

## ART «» ENTERTAINMENT

## Records

## NONAAH

Roscoe Mitchell  
(Nessa Records)

Chuck Nessa of Nessa Records began recording Roscoe Mitchell for the Delmark label. His legendary '60s *Sound* album has recently been re-released as part of Delmark's Modern Jazz Series.

This series contains much of the early work of artists from the Association for the Advancement of Creative Music (AACM), a musicians' collective in Chicago of which Mitchell was an early associate. Mitchell also recorded for Delmark with the Art Ensemble of Chicago (AEC), playing a variety of reed and percussion instruments. On his latest album, *Nonaah* (a double-record set), he has chosen to return to his original instrument—the alto saxophone.

Why the switch? As Mitchell puts it in the liner notes to *Nonaah*, "It's a very natural time... to return to the alto.... When I used to play one instrument it became part of me, a very natural sort of thing, all the mind's eye had to deal with. When I started to play a lot of instruments, that feeling went away, and I couldn't play anything.... I've briefly moved away from that in this project to return to a particular place on the circle."

Not only is Mitchell featured exclusively on alto on the *Nonaah* album, but several cuts (including one version of the title tune) feature the artist/composer on solo saxophone with no additional instrumentation. Another version of "Nonaah" is scored for a quartet of four altos. It is the highlight of the album, featuring, besides Mitchell himself, Anthony Braxton, Henry Threadgill and Wallace Macmillan.

The music on the album as a whole is a demanding mixture of stark predetermined patterns and totally improvised primal utterances. Like the earlier *Sound* album, it is an experiment in extending the boundaries of music.

In a real sense, Mitchell seeks to demystify music and free us to hear it in its purest form. The result is a vehicle for both the creative expression of the artist/composer, and, perhaps more importantly, taps into the dialectic of universal energy formation and transformation. Its emotional directness is refreshing in an era when canned Muzak has become a marketable substitute for real music because of its dulling and unobtrusive effect on the listener. Mitchell's music, no matter what

you think of it, cannot be ignored.

The music of Roscoe Mitchell is at war with the product mentality of today's commercial music industry. Its subversive power lies in its purity of form and expression. Like much revolutionary art, it is part battle cry, part healing force, part futuristic vision.

—Ron Sakolsky  
(Nessa Records,  
5404 N. Kimball, Chicago,  
IL 60625.)

Ron Sakolsky has a bi-monthly jazz show on WSSR, public radio station in Springfield, Ill.

## BIRTHRIGHT

Hamiet Bluiett  
(India Navigation)

The music on this album exemplifies two of the characteristics that its tradition values: clarity of thought and a sense of the continuity of time.

First, the setting. Hamiet Bluiett, without a doubt the leading baritone saxophonist of today, born in Brooklyn, Ill., was a key builder of the Black Artists Group in St. Louis in the late '60s and early '70s; later gigged with the Charles Mingus band; currently works in New York with other leading innovators like David Murray, Oliver Lake and Julius Hemphill. *Birthright*, his second album on India Navigation, is a solo blues concert, consisting of seven tunes he wrote for members of his family and people who have influenced him forcefully.

Back to the two characteristics. First, clarity of thought:

Hamiet Bluiett gets more dimensions of sound out of a baritone than anyone who plays the instrument. He can, for instance, play with full authority in high octaves very few players can even touch. You will not hear the staggering runs you might expect. He doesn't need them. The musical ideas that flow through his head are driven by the force and feeling that come from deep absorption in rhythm. They

are so clear that there is next to no waste motion, no wasted energy, no wasted speech.

Each phrase builds off the previous one, takes it an additional step forward, and/or to a new area. For focusing the mind in improvisation means that the imagination—that which thinks of how to form a note or phrase so that it adds something—is constantly productive.

A sense of the continuity of time: understanding how events that come one after another are connected. This shows in his tunes and in his use of the blues tradition. Take, for instance, the opening, "Doll Baby aka Song Service," dedicated to his grandmother who used to love to go to the song service. It is a simple blues melody, played with full appreciation of the beauty and meaning it contains all by itself, then taken into the realms of the past decade without that initial sense being lost.

This is neither the conventional blues nor "new music." It is Great Black Music, an entire tradition that has carried certain concepts forward as its core. Bluiett works the simple old phrases and innovative new ones together so that there is really no distinction. It all adds up to a very free music—free because it permits him to give so much meaning to the basic and the essential, not because it lacks restrictions.

A sense of the continuity of time: digging into the rhythm of a phrase by repeating it a few times, he takes it a little further each time until he has explored all kinds of territories of the composition, all the while not more than one big resonant note away from resolving it to where it began.

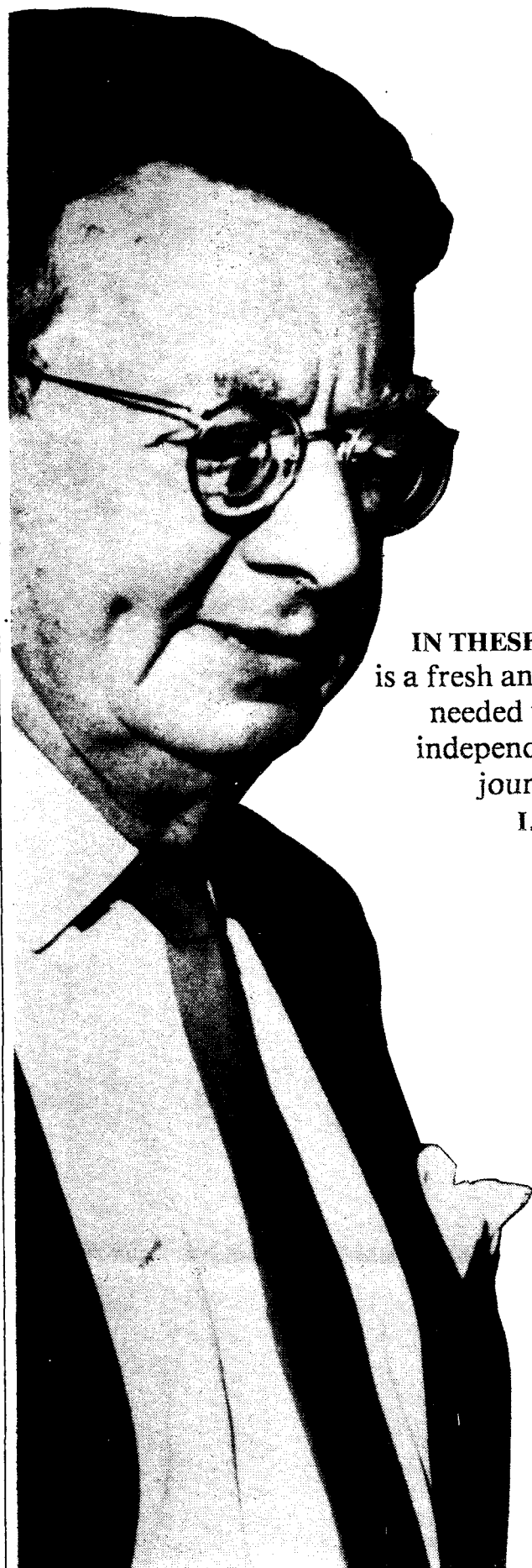
This is today's music. These are serious times and complex times. To a unique degree they require being simultaneously on top of fundamentals and aware of infinite possibilities. By today's music it is not meant that it projects the confusion and chaos of the present world; rather that it offers some tools for creating something positive in its midst.

—John Kordalewski

John Kordalewski has a jazz program on WGTB in Washington, D.C.



Hamiet Bluiett, baritone



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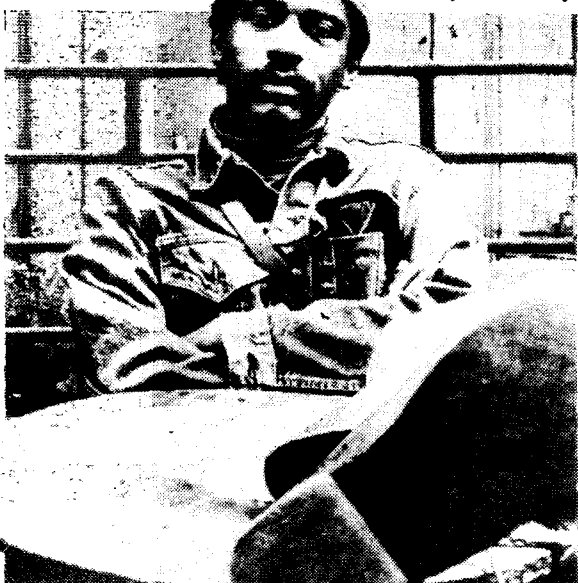
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Roscoe  
Mitchell, alto.

## FOREIGN

## Mid East filmfest ready to tour

The first Middle Eastern Film Festival has completed an outstandingly successful run in New York City and is being booked for national distribution later this year.

The goal of its organizers: "to move Americans beyond their simplistic vision of the conflict and into the complex social and political realities of these societies" was achieved not only by the showing of some 30 feature films and documentaries, but even more by discussions with many of the filmmakers—discussions that were continued by small groups around tables in cafes near the theater and in the homes of Americans and Mid Easterners who attended.

Entries from Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Iran, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Syria, South Yemen, Tunisia and the Palestine Cinema Unit were organized into four categories, to each of which a whole day was devoted. Possibly the most popular was Women in the Middle East, which included not only films about, but also films by women of Egypt, Israel and Iran. The other categories were Struggle for Social Change, Tradition in Transition, and Battle Scars: Arabs and Israelis.

Nearly every film exposed the repercussions of modernization, and several were, for one reason or another, unsuccessful on their home grounds despite critical praise. For example, *Paratroopers* (Yehudah Ne'eman), which won the Israeli Film Festival's second prize in 1977. It deals with the inability of a misfit at

bootcamp to adjust to the rigors of army life and exposes the Israelis' moral dilemma over the human price exacted for security. It did not do well in Israel and the American Jewish Community has been reluctant to distribute it here.

*The Cycle* (Darius Mehrjiu, Iran, 1974) has been shelved for several years at home, presumably because of its grim picture of the illegal trafficking in blood by which some of the poor, sick and elderly attempt to survive. *The Cement Jungle* (Mohammed Chamin, Syria, 1978), on the other hand, is a box-office success, despite its attack on corruption in industry and government. It does not draw on its country's unique cultural heritage so much as the Western tradition of



THE SEALED SOIL.

blond and blue-jeaned good guys vs. fat and swarthy bad guys, and a plat line like *All the President's Men*.

Style does conform to content in *The Sealed Soil* (Marva Nabili, Iran, 1977), a feminist film made by Iran's only woman director, which deals with the emotional breakdown of a young woman under pressure common to women worldwide.

Egypt's Layla Abou-Saif's documentary, *Where Is My Freedom?* chronicles the history and impact of feminism in her country in interviews with working women who have succeeded despite oppressive laws, social mores and religious traditions. (Abou-Saif's film is one of two Egyptian selections. Others were solicited by the festival, but the embassy in Wash-

Continued on next page.



Gazing at imperialism in *THE CHESS PLAYERS*.

## Ray's elegy for India

### THE CHESS PLAYERS

Written and directed by Satiyajit Ray  
Distributed by Creative Films International

In the opening scene of Satiyajit Ray's *The Chess Players*, two Indian noblemen are sitting cross-legged over an ornate chess set. A pudgy, jeweled hand arches lazily toward the board, pauses, then grasps and moves an ivory piece.

Fat with leisure, absorbed in their private contest, distracted only by family disputes, the players are fourth-generation descendants of Buhuran-al-Mulk, the warrior who drove the Mongols out of India a century earlier. They have inherited the spoils of that conquest, but none of their ancestor's integrity or strength.

The conflict on the chess board has no apparent beginning or end, only an interminable middle. The players lift their head occa-

sionally, heave resigned sighs and sink back into the game. As the gentry pursues its amusement, history hurries by.

Ray, who is India's most prominent film director, has chosen this vehicle to depict the apex of 19th century British imperialism and the fall of the last independent kingdom in India. Yet the film never accelerates the stately pace of its beginning. Yards of footage are devoted to the pomp and glitter of the monarchy, the noblemen's luxurious lives, the sobriety of British colonial officers.

But the film does more than probe the foibles of ruling classes. It becomes clear that the primary characters—Indian or English—are no more the authors of their actions than the sculptured chessmen. For Ray, history does not move with the sweep of a sceptor.

The Indian king is a figurehead. (Power has long ago been

ceded to the imperial authority.) When British troops mass outside the gates of the capital city, he can only recite tragic verse. The British Resident General also lags behind pre-determined events, carrying out the orders of his queen. The fall of Oudh is anticlimactic. The immediate drama is wholly symbolic, the film a kind of postlude to the conquest of India.

*The Chess Players* ends much as it began. The gamesmen transport their contest—and their whole social order—away from the bothersome city. In the last frames, the board is set for another match. A servant is attending to hookahs and the aristocratic appetites. The chess players are frozen in a reddish light. On the horizon, British soldiers are marching, unopposed, into the capital city of Oudh.

—Mac Margolis  
Mac Margolis is a free-lance writer in Cambridge, Mass.

## CLASSIFIED

NOTICE is hereby given, pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an assumed name in the conduct or transaction of business in this State," as amended, that a certificate was filed by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook County, file No. K61526 on the 6th of July 1978 under the assumed name of Post-Dates with place of business located at P.O. Box 48563, Niles, Illinois 60648. The true name and residence address of owner is P. Rice, 922 W. Ainslie, Chicago, IL 60640.

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