

logic, clarity, restraint, and invention. His carefully considered phrases call to mind a sort of avant-garde Bill Evans, free of cliché, and quite original in conception. No less noteworthy are his compositions that, despite the relatively short running time of the CD, manage to pack quite a number of striking ideas into the ten titles, of which no two were alike. "Jitters" casts the piano and guitar in a glittering counterpoint, almost like a sequencer pattern, that leads to bright and inventive ensemble play. "Therapy" is a beautiful, moody piece that echoes compositional aspects of Noble's mentor, John Taylor, with its arpeggiated complex chords. "Enchante" is an up-tempo jaunt that threads between Swing and Samba. Along the way, Noble manages to throw some rhythmically mutated montuno licks into his solo and goes on to generate some real improvisational heat. "Bunker" pits Gress' loping bass against angular lines in the guitar and piano giving way to some oddly funky interplay among the ensemble. "Butterflies," a duet for Robeson and Noble, has the guitar and piano weaving dissonant angularities around and through each other. The title track begins with a strange rubato unison line over various pedals, oddly harmonized, that suggests a bluesy ballad viewed through a fun house mirror.

"Romance Among the Fishes" is an excellent album that held up very well with repeated listenings and should serve to raise international awareness of Noble's excellent playing and writing. In this day and age of Jazz retreats, it's refreshing to encounter a genuinely original voice.

David Kane

BEN WINKELMAN, STOMPS PIECES & VARIATIONS, JAZZHEAD 57.

Trio Piece in Seconds and Thirds / Bananeiro / Maxine's Stomp / Scumbag Blues / I Sold You and You Sold Me / No Tengo Un Puto Duro / The Tomasa Variations / Pearls Before Swine / The Game with Mirrors / Study in Seconds and Thirds / The Deadly Vice of Nostalgia / Spring / Stand a Little Taller at Yom Kippur / Five Note Rag. 66:39.

Winkelman, p; Rodrigo Aravena, b; Danny Fischer, d. Melbourne, Australia, Apr. 1-2, 2004.

Sometimes it seems like just about everybody is styling themselves "eclectic" nowadays—it's a word I've come to dread when it turns up in press releases—but Australian pianist Ben Winkelman is the genuine article, a determined crossbreeder of styles whose music is inventive and often surprising. Classical music and tango and klezmer are all in there somewhere, but what's most striking about his music is his determination to inject stride piano and ragtime into a familiar post-Hancock/Tyner keyboard idiom. Usually when contemporary pianists hark back to earlier styles it's via Monk and Ellington—key names here are Jaki Byard, Ran Blake, and Dave Burrell, not to mention European players like Guus Janssen and Michiel Braam—but Winkelman doesn't go that route, and perhaps as a result there's something of a stylized etude-like quality to his music ("Study in Seconds and Thirds" could have been straight out of Debussy's

Children's Corner). I'm left with the feeling that the individual components of this music are less original than the way it's put together, but it's hard not to enjoy the panache and sense of fun: Winkelman's tunes keep you guessing, and the trio negotiates their hairpin musical turns with ease and vivacity. Best tracks: the fast-paced "The Deadly Vice of Nostalgia," the quietly estranged ballad "Stand a Little Taller at Yom Kippur," and the genre-hopping minor-key swinger "Trio Piece in Seconds and Thirds." In the era of the postmodern piano trio, Winkelman's already claimed his place at the table.

Nate Doward

1) MELVIN SPARKS, GROOVE ON UP, SAVANT 2070.

Mykia's Dance / Cranberry Sunshine / Groove On Up / Hump / Ooh Girl / I Want To Say Thanks / She's A Bad Mama Jama / Onion Patch / If It Don't Fit (Don't Force It)* / U Got Mel.* 47:56.

Collective personnel: Sparks, g; Oscar Wright*, Nikki Armstrong+, vcl; Jerry Z, Paul Wolstencroft, org, kybd b; Eric Boliver, Eric Kalb, Jun Saito, d; Tom E. Ted, tablas. 12/05. Paramus, NJ.

2) GUIDO PREMUDA/ GILBERTO GRILLINI/ ALESSANDRO DALLO, BLUES EXPLORATIONS, SILTA 601.

Turnaround / Tears Inside / Ramblin' / Broadway Blues / Follow Your Heart - Binky's Beam* / Better Git It In Your Soul* / Blues Exploration / All Blues* / Quasi Blues / Mission Uncompromised / Blues Connotation / PGD Blues.* 59:03.

Premuda, g; Stefano Scippa*, ss; Grillini, b; Dalla, d; Stefano Scippa, ss* 6-11/04. Italy.

3) CALVIN KEYS, VERTICAL CLEARANCE, WIDE HIVE 269.

Mirky / Spreading Spirit / Unresolved Daydream / Proceed With Caution '06 / Saccucus S. Rutherford / Vertical Clearance / Seven And Sonny Straight Up / Maximum Height / Blue D / Drunk Monk / Last Exit. 52:26.

Collective personnel: Keys, g; Sonny Fortune, Doug Rowen, Paul Hanson, sax; Mike Rinta, Phil Ranelin, tbn; Roger Glen, vib; Doug Carn, org; Katt Quano, el p; Gregory Howe, synth; Matt Montgomery, Babak Tondre, b; Thomas McCree, Ron E. Beck, Darrell Green, Babatunde Lea, d; Mingo, Jr., cga; Headnodic, beat. circa 2005. San Francisco, CA.

4) GEORGE JOHNSON, JR., ALL STAR TRIBUTE, BCS 70002.

Morgan / Sleepy+ / Shaw Nuff+ / Birdlike(a) / Little Man (a) / I Didn't Know What (b) / Milestones (c) / Tuang Gura (d)/ My Break Tune (a)/ Alice In Wonderland (c)/ Fly Me To The Moon.* 61:30.

Johnson, Jr., d, vcl; Jon Faddis*, Terrell Stafford+, Wynton Marsalis(a), tpt; Clifford Adams*, Wycliff Gordon+, Curtis Fuller(c), tbn; Dave Hubbard*, Ed Wiley+, Ralph Bowen(b), ts; Donald Harrison(a), as; Aurell Ray*, g; Charles Earland*, org; Shirley Scott+, Johnny O'Neal, (a), Rich Budesaf(c), Cedar Walton(c), p; David Ephross+, Charles Fambrough(a & b), Jimmy Merritt(c), Marcus McLaurine(d), b. No dates or locations listed except (a) Montreux Jazz Festival, Switzerland.

5) YELLOWJACKETS, TWENTY FIVE, HEADS UP 3112.

Disc 1: Revelation / Geraldine / Jacketown / Sea Folk / Free Day / My Old School / Greenhouse / RunFerYeRLife. 72:36.

Disc 2: My Old School / Red Sea / Matinee Idol / Out Of Town / Geraldine / Imperial Strut / Sea Folk / Greenhouse / Time Squared. (See below re total time).

Bob Mintzer, ts; EWI; Russell Ferrante, p, synth; Jimmy Haslip, el b; Marcus Baylor, d.

Disc One: 10/17/05, Paris. Disc Two: 10/7/05, Forli, Italy.

On his fifth appearance for the Highnote/Savant/Fedora combine, six-string vet Melvin Sparks continues to mine the Soul Jazz and Deep Groove territory of his previous issues. **(1)** is made up of many of the same personnel from his last few releases so there is nothing too unexpected to be heard herein. Thankfully, he has relinquished the vocal microphone to two other singers, songstress Nikki Armstrong, who turns in a forceful rendition of "If It Don't Fit Don't Force It," while former Upsetters comrade Oscar Wright gets some payback on the somewhat strained "Ooh Girl." Elsewhere the program consists of original ditties from the leader except for Leon Haywood's "She's A Bad Mama Jama" and band member Jerry Z's funky "Onion Patch." Everyone takes care of plenty of business, especially Sparks who comes up with forceful (if sometimes too notey) solos that spice up the fairly simplistic charts. To say this is chock full of retro sounds from the sixties and early seventies would be redundant. When was the last time you saw a tune title like "Cranberry Sunshine"? Those who got off on his other Savant discs will not be displeased with this one.

Those hoping to find more of the same or mere four chord Blues changes will no doubt be disappointed in **(2)**. Although the Blues Explorations title is somewhat correct, this is most assuredly a Jazz album with dashes of Blues coloration throughout. What we have here is certainly no failure to communicate, with a basic guitar/upright bass/drums trio augmented on four tracks by Stefano Scippa's fluid soprano navigating their way through three originals and texts from names like Mingus, Miles, John McLaughlin, Pat Metheny, and Ornette. Each name is responsible for a selection except for Coleman who has five scripts covered among the dozen cuts. All of those compositions, as well as the remainder, have an azure hint about them while not being strictly in the Blues form. Premuda utilizes three different Gibson models yet retains his own identity throughout with a McLaughlin-like clarity in his execution and ideas. The acute interplay between the threesome is uncanny, subconsciously signaling the listener to the fact this trio has put in long, hard hours to achieve a cohesive whole that pays off in spades. Another neat touch is the listing of the key the number is in, something these eyes have not seen before. Talk about a sleeper, this is one for the books. Pay particular attention to the adroit string work of bassist Gilberto Grillini who constantly dazzles with a high level of musician-ship. Highly recommended.

Though guitarman Calvin Keys is not exactly

a household name (even in homes that have the welcome mat out for Jazz), he has been in the pages of this periodical many times and all of his previous efforts have held at least some interest. For his second session for Wide Hive **(3)**, he has assembled a rather large cast of players to interpret eleven fresh compositions penned by the leader (sometimes in conjunction with fellow bandmates). He likes the Hammond organ sound and where he used Chester Thompson on his preceding date here he employs Doug Carn of Black Jazz label fame. A definite plus is the presence of sax champ Sonny Fortune on three tracks while either Doug Rowen or Paul Hanson handle the reed chores elsewhere. Another *name*, Babatunde Lea, adds his percussive touch to a few cuts and there's occasional vibes and trombone from Roger Glen and Phil Ranelin respectively. This is something of a half and half affair; most of the early titles are in a more Soul Jazz straight ahead manner while the second half sinks into a Deep Groove vibe but with darker hues than **(1)** above. Keys' distinctive guitar tone weaves in and out of the material with ease. Another winner for him and Wide Hive.

(4) is a curiosity in comparison with the other packages covered in this batch. George Johnson, Jr., is a name only vaguely known to me from his work with the late Charles Earland but he has played with a host of famous Jazz names according to a small blurb in the accompanying booklet. These eleven titles are apparently from his personal stash and showcase his playing with a variety of different groups over the years although no dates are given. The opening number finds him with the Mighty Burner at the Montreux Jazz Festival but no other locations are given for these mostly live performances. On the whole the sound is acceptable even though it fluctuates a bit from track to track. The three with Wynton Marsalis seem to be from a Jazz Messengers edition with Johnson on the drum throne instead of Blakey, but I don't know for sure. Spirited playing from all of the soloists and it's always nice to hear Shirley Scott on the piano with her nephew Terrell Stafford. The final standard is a studio rendering, mistakenly attributed to Duke Ellington(?), with the leader playing tubs and singing the familiar melody over a synthed string bed. Nothing exceptional here but the other ten numbers may hold some interest to fans of the respective players.

The final title **(5)** is a two disc (one CD, one DVD) presentation from the popular combo The Yellowjackets. In an industry that is rife with fly-by-nights it is unusual for a group of this nature to stay together for any extended period of time, although there have been a few personnel changes over the years. They at first had the draw of the gifted Robben Ford but haven't employed a guitar player since; when they added the multi-talented Bob Mintzer in 1990 the music really took an upswing. I had the pleasure of chatting with Mintzer some years ago at the Wichita Jazz Festival and was struck by what a dedicated musician (and hardcore Jazzer) he was. His bass clar-

inet work has always held a certain appeal but it is absent on these discs. Peppered with some older favorites, the compact disc offers a fairly complete overview of this band and the bonus DVD from an Italian concert includes repeats of four selections from the CD. A sticker on the case cover proclaims "3 & 1/2 hours of video footage and much more" but the actual concert from play to play ran about 75 minutes. Unlike similar groups, the music is more spirited and adventurous within the parameters of the genre. A nice package to celebrate their silver anniversary.

Larry Hollis

1) VICTOR GOINES, NEW ADVENTURES, CRISS CROSS 1274.

Stop 'n' Go / Pres' New Clarinet / The Nearness of You / Eternal Devotion / Cochise / Waltz Beneath the Weeping Willow / Petite Fleur / New Adventures / As We Mature (We Learn to Take Our Time); 64:51.

Goines, ts, ss, cl; Peter Martin, p; Carlos Henriquez, b; Greg Hutchinson, d. 2/26/05, Brooklyn, NY.

2) BRAD GOODE, HYPNOTIC SUGGESTION, DELMARK 567.

Hypnotic Suggestion / Once Upon a Summertime / Bemsha Swing / Thinking of You / Beautiful Love / Detroit Scene / I Can't Forget About It. 54:02.

Goode, tpt; Adrean Farrugia, p; Kelly Sill, b; Dana Hall, d. 2/6/05, Chicago, IL.

Labels that last a while develop identities, mirroring the tastes and personal preferences of the founders. Blue Note, Prestige, Riverside, and the other classic labels of the Fifties and Sixties had a certain feel to them. In the modern era, you'd certainly count Gerry Teekens' Criss Cross imprint as a label with a strong and consistent identity, one of swinging small group Jazz with an emphasis on modern Bop. (1) is another strong album as reedman Victor Goines, collaborator with Wynton Marsalis in the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra and the Marsalis Septet, steps out with his own quartet date. Working with the sparkling rhythm section of pianist Peter Martin, bassist Carlos Henriquez, and the ever-tasty drummer Greg Hutchinson, Goines stretches out on tenor and soprano saxes and clarinet. The music leaps from the start with the uptempo drive of "Stop 'n' Go," with Goines on tenor, Martin aggressively comping while Hutchinson and Enriquez kick things along. By varying the featured horn from track to track, along with the usual gambits of mixing up the tempos and avoiding putting songs in the same key in succession, Goines and Teekens have put together an album that's a pleasure to listen to all the way through. "Pres' New Clarinet" is meant to evoke the great Lester Young, and it's got that relaxed feel of Pres' small group clarinet playing. "Eternal Devotion" is the first of two outings on soprano, an original that Goines describes as a tune where it's clear that "each instrument is a character ..." "Cochise" is New Orleans clarinetist Alvin Batiste's tune that Goines eats up on tenor, tearing into the

slightly frantic Bop line with a welcome ferocity and bite. Martin also turns in a fine solo on the piece, starting out simply and growing more complex as he moves through the changes. Hutchinson is in Billy Higgins territory, bouncing right along with great spirit. Goines moves back to clarinet for the lovely and plaintive original "Waltz Beneath the Weeping Willow," with a finely wrought emotional solo, followed once again by a satisfying solo by pianist Martin. Bassist Henriquez weighs in as well with a simple and direct solo punctuated by Hutchinson's rhythmic commentary. There are three non-originals on the disc, a breathy tenor exploration of Hoagy Carmichael's "The Nearness of You," Batiste's "Cochise," and a tender version of Sidney Bechet's eternally beautiful "Petite Fleur," here essayed on woody and wailing clarinet. It's a sweet performance, if over-long at nearly nine and a half minutes. The title track is a sinuous 6/8 groove that just won't quit, and the energetic treatment justifies the length of just over nine minutes. The tune lies just right for Goines' soprano and the track features a free-flowing Elvin Jones-like drum part by the resourceful Hutchinson, who also takes an especially fine and exciting drum solo. The appropriately stately "As We Mature (We Learn to Take Our Time)" closes the hour-plus affair with Goines back on tenor, testifying and preaching on a rolling kind of Blues reprised from a 1996 album. It's a most satisfying way to end the date, a quality session by a very together quartet that will bear repeated listening.

Delmark Records, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2003, encompasses the tastes not only of founder Bob Koester but the Chicago music scene itself in its varied manifestations. Even when Chicago area players like trumpeter Brad Goode leave the Windy City for other climes (to teach in Colorado, in his case), they sometimes record there when they come back for a visit. It may have been a cold day in February when Goode and his quartet taped (2), but this music will sure warm you up in a hurry. These guys were ready to *play*, and that spirit comes through in every note. Goode led the house band for a dozen years at Chicago's Green Mill, where this quartet played for a couple of nights before taping this set in a brief session. They treat the studio as another stage, and consequently the whole CD flows well.

Goode is an excellent trumpeter, an inventive soloist with enviable command of his sound, a witty approach to some of the classic material he chooses to plays, and an acute rhythmic sense. It's that last attribute that drives the music, as Goode and the quartet establish persuasively swinging rhythms at all tempos. The closer, "Crazy Rhythm," sums up the whole disc. Goode is all over his horn, jaunty and full of attitude, showing off just a bit, and the rhythm section is right there with him, imperceptibly shifting tempo as the band seriously stretches the song form over five and a half minutes.

Pianist Adrean Farrugia has a sure touch, bright and crisply articulate, and equally effective as soloist or accompanist. Sometimes, as on his solo on Goode's original "Detroit Scene," there's a real