

forced spontaneity (as on *Kind of Blue*), and the results have been impressionistic and rather tentative. In person the group is something else altogether—an explosive band that tears into the music rather than feeling their way through it.

I prefer the in-person Miles, and I think there is objective reason for that preference. Putting it simply, the frequency of significant musical events on this album and its stylistic predecessors (*Sorcerer*, *Nefertiti*, and *Filles de Kilimanjaro*) is rather low. When something does happen it is almost always something good, but more good things happen during most in-person tunes by the quintet than on this whole album.

The new musical color this time is an intriguing rhythm section combination of electric piano and organ, but it seems as if half the album is taken up while this color is established and adjusted.

*Shh/Peaceful*, which appears to have been spliced together from several takes, is the less successful performance. Miles' solo is a lukewarm elaboration of one of his favorite phrases, and there is a lengthy guitar solo which never quite emerges from the rhythm section's noodling.

Wayne Shorter's turn is brief but beautiful (the personnel listing has him on tenor, but he plays soprano saxophone throughout). He has a remarkable technical command of the instrument (this recording was reportedly the first time he ever played the soprano), and he reveals a touching, blue lyricism that rarely appears in his tenor playing.

The second side begins with Zawinul's *In a Silent Way* (all the other lines are by Miles), and its hymn-like quality fits the electric piano-organ-guitar-bowed bass ensemble quite well. This segues into *It's About That Time*, which finds Davis and Shorter in very good form over a striding rock rhythm.

If the performers of this music were merely good musicians the results would probably put anyone to sleep, but the skill and subtlety of the accompanists and the genius of Davis and Shorter make this album worth hearing. —Kart

### The Dells

**THE DELLS' GREATEST HITS**—Cadet LPS-824: *Stay in My Corner*; *Always Together*; *There Is*; *Love Is So Simple*; *Please Don't Change Me Now*; *Wear It On Our Face*; *Make Sure*; *O-O, I Love You*; *Does Anybody Know I'm Here*; *Hallways of My Mind*; *The Change We Go Thru*; *I Can't Do Enough*.

Personnel: Charles Barksdale, Verne Allison, Michael McGill, Johnny Carter, Marvin Junior, vocals; orchestra conducted by Charles Stepney.

Rating: ★★½

The ever-popular Dells are among today's truly venerable r&b vocal groups. Some of their early work, for example *Oh What A Night*, (currently in a new hit version) can be heard on "golden oldies" type reissue albums. Despite their present and past popularity, however, their vocal work, compositions and arrangements, though competent and sometimes good, are not particularly distinctive or original.

Unlike Smokey Robinson and the Miracles, the Four Tops, and the Impressions, the Dells do not have a really outstanding lead vocalist, and the lead work is shared by several men. The variety of vocal styles

heard on this LP, ranging from raw and powerful (usually pretty good but sometimes exaggeratedly husky) to falsetto is, in fact, one of its virtues.

The Dells are now a modern r&b group, but their work here indicates the roots they have in the past. Their *Love Is So Simple* is reminiscent of 1950s r&b and *O-O I Love You*, which includes some deep-voiced talking parts, is a performance influenced by the Ink Spots.

The best selection is *The Change We Go Thru*, a good piece performed in a really impassioned manner. There are some other interesting compositions, but on none of them do the Dells convey similar emotional intensity. Generally, their work is not uninspired but not especially moving either. At times, as on *Love Is So Simple* and *Please Don't Change Me Now*, it is sloppily, even ludicrously sentimental.

The instrumental backgrounds are too often schmaltzy.

This is a somewhat better and more interesting than average r&b album. —Pekar

### Earl Hines

**FATHA BLOWS BEST**—Decca DL 75048: *The One I Love*; *I Love My Baby*; *Nobody Knows*; *Saturday*; *You're Mine, You*; *Thinking of You*; *For Me and My Gal*; *Shine On Harvest Moon*; *Back in Your Own Back Yard*; *Everything Depends on You*; *Rhythm Sundae*.

Personnel: Buck Clayton, trumpet; Budd Johnson, soprano and tenor saxophone; Hines, piano, vocal (track 9); Bill Pemberton, bass, electric bass; Oliver Jackson, drums. Tracks 4 and 10 by Hines and rhythm only.

Rating: ★★★★★

This relaxed, nostalgic, conversational music is of a sort too seldom heard (and almost never recorded) today. The tempos are moderate (but never slack), the approach melodic, the mood mellow. Yet this is vital and vibrant music.

It could have been made only by seasoned musicians, at ease with each other and themselves, their horns, and their music. A brand of jazz sometimes called mainstream, it will always be current.

The material is interesting, consisting in the main of quite ancient (but unhackneyed) tunes Hines remembered from the '20s and before, plus a '30s standard (*You're Mine, You*) and a pair of Hines pieces from that same decade (last two tracks).

This was probably the last record date by Hines' excellent regular group, which broke up recently, with Clayton as a welcome guest. That this sterling trumpeter is so seldom recorded these days is not less shameful because he shares this fate with such contemporaries as Roy Eldridge. He and Johnson—one of the unsung giants of the tenor, who during this decade has also become a master of the soprano—go together hand in glove.

Hines, who can be an eccentric accompanist, backs the horns masterfully and is in sparkling solo form. He radiates confident authority, even when in a reflective mood, and his touch and tone are a joy.

The three soloists are so consistent that a track-by-track resume would be redundant. Of particular merit, however, are Johnson's soprano on *Baby* and *Harvest Moon* (the latter the longest and best track) and his Pres-inspired tenor on *Thinking*, which has superb trumpet as well; the lyrical Clayton on *Nobody* and

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his perfect obbligato to Hines' jaunty vocal on *Back Yard*, and the piano work on *Harvest and Love*. Jackson and Pemberton give ideal support throughout, and briefly step front and center on *Thinking*. The drummer's brush work is outstanding, and Pemberton gets an unusually pleasing sound from his Ampeg bass—not at all dry.

This tasty album is a sleeper and Decca has kept it a well-guarded secret. But it can—and should—be had. —*Morgenstern*

### Moondog

MOONDOG—Columbia MS 7335; *Theme: Stamping Ground; Symphonique #3 (Ode to Venus); Symphonique #6 (Good for Goodie); Minisym #1; Lament I (Bird's Lament); Witch of Endor; Symphonique #1.*

Personnel: Joe Wilder, Teddy Weiss, Mel Broiles, Alan Dean, Danny Repole, trumpets; Paul Faulise, Tony Studd, Charles Small, Buddy Morrow, trombones; James Buffington, Richard Berg, Ray Alonge, Brooks Tillotson, French horns; Don Butterfield, Bill Stanley, Bill Elton, John Swallow, Phil Giardina, tubas; Harold Bennett, Andrew Lolya, Harold Jones, Hubert Laws, flutes; Henry Shuman, Irving Horowitz, English horns; George Silfies, Phil Bodner, Ernie Bright, Jack Knitzer, Don Macourt, Ryohei Nakagawa, George Berg, Wally Kane, Joyce Kelly, reeds; George Duvivier, Ron Carter, Alfred Brown, Louis Hardin (Moondog), bass; Jack Jennings, Dave Carey, Elayne Jones, Bob Rosengarden, percussion; Paul Gershan, Aaron Rosand, Emanuel Vardi, David Schwartz, Eugene Becker, Raoul Poliakin, George Ricci, Joe Tekula, Charles McCracken, strings.

Rating: ★★☆☆

This music is essentially classical in conception and purpose, but it is clear that the composer-conductor has absorbed a strong feeling for the contemporary. Although he maintains his heart is not in jazz, it has seeped into his consciousness and enhances much of this LP. With each hearing it becomes a richer pleasure.

Moondog is the pseudonym of Louis Hardin, 53, who is blind, writes all his music in braille, and enjoyed some popularity in jazz circles during the early '50s.

Initially, *Symphonique #6* makes the strongest impression. In a sense, it is nothing more than a simple 8-bar figure raised to the 17th power, on what is called a ground. The theme is introduced by the bass, then is picked up by the clarinet (it was conceived in 1955 as a dedication to Benny Goodman), then a duo of violas, then the bassoon and so on until it builds to a 17-part counterpoint. The effect is stunning and must be heard.

*Lament I*, which honors Charlie Parker, is not an attempt to orchestrate the swirls and whiplashes of Bird's style. It's a simple four-bar figure which becomes a tapestry for a free melodic line played by alto and baritone saxophones. Hardin and Bird knew each other, and even talked once about doing an album together. It's too bad it never materialized. His salute to Parker haunts the mind.

The opening track, *Theme*, is another ground, this time using a basic 16-bar theme in 5/4 time. It has a sweeping, almost pastoral quality to it, although unfortunately it fails to develop to a logical conclusion.

*Minisym* is a short work in three parts, alternating between the snappy and the lyrical in 4/4 time. The rhythms are infectious, with an especially appropriate interlude using a trio of bassoons.

Moondog adheres to the disciplines of traditional tonality throughout, but yet

achieves an adventurous musical experience that is very much of today—perhaps because his tools are the basic ones, producing a sound for all seasons. There is much here that jazz lovers, especially those bending toward the mainstream, should find stimulating, even though this is not a jazz or "swing" package. Recommended.

—*McDonough*

### Big Joe Williams

HAND ME DOWN MY OLD WALKING STICK—World Pacific 21897; *Oh Baby; Hand Me Down My Old Walking Stick; Shady Grove; Mama Don't Like Me Runnin' Round; Sittin' N' Thinkin'; Scardie Mama; Blues Round the World; Everybody's Gonna Miss Me When I'm Gone; Pearly Mae; Baby Keeps On Breakin' 'Em Down; Church Bells Ring; Take It All.*

Personnel: Williams, nine string guitar, vocals; unidentified drums. (tracks 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12); probably unidentified electric bass, track 7.

Rating: ★★★★★

This is Big Joe's first new LP in several long years, offering new and unfamiliar older material even more eclectic in inspiration than usual from this resourceful



performer (*Oh Baby* is a melange of familiar lines, and for all you or I know, this version is the source of them all). If it is not Big Joe's best music, it is nonetheless good to hear, and after all it is a new LP and the others are largely unavailable.

Big Joe cut it in three hours, but it must have taken at least a week of full-time work to dub in that totally useless drummer who muddies up the works in seven of the songs. Whoever he is, he attempts to be unobtrusive, probably because he realized that the hare-brained producer's scheme of presenting Big Joe as a "modernist" is a shoddy way to acquire a few pounds. There is some cute jive with a double-time bit in *World* and with the sock cymbal in *Scardie*, but otherwise he stays as modest as possible—even so, the purists who constitute most of the record's potential audience are likely to be put off. The bass line in *World* is so dead and motionless that it is surely an interloper's work, too. This is Big Joe's record, though, and the music is extremely valuable.

This is a music of constant rhythmic change, color and detail variation, fairly extreme yet controlled drama, erratic shifts of tone and character—in short, almost a surrealist-expressionist music, saved only by Big Joe's humanism and the primacy of the blues impulse. True, there is *Church*, a strong kind of story-song, which opens with single note lines, spreads into 3rd, 6th, etc. chords in the second chorus—Big Joe's favorite harmonic medium, a climactic method of his thinking—then into suddenly broken phrases which final-

ize the sense of tragedy and loss so that when the first chorus is repeated it gains profound power. This kind of structural flow is uncharacteristic. By contrast, *Sittin'*, the best song here, offers all of Big Joe's techniques, especially the dramatic contrasts of a cappella vocal or bass string lines against full orchestral-sounding lines, broken passages of rhythmically free yet highly emotional materials placed in a most original construction.

Spontaneity is the motivating element in Big Joe's music. Even more than most of today's allegedly free jazzmen, Big Joe's music has no safeguards: the traditional two or four-measure blues units are ignored except when he deliberately rushes tempo, and although each chorus does manage to at least refer to the blues changes, there is no supporting continuity underlying the foreground vocal-guitar motion of each song.

This is an immensely sophisticated art beside which the music of the leading contemporary blues performers seems crude and vulgar. Big Joe's emotional contemporaries are not modern blues or r&b men, but Jackie McLean, Ornette Coleman, Roscoe Mitchell: free and open musicians who express powerful thoughts through methods equally unbound by other than wholly emotional or artistic considerations.

Few artists in blues or jazz have ever been such dramatic performers. As a singer and guitarist, Big Joe is a complete orchestra, as flexible in his own forceful, idiomatic way as Ellington's, at least when he chooses to be so. Despite the reservations noted above, no track among these 12 is less than excellent. This LP is highly recommended as a sample of a powerful individualist's art, slightly lighter in tone than his earlier best works, and ever faithful to his most musical self. —*Litweiler*

### The World's Greatest Jazzband

THE WORLD'S GREATEST JAZZBAND OF YANK LAWSON AND BOB HAGGART—Project 3 PR/5033SD; *Sunny; Panama; Baby; Won't You Please Come Home; Up, Up and Away; Ode to Billy Joe; Honky Tonk Train; A Taste of Honey; Limehouse Blues; Big Noise from Winnetka; This Is All I Ask; Mrs. Robinson; Bugle Call Rag.*

Personnel: Lawson, Billy Butterfield, trumpets; Carl Fontana, Lou McGarity, trombones; Bob Wilber, clarinet, soprano saxophone; Bud Freeman, tenor saxophone; Ralph Sutton, piano, Haggart, bass; Morey Feld, drums.

Rating: ★★★★★

EXTRA!—Project 3 PR/5039SD: *What the World Needs Now; Windmills of Your Mind; South Rampart Street Parade; Do You Know the Way to San Jose?; Wichita Lineman; Wolverine Blues; I'm Prayin' Humble; 59th Street Bridge Song; It Must Be Him; Alfie; Savoy Blues; Love Is Blue.*

Personnel as above, but Butterfield doubles flugelhorn and Gus Johnson replaces Feld.

Rating: ★★★★★ 1/2

Forget the hyperbolic name—the musicians didn't choose it. But it's a good promotional stunt, and effective and intelligent promotion of jazz is such a rarity these days that we can't complain.

Though the second album is better than the first, neither does justice to the band's in-person capabilities. Perhaps it should record live, or maybe additions to the repertoire were recorded a bit too soon.

But even at less than its absolute best, the WGJ is well worth attention. This is an unusual group in many ways: size, instrumentation, repertoire, personnel. Is it a small big band or a big small band?