

Cool jazz to get you through the long, hot summer

Wynton Marsalis Septet

Citi Movement
Columbia

People are talking Duke Ellington here, and Marsalis is aiming for a suite capturing the roars and silences of New York City itself. Wynton wrote *Citi Movement* for Griot New York, a modern ballet choreographed by Garth Fagan that premiered at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 1991.

"The three-part composition," writes poet-cum-critic Stanley Crouch in the record's liners, "uses jazz to render the feelings of a city, the waves and wages of history, and the emotional reference connected to styles and rhythmic grooves." It's these grooves, instead of melody or harmony, that unify the composition, Crouch explains, allowing Marsalis to play with rhythm, time, tempo and mood as he sees fit.

There are more than a few flashes of brilliance on *Citi Movement*. But Marsalis has not Duke's genius, nor a collaborator like Billy Strayhorn, nor the players Duke had to draw from to produce his enormous variety of voicings and colors. Duke knew his players so well that he wrote each of their parts with their individual voices in mind.

Nor does Wynton achieve the heights of emotional abandon and mournful passion that Charles Mingus hit in his tributes to Duke.

But this is a great, sprawling, ambitious record, full of moving passages and pastiches of mid-century jazz styles, with touches of Latin, modal, gospel, blues and wailing, muted trumpets and trombones that give the best cuts on the album an Ellingtonian flavor.

Wynton, like most of today's young lion, is a classicist, a neocoon who values order and structure above adventure and chance-taking.

This attention to precision and tradition keep Marsalis and his band from really cutting loose on this one.

The emphasis on composition and ensemble work also keeps the soloists a bit reigned in—a problem Mingus and Ellington's bands did not have.

But numbers like "Hustle Bustle," "Stop and Go," "Dark Heartbeat," "Bayou Baroque" and much of the second disk, including the closer, "Curtain Call," summons a richness of emotion that would make Ellington, Strayhorn and Mingus proud.

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SCOTT TIMBERG

Max Roach

Percussion Bitter Sweet
Impulse!/GRP

The whole record, originally recorded in 1961, is a political call to arms and opens with "Garvey's Ghost," a tribute to Marcus Garvey, and ends with "Man From South Africa." Drummer/composer Roach was as ahead of his time politically as he was musically.

Percussion Bitter Sweet brings back the moment in jazz when late '50s hard bop was flowering into something that never quite got a name. The record is fully percussive, with Roach playing like a man possessed throughout and lifting his soloists to a height of frenzy and commitment. He wisely chose several Mingus sidemen—Booker Little on trumpet, Clifford Jordan on tenor, and Eric Dolphy on alto, bass clarinet and flute—as well as Julian Priester on trombone and Abbey Lincoln, whose vocals distinguish two numbers. Lincoln's "Mendacity" may be the album's highlight, but everything about this record, from the horn solos, to Roach's percussion excursions, to his experiments with 7.4, 3/4 and 6/8 time, recommends it.

Dolphy was a radical, out-of-hand player who made middle-Coltrane look tame. His playing on Roach's record is protean and challenging. He jars and dazzles with bass clarinet passages, beguiles with post-Bird alto sax solos, seduces with lyrical flute breaks. He closes the album with a haunting, beautiful flute solo, as if to atone for the chaos of what had come before. Dolphy was not a snake charmer, like Coltrane or Wayne Shorter—Dolphy was the snake.

As for Max, he fully justifies his entry in the *Rolling Stone Jazz Record Guide*: "Sometimes his rhythms are so simple, you could teach a child to count the beat. But it is those simple meters, cross-combined, that make Max Roach (b. 1925) the most important drummer in jazz."

Percussion Bitter Sweet has in it all of the sorrow, energy and triumph of the early '60s civil rights movement—the whole record would have made a great soundtrack to Spike Lee's movie.

Ben Webster

See You at the Fair
Impulse!/GRP

"Ben was almost perfect in my book," writes Owen Cordle in his *Down Beat* review this month, and indeed it is so. Webster was an absolute master of both gutbucket blues and sumptuous ballads, with a drive and command of "tonal nuance," (as Cordle puts it) no one has matched. *Ben Webster Encounters Coleman Hawkins* (Verve) is one of my all-time ten best, a rhapsodic record of ballad standards that shows Ben blowing his mentor off the stand.

See You at the Fair, recorded in 1964, two decades after Webster came to prominence with Duke Ellington's best band, shows that Webster kept kicking hard until the end. There is nothing weary or nostalgic about this record, a spirited romp that shows Ben taking old standards and Ellington chestnuts and breathing new life into them.

"In a Mellow Tone" and Gershwin's "Our Love is Here To Stay" shows Webster's growling, hearty tone and razor sharp edges at their fullest, with a playful attitude that allows him—as Sonny Rollins did in his best playing—to parody the familiarity of the numbers without trashing them. The ballads—"Someone to Watch Over Me," "Over the Rainbow," "The Single Petal of a Rose"—are romantic and never sentimental.

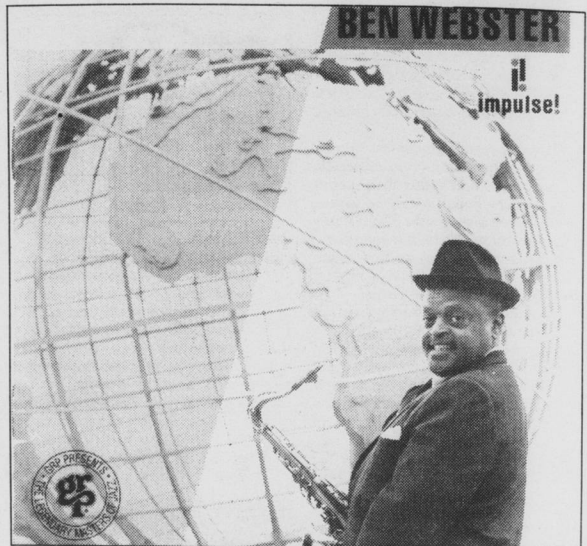
The reissue also includes "Midnight Blue" and "Blues For Mr. Broadway," originally released on Oliver Nelson's *More Blues and the Abstract Truth*.

Kenny Drew Jr.

A Look Inside
Antilles

Call it T.S. Monk syndrome. Like the younger Thelonious, Kenny Drew Jr. shares a moniker with a noted Blue Note era pianist, and he inherits both welcome attention and daunting comparisons. Though Drew's father is not as famous as the elder Monk, Kenny Drew, Sr. has long been one of the most consistent and swinging of expatriate jazzmen.

A Look Inside is the 33-year-old New York-bred pianist's second record for Antilles. Highlights include Monk's "Ugly Beauty" and "San Francisco Holi-



Webster will see jazz fans at the fair

day (Worry Later)," Wayne Shorter's "Nefertiti," Strayhorn's "Blood Count," and Coltrane's rousing "Mr. P.C." and "Giant Steps." Of Drew's own compositions, the beguiling elusive "Alahambra" stands out, while his take of Ravel's "Minuet on the Name of Haydn" explores Bill Evans territory. Arrangements range from solo to quartet and several tracks feature the formidable tenors of David Sanchez and Joshua Redman.

Drew's piano style provides a confident synthesis of Horace Silver, Bud Powell and Wynton Kelly. Though his style is not tremendously distinctive, Drew handles the difficult voicings and odd accents of Monk as well as he does the breakneck speed of Coltrane's chords and the lyricism of Shorter and Strayhorn. What Drew lacks in individualism he makes up for in versatility and taste in influences.

Drew breaks little new ground on this album. His contribution, like the younger Monk's, is neither instrumental virtuosity nor dazzling innovation, but rather a hard-hitting record that pays homage to the masters of the past without giving in to nostalgia or imitation.

Thelonious Monk Quartet

featuring John Coltrane, Live at the Five Spot, Blue Note

Coltrane's term with Monk was one of the most important in the saxophonist's development and helped him get back on his feet and emerge with his own sound and triumphant records like *Blue Train* (Blue Note) that got him hired back by Miles Davis. The partnership also marked the beginning of Monk's emergence after years of undeserved obscurity. The Monk/Trane gig at the Five Spot Cafe was the toast of New York for the summer of '57, and lines used to stretch around the block.

Naima Coltrane, John's wife, recorded this gig one night on a portable tape player with a single microphone and, though Blue Note has done its best

to make this sound as full as possible, this is not an audiophile experience.

Both Coltrane and Monk take plenty of room to solo, and the chemistry between the men comes through, even with the shoddy acoustics. Coltrane's playing in particular is far more adventurous than on his studio records of the time, and he can be heard achieving his "sheets of sound" approach, unleashing flurries of notes.

Also of note:

John Coltrane, *Dear Old Stockholm* (Impulse!/GRP)—This puts together two passionate Coltrane dates from '63 and '65 featuring the classic quartet, but with Roy Haynes sitting in for Elvin Jones. Elvin's style was muscular and driving, while these numbers show what Trane's band could do with Haynes' spreading, polyrhythmic style. Coltrane cuts will want this album, if only for the title cut, a reworked Swedish folk song Trane originally cut, much more conservatively, with Miles Davis back in '56.

Charles Mingus, *Debut Rarities*, Vol. 1 and 2 (Fantasy)—Debut, owned by bassist/composer/bandleader Mingus, was one of the first-ever black-owned record companies.

These two reissues, the first a Mingus octet date plus a session with trombonist Jimmy Knepper's quintet and the second a set of duets with pianist Spaulding Givens, exist on CD only as part of Fantasy's Complete Mingus box set.

Louis Armstrong and his Orchestra, *Heart Full of Rhythm*, (Decca/GRP)—No one can claim credit for inventing jazz—though Jelly Roll Morton tried to—but Louis Armstrong had claim to being its first great soloist.

His late '20s work, on Columbia's *Louis Armstrong Story*, is seminal and brilliant. Almost as good were his more pop '30s recordings for Decca.

Admittedly less groundbreaking, these sessions show Louis' gift for melody, his singing and scatting, and the hottest trumpet in the business. This sequel to *Rhythm Saved the World*, reissued by Decca in 1991, shares its predecessor's excellent sound.

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