

tenor saxophonist's improvisations—compact, yet incorporating contrasts of color and line and subtleties of shape—Farmer broke his own playing down “to basic fundamentals.” Smiling wistfully, Farmer pointed out: “Pres told his musical stories so simply. He layed them out so that his life flowed through the horn. He said very little off the stand; it all came pouring out as soon as he heard the drummer stroking the time. And always there was melody; it was implicit in everything he played.” Young sang his own brand of song on the tenor, flavoring it with a continuing flow of rhythmic energy. The relation of rhythm to melody, the placement and accenting of notes in solo lines were illustrated every night. It soon became apparent in Farmer's work that he had learned his master's lessons well. Making increasingly potent use of his materials, he structured solos at a fine story-teller, piecing together phrases, sentences, and paragraphs, wasting little as he moved from thought to thought.

His melodic style did not undergo any radical change as he moved from band to band in the late 1950s. Only modifications befitting the environment were made. With the future-minded Charles Mingus and George Russell, he was forced into new areas, but did not deny his own ways. His improvisations, though shaped by the music, were unmistakably logical, poised, rhythmically and melodically attractive. As a sideman with the Horace Silver Quintet (1957-58), Farmer had to play louder and more emphatically. Whereas in the subtler clime of the piano-less Gerry Mulligan Quartet, he could more easily follow his melodic inclinations.

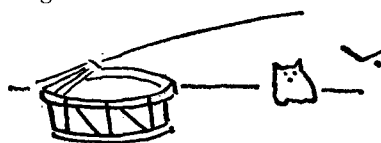
It was inevitable, considering his increasing stature, that Farmer would organize his own unit. Though he had briefly co-led a group with Gigi Gryce in the mid-1950s, it did not receive sufficient recognition at the time to survive. In 1959, the time seemed ripe and Farmer and tenor saxophonist-composer Benny Golson formed the Jazztet, a sextet which they headed for four years. A writer's band, emphasizing arrangements rather than improvisatory freedom, it did not allow Farmer sufficient space to grow.

As a leader of his own quartets, however, he found that everything seemed to fall in place. His music became a true reflection of the man playing it. What he played progressively warmed the inwards. His impact was not that of gin, but of brandy, to be savored for its subtlety. He could give full rein, within the informal atmosphere, to his melodic talents. The first of these foursomes, featuring guitarist Jim Hall, bassist Steve Swallow, and drummer Walter Perkins, played a particularly charming, quiet

form of chamber jazz, with Farmer and Hall engaging in graceful, swinging interchanges. Hall soloed and provided provocative harmonic backing for Farmer's new chief instrument, the flugelhorn. The Farmer sound was darker, even more intimate, and enlivened by a firm rhythmic undercoating. Steve Swallow's presence in the group had a progressively greater effect on Farmer. By playing freely while still making musical sense, the bassist motivated Farmer to take more chances, move out beyond the containing harmonies and rhythms of a song and to change the texture of his playing more frequently. The addition of drummer Pete La Roca, who not only drummed in a complex style but composed challenging frameworks for the unit, put additional pressure on Farmer to further loosen up rhythmically. The interactions of Swallow, La Roca, and later the adventurous pianist Steve Kuhn (who replaced Hall), called on the abilities Farmer had allowed to go untested.

A series of Atlantic albums *Interaction* (1412), *To Sweden with Love* (1430) and finally *Sing Me Softly the Blues* (1442) illuminates the development of the unit and reveals Art Farmer as a still developing jazzman, aware and affected by some of the newer happenings in jazz. Though still the lyrical improviser whose insistence on “clarity of design and economy of means” (Nat Hentoff) remains constant, he has become more involved with rhythmic force and complexities. He is no longer the man who seldom changes the volume of his playing. With added intensity and more varied volume and shading, he achieves greater variation and contrast within a selection. A jazz musician must be able to move in various ways, Farmer now insists; he must have scope. “I want to move from one pole to the other, when it comes to range, tempo, volume, and complexity of ideas. You can't stay in one place. By growing in this manner, I am merely bringing my melodic concept into a new context, just rebuilding on my past.”

Farmer's recent, lengthy stay in Europe was catalytic in his making the changeover in style. During several months of steady work he came to realize that the past cannot be denied, nor can the road to the future be averted, that good people and music prevail through a revolution and the period of transition that follows. It's a matter of taking what is right for you and dismissing the rest, bringing to the music something from within yourself. Farmer did this through one revolution, and is working his way through another.



## G & S: After the Carpets

**D**URING THE RUN of *The Gondoliers*, which opened at the Savoy on December 7, 1889, the theater's director, Richard D'Oyly Carte, outfitted the house with new carpets and charged them to the expense accounts of the production. To understate the matter, librettist W. S. Gilbert protested vehemently. He saw no reason why his money earned from *Gondoliers* should pay for D'Oyly Carte's carpets. A meeting was arranged to placate Gilbert, but the writer was in no mood to be reasonable. He demanded to know where his partner, Sir Arthur Sullivan, stood in the matter. (Already relations between the two men had been undermined by continual outbursts of temper.) When Sullivan let it be known that he agreed with D'Oyly Carte, Gilbert left in a fury. The next day he demanded an apology from Sullivan and insisted that they break off all dealing with D'Oyly Carte. Sullivan refused, and Gilbert announced that they could never again work together.

During the next four years Gilbert wrote several plays that were only moderately successful, and collaborated with Alfred Cellier, who had previously been D'Oyly Carte's conductor from 1877-79, on an operetta called *The Mountebanks*. Sullivan turned his attention to the writing of a grand opera, *Ivanhoe* (1891), which D'Oyly Carte produced at a tremendous financial loss. In order to try to regain the money lost on *Ivanhoe*, D'Oyly Carte urged Sullivan to return to comic opera, and the composer collaborated with Sidney Grundy on *Haddon Hall* in 1892. *Haddon Hall* was not the success hoped for, and D'Oyly Carte realized that the breach between Gilbert and Sullivan had to be amended. This was effected, and the result was *Utopia Limited* (1893). The opera did not do well, and the reconciliation was short lived. After one more effort, *The Grand Duke* (1896), the breach became permanent.

The works of the “post-carpet” period have been represented, until recently, on LP by only a handful of excerpts from *Utopia* on London, as a final side for their recording of *Trial by Jury*. To fill this void in the G&S discography, a valiant, ambitious group in Washington, D.C.—The Lyric Theater Company—has not only staged *The Mountebanks*, *Utopia Limited*, and *The Grand Duke*, but has recorded them complete with dialogue under professional studio conditions. (The sets are available from the Lyric Theater, 3311 Ross Place, N.W., Washington, D.C., 20008. *The Mountebanks* sells for \$17.85 and *Utopia*, (Continued on page 72)

# RECORDINGS REPORTS: JAZZ LPs

## PERSONNEL, DATA

## REPORT

Mose Allison: *V-8 Ford Blues*. Allison, piano and vocal; Aaron Bell, Addison Farmer or Henry Grimes, bass; Osie Johnson, Jerry Segal or Paul Motian, drums. Epic 26183, \$3.79; stereo, \$4.79.

Allison is distinguished by his material. Born in Mississippi, he is a white who sings and plays the successes of blues artists like Sonny Boy Williamson, Willie Dixon, Willie Love, Percy Mayfield, and Lightnin' Hopkins with affection and understanding. His translations have wit and irony, and heard on their own merits they lift him above the category of the popularizer. His playing is quite unpretentious, but it is always built over an infectiously insistent beat, to which Aaron Bell and Osie Johnson contribute with happy professionalism on six tracks. When originally issued, this set was entitled *Mose Allison Takes to the Hills*.

Gene Ammons: *Sock!* Ammons, tenor saxophone, with trios and sextets. Prestige 7400, mono and stereo, \$4.79.

If Ammons has indeed been "damned by faint praise" as the annotator claims, it may well be because he is essentially a straight-ahead blower. Less imaginative than Lester Young, to whom he is much indebted stylistically, he puts more emphasis on strength and body. "Scam," "Blues for Turlers," and "Rock Roll" offer good examples of the kind of effortless propulsion he can produce while always suggesting a feeling of reserve power. Patti Brown (piano) and Ernie Shepard (bass) are among the accompanists heard to advantage.

Chet Baker: *Smokin'*. Baker, flugelhorn; George Coleman, tenor saxophone; Kirk Lightsey, piano; Herman Wright, bass; Roy Brooks, drums. Prestige 7449, mono and stereo, \$4.79.

Baker, who now plays flugelhorn, is a more impressive musician than when he used to win jazz polls on trumpet, and Coleman is a thrusting, energetic player whose early blues background occasionally emerges significantly in solos like that on "So Easy." The record's importance, however, lies in the introduction it affords to an exciting pianist from Detroit, Kirk Lightsey, who for some time has acted as accompanist to singer Damita Jo. His muscular touch, enhanced by good recording, contributes much to an excellent rhythm section. His conceptions involve creative chord changes and are often intricate, but they are delivered with ease and fluidity thanks to a secure technique that embodies a driving left hand and a fast right.

The December Band: *At Moose Hall*. Kid Thomas Valentine, trumpet; Jim Robinson, trombone; Capt. John Handy, alto saxophone; Sammy Rimington, clarinet; Bill Sinclair, piano; Dick Griffith, banjo; Dick McCarthy, bass; Sammy Penn, drums. Jazz Crusade, 2007 and 2008, mono only, each \$4.95.

These two records commemorate an unusual get-together of the traditionally minded in Connecticut, where the need to "keep the sound alive" seems to be an issue of some consequence. The participants include four musicians from New Orleans, three from Connecticut, and young Sammy Rimington from England. There is a long and astonishing (in the context) saxophone solo by Handy on "Handy's Boogie," but the most rewarding performer generally is Rimington, who shows a thorough knowledge of the time-honored devices as well as a will toward further exploration. The playing is hearty, the recording cavernous, the audience almost idolatrous in its enthusiasm.

Rod Levitt: *Solid Ground*. Levitt, arranger and trombone; Rolf Ericson, trumpet and flugelhorn; Buzz Renn, George Marge, Gene Allen, reeds and woodwinds; Sy Johnson, piano; John Beal, bass; Ronnie Bedford, drums. RCA Victor LPM 3448, \$3.79; stereo, \$4.79.

Levitt uses the same versatile octet as on his previous two albums. The material is varied, and of ingenious writing there is no short measure. In fact, some of the arrangements are too busy, and there is, perhaps, a little too much humor—an unusual complaint to make today! Of the soloists, Rolf Ericson, Buzz Renn, and Gene Allen are the most attractive, the last's smooth, warm-toned baritone saxophone being particularly effective against Levitt's novel backgrounds on "Borough Hall." The "solid ground" is on "I Wanna Stomp," a more consistent performance than the others, and one which makes several bows in the direction of Duke Ellington.

Blue Mitchell: *Down with It*. Mitchell, trumpet; Junior Cook, tenor saxophone; Chick Corea, piano; Gene Taylor, bass; Aloysius Foster, drums. Blue Note 4214, stereo \$5.79; mono \$4.79. Duke Pearson: *Wahoo*. Duke Pearson, piano; Donald Byrd, trumpet; James Spaulding, alto sax and flute; Joe Henderson, tenor sax; Bob Cranshaw, bass; and Mickey Roker, drums. Blue Note 4191, stereo, \$5.79; mono, \$4.79.

A long association with Horace Silver was not wasted on Mitchell, Cook, and Taylor. With Corea in Silver's place, and an excellent drummer in Aloysius Foster, they form a well-integrated group that plays with strength and conviction. Mitchell's growing maturity and judgment are shown in his increased appreciation of form and musical patterns. His "March on Selma" is an especially infectious piece of work, its success being very much due to Foster, who pushes the soloists tirelessly and imaginatively without ever being obtrusive. Another Blue Note group in the Silver image is Duke Pearson's, which is responsible for *Wahoo* (4191). There are a couple of exotic numbers in the manner Silver has lately affected, and the broad scope of his tenor saxophonist, Joe Henderson, is common to both. Pearson himself, a less forceful pianist, reveals a pretty lyricism in the trio interpretation of a waltz entitled "Farewell Mabelle."

Oscar Peterson: *With Respect to Nat*. Peterson, vocal and piano, with trio and with 17-piece band. Limelight 86029, \$4.98; stereo, \$5.98.

This tribute to Nat Cole is something of a curiosity in that Peterson's singing voice so closely resembles his. What is curiouser is that Earl Hines, Cole's original pianistic inspiration, also sings in a similar fashion. It seems to be as much a matter of feeling as of imitation, as was the case with those many trumpet players who expressed themselves vocally like Louis Armstrong (e.g. Walter Fuller and Ray Nance). Peterson's performances mostly dwell on the better Cole qualities that show business overwhelmed. For a glimpse at how they struggled to survive, hear "Where or When," a piano solo in *Nat King Cole at The Sands* (Capitol MAS 2434).

*Rare Bands of the Twenties*: Blue Ribbon Syncopators; Cecil Scott's Bright Boys; Williamson's Beale Street Frolic Orchestra; New Orleans Owls; Jelly James' Fewscians; Tiny Parham's Musicians; Walter Barnes' Royal Creolians. Historical Jazz 7, mono only, \$5.00.

This is the seventh in an interesting series of recordings made in the 1920s. Unlike most reissue collections, the emphasis here seems to be deliberately on the obscure. This can be very valuable in securing a perspective on a period that was far from being wholly golden. One track here is by the Walter Barnes band, which perished years later in a Natchez ballroom fire. On No. 3, the important Alphonse Trent band—nursery for players like Harry Edison and Stuff Smith—can be heard. Nos. 1, 2, 4, and 5 are devoted to blues singers, including Leadbelly and the formidable Memphis Minnie.

Pee Wee Russell: *Ask Me Now!* Russell, clarinet; Marshall Brown, valve trombone and bass trumpet; Russell George, bass; Ronnie Bedford, drums. Impulse 96, \$4.98; stereo, \$5.98.

Marshall Brown deserves credit for providing so much color and contrast with a group of this instrumentation. His settings enable Russell to mirror each number's essence as he sees it, and without strain. In a program containing numbers by Ellington, Coltrane, and Monk, the most striking performance is of Ornette Coleman's "Turnaround," which certainly emphasizes the error of restricting the clarinetist to Dixieland or "Chicago" areas. He expresses himself here with his customary individuality, but also with a sensitivity and spirituality ("Angel Eyes") not always possible in less sympathetic contexts.

—STANLEY DANCE.