

Record Reviews

Records are reviewed by Chris Albertson, Don DeMicheal, Gilbert M. Erskine, Ira Gitler, Alan Heineman, Wayne Jones, Lawrence Kart, John Litweiler, John McDonough, Dan Morgenstern, Irvin Moskowitz, Don Nelsen, Harvey Pekar, Harvey Siders, Carol Sloane, and Pete Welding.

Reviews are signed by the writers.

Ratings are: ★★★★★ excellent, ★★★★ very good, ★★★ good, ★★ fair, ★ poor.

When two catalog numbers are listed, the first is mono, and the second is stereo.

Bobby Bryant

THE JAZZ EXCURSION INTO HAIR—World Pacific Jazz ST-20159: *Be-In (Hare Krishna)*; *I Got Life*; *Let the Sunshine In*; *Hair*; *Good Morning Starshine*; *Aquarius*; *Where Do I Go? Colored Spade*.

Personnel: Bryant, trumpet, flugelhorn; Buddy Childers, Paul Hubinon, Reunald Jones, Freddy Hill, Bill Peterson, trumpets; Bob Brookmeyer, Charles Loper, trombones; Mike Wimberly, bass trombone; Bud Shank, flute, Ernie Watts, tenor saxophone; Joe Sample, piano; Freddie Robinson, guitar, Wilton Felder, bass; Paul Humphrey, drums.

Rating: ★★

The musical *Hair* contains some good compositions, but the treatment of them here is unimpressive. Shorty Rogers, who wrote the arrangements for the album, did some fine writing for the Woody Herman and Stan Kenton big bands and for his own groups (among his sidemen were such praiseworthy performers as Art Pepper and Hampton Hawes) back in the '50s. The creatively stultifying environment of the Los Angeles area, where he has been based for so long, eventually affected him, however, and he started turning out trivial music.

His arranging here is technically competent but lacks the individuality of his earlier work. In fact, it has an anonymous quality. Influenced by modern r&b, he seems interested mainly in having the band play forcefully; e.g., there is a lot of loud brass playing.

Bryant is the featured soloist. He has good technique, fine range, plays with considerable power, and therefore is probably a valuable man to have in a studio band. However, his solo work is very derivative. He seems content to play solos loaded with stock ideas which listeners not too familiar with good modern jazz may think are very hip. His playing is also raucously tasteless at times.

There are solos by other members of the band too, but none of them particularly impressive.

Some pop and pop-jazz fans might like this album but I would not recommend it to jazz fans who value imaginativeness in music. —Pekar

Gary Burton

THROB—Atlantic SD 1531: *Henniger Flats*; *Turn of the Century*; *Chickens*; *Arise*; *Her Eyes*; *Prime Time*; *Throb*; *Doin' the Pig*; *Triple Portrait*; *Some Echoes*.

Personnel: Richard Greene, violin; Burton, vibraphone, electric piano; Jerry Hahn, guitar; Steve Swallow, electric bass; Bill Goodwin, drums.

Rating: ★★½

A pianist friend who is a skilled performer of both jazz and ragtime has an interesting theory about the two musics. Many jazz historians seem to regard ragtime as merely a tributary to the jazz mainstream which dried up soon after its contribution had been made, but he feels that ragtime was a largely separate entity

which has continued to influence popular music to this day.

I think anyone who listens to Burton's performances of Mike Gibbs' *Turn of the Century* and *Throb* or Steve Swallow's *Chickens*, *Arise*, *Her Eyes*, and *Doin' the Pig* alongside, for example, Willie The Lion Smith's *Passionette*, *Rippling Waters*, and *Fading Star* (all on a Mainstream LP) will hear the kinship. The qualities of ragtime—melodious charm, formal elegance, decorative improvisation, and frequently programmatic or impressionistic aims—are quite prominent throughout the Burton set.

Turn is a charming genre piece that conveys the gentle complacency of a 1900 small-town musicale, disturbs it momentarily with a more assertive bridge (the troubles to come?), and returns to the original mood. *Throb* is a similarly effective piece of impressionism, as is Swallow's *Arise*. The other Swallow pieces have a country hoedown flavor, and *Chickens* contains a delightful solo by the composer (sort of a *Foggy Mountain Breakdown* for electric bass).

Guitarist Hahn, who has since left the group, and violinist Greene, who began his career with Bill Monroe and His Bluegrass Boys, are quite effective in context, and I think Burton might well add Greene or a similar violinist as a permanent member.

About the group as a whole I have two reservations. First, there are Burton's solos. As implied above, this music requires little more than spirited, appropriate decoration from the soloists—a task which Hahn, Greene, and Swallow fulfill. But Burton, technically skilled as he is, seems to me a cool, indifferent improviser. The only emotion I get from his playing here is geniality, and too often even this is gone, leaving only "mallet wizardry".

My other reservation is about the group's conception. I suppose Burton doesn't claim comparison with jazz' heavyweights, but his popularity invites it, and by those standards his music is light entertainment.

Burton's fans can be assured that this album is as good or better than most of his previous sets, and curmudgeons like myself can admire its pleasant skill or press on to more urgent musical matters. —Kart

Jaki Byard

THE JAKI BYARD EXPERIENCE—Prestige PR 7615: *Parisian Thoroughfare*; *Hazy Eve*; *Shine On Me*; *Evidence*; *Memories of You*; *Teach Me Tonight*.

Personnel: Roland Kirk, clarinet, tenor saxophone; manzello, whistle, kirkbamb; Byard, piano; Richard Davis, bass; Alan Dawson, drums. Track 5: Kirk and Byard only; track 3: Byard and Davis only.

Rating: ★★★★★

The Byard-Kirk combination, a natural, has been heard before, on Roland's *Rip*,

Rig and Panic (one of his best) and *Here Comes The Whistlerman*. Both men are highly caloric musical personalities, both are eclectics in the best sense, at home with all the accents of the jazz language, and both have humor.

The result is mutual inspiration, and when the backfield is as potent and compatible a team as Davis and Dawson, sparks are bound to fly.

And they do. *Parisian* is a 10-minute tone-poem which for sheer energy and excitement leaves most psychedelics at the starting gate. Kirk's tenor solo is one of the best he's put on wax, and Byard's spot is no anticlimax. The finale should blow even the most blasé mind, as Kirk unleashes his entire arsenal. The rhythm section sustains the hair-raising tempo from start to finish.

Evidence is another lusty, surging ride, with Byard at his most extroverted while Kirk (on tenor all the way) digs into Monk's entrails. Don't miss Dawson in the last chorus—he's like a third melodic voice, but the beat stays there.

Eubie Blake's beautiful *Memories* is presented in an unusual tenor-piano duet. Kirk tips his cap to Don Byas, and his internal swing more than makes up for the missing rhythm section. Byard's solo opens in his best Tatum manner, becomes all Jaki, and evokes Tatum once again—and that's somebody to evoke. On *Teach Me*, which makes reference to the then ongoing New York City teachers' strike, Byard affectionately salutes another giant, Erroll Garner, who made this tune his own.

In contrast, *Hazy Eve*, a piano-bass track, is gently romantic and reflective. Byard's full-bodied sound is complemented by Davis' rich, dark tone. *Shine on Me* features Kirk on clarinet as well as tenor, and gets a Gospel groove. The clarinet is redolent of New Orleans, and Byard also goes way back home.

A first-rate session, recommended to all who like their music warm and from the inside. —Morgenstern

Miles Davis

IN A SILENT WAY—Columbia CS 9875: *Shhh/Peaceful*; *In a Silent Way/It's About That Time*.

Personnel: Davis, trumpet; Wayne Shorter, soprano saxophone; John McLaughlin, guitar; Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea, electric piano; Joe Zawinul, electric piano, organ; Dave Holland, bass; Tony Williams, drums.

Rating: ★★★★★½

With the exception of *Miles Smiles* and *Miles in the Sky*, recent years have seen Miles Davis playing one kind of music on record and another kind in person. The majority of his recordings have been concerned with musical color and en-