have the best deep fried Snickers bars in town). The first night was a solo set offering Blood at his Bluesy best - singing in his trademark swampy, distressed voice that's steeped in authenticity. He commenced with singing, "If you don't know my name, call me James Blood," and went on with, "I'm lookin' for a woman who makes me feel like a man that I am, one who will drive me crazy," and "O, it's a shame people call each other names." He also sang, "I'm gonna take my music back to the church, [Laughed] Blues without religion will make a poor man lose his soul," and "My daddy taught me how to strum. If you stick with music, you'll have something to say. Don't let no woman take it off the track. If she gives you love, don't let her take it back." As deeply personal as his vocals were, his guitar playing and unique guitar tuning also stands out as inimitable and it would have been nice to have more instrumental playing. Ulmer was a bit uncertain about the timing of the set and when to end it. He kept asking the audience if he was done – "My heart says it's time to go. Is it time to go? No? Okay, we'll keep moving it along." After noting that his glasses weren't working and then performing his "hit" "Are You Glad to be in America?," he said, "Now tell me, is it time to go?" After the set, he said he had never adlibbed so much on stage in his life and that, "You heard the real Blood tonight." The next night he said, " I Brought some help" in the form of Philadelphian drummer G. Calvin Weston and electric bassist Mark Peterson to complete his Black Rock Trio. Fresh off a hit 2 weeks previously at the Big Ears Festival, the trio was raring to go. Upon taking the stage, Weston, now shorn of his dreads, pumped up the crowd by yelling – "Come on Philly!" Ulmer was in a playful mood - obviously enjoying having bandmates after having to shoulder the load all himself the night before. By mid-set, after smiling and joking with Peterson, he said, "We havin' a little fun on the stage." Looking to take a break, he made an

offer to Peterson – "You wanna' do a solo?" No was the response and the trio was back on the clock. The set commenced with a high energy "Are You Glad to be in America?" Other songs covered included "Jazz is the Teacher," and "Don't Control my Pleasure." There was also a new Blues that popped up that Ulmer adlibbed words to, leaving Peterson and Weston looking at each other but expertly following their leader. The trio brought Blues-Funk-Jazz to a high with Ulmer's singing and powerful guitar playing teaming up with Peterson's assertive bass and Weston's take no prisoner approach to the [for him] small drum set. Having the opportunity to experience Ulmer two nights in a row and in two different settings was an event to savor especially since he's not been seeking an active performance ledger due to age considerations…Earth's funkiest electric bassist – Jamaaladeen Tacuma - celebrated Eid Al Fitr (the end of Ramadan) on 4/21 at Masjidullah Center for Human Excellence with a version of his Brotherhood Collective at a late afternoon set tied to Philadelphia's Center City Jazz Festival. The performance concept was to highlight the link between Islam and the history of modern Jazz in America, especially "Spiritual Jazz" which grew out of the 1960's cultural shift. Musicians such as Ahmad Jamal, Yusuf Lateef, Art Blakey, Pharoah Sanders, Talib Dawud, McCoy Tyner and Dakota Staton were Muslim Jazz musicians that Tacuma acknowledged. The mosque's auditorium was filled with hundreds of people enjoying a free celebratory feast of rice, mac and cheese, broccoli, string beans and chicken as Tacuma announced he was dedicating the performance to the recently passed Ahmad Jamal as well as the late Pharoah Sanders and that songs by Muslim American musicians would be covered along with some of his own original work. An early rendition of Sanders' "The Creator has a Master Plan" set a high bar for funkified, soulful creativity and Tacuma topped the performance off by bringing out Moroccan sinter player Samir LanGus and Snarky Puppy's percussionist Nizar Dahmani…Later that night, Ars Nova Workshop presented a rare performance by the Richmond, VA ensemble Plunky & Oneness of Juju at Solar Myth. Described as a Neo-cosmic-FelaPharoah-Afro-Funk band founded in San Francisco in 1971 by saxophonist James "Plunky" Branch. It was a family affair as the leader's son, Fire, was on electronic percussion and brother, Muzi, was on electric bass, along with pianist Weldon Hill, vocalist Charlayne Green and drummer Tony Green. Branch's groups connected Black American music - Jazz, R&B, and Funk - through Afrocentric rhythms and spirituality back in the day with links to the era's anti-war and anti-colonialist political activism (Plunky had an FBI file) and his work has been rediscovered by Afrobeat DJs and Hip-Hop beatmakers such as Dilla. The Philadelphia show revisited Oneness of Juju's material recorded between 1974-88 and morphed genres as the night progressed. The first two songs featured Hill on piano (he would soon switch to electronic keyboard) and searing tenor sax from Plunky, mixing in quotes from "A Few of My Favorite things," "Afro Blue" and "Chim Chim Cher-ee," but along with the change to electric keyboard, the music shifted to a more Funk-base on songs like "Space Jungle Funk" and then to Reggae form on "Make A Change" and "The Meaning of Life is Love." Mid-set, vocalist Green began singing in a sweet, soulful way, often joined by Plunky. After ending with their hit "African Rhythms," Plunky

implored the listeners to do certain things – 1) clap your hands; 2) if you see trash [in the community] pick it up; 3) help kids out who are 15 and under; 4) take care of yourself…Don't do too much of anything. When asked what he hoped to achieve with his music, Plunky said, "Change the world, one soul at a time and to be a family, bring people together."...Drummer William Hooker's duet with (now locally based) Matt Lavelle (tpt, reeds) on 5/31 at The Rotunda (Fire Museum Presents) was a joyful event. Hooker thanked the audience at the start for coming and singled out a young Black listener for being present. Hooker has been actively shouting praise for Black film director Oscar Micheaux for years and this night he repeatedly read short passages from a book written by Micheaux that he bought for one dollar outside the Strand book store in New York City. Hooker's playing, as always, brought emotive physicality, complete with his trademark guttural screams that augmented his vociferously energetic drum pounding. Lavelle was a fine foil, shifting across trumpet, alto and bass clarinet. He also played the rarely heard E-flat piccolo/sopranino clarinet, an instrument that originally belonged to the late Free Jazz legend, Giuseppi Logan. Lavelle shared a tight connection with Logan and was gifted 5 of his horns after his death. Lavelle has also maintained a close relationship with Hooker, playing in many combos with him for 20 years, but this was their first duo. Lavelle related to me that, "I honestly was never strong enough to do it until now. William is the most powerful musician, spiritually and musically, that I have ever played with, and it's all love. To stand on a stage with him and play duo is an extremely intense experience for me, where I have to drop what I call my ultimate music. William himself told me he was coming into Philly like a hurricane and I better be ready." Starting the evening off were The Instant Arts Two-oh, a duo consisting of local heavyweights Terry Lawson on tenor sax and Kevin Diehl on drums. They impaled the listeners with ecstatic, high energy playing… Void Patrol at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) on 6/2 was only the stellar quartet's (Elliott Sharp, el g; Billy Martin, perc; Colin Stetson, sax; Payton MacDonald, vib) third live performance. Fusing elements of Jazz, Drone, and Metal, each piece was a series of unexpected delights, built around a drone center which each artist could improvise over. The times when the music reached crescendos was devastatingly thrilling. Stetson's massive bass saxophone sitting near center stage, set a visual sign of massive sounds to come – and they did. His low bass bellows conjured up doom elements but more often added a hypnotic grounding. He also spent time on alto sax and combined well with Sharp's expressionistic guitar work which utilized EBow, two metal cylinders and tightly bunched fingers at times to alter sound. The shifting rhythms supplied by Martin, who excelled on his trap set and other small percussive instruments layered in an endless bevy of moods . MacDonald was a revelation on vibraphone, marimba and gyli (Ghanaian xylophone). He was a blur of activity with a flair for the dramatic and a conjurer of unusual sounds that added much to the music. MacDonald, who got his start in the Contemporary Classical scene, organized the group which came about during the pandemic in 2020 when everyone had time on their hands. When asked how he put the quartet together, he said, "I had worked with Elliott

and Billy in various contexts before this project. Billy and I first worked together when I was in Alarm Will Sound and he was still active with Medeski, Martin, and Wood. We did a big MMW/AWS project. And then I commissioned a piece from him for my Sonic Divide project. I've commissioned several pieces from Elliott, and we also did two recordings together over the years. One was a trio with Peter Evans on trumpet and the other was a trio with Steven Crammer on drums. Colin and I went to school together. We are exactly the same age and we played together and were in classes during our undergraduate years at the University of Michigan. We reconnected through this project. I've followed his work for years and he's one of a kind, with a totally unique and beautiful approach to the saxophone. He's also a wonderful composer. I knew that the group would work on a personal level. They're all very professional and enjoyable people to spend time with. I also knew it would work aesthetically. We're all composers as well as improvisers, and I think that informs our improvising, opening up a lot of creative spaces in terms of orchestration and development. We all have broad interests in music and the arts, and I felt that interdisciplinary experience would also influence our music in interesting ways. And there are many specific aspects of their playing as individuals that I adore, from tone production and touch to their sense of pocket and groove, and a balance between more abstract playing and more groove-based, pattern-based, tuneful expression."… Fieldwork at Solar Myth (Ars Nova Workshop) brought together Vijay Iyer (p), Steve Lehman (as) and Tyshawn Sorey (d) for the first time since 2016 for 3 nights between 6/8-10. I caught the last night. The trio's label company mission statement quotes that "Fieldwork's music reflects each member's ties to the American Jazz tradition, modern composition, African and South Asian musics, underground Hip-Hop and Electronica, and the influential music of Chicago's A.A.C.M… to create intensely rhythmic music that combines Jazz ingenuity, Rock velocity and World Music savvy." That's a pretty fair assessment of how the set went down. Although deep into charts for each song, though Sorey did away with his stand mid-set, the music never felt rigid or controlled and it was difficult to tell composed segments from improvisation. There were quiet interludes but it was the piercing, seismic highs that spurred the audience to ecstatic applause, especially after the late take of "Domain." Sorey was outstanding and drove the music with constantly shifting meters. At one point, after a challenging piece, a listener yelled, "I'm exhausted!," to which Sorey humorously responded, "Come up here and take my place!" Another listener topped that off with, "How do you follow that?" One local musician noted upon exiting, "That was like a religious event!" Presenting Fieldwork for three nights was quite the coup for Ars Nova Workshop as the trio last played in 2016 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City and had no plans to play again this year. Iyer explained that, "We play all the time, just not as the trio. Tyshawn will visit Harvard [where Iyer teaches] next year and we'll bring Steve up," so watch for more Fieldwork gigs in 2024.

Ken Weiss

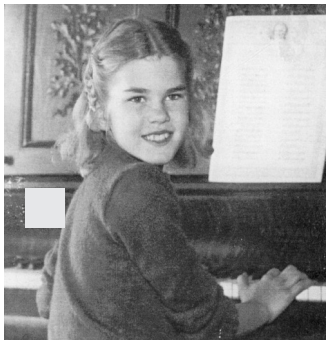
Pianist Veryan Weston on Trevor Watts

Taken by Ken Weiss

Back in early-to-mid-1960s, when my sister Armorel was doing a fringe theatre gig with the Scaffold [a comedy, poetry and music trio from Liverpool, England, consisting of musical performer Mike McGear (real name Peter Michael McCartney, the brother of Paul McCartney), poet Roger McGough and comic entertainer John Gorman] up in a place called the Little Theatre Club. She was also crooning in a casino in Soho (Charlie Chester's club), and the band would get there early so they could get the nuts off the tables which were supposed to be for the customers later. The drummer in that band was John Stevens. He mentioned to her that he had just finished serving time as a musician in the RAF with some friends (two being Paul Rutherford and Trevor) and they were looking for a place to develop the music. She said she was doing a gig with the Scaffold called How to Pass Your Sperm Test up in a place called the Little Theatre Club. So she asked Jean, who was the owner, if John and Trevor (and others) could have a regular night there and Jean was ok about it. I was still in a horrible boarding school and I worshipped Armorel (still do) and remember her taking me to the Little Theatre Club a few times. I was listening to musicians like Mose Allison and Otis Spann at that time and couldn't make heads or tails of what was going on there. I remember seeing these guys playing something and one of them had a radio on at the same time as they were all playing (so that must have been AMM). It was at this time that John was working with Trevor and developing the music of the SME. I met Trevor a bit later when I failed my music exams and decided to go and live in London with my wife - Jill and our son. We lived in Brixton in the early '70s first and we'd go down to the Plough in Stockwell nearby and listen to a house rhythm section consisting of John Stevens, Stan Tracey and a Scottish bass player called Lindsay Cooper. They'd have a horn player guest each week like Harry Becket, Don Weller, Lol Coxhill and Trevor. The music was often great but the landlord still didn't like the fact that, in spite of the place being frequently packed, the clientele was more interested in listening to the music than drinking his beer. The Little Theatre Club was still in existence at this time and John Stevens gave me some chances to play there. It was at this time that I think I first played with Trevor. I also met Martin Davidson, who was also keen on the SME and other experimental music projects and started releasing recordings of these on his own label EMANEM. It was much later on that Trevor and I made some recordings for him. After moving out of London, I got an artists' residency and started working more regularly with other musicians, one of whom was Lol Coxhill. There were some local young guys who played and we formed a band and got nominated 'Young Jazz Musicians of the Year' by the Greater London Arts Association. It was around this time (1979) that I remember visiting Trevor's house in North Finchley as I felt we shared similar

musical interests. He was working on music with Amalgam. I think I was a bit cocky then but somehow Trevor was able to deal with this. It was around this time that Trevor also moved away from London as well. Soon after this I was invited to be part of a new project of his called Moiré Music. It was always an extra bonus to be by the seaside when we did rehearsals, even though the music had very specific demands. This was a big learning experience which required developing listening skills as melodies and chords functioned as being part of a rhythmic cycle and these had to fit in a certain way with everybody else's rhythmic cycles before they could work, and often that 'certain way' didn't feel like it was the easiest place to put your part in relation to what everyone else was doing. I found ways of using my feet so I could keep track of what part of the bar we were all in and then I began to see some of the other musicians in the band looking at my feet and I figured that they also got lost sometimes just like me. Even Trevor got lost, so we were all sharing these challenges. It was a great band with some wonderful musicians. After this period Trevor worked on his drum orchestra projects and quite a lot later we got together again as a duo and just improvised. We called this project 'Dialogues' and somehow all the previous work we had done together informed our musical relationship as improvisors. Being open and free meant to us that we also could play the things we liked and that included melodic, harmonic and rhythmic ideas but explored spontaneously. At my request and suggestion, we are now working again on Trevor's music in a band we call Eternal Triangle which includes percussionist - Jamie Harris. Considering Trevor is 84, the music he's working on is still both demanding and challenging, but Jamie and I really love this. The rehearsing, the traveling, the waiting around, the conversations, the meals, and the gigs themselves, are all a vital strand to my life. These experiences with Trevor consist of some vivid moments but are just personal glimpses as opposed to anything particularly profound. Trevor has talked to me about his grandson George and he is very positive and enthusiastic about George's ability to work on ideas and activities by himself, a number of which are quite unusual for children his age. That to me says a lot about Trevor as well.

ESCALATOR OVER THE HILL: Now over 50 - but not yet anywhere near over the hill...



It all started with this: A Facebook post by Gaspare Di Lieto, 2/10/23, on his Rare Jazz Photos page, accompanying this (unattributed) picture of Carla Bley, as a child, at the piano, smiling in the direction of the camera, something it took me 35 years to get her to do. My comment, since edited, posted later the same day, in response to the comment that Escalator Over the Hill was 51 years old:

In 1972, no American record company was interested in taking a chance on a 3-LP album such as Escalator Over the Hill, so Carla and her then-husband Michael Mantler put it out on their own JCOA (Jazz Composers Orchestra Association) label, while also founding the New Music Distribution Service, which handled hundreds of small labels, and was the first US distributor for ECM. With time, the JCOA label was folded into Bley and Mantler's newer entity, the WATT family of labels, and ECM became WATT's distributor. Carla now records for ECM. She often gets short shrift among critics, but that comes with the territory of being free enough of trends to set your own rather than following one. What I find most grating is her name being left out of too many rosters of pioneering women who have helped level the playing field in a part of the music world so long dominated by men. We are fortunate that from the beginning, Carla Bley has always followed her own muse. She is a force of nature.

An Auspicious Debut

Robert Palmer was the canary in my coal mine. His glowing review of Escalator Over the Hill in Rolling Stone arrived in August of 1972, while that publication's imprimatur still carried more weight than fluff. It was the first I'd heard of this album – or of Carla Bley - and this was the next 3-LP box set to garner such notice since George Harrison's Concert for Bangladesh a few months before.

Palmer's review made it an enticing prospect, tempting enough to inspire my investment of a mail order fortune. I can't remember whether its $12 price tag included shipping, but at that point in my life, monthly rent was $25…

Primarily, I bought it because it featured John McLaughlin. The original Mahavishnu Orchestra was hot at the time (though by then, I was also discovering McLaughlin's solo debut from across the pond, Extrapolation, which sounded equally uplifting, more inviting, and less noisy). I also knew of Jack Bruce, from Cream, but had yet to discover Songs for a Tailor or, especially, Harmony Row, so this was my introduction to him doing much of anything besides backing Eric Clapton. And of course everyone knew who Linda Ronstadt was.

Little did I know how many mind- and ear-expanding surprises awaited me. EOTH was my introduction to so many amazing musicians, including the composer Herself. Its overall roster comprises a veritable Who's Who of the jazz avant garde, an aesthetically far-flung legion spanning the interfaces between structure and chaos, at a time when adventurous ensemble exploration of the unknown was embraced.

To create EOTH, Carla Bley organically organized this unruly, lovingly creative lot, session after session, with an ever-changing cast, during the years 1968 to 1971. The sum of this endeavor adds up to more than its parts, most any of which can sturdily stand unto themselves as shorter pieces.

The 3-LP set was packaged in a hefty, classical-looking gold-foil topped box, with a libretto book – not a booklet, a book – of Canadian poet Paul Haines' lyrics for this de facto jazz opera. This publication remains a paragon. It was re-published at full LP dimensions for the CD edition, which was housed in a gold-foil topped box identical to the original LP issue.

I like to think the booklet for Bley's 2002 big band album, Looking for America, which, like the EOTH book, was photo-edited and designed by Bley herself, this time with my own rehearsal and session photos, followed nicely in a similar vein, even though the CD format is physically smaller. While it won't be engraved on my headstone, it will always warm my heart that I was the first photographer allowed, some 30 years later, to follow in the footsteps of Gary Winogrand, Tod Papageorge and Paul McDonough, documenting Carla Bley in the recording studio with an ensemble. Now it can be told: I'd have done it for free, but it was nice to not only be invited, but also respected, and decently paid.

Over the years, I've ended up spending a good bit of time with the Escalator libretto book as well as the music itself. My affection for its pages stems from its embodying many of the same design elements as the now-obscure art form I came up in: the school yearbook, an activity I began I junior high, and for which I served as editor-in-chief in both high school and college. I've seen a lot of music packaging, and have had my work included in or on about 300 albums, but EOTH's book has seldom been equaled and never surpassed.

Comprehending the scope of the music was another matter. I'd heard a bit of Satie and Weill, but not yet so much Monk or Ornette, much less Ives or Ellington. As

a recovering rocker southern white boy in my early 20s, sitting still long enough to attentively listen to all 6 LP sides in uninterrupted sequence would have been unlikely. Then there was the matter of my cluelessness due to not having lived long enough, much less heard enough other music which would prepare me for this eccentric extravaganza. So, though I didn't listen to Bley's music as I was coming of age, her music helped me grow up (as much as I have, anyway).
I glommed onto bits and pieces here and there. There was no shortage of portals into this sprawling work. Gato Barbieri's impassioned tenor wailings throughout, or Ronstadt's mellifluous vocals on Haines' surreal lyrics for "Why" (with Charlie Haden singing harmony, and that snaky lick McLaughlin dashes off at the end) or Don Cherry's hypnotically mystical auras in "A.I.R.", leading seductively into the shredding of Jack's Traveling Band = McLaughlin, Bruce, Paul Motian and Bley herself = on "Rawalpindi Blues" were the first to catch my attention, and the first I played on my college's radio station, at a time when the Eagles debut album topped the playlist. An added benefit of playing it on air was to give me another chance to try to make sense of how so much different music could come out of the same box.

It would take another five years until I could do more than occasionally cusp on comprehension for the span of the entire work, as Bley calls it, a chronotransduction, much less perceive as a single opus, one about as magnum as an opus can get. The power of it all was, unexpectedly, first fully revealed to me while I was driving my Volkswagen bus around Jacksonville, Florida, my old home town, delivering flowers for holidays. I'd recorded all 6 sides, about 105 minutes' worth, of EOTH onto one of those nice BASF chromium dioxide 120-minute cassettes – the only variety of 120s which didn't stretch or break if you so much as looked at them wrong – and I listened to it while running roses, etc., all over town.
Though my listening wasn't uninterrupted, it was in sequential order, start-to-finish, somewhat like watching a movie on commercial television, except that my interruptions weren't for advertisements, rather for stepping out to ring doorbells and hand over the goods at many a home or business. I began to have favorite passages which I looked forward to hearing, but instead of forwarding or rewinding the tape to repeat-play those, I only listened in full sequence, acquiring, if not new favorites, at least new curiosities to be examined further, on most every pass, which also revealed more of the contextual nuances of Bley's larger musical architecture. Many a mile driven in that burgeoning multi-county spread of suburbs, exurbs and ruburbs was made far more enjoyable with this infinitely intriguing soundtrack. Hearing it twice through in a day gave me an ever-deepening perception for its overarching structure, its labyrinthine narrative arcs and recurring motifs, of the work as a whole.
I can still be amazed by the breadth and depth of the scope of Bley's musical vision. Even if logic says it shouldn't all fit together, it does.
With the years, I have also grown quite fond of Carla's sign-off on the inside back cover of the libretto book: "Anything not told, wasn't yet known."

Carla Bley, Steve Swallow and Andy Sheppard at their rehearsal for the Big Ears Festival in Knoxville, Tennessee, March 21, 2017. Photo credit ©2017 by Patrick Hinely, Work/Play®

An Interview with Gene Paul

By Bill Donaldson

Producer Joel Dorn wrote in the liner notes positive comments about the quality of the sound from a tape recording ("on a $1.98 cassette") of a live Ray Bryant concert. I thought that sound engineer Gene Paul's comments may be of interest. This is what he said. Mr. (Gene) Paul engineered Grammy-winning recordings by Aretha Franklin, Roberta Flack, Nora Jones, and Maria Schneider.

CADENCE: You've worked with Joel Dorn for a long time.

Gene Paul: Yes, I've done work for Joel for years. Wherever he goes, I'm there. I first worked with him in the sixties and seventies at Atlantic Records. Even the owner of DB Digital Plus [a mastering studio], Joel Kerr, is from Atlantic. Sometimes Joel does recording dates on the outside, and when he does that, I work with him on those projects too. I work with him exclusively on the mastering. In the eighties, Joel [Kerr] and I started re-mastering live concerts. Part of the problem in dealing with board tapes—tapes that people had just put into the machines to record things—is that a certain amount of equipment is needed to handle them. We use two pieces of equipment for that purpose. One is the Atari 5050 two-track, which handles the quarter-inch tape. In other words, it's the home consumer's best professional deck for handling that type of tape. The other unit we use is a Nakamichi Dragon, a cassette unit with an automatic seeking azimuth. That means that the heads are on a motor. The Dragon says, "Feed me any tape, and I will align the heads to fit that tape automatically." That provides the best resolution of the sound that you can get from a cassette. We've had several collections that consist of thousands of cassettes. The Dragon is exquisite for getting the music off the tapes with the best fidelity. Ray Bryant's album, "Somewhere in France"[1], fell into that category of audiocassette. Somebody had just slipped the tape in a deck and recorded it. Working on that recording was a delightful experience. Normally, when a person says, "I have a pillowcase full of tapes," I immediately think, "Is it good? Bad? Ugly?" But Ray's tape was a special find. If the listener didn't know that it was recorded on audiocassette, he would think, "Wow! What sound truck did they use?" The audience was phenomenal. Ray played as if he were in Avery Fisher Hall. His speaking on the tape was just perfect. At the end of the concert, the technician must have said, "Hey, Ray. Before you leave, take these." Ray basically came home, threw the tapes in a drawer, and never listened to them. Initially, Joel [Dorn] had said to Ray, "You don't have to listen to your tapes. Many people just collect them and don't want to be bothered. We'll take care of it." Ray said, "No, I'll listen to them." Ray was astonished when he finally heard them. He called Joel a couple days later and said, "The find was incredible." When Joel and I heard the tape in the studio, we both fell over. Technically speaking, that

Gene Paul

Gene Paul, Mary Ford, Les Paul

tape was one of those we're-never-going-to-find-another-one-like-that.

Cadence: How is the quality of the tapes from the Left Jazz Bank Society?

Gene Paul: Those are rough. One problem is that the performances were recorded on a seven-inch reel-to-reel Mylar tape. When you stretch Mylar tape, it becomes a rubber band. There's no bringing it back after it's stretched. Also, Mylar is half mil, which means it's extremely thin. When acetate tape breaks, you can pick up the pieces and put it back together. But the minute that Mylar tape stretches, it has to be cut because it's gone. So, a half-mil tape means that more tape can be put on a reel and therefore record for a longer length of time. Also, Mylar tape is quarter-track, which means that it goes stereo in one direction and, when the tape is turned over, it goes stereo in the other direction. To boot, the Mylar tape is at three-and-three-quarter and seven-and-a-half RPM—very slow speeds for music. The Left Bank Jazz Society put the band on one side and the featured horn on the other side. That means that, for all intents and purposes, they created a big mono. For someone who thinks "I happen to love Getz," the Left Bank Jazz Society's tape makes it a privilege to be able to revisit that night he played there. The listener of the CD[2] can sit there and say, "Wow. That's spectacular." But when we sent the original rough, which was a copy of the original tape, for the Getz estate to hear, they said, "Can you fix any of this?" They were stunned at how bad the tape sounded. But Joel wanted to hear if the estate was interested in going to the next phase so that we could present an improved tape to them. They did notice that Getz was playing incredibly, but they were concerned about the quality of the sound. The tape did need some tender loving care. If I went into a club and sat at a table that didn't quite give me a great balance, and if Getz were playing the way he did on the Left Bank Jazz Society tape, I wouldn't get up and leave! Great musicians are great musicians. We make the recordings as good as they can be, considering the environment where the tapes were recorded. It's wonderful to hear that people enjoyed the recordings after they were enhanced. The environment in the studio is very controlled, even during a free-spirited jam session. The spirit in a club became, "Oh, there's no producer. Oh, I don't have to sell this. People only have to hear it once." But when the audience goes crazy during a performance, it's like a bookmark. There's a flag that something exciting is happening, and we should stay with the music. The audience's reaction energizes the artist to go to a higher place. A live performance rises to a level that's just marvelous. If I were a student of saxophone, I would love to have access to Getz's performance since I wouldn't be able to go to a club to see him. Those Left Bank Jazz Society recordings become a learning tool and an important part of history.

Cadence: The Cedar Walton recording[3] sounds rougher than Getz's.

Gene Paul: Absolutely. His piano was a little out of tune. Getz shined on his CD because when he performed, the horn was on one side and the band was on the other. So we could play with the tape. But we struggled to improve

the recording of Cedar's tape because it didn't have that separation of sound. Pianos are never miked as well as horns are. Recordings of pianos are driven by questions like "Is it a good piano? Is it tuned well? Is it miked well?" So, some of these tapes are very rough. However, our technical equipment and our involvement in reissuing old tapes for twenty years help us. With the Coltrane box set4, Joel included the outtakes that led up to the final recordings. When you listen to the recorded progression, you can actually hear the tunes being developed.

Cadence: What is your role in the process?

Gene Paul:I do the hands-on work. When the process gets to particulars like no-noising or some type of polished editing, I supervise the work. If the work is just a matter of EQ [equalization] and taking top end off, then we keep the work simple. In most cases, the work is simpler than one would think. For example, you could take noise out and divide Basie's band if you want to. But there's a level where noise and music share the same ground. When the noise is removed to the extent that the sound is too clean, we lose what music—to me—is expressing. The sound of music is best when one note bleeds into the next one after it is struck. They share the same territory. When too much noise is removed, it spoils what the musicians try to do. In my mind, music is sacrificed to achieve no-noise. Therefore, I would rather hear a little noise so that the music is performed correctly. A lot of the old tapes that I've enhanced have a certain expression to them as if a person sat down in a club. Sometimes the air conditioning, the bottles clicking, or the people talking can be heard. Those sounds should never be removed completely because they are as much a part of the event as the smoke in the room. Joel has said many times that truly the most important thing is what you don't do that makes a recording work. We have the ability today to do too much. You could put a divider between each musician in Basie's band and totally clean up the recording so that you can hear every player. But Basie's band was never thought of that way. It was a unit. Years ago, I was fortunate to hear Wes Montgomery and Jimmy Smith in a club in Harlem. The room was dark and foggy. But the music just melded together. There was no division. Hearing the pedal of the organ hit the floor did something to the audience. When you remove that feeling to make a quote-unquote "clean" record, you lose the basis for the music. So technically, while we have the ability to make performances "perfect," I choose to stay with the raw sense of the music. Joel spent a good part of his life in clubs, and sometimes he asks me, "Why is the recording so clean? It doesn't sound like a club." Sometimes we say, "Wow. We feel like we're in the environment." If the music doesn't make the listener feel as if he were in the club, then we're doing something wrong. From an engineering perspective, jazz is no different than classical music. If you had thirty-five or forty musicians playing a symphony, would you put a mic on everybody? No. It's the same situation with jazz, except that putting the mic on every musician in a band is possible. Therefore, it's done. To me, jazz

consists of notes bleeding together. The minute they separate, it's not the same. In the middle eighties, engineers crossed over to become the artists. That was a major mistake. It resulted from the fact that albums could be made from four bars. It resulted from the thought that "if the technology is doable, why don't we do it?" The minute they did it, it changed music. It's not that I don't like the [electronically enhanced music]. It's that when Aretha Franklin and people of her stature record an album with musicians, it's one thing. The minute that the music is overdubbed and sampled, you lose that connection to the human element in the music. If you could take an old vinyl record and compare it to what's happening today, the same magic isn't there. I remember that when I worked at Atlantic Records, the engineer became someone who captured something. Ray Charles was not made by Tommy Dowd. Tommy Dowd captured Ray Charles.

Cadence: Do you think that the engineers have too much control today?

Gene Paul: Yes, way too much control. I remember working on a Mongo Santamaria album[5] that consisted of twenty-eight musicians in a single room. That's devastating for an engineer. I remember that, after everything became stable, the producer hit the key and said, "Let's run this tune down." After it was performed, he said, "That's a take. We're done." The ability to hear a finished record while it was being performed was marvelous. That process started to become obsolete when I began my career in the late sixties. But having experienced a couple dozen sessions of that type, I found that process to be one that shouldn't have been allowed to die. Today, an engineer plugs a unit into the wall, and fifteen things play. No human being has any input or changes the process to accommodate the artist. The same music comes out of the processor every time. The more that engineers keep going in that direction, the more I'm hearing a coldness in the music. The result is so perfect that no human being could play like that in real life. I've heard mistakes that lead to a wonderful take. When I started at Atlantic, it was so hard to me. I was brought up on the belief that, "Oh, we'll punch that in. We'll fix that." But at Atlantic, it was, "No! That's an honest mistake. That's the take!" Today, if a musician begins to think about a mistake, the engineer corrects it. That kind of correcting has nothing to do with the human connection. We have the ability to do a lot of things. It's up to us to say if we want them or not. Or whether we use them intelligently. Over a long period of time, if the public is fed enhanced music, they will become more aware that they're listening to it. For example, we mastered Otis Redding's Dock of the Bay[6]. I tell you, that album could be a learning tool for anyone who records. When they made the album, the engineers had nothing but door springs and cheap mic's. Everything was wrong. Yet, it's the most balanced, well-done, phenomenal album ever made. All of today's technology couldn't have produced an album like that. The producers needed the ability to deal with what they had on hand, and they pulled it off. On Sexual Healing[7], Marvin Gaye combined technology with

raw music, and the listener could accept the combination because the human element was involved. Today, I think the public realizes that the human element has to be involved in creating the music. The minute that people are returned to the equation, human feeling will override synthetic enhancement every time.

Cadence: Earlier, you said that you were brought up to make recordings perfect until you joined Atlantic. Why did you think that recordings had to be perfect until then?

Gene Paul: Well, I was working with my dad in his studio. His work involved perfection. Today, there are microphones that are awesome. But when I was a kid, I asked my dad, "What kind of a mic would you use on a trumpet?" And he asked, "What's the frequency range of the trumpet?" Then he said, "This is the mic I would use." When he showed it to me, I asked, "Why wouldn't you use a mic with a wider range?" And he answered, "There's no reason to. The frequencies aren't there. It becomes annoying. You want the essence of the instrument." He proved that to me, and that's how I was educated. Today's studios use microphones that have a frequency response with nothing in common with the instrument. That's why you hear cymbals four octaves higher when you listen to a recording of a drum. Then you think, "Gee, when a drummer hits a cymbal like that in a club, the sound is different." Because the engineer is in control, the sounds become strange. Also, I don't know what's happening in the community of mastering, but levels keep getting louder. There's no reason for it. Years ago, there used to be a slight reason because the vinyl rumble and hiss were annoying. A louder record diverted the listener's attention from that noise. But digital technology eliminates the reason for loudness, even as the music keeps getting louder. To make the music louder, the music must be squeezed. Instead of letting a vocal express itself and breathe, it must be condensed to the point where it stands still. The result is a different kind of music. When the music leaves the studio, it's right. It's when the music goes to the mastering house that it changes. When you listen to the two versions, the studio mixes breathe. But the final product is squeezed so hard that the finesse of the performance sounds different.

Cadence: Have you always been involved in sound engineering, or have you had other types of jobs?

Gene Paul:I played drums with my dad when I was a kid. I went on the road with him for six to eight years. It was just wonderful. I wasn't great at playing drums, but I was good enough that I could fit into the band. Actually, that's where I got my "college education."

Cadence: Who else was in the band?

Gene Paul: It was just my dad, Mary [Ford] and myself. They utilized whatever band happened to be in the city where we played. Without even knowing it, I was being taught about presenting music, which was a great experience. I worked on putting the shows together with Dad. I watched him record his own music as well as groups'. If he said, "Do you want to know about this?" I'd say,

"Yes." And I'd go set up a mic. By the time I grew up, I knew how to record.

Cadence: Whom did your father record?

Gene Paul: In the early days, out on the West Coast, Bing Crosby came over to the house to be recorded. Sometimes they tried out ideas on a project they were interested in. If their work turned out good enough, sometimes Bing said, "Let me use this." Dad's development of the multi-track recorder came out of that period. Oddly enough, he never made one hit record on the multi-track. His recordings were all done on a mono tape machine with a fourth head. That means he played his part, recorded it, played it back and recorded the new part. The older I became, the more I appreciated what Dad did. He used to record the sixth vocal part first. Mary used to sing the fifth, the fourth and the third parts. The last vocal part he recorded was the lead. He completed the recording with the bass. He did the same thing with the guitar parts: He recorded all the parts and then the lead. He had the ability to hear pitch and to project what the finished recording would sound like as he worked on the twelve parts. That was overwhelming. And then he did it on a mono tape machine.

Cadence: Did he do that all in his head, or did he write it?

Gene Paul: No, he can't read a note. But that was how he made the hit records. After I learned how he recorded those kinds of records, I used to think, "Everybody records like this." Later, I went into the studio and heard Aretha Franklin, Cissy Houston and Roberta Flack sing over back-up parts. Then I thought to myself, "My gosh! Mary used to sing the six parts herself."

Cadence: So you realized how much work that was.

Gene Paul: Not only how much work it was, but also how good you had to be. Mary's pitch had to be perfect on the first recording. Otherwise, it would throw off all the other recordings on top of it. If that happened, those recordings would have had to be done all over again!

Cadence: That technique was your father's idea, but what did Mary think of it?

Gene Paul: It was a lot of work, but she had perfect pitch. If Dad could so much as hear a glass clink, she could hit the note. He knew which note it was before he picked up the guitar. After I worked in this industry for thirty years, I thought to myself, "My gosh! Dad really had to be on the button with that technique." Then he went on to create the solid-body guitar and the multi-track. Thirty years ago, when my dad had invented the multi-track, not one multi-track hit was made. All of Dad's records were done in his head before he recorded. I remember my dad's stories about how he and Mary toured. They played in the club at night. Then at three o'clock in the morning, she would be singing under a blanket while he played guitar. That's how they made their records. The level of my dad's playing is what made his music so great. That's the same level of excellence that Otis Redding had and which made his music exciting. When an artist reaches a certain point, something more happens than just clean sound. In my opinion, that's the element that's missing in today's music.

Cadence: How did you get your job at Atlantic?
Gene Paul: Dad knew the studio manager there, Phil Iehle. Dad sat down with me and said, "I can get you in, but you're on your own." I worked there for three or four years before I was given any real opportunities. By working with Tommy Dowd, the Erteguns, Jerry Wexler and Joel Dorn, of course, I soaked up the experience. Also, I worked in many of the outside sessions for people like Diana Ross and Gladys Knight. One day, we would be working with Aretha, and the next day we would be working with the Rolling Stones. I would have paid to work there! It was like being in a dream.
Cadence: Which record was the first one you were responsible for?
Gene Paul: I forget the name of the record, but it was for Wilson Pickett. He got mad at me. He said the record sounded like a 78. I spent a lot of time with Tom Dowd to grow with the craft and do as well as I could. That was a wonderful period of time in the recording business. There were so many brilliant musicians then. I remember that I had to make a mic change for Mingus once. When I walked up to Mingus, I said, "Mingus, that sounds great." After I went into the control room and turned up the mic, I could hear [snoring sound]. Joel's love for music is so strong. He's finding so much music that's wonderful because he didn't go with a major label. It's good that he didn't do that. If he had, he would be reissuing that type of music, instead of finding older tapes to release for the first time. There was a certain affinity between Joel and Rahsaan that's still there. Joel was amazed by what he heard Rahsaan play. I mean, if he finds a tape that Rahsaan recorded, Joel puts it away. For the most part, we released Rahsaan tapes that someone found somewhere. We had a collection of four hundred of Rahsaan Roland Kirk's cassettes. By the time we were done listening to the cassettes, we "knew what this guy eats every day." We could come out with some delightful results that include a pristine sound, or we could get all kinds of variations from that. It's no different than hunting for treasure under the water. We have to keep looking. Some of these people are one-of-a-kind. Rahsaan definitely fits into that category. I must have worked on fifteen albums with him. It's remarkable that he can play so far out and still stay inside. I was amazed at how he could create so much music with all his horns. Rahsaan used to play hoses, gongs and anything else. Joel would tell him, "Go ahead and do it." Rahsaan was a marvel, but he used to be upset that people didn't take his music seriously. He led a short life for a guy who contributed so much.
Cadence: What type of music do you prefer?
Gene Paul: I like anything, although classical music gets a little bit away from me. Jazz in the far-out sense gets me a little nervous, but I enjoy jazz in the commercial sense. Rahsaan is as crazy as you can get, and he'll really leave the planet. Yet, he'll come back to visit enough that he won't lose you. Any of Rahsaan's albums are collectibles. But good music is good music, whether it's banjo, saxophone, or spoons. We're working on a Buddy Rich album[8] now.

Buddy has to be one of the top three drummers, if not the greatest. Buddy Rich's music wasn't exactly warm and soothing. But when I listen to his music, I think, "My God! He was so accurate, and his sound was so big." When I played drums as a kid, the two drummers my old man took me to see were Gene Krupa and Buddy Rich. We listened to them play, and Dad said, "They're what a drummer's about."

Cadence: Did you father ever perform with them?

Gene Paul: I don't think so. Dad wasn't a jazz guy. He was more commercial. Plus, he didn't like a drum. The drum got in his way. Back then, the drum was a silent partner. Sometimes people speak of jazz as if it's a dirty word. Some of jazz was self-indulgent, and the public wasn't involved in it. I remember that Dad took me to see jazz at The Village Gate. I said, "Who's this?" And he said, "Billie Holiday. She's good." I was a young kid, and I didn't know anything. And I said, "Gee, Dad. Why is her back toward us? Shouldn't she turn around?" And he said, "Just listen to her!" I'll never forget that. So even though she didn't face the audience, she still connected with it.

Cadence: What is your goal in remastering?

Gene Paul: If enough people say they like the recordings, I'm happy—especially if they think the recordings came out well. And if I can make the listener and the artist satisfied, to me that's fulfillment. Sometimes, Joel gets on the Internet and fishes for comments about the CD's he produces. Then he tells me, "A lot of people this week say that the music sounds like vinyl." And I say, "That's good." We have the same ideas about the sound. Perfection is for somebody else. All that we want is to make sure that people can enjoy the music. It's wonderful when people like you hear some of our recordings and say, "Hey, this sounds good."

New York, NY
December 1, 2000

Ò Registered trademark of E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Company.
1 Somewhere in France by Ray Bryant. Label M 5701.
2 My Foolish Heart: "Live" at the Left Bank by Stan Getz. Label M 5702.
3 Three Sundays in the Seventies: "Live" at the Left Bank by Cedar Walton. Label M 5711.
4 The Heavyweight Champion – The Complete Atlantic Recordings by John Coltrane. Atlantic 8122 79642 7.
5 Up from the Roots by Mongo Santamaria. Rhino 8122737112.
6 The Dock of the Bay by Otis Redding. Volt/Atco 7567-80254-2.
7 Sexual Healing by Marvin Gaye. Columbia 13-03585.
8 Wham! by the Buddy Rich Big Band. Label M 495717.

Trevor Watts Interview

English Royalty

By Ken Weiss

Alto/soprano saxophonist Trevor Watts (b. February 26, 1939, York, England) is part of a small group of English musicians who turned their back on American Jazz in the mid-'60s and developed their own language of improvisation based on sound texture and rhythmic complexity rather than staying reliant on melody and rhythmic regularity. Largely self-taught, Watts co-founded, along with drummer John Stevens and trombonist Paul Rutherford, the Spontaneous

Trevor Watts
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Trevor Watts
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Trevor Watts
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Trevor Watts
Photo credit © Ken Weiss

Music Ensemble, the influential band that was one of the first Free Jazz improvisatory groups in England. Watts split away temporarily about a year later to form Amalgam in 1967, a band that included bassist Barry Guy and trombonist Paul Rutherford (and later Keith Tippets, USA bassist Kent Carter and Keith Rowe) and focused on not just Free Jazz but also Blues, Folk and Rock elements. Never one to settle down into any one space for too long, including the confined limits of Free improvisation, Watts moved on to his African music inspired Moiré Music projects starting in the early '80s. However he was not not really influenced by the numerous expatriate South African musicians in London at the time, Watts was drawn to utilizing composition and arranging, which he showcased in his many versions of his Moiré Music ensembles, as well as his Drum Orchestras. Watts continued on with many other ensembles, evolving his music with like-minded artists around the globe. Some of the other musicians Watts has played with include Steve Lacy, Don Cherry, Bobby Bradford, Stan Tracey, Derek Bailey, Evan Parker, Kenny Wheeler, Archie Shepp, Jayne Cortez, Louis Moholo, Veryan Weston, Harry Miller, Peter Knight and Mark Sanders. This interview took place between mid-2022/early-2023 by way of the internet. Be on the lookout for Watts touring through parts of the USA in 2023 with his duo partner Jamie Harris on percussion.

Cadence: How

have you spent these past few years with the COVID-19 pandemic silencing performances?

Trevor Watts: It's been a tough time with Covid and lockdown, etc. Very few opportunities to play. Jamie Harris and I did a duo at the Peitz Festival near Berlin and we did a few Eternal Triangle concerts which now are increasing again. It's beginning to feel a bit more normal. I also did some trio concerts in Norway with John Edwards on bass and a

Norwegian drummer called Tollef Ostvang. It was initiated by Tollef out of the blue, so to speak. I have managed to keep in touch with my sax playing and some writing, but it has been strange.

Cadence: What groups are you actively presenting?

TW: Currently I am playing with these combinations:

Eternal Triangle- Trevor Watts (compositions, as, ss), Veryan Weston (kybd), Jamie Harris (perc)

Trevor Watts (saxes), Jamie Harris (perc) duo

Tollef Ostvang (d) Norway, John Edwards (b) UK, Trevor Watts (saxes) UK

Cadence: Your 80th birthday came in 2019 and was celebrated a year later with the release of A World View – a 5 CD limited edition box set with never before released music drawn from the wide span of your career. How was it to help organize the project and to look back on your career which has been in constant flux?

TW: My 80th came and went almost unnoticed. In fact, it was pianist Veryan Weston who organized a celebration for me in a small London club called the 100 Years Gallery. He reintroduced me to playing with Jamie Harris again, and amongst the people who helped me celebrate, it was of course my family,

but players like Phil Minton, Veryan Weston, Hannah Marshall, Alison Blunt, etc. There would be no boxed set without it being the idea to do it by Maciej Karlowski in Poland. So, that was great. All I had to do was select a bunch of performances from my archives, which is where they all came from. That's how it was done. I could have selected many different things, thus it wasn't a selection that I necessarily thought was the most representative of my life, just underexposed groups, I guess. It all never felt particularly like a special occasion, although it was in reality with family. And big thanks must go to Veryan because without his input I would have done nothing.

Cadence: It must have been a bit unnatural for you to re-examine your work as you've always been a forward thinking artist.

TW: Generally, I don't think about the past, I have always lived for the future as it felt more optimistic. Whereas, I notice a lot of people want to relive the past, certainly on social media. I tend to find that a bit depressing. To me, it's like living it all over again. Jazz in Britain, for instance, is mainly reissuing recordings from musicians' archives and focusing on the scene from the past from the ones who received more exposure at the time. But they are doing some other things too which are still from the past but never got so much exposure at that time. This includes quite a lot of my things from my own archives that were mainly all recorded by me such as The Art is in the Rhythm CD from 1979 JIB -39-S-CD of the duo of Liam Genockey (drums) and Trevor Watts (saxes) "live". That is on the JIB label which

they have organized. It's a limited CD and download as are most of the things that JIB do I felt that was a very important and innovative duo at that time. There's now also a double CD of my Original Trevor Watts Drum Orchestra to be issued soon that was also recorded in 1989.

Cadence: You are one of a small group of British innovators who developed a new concept of improvisation in the '60s. Are you satisfied with how that musical form evolved over the years?

TW: It's not for me to judge whether the concept we introduced in the '60s has developed into something that I feel it should have done. I only had a part in what we thought was a good idea to move the music on for ourselves and to hopefully incorporate many other players. The truth is that it is now a valid and established musical form. And I can hear clearly the influences from groups like SME (Spontaneous Music Ensemble) and AMM in a lot of the way the music is still played now. A younger player said to me, and this was unsolicited, "It's not all about history you know" Well, I never said it was. But there always seemed to be resentment from a lot of players who followed on, but nevertheless, unwittingly we were using musical devices that simply didn't exist before we took them seriously enough and brought them into the world. History is an important thing in anything, even if only to stop the same mistakes being made again. Anyway, John Steven's book Search and Reflect is now in most music colleges in the country, something we could never have imagined

whilst playing that Little Theatre Club in St. Martin's Lane in London all those years ago. Going up those flights of narrow stairs and performing week after week for the sake of the development of the music and ourselves within it, of course. It was a special time. I have no doubt about that, even with all its difficulties and disagreements about where it all should go to next. Or whether someone was keeping some money back for themselves - all the basic human problems.

Cadence: Which current day Free improvisers interest you?

TW: To be honest, I don't take a great deal of interest in listening to anyone on that scene. My main interest for a long time now has been rhythm. When I was playing what is now known as Improv music, it was something I was doing for myself and my own development.

Cadence: Jamaican born saxophonist Joe Harriott was active on the British scene starting in the '50s. He was unheralded at the time but he's now recognized as a pioneer of Free-Form Jazz. How aware of his work were you at the time? Did you like what he was doing?

TW: The local scene at the time Joe Harriott was around did not interest me at all. I had been listening to the truly great USA artists for a long time and my attention was on them. You know, pretty obvious stuff, well, for me anyway - Charlie Parker, Sonny Rollins, Coltrane, I loved Albert Ayler, and so on. So Harriott's playing had no influence on me as I was more into Eric Dolphy

and Ornette [Coleman] and Cannonball Adderley on alto. My first influence would be Ernie Henry who died at 35 and played lead alto with Dizzy Gillespie's big band. I never saw Harriott as a pioneer, to be honest. History is always a made up thing anyway. Things remembered are never the same as in real time, especially when it's written by people who were not even there. Modern TV and films always get many things wrong about an era. When you get to my age, or I should say when I got to my current age, you just notice how wrong people are in lots of ways in terms of historical events. So, it's all a bit of a mug's game.

Cadence: As your career progressed and your interests changed, you largely pre-empted the "World music" phenomenon with your Amalgam and Moiré Music groups in the '80s which added elements of African/World music to your repertoire. Why don't you like the term "World music" being attached to your work?

TW: For me, how I progressed was always something that felt natural. Or, if it was an idea, it stemmed from something much more subjective than objective. When I left school at just 15, I wanted to do something exciting like play Jazz or sing or whatever. Just something, I didn't want to work in a factory or bakery, which was my first job as my dad was a foreman baker. He'd lived in Canada and visited the USA frequently, so he brought his love of Jazz, and a lot of recordings back to the UK where he met Mom and they got married. That's where my love of the music came from. Dad particularly liked Black Jazz and

so did I. It became important, as I went on, that I found some African musicians who lived in the UK to play with. But I wanted traditional African musicians because I thought that that would be a better, more fruitful and less trodden path. To play freely, but with all that rhythm, that was the appeal. I guess the rawest on CD is the Live in Latin America Vol 1, by the Moiré Music Drum Orchestra ARC CD006 and reissued on FMR in the UK. I recorded all the tracks live in Mexico, Venezuela, Canada and the USA during a tour in 1990 and released on our own ARC label. I don't mind at all the label "World music," it's others who seem to mind. I don't like the label Minimalism as the music was based on rhythmic patterns and cycles and in-betweens. Minimalism was never in my mind, African rhythms were and I think that's where the mix up comes with some writers.

Cadence: A guiding light that shines through your work is the idea and mission of inclusivity. You've been a strong advocate for communal and community music making. Why has that been so important to you?

TW: Yes, it was my idea to call the Splinters' release on the Jazz in Britain label Inclusivity as that was what it really was. Bringing together older musicians and younger generation ones together to basically have a jam. This goes back to the time the first Musician's Cooperative was formed and the split that happened between mainly John Stevens and I who were on the one side and some newer musicians on the other. We wanted that cooperative to include ALL players of whatever persuasion who simply were not working enough but others

at the meeting wanted the group to become something that only supported the avant-garde and that's what kind of won out in the end. I felt we were steered up the wrong path by the Arts Council wallers saying that they would only meet us all again if we got ourselves a committee. However, I felt it was working perfectly fine before that. Once we had the committee then we were divided. It's the old game of divide and rule. Suddenly one realized that those on the committee seemed to be working a bit more often than others not on it, and so on. It was John Stevens who really was the driving force behind the establishment of Community Music and his book of methods to help teach a way of involvement within improvisation. We had been friends and playing companions since our first meeting in 1959. I was there in a more supportive role, as the musician that helped him secure those ideas by being the first person to try them out with him together, usually in duo form, mainly at the Little Theatre Club but also at his house on occasions. We also did record "live" the very first A Records release on vinyl called SME for CND for Peace for You to Share which is made up of 3 previously organized exercises or pieces that John and I had worked on. All the proceeds from that recording went to the CND which was the main Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament group in the U.K. For You to Share was recorded at Tangent Records Studio called The Crypt in Ladbroke Grove, London on May 20th, 1970. "Park Piece" was performed and recorded outdoors as more of a 'jam for all' in Euston Square in London May 9th, 1970. The pieces included non-musicians and beginners and all kinds of different participants were welcomed whether they had an instrument or not and John and

I played a duo within it all. John was particularly thrilled by a girl with a speech impediment repeating the given mantra of 'If you want to see a vision' at the very end of the gig, all on her own, whereas at the beginning of the piece, she could barely bring herself to even talk. I think he believed in some kind of healing process through repetition. John seemed to me to be a bit quasi-religious about a lot of things. Later, well known recording engineer Eddie Offord remastered the recordings. Around that time, we had won what was called a Thames TV scholarship that allowed the two of us to work at a school in a rough part of London at that time called Stepney. The school was called John Cass and the teacher who booked us was also a writer and an enlightened human being named Chris Searle. He eventually got the sack from the school for publishing a book of the kid's poems, some of whom expressed the conditions they were living in. It was in all the newspapers of the time. Our residency at the school lasted a month and my observation was that the lower the kids were ranked at school, the better they participated in the pieces. A musical group, whatever the music is, works best when everyone supports each other within the music, and that's always been my philosophy. Also, though, not to say that it's wrong to be leading within it when the time is right, but music, after all, is made up of people joining together somehow and, in some way, with all their different "heads" to eventually try to make some sort of cohesive statement, and that being at it's very best.

Cadence: Trombonist Paul Rutherford, your frequent past cohort, identified as a Communist (his 1970 trio, Iskra 1903,

was named in tribute to the Lenin-managed revolutionary newspaper). Others on the British creative music scene, such as Keith Rowe, had similar ideas. Did that point of view also resonate with you?

TW: No, that point of view never resonated with me. I had met Paul's dad at a bar in Blackheath. He was what we called a "died in the wool" Communist party member and I always felt that Paul went down that path as some kind of support for his dad by way of an influence or admiration, in some way. His dad liked drinking beer a lot and so did Paul, which in the end was a contributory factor to his earlier than expected demise. Although we all had a look in that direction (at say, Karl Marx's ideas or whatever) and John, Paul and I certainly went to a Workers Revolutionary Party meeting at the Archway Tavern in London to listen and take a look. People in the forefront of that included Vanessa Redgrave, who John also had the "hots" for. Nothing unusual there. There was also Lynn Redgrave, who was being boring as hell, and I was reminded recently that we also played some improvisational music. That would have been Paul Rutherford (trombone), John Stevens (probably cornet) and me. But I have very little recall on that except the meeting was upstairs in the Archway Tavern. It's always helpful to have your meetings in a pub. It was a strange scenario for me because they were talking about things as if we were living in conditions exactly the same now as in 1917 so it all felt a bit hollow. I felt Paul had become a kind of parody of himself by the end, if that's not too unkind to say. I really couldn't take Keith seriously when he started to talk about things related to those ideas.

They never resonated with me at all. Though coming out of a very working-class environment and being there through the Second World War with the rationing of food, and etc., even into the '50s, put one on the side of the Labor argument for sure. But things now simply are not like that anymore, not for me anyway.

Cadence: Your 2005 World Sonic album was your first totally solo recording. Up until that time,

had it been unappealing to present yourself alone?

TW: Yes, you could say that it was unappealing to both play alone and to present that to others. Solo sax can be pretty boring to my way of thinking, so I left that well alone until I was asked enough times, and then gave in to the pressure, however slight. When I made World Sonic Hi4HeadRecs HFHCD 004 at the behest of Nick Dart owner of the company, it made me want to make a different statement that included rhythmic ideas within it and distortion of the pure alto sax sound. It's all alto sax but somehow a lot of it sounds like soprano. It's a bit odd to me to have an instrument and then try to make it sound like something else. I am not against that, but not really for it either. However, I have made a couple of solo CDs subsequently, like The Lockdown Solos on Hi4HeadRecs HFHCD029 in 2020 or Veracity FMR CD377 in June 2014, it's not been something

that has fascinated me enough to want to proceed consciously with any development of that. When I made Lockdown Solos, well, it was as it says in Lockdown, and so logical that I should do it then, if at all. Mainly, I really love the interaction with other musicians by far the most. That's what gets me excited.

Cadence: Talk about your experience with Don Cherry.

TW: Don Cherry was invited to the Baden Baden Free Jazz Meeting (1970), at the same time I was. The musicians were all selected to be there in that radio studio in Germany for a few days with the idea that we all play and record the music we created together in various combinations. The recordings were then transmitted later on as radio broadcasts. Joachim Ernst Berendt was the programmer for these events. The

Melody Maker music paper in the UK even featured a two page spread complete with photos taken at the time. I still have the cuttings. The magazine primarily wrote about "Pop" music, so it was somewhat of a scoop at the time. There were players such as Steve Lacy, John Stevens, Dave Holland, and so on. I remember Don had a piece of music that he put together that was based on what I had first heard Indian musicians play in terms of the main scale. I liked that a lot, but it's such a long time ago now that most of it fades into oblivion. What I always remember though was that Don, whenever we met at a festival somewhere later on, would always come over and say, "Hey Trev, how's it going?" He was always positive and friendly. Of course, Don was part of the movement that influenced us, along with Ornette. And we met and got to know Ornette too, who also seemed such a lovely human being.

Cadence: Cherry was a very spiritual person and that came through in his music. That element is also evident in your playing. At one point, you were into organic and fermented foods. Talk about your spiritual side.

TW: What one calls spirituality is something that comes through the intensity of trying to make every moment count. I did do yoga for quite some time. I read many a book about Indian philosophy and I loved what was called Spiritual music – music from Negro spirituals to John Coltrane's music or Indian music, etc. Or if I hear the classical piece by the UK composer Vaughan Williams called Lark Ascending or USA composer Samuel Barber's Adagio for Strings, they give me

that same wonderful feeling. Doesn't matter what it is or where it comes from. So, at an early age, I identified with that as being something "spiritual" in the sense of how I understood it. However, as time goes by, I have come out of that stage of believing in one's own spirituality, as being just that and possibly connected to some more powerful being, to the realization that it's all in the chemistry of the mind and body, which are the same thing. I prefer it also as a more realistic concept. Less hocus pocus and more real to me. I feel freer in thinking of having a feeling of knowing that a God does not exist, that we are all a part of the same universe and that when we die, we go back to the earth where we came from.

Cadence: Do you have expectations or the hope that your music will change listeners?

TW: No. If and when it does though, and it is a positive thing that people come up and tell me about, then of course I fully appreciate and respect that, but am also nearly always surprised. But you know that this is really tied up with the last question and the difference in people's minds and different perceptions about different things. Someone wrote on a YouTube track regarding my playing with the Moiré Music Drum Orchestra - "This guy doesn't know what he's going to play next." I think that was an attempt at a put down but, for me, it was a compliment. When expressing one's self within a piece of music, I find it's best to try to be in that moment. It always surprised me when I heard a player, say at a recording session, practicing something that was to be part of their bass

solo later on. Yes, it kind of works, but I think that with the other way, the music does take on a feeling more akin to what may be called "Spirituality" having a certain tension within it.

Cadence: You're known for playing alto and soprano saxophone but you've also played piano, bass clarinet, oboe, flute and vibes. What else do you play?

TW: Percussion has been the main "other thing" I play. This mainly came about through a workshop I held here in Hastings in around the year 2000. Jamie Harris came along to it, and at that stage he was mainly playing guitar and singing. I said to him at the workshop that I didn't have anything for voice at the moment but handed him a drum (tarabuka) and I then I played him a rhythm, which he quickly picked up and had the feel for it. So I said to him, 'You are a natural drummer," and he was and is. From that workshop I began writing music again for what became the Trevor Watts Celebration Band on ARC CD010 (2001) and Jamie played percussion within that. A little later on, Jamie Harris and I started to play duo, this was at my instigation. We used to meet no less than three times a week around my house and I'd be coming up with stuff on the drums to hone everything into something good. You could say I mentored Jamie for about 3 years. It was great for me too because I had to work at rhythmic ideas on a tarabuka also. With some of the pieces we play drums together before I move over to sax. Trevor Watts/Jamie Harris Live in Sao Paulo, Brasil now is also a CD on HFHCD 005(2006) and is from the SESI Jazz festival in Sao Paulo, Brazil in 2005 where we played two consecutive nights to

a full house on both occasions. The second night, the audience joined in with some of the vocal stuff that Jamie was doing and thoroughly enjoyed the music. We also toured in other parts of Brazil and the Dominican Republic. The people loved the music there very much and related to the rhythmic aspect of it. So this was a great success, and all that work seemed to have paid off. It's now culminated in the latest group (2022) we call Eternal Triangle. This group features my compositions and sax playing with Jamie on percussion and Veryan Weston on the Nord keyboard. Veryan had expressed an interest in playing with Jamie and I and using some of my compositions. How could I refuse that? I know you asked about the instruments I play but It's difficult for me to stick to that question in a simplistic way because what happened with Jamie IS the reason why I started to play tarabuka. It's as simple as that. I think one usually has a reason for playing instruments. I mean when I played oboe, flute, bass clarinet, etc., it coincided with the SME period of "seeing sounds and hearing colors." I even had a C melody sax and an old Beuscher stritch that I had forgotten about.

Cadence: During the '50s and '60s, many American Jazz musicians fell into the trap of using drugs as a means to increase creativity. Was the same issue happening on the British Jazz scene at that time?

TW: Yes, a lot of the players at that time got hooked on heroin and in many ways it almost messed every one of them up. John Stevens and I had to have a laugh at the fact that Stan Tracey

remembered in an interview on TV that he did do heroin but never admitted he played with John Stevens and Trevor Watts. Yes, Tubbs and Stan and many others, but not Kenny Wheeler, though. In fact, our very best drummer was Phil Seaman but he could never go to the States because of his habit. He died quite young, which was a shame. He influenced Ginger Baker, amongst many others, in the playing I mean.

Cadence: You were born in York, England but your family moved to Halifax in Yorkshire when you were 6-months-old. Talk about your parents and your childhood. You've indicated that money was an issue growing up.

TW: We never felt the lack of money as kids but we lived in a small, unheated house, apart from a small coal fire, and that was it. Dad could always get stuff from the bakery, and sometimes, even during the war, he would bring home hard to get items such as pepper. The house was a rented house until shortly before Dad died at 53-years-of-age. They had signed on for an insurance policy that then gave the house to Mum when he died around 1961, I think. I was in the RAF Music Services in Germany at the time when the news was broken to me by an officer in his office at RAF Butzweilerhof nearby Cologne. I went to school at 4-years-old, so we are talking 1943 now. We took gas masks, I still have mine. Halifax was a lucky place to be in at the time as it was fairly untouched by the war. A couple of bombs and a visit to the shelter, but that was about it. We later on saw what we called the 'doodlebugs' going over the house towards Liverpool or Manchester. These would be the V1

or V2 rockets. We had family from London staying with us for a while to give them respite from the Blitz. My brother and I slept in the same bed and when family came to stay from London, our male cousin was in a spare single bed in the room with my brother and me. One night, it started to thunder and lightning and he got very frightened and ran downstairs to his parents. We thought he was scared of the storm but years later I realized that he thought it could be bombs. We'd never have any idea as to what it was like living in London at that time. One nice memory was receiving stuff like chocolate powder and cocoa sent by our Canadian friends at school. I then proceeded to eat it all on my walk home from school, finishing it all off even before arriving home. It just felt like the natural thing to do at the time.

Cadence: You learned to love Jazz from listening to your father's record collection but didn't have contact with anyone else who knew about or liked Jazz. You've described feeling isolated in your youth.

TW: I'd been listening to mainly Black American Jazz since the '40s vinyl 78's that my father had brought back from the States in the late '20s-early '30s. We had all these recordings in the house like Duke Ellington, Fats Waller, Nellie Lutcher, Tex Beneke, and so on. I was listening to that music practically from the day I was born. My father loved that music, and particularly the Black art form. There was no, or very little, music where we lived at the time. I didn't particularly feel isolated, only in a musical sense, as we played lots of made up games with lots

of other kids all the time. There was a lot of what we called spare land to play on. So, in a way, the fact that I loved Jazz, and others loved other things, didn't have much of an effect [on me]. It just seemed that that was normal. So, I don't want to give you the idea that I felt isolated - that would be the wrong emphasis. I also loved sports and played tennis, football, rugby and running in the main. There was no Jazz scene here of any kind so there was no discussion about any of it at that time. We were too busy just getting on with our lives, and like most kids, what you grew up with you kind of took for granted. It wasn't until much later you appreciated the exposure to something that your parents did for you, unwittingly most of the time. In my case, it was a love of Jazz, and also for my brother, but he had more choices because he went to grammar school and then university. That led him down the road of a career path as a teacher, and a good one at that. For me, I left school at 15, and that was that. My brother's daughter Helen called her children Ella and Louis, so you can see how the influences were handed down.

Cadence: What was the first significant live Jazz performance you viewed?

TW: I travelled over to Bradford to see the Count Basie Big Band. That was around 1956. I still have the program somewhere. That was a wonderful experience at the time.

Cadence: How did you go about teaching yourself to play and read music?

TW: It was a labor of self-taught love to learn to play the sax. That was the cheapest thing in the shop that my parents could afford to buy for me when I was around 16. I'd learnt a bit of cornet, then trumpet, before sax. My first sax was a silver Buescher underslung, and I wanted to play something akin to what I was hearing in those days, but how? That was always the question. I tried to copy things I was listening to, and then I thought it would be a good thing to learn to read music so I got a book and taught myself. Before that, it was all learning by ear as much as possible. My first observation was that it seemed harder to pick things up by ear once the reading came into play. Much later in life, I was touring in Africa with my Moiré Music Drum Orchestra and Nana Tsiboe was showing by playing some West African (Ghanaian) type of drumming in a Botswana College. While there, he announced, "If anyone wants to know how to write these down, Trevor can show you," which was actually sprung on me at the time. Everyone put their hand up, which was a great surprise to me. So I got on the blackboard and interpreted what was being played as closely as I could.

Cadence: You left high school after failing the required test needed to move forward in school?

TW: I never went to a high school. It was a very low school in the Industrial North of England - Halifax in the West Riding of Yorkshire. I left at just 15, as my birthday is in February -so that would be 1954.

Cadence: As a young man growing up in a working-class area

of Halifax, a factory job was inevitable. Music became your out. Did you choose music consciously as a way to avoid working as a laborer or was it purely out of love for creating music?

TW: I could honestly say it was both. It's very difficult to answer a question like this as that area of the country was full of workers in factories. That is usually where one would go to work. My friend at school for instance, worked as a loom tuner. As it implies, it was a job making sure the looms worked perfectly in order to make the carpets and patterns with absolute certainty and good quality. If this had been a coal mining area then that would have been the job for those that didn't get qualifications. For me, I was quite rebellious in that respect. It was the period of James Dean in film and we, as teenagers, reacted against the status quo. I heard Bill Haley's "Rock around the Clock" and it blew my socks off, as they say. I remember that occasion clearly. At that time, I was 15, working in the bakery, and there was a radio in the corner that was always covered in flour with this music emanating out of it. Talking around 1954 now. You see, I guess I loved MUSIC not just Jazz, and we didn't place the different musics in different spaces, it just came at you from wherever. Dance halls were popular then, and dancing was one of the things to go out and do. We listened to lots of big band music at the time. In other words, we had no real tradition of a certain type of music. It was all up for grabs if you wanted it. That's how it felt, no baggage really in that respect. It's like years later with Bobby Bradford saying to us, "Most players in the States were listening to the same phonographs as you." Implying that it wasn't that unusual

to be somewhere where that was the only thing possible at the time. Nevertheless, I thought it was a generous thing for him to say.

Cadence: You shared an old black and white photo with me of Halifax as you remembered it with its numerous factories obscured by the smoke belching out of chimneys. It's a scary vision out of an Upton Sinclair novel. How was it growing up in that environment realizing the limited future available to you?

TW: It was quite frustrating in some ways because having failed official examinations at school while my brother, who is older, succeeded in the hopefully anticipated way, it left me feeling inferior for a while. This was no fault of my parents in any way, they treated us even handedly. It is just the way I took it when faced with perceived failure, and also being the younger sibling, it added to that. I read a lot of the time and became quite philosophical in many ways. Eventually, I found that I could hold my own in a conversation with my older brother and others who had gotten a better official education. I guess the feeling of inadequacy can stay with you in some ways but it made me doubly sure that I would succeed in another way. It wasn't ever to be in academia. I chose music as something where I felt that I could express myself and find a way out of, what for many young people like me in those days (we're talking early '50s now) was a [predetermined] future upon leaving school. I had this dream of being, primarily, a Jazz musician, and so I started then on the path that I have subsequently always been on until now, and as far as I can see into the future, will be that

of wanting to be as good and as creative as I can be within the music I have chosen to take part in. I have always maintained an interest in trying to develop new things within this music, things that are sustainable, and will leave its mark in some way. There are many ways of educating oneself. It requires some kind of discipline, organization and optimism to keep it all going but it definitely can be done for sure.

Cadence: What did you do between the time you left school and the time you entered the Royal Air Force (RAF)?

TW: I worked in a bakery between the years 1954 to 1959 as my father knew people who could give me a job. The main thing I wanted to do was to be a musician and to be able to play Jazz.

Cadence: You fulfilled your military obligation by serving in the RAF (1959-'64) which helped propel your career.

TW: I was called up - last of the drafts actually - in 1959, where I met Paul Rutherford and John Stevens at the RAF School of Music in Uxbridge, London. They both were from the London area while I was 200 miles away in the north. This was after basic training, (all that over the wall and under the barbed wire sort of stuff.) It was day one for all of us at the music school and I was billeted with John and Paul. However, people like me from the north, in those days, were kind of treated a bit like aliens, and so they asked if I wouldn't mind leaving their recently designated room, letting another London person in, and me going somewhere else. I said, 'Okay, as long as you help me with

my gear,' and so they did. To be trained to be in the RAF band, the military wanted something back, so I had to sign on for another 3 years - making 5 years in all. John and Paul were a bit younger than I and they had to sign on for the full 5 years as they did not really have to go at all. In those days, that was one way of learning music as there were no music schools for the likes of us.

Cadence: What do you mean when you say people like you were treated like aliens?

TW: When you came from a region in the UK that had a strong local dialect, like Yorkshire in the North of the country, and then you moved to London, it was a giveaway that you came from the sticks. I am sure it was much like that in the USA too regarding the South.

Cadence: How did you convince Rutherford and Stevens that you were a worthy kindred spirit?

TW: Nobody had to convince anyone else about being a worthy kindred spirit as we all seemed to be into the same things almost right from the start. In any case, being all in the same "boat," so to speak, it became quite easy to find each other. It quickly became apparent through being together every day in the band room or music room or the NAAFI bar or billet, always sharing thoughts and ideas. You soon realized that the differences are a lot less than what you have in common. My saxophone tutor in the RAF School of Music

used to do his shopping on Saturday mornings when he was supposed to be teaching me. He realized there was nothing he could teach me about Jazz. When I got posted to the 2nd Tactical Air Force Band in Germany my second year at the RAF School of Music, John and Paul asked for the same posting so that we could be together as good friends and keep working on the music that we had started to hone and shape. That was around 1961. We had a posting there in Germany that lasted for about three-and-one-half-years together. With military band practice being about 1 hour a day, it meant that we could spend the rest of the time practicing together, if we wished, or in between hanging out in bars in Cologne and other such things, which is what we did. As I said, there were no music schools for beginners and self-taught players like us at that time. I think all of us being self-taught led to the need to develop something of our own, and at the very beginning too, it was Jazz that was the main liberating force. I don't think people are aware that we worked on the music and lived together for most of the time before SME was formed in 1965. We did that for about 6 years. That's very different from just meeting a player and joining together to make music. A LOT of commitment went into the music together and friendship was important - this is never spoken of or hardly written about. What do people think we were discussing all that time?

Cadence: Considering that you had never found others who shared your musical interests, how difficult was it to merge your playing with the newly discovered progressive-minded musicians?

TW: Well, I guess we all had our challenges. For me, I had some arrangements from Downbeat magazine by Marty Paich and we tried running through those but John was such a loud and raw drummer he practically destroyed everything in a very echoey band room. However, I think the thing that pulled us all together was our enthusiasm for Jazz in the main and also a general love of music of all kinds. We were all similar in that respect and you soon learned to put those certainties that one had built up in isolation behind, and to try other things that came up independently or together. And we were all into finding a way that eventually was OUR way, obviously based on everything that had come before.

Cadence: You've spent your career working to bring people together and building bridges across communities and countries. Did you run into any rough patches while serving in the military and dealing with the inherent military mindset?

TW: To be honest, not really, as it was, what we call, a bit of a 'doddle' most times. As I have previously said, we had the one hour band practice and the rest of the time was ours. We always tried to "buck" the system if we could. For instance, the alto player next to me in the band was a junior technician so he got paid more, and theoretically was supposed to be a better player. But I was the player always chosen to do the extra officers mess duties, i.e. playing before or during the various dinners or celebrations that they had, usually behind closed doors. Yes, they closed the doors so they wouldn't have to look at us, which also meant we didn't have to look at them! We'd

play all kinds of things like show tunes and Classical pieces adapted for military bands, and so on. I was also in the dance band and played in officers' messes for dancing. Anyway, there was an Irish sergeant major called Paddy Blood, and he sometimes would conduct the band (or try to). It was always a bit difficult for him, that was plain for all to see, and on this occasion it was for an officer's mess dinner, and there was a long extended alto saxophone written solo to play in one of the pieces. I tried to pretend I couldn't play it in order to get off duty. Paddy eventually called the commanding officer in to listen to my "struggles." He said to the officer, "Listen to this," and proceeded to conduct me in. I was on the spot, and so I tried to get through this one by keeping on pretending it was too difficult to play. The officer in the end took me into the office and said, "Now look here Watts, what's going on?" I told him all the stuff about not being able to play it, but it made no difference, I had to do the extra duties. This sometimes meant travelling to somewhere like Mönchengladbach at night, and on this occasion it was in a Bedford crew coach. These were only supposed to take crews to their planes sitting out on the runways, not to travel for miles on major roads full of musicians and band equipment, as they were high sided vehicles and very unstable in any wind. You sat back-to-back, down the center of the coach, facing the windows on either side. The driver seemingly had only just come from England, and we drive on the left. He didn't even know whether to turn right or left outside the main gates. On the way back home he hit a lamp post, the bus careened across the road and eventually turned over in a ditch. I had the foresight to hang on. My friend

next to me didn't and ended up in the hospital. The most eerie moment was when the coach had stopped and you could smell petrol. That was a great incentive for us to get out as quickly as we could. Another dangerous journey was taking off in a plane in thick fog when nothing should have been moving. It was a bit of an old crate with no pressurized cabin so when we came down, I had a splitting headache.

Cadence: After leaving the RAF, you worked in a number of musical settings including Jazz, Blues, R & B, and Rock. What stands out from that time?

TW: Around 1964 in London, when I got out of the RAF, I found some work with Long John Baldry, who was a Rhythm & Blues player. We were called Long John Baldry and the Hoochie Coochie Men. We played regularly at one of London's major clubs called the Marquee Club on Wardour Street in Soho, as well as around the country. I particularly remember this night playing with Sonny Boy Williamson, who was on tour. I remember that he never stuck strictly to a 12 bar or 16 bar pattern but came out of the "turn around" where it felt right to him, at any given time. When it came to my solo, I remember saying to myself, "I am free," as I'd been following all the developments in Jazz since the early days, while trying to also develop my own thing, and to play the turnaround where you felt it, seemed a good thing to do. So, in some small way, it was an affirmation of this way of playing and something that stayed with me. By the way, I have nothing against the usual way of doing it. I just remember Sonny Boy looking over quizzically at

me. At least that's what it seemed like at the time.

Cadence: What do you recall from playing with Rod Stewart when he passed through town during your time at the Marquee Club?

TW: Rod was part of what was called the 'Steam Packet,' which included Julie Driscoll with Brian Auger and the Trinity at the Marquee Club. They played often at the club and sometimes did other gigs as that package too. Long John Baldry and the Hoochie Coochie Men (the group I was in) played opposite them on a few occasions. We also had a Jewish tenor player in the band called Al Gaye. Rod just seemed a very nice and ordinary kind of guy at the time, easy to talk and relate to. Not cocky like John Lennon, which is the way he came across when I met him in 1969. Rod seemed to have a very natural demeanor, and I liked him for that. I never spoke with Julie. It never entered my mind that we would be playing together later on in life within the SME, of all things, as she was definitely a top Pop star of that time.

Cadence: During the '60s, you worked as a proofreader at Boosey & Hawkes, the British Classical music publisher. Also working in the building were John Stevens in the hire library, Peter Knight, of Steeleye Span fame, selling violins, and Chris Squire, who would go on to work with Yes, packing instruments. That's a lot of talent in one spot.

TW: Yes, musicians who were aspiring to do something, trying

to create something new, in whatever genre, they had to find something that could support them until they'd got to a point where they could earn enough through the playing. Boosey & Hawkes was at least in the musical sphere, I guess that was the attraction. I used to also deliver music to the Royal Opera House, Glyndebourne, and the Royal Festival Hall, and I could watch all the concerts for free. So, for me, it also was a very educational time. I witnessed musicians refusing to blow their horns into the piano in a rehearsal for a Xenakis premier of a new piece which featured that as part of the piece at the time. It made sense to me as the pianist was holding down chords and the trombone players were given certain complimentary notes to play. I found that interesting. Or I would see and hear the great Russian bass baritone singer Boris Christoff at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden in London. I saw Rudolph Nureyev dancing with Margot Fonteyn at the Royal Ballet there too, and so on. In fact, I had been offered the music editor's job at Boosey & Hawkes at the time I decided to leave in 1968. Partly because I was offered that job and to avoid getting stuck, therefore making my commitment to playing the music I loved much stronger. That was the last time I had a 'proper' job, as we called it. Boosey's at that time was the largest music publishing company in the world, located in Upper Regent Street in London near the BBC's Broadcasting House. If I had taken that job I probably would have earned more in a day than I did playing a year's worth of music at that time, but we were playing the music for ITS own sake.

Cadence: How did you come to reconnect with John Stevens and Paul Rutherford in London?

TW: I never lost contact with Paul as he lived in Blackheath in South London at the family home and I lived quite near in Lewisham at the time. We carried on working together and kept on trying to develop new things. Also sometimes with John, but he had broken into the more straight-ahead scene

and played with people like Tubby Hayes at Ronnie Scott's club. It wasn't until John came to check out what Paul and I were playing at a London club run by Mike Osborne, the altoist, on Liverpool Street called the Peanuts Club. That enthused him to want to get back into it more seriously with us. That led to trying to find a home for our music. So John, being much more gregarious than either Paul or I, talked to a singer he knew at that time called Armorel Weston. She just happened to be the older sister of pianist Veryan Weston who I have been playing with for many years in the various Moiré Music groups, as a duo and currently in Eternal Triangle. Armorel knew a woman called Jean who owned a place called The Little Theatre Club in London's St Martins Lane which was where actors would go to relax a little after hours and have a drink after performing in various plays or shows. So John went along to meet and talk with Jean to see if we could use the club for the music. She said yes and suggested we start after the plays had finished, around 10:30 each night. We also got to play inside many a theatre set that was left there after the night's performance.

Cadence: You founded the Spontaneous Music Ensemble (SME) with John Stevens& Paul Rutherford in 1965 after locating that venue, the Little Theatre Club near Trafalgar Square, which offered you a practice and performing space. Talk about the early days of the SME at the LTC, the early thought process and the Jazz-based music making up until the day the group's music process changed.

TW: The opening night at the Little Theatre Club in early 1965

also featured AMM as well as SME. It was the classic AMM of Keith Rowe, Cornelius Cardew, Lou Gare, Eddie Prevost, as I remember. On that occasion, they were wearing long white coats like doctors wore (music doctors?), and they played radios, as well as electronics, mixed with cello. They were tuning the radios as they went along with the performance, that was all part of it. I remember a question mark appearing in my head with regards to Eddie coming off the stand and proudly saying, "And we didn't play any Jazz." Obviously, our music at that time was steeped in Jazz. In fact, Jazz carried the torch for improvisation for a long time. I firmly thought, and I felt that we should never forget that, no matter where we ended up. There was a lot of boasting on the European scene about Dutch or German music, but all those guys were influenced by Jazz in some way or other. I am sure there's no [Peter] Brötzmann without Albert [Ayler] and I always thought it okay to acknowledge that. One of the most difficult things I found to do was to be able to freely make up a solo. It seemed a mystery at first without the chord changes. On a personal level, Ornette was important in that respect, and you could say Don [Cherry] also served as teachers for me at the beginning. We could play at that club every week, and at first, John was trying to run it seven nights a week but that quickly became two or three nights. He was, after all, trying to hold his family together too. John organized a kind of annual festival each year with more consecutive days of playing and more groups. Again, it was the regularity of it all and the willingness and the space to perform in that really helped the music go through the various stages of development quite quickly. We could try anything we wanted and we certainly did that. At the same time, encouraging the

next generation of players to take up the baton, and that they did very well, but not without some reaction against the first generation of players, I observed. Maybe though that's how it always is? I think it's fair to say though that the music played today still has all the echoes of what the AMM and SME did, and not only in England.

Cadence: Famously, one night John Stevens announced to the other musicians that the music to be played by the SME moving forward was not going to be the typical Jazz and Blues music of the time. Talk about that change and was that something you had discussed with him previously?

TW: We were not actually playing a typical Jazz and Blues thing of that time. We were playing our version of music that would be influenced primarily from people like Ornette Coleman, [Eric] Dolphy and Trane. All the obvious influences were there from where we'd come from, mainly through the process of listening and listening to everything, soaking it all up. Nothing had ever previously been discussed with anyone else regarding what John had in his mind when he came into the club and announced to us to, "Forget all that shit and let's do something else." Not to my knowledge anyway. The "shit" was arrangements that we wrote and were playing and had worked on. Suddenly the music became what we called the "Small" music, as it brought to the genre of improvised music a very pointillistic, nonlinear approach which had never been done like that before until the day John came into the Little Theatre Club and said what he said and got us to start playing

in that nonlinear way. I felt he suggested it this way because it echoed the drum, and he was a drummer. The rules were quite tight at first but I always thought that that was the best way to develop something anyway, and then you loosen the strings as you go along after you have defined some sort of parameters, as in "Click Piece" which started out as a duo piece with John and me. The spacing of the first two clicks indicated the tempo. I could go onto his click and he could go onto mine. We'd feel the silent click until someone changed, or on occasion you changed together. The development of that was to feel the clicks but not play them. We learned to improvise in the space in between. That was great in terms of giving you a sense of feeling of the space and everything became a rhythm in its own way. I am guessing that that retained an element of Jazz, in that respect. That gives you an idea of the type of things we were doing up at the club. John had been to Denmark in 1967 and had heard a musical saw player that had really turned him on. I never found out who or what it was about but that was the beginning of the new music we played. For me, I think a recording like Dynamics of the Impromptu, now on the CD label FMRCD 360-0913 in the UK but originally released in the USA on Mike Khoury's Entropy label with Derek Bailey, John Stevens and I, truly encapsulates what that music was all about when we regularly played together at the Little Theatre Club. Derek Bailey would play solo, John and I some duo music, and then the three of us would also play a set together. In fact, writer John Corbett from Chicago, said that this recording was amongst the finest examples of that music ever documented. I think the duo double CD on Emanem called Bare Essentials is

also up there in that category as some great representational examples of that way of playing. On a more personal level, I also recorded all of those duo examples on a Yamaha stereo cassette player with two AKG mics. The duo being John Stevens (small kit and pocket trumpet) and myself on soprano sax. Martin Davidson recorded the trio examples appearing as the Dynamics CD but decided not to issue them on the Emanem label and he gave me the tapes. Years later he asked me if I still had them.

Cadence: This new music established a new style, a distinctly British style of Free improvisation in the mid-'60s that went beyond American Free Jazz (which still retained some elements of composition, pulse and melody). You drew more from European and Middle Eastern sources to focus on textures and sounds.

TW: I guess you are right in some way of saying that the new music we developed established a distinctly British style of Free Improvisation, but nothing is developed in isolation. Many influences are within any style of musical form, even from the very start. Gagaku music of Japan or Anton Webern's style of writing all took their place within the general set of influences that made for a quite distinctive flavor. But as I have said before in this interview, Jazz was also in that, and a very important part of it too. And as I also said before, it carried the flag regarding improvisation for a long time. This cannot be ignored.

Cadence: Was this new form created as an intentional rebuff of

American music? Was there a political statement, a rejection of American culture, being made at the time?

TW: For some players it was an intentional rebuff and rejection of American culture but also I thought, within it a kind of love/hate thing going on. In my case, I never ever rejected the influences that drove me on and inspired me to help develop new ways of taking part in music practice, and for that, I shall be eternally grateful. I am guessing that players who came after us didn't have the same set of problems that we had in inventing new ways of playing. It was quite tough at times, and we faced some strong objections that simply don't appear to be there now in such a physical and intense way as they were at that time. Improvisation as a music form in its many ways is now an accepted reality. Still, maybe small in relation to some other types of music, but it now has its place as a validated form of music, and in spite of some people's denial of this, I think it's here to stay as an expressive form.

Cadence: The music came to be termed "insect improvisation" by some critics because it tended to be very quiet at times, intense, arrhythmic, and by and large, atonal. Did you find that term offensive?

TW: I found the term funny more than offensive. Little story: a guy came up at the break in a gig and said to me, "I nearly left but I stayed because I thought you got better as you went along." In his ears and eyes, he was convinced he was right. He never thought for one minute that possibly he could be

gradually getting used to the form and starting to listen to it on its own terms. That was something I could work out as soon as it came out of his mouth. So, you see, comments like the one you quote, or sentences like the incident at the gig I just spoke of, do not intimidate. It can only be intimidating if you cannot find an alternative reason for someone saying something that could be perceived as negative, and even that is down to the individual character of a person, i.e., how you view it. So the answer is NO.

Cadence: The British Free Improvisation/Experimental music ensemble AMM with Keith Rowe and Eddie Prévost also formed in 1965. How much influence and interaction was there between the SME and the AMM?

TW: It seemed like none at all. The first performance at the Little Theatre Club was the only time I remember that we took the stage together. Two different worlds, to quote the name of the song.

Cadence: The new music the SME was making was not an immediate hit with listeners- it was challenging music. Did you have concerns about finding an audience and earning a living through your music?

TW: Not really, as it was then as it is now, to do with primarily the development of the music. Except today with Eternal Triangle, I am developing music that has all the elements of the music I was inspired by, and more. So naturally, because it has

rhythmic and melodic developments within it, and because I love those too, I am sure more people can relate to it. Of course, it also has the opposite effect for some but I have always played and developed the music mainly for its sake and because different things engage me more at different times. It's not that I have earned nothing financially, but promoters really do need to know what you represent, to a certain extent, so that they can sell it. So, at this stage of the proceedings, I am sure a lot of people will enjoy the music of Eternal Triangle but selling it is another thing. I am certain when people get to hear and know what we are doing now they will love it.

Cadence: The SME was specifically named to include 'ensemble' in the title to reflect the concept that any sized group could represent the band, which changed in size and personnel regularly. That also proved to be the case for your own future groups. Why was that an important concept?

TW: The name of the SME was supposed to reflect how the music was played - a group music played by musicians who equally took part in it. This was invented before journalists decided to stick the name John Stevens in front of it, which eventually he would do also. John always professed that the nature of this music was to do with being a collective, and to start with, that's what it was. Personally, I have no qualms about having my name in front of Moiré Music or Amalgam or the Moiré Music Drum Orchestra or the Celebration Band, as I invented all of those and committed a lot of time and invested money in each project, money I eventually got back,

but I took the risk, to be clear, up fronting things like air fares, as well as working on tours around the world, and asking for no money for myself in return. But even so, if not musical ideas, combinations of players that would not otherwise ever have played together. But the duos of Trevor Watts and Veryan Weston or Trevor Watts and Jamie Harris or Trevor Watts and Liam Genockey, those were the main ones and were always advertised as that.

Cadence: Trumpeter Kenny Wheeler was an early member of the SME.

TW: Kenny Wheeler was from an older generation of musicians than I. Every decade or so throws up a movement that wants to take the place of whatever is already there. That's why personally I liked Punk when it came out as it broke down the more popular scene that had become quite slick with the Prog Rock stuff. You kind of got the feeling that they were all a little too pleased with themselves. In that I think you eventually lose the raw edge which depletes a little the emotional quality of the music. Listen to Billie Holiday, she had a great emotional quality to what she did all the time. There were players I guess who couldn't or didn't want to play their instruments "properly," as Kenny put it. They made music in another way that took a different set of involvement and ideas. I think it's our place as musicians to give it all a chance and to see what comes out of it sometimes. I have no problem with that. I remember Kenny had said to someone, and it got back to me, that he, "Couldn't tell whether Trevor was playing free or playing in time." I, on a personal level, always tried to incorporate everything I did into my playing of the instrument, whatever it was. With someone like drummer John Stevens, he was able to separate his mindset when he was playing Jazz and when he was playing improvised music. He treated them quite differently. I was trying to play myself within whatever I did and could never quite understand why anyone would want to split the difference. It didn't make sense to me. To me, Kenny always sounded like a Jazz trumpet player in whatever he did - improv or Jazz. Maybe I sound like something in between to most people but who really cares?

Cadence: To fully realize one's potential it helps to maintain

strength and direction.

TW: I read that Art Tatum would stop outside a bar and listen to whoever was playing the piano and people with him wondered why? I'll tell you why, because he heard something in what was being played, or how it was being played, that he could learn from, as much as anything else. That was CURIOSITY! There's also the example of Duke Ellington saying, "It's a good job when we didn't know what we were doing." I understood that straight away as a young man. Of course he didn't mean that literally, he meant that they didn't know what was about to come up next but that they solved the problems, if there were any "on the hoof," so to speak. Thereby maximizing that "sound of surprise" complete with strong emotional quality that you get playing within the moment. That's what it's really all about. That's why Mingus shuffled the parts around and so on - to keep it all fresh. Peter Knight, the violinist, had a humorous kind of self-defeating saying. He'd say, "Comes up fresh every time." I can tell you for sure that John Stevens and I used to practice rhythms and phrases together on drums and saxophones for hours - playing "on beat" phrases off the beat, and vice versa. This was to train the ear, and also so as not to fall into the hole that Kenny described Joe Harriott fell into with Phil Seaman. I can imagine that Phil got a great deal of pleasure out of that. Also, I don't agree with Kenny's assumption that everyone would cross the beat if that happened, as you are only talking about familiarity and the fact that horn players often don't put that kind of work into familiarizing themselves with how things can work differently rhythmically. That's why

when I got to play with African musicians, I already had a good idea of where the main stresses were in a piece. In fact, John spent a lot of time on the stand, sometimes in more conventional Jazz gigs, and I know that a lot of players felt he'd crossed the beat when he deliberately changed stuff around. So conventions abound in all kinds of music and get cemented in. I felt and thought it was part of our own personal growth to always challenge assumptions and because my involvement with Jazz went back so far into the '40s, I grew up with the idea that Jazz was always progressing and changing.

Cadence: Derek Bailey was someone who you often played with who became widely known in the U.S.

TW: The pyramid system here seems to have put Bailey at the top, with anyone else practically at that time slightly below, certainly here. But I am an unbeliever as far as that system goes.

Cadence: You left the SME after two years to form Amalgam, although you soon returned. Do you have any regrets about missing out on being a part of SME's landmark 1968 Karyobin recording?

TW: I have no regrets about not being part of SME's, what you call, "landmark" recording. As by then, in any case, I had become a bit estranged at that point with the music and with John. But if you look at the history, you will see that I wasn't the only one that that happened to, by any means, it just seemed like it was my time. In any case, I objected quite strongly at

times about the amount of control John started to exert. (Don't forget that he and I went back quite a bit longer than anyone else in that group that made the Karyobin recording, so we had a lot of history together already). Prior to this recording we had a trio - Evan Parker, John Stevens and me. Gradually over time, in a personal way, I felt that the strictures and suggestions from John Stevens about the way we should go about this was a device to get us all to copy the drum, and, of course, John was a drummer. Both pointillistically and rhythmically. One stricture was a suggestion from him that we should play (or maybe just to me?) in a way whereby there'd be no linear playing. I think this is the way some things were at that time in order to establish a certain principle or new set of rules. A lot of it was about not what you put in, but what you left out, I think. John wanted me to play more like the shit Evan had got together in order to play with John on the drum. But I have my own way, too bad if it didn't fit the way John wanted it. There was no way I was going to change any more. Then, while playing a gig at Ronnie Scott's old place, John said to me at the interval, "Why don't you play more like Evan?," which to me was a very crass remark. I replied, 'You have one already, why do you need two?' So I left the group there and then. Of course, it pissed me off at the time but I guess he wanted to record this music with what he felt were the best people for it, and that's what he did. You'll notice that later on with the So What do you Think? recording that it was Evan who was not there. But the, what you call "landmark" recording, had been achieved. And you only need read my response (on the sleeve of that So What recording), which was the answer to the telephone call

John made to everyone in which he described the project and asked the participants if they were interested. He said, "So what do you think?," and the answers became the very first musical statement. The words transferred to notes and phrasing. You can tell by my answer that my response is a cautious one. However, I created the first Amalgam together with Paul Rutherford and Barry Guy around that time, and it was Paul who actually thought of the name for the group Amalgam. So what it did, in terms of doing us a favor, was to help us summon up the determination to develop the music and our own playing in our own way. For me, there'd be no interesting and often magical music existing today like the Amalgam group made, for instance, that featured Keith Rowe or the Moiré Music Drum Orchestra or Moiré Music 10 and 14 piece groups, which, of course, leads up to the present day music with Eternal Triangle. As far as my own skill in playing the music that mainly John suggested, I think the examples from the Little Theatre Club with Derek Bailey, John and I as a trio on FMR called Dynamics of the Impromptu or Bare Essentials on Emanem which are the duos with John and I stand up to scrutiny. There's also the quartet with Julie Tippetts or the two Quintessence CD's on Emanem in which I take part in a way which has more of myself within it than I am sure would have happened had I been in the Karyobin controlled environment. After all, it was freedom that we were looking for in the first place, and by taking the stance I did, I thereby gained more of it.

Cadence: Amalgam (1967-'79) further added to the radically changing face of a European-style Jazz and Improvised music

that explored mixtures of Jazz, improvised music, Folk and traditional musics, Rock and Fusion. Talk about your concept for Amalgam.

TW: The trio that began the original Amalgam did not last very long. I think we all had a slightly differing ideas of what we wanted from the situation and eventually went our separate ways. We'd all come out of the SME and had started as an improvising trio. Barry and I played some duo performances and sometimes even played opposite the duo of John and Evan. I guess that was when I really started to formulate a more personal path through the music. That would be around 1974 when I met the Irish drummer Liam Genockey. Meeting him was a breath of fresh air for me, a totally different type of drummer. Basically a good Rock drummer but who had a fascination and curiosity about playing other things, and so I could play with Liam and enjoy it because he was a great rhythmic player. I had been playing rhythm for many years and studying it alongside Improvisation, of course, and we found that in our duo playing we were able to pick up a rhythm together very quickly and our imagination ran together intuitively, I think. Jazz in Britain has released a recording of the duo called The Art is in the Rhythm Vol 1. A lot of what I did was never recorded officially for established record companies apart from Prayer for Peace (1969) with Amalgam (John Stevens, Jeff Clyne (b) and myself ,playing all my compositions, and Barry Guy also being on one of the tracks). This recording has become highly rated by many influential critics and also has influenced a lot of musicians.

Cadence: Keith Rowe was a freethinking, uncompromising artist who wasn't interested in being a follower. How did things work out with him being part of Amalgam?

TW: I can tell you that he would give you a very different and more considered view on his involvement with Amalgam in the late-'70s, or I should really say, a reconsidered view. He has said these days that within the group playing we did together, he was working against what we were doing. But right from the start, that is why I asked him in - that's exactly the reason. That was the true intelligence of the matter. He kept his disgruntlement well-hidden then. That's all I have to say about that. Apart from personally, I got a lot of pleasure out of it all at the time. Before Keith joined, we had a trio with Liam Genockey, Colin McKenzie (b g) and me on saxes and compositions. It was the first group I had that didn't include John Stevens. Before that, we had American guitarist Steve Hayton in the group. It was he that introduced me to Liam. Steve was living in the UK, like a lot of Americans were, in order not to have to go to Vietnam, which now looks like it was the right thing to do.

Cadence: How did Amalgam's music and concept change over time?

TW: Well, it was always changing right from the start - from the original trio of Barry Guy, Paul Rutherford and me, to the Prayer for Peace album with John Stevens and Jeff Clyne in 1969 (also reissued on No Business in Lithuania years later) to the classic 1979 quartet of Keith Rowe, Colin McKenzie and Liam

Feature Review

BILLY VALENTINE & THE UNIVERSAL TRUTH
BILLY VALENTINE

FLYING DUTCHMAN RECORDS by Zachary Weg

"WE THE PEOPLE WHO ARE DARKER THAN BLUE"
Drums: Abe Rounds
Bass: Linda May Han Oh
Piano: Larry Goldings
Tenor Saxophone: Immanuel Wilkins

"HOME IS WHERE THE HATRED IS"
Drums: James Gadson
Bass: Pino Palladino
Fender Rhodes Electric Piano: Larry Goldings
Guitar: Jeff Parker
String Arrangement: Rob Moose

"MY PEOPLE...HOLD ON"
Drums: Abe Rounds
Bass: Pino Palladino
Fender Rhodes Electric Piano: Larry Goldings, Bob Thiele, Jr.
Guitar: Jeff Parker
Vibraphone: Joel Ross
Percussion: Alex Acuña
Backing Vocals: Owen Thiele, Jana Miley, Will Wheaton, Jason Morales, Bridgette Bryant

"THE CREATOR HAS A MASTER PLAN"
Drums: Abe Rounds
Bass: Linda May Han Oh
Piano: Larry Goldings
Guitar: Jeff Parker
Flute & Backing Vocals: Amber Navran
Baritone Saxophone: Claire Daly
Marxophone: Bob Thiele, Jr.

"SIGN OF THE TIMES"
Drums: Abe Rounds
Bass: Pino Palladino
Fender Rhodes Electric Piano: Larry Goldings
Clavinet: John Philip Shenale
Guitar: Jeff Parker
Percussion: Alex Acuña
Synthesizer: Bob Thiele, Jr.

"YOU HAVEN'T DONE NOTHIN'"
Drums: Abe Rounds - Bass: David Piltch - Piano: Larry Goldings"

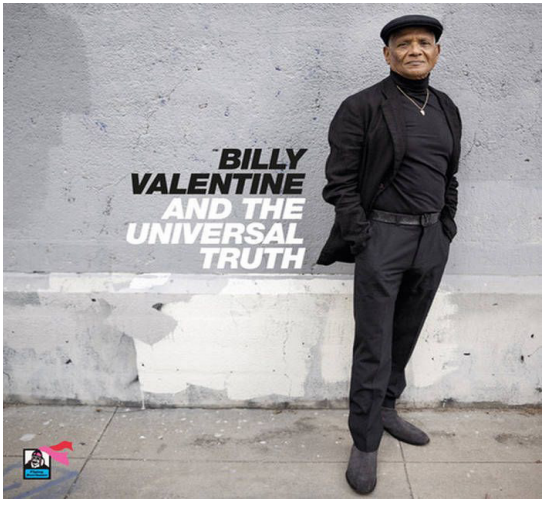
WADE IN THE WATER"
Drums: James Gadson - Bass: Pino Palladino - Piano: Larry Goldings - Guitar: Jeff Parker - Background Vocals: - Will Wheaton, Jason Morales, Bridgette Bryant

"THE WORLD IS A GHETTO"
Drums: Abe Rounds
Bass: Pino Palladino
Guitar: Jeff Parker
Fender Rhodes Electric Piano: Larry Goldings
Percussion: Alex Acuña

TOTAL RUNNING TIME-
APRROX. 41 MINUTES.

Produced by Bob Thiele, Jr.; Recorded & Mixed by Dave Way; Recorded @ East-West Studios; Additional Recording @ Sear Sound by Chris Allen

Feature Review



At ninety-seven, Billy Valentine not only still has it but is afire. Even as he nears a hundred, the elder statesman of jazz singing has released perhaps his most powerful album with Billy Valentine & The Universal Truth.

In his signature rasp, the Ohio-born singer covers eight songs and ekes out hope for a fractured America. With Valentine, it almost seems possible that the country's poverty and violence, all of its hardships, can heal. "Are we gonna stand around this town,/And let what others say come true?" he sings on the opening Curtis Mayfield track, "We the People Who Are Darker Than Blue," and his optimism shines through. Yet Valentine has been around for a long while, and knows that change doesn't come easy. In a voice that is both wise and wizened, on the Gil Scott-Heron classic, "Home Is Where the Hatred Is," he continues, "Home is filled with pain and it,/Might not be such a bad idea if I never, never went,/Home again." Valentine is, in fact, saddened here and is all too aware of inner city blues. Like Bobby Womack, he feels the great despair across 110th street and sounds it out as only he could.

Above Larry Goldings on piano and a stellar set of drummers, his voice is something to behold. On such tracks as the Eddie Kendricks-popularized "My People... Hold On" and Ramsey Lewis' "Wade in The Water," he evokes fear and joy, sometimes in one note. Like Smokey Robinson, he is not only a technician but an artist. There are moments on the record, such as on the Kendricks track and on the latter half, where he gets deeply spiritual and shows a gospel influence. The singer even makes way for Pharoah Sanders' "The Creator Has A Master Plan," and almost renders the free jazz classic even more cosmic.

Yet, truly, Valentine is a searcher and seeks out solace in his own way. "Somewhere there's a home (a home),/Sweet and nice," he sings on the closing "The World Is A Ghetto" by War, and, with his soaring falsetto, he will soon get there.

Zachary Weg

New Issues

FLORIAN ARBENZ
CONVERSATION #9 TARGETED

SELF RELEASE

FREEDOM JAZZ DANCE/ SLEEPING MOUNTAIN/ VERTICAL HOLD/ SEVEN STEPS TO HEAVEN/ I LOVE YOU PORGY/ OLD SHARMAN 38:43

Arbenz, d; Greg Osby, sax; Arno Krijger, org. 3/23 Basel, Ch

Florian Arbenz delivers another striking performance with his ninth installment of the Conversation's series. "Conversation #9 Targeted" features American saxophonist Greg Osby and Dutch organist Arno Krijger playing three originals and three standards. For those of you not familiar with Florian's Conversation's series, each one of the nine Conversation CD's contains a performance of Eddie Harris's "Freedom Jazz Dance", every time with different musicians.

On "Conversation #9" "Freedom Jazz Dance" is the opener. Greg Osby on Soprano and Florian on drums start out as a duo, fragmenting and extrapolating on the melody together before Arno Krijger enters. The tune is built on one chord, allowing lots of free space for the trio to converse openly. The melody, their rhythmic energy and an uncanny ability to listen to one another become the thread that drives them forward. A river of percussive feistiness from Florian is the undercurrent throughout. Each player contributes exquisite solos and support to each other. The original "Sleeping Mountain" begins with a warm and insightful organ intro. Saxophone states the melody as this unhurried ballad surges and falls as if powered by nature itself. Greg Osby's performance ranges from mystical to blistering as he captures the spirit of this beautiful piece. The original "Vertical Hold" is a duo with Alto and Drums that's a freewheeling joy ride full of spirited dialogue. Victor Feldman's "Seven Steps To Heaven" opens with a masterfully constructed fervent drum solo that beautifully sets up what's to come on this up tempo gem. It's only organ and drums on this tune. Arno begins with some soloing before he breaks into the melody. The two players are completely in sync as they bend the time to their liking. Arno's tone is dark and intense and his solo is on fire as the two of them reach for and achieve excellence. The atmosphere is set for Gershwin's "I Love You Porgy". A magical soundscape is created with organ, cymbals and percussion as Greg Osby artfully seduces the listener to another time and place. Another original "Old Sharman" closes the set as it starts with a gentle three feel before it breaks into a rough edged ostinato figure with some strong unison lines. The tune then returns to a gentler feel with some cosmic drum and organ exchanges. It then returns to the ostinato figure before closing.

For those of you wanting to know where modern jazz is today, look no further then Florian Arbenz's Conversation's CD series, a panoramic earful of possibilities.

Frank Kohl

New Issues

TOMAS JANZON
NOMADIC
CHANCES MUSIC 115

OUT DOOR VALLEY/ ROB'S PIANO/ NIGHT WATCH/ LETTER FROM JSB/ SEARCH FOR PEACE/ VALSE HOT/ SUBCONCSIOUS-LEE/HOT HOUSE/ ASCENDING/ UNCOVERING/ BLUE FROG RETURN/ PRESSING FORWARD 44:53
Tomas Janzon, g; Steve Nelson, vib; Hilliard Greene, bass; Jeff Littleton, bass; Chuck McPherson, d; Tony Austin d New York 2023

Janzon and Nelson are on all tracks with alternating rhythm sections. The sounds of the vibes and guitar blend very nicely. Just to be picky, sometimes Nelson's use of very hard mallets can be a bit jarring as can McPherson's overly bright snare sound and his use of crash cymbals.
Janzon's writing is very nice. The tunes are all very melodic. The tracks are relatively short giving Janzon and Nelson nice room to solo without overdoing anything. The duet Letter from JSB is especially nice. The interplay between Nelson and Janzon is excellent.
It is nice to hear a couple of old jazz standards. I particularly love Valse Hot. After hearing Hothouse and Valse Hot it is easy to see how these tunes fit with Janzon's compositions.
Both Greene and Littleton turn in excellent work with solid accompaniment and Tony Austin has a nice solo on Ascsending.
In short, nothing really new here, but some very nice playing.

Bernie Koenig

CHARLIE APICELLA & IRON CITY
THE GRIOTS SPEAK: DESTINY CALLING

A02 RECORDS 144

AS THE SUN RISES/ TITAN VS. SPHINX/ JUMA'S SONG/MALIKI MELASHA/ WE'RE ALL HERE IN SPIRIT/ I HEARD IN PASSING/ IF YOU KNOW WHERE TO LOOK/ WHERE DO YOU FIND THESE PEOPLE/ SPARKS 43:02

Daniel Carter, s, flt, clt, tpt, p; Charlie Apicella, Madal d, Tibetan singing bowls, g; William Parker, bass, Closon ngoni, gralla, gambini, pocket tpt; Juma Sultan, congas, shakers perc; Brad Whitely, org, Austin Walker d Brooklyn, NY Nov 13, 2022

This record looks like fun with people playing many different percussion instruments. And I was right. This record had me toe tapping and moving in my chair. I had to remember to listen to all the music and not just react to the rhythm.

I had to do a double take while listening to We're All Here in Spirit as there are two trumpet solos. I assume one has to be Carter and the other Parker. Interesting contrast in sound. It's All Right to Run has a great rhythmic pulse to it with great playing by all. Walker's drums really work well here. As does Sultan's Congas.

Both Carter and Apicella prove to be good soloists. The important thing here is that their playing meshes with the rhythm. In this regard it sounds to me that everyone is listening to everyone else. The groups really works well together.

I Heard in Passing is a more straight ahead piece dominated by Parker's bass with great solos by Carter on trumpet and Apicella on guitar. Carter actually does great work on all his instruments, turning in some nice flute playing on If You Know Where to Look.

In short a truly enjoyable record. It will get many plays in my house.

Bernie Koenig

New Issues

CLIFFORD JORDAN & HIS FRIENDS, DRINK PLENTY WATER

HARVEST SONG 2022-1.

THE HIGHEST MOUNTAIN / WITCH DOCTOR'S CHANT (EE-BAH-LICKEY-DOO) / DRINK PLENTY WATER AND WALK SLOW / I'VE GOT A FEELING FOR YOU / MY PAPA'S COMING HOME / TALKING BLUES / TALKING BLUES (INSTRUMENTAL). 36:18.

Jordan, ts; Dick Griffin, tbn; Bill Hardman, tpt; Charlie rouse, b clt; Bernnell, cel; Stanley Cowell, p; Sam Jones, b; Bill Lee, b & arr; Billy Higgins, d; David Smyrl, Donna Jordan Harris, Kathy O'Boyle, Denise Williams, Muriel Winston, vcl. Circa 8/1974. NYC,NY.

It must be admitted up front that I'm not a fan of singers, male or female. Sure I have a few favorites but I worked with too many to not be somewhat jaded. On the other hand, I have been a long time admirer of tenor sax master Clifford Jordan. He always struck me as somewhat different from the rest of the pack. That plus the musicians line up sold me on covering this obscure recording. As explained in the accompanying annotation this project was originally conceived as a Strata East release but for some unexplained reason it has sat in the vaults for almost half of a century.

Jordan apparently recruited an impressive list of players to make this album. Three undervalued wind practitioners are present; ex-Messenger Bill Hardman adds his Brownie- inspired staccato trumpet Monk mainstay Charlie Rouse makes a rare appearance on the difficult bass clarinet and super slider Dick Griffin handles the bone chores. The latter also mentions in his lengthy memoirs his impressions of the six main numbers so I won't go into detail concerning them here. I concur with his critical assessments but he leaves out a few things I will mention. The cello is utilized most prominently on the title cut and less so on the last two cuts. The stellar rhythm unit is featured on the introduction to "My Papa's Coming Home" and Griffin gets a nice spot on the fourth title and adds some low note blats that give a tuba effect on the instrumental. That selection was the most interesting to yours truly not only because it is the most extended but in its use of up and down dynamics in a kind of free-for-all boogaloo.

Now to the vocals. There are three female singers which include Jordan's teenage daughter who is indistinguishable from the others. One of the ladies is a professional as is the lone male participant. He is primarily heard talking, except when lost in all the voices on the fifth cut, mostly on the title track, and trash talking over the ensemble on "Talking Blues". The majority of these collective vocals form sort of a mini-choir that recalled some similar sounds from Donald Byrd, Horace Silver, etc. So in summation, this is a fortunate find. A keeper not a weeper.

Larry Hollis

New Issues

KEVIN O'CONNELL QUARTET,
HOT NEW YORK MINUTES,
KOO-001.

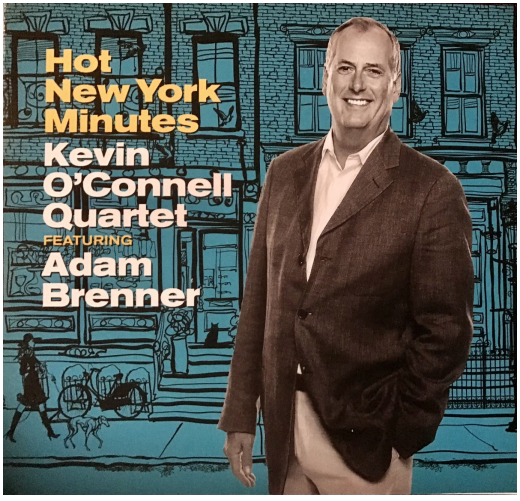
NEWEST BLUES / ONE FOR CLIFF / BOO DEH DAH / PLAYA CULEBRITA / BISKIT / CHOOSE NOW / BLUE SEVEN / FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE / ONE FOR GEORGE / A THOUGHT. 55:53.

O'Connell, p; Adam Brenner, as, ts; Paul Gill, b; Mark Taylor, d. No dates given. NYC.

If you are unfamiliar with musician Kevin O'Connell don't feel bad because I had no idea who he was either until this digi-pack came in the mail. Apparently he has paid the prerequisite dues in the Big Apple, Chi-town and other urban areas but has also been buried for several decades teaching in the music education field. This disc is a reunion of sorts with saxist Adam Brenner with whom he gigged in the l980s. In fact, it would not be out of order to credit the hornman as co-leader since he is all over this date.

With fellow veterans Gill and Taylor they zip through ten well-chosen numbers both fresh and new. Three titles are from the pianist; the head-nodder "Blue Seven". "Playa Culebrita" a slowish samba and a nod to former employer Clifford Jordan on the second cut. Brenner contributes a pair and arranged the late '40's standard "For Heaven's Sake". On some tracks it sounds like he has overdubbed his full-throated alto and tenor mostly on the heads. The leader plays what could be termed standard jazz piano that goes down smooth and non- threatening. Spike Lee's dad Bill furnished a mood piece and spirited boogaloo while Cedar Walton and Tadd Dameron both have compositions represented. This is relaxing, easy on the ears mainstream sounds more than worthy of a spin.

Larry Hollis



New Issues

DEXTER GORDON, COPENHAGEN CODA

STORYVILLE 1018489.

IT'S YOU OR NO ONE / HANKY PANKY / MORE THAN YOU KNOW / BACKSTAIRS. 57:01.
Gordon, ts; Kirk Lightsey, p; David Eubanks, b; Eddie Gladden, d. 2/2/1983.
Copenhagen,Denmark.

Cary Grant was a good enough actor but he was a quintessential movie star. Tall, articulate, debonair and suave he was the Hollywood epitome of the leading man. If there was anyone that fit that role in jazzdom it would have to be Dexter Gordon. LTD was so cool one could get frost- bitten to the touch.
According to the liner notes of Thorbjorn Sjogren these four selections were taken at the club Montmartre in what was the tenor giants final gig there. The performance program contains only four numbers but they are extended workouts. The two ballads present are well worn but Gordon dolls them up like an old lover with a new do-over. Sammy Cahn and Jule Styne should have gotten good royalties from "It's You Or No One" which was a Dex staple. The eldest tune "More Than You Know" was penned in the twenties and first appeared by the hornman eight years earlier on the Steeplechase album of the same name as was the former title. It is listed as being written by Lester which is incorrect. Try Vincent Youmans. The other two items are blues lines with the final "Backstairs" credited also incorrectly to Hoagy Carmichael. Both are original charts; the latter being listed on the Columbia HomeComing lp as such. With his sterling backing trio of the time LTD is in his prime which should be enough said. This writer had the pleasure of catching this exact unit (with the elusive Dupree Bolton sitting in) in a local OKC nightspot back in the eighties so this brought back some fond memories. Highly recommended.

Larry Hollis

New Issues

GEORGE COLEMAN,
LIVE AT SMALLS JAZZ CLUB,

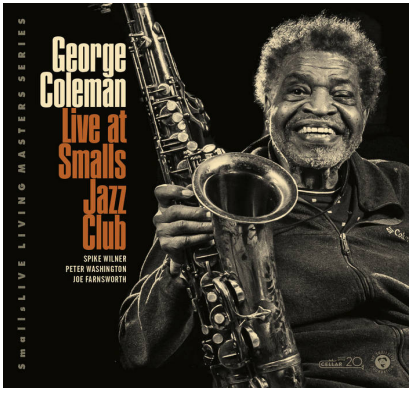
CELLAR MUSIC 006.

FOUIR / AT LAST / MY FUNNY VALENTINE / MEDITATION / BLUES FOR SMALLS /
THE NEARNESS OF YOU / NEW YORK, NEW YORK / WHEN SUNNY GETS BLUE.
TOTAL TIME: 71:19

Coleman, ts; Spike Wilner, p; Peter Washington, b; Joe Farnsworth, d. 3/15/2022. NYC,NY.

Although we have never met personally George Coleman and I, as they say, go way back. We first met musically via a 1959 United Artist record entitled Down Home Reunion subtitled Young Men From Memphis which featured a host of favorites: Booker Little, both Newborn brothers, Calvin & Phineas, Louis Smith, the superb Frank Strozier among others. Since then I've picked up everything I could find with his name on it (leader/sideman) and not been disappointed in the least. Here's another one to add to that list; a live quartet date from last year at the Village venue Smalls. The crack bass/drum duo of Washington and Farnsworth are joined by Spike Wilner on the keys for a deft romp through titles both old new. Three belly-rubbers are present, "When Sunny Gets Blue", The Nearness Of You' & "My Funny Valentine" which Coleman performed while with Miles Davis. The opener "Four" also sports a Miles connotation since it was scripted by him and the following "At Last" although usually taken as a ballad is lightly swung. So is the Jobim samba. My two favorite tracks are the original "Blues For Smalls" where the tenor returns to its Memphis roots and the joyous "New York, New York" a movie theme popularized by Old Blue Eyes. While the leader and Spike dominate the solo space on the lower end Washington and Farnsworth get their fair share overall. There seems to be a resurgence of interest in Big G of late with the release of the quintet "In Baltimore" and "Queen Talk" from Shirley Scott both live in Maryland. That's great news all around.

Larry Hollis



New Issues

JIMMY BENNINGTON
CHURCHBELLS—LIVE AT THE GREEN MILL

CADENCE JAZZ 1270

KUNG FU/ SERIOUSLY/ SNEAKY/ PLEASE MAKE UP YOUR MIND/ THE HITCHIN' POST/ THE CHURCHBELLS OF WILLISAU/ A DANCE FOR KEIKO 40:07

Jimmy Bennington, d./ Fred Jackson Jr, as/ Artie Black, ts/ Dustin Laurenzi, ts/ Mike Harmon, bass

Whenever I get a CD led by a drummer my expectations go in all directions. Will there be lots of solos, and will they be interesting, or will the drummer basically play a supportive role.

The CD opens with mallets on tom toms which end up being supportive to the group, which features a nice Asian sounding melody and a lovely sax solo. Throughout the three saxophone line up provides some very nice ensemble work and each player also turns in some very nice solo work. There is some really nice interplay between the horns on Hitchin' Post.

For the most part Bennington plays a supportive role and he does a fine job, whether on mallets, sticks or brushes. I should mention I like the sound of his drums. His snare is on the darker side, which I like so it blends nicely with the horns. On the title track he uses his cymbals to create the church bell sound.

And I must mention the rock solid support provided by Harmon.

A very enjoyable CD.

Bernie Koenig

New Issues

LOUIS HAYES,
EXACTLY RIGHT!,
SAVANT 2206.
EXACTLY RIGHT! / IS THAT SO? / HAND IN GLOVE / SO MANY STARS / CARMINE'S BRIDGE / NEFERTITI / MELLOW D / THEME FOR ERNIE / SCARBOROUGH FAIR / UGETSU. 54:52.
Hayes, d; Abraham Burton, ts; Steve Nelson, vib; David Hazeltine, p; Dezron Douglas, b. 12/16 & 17/2022. Paramus,NJ.

Louis Hayes is a modern day music marvel. While most of his peers are no longer with us he (along with the legendary Roy Haynes) are still on the planet to remind us of what top-level percussion is all about.This is the follow-up to the combo's last Savant issue Crisis with the same band plus a pair of vocals from Camille Thurman. The ten selections on both releases reflect the impeccable taste of the NEA master with its mix of one Hayes writing, two Cedar Walton charts, a traditional piece popularized by Simon & Garfunkel, titles from fellow jazzers Duke Pearson, Fred Lacey and Horace Silver. To spice things up even more there's Sergio Mendez's "So Many Stars", the late Wayne Shorter's famous "Nefertiti" and the unique David Hazeltine bridge-less tune "Carmine's Bridge". Owners of this bands previous outing will be familiar with these sonics; the constant Douglas upright, sparkling piano throughout, Nelson's slinky vibe work and muscular tenor of Burton. Abraham has a special affinity towards drummers as witnessed by his work with Eric McPherson. All in all, a perfect companion set to the former Savant recording. Heartily endorsed.

Larry Hollis

New Issues

ERIC ALEXANDER,
A NEW BEGINNING,

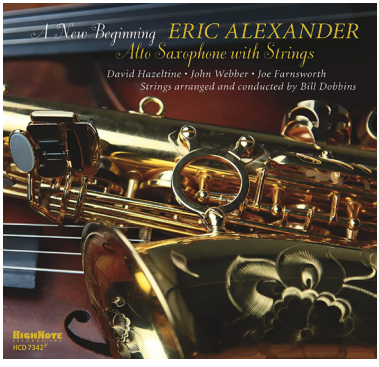
HIGHNOTE 7342.

BLUES FOR DIANE / EMBRACEABLE YOU / ALL MY TOMORROWS / MAYBE SEPTEMBER / TO LOVE AND BE LOVED / ANITA / SHE WAS TOO GOOD TO ME / TOO LATE NOW / BLUES FOR DIANE (ALT. TAKE). 48:28.

Alexander, as; David Hazeltine, p; John Webber, b; Joe Farnsworth, d; Unidentified strings. Bill Dobbins, cond. 8/28/2021. Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

For many years it has been customary, but not mandatory, for beginning saxophone students to start their studies on the alto due to the smallness of their hands. Like myself, and many others, upon reaching his teenage years Eric Alexander shelf his Eb model for the larger Bb tenor model and the rest, as they say, is history. Now he's dusted off his smaller horn and this album is his presentation playing it. There was an earlier hint on a single track of the Heavy Hitter's recording performing a dedication to his deceased father but this offering is all alto. Wisely employing his seasoned rhythm section and bandmates in the much-missed One For All aggregation the veteran arranger Bill Dobbins was brought on board for all but two cuts. Those are the opening number, "Blues For Diane" an Alexander original, and the final alternate take to close things out. That rendition is slightly longer and has some breath-taking improvisation from both the horn man and pianist. As for the remaining seven titles the bulk is made up of a half-dozen tried & true standards that range chronologically from the thirties to the sixties. Another Eric text "Anita" is a lush ballad that fits right in with those others. As for the sound of the new sax there is no question the leader hasn't done his proper woodshedding. With a tone not near as tart as Jackie McLean the alto falls into the classic category with Phil Woods technique, Art Pepper intensity and even a Sonny Criss-like smoothness at times. Right up there every bit the equal of Eric is David Hazeltine who appears to be hitting his peak in terms of comping and soloing. Think of this alto addition as just another weapon for Alexander to add to his formidable arsenal. Like the great Sonny Stitt this man is a certified reed master that can double on any sax he happens to pick up.

Larry Hollis



New Issues

SONNY STITT,
BOPPIN' IN BALTIMORE
LIVE AT THE LEFT BANK,
JAZZ DETECTIVE DDJD-009.
DISC ONE: BALTIMORE BLUES (*)/ STAR EYES / LOVER MAN (OH WHERE CAN YOU BE?) / THEY CAN'T TAKE THAT AWAY FROM ME.
DISC TWO: A DIFFERENT BLUES(*) / STELLA BY STARLIGHT(*) / DEUCE'S WILD (*) / THE THEME.
Total Time: Disc #1= 43:11/ Disc #2= 41:38.
Stitt, as, ts (*); Kenny Barron, p; Sam Jones, b; Louis Hayes, d. 11/11/1975. Famous Ballroom Maryland.

The era was the late sixties, the location a decrepit club on NE 23rd street in Okla. City and the word was "STITT'S IN TOWN!". On Sunday afternoon a tenor-playing podner and I made it over early to check him out. As was the norm in those days he had no permanent band but a pickup unit made up of some of OKC's finest, Charles Burton, guitar whose combo the Burton Band was one of the most popular around, Chester Thompson, behind the Hammond B-3 long before his increased exposure with Tower of Power & Santana, and rhythm-kingpin Delmar Burge subbing for Hugh Walker who was making a name for himself in Motown. Sharing the front line was alto sax ace Buster Green who was so bad he prompted the leader to break out his tenor. The kickoff set was all that one could wish for.

Word must have gotten out about my buddy and I because out hero made it over to our table on the break for a taste and some saxophone shop talk. Having heard several varying reports on his demeanor I as happy to report he was the perfect gentleman and even took my request for what many consider his signature tune "The Eternal Triangle" with which he opened the second set. As with the remainder of the night he dazzled us both with awesome displays of serious saxology.

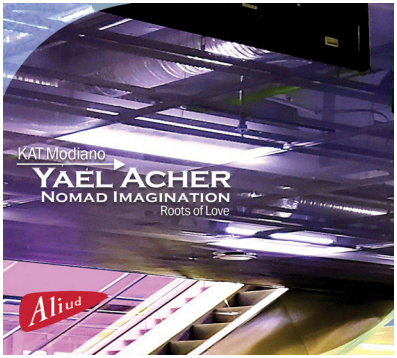
String comes out of the gate on the first disc hot and heavy notching rides on both horns in- between some expected fluent piano soloing from Barron on the longest track present. Much shorter are the other two blues items both of which are on the tenor. The remaining three titles are well- known with "Star Eyes" and "Lover Man" both being associated with confere Charlie Parker and an evergreen courteous the Gershwin brothers rounding out the set.

As was the case with the initial platter, disc two opens with another extended tenor blues some five minutes below the openers mark. It's slightly ironic that the two ballads heard herein are both from the forties, "Lover Man" from early in the decade and "Stella ..." from later on. The latter is an unusual long form composition that earned standard status long ago having been covered numerous times by everyone and his dog. This particular reading is less legato than normal and while twice the length of "Lover..." is broken up by piano and upright statements. Following that spirited rendition, Stitt kicks right into the final number "Deuces Wild" an Atlantic album shared with Rufus Harley. The Miles theme serves as an introductory section for the leader to acknowledge the backing trio one of the finest of his career.

Production of the accompanying booklet is top notch with fine writing from Bob Blumenthal, personal recollections from Barron, Louis Hayes, & Charles McPherson. Plus a portion of a Stitt interview from the seventies. Also available on 180 gram two lp set that makes my eyes red just thinking about it. Larry Hollis

New Issues

YAEL ACHER "KAT" MODIANO NOMAD IMAGINATION - ROOTS OF LOVE
ALIUD RECORDS



BLUE KAT MOVES/ MODIANO CARNIES/ RITUAL FOR PEACEFUL SPIRITS/ NOMAD IMAGINATION-ROOTS OF LOVE/ AIR-PENG'S FLIGHT/ NOMAD MULTIPLICITIE-IT / MATHEW'S/SUGAR HILL
Yael Acher "KAT" Modiano - flute, EFX, bansuri (Indian bamboo flute), industrial Beat, electro-acoustic loops (all tracks)
Rashad (MATTHEW) Dobbins - voice & lyrics (on tracks 2, 6, 7)
Daniel Muschinsky – piano and keyboards (on tracks 1,3, 4, 5,8)
Kristor Brødsgaard – double bass and el- bass (on tracks 1,3, 4, 5,8)
Ayi Solomon – percussion and voice (on tracks 1,3, 4, 5,8)
Niclas Compagnol – drums (on tracks 1,3, 5,8)
All music composed by Yael Acher "KAT" Modiano
Produced by Yael Acher "KAT" Modiano.
Recorded February-May 2021 at BOGEY Studio, Copenhagen V. Denmark
Sound engineer: Kristor Brødsgaard
Music Editing: Kristor Brødsgaard (tracks 1,3, 5,8)
Music Editing: Yael Acher "KAT" Modiano (tracks 2, 4, 6, 7)
Mixed and mastered by Jos Boerland, Aliud Records, Joure, NL.
Album Cover photo: Yael Acher "KAT" Modiano

Nice Album! Thoroughly entertaining. Yael KAT Modiano Acher - Composer, flutist, arranger. There is evidence here of something special, there is patience here, and an interest in creating a really good album. And that she does in spades. You can hear the creative NOMAD IMAGINATION at work. MODIANO CARNIES feels like a gritty journey through real streets, evocative, other-worldly, organic, and authentic. KAT is equally adept as a classical artist and as a mind bending proponent of modern soundscapes. Her approach is flawless, sensitive, and puts the listener in the middle of unique and often visual experiences. KAT is known for her performances with silent films. One can hear her cinematographic sensibility on this album. She swings and covers a lot of territory here. Her sense of phrasing is superb. It's a really Nice Album Indeed! Rock on KAT! Recommended.

Zim Tarro

PETE BROWN
A FAREWELL SALUTE TO PETE THE POET
DECEMBER 25, 1940 – MAY 19, 2023

Anyone listening to American AM radio during rock's most creatively fertile period, the later 1960s, knew some of his verses – the lyrics he wrote for Cream, with Jack Bruce – even if they didn't know who Pete Brown was. As it turns out, those words, which brought him the most fame and fortune, were only one facet of his extensive and too often obscure oeuvre, and far from the most poetic.

It was my good fortune to visit Brown a couple of times in 1987, at his flat in London's Weston Park neilghborhood. By way of introduction, I'd sent him a cassette dub of a program I'd produced for public radio using recordings of him reading his work, or making music with several of his bands, and Jack Bruce's recordings using his lyrics, as well as Dick Heckstall-Smith's. I told him I was hoping to catch up with him while I was in town, and he said by all means do come visit. He humored my request to make some photos of him, and bestowed upon me a copy of his then-brand-new 2-LP anthology Before Singing Lessons, saying I'd be among the first to have one in the States, where it was assured of sales in the dozens…

Ben Beaumont-Thomas penned a sufficiently thorough obituary for Brown in the May 20, 2023 edition of The Guardian (https://www.theguardian.com/music/2023/may/20/pete-brown-countercultural-poet-singer-and-cream-lyricist-dies-aged-82) that I feel free from being duty-bound to recite his entire life story. Actually, he did that himself, in his own way, with 2010's memoir White Rooms and Imaginary Westerns: On the Road with Ginsberg, writing for Clapton, and Cream – An Anarchic Odyssey (ISBN 978-1906779207). It's now gone out of print and gotten rather costly, so let me recommend Interlibrary Loan.

Brown was living the beat poet life and penning poems well before he took up writing song lyrics. His older volumes, Few Poems (1966) and Let 'em Roll, Kafka (1969) have long been, to put it mildly, rare and coveted collectors' items. One of his early ensembles, the First Real Poetry Band, included a promising young guitarist from the London recording studio scene: John McLaughlin, who later wrote "Pete the Poet" for Brown, recording it on his own first solo album, Extrapolation, with John Surman, in 1969. It's a nice tune among several on an auspicious debut.

While Brown's lyrics for Cream were canonical to the day's zeitgeist, it wasn't until I heard the double-whammy of Jack Bruce's second solo album, Harmony Row, and Brown's recorded anthology of a selection of his own poems with musical accompaniment, The Not-Forgotten Association, that the full force of the breadth and depth of the man's genius was revealed to me.

Harmony Row, despite being a trio album – Bruce on vocals, bass and keyboards, Chris Spedding on guitar and John Marshall on drums – is orchestral, nay, symphonic, in a way not unlike Abbey Road. Brown's visions and stories interweave seamlessly with Bruce's music and that instantly-recognizable Scots voice, sometimes in chorus with itself. Both were hitting their full stride, collectively and individually, with spectacular results. This album is full of miniature masterpieces, and its acoustic closer, "The Consul at Sunset" offers a more telling introduction to the writings of Malcolm Lowry than any literary criticism I've yet read. Brown continued working with Bruce for decades, but they never surpassed this collaboration.

The Not-Forgotten Association is a veritable feast of beat poetry, a much more

aesthetically-matched and -meshed amalgamation of the spoken word with music than much of what such had been recorded on this side of the pond. Brown's recitations are spirited and witty with a knowing sense of how performance art works. I laughed a lot the first time I listened to it, nearly 50 years ago, and still do, though I do so now with more of an appreciation for the darker side of his humor, sublime and surreal, which permeates but seldom dominates the proceedings.
Brown's later involvements included writing lyrics for Procol Harum's 2017 album Novum, and, most recently, completing recording sessions for an album said to be entitled Shadow Club, which, one hopes, will be available within the foreseeable. It can't arrive soon enough.

It's challenging to list but a few of his recorded and/or published accomplishments, since so many are so tasty, but here we go, with an incomplete, hardly impartial and sometimes incongruous assortment:
BLUES FOR THE HITCHHIKING DEAD (JAZZ POETRY SUPERJAM #1) – 2013 2-LP on Gearbox (UK): a 1962 live recording of the New Departures Jazz Poetry Septet, with Brown and fellow poet Michael Horovitz, as well as pianist Stan Tracey. Historical and at times hysterical, documenting the London avant-beat scene in pre-Beatles days. Not for the faint of ear.
BEFORE SINGING LESSONS: 1969 – 1977 – 1987 2 LP set on Decal (UK). Not yet available on CD. An anthology featuring Brown's work from albums with his Battered Ornaments, Piblokto, Bond and Brown, Brown and Friends (including Jack Bruce and Jeff Beck), Ian Lynn, and the Flying Tigers, among others, along with some previously unreleased pieces. This gives one a good glimpse of Brown's range and proclivities in those days.
A STORY ENDED, Dick Heckstall-Smith – 1972 LP on Bronze/Warner Brothers, 2009 CD on Esoteric: Side one features Brown's lyrics, sung by Paul Williams or Graham Bond, his images and narratives made musical by some of London's finest players, including Jon Hiseman and Gordon Beck. This was saxophonist Heckstall-Smith's major-label solo debut, and deserved more attention than it got at the time.
As a producer and sometimes player and/or singer as well, a trio of blues-oriented albums, amongst a roster of many other musicians far more widely-known and more numerous than I care to enumerate here:
KNIGHTS OF THE BLUES TABLE – 1997, Viceroy. (as Various Artists)
BLUES AND BEYOND – 2001, Blue Storm (as Dick Heckstall-Smith and Friends)
FROM CLARKSDALE TO HEAVEN – 2002, Eagle (as Various Artists)
MUNDANE TUESDAY AND FREUDIAN SATURDAY – Ridgeway Press, 2016, ISBN 978-1564391360 – A collection of Brown's later poetry, proving he had grown with the years but remained a beatnik at heart.
And the aforementioned:
HARMONY ROW, Jack Bruce, 2971 LP on Polydor: the 2003 CD edition includes additional tracks, though in this case those are coals to Newcastle.
THE NOT-FORGOTTEN ASSOCIATION, 1973 LP on Deram, 2015 CD on Esoteric. An epic listen if you do it at one sitting. When this appeared, no one else had done anything like it, and thus far no one else I've heard has done anything like this nearly as well.

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Pete Brown in his Weston Park flat, London, February 1987.
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