

case for Frishberg's song-writing (music and lyrics), arranging and vocal gifts, which are considerable.

Frishberg is a true original. His forte is a whimsical, quite unique sense of humor. If he ever reminds of anyone, it may be of his sometime song-writing partner and fellow pianist-singer Bob Dorough, but this is mainly a matter of similarities in off-hand delivery and vocal timbre, and the rare combination of humor and first-rate musicianship.

The ten songs offered here, all originals, vary in mood and quality, but none is less than good. My favorite is *Van Lingle Mungo*, named after a baseball player who was with the Dodgers in the 1940s (the song has done well enough to earn Mungo and Frishberg a joint appearance on the *Dick Cavett Show*). The lyric consists entirely of a recitation the names of legendary and not-so-legendary ballplayers, set to a romantic bossa-nova melody. It has to be heard to be appreciated; description can't do it justice.

Also excellent are *Nasty Nasty Habit* (one never learns just what the habit is, but the song contains the immortal lines "... I'm pinned up against the wall/like a beat-up ping-pong ball/stuck against the radiator); the tender *Wallflower*, a c&w-type ballad tailor-made for Ray Charles; and *Success* and *Rocky Mountain*, in their different ways fine parodies of silly "folk" songs.

Though there are some good wa-wa



spots from Scharf, there are no solos by the hornmen (excepting some brief Berry flurries on *Mungo*). But almost every track has a sample of Frishberg's delightful keyboard work—perhaps the best are on *Toad* and *Nasty*. They are, of course, only teasers. His arrangements are first-rate, and everything on the album swings. His singing may be an acquired taste, like Greek olives, but I dig it, and he puts the lyrics across.

I hope this album, or at least some of its songs, makes it big. Then, perhaps, we'll get that long-overdue jazz LP featuring Frishberg as an instrumentalist (a role in which, so far, he's only been recorded on a Jimmy Rushing BluesWay LP). It will be a treat, for Frishberg is one of the best jazz pianists around today, not to slight his other talents. —*Morgenstern*

BARRY HARRIS

MAGNIFICENT—Prestige 7733: *Bean and the Boys; You Sweet and Fancy Lady; Rouge; Ab-leu-cba; Just Open Your Heart; Sun Dance; These Foolish Things; Eternity.*
Personnel: Harris, piano; Ron Carter, bass; Leroy Williams, drums.

Rating: ★★★★★

This is perhaps Barry Harris' finest album to date, which is to say that it is an event, for Harris is as good as they come.

Though still a young man, Harris was a musical father-figure to most of the talented players who came out of Detroit in the '50s. Today, he stands as one of the

down beat

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standard-bearers of a musical tradition sometimes called bebop—I prefer the term Charlie Parker music. Even in a music to which honesty is so basic as jazz, artists who never yield to the temptation of betraying their gifts are rare, but Harris is such a man.

On this remarkable album, which maintains an uncommonly high level of inspiration, we find all the facets of a complete musician. There is no shucking or jiving, no cute concessions to hip fads; nothing but pure, honest music.

For openers, Harris salutes the memory of a close friend and frequent musical associate, Coleman Hawkins, with a broiling, one-take-perfect assault on *Bean and the Boys*. Harris' marvelous swing and unceasingly inventive horn-like single-line style are to the fore as he builds and sustains excitement for six-and-a-half minutes, with sterling rhythm support.

The well-paced program continues with two Harris originals, the minor-hued, almost Monkish *Lady* and the pretty, sweet (but never saccharine) *Rouge*, nostalgic in mood and spotting a little gas of a Tatum run in the final bridge—I'd like to hear this scored for the Ellington band.

Charlie Parker's *Ah-leu-cha*, opening with some deft contrapuntal work, is a lesson in melodic improvisation in the composer's mold; Harris' lines even seem to "breathe" like a horn's.

Just Open Your Heart is a gentle, happy melody stated by the composer in a relaxed, pulsing tempo. It evokes a mellow mood. Harris again creates superb variations, and there is a full solo chorus by Carter—melodic bassing at its best. *Sun Dance*, another Harris original, is a Latin-flavored blues with a catchy theme, splendidly performed by the trio—a most cohesive unit.

On Foolish Things, Harris demonstrates how to play a standard with a master's touch. His second chorus is a marvel of lucid construction and development, and the elaborate, romantic cadenza is touched with gentle humor at the end.

Dexterity takes us back to Bird; a passionate, swinging conclusion to a generous 40-minutes plus of uplifting music. Harris begins his solo in the lower register and gradually builds higher; his intelligent utilization of the resources of his instrument, without frills or excesses, is a joy to hear. Harris is one of the very few pianists who never allow the fingers to fill in when the mind falters; there are no cliché runs in his book.

That Carter should be a perfect partner here comes as no surprise, but Leroy Williams is a name new to me, and a most welcome acquaintance. He is a listening drummer, agile of mind, hands and feet, and everything he does here seems just right. The engineering is first-rate, and the piano good and properly tuned. One of those rare dates where everything seems to have gone well, produced by the intrepid Don Schlitten—Harris, a believer in honest music. Basically, there'll be no follow-up. We hear that Prestige is cutting down on non-commercial jazz, and Schlitten will no longer be producing live dates for the label. This is 1970. Grab this while you can. . . . —*Morgenstern*