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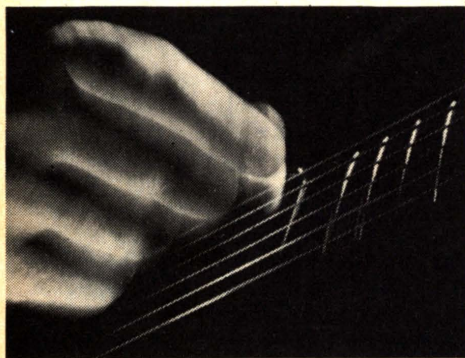
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in the fashioning of an individual aesthetic that uses the influences as a point of departure.

I do not find that Lloyd has learned a great deal from Coltrane. He has not learned—if this recording is a fair and just representation of the realization of his aesthetic (and since it has been released, presumably with his blessing, I believe one is entitled to make such an assumption)—how to build a solo that makes a real, coherent statement, that reveals a process of organic growth and unity from beginning to end; a solo that does not merely skitter, however attractively, across the music's surfaces. And the latter is pretty much what we get throughout this album, since it's very much Lloyd's show all the way, with only occasional bows in the direction of his co-workers.

The leader could learn a great deal from Jarrett, for example; the pianist's solos do possess that unity and flow. Would that there were more of his work on display here—the rating, for one thing, would have been conspicuously higher. As it is, most of the present rating is due to the attractive thematic materials and the splendid empathetic rapport the group develops. They can really play together—responding, anticipating, creating a beautiful fusion of minds and hearts.

But it's Lloyd they're responding to, and as he goes so goes the album. It's not that he plays badly—he doesn't—but, rather, that his eloquence is deceptive. The sheer loveliness and easy gracefulness of his oratorical style tend to spellblind one to the emptiness, the lack of message, of truly meaningful content of his solos. Clothing does not make the man, after all.

—Welding

### Wes Montgomery

DOWN HERE ON THE GROUND—A&M 3006: *Wind Song; Georgia On My Mind; The Other Man's Grass Is Always Greener; Down Here on the Ground; Up and At It; Goin' On to Detroit; I Say a Little Prayer For You; When I Look in Your Eyes; Know It All; The Fox.*

Personnel: Montgomery, guitar; Hubert Laws, George Marge, Romeo Penque, flutes, oboe; Gene Orloff, Raoul Poliakin, violins; Emanuel Vardi, viola; George Ricci, cello; Herbie Hancock, piano; Mike Mainieri, vibes; Ron Carter, bass; Grady Tate, drums; Ray Barretto, Bobby Rosen-garden, percussion.

Rating: ★★★★★

Like all jazzmen who've made it big, Wes Montgomery has a sound—hear that good, ye squealers and brayers—a lovely sound. Like all jazzmen who've made it big, he is a superb melodist—hear that, ye runners of tuneless runs—a singer. And like all jazzmen who've made it big, he swings—hear that, ye twisters of the time.

And not least, of course, Wes Montgomery is a musical personality; his own man.

You can't manufacture that, but you sure can market it, and one of jazz' most harmful myths is that if you do market it, and it sells, some mysterious essential change takes place; art is tainted by success.

Wes Montgomery is very successful these days, yet he is not one iota less the artist he was when only his fellow musicians and a few of the initiated knew that he was great. If anything, he is even bet-

ter, for it is a myth that the artist must suffer to create. Do you do your thing best when you are suffering? Is an artist not a human being?

This splendid album is, I guess, what the purists would call "commercial." That means, in the present case, that the selection of tunes is varied and tasteful, that the tracks are not overly long, that arrangements have been thoughtfully crafted, that excellent musicians have been provided to interpret them and back the featured artist, that the music has been carefully recorded and mastered, and that the packaging is handsome. (Take the opposite of almost all these ingredients and you'll have a pretty good description of what some people consider honest, untainted "art.")

At the risk of being labeled a middle-brow philistine, I'll take the commercial concept. You see, I believe in communication.

And so, apparently, does Wes Montgomery. His music, aside from the virtues already cited, has the additional positive qualities of logic, clarity, form and feeling—feeling that communicates directly, without the ambiguity that is so much in fashion everywhere today, and which so often simply hides inability to feel and inability to think.

But I don't want to make of this album a brief of beliefs it happens to confirm while losing sight of the subject itself. It is a most pleasant subject. Though the selections aren't long, almost every moment is the soloist's. The arrangements—all but two by Don Sebesky, and a third probably a "head"—are there to enhance his work, and almost always do.

The strings, in number and instrumentation, equal the classic string quartet, and no better sound for strings has yet been devised for intimate contexts. (That sound is best represented on *Eyes*, but is always the antithesis of that cloying schmaltz that marks commercial string writing at its most common and worst.)

Flutes and oboe are used with tasteful discretion. The flute trio on the bossa nova *Know It All* is delightful, and the solo oboe on Lalo Schiffrin's *The Fox* is superbly played (by Penque or Marge?). Mainieri's vibes add coloristic touches—only the chromatics on *Fox* are a bit trite, but that's not his doing.

As for the rhythm section—just read the names, please. Hancock, though he doesn't solo, adds many fine touches. On *Georgia, Ground*, and *Know*, he's particularly apt. Carter is merely one of the best, and his sound records wonderfully well. Tate is felt rather than heard, which is just right under the circumstances. When more presence is called for, as on the romping *Greener*, he's in there.

My own favorites (no track is less than very good) are *Greener*, a good tune; Wes' own two blues, the slow *At It* and the medium *Detroit*; *Georgia*, hauntingly nostalgic; *When I Look*, a tranquil ballad, and the title tune, a fine melody by Schiffrin, which I'd like to hear Carmen McRae sing—provided the lyrics are good, too.

Though this is not a blowing session, there is plenty of blowing. Wes flies on

Greener, and stretches out on *At It*, hypnotically repeating a phrase, kneading it into you, and later echoing his own octave riffs on single string (not fake echo; the real thing). His brief unaccompanied passages on *Look* sound as full as a harp, his theme statement of *Georgia* is glowingly golden, and his two opening notes on the blowing section of *Detroit* startlingly trumpet-like.

But these are sketchy details. Let your ears fill in the gaps, and be glad that Wes Montgomery has made it big—good and big. To give due credit, the album was produced by Creed Taylor. As they say in the trade, it's a superior package.

—Morgenstern

## Bill Plummer

THE COSMIC BROTHERHOOD—Impulse 9164: *Journey to the East*; *Pars Fortuna*; *The Look of Love*; *Song Plum*; *Arc 294°*; *Lady Friend*; *Antares*.

Personnel: Tom Scott, reeds; Lynn Blessing, vibes, bells; Mike Lang, piano, harpsichord; Ron Anthony, Dennis Budimir, guitars; Plummer, Hersch Hamel, Ray Neapolitan, sitars; Jan Steward, sarod; Hamel, Steward, tambouras; Plummer, string bass; Carol Kaye, electric bass; Maurice Miller, Bill Goodwin, drums; Milt Holland, tabla; Mike Craden, percussion.

Rating: ★★½

The more you listen to this ambitious project, the more you'll come to accept the group's name as definitive. Theirs is a rhythmically vital ecumenicism that embraces exotica from the East, funk from the West, and rock from the fountain of youth, laced with a contemporary brand of jazz from today's swingers, unafraid to tap any source for inspiration.

Two of the more adventurous amalgams—poetry reading over raga-time (*Journey to the East*) and Eastern free-form (*Antares*)—don't quite come off, but the rest of the album is a ball. Plummer has tossed a winning combination of instruments and a compatible ensemble of instrumentalists into a highly spiced salad.

The best moments come when the foreign and domestic elements merge. The resulting jam session moves with the conviction of an East-West scrimmage. *Arc 294°* and the non-poetic portion of *Journey to the East* are the finest examples—especially the saxophone and flute work of the amazing Tom Scott and the vibes statements of Lynn Blessing, wailing over a twangy cushion of three sitars and related Indian percussion.

*294°* has no overt pulse, but the overall rhythm—like the dynamics—rises and falls in intensity. *Pars Fortuna*, a way-up jazz waltz, provides an excellent vehicle for Scott, plus an all-too-brief piano solo by Mike Lang.

In *Look of Love*, the bent tones of the sitars, the drone of the tamboura, and the melodic lead of the harpsichord over rock drumming imbue this harmless ditty with an international flavor that Burt Bacharach never thought of. *Song Plum* threatens to go off in many harmonic directions at once. It boasts an unusual, expansive, modal melody over a clashing background that finds bossa nova set against a raga in 5/4. The delightful, tingly sound of vibes, flute (harpsichord?) and percussion that opens *Lady Friend* conjures up Christmas in New Delhi.

On *Antares*, Plummer takes a fine

plucked solo and then, via overdubbing, solos arco in a very unmusical search for effects, ending up sounding like a hinge in desperate need of oiling. —Siders

## Johnny Smith

KALEIDOSCOPE—Verve 8737: *Walk*; *Don't Run*; *Old Folks*; *Days of Wine and Roses*; *The Girl with the Flaxen Hair*; *My Foolish Heart*; *By Myself*; *Sweet Lorraine*; *Choro da Saudade*; *Dreamsville*.

Personnel: Hank Jones, piano; Smith, guitar; George Duvivier, bass; Don Lamond, drums.

Rating: ★★½

The very profusion of guitarists today makes it the more imperative that geniuses such as Tal Farlow, George Van Eps, and Johnny Smith be kept in the forefront as

much as possible. We always need the masters, and this album—though it has flaws—demonstrates why Smith is among that elite.

Smith's uncanny skill at chordal voicing and his tasteful weaving of single line improvisation are alternated throughout. When both are deployed in an unfettered atmosphere of rubato, Smith is untouchable. Thus his unaccompanied portrait of the lady with the *Flaxen Hair* is pure, shimmering poetry. So is the first chorus of *I'm Old Fashioned* (also unaccompanied), with its gossamer passing tones.

Other highlights occur on *Old Folks*: the occasional segue into the land of funk; the fine bowing of Duvivier; the unex-

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