

# RECORDINGS REPORTS: JAZZ LPs

TITLE, PERSONNEL, DATA	REPORT
Count Basie: <i>Basie Picks the Winners</i> . Basie, piano; Billy Byers, arranger; with 16-piece band. Verve V6-8616, \$4.98; stereo, \$5.98.	This set consists of ten recent and not so recent hits arranged by Billy Byers, and an old one made famous by Bessie Smith—"Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out." The last is sung and talked by Leon Thomas with elegant piano accompaniment by Basie. Generally, the performances are to the workaday Basie-Byers pattern, the more successful being of "Watermelon Man," "My Kind of Town," and Fats Domino's "I'm Walkin'." The soloists heard throughout the album are Lockjaw Davis, Al Aarons, Eric Dixon, Al Grey, and the pianist, but space is too grudgingly allotted them. "Oh, Lonesome Me" is introduced by the trombone quartet, one of the present band's strong assets that might also be advantageously featured more.
Kenny Burrell: <i>Crash!</i> Burrell, guitar; Jack McDuff, organ; Harold Vick, tenor saxophone; Eric Dixon, flute (on one title only); Joe Dukes, drums; Ray Barretto, conga. Prestige 7347. Jack McDuff: <i>Recorded Live!</i> McDuff, organ; Red Holloway, tenor saxophone; George Benson, guitar; Joe Dukes, drums. Prestige 7362, mono and stereo, \$4.98.	The value of Burrell to the first album is offset by superfluous conga drumming. However, he has two good choruses on T-Bone Walker's "Call It Stormy Monday" and swings infectiously on an up-tempo version of Gershwin's "Love Walked In," where Basie's Eric Dixon joins the company on flute. "We'll Be Together Again," in contrast, is a pretty ballad on which organ and guitar combine in quietly lyrical statements. On the other record, the regular McDuff quartet is heard celebrating a recent European tour to giant-size applause. Benson is a good blues guitarist and the group is at its unpretentious best when rocking a medium-tempo blues like "Lew's Place," although the recording is often less than kind to Holloway's tone.
Kenny Clarke and Francy Boland: <i>Now Hear Our Meanin'</i> . Clarke, drums; Boland, piano and arranger, with 18-piece band. Columbia CL 2314, \$3.98; stereo, \$4.98. Benny Golson: <i>Stockholm Sojourn</i> . Golson, arranger and conductor, with 23-piece band. Prestige 7361, mono and stereo, \$4.98.	The first album shows how American musicians resident in Europe influence jazz there. The second, notably in Golson's treatment of Sibelius's "Valse Triste," shows how American musicians are influenced by Europe. Neither suggests, as some hope, that the salvation of jazz lies on the other side of the Atlantic. The Clarke-Boland band comes on with more spirit, but it has no personal identity and sounds rather like a good New York studio band. Significantly, the most striking contributions are made by Americans in the cosmopolitan personnel: Sahib Shihab, Billy Mitchell, and Jimmy Woode. Golson's album, made mostly with Stockholm musicians, may serve as a swan song to the cool, with which, by all reports, Sweden is at last disenchanted. In terms of color, the potential of the big band is simply not realized, and of the soloists only Benny Bailey reaches any heights of emotional and rhythmic vitality. A minor blues, "A Swedish Villa," is the most fruitful interpretation, but the set as a whole emphasizes that modern arrangers, whose orchestral palette has been extended with oboes, flugelhorn, French horns, English horns, and flutes, actually achieve less tonal variety than Duke Ellington, Sy Oliver, and Don Redman, who rely or relied only on trumpets, trombones, clarinets, and saxophones.
Hank Crawford: <i>Dig These Blues</i> . Crawford, alto saxophone and piano, with two trumpets, tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone, bass, and drums. Atlantic 1436, \$4.98; stereo, \$5.98.	Except when Crawford switches from alto saxophone to piano on two numbers, the instrumentation and sound of his little blues band remains the same despite considerable changes in personnel. His is honest, basic music, not especially imaginative, but of a kind likely, as annotator Hentoff suggests, to survive when currently popular fads and gimmicks are forgotten. A firm beat and good tempos (the opening track on either side, for example) make it excellent for dancing, and Crawford's saxophone seldom relinquishes melody for long. The backgrounds are well conceived and sturdy, but never overbearing.
Quincy Jones: <i>The Pawnbroker</i> . Jones, composer, arranger, and conductor; Rod Steiger, dialogue. Mercury MG 21011, \$3.98; stereo, \$4.98.	Quincy Jones confesses in his notes that when he first saw <i>The Pawnbroker</i> he felt it "didn't even need any music." Those who have seen the picture will remember how effectively his music complemented it. He wrote dramatic, descriptive music for the city scenes, but he did not forget his jazz background and the contrasting value of the spare and simple. Only "about fifteen minutes of the music could be classified as jazz," he says, but they are among the most telling. It is Bobby Scott who plays the four-minute piano blues, "The Naked Truth," and there is a restless excursion into Spanish Harlem entitled "Otez's Night Off." Rod Steiger's ironic speech, "How Come, You People!," is also included.
Blue Mitchell: <i>The Thing to Do</i> . Mitchell, trumpet; Junior Cook, tenor saxophone; Chick Corea, piano; Gene Taylor, bass; Aloysius Foster, drums. Blue Note 4178, \$4.98; stereo, \$5.98.	Three former members of Horace Silver's group—Mitchell, Cook, and Taylor—bring several of his characteristics to this set. There are neat sketches to serve as points of departure and arrival, and the same kind of unflagging drive. In Silver's place at the piano is an able young Bostonian, Chick Corea, whose approach and touch are respectively more reflective and gentle. Cook and Mitchell work together particularly well, and both are energetic soloists, the latter's clean tone and control being well displayed on the pensive "Mona's Mood." The most cohesive performance is of the number that gives the album its title.
Oscar Peterson, Erroll Garner and Art Tatum: <i>Great Jazz Pianists of Our Time</i> . Peterson, Garner, Tatum, piano. Camden CAL-882, \$1.98; stereo, \$2.49.	This interesting collection unites three sides each by Oscar Peterson and Art Tatum with four by Erroll Garner, all but one having been made in 1947. Peterson's were recorded in Montreal before he left Canada and they show an already accomplished pianist. The abandon of his "Flying Home" (1945), which is full of rolling power, makes an intriguing contrast with his current work. Garner's rhapsodic side is well in evidence, but the earthier "Erroll's Bounce" offers a good example of the rhythmic left-hand chording that made him famous. Tatum's glittering precision and—when he feels like it—tremendous swing make his "Cherokee" and "Out of Nowhere" the album's high spots. Tatum and Garner are unaccompanied, but Peterson, the notes to the contrary, has the usual backing.
Jimmy Smith: <i>Monster</i> . Smith, organ; Oliver Nelson, arranger and conductor, with 12-piece band. Verve V6-8618, \$4.98; stereo, \$5.98.	As played by this group, the monster music from the movies requires strong nerves, but "St. James Infirmary" and originals from both Smith and Nelson are more rewarding. This time Nelson has used no brass, but he successfully complements the organist's vigor with eight reed and woodwind specialists, most of whom play at least three different instruments. With soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone saxophones, clarinet, bass clarinet, flute, alto flute, piccolo, and oboe, some unusual textures are obtained. Those on the theme from <i>The Man with the Golden Arm</i> are perhaps the most appropriate and satisfying.
Clark Terry and Bob Brookmeyer: <i>The Power of Positive Swinging</i> . Terry, trumpet and flugelhorn; Brookmeyer, valve trombone; Roger Kellaway, piano; Bill Crow, bass; Dave Bailey, drums. Mainstream 56054, \$3.98; stereo, \$4.98.	The virtuosity and temperament of the co-leaders occasionally lead them to a genial but rather superficial form of expression, one opposed to the kind of commitment that results in "positive swinging." Nevertheless, this is a well-balanced group of fine musicians in a very agreeable program. Their depth of background is indicated by the inclusion of Don Redman's "Old Manuscript" and Count Basie's "The King." It is by the latter that the album title is best exemplified. Terry duets with himself (on flugelhorn and muted trumpet) to good artistic effect in "Green Stamps," and is exciting in "Battle Hymn of the Republic." The least predictable player is Roger Kellaway, a pianist who uses the whole keyboard and both hands to tell a surprising story in every solo. Bill Crow and Dave Bailey deserve special praise for their tasteful and selfless support. —STANLEY DANCE.

# “Barber” from London

By HERBERT WEINSTOCK

THE NEWS IS that *The Barber of Seville* has been recorded almost exactly as Rossini composed it (the lost overture excepted), played almost exactly as he intended the orchestra to play it. With Teresa Berganza (Rosina), Stefania Malagù (Berta), Ugo Benelli (Almaviva), Manuel Ausensi (Figaro), Fernando Corena (Bartolo), Nicolai Ghiaurov (Basilio), and Dino Mantovani (Fiorello and An Officer), with the Rossini Orchestra and Chorus of Naples conducted by Silvio Varviso, this three-record London set (A 4381, \$14.37; stereo OSA 1381, \$17.37) comes close to offering a document by which Rossini's enduring masterpiece can be judged fairly. Only the recitatives are cut; only one dramatically crucial scene (that in which Rosina turns against Almaviva and agrees to marry Bartolo) has been omitted. That this well-conceived recording does not result in a truly satisfying performance is sad. But we have learned that style is not always a result of wisdom and honesty; perhaps, in fact, it is simply unrelated to them.

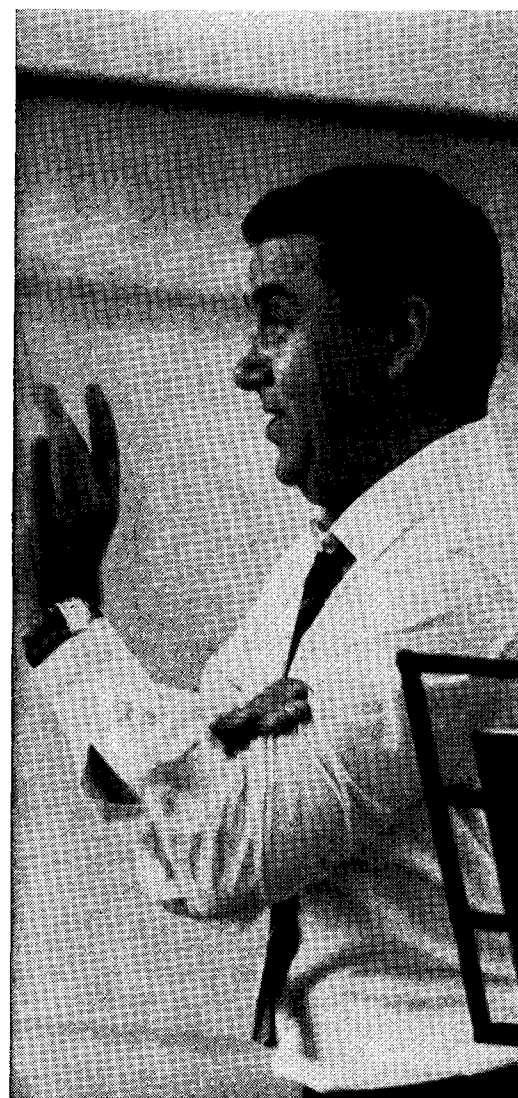
Using a reduced orchestra (formerly called the Scarlatti Orchestra of Naples) little larger than the one heard when *The Barber* was sung for the first time (Rome, 1816), Maestro Varviso allows us to enjoy the fine points of Rossini's perfect instrumentation—and most of the time brings the voices through understandably. What he does not do is approach closer than the conductors of the other recorded versions of *The Barber* now available to allotting Rossini the crisply defined sparkle and vital energy that one might get from a master conductor of the Toscanini stripe or the Beecham, or perhaps from a Carlo Maria Giulini or a Georges Prêtre. Varviso produces no bad or reprehensible results; he merely fails to evoke an exact likeness of a work of genius. That failure is definitive; unhappily, it is not alone.

We are, for example, grateful to have Count Almaviva permitted to sing his role in full, including the prolonged and wonderful scene and aria that just precede the Act II finale—particularly as this gives us a scarce opportunity to enjoy “Ah! il più lieto, il più felice,” the flowery, telling expression of joy which, the year after *The Barber*, became “Non più mesta” in *La Cenerentola*, but which nearly always is omitted from perfor-

mances of *The Barber* on the mistaken ground that it slows up the concluding action. But we should be even more grateful for that music if Ugo Benelli, who sings charmingly except at extremely difficult junctures, sang magnificently. But his voice nearly always lacks sufficient resonance and cannot assert itself in the rushing ensembles. Manuel Ausensi, well schooled, does little with his unremarkable voice, and thus robs Figaro of what he most needs: unmistakable character. Fernando Corena, unhappily, no longer commands the vocal pliability that was his when he recorded the role of Bartolo in the older London *Barber* (XLLA-51).

The stellar performance of the new *Barber* is that of the fantastically endowed and gifted Bulgarian bass Nicolai Ghiaurov as Basilio. Only he and Corena shade their voices in color, attack, and emphasis, to meet the clear significance of the text words. As he has announced by performances elsewhere, he is one of the best operatic performers of the present day. Here he has to do little more than open his mouth and utter one note to make his colleagues generally sound a little inferior to both style and understanding.

Teresa Berganza, technically everything that a Rosina should be, sings more brilliantly and assuredly than ever. Hers is a peculiar case. She is, in my view, not a Rosina at all, though I feel sure that, had she the right range, she would excel as the disillusioned older Rosina of *Le nozze di Figaro*. She does not sound like Rossini's and Sterbini's pert young girl because of the innate sorrowfulness of her vocal quality and her concentration upon singing at the expense of meaning. What Simionato does with complete mastery in the London recording mentioned above, what Maria Callas does in the older Angel recording, Berganza does no better than (to mention other available recorded Rosinas) Victoria de Los Angeles or Roberta Peters and not much better than Gianna d'Angelo. And yet, Berganza is a convincing great artist when what she is required to sing lies within her expressive and emotional nature—as it does in the passing moments of disappointment, sorrow, and despair here in *The Barber*. If this judgment is correct, she is as much miscast when asked to be Rosina as when asked to be Isabella in *L'Italiana in Algeri*. I hope that she will not



—Eleanor Morrison (London Records).

**Nicolai Ghiaurov—“fantastically endowed and gifted bass” (Don Basilio).**

risk the confrontation with Simionato as Cenerentola. What one would like to hear her try is one of the great tragic roles that Rossini composed for Isabella Colbran—say Elisabetta in *Elisabetta, regina d'Inghilterra*, or Elena in *La donna del lago*. (True, Colbran was called a dramatic coloratura soprano; but Berganza would have little, if any, trouble with the tessitura of the Colbran roles and would suit them perfectly, as she does not the comic Rosina and Isabella.)

A very interesting and often attractive flawed performance, then, set out with London's usual packaging care: an interesting booklet of useful information by Erik Smith and the sung text in both Italian and a useful English translation by Peggie Cochrane. Were the conducting and the rest of the singing on the level of what Ghiaurov accomplishes with “La calunnia è un venticello,” this would be a reasonable nomination for the best operatic recording of the year. We must, I suppose, continue to eat only half of our cake.