

combines the low register of the guitar and the wah-wah pedal to get an effect remarkably like a plunger trombone. His fuzz-feedback obligatos to Davis are for the most part effective, although they occasionally come close to dominating.

In the film, a stunning drum solo accompanies a Charlie Chaplin silent movie boxing routine thrown in as atmosphere, but that solo is missing from the album, as is other incidental music.

Grossman's soprano solos are pretty and graceful.

There's nothing about the electric piano or organ playing that speaks to these ears of Herbie Hancock, but producer Teo Macero's office says Hancock is on the record. (No players are listed on the album jacket.)

This music ends with Miles floating muted

over a large ensemble voice, if not by Gil Evans, in the Evans style. Those few seconds add a half star to the rating. Pure beauty, tromped on by Brock Peters doing a speech from the movie.

As background for the film, the music is frequently appropriate. At other times it seems the record session must have been held independently of the film making; the music just doesn't fit. Nonetheless, on balance it is a good deal more successful than the vast majority of movie music. Apart from considerations of the sound track, don't miss the film when it's released. Producer Jim Jacobs has done a remarkable job of combining old film clips and painstaking research into a cogent statement not only about a black hero's triumph and agony but about the United States of America.

—Ramsey

## DUKE ELLINGTON

NEW ORLEANS SUITE—Atlantic SD 1580: *Blues for New Orleans*; *Bourbon Street Jingling Jollies*; *Portrait of Louis Armstrong*; *Thanks for the Beautiful Land on the Delta*; *Portrait of Wellman Braud*; *Second Line*; *Portrait of Sidney Bechet*; *Aristocracy a la Jean Lafitte*; *Portrait of Mahalia Jackson*.

Personnel: Cootie Williams, Money Johnson, Mercer Ellington, Fred Stone, Al Rubin, trumpets; Booty Wood, Julian Priester, Dave Taylor, trombones; Russell Procope, clarinet, alto sax; Johnny Hodges, alto sax; Norris Turney, clarinet, alto sax, flute; Harold Ashby, clarinet, tenor sax; Paul Gonsalves, tenor sax; Harry Carney, clarinet, bass clarinet, baritone sax; Ellington, piano; Joe Benjamin, bass; Rufus Jones, drums. On tracks 3, 5, 7 & 9, Hodges is absent, Cat Anderson replaces Johnson, and Chuck Connors replaces Taylor. Wild Bill Davis, organ, is added on track 1.

Rating: ★★★★★

A major event for a number of reasons: Ellington's first large-scale work since the *Far East Suite* and his first since the death of Billy Strayhorn; Johnny Hodges' last appearance on record; and above all, some very beautiful music.

As is the case with most of Ellington's suites, the piece can be enjoyed as a whole, but the individual segments stand up just as well by themselves. The music is evocative, highly atmospheric and marked throughout by the gorgeous ensemble textures that set this orchestra apart from every other big band in the history of jazz—or, in deference to Ellington's semantics, American music.

Among the peaks, to this listener, is *Aristocracy*, a charming waltz enhanced by Carney's sonorous baritone and the fine solo work (on fluegelhorn) of Canadian Fred Stone, which brings to Ellington's music a touch of bebop lyricism absent since Clark Terry's departure from the fold. (Stone is no longer with the band, but one hopes that someone else—perhaps Eddie Preston—can be found to recreate his part so that this masterpiece will not vanish from the repertoire.)

Other marvelous segments: *Second Line*, with its spirited ensembles that join scored and improvised elements in a unique blend, Russel Procope's warm, sinuous clarinet arabesques, and a powerful, perfectly structured Cootie Williams solo; *Portrait of Mahalia Jackson*, a sombre, stately piece with lovely reed hues (including the recently rediscovered clarinet trio device) and a short and very moving Gonsalves solo. And *Portrait of Sidney Bechet*, conceived for Johnny Hodges, who died two days before the recording. Paul Gonsalves makes it as much of a tribute to his dear departed friend as to Bechet, but then, there was a close link between those two giants. Gonsalves' playing is unlike anything he has done before, with an uncharacteristic vibrato, never sentimental but profoundly emotional. A beautiful performance.

The *Portrait of Louis Armstrong* has been performed more tellingly by Cootie Williams in person, but even so, and especially now, stands as a warm tribute, climaxing in a most Satchmo-like cadenza. Norris Turney's superb flute is much in evidence in *Bourbon Street*, a highly romantic piece despite the fey title. Harold Ashby is featured throughout *Delta*, and comes remarkably close to the sound and feeling of his idol, Ben Webster.

And then there is Hodges, making three solo appearances on the long *Blues for New Orleans*, of which the second is a fitting swansong, beautifully executed, with that never-to-be-duplicated and unforgettable sound.

This is a great record, and by any standard

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one of the major musical events of 1971. One now awaits with impatience the appearance on record of Ellington's *Near East Suite*, most or all of which has already been taped by the maestro himself, as was this album until Atlantic took it on, for which they merit applause.

— Morgenstern

## HERBIE HANCOCK

MWANDISHI—Warner Bros. WS-1898: *Ostinato (Suite for Angela); You'll Know When You Get There; Wandering Spirit Song.*

Personnel: Eddie Henderson, trumpet, fluegelhorn; Julian Priester, trombone; Benny Maupin, bass clarinet, alto flute; Ron Montrose, guitar; Hancock, Fender Rhodes piano; Buster Williams, bass; Billy Hart, drums; Jose (Cepito) Areas, congas, timbales; Leon Chandler, drums, percussion.

Rating: ★★½

Recently, while listening to an FM station from East Hartford, Conn., I heard the d.j. comment on the influence Miles Davis has had on young musicians with his new so-called electric jazz. (That's what the d.j. called it.) This record is a sub-par Miles Davis electric jazz album under the name of Herbie Hancock.

This music is extremely "spacy". It has very little emotional content. The album is highly arranged, so there's very little room for improvisation. Hancock sort of tinkles in from time to time on the electric piano, and Eddie Henderson sounds like a clearer-articulating Miles. Not that playing in the style of Miles is negative, and certainly he has influenced many trumpeters in the last two decades. But I've heard Henderson before and he *had* his own very distinct style.

Benny Maupin and Buster Williams are brilliant throughout. Maupin explores a spectrum of sounds with the alto flute and bass clarinet. But his creativity is stunted by the level of energy of the arrangements and the post-Debussy tonal character of the album. Williams is an exceptionally strong bassist, but Hancock must have had a mental lapse when he put him into an ostinato for the entire piece, *Ostinato* (see musical example). It's



true that an ostinato is a repeat harmonic line, but there are lots of ways of doing that.

Priester floats in here and out there. His piece, *Wandering Spirit Song*, is the best of the three really beautiful compositions.

I remember reading, about 15 years ago, a letter in Ann Landers' column about a man who had married what he thought was a physically beautiful woman. On the first night, when they were going to bed (those were the old times, folks) she took off her hair piece, false eyelashes, rubbed out her eyebrows and rubbed off the face cream which covered blemishes. But what really killed the man who had sent in the letter was how much padding she had in her bra. This album reminds me of that woman. It really sounds beautiful, but it's so contrived. Even the few attempts made to straighten out and get free are superficial.

I keep talking about potential and the manifestation of the same. I don't want to be unnecessarily redundant, but with the musicianship present here something more than this should have happened.

— Cole