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*Loose Wig* and *Lamplighter* are the standout big band sides. The former features a rich-toned sax section chopping away at a riff, answered by the unison purr of the trombones. Cat Anderson takes a few whacks in the first bridge, showing that he was a high note specialist of the first order before joining Ellington. *Lamplighter* has a small group feel and draws much of its strength from a light, supple rhythm section and some superb trombone and sax voicings near the end.

*Overtime* and *Bag* are more uptempo but far from the unrestrained bedlam which seems to have earned Hampton the indifference of some critics. *Bag* has Karl George in a straight-from-the-shoulder 16 bars of trumpet. Illinois Jacquet also has 16 bars; his only solo appearance in the LP. Arnett Cobb takes a fine chorus in *Overtime*, a relaxed but driving solo contrasting favorably to the big-toned, dirty, low-down growls he dishes up on *Flying Home*.

The previously unissued septet sides strongly suggest the Benny Goodman Sextet days, especially *Royal Family*, a 32-bar riff figure in the best Goodman tradition. Marshall Royal's clarinet has a roughhewn, rugged sound, suggesting Edmond Hall more than Goodman, but it works well. Irving Ashby's electric guitar is strongly reminiscent of many of Charlie Christian's tricks, such as descending runs in eighths or harmonic extensions on chords. He proves himself a fine musician, although a bit clumsy when compared to Christian. (Coincidentally, the date of this first septet session, March 2, 1942, was the day Christian died.)

The format of the two 1945 septet sides is about the same. *Doublin'* is nudged gently along by a shuffle rhythm and features some very graceful and swinging guitar by Billy Mackel. *Ribs* is in the same mold. Both exhibit Hamp in his best, most relaxed form. The sound is refreshing. As virtually the entire LP, it's all music and no fireworks. As for Hampton, his vibes architecture was and still is peerless.

—McDonough

### Ramsey Lewis

ANOTHER VOYAGE—Cadet LPS 827: *If You've Got It, Flaunt It; Wanderin' Rose; How Beautiful Is Spring; Do You Wanna; My Cherie Amour; Black and Bold; Opus No. 5; Uhuru; Cecile; If You've Got It, Flaunt It.*

Personnel: Lewis, piano, electric piano; Cleveland Eaton, bass; Phil Upchurch, guitar (tracks 2, 5, 6); Maurice White, drums, Kalimba.

Rating: ★★½

Here is another Ramsey Lewis LP in the pop-soul groove. Although his playing in recent years has held diminishing interest for the jazz listener, he has developed a considerable mass following, with which this session should go down well.

The tempos vary from the surging thump of *If You've Got It* to the moody ramblings of *Rose* or *Cecile*. All selections are pleasant enough with several (*Opus*, *Bold*, and *Rose*) offering a varied spectrum of rhythm and tone colors within the respective performances.

*Do What You Wanna* is played by Lewis on the electric piano, which here sounds remarkably like a guitar, in a

good hard-driving manner. The beat is rock-style, and the performance has a certain vitality, especially in Lewis' breaks.

The record opens and closes with *If You've Got It*, although the second version appears to be some sort of fragmented take. It has neither beginning nor end; just a fade-in, fade-out 2:18 of heavy, driving chords.

Enjoyable listening in the pop bag rather than jazz.

—McDonough

### Mike Mainieri

JOURNEY THRU AN ELECTRIC TUBE—Solid State 18049: *It's All Becoming Clear Now; The Wind; Connecticut Air; We'll Speak Above the Roar; The Bush; I'll Sing You Softly of My Life; Yes, I'm the One; Allow Your Mind to Wander.*

Personnel: Jeremy Steig, flute; Mainieri, vibraharp; Warren Bernhardt, piano, organ; Joe Beck, Sam Brown, guitars; Hal Gaylor, bass; Chuck Rainey, electric bass; Donald MacDonald, drums; Sally Waring, vocals.

Rating: ★★★½

Mainieri has evidently put a lot of thought into this album: his arrangements are clever, tastefully conceived, and fuse jazz and rock subtly; his songs (he had a hand in writing all except *Wind*) are harmonically and melodically attractive; his solos and accompaniments reflect an abundant musical skill, always applied with deft touch and admirable restraint.

When his various talents and those of the other musicians (especially that of Steig, who's a wonderful player) come together and approach their full potentials, as in *Roar*, the result is superb; but when all are under wraps, as on most of the other performances, the effect is pleasant but unmemorable. On the other hand, when little restraint is shown, as on the seemingly endless *Allow Your Mind*, the music is so internally disconnected that it is meaningless.

Somewhere there is a middle path for Mainieri.

—DeMicheal

### Jean-Luc Ponty

MORE THAN MEETS THE EAR—World Pacific Jazz 20134: *With a Little Help from my Friends; 3 + 2=1; California; Gimme Little Sign; Pata Pata; Pebble Beach Walk; Pacific Drive; Fort Ord Canon.*

Personnel: Carmell Jones, trumpet; Leo Wright, alto saxophone, flute; Ponty, violin; George Gruntz, piano, arranger; Guy Pedersen, bass; Daniel Humair, drums.

Rating: ★★★★★

ELECTRIC CONNECTION—World Pacific Jazz 20156: *Summit Soul; Hypomede del Sol; Scarborough Fair/Canticle; The Name of the Game; The Loner; Waltz for Clara; Forget; Eighty-One.*

Personnel: Paul Hubinon, Tony Rusch, Larry McGuire, William Peterson, trumpet; Thurman Green, Frank Strong, Mike Wimberly, trombone; Bud Shank, Tony Ortega, Richard Aplan, reeds; George Duke, piano; Wilbert Longmire, guitar; Bob West, bass; Paul Humphrey, drums; Gerald Wilson, arranger.

Rating: ★★★½

These are the first U.S. releases by the immensely gifted young French violinist.

The first album was recorded in Europe, the second in California, but the first has more musical sunshine. Perhaps this is because Ponty was stimulated by the presence of soloists of the caliber of American expatriates Jones and Wright and put at ease by his friends in the rhythm section; perhaps it is because the program is more varied and the small-band framework more relaxed—whatever the cause, I find *Ear* charming and *Electric* a bit monotonous, while hastening to add that it cannot be

faulted in terms of musicianship and integrity.

Ponty is brilliant on both albums. He is an instrumentalist of the first rank, equipped with virtuoso technique and gifted with a musical brain to match and control it. His ear is fabulous, and he appears to be a natural jazz player—he discovered and embraced the music when he was already an established classicist, and from all indications, it was a love match.

He plays his instrument amplified. His tone is somewhat dry and nasal, but pleasantly so, and fits his ideas and expression perfectly. (This unity of sound and content is the hallmark of all great jazzmen.) His stops—and the way he puts them to work—are masterly, and he gets a great variety of tonal effects from the violin. There are moments when his sound and phrasing evoke a saxophone, and his bowing is astonishingly clean and agile. To top it off, he has natural swing, and his phrasing is never stilted.

If you have not yet made Ponty's acquaintance (he can also be heard on *Violin Summit*, originally on MPS and now issued here on Prestige 7631, which received a ★★★★★ review from this writer and finds Ponty in the company of three formidable colleagues: the late Stuff Smith, Stephane Grappelli, and Svend Asmussen) you are in for a treat.

The *Electric* LP will appeal to fanciers of modality. The entire first side is in this contemporary mold, and there isn't much variety in tempo, either—excepting the accelerando segment of *Hypomode*, the most interesting of Ponty's three originals.

The second side has more variety, and a highlight is the beautifully scored and played elegiac ballad, *Forget*. Ron Carter's *Eighty-One* is a fine showcase for the variety of textures Ponty is able to obtain, and has a strong piano solo by Duke. The young pianist has a powerful, percussive touch and plays with such conviction that he can make rather commonplace ideas sound interesting. He also 'comps for Ponty with remarkable rhythmic and harmonic empathy.

There are other good things on the LP: Wilson's pretty voicings, of violin with flute especially; Longmire's fleet solo on *Soul* (previously recorded on the *Summit* LP mentioned above), and Ponty's moving solo on his own *Waltz*. *Name* has an alto solo with Varitone octave divider effects, probably by Shank, and a flute (Ortega) is heard on *Waltz*.

*Ear* is another story. The music has a gaiety and liveliness that seems lacking in the U.S. efforts. The presence of Jones and Wright inspires Ponty, and Gruntz' deft, clever charts provide good settings for the soloists.

It is good to encounter Carmell, who has been too seldom heard on records since his move to Europe some years ago. He does not solo on every track, but is well featured on *Help*, *California*, and *Canon*. On *Help*, especially, he is in brilliant form.

Wright, in Europe even longer than Jones, is also a pleasant acquaintance. *Gimme* is his track, and his vibrant, full-toned alto is as forthright and swinging as ever. His flute playing on *California* is very pretty.

Ponty is brilliant on *Pacific*, an interesting contrapuntal piece also featuring Gruntz. The pianist is at his best on *Canon*, where his solo is very intelligently constructed. He is somewhat lacking in swing, however.

The contemporary pop material is well handled. In fact, this group's approach should be a model for the idiom-mixing so fashionable these days. Here, the freedom of jazz is retained within the rhythmic framework of rock/soul, and the little touches of humor are neither arch nor heavy-handed.

Humair's superb drumming should not be overlooked, and it is interesting to note that Ponty's attack on *Help* is not unlike that of Stuff Smith.

One hopes that Ponty will firmly establish himself on the U.S. jazz scene. He has much to offer. —Morgenstern

### Buddy Rich

**BUDDY AND SOUL**—World Pacific Jazz ST 20158: *Soul Lady*; *Love and Peace*; *Hello I Love You*; *Greensleeves*; *Soul Kitchen*; *Comin' Home Baby*; *The Meaning of the Blues*; *Ruth*; *St. Petersburg Race*; *Wonderbag*.

Personnel: Mike Price, Kenneth Faulk, Oliver E. Mitchell, Robert Yance, Salvador Marquez, trumpets; Vince Diaz, Rick Stepton, Donald Switzer, trombones; Joe Romano, Richie Cole, Pat LaBarbera, Donald Englert, Joseph Calo, reeds; David Dana, guitar; Robert Magnusson, bass; David Lahm, piano; Rich, drums.

Rating: ★★ ★

The fifth LP by the Buddy Rich band was recorded before a crowd at the Whiskey A Go-Go and has a lot of brass, lots of beat, but unfortunately less overall excitement than the first four.

You can't write off the record as a failure, of course, not when it contains the number of first-class soloists that it does and the excellent drum work by Rich; but this time out, the leader elected to record for the most part a group of big band rock arrangements. The result has been to substitute a stilted, squarish (rhythmically speaking, not culturally) rock beat complete with the deep twang of the electric bass pumping out the same monotonous figure chorus after chorus for the swift, swinging propulsive drive that made his earlier LPs count among the very best big band experiences of the decade.

Charts such as *Readymix*, *Critic's Choice*, *Sister Sadie* (ST 20113); *Group Shot*, *Rotten Kid*, *Machine* (ST 20126); *Love for Sale*, and *Big Swing Face* (ST 20117) captured huge audiences for the band and showcased Rich at his ultimate. But that hard-driving, swinging sound is not to be heard here. What we do hear is probably the most sophisticated and musically literate refinement of rock to come along so far, but still rock.

Altoist Richie Cole is the dominant soloist, heard on half the tracks. One is struck by the primitive rhythmic character of his solos and how they resemble the hard, jerky slap tongue style of Coleman Hawkins on some early Fletcher Henderson sides like *Dicty Blues* or *Teapot Dome*. His sound is hard and cold and his harmonies are free-wheeling.

Although this ranks as probably Rich's most commercial reach for the young rock audience, one can't deny that the band plays with incisiveness and a rousing spirit. It's still an exciting group, but hopefully its book won't get bogged down in this groove. —McDonough



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