

# RECORD REVIEWS

Records are reviewed by Don DeMicheal, Gilbert M. Erskine, Kenny Dorham, Barbara Gardner, Erwin Helfer, Don Nelsen, Bill Mathieu, Dan Morgenstern, Harvey Pekar, Harvey Siders, Pete Welding, John S. Wilson.

Reviews are initialed by the writers.

When two catalog numbers are listed, the first is mono, and the second is stereo.

Ratings are: ★★★★★ excellent,  
★★★★ very good, ★★★ good,  
★★ fair, ★ poor.

## TWO VIEWS OF THE NEW WAVE

### Various Artists

THE NEW WAVE IN JAZZ—Impulse 90: *Nature Boy*; *Holy Ghost*; *Blue Free*; *Hambone*; *Brilliant Corners*.

Personnel: Track 1—John Coltrane, tenor saxophone; McCoy Tyner, piano; Jimmy Garrison, bass; Elvin Jones, drums. Track 2—Donald Ayler, trumpet; Albert Ayler, tenor saxophone; Joel Freedman, cello; Lewis Worrell, bass; Sonny Murray, drums. Track 3—Grachan Moncur, trombone; Bobby Hutcherson, vibraharp; Cecil McBee, bass; Bill Harris, drums. Track 4—Ashley Fennell, trumpet; Marion Brown, alto saxophone; Archie Shepp, tenor saxophone; Fred Pirtle, baritone saxophone; Virgil Jones, trombone; Reggie Johnson, bass; Roger Blank, drums. Track 5—Charles Tolliver, trumpet; James Spaulding, alto saxophone; Hutcherson, vibraharp; McBee, bass; Billy Higgins, drums.

Rating: ★★

These performances are from the Black Arts Repertory Theater/School concert in March, 1965, at the Village Gate in New York City. With a good representation of leading "new thing" players, this album strikingly shows the series of problems that have expanded into the crisis facing the jazz avant-garde today.

Analogies in art are dangerous, and especially so when dealing with something as fluid as the avant-garde, but the current situation is so palpably similar to that of the post-Renaissance period in European art that it is fitting to consider the parallels.

Classical beauty and harmony and "correctness" had reached a peak during the Renaissance, and the new artists, seeing the futility of working the same ground as Michelangelo, Raphael, Titian, and Leonardo da Vinci, began to search for new approaches to expression. The mood of the Renaissance age, moreover, was jarringly out of place in the turbulence of the 16th century.

Unable to manifest the pulse of the times in any conventional manner, some artists, in their frustration, turned completely to the startling, the unexpected, the unheard-of effects, and their commitment was such that many developed a rage against tradition.

Their works, while different, were not always successful. Zuccari's windows in Rome (1592) are simply bizarre; Parmig-

ino's *Madonna with the Long Neck* (c. 1532) is grotesque; and Giovannie da Bologna's 1567 statue *Mercury* is eccentric.

It was a time of crisis: the old forms did not fit the new sensibilities, and the shock tactics of the new wave could not produce art.

The day was saved by the Venetian painter Tintoretto and El Greco of Spain, both of whom, showing the substance of the creative spirit, refused to be trapped in ideologies that negated the past.

Both were tired of old forms but not old art; and both, painting pictures that transcend time and age, showed the others how to be new. El Greco's *View of Toledo* (c. 1600), rooted in tradition but with its avant-garde foreground and shaking sky, tells a thousand more secrets of the heart and mind than any of Zuccari's caprices.

Much of the avant-garde in jazz today can be equated with post-Renaissance art. The syndromes are identical: the shock tactics, the rage against tradition (this, in spite of what some critics say), and the dominance of ideology over esthetic sense.

Of the "new thing" players at this session, only the Tolliver-Spaulding group treatment of Thelonious Monk's difficult and beautiful *Corners* succeeds in performing work that is esthetically satisfying, and this is so because the musicians are faithful to Monk's great sense of tradition.

On *Ghost* Albert Ayler shows us the labored journey he's made to free himself from the bondage of meter, harmony, and even melody; but, like Zuccari, having forced the change, he's made only a bizarre artifact—not art. His refusal to use tradition puts him in a more rigid, cold, and cramped place than convention could ever be. His whole approach, moreover, seems dictated by ideology, and not by artistic impulse. Would he feel free to use tradition? I think not—at least not now.

The men in Coltrane's group relate to each other for a few brief opening phrases on *Nature Boy* and, then, in extended "free" improvisations, the group skitters in chaos, failing in the same way Lennie Tristano failed with *Intuition* 16 years ago. With no collective point of reference, not even intermittent ones, the players simply don't get anything going.

There is a dazzling McBee-Hutcherson duet on *Free*, and some original compositional structure, especially in the opening section, where the melody direction seems to backtrack on itself instead of going forward. But the continual, relentless string of augmented chord changes is a capricious and boring device.

Shepp, one of the most heralded and interesting of the "new thing" musicians, would have most modern-mainstream tenor men in trouble if he played their style. His ear is fine, and he has a fantastic imagination.

### 10 On 1 In Music '66

The *New Wave in Jazz* album reviewed on this page is the subject of 10 far-ranging critical evaluations in *Down Beat's Music '66*.

Like the painter Goya (1746-1828), who spent a great deal of time and energy depicting the horrors of man's inhumanity to man, Shepp's playing reflects the cruelties of racism. It's all there—the slave exploitation, brutality, white treachery, the doctrine of "separate but equal," the ghettos—and, like Goya, there is no alternative; it is something he *has* to do. Unfortunately for jazz, this phase of Shepp has more social import than esthetic jazz value.

LeRoi Jones' notes are hurried and inadequate, and his subservience to the black nationalists cancels his effectiveness as a critic. At one point he says, "In order for the non-white world to assume control, it must transcend the technology that has enslaved it . . . these players [show the way by] transcending any emotional state the white man knows," showing by another kind of cunning his willingness to use the jazz avant-garde for his own racist ends. (G.M.E.)

### Various Artists

THE NEW WAVE IN JAZZ—Impulse 90.

Rating: ★★★★★

There is no moment on this record when the spirit falters. The recording is live from the Village Gate, March 28, 1965, for the benefit of the Black Arts Repertory Theater/School. Aside from titling the album with their own trade-motto, Impulse has presented the music with exemplary noninterference.

The five groups cover a stylistic range from neo-bop (Tolliver) to the most severe avant-garde (Albert Ayler); they can be discussed in that order.

*Corners* is formed around a heavy unison post-Parker line, and the playing, especially by Spaulding, fits with the other groups mostly by virtue of contrast, as if to show us how much jazz has learned in so short a time. Spaulding's wide, lush, and very beautiful vibrato might make someone born before 1940 exclaim, "My God, it's getting late!"

Coltrane's long *Nature Boy* solo presents him with his usual intensity and with more than usual coherence; the group seems especially receptive.

*Free* is the most compositionally organized piece and, not surprisingly, is also the most calm and controlled statement.

Hutcherson's work is deliberately beautiful. The compositional spirit goes beyond the written music, however; the improvising is compositionally sensitive on a level rarely found in unwritten music. Even if the materials are less adventurous (whole-tone modality, for instance), the commitment of the individuals to the quartet is highly rewarding.

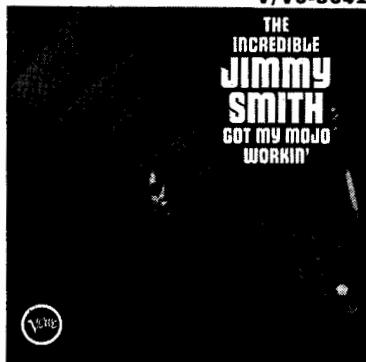
*Hambone* is a most brilliant and subtle musical satire.

There is no specific object; rather a general posture toward human life, human dignity. (The San Francisco Mime Troupe is called to mind.)

Shepp's playing is less vaulted than on other occasions; but this piece is so purposefully eclectic, so intentionally extra-musical that we listen with dramatic as well as musical ears and tend to think of the voices as principals as well as instru-

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**JIMMY SMITH**

swings all year every year, and 1966 is no exception. Hear the Jimmy Smith Trio in "Got My Mojo Working," and you'll know what it is and where it's at.

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**WES MONTGOMERY**

swings with a big band shouting him home. Oliver Nelson wrote the charts, Wes and the band make them live. "Goin' Out Of My Head" describes the sound and all that fury.



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ments. The piece uses a great variety of stylistic reference, from triadic harmonies and simple rhythms and sardonic quotes to avant-garde pan-meter and pan-modality; it begins somewhere past the middle of Duke Ellington and goes beyond.

Albert Ayler's *Ghost* is to my ears the top of the crest of the wave. To an astonishing degree it commands the suspension of critical judgment and succeeds in presenting itself full face forward to the listener on a level above quality, above personal like or dislike. It simply *is* what it *is*; it arrives at mere experience, much like a raga. Perhaps when there is more cultural and temporal separation between us and it (some more enlightened day?) this feeling will change.

Freedman's cello solo is like a dawn.

The music on this record strikes me as being completely true. I don't believe it can be meaningfully approached without interest in contemporary black culture. I don't believe that the isolationist position that conditions much of its origin is musically inaudible; nor can it be ignored. It is not necessary to know fully the relation of this work to its social climate. No one can; not now. It is enough to know that this direct song comes from something central to all our lives.

This LP is a set of definitive performances right off the top. The music is as full of bitterness as it is of restraint—but it is more full of *everything* than any other contemporary music (that's not a remark about quality). Human activity cannot become more serious (though no doubt it has been more mature when springing from periods less characterized by revolution).

Whatever it is, then, it's not entertainment. Highly recommended for both serious beginners and connoisseurs. (B.M.)

**Ornette Coleman**

AT TOWN HALL, 1962—ESP 1006: *The Ark; Doughnut; Sadness; Salute to Artists.*

Personnel: Tracks 1-3—Coleman, alto saxophone; Dave Izenzon, bass; Charles Moffett, drums. Track 4—Selwart Clarke, Nathan Goldstein, violins; Julian Barber, viola; Kermit Moore, cello.

Rating: ★★★★★

This rewarding album preserves a portion of the well-received New York Town Hall concert Coleman gave in December, 1962; though supposedly to be issued on Blue Note, the concert recordings have turned up on ESP. It is a pleasure, in any event, to have these additions to the Coleman discography, for he has been too long away from the recording microphones.

Three of the selections in this set are played by the altoist's trio; the fourth, *Salute*, a Coleman composition for string quartet and dedicated to the nonpareil Fine Arts Quartet, is executed by a group of top New York string players. This latter work, though employing occasionally interesting sonorities, is generally unadventurous and gives the impression of aimlessness—rather surprising considering the strong, exciting, daring stamp of Coleman's own playing-instantaneous composition.

*Salute* is little more than tepid Bela Bartok; there is little forward movement to the music (it never *leads* anywhere but,

rather, like one of those Moibus rings, seems forever wrapped up in itself), and it is surprisingly sedate melodically and rhythmically. The fault would appear to lie with the work itself, for the string players give it a handsome reading. The piece does reveal, however, that in 1962 Coleman had attained a mastery of the vocabulary of string-quartet writing (in that respect, the composition is not in the least lacking); all that remained was for him to speak in the idiom with the same fluency and persuasive force he brought to his own improvising at the time.

That instrumental and improvisational strength is evident in the three performances by his trio; they have the directness and sweeping power absent in the quartet performance. There is no hesitation, no letup in invention or intensity in Coleman's work on his horn. And his mastery is evident in every note he articulates.

I found the short, impressionistic piece, *Sadness*, the most effective track. Over Izenzon's iterative bass, Coleman's alto oozes the emotion of the title; it's a remarkable evocation of desolation and loneliness and is quite overpowering as a musical experience.

*Doughnut*, too, is interesting: there is a sort of sardonic calypso quality to the theme in parts, and Coleman's improvisation is fleet and unequivocal. Coleman often gave the impression of engaging in call-and-response playing—dueting with himself, as it were—and this antiphonal device is both quite pronounced and well conceived on *Doughnut*.

*Ark*, which comprises the whole first side of the album, goes on much too long to be wholly effective. Though Coleman's playing is shot through with marvelous things (he always surprises), and though there is a considerably higher percentage of wheat to chaff in his playing when contrasted with the work of some of his followers, there is just too much treading water while waiting for something to happen.

In Izenzon and Moffett, Coleman had—and has—two remarkably sensitive collaborators. The bassist in particular is a remarkable instrumentalist who creates considerable interest in his responsive playing to the leader's alto. Moffett is equally sensitive in his reactions to and anticipations of the work of the others.

One hopes that this is merely the first of a series from ESP that will document the December, 1962, Coleman concert in its entirety. There were, as I recall, a number of other important Coleman works given imaginative readings at the concert. This present LP is an important waystop on Coleman's musical odyssey. (P.W.)

**Coleman Hawkins**

COLEMAN HAWKINS AND THE TRUMPET KINGS—Emarcy 26011: *I Only Have Eyes for You; 'S Wonderful; I'm in the Mood for Love; Bean at the Met; Through for the Night; I'm Yours; Under a Blanket of Blue; Beyond the Blue Horizon; A Sbanty in Old Sbanty Town; My Man; El Salon de Gutbucket; Embraceable You.*

Personnel: Roy Eldridge or Joe Thomas or Buck Clayton or Charlie Shavers, trumpet; Trummy Young, trombone; Hawkins, tenor saxophone; Teddy Wilson or Earl Hines, piano; Teddy Walters, guitar; Billy Taylor or Slam Stewart, bass; Cozy Cole or Denzil Best, drums.

Rating: ★★★★★ 1/2

These performances originally were