

RECORDINGS REPORTS: JAZZ LPs

TITLE, PERSONNEL, DATA

REPORT

Kenny Burrell: *Guitar Forms*. Burrell, guitar, with quartet and 13-piece band; Gil Evans, arranger and conductor. Verve 8612, \$4.98; stereo, \$5.98.

This, at last, is a set that does justice to the many-faceted talent of Kenny Burrell, who plays both the amplified and the classic Spanish instrument here. The material covers a lot of ground, beginning with an Elvin Jones blues that is reminiscent of Big Bill Broonzy's. There is an excerpt, played as a solo, from Burrell's transcription of Gershwin's "Prelude #2 for Piano," a skilful interpretation of Joe Benjamin's "Terrace Theme," and well-devised performances with the big band of "Greensleeves," Alec Wilder's "Moon and Sand," and Cyril Scott's "Lotus Land," the locale of the last being shifted to Spain. The kind of brooding backgrounds Gil Evans wrote for Miles Davis are even more appropriate and moving behind Burrell, to whom beauty of tone is obviously of prime importance. Thanks to doubling on the part of the reeds, Evans achieves a great deal with a relatively small number of musicians.

John Dankworth: *Zodiac Variations*. Dankworth, alto saxophone, clarinet, arranger and conductor, with 15-piece band and guests: Clark Terry, trumpet; Bob Brookmeyer, trombone; Phil Woods, alto saxophone; Lucky Thompson, Zoot Sims, Ronnie Scott, Danny Moss, tenor saxophones; Ronnie Ross, baritone saxophone; Chuck Israel, bass; Osie Johnson, drums. Fontana 27543, \$3.98; stereo, \$4.98.

By all odds, this Anglo-American collaboration is the most imaginative and fascinating big-band album of the year. "Just as the signs [of the Zodiac] are influenced by the inexorable progression of planets and stars," Dankworth writes, "my variations are governed by the cycle of keys and modes." Moreover, each soloist is born under the sign of the variation featuring him. Some of the variations are brief, but all have shape and form, and they rejoice in exquisite textures and dynamic contrasts. In terms of compositional and arranging ability, Dankworth shows himself here to be second only to Ellington and Strayhorn, whom he obviously admires and has studied. The Americans add color and personality, but the English soloists compare very favorably, especially Danny Moss, Ronnie Ross, and Dankworth himself.

Grant Green: *His Majesty King Funk*. Green, guitar; Harold Vick, tenor saxophone; Larry Young, organ; Ben Dixon, drums; Candido Camero, conga. Verve 8627, \$4.98, stereo, \$5.98. *Talkin' About*. Green, guitar; Larry Young, organ; Elvin Jones, drums. Blue Note 4183, \$4.79; stereo, \$5.79.

Green, Young, and Dixon work together regularly as a unit, a fact that gives the Verve album, on which they are heard together, a rhythmic strength and definition not always present on Blue Note. The influence of the saxophonists he admires is frequently to be heard in Green's single-note lines, where the feeling of spontaneity is more consistent than his inspiration. During long, leisurely solos, as on both records, the listener sometimes needs patience, but it is usually repaid. And when reflection is deserted in favor of dancers' needs—"Daddy Grapes" (Verve)—he, Young, and Dixon work into a very exciting groove.

Al Grey: *Shades of Grey*. Grey, Grover Mitchell, Bill Hughes, trombones; Harry Edison, trumpet; Elvira Redd, alto saxophone; Lockjaw Davis, tenor saxophone; Kirk Stuart, piano and organ; Wyatt Ruther, bass; Sonny Payne, Rufus Jones, drums. Tangerine 1504, \$3.98; stereo, \$4.98.

More care and preparation obviously went to the making of this rewarding album than is usually the case today with those by small bands. The arrangements by Roger Spotts are neat, well played, and well recorded, the level of musicianship being generally high. The use of three trombones and organ on some tracks gives the ensemble a rich, full-bodied sound, which complements the best solos in years by Lockjaw Davis and Harry Edison. Grey is an increasingly individual and convincing soloist with the plunger mute. ("A New Blues" and "Put It on Mellow"), and his open work often surprises with the scope of its reference, as when the solo on "Jilly's Honey" begins swiftly in a manner worthy of Benny Morton. Vi Redd, the most accomplished lady saxophonist on the scene, and all members of the rhythm section likewise acquit themselves admirably.

Art Hodes: *Plain Old Blues*. Hodes, piano; Truck Parham, bass. Emarcy 26005, \$3.98; stereo, \$4.98.

Old they may be, but Hodes, who knows and loves them, shows how many colors, grades, and variations there are in the blues. Playing the blues is what he does best, and he is at pains to do it faithfully in both form and content. Age has enhanced rather than impaired his ability, so that those familiar with the records he made more than twenty years ago may be surprised by the agility of his right hand. There are blues here by Pinetop Smith, Leroy Carr, James P. Johnson, and King Oliver, but the Hodes originals come off well, too, particularly "By A. and T."

Illinois Jacquet: *Spectrum*. Jacquet, tenor saxophone, with nonet and quintet. Argo 754, mono and stereo, \$4.98.

On the first side, Jacquet labors in a dreary rhythm-and-blues setting with five drearier tunes, three of them from the movies. The second side is relatively livelier, Patti Bown has several solos, and in the performance of his own number, "Big Music," Jacquet does more than hint at the jazzman he really is.

Billy Larkin: *Blue Lights*. Larkin, organ; Clifford Scott, alto and tenor saxophones, and flute; Hank Swann, guitar; Mel Brown, drums. Aura 3003, \$3.79; stereo, \$4.79. Howard Roberts: *Goodies*. Roberts, guitar, with trio, quartet, quintet and septet. Capitol T 2400, \$3.79; stereo, \$4.79.

A promising organ trio from Oregon, the Delegates made their record debut on an earlier Aura album (3002). They are joined here by a talented alumnus of the Bill Doggett band, Clifford Scott, whose striking alto saxophone on "Killer Joe" indicates his familiarity with pre-Parker styles. A well-chosen program allows for adequate mood contrasts, and the tempos are more satisfying than is customary. The titles of Howard Roberts' three previous albums (*Color Him Funky*, *Something's Cookin'*, and *H.R. Is a Dirty Guitar Player*) were variously misleading or inaccurate. Although he is accompanied by three organists, the proceedings on this one are similarly bland and innocuous. Disappointment probably stems from the fact that H.R. is *not* a dirty guitar player, but an overly hygienic one.

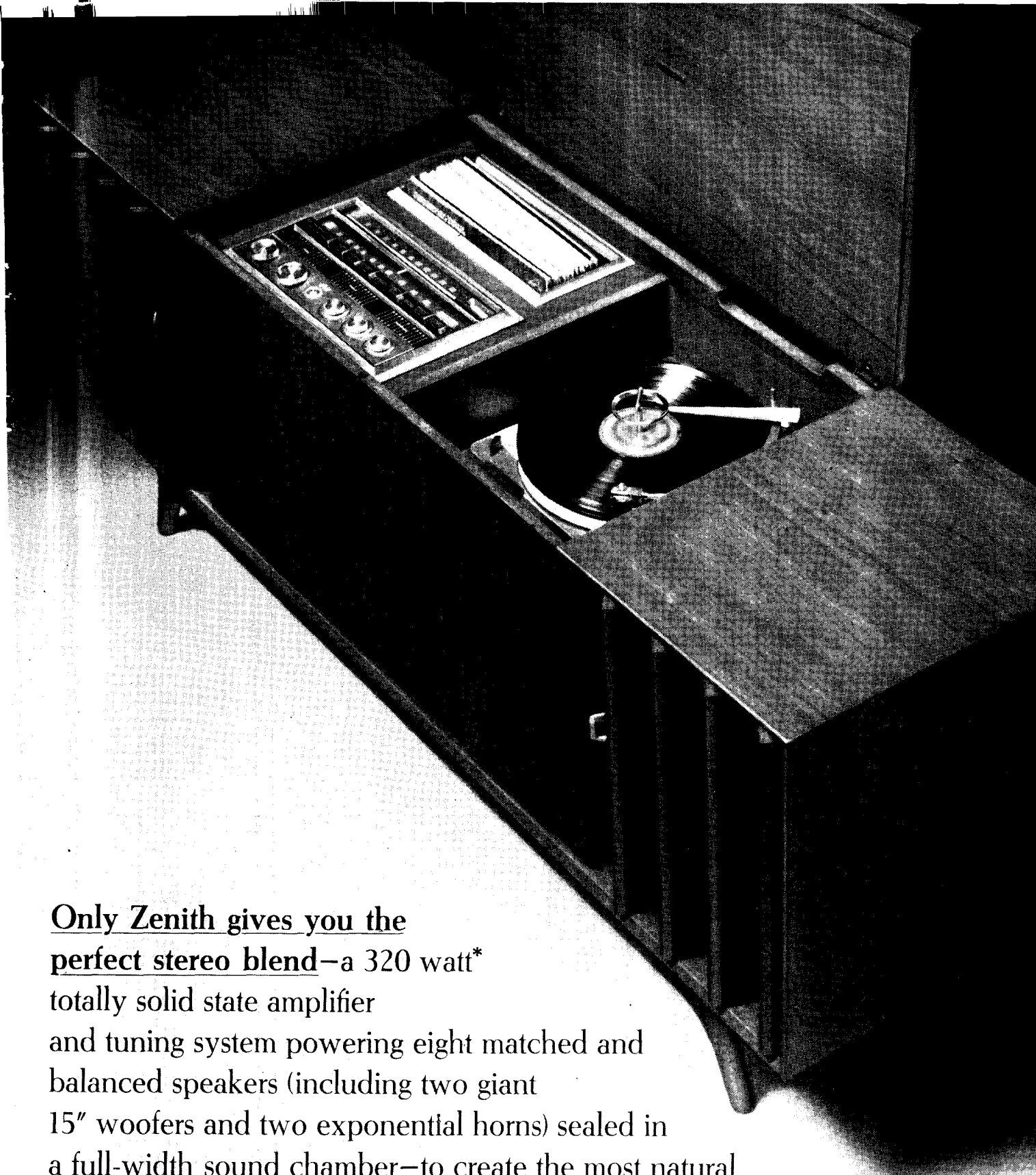
Otis Spann: *The Blues Never Die!* Spann, piano and vocal; James Cotton, harmonica and vocal; James Madison, Dusty Rivers, guitars; Milton Rector, bass; S. P. Leary, drums. Prestige 7391, mono and stereo, \$4.79. Various Artists: *Bluebird Blues*. Blind Willie McTell, Tampa Red, Poor Joe Williams, Sonny Boy Williamson, Tommy McClennan, Sleepy John Estes, Arthur Crudup, Lonnie Johnson, blues singers. RCA Victor LPV 518, mono only, \$4.98.

Spann heads the regularly Muddy Waters combination here, with Waters heavily disguised as "Dirty Rivers" on guitar. The singing is done by Spann and Cotton, the tempos are excellent, and the music justifies the album title, for this is how the blues continue to be sung and swung under honorable conditions. The integrity of the group is remarkable, and there are very few in jazz who can swing like it. The Victor collection, mostly culled from the old Bluebird catalogue and wisely annotated by this magazine's Lawrence Cohn, is designed to give a perspective on the 'Thirties and early 'Forties. Masterly singers like McClennan, Estes, Williams, and Williamson, as well as the great guitarist Lonnie Johnson, are contrasted with the folksy McTells and the once-popular Crudup and Tampa Red.

Stanley Turrentine: *Joyride*. Turrentine, tenor saxophone, with 15-piece band; Oliver Nelson, arranger and conductor. Blue Note 4201, \$4.79; stereo, \$5.79.

Turrentine plays well in this big-band context, building excitement on "River's Invitation," waxing warmly romantic against Nelson's sonorous backgrounds on a Buddy Johnson ballad, and evoking a mood of lonely melancholy on Jimmy Smith's "Bayou." The record nevertheless exemplifies a distressing contemporary tendency to stretch individual talents to thinness, if not to the breaking point. The first-class accompanying band includes men like Snooky Young, Clark Terry, Henry Coker, Budd Johnson and Kenny Burrell, but every solo is by Turrentine except for one by pianist Herbie Hancock.

—STANLEY DANCE.



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Voices of Yesterday

HISTORY once was the province of the printed page alone, which, with contemporary art work, gave us all we had for remembrance of things past. Without art and the printed word there was no history—until cameras and films and tapes and recordings came along. Now we have not only the words handed down from one generation to another but the actual voices and sounds of the originals. And sometimes these new instruments of recorded history give us fresh views or ideas of what a man or a woman or an event was like. But, on the whole, if the present rash of historical recordings are good examples, we will still need the printed word; the voices and recapturings of sound will be but cosmetics, frosting, condiments on top of what we already have in writing.

Capitol Records is releasing the actual recorded voices of half a hundred outstanding celebrities from two centuries mixed into a sort of historical narration spoken by Fredric March. Here in the original are the voices of Thomas Edison, Lillian Russell, Teddy Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, Woodrow Wilson, General Pershing, Gandhi and Einstein, Lindbergh and W. C. Fields, Cal Coolidge and Jimmy Walker, George Bernard Shaw and Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Where Edison's voice is clear, intelligent, and exciting, William Jennings Bryan's "Cross of Gold" speech recreated makes it immediately apparent why Bryan was the most persuasive political declaimer of his time—strongly oratorical but not flowery, absolutely clear to the last row and the last syllable (and with no public address system to help him). On the other hand, Lillian Russell's soft sweet nothing of a voice seems to prove that she must have been beautiful beyond description. And, alas, Teddy Roosevelt sounds like a take-off on Fiorello La Guardia; his high, squeaky voice chatters away a mile a minute in tense nervousness not always pleasant to the ear. Admiral Peary's voice, on the other hand, is tough and sure. You would trust him with any assignment. William Howard Taft sounds exactly like his son, the late Senator; the vocal resemblance is positively startling. President Wilson's great voice, a well-modulated baritone, makes it possible for us to understand why he was the most sought-after public speaker of his time. Pershing comes off well, while Foch is emotional and very French. Then Henry Cabot Lodge, Sr., talking like the America Firster that he was,

precedes a sad and almost inaudible deathbed defense of the League of Nations by the stricken Wilson. Gertrude Stein reads her jolly "Valentine" poem, Lindbergh makes some jokes that come off, Coolidge's flat, nasal assurance contrasts sharply with Jimmy Walker's patent baloney, and Gandhi is there saying with precision: "I regard myself as a soldier, though a soldier of peace."

How successful can a motley like this be? It depends on what you expect. Having been disappointed before, I did not expect, perhaps, as much as others will and I was not, therefore, disappointed. Taking these precious bits for what they are—incredible echoes of history going back to the very voice of Florence Nightingale herself, to the bugle that was blown at Waterloo and actually called the charge of the Light Brigade at Balaklava, one can feel only gratitude. Here are the original Florodora Sextette singing "Tell Me Pretty Maiden," George M. Cohan delivering his unforgettable curtain call "My father thanks you, my mother thanks you. . . ." Some of them you can't hear very well at all, understandably. Mr. March's brightly done narration is, however, a treat and treasure, as always, and no history buff (or teacher) dare be without a pressing as unbelievable as the two slim sides of "Hark! The Years!," truly a collector's item in sound.

Comparing ancient voices in the original to MGM's recording of the words of Pope Paul VI on his New York visit last October 4 is patently unfair but, since these discs are issued at approximately the same time, comparisons are inevitable. In the case of Pope Paul's visit, most of us saw and heard so much on television (some of it in color) that his words alone make awfully hard listening. For one thing, not everything he

says in English can be understood, since English is not one of his strong languages. I suppose anyone with a feeling for his historic visit will wish to add the actual sound of his voice to the record library, but to be candid about it this is not a very arresting item.

The Adlai Stevenson portrait-through-speeches is, of course, much more readily discernible and, as always, beautifully said by one of the great public speakers of all time. We hear the late Ambassador accepting Presidential nominations, conceding Presidential defeats, damning Communist aggression in the U.N., and eulogizing Sir Winston Churchill in words that could well have applied to himself. If you loved Stevenson this is your pigeon, and if you own a collection of memorable voices you cannot do without either the Stevenson or Pope Paul issues.

STILL another kind of history-in-the-recording comes this fall from Enrichment Records and Random House. Based on World Landmark Books, two pressings for particular use by young people in school dramatize the life of Julius Caesar, the story of Albert Schweitzer, and the years of Winston Churchill. Naturally, the Caesar story contains no "original" sound, but is simply a dramatization with actors and a script of the life and times of the most ambitious European before Napoleon. The Schweitzer dramatization, possibly because there may be little recorded in English by him, also is entirely recreated by actors' voices. On the whole, the Caesar side of this recording comes off better than the Schweitzer dramatization. There's something faintly ludicrous to me in an actor's portrayal of a famous man speaking ersatz small talk to his wife in a slight German accent and highly dramatic, stilted language and timbre. I suppose one must give Dr. Schweitzer a German accent to prove his origins to the school child, but the results are often unintentionally funny.

The Churchill recording, on the other hand, includes not only a stirring dramatization of the great man's life and times, but also one side devoted to excerpts from famous speeches by Churchill as recorded at the time of delivery. No matter how many times one hears the rolling cadences and lovely dependent clauses—precision language of a truly great master, spoken impeccably by the master himself—one never ceases to marvel at the luck of having been for even a few years Winston Churchill's contemporary. One thing is sure: in this whole batch of history-on-record there are no better voices or more persuasive vocal personalities than Churchill, Wilson, Roosevelt, and Stevenson, unless it is the silver-voiced orator, William Jennings Bryan. —RICHARD L. TOBIN.

Hark! The Years! Capitol T 2334, \$3.79.

An Historic Occasion: Pope Paul VI Visits New York City October 4, 1965. MGM E 4337-D, \$3.79.

Adlai E. Stevenson—Produced by Audio Stage, Inc., for The Macmillan Company—AS-101 61447, \$5.79, Radio Press International.

Winston Churchill (EWR 304). Julius Caesar, and The Story of Albert Schweitzer (EWR 302). Dramatized recordings adapted from World Landmark Books (Random House), Enrichment Records, \$5.95 each.