

Jazz!

The Griffith Park Collection Elektra/Musician

Lenny White (drums), Stanley Clarke (acoustic bass), Chick Corea (piano), Joe Henderson (tenor sax), Freddie Hubbard (trumpet and Flugelhorn) — the all-star quintet White assembled to support Chaka Khan on her recent back-to-bebop *Echoes of an Era*. The backing musicianship was considerably superior to Khan's own performance. I wished that the group had made the album without her.

Well they've done even better. Rather than choosing a bunch of oft-recorded classics, all the tracks here are good originals apart from Steve Swallow's 'Remember'. Hence although the musical approach is similar to that on Khan's album, the pieces themselves don't stamp any restrictive sense of period on the set. The styles range from straight ahead bebop to tender ballads to the fluid lyricism redolent of *Maiden Voyage*-era Hancock. This does mean, however, that the overall feeling one gets does tend to be of the 60s. Perhaps this is as much the result of an all-acoustic lineup.

I, for one, certainly haven't enjoyed the old rhythm team of White, Clarke and Corea, together or singly, so much in a very long time. In fact everyone concerned plays as well as you'd hope. Peter Thomson

John McLaughlin My Goals Beyond Red Rodney & Ira Sullivan Spirit Within Charlie Parker One Night In Washington Elektra/Musician

The Elektra/Musician label has been founded as a subsidiary of Elektra/Asylum, specifically to release the product of musicians from outside the 'commercial' pop field, and jazz people in particular. It's a mixture of new releases and reissues. A creditable project.

My Goals Beyond was recorded around 1971, just prior to McLaughlin's embracing of Sri Chinmoy, and the formation of Mahavishnu Orchestra. It is a seminal, all-acoustic work. Side One is McLaughlin alone, interpreting Mingus, Davis and Corea, as well as his own compositions, showing a delicate touch far removed from the electric excesses of Mahavishnu. On Side Two, he is joined by Billy Cobham and Jerry Goodman, bassist Charlie Haden and reed and woodwind player Dave Liebman, who toured here last year. Aided by three Indian musicians, they play two lengthy compositions, 'Peace One' and 'Peace Two'. McLaughlin takes the back seat to some inspired playing from Liebman and Goodman.

Red Rodney (flugelhorn, trumpet) and Ira Sullivan (flugelhorn, flute, alto sax) are two Americans who have played together since the 1950s. Both were brought up in the be-bop school, but Sullivan, the more adventurous of the two,



Charlie Parker. Ira Sullivan & Red Rodney.

has experimented with modern forms for several years. It's a mellow fusion they produce on *Spirit Within*, recorded last September. The compositions are largely the work of pianist Garry Dial, leaning slightly towards the styles of Don Cherry and Sam Rivers. Rodney and Sullivan both sound comfortable in the freer format, adding just a touch of swing here and there, to produce a very satisfying sound.

The Charlie Parker album is from a 1953 concert with a notable big band, led by Joe Timmer, just two years before Parker's death. That he showed up at all surprised the convenors of the show. He played a plastic sax, had no sheet music, worked purely by instinct, and blew everyone to pieces. Another precious bit of history, lovingly preserved and packaged. Other current and upcoming releases on this label include previously unreleased material from Clifford Brown and Bud Powell, and new albums from Dexter Gordon, Woody Shaw, Mose Allison, Eric Gale and Billy Cobham, to name just a few. Duncan Campbell

Lee Ritenour Rio Elektra/Musician Al Di Meola Electric Rendezvous CBS Larry Carlton Sleepwalk Warner Bros

Three albums by three ultra-competent jazz-rock guitarists. Stifling yawns already? Yeah, these musical hybrids usually end up destroying both the fire and the feeling of their original constituents. What remains is usually just slick melange, often only a sophisticated muzak.

Rio is a case in point. Now Lee Ritenour undoubtedly has the technique to play currents out of a fruit cake, but the mild meandering served up here seems simply programme music. You can imagine this album providing the soundtrack to some glossy documentary promoting vacations in Brazil. It's light, bright, jazzy and never in the slightest disturbing or distracting.

When Al Di Meola takes on Latin American music he at least displays a native's flair and passion. But when he mixes them with Yankee jazz-rock his natural aggression turns academic and



arid. The title track of *Electric Rendezvous* falls between all the usual stools, however on Side Two he achieves more when he attempts less.

Larry Carlton is probably California's top session guitarist, busy enough to quit the Crusaders just as their popularity was peaking a few years ago. His solo approach is exquisitely crafted and shamelessly LA. Viewed from a strict jazz perspective, *Sleepwalk* is a snooze-off. Yet deep down, cocooned in the cottonwool production, these guys really are getting it on. They've even got some catchy tunes to play with.

So there you go. Ritenour is insipid when you want him inspired. Di Meola storms but also gets stodgy. And Carlton continues to tread carefully on the tasteful side of tepid. The state of the market perhaps? Peter Thomson

Thelonious Monk The Complete Genius A Decade of Jazz: Vol. 1 1939-1949 Vol. 2 1949-1959 Vol. 3 1959-1969 Liberty

The Blue Note label and its multitude of historic jazz recordings have been acquired by Liberty Records, who are in turn distributed by EMI. These double album sets are the first of the catalogue to be locally pressed, and we sincerely trust there are many more to come.

The death of Thelonious Monk earlier this year left an unfillable gap in the jazz world. Monk will ever remain a giant of the keyboard. His sound was unmistakable; that phenomenal right hand could make the piano chuckle or croon, rage or relax. His playing was so eloquent, and often so eccentric, it took very special sidemen to keep pace with him.

This set of recordings, between 1947 and 1952, includes saxists Sahib Shihab and Billy Smith, trumpeters Kenny Dorham and Idrees Sulieman, and vibist Milt Jackson. But to really sample the genius of Monk, try the second side of trio recordings, with the imperturbable Gene Ramey and Art Blakey. The influence of the great stride pianists of the 20s and 30s becomes clearer. The jaunty filigree of 'Well You Needn't' and the quirky tenderness of 'Ruby My Dear' are Monk at his finest. The *Decade of Jazz* collections

encompass 30 years of jazz in three quite acceptable, but hardly imaginative, packages.

Volume One includes contributions by Albert Ammons, Sidney Bechet, Earl Hines, James P. Johnson, Tadd Dameron and Thelonious Monk ('Round Midnight' and 'Epitaph'), both also appearing on *The Complete Genius*. This takes you from the end of the New Orleans heyday, through the migrations to Chicago and New York, and the formative years of bebop.

Volume Two features the likes of Bud Powell, Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Clifford Brown, Sonny Rollins and Horace Silver. The bop starts to harden up and wail. All sweaty stuff.

Volume Three takes you into the beginnings of modern or free jazz, with Eric Dolphy's 'Out To Lunch' and Ornette Coleman's 'European Echoes' giving the strongest pointers.

Take these collections in chronological order, perhaps assisted by Joachim Berendt's *Jazz Book*, and introduce yourself to a new world. Duncan Campbell

The Legendary Artist Series: Billie Holiday Sarah Vaughan Robert Johnson Marlene Dietrich CBS

More reissues. Sparse, cheap packages, but in three out of four, the contents override that consideration.

Enough scandal has been written about Billie Holiday over the years, but her personal legend survives all the crassness, including that execrable film. A prostitute in her early teens, dying of heroin in 1959, she poured her life's tragedy into her songs. Listen to her sing 'Gloomy Sunday', and know what it's like to feel pain. An incomparable artist, who continues to gain new fans more than 20 years after her death.

Sarah Vaughan came along during the be-bop era, performing with Billy Eckstine, Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie. She often strayed outside the realms of pure jazz interpretation, proving herself an accomplished popular singer as well. An exquisitely earthy, rich voice, bursting with sensuality. As a sample, try her version of 'Deep Purple', then see if anyone else can match it after that. Vaughan continues to perform and record, and her ability and stature only grow with the years.

Robert Johnson, often dubbed King of the Delta Blues Singers, was an enigmatic figure, a drifter, womanizer, brawler and boozier, who influenced so many blues singer-guitarists of the 1940s and 50s. Johnson died at 23 in 1937, allegedly poisoned by a jealous girlfriend. His eerie voice and keening bottleneck guitar have an almost ghostly intensity. Compulsory listening for all those interested in the roots of modern music.

The Marlene Dietrich album is a recording of a nightclub performance in London, with introductory recitation by Noel Coward. Tres camp, and just the thing for playing in luncheon restaurants. Duncan Campbell



Stevie Wonder's Original Musiquarium I (Motown)

It's a tribute to Stevie Wonder's output — both in term of quality and quantity — that this double album collection of greatest hits (plus four new songs) is only one of the many possible selections that could be made from among his recordings of the last decade. Still, that said, *Original Musiquarium I* does contain most of what the hit collector will be looking for. These are the recordings that set the standards for the 70s and 80s and on this well thought out and (apparently) remastered compilation they all sound as fresh as ever. And, even if some of the new songs don't have quite the melodic sparkle of the older material here, they're still imbued with the joy and innocence that's made all of Wonder's work such a delight. A great collection. Alastair Dougal

Diana Ross All the Greatest Hits (Motown)

Need more be said? This double album contains many of Ross' big hits, from her days with the Supremes (here treated in a shoddy 'Stars on 33' manner) all the way through to her recent hit 'Endless Love' with Lionel Richie. The four sides are organized for stylistic consistency: one side of slush soul ('Endless', 'Mahogany'), one side with Chic ('Upside Down', 'I'm Coming Out'), one side of her work with Nicholas Ashford and Valerie Simpson (The Boss', 'It's My House') and, of course, the Supremes' side. Stacked back to back like this it all adds up to something less than a musically satisfying career. Erratic perhaps but all the high points are here. Alastair Dougal

Luther Vandross Never Too Much (Epic)

Luther Vandross is some romantic. The hit single (and title song) from this album lays his sentimental credo on the line:

*A thousand kisses from you is never too much
A million days in your arms is never too much ...*

On this, his first Epic album (after two unsuccessful albums on Atlantic), Vandross steers these romantic sentiments and his fine, clear voice through a strong set of self-penned songs and Dionne Warwick's 'A House Is Not A Home'. The inclusion of this last song hints at the pop-soul combination Vandross is aiming for; where the sweetness of the emotions and arrangements is undercut by the tough funk of the rhythm section and the soul of the voice. And at least one track here ('I've Been Working') suggests that Vandross, now he's found his audience, may be capable of great things. Alastair Dougal

The Neville Brothers Fiyo on the Biyou (A&M)

The Nevilles, Art (43), Charles (42), Aaron (40) and Cyril (32), loom large in the regional orbit of New Orleans music. Art founded and Cyril sings with the Meters, and Aaron recorded the original 1966 hit version of Tell It Like It Is.

However, the expectation that something vibrant and distinctive from the regional tradition will distinguish the record from the general run of the pressing plant, is largely disappointed.

This is a disparate collection of songs in which the differing styles are not synthesised so much as the songs are de-stylised into an overslick, homogenous mass.

The record seems conceived purely as a showcase for the undeniably impressive vocal accomplishments of the brothers.

Great singing, flawless session musicianship, impeccable production, merely result in a record which despite odd high spots, never succeeds in being more than pleasant. Don MacKay

Quincy Jones The Best of (A & M)

Once a jazz arranger of some note, Quincy hit big with his score

for *In The Heat Of The Night* in 1967. He then spent most of the ensuing decade peddling big band MOR, with and without vocal chorines. Things came right again in '79 when he masterminded Michael J's monster *Off The Wall*. Last year he again hit mega-platinum with his mega-production of the Chas Jankel penned 'Ai No Corrida'. That and Stevie Wonder's 'Betcha Wouldn't Hurt Me' are easily the best things here and they're both off *The Dude* album. PT

Linx Go Ahead (Chrysalis)

With their second album, Linx veer away from the funk stylings of their debut towards a lighter pop approach. This change in emphasis, combined with David Grant's already lightweight vocals and a general drop in song quality, results in Linx sounding closer than ever to something like 10cc. Those interested had better refer to their *Intuition* album. AD

Brandi Wells, Watch Out (Virgin)
Eh? Album by black American woman gets release on English white boy label! No such contradiction in the music though: glamorized pop-soul, smart and slick. Wells can disco stomp as well as most and turn in a lush ballad comparable to Dionne Warwick. Worthy but not exceptional. PT

Yellowjackets (Warner Bros)
The liner notes point out that this is a digital recording, free of all the imperfections of the normal process. That's the most interesting thing about the whole record. Fine for audiophiles, who want to test the amount of flutter around their bottom. For the rest, it's just anonymous jazz-funk, technically fine, but unmemorable. DC

War, Outlaw (RCA)
There was a time, about a decade ago (remember *The World Is A Ghetto*) when War almost seemed to define funk — despite their music embracing Afro-Cuban, jazz, rock and blues. On *Outlaw* they also take in Caribbean, some Dr John-ish gumbo and a ballad Lionel Ritchie would have been proud of. Strong performances too. Only complaint is that good three minute songs are stretched to over five, and half of Side Two is wasted on trite rapping. PT

Pieces of a Dream (Elektra)
Three Philadelphia musicians, all in their teens, but already gaining quite a reputation. Grover Washington Jr produces, and plays, and a host of other session kingpins join in. Easy, sophisticated jazz-funk, just right for when the wine is chilled and the lights are low. Don't expect any surprises. DC

**Michael Henderson
Slingshot (Buddah)**
As a bassist, Michael Henderson has recorded with Miles Davis (*Bitches Brew*, *Live/Evil*) and toured with Stevie Wonder and Aretha Franklin. As a singer he offers up his identity on the altar of black American MOR. The tracks here alternate between ill-focused exercises in hyperfunk and inadequate smooch-ups of other folks' ballads. Neither are remotely necessary (though some people might at least find the cover stimulating). PT

45s ... from the gang who defy words, Kool & the Gang we get 'Get Down On It'/'Steppin' Out' (*De-Lite*). Kool, funky and cheap, cos ya get the two best tracks from *Something Special* ... Donna Summer back with her bad girl persona on Quincy Jones produced 'Love Is In Control' (Warners). Neat riddims, inventive sound, but why more lyrics about triggers from cowboy boot city. Flip is yuck ... Skyy 12 inch of 'Call Me' (*Salsoul*) is extended (6.21) Prince for your mother. The former's groove with Chic modesty in apparel. Fun ... representing England is Junior on 'Mama Used To Say'/'Instrumental' (Mercury). Like Linx, he's mainstream U.S.A. funk-pop. Consciously derivative, great ditty, good singer. Bring on an album ... Temptations return to Motown with 'Standing On The Top' Parts 1 & 2. Rick James wrote and guests and the result is a good Rick James record, Clinton for the masses, complete with George's 'we need the funk' chorus. Fun but more Temptations, less Rick next time, please. Murray Cammick

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