

WEATHER REPORT: OUTLOOK BRIGHT AND SUNNY

WEATHER REPORT

WEATHER REPORT—Columbia CH 77777: *Milky Way; Umbrellas; Seventh Arrow; Orange Lady; Morning Lake; Waterfall; Tears; Eurydice.*
Personnel: Wayne Shorter, tenor and soprano saxophones; Joe Zawinul, electric and acoustic piano; Miroslav Vitous, electric and acoustic bass; Al Mouzon, drums, voice; Airtio Moiterra, Barbara Burton, percussion.

Rating: ★★★★★

An extraordinary new group merits an extraordinary review of its debut album. This, in fact, is more than a review. It is an introduction to Weather Report and a discussion of the music on the group's album (to be released in mid-May) by the musicians themselves, with parenthetical comments by this writer.

Genesis

The musicians who make up Weather Report, an incorporated, cooperative group, came together early this year when all found themselves free to engage in a new venture.

Wayne Shorter and Joe Zawinul had worked together on Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew*, and, according to the pianist, "it was a fantastic cooperation kind of feeling." Not long thereafter, Shorter left Miles and was doing some free-lance recording and thinking about forming a group of his own. He was trying to obtain the services of bassist Miroslav Vitous, then with Herbie Mann, for a record date, but the band was off for Japan.

Some time later, Vitous called Shorter and told him: "I'm free!" Wayne thought at first he meant for recording purposes, but Vitous explained he no longer belonged to any band. Meanwhile, Zawinul had decided to leave Cannonball Adderley and get into his own thing. He had used Vitous on an album of his own, and the two men had discussed the possibility of working together. In one afternoon, Miroslav called Wayne, Wayne called Joe, and, the pianist says, "all three of us found that we were free—so there was the band."

They wanted to find out how it would feel and sound, so they called drummer Billy Cobham (Al Mouzon, who'd recorded with Wayne, wasn't in town, though they had already talked about getting him) and rented a studio for the afternoon. "That was really an experience," says Joe. "We decided that we were going to need some fantastic management, because the quality of the music was very high," he continues, "so we got Sid Bernstein (who, as everyone knows, brought the Beatles to the U.S.). Then, I was supposed to do some independent producing at Columbia, and when they heard we had a band, the machine started rolling."

"Then we needed a drummer, and Al was the first choice, and when he started working with us in rehearsal it was really fantastic—he sings and all that. And then Airtio—we'd tried another percussionist but he didn't have that individualism, and that's what we really are aiming for—individuals all, but playing together. So we called Airtio and he fit right in."

"We rehearsed three weeks—or rather, we took a month and rehearsed four days a week—and then we went in the studio and did the record in three days. Rehearsing was quite something—every day when we got home we'd be exhausted,

there was so much music going on."

The week the album is released, Columbia will present the group in a private concert—the first live performance by Weather Report—and a European tour is set for June.

The Music

Shorter: *Milky Way* was originally conceived by Josef Zawinul. (Laughter) He had an idea. We just did it with two instruments.

Zawinul: Horn and acoustic piano—no electronics whatsoever. But I think it's a new way of doing something with the pedals and with the saxophone. And what it really represents is that *Milky Way* is everything.

Shorter: We had to start somewhere before we got to the idea of weather and atmosphere and all that, so we thought of coming from a vacuum—nothing into something—and then we thought about our galaxy—we're on the outer edges of the milky way. So we thought of ourselves as seen from some all-seeing, mythical perspective, and then panning in and coming in closer, into the next cut and to humanization and reality.

Vitous: It would be almost as if you were sitting in a space ship, watching meteors flying by, and then a change into chords, like you see that and you see this . . .

Shorter: So instead of opening the album with a tune and everything that implies, from Tin Pan Alley to a classical concept, we decided on no concept at all except just as much of the universe as you can see. No matter how small you think you are, everybody's got a share in it. So we use sound to convey that idea; like all right, let's begin here.

Zawinul: A preparation for the rest of it. It's like a soundtrack to your mind. You can put yourself where you want; there's enough room in space.

This brought up the name of the group and its implications.

Zawinul: What the music does to people is also what the weather does to people. It doesn't really make that much difference to me if it rains or the sun shines, I can be happy either way; but most people, I think, make up their way of living by what's happening out there when they look out the window in the morning—or even by the report at night.

But the name can be taken any way at all. We first had an idea to call the band Audience, because we make up the soundtracks to our own ideas: we accompany ourselves: our thoughts. So we thought of an audience: the audience is really the minds, and we make up the backgrounds for them, and for us. We are the film, or the play, and the music is the soundtrack.

The people who've heard our music, it really does something to their heads. Instead of thinking, yes, here F7, and there this—it's nothing like that. Even the musicians who've heard it don't listen to it that way (i.e., analytically); they just sit back and get all kinds of thoughts. . . .

Vitous: It's very difficult to analyze . . .

Shorter: Yes, and it's not like what do you use here, and so on. The only ques-

tion was about *Milky Way*—what is that? Is that an electronic machine? And we'd say no, and that's the end of that.

Zawinul: Next is *Umbrellas*. The first piece Wayne and I did together. The second, Miroslav wrote the melody and we did a little background and fit it together. And it really gives you the feeling of different kinds of rain. Human behavior in different degrees of rain. The people—you can actually feel that in the tune. I can hear the little kids running with their mamas holding the umbrellas and getting a little wet on the side.

Shorter: Some people carry their umbrellas closed even when it rains—they refuse to open them. And then, when it really starts pouring—they open inside out. And some carry umbrellas when the sun is shining—in London.

Zawinul: On this, I use electric and acoustic piano at the same time to get a little more treble, a little more punch in the sound.

The question of overdubbing was raised, and the answer was that hardly any was used, perhaps here and there a note or two to improve something, "but eventually, you'll hear that same thing done live, because we'll have had the time to work on it," Shorter explains.

Shorter: The piece has a very festive air to it: there's a lot of joy in it, like when it rains during the very hot season. Lots of people dig rain.

Zawinul: Some people get a little melancholy when it rains, like on a Saturday afternoon. A little sentimental. It has lots of different feelings.

Shorter: If you hear anything in the album that sounds at all bluesy, it's like a blues upside down, with the downward part of the blues facing the oxygen of the good intent in life . . . like, you can do anything you want to do; the blues doesn't control you, you control the blues.

I'm trying to get the feeling of playing upward, and if there's anything sad, we take that sadness under our wings and say, OK, come on, be sad—but that won't last too long. So each bent note that you hear, you can take it in that way, dig?

Zawinul: Have you ever seen down in New Orleans how the bands march with those umbrellas—that's all in there—Brazilian, Caribbean, all those little things are there.

Shorter: And people who don't see umbrellas will see something else . . . and that's OK, too.

Zawinul: The next thing is the *Seventh Arrow*, which Miroslav wrote. What can you say about it . . . it's a masterpiece.

Vitous: It's a continuous composition; in other words, we don't just play one motive and then something on that. It's first one motive and then comes another, almost like another song, and all these motives are written, so it never really is improvisation. Actually, the piece is two songs, two of my songs which we decided to put together—it reminded me of an arrow.

Shorter: He's a Sagittarian—it has that energy and speed. It's swift. . . .

Zawinul: And it's a constant interplay of motives. There are three main lines and they appear in constant interplay. It's



like a conversation. On the middle part, I use a ring modulator, to get a whirring sound. My wife used to teach archery in school, and when you stand on the side and hear those arrows flying by, that's what it's like.

I wrote *Orange Lady* thinking mainly of my wife, but also of most ladies who have children and are stuck in a big city. There's a certain sadness in it. In my case, in order to really make my wife happy, and make myself happy by making her happy, I'll take her out somewhere in the country—that's what the middle part is about—and then that changes the whole attitude and you can go on being happy for a while again, and then you come back to New York and it's like the same thing all over again—it's like a constant change from a certain sadness. . . .

Shorter: It's funny—Joe described that like a blues feeling, but he didn't use the word having the blues, and that's indicative of the change in what we're doing . . . we can't, we cannot play—we dig the blues and all that stuff, conceptionwise—but we cannot play something that's been played before, because the change is calling to us. It's a necessity. . . .

Zawinul: So that's the first side. The second side starts with *Morning Lake*, which was written by Miroslav, and which will create the feeling in you of being somewhere very early in the morning on a nice day, maybe in spring, and it's still a bit cold—a mountain lake. . . .

Vitous: You can see that the water is cold, because you can see through it so well that it has to be cold. . . .

Zawinul: And now and then a fish comes out, and you can walk and just breathe the fresh air; you hear the birds and there's that very peaceful feeling that you get early in the morning—lots of space, which gives you time to put your thoughts in there. . . .

Vitous: And there'll be a duck swimming on the lake, with a little current behind it . . . The next piece—those two tunes are connected—is *Waterfall*, which was written by Joe and the lake turns into a waterfall, with the water coming down at different speeds, and then it disappears into a big river . . .

Zawinul: You'll hear a lot in the upper register of the piano . . . it's kind of impressionistic. And after that comes a tune written by Wayne: *Tears*.

Shorter: In a sense, the colors I see in that are maroon, purple; dark purple, and dark blue—and some deep yellows, which means it has a hint of the blueish kind

of feeling, but not really like that. It's grounded, like in the earth; it has a firm pedestal. Pedestal meaning it's kind of earthy, in a sense, but there's a regal quality there. Maybe a hint of sadness, but carry whatever sadness you have with pride. The image I get is human: tears, blood, skin—a human being. The voice came out of that, the human voice, Al's voice—because we'd been through inanimate objects, objects of nature, water, the milky way, so at some point, we get to the molding of a human being . . .

Zawinul: The way that moves around, from C to A flat, that's very interesting the way it moves, and out of that come



some real pretty notes . . .

Shorter: The color of the ruby, big flashes of emerald; but above all, this regal quality that is in every human being, no matter what they have to face in life . . . Al's voice was used in this without any literary message, just as an instrument, and he was given time to figure out how he wanted to do that . . . there's not much more to be said about that, except dig it.

Zawinul: The next tune is also by Wayne—a fantastic song, *Eurydice*—which is more traditional in the way of playing. It's more in the jazz tradition.

Vitous: Swing in 4/4 time. . . .

Zawinul: Very hip swing . . . and this is really the only track where we solo a little bit, 'cause on all the other tunes, we don't solo; we just play with one another—like an orchestra. See, we want to use our little band . . . on this first album, we didn't use all our instruments. I have a synthesizer I'm working with, and several things attached on the electric piano. Except for my using the ring modulator on the bridge to *Seventh Arrow*, we didn't use any of that, but next time we will. But only in a musical context, not to show everybody, here, we got this and we got that. We just want to use it for the music . . . we're taking advantage of everything, but we just try to make music. . . .

Vitous: Each instrument as an extension of your mind.

Shorter: In *Eurydice*, I was thinking of my horn in the sense of a woman. There's an *Eurydice* in every man's life, and she's elusive; like if you look back, she might be gone . . . and she's wearing something transparent. So the horn, to me,

became the garment with the woman inside, very elusive, but floating around in everybody's life. Womanhood is opening up even more today, and that male private thing—art, music, this is *ours*—I tried to get to the woman thing without that overbearing sexual symbolism. You know, everybody is OK—sometimes (laughter)—most of the time. . . .

The Future

Vitous: So that's the entire album. And in a way, we've set up a communication system between all of us, and the next time we'll use everything there is to be used, because we've established our basic thing and we can go from there. . . .

Zawinul: Wherever we go, we'll have our own sound system, so we can always sound like we want to. It will be like having our own recording studio on the road. The equipment is all custom-built and really fantastic . . . we'll have a full panel with all kinds of settings, etc. . . .

Shorter: But none of this will be used (as gadgetry) but for musical ends, and if something breaks down, no need to panic. We'll find a way of using what goes wrong, too . . . we'll have our own ESP.

Zawinul: About Airtio—he has the most uncanny ability to hear what you want. He doesn't even have to rehearse with us. He didn't. He just comes in and hears the music and he knows what to pick, where to come in. He's incredible; he's a natural talent and we love him and whenever he



can work with us, great.

Additionally, the musicians pointed out that the format of the group will be flexible. The quartet is the true nucleus, but if occasion arises, they will use strings, voices, etc. In fact, they are looking for a singer, and Zawinul is trying to find a girl singer "with a fantastic range, conception—and pretty, too" who once, years ago, worked with Cannonball's group at the old Club De Lisa in Chicago, and whose name is something like Liz Lang, or Lance.

Meanwhile, both Shorter and Zawinul have albums coming out in May—they should be available at this reading. Shorter's is on Blue Note, entitled "The Odyssey of Iska" (Iska, a word of Nigerian derivation, means "the wind that comes and

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Czechoslovakia: After a successful two-week stand in Munich, Germany, the big band of **Gustav Brom** began a five-week tour of the Soviet Union in late April. The band has played in Russia several times before. When **Maynard Ferguson** visited Czechoslovakia, he played on several occasions with the Brom band. A record was recently issued by the Gram-moclub here under the title of *Maynard and Gustav*. American drummer **Bill Moody**, with Brom's band for several years, is also on the LP . . . After two years of remodeling, the largest nightclub in Prague, the Reduta, finally reopened with a concert by a Czech all-star group. **Ivan Poledniak**, the jazz historian, was appointed manager of the club. The main room, with a capacity of about 200, is equipped with a first-rate sound system and air conditioning. Broadcasts and recording sessions are planned, and in the afternoons, the club will be the site of jazz education seminars with record recitals and commentary by jazz experts . . . A five-part TV show, *The History of Jazz in Czechoslovakia*, featured musical contributions by the big bands of **Karel Vlach** and **Gustav Brom**; the **Jazz Fiddlers**; the **Traditional Jazz Studio**; pianist **Jiri Verberger**; the combos of **Ludvik Svabensky** and **Jiri Stivin**, and singers **Eva Olmerova** and **Vlasta Pruchova** . . . Arranger-composer **Alex Friedl's** *Concerto for Clarinet*, with **Felix Slovacek** as soloist, was premiered by the Brom band at last year's 7th International Jazz Festival in Prague. After hearing a tape of the performance, **Don Ellis** commissioned a chart from Friedl and his new band. He also said the clarinetist's performance was "incredible" . . . **Jiri Stivin**, leader of his own trio and considered one of the best European saxophone and flute players (he won first prize as best soloist at the St. Sebastian festival) was offered a full tuition scholarship by the Berklee College of Music . . . It seems that the supply of first-class bassists in Czechoslovakia is inexhaustible. After losing the four best bassists in the country (**Miroslav Vitous**, **George Mraz**, **Jan Arnet** and **Milan Rezac**) to the U.S., the Czechs have come up with a new crop. **Jiri Pellant**, 20, is the best of these, playing with incredible style and technique with the **Jiri Stivin Trio**. The other fine bassists are **Vincent Kummer** (with the **Kamil Hala** big band), **Pavel Greifoner** (with the **Celulla Quintet**) and **Imre Mozi** (with **Gustav Brom**) . . . **Kamil Hala**, well-known composer-arranger, is the new leader of the Czech Radio Dance Orchestra, formerly conducted by **Karel Krautgartner**, who moved to Vienna and now directs the Austrian Radio Jazz Band. One of Hala's best scores is his *Three-Penny Opera Suite for Jazz Orchestra*.

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goes and leaves no trace"). On it, he used three drummers, guitarist **Gene Bertonecini**, bassists **Ron Carter** and **Cecil McBee**, **Barbara Burton** (who also plays a little on the *Weather Report* album) on percussion, and **Dave Friedman** playing vibes and marimba

"stacked together" as one keyboard instrument.

Zawinul's album, on Atlantic, has himself and **Herbie Hancock** on electric pianos, trumpeter **Woody Shaw**, saxophonist **Earl Turbinton** from New Orleans, **George Davis** on flute, and drummers **Joe Chambers**, **Jack De Johnette**, **Billy Hart**, and **David Lee**.

But from now on, **Shorter** adds, "when and if we do things under our own names, they will be done with more control than we had in the past. We will have more control as strong individual personalities over anything we do, not only albums, but everything in life." And **Zawinul** adds: "From now on, everything we do is going to be artistic. We have our own thing here, and that's when you find the truth in a musician."

Postscript

The music of **Weather Report** is music beyond category. All I can add to what has been said by the men who made it is that it seems to me music unlike any other I've heard, music that is very contemporary but also very warm, very human, and very beautiful. I don't want to discuss it in detail, but I would be amiss if I didn't mention that there is, on *Orange Lady*, a unison melody statement played by **Shorter** and **Vitous** in which the bassist bows in a manner quite beyond description. And that's just one of the many remarkable things **Weather Report** has to offer the listener. The forecast, if there is justice, must be clear skies and sunny days for these four creative men and their associates.



COLLEGE

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ing as a bloc (but not for themselves). It didn't work out too well. Not enough of the musicians heard enough of the other groups to make a well-considered opinion. This is not a reflection on the **Fredonia** band. It was very good but only two or three groups were in the audience to listen to the fine **Memphis Jazz Band "A"**, and the musical subtleties of the unusual band from **Southern Univ.** were not sufficiently appreciated. There is merit in using a "peer" value judgment but there will have to be additional safeguards built in before it is used again.

On the final evening program, a leaf was taken from the **ACJF** program with the clinicians performing with the school bands. **Al Beletto**, alto sax, and **Richard Payne**, bass, played with **Loyola Univ.** (New Orleans); **Mundell Lowe**, guitar, played with the **Memphis State** band; **Larry Ridley**, bass, played with the **Southern Univ.** band, and **Urbie Green** wound it up fronting 76 swinging trombones. On Saturday morning, **Charles Suber** chaired a general clinic on jazz education; **Mundell Lowe** did an arranging and film scoring clinic. **Larry Ridley** and **Bill Fowler** did a rhythm section clinic, and **Al Beletto** gave a reed clinic. All sessions were well attended and well received. The facilities of the Mobile festival are excellent, the programs are well run, the music is great, and the shrimp and oysters ain't bad either.

