

# JAZZ

By Francis Davis

## S H O R T T A K E S

Why it should be so is a complicated matter involving American social and cultural prejudices as well as foreign rates of exchange, but it's a fact that much of the bravest, truest jazz heard on record these last few years has come roundabout via European labels. Intriguing imports from Black Saint and Soul Note (Italy, distributed now by PolyGram Special Imports), Timeless (Holland, from Rounder and others) and hat-MUSICS (Switzerland, via New Music Distribution, 500 Broadway, New York City, NY 10012) dominate this month's new releases.

**Bill Dixon** — *November 1981* (Soul Note). It only reaffirms his status as a true revolutionary that the leading architect of the October Revolution in Jazz is probably no closer to the jazz mainstream now than during four nights of concerts that shook the world in 1964 (the tremors have been late arriving in some locales). Music as draconic, as unabashedly personal as Dixon's is seldom part of a mass movement. With only a free drummer and two grapping basses creating a groundswell below him on this double (half-studio, half-concert), he's necessarily less occupied with texture and harmonic placement than on his records with more horns. But the trade-off is a better opportunity to display the bristling, emotionally wounding solo style he's snatched from the jaws of a severely limited trumpet technique. Imports not only launch new careers these days; they allow financially marginal careers like Dixon's to continue, and for that we're all richer.

**Leo Smith** — *Go In Numbers* (Black Saint). This record of a New Daita Ahkri 1980 Kitchen concert isn't as eventful as some of the trumpeter/composer/theorist's other group efforts, but it introduces two major works, and there are gripping moments throughout: the leader's bullish solos; the Dwight Andrews tenor solo that gives "Illumination" direction and a center of gravity; lucid accompaniment by vibist Bobby Naughton and bassist Wes Brown; and four-way interplay that probably sounds so fresh and spontaneous because it was so scrupulously blocked out beforehand.

**Balkida Carroll** — *Shadows And Reflections* (Soul Note). Trumpeter Car-

roll plays a large role in the success of the new Muhai Richard Abrams big band LP. His own date resounds with echoes of 60s Blue Note and Miles, but also with personal, contemporary touches, like Carroll's high-register melodicism, Julius Hemphill's abrasive tonality, more-percussive-than-usual Anthony Davis' clusters and Pheeroan Ak Laff's shifting accents. Not indicative of everything Carroll can do, but very good, and a welcome sign that both Hemphill and bassist Dave Holland are fully recovered from their recent illnesses.

**George Adams & Don Pullen** — *Melodic Excursions* (Timeless). *Steve Lacy & Mal Waldron* — *Snake Out* (hat-MUSICS). **Giorgio Gaslini & Anthony Braxton** — *Four Pieces* (Dischi Della Quercia/PSI). Of these saxophone and piano duets, the Adams-Pullen is the most eloquent and exuberant, possibly because these two men play together so regularly. I've grown suspicious of their quintet's emotionalism, and I wasn't too impressed hearing them duet live last summer, but their LP is lusty and intelligent. Pullen's "Decisions" is especially good—a scudding scalar blues with tenor hysterics and thunderous piano crashes on the turnarounds. Iconoclasts Lacy and Waldron have recorded together before as members of small groups, but alone together they seem oddly independent of each other, with Waldron's heavy chords hemming Lacy in. Still, Lacy in particular is always worth hearing. So is the Braxton-Gaslini offering, even if Braxton's multiphonic configurations seem needlessly abstract at times. The Italian pianist is a spunky, peculiar talent we Americans should be better acquainted with.

**Peter Warren** — *Solidarity* (Japo/PSI). The bassist from Special Edition casts himself in a supporting role even as a leader. But in league with drummer/producer Jack DeJohnette, he urges powerful blowing from saxophonist John Purcell, guitarist John Scofield and trombonist Ray Anderson—not that the mercurial Anderson needs much urging. The two tracks featuring Anderson are the main reasons for seeking this one out, but all of it is intensely, viscerally satisfying.

**String Trio Of New York** — *Common*

*Goal* (Black Saint). Another poised effort by violinist Billy Bang, guitarist James Emery and bassist John Lindberg—one of the best working bands around (when they can find work, that is). Even at their most fragmented, convoluted and scratchingly contrapuntal, these three-part inventions (the ones written by Emery in particular) maintain a lift and tang that recall the Hot Club of Paris and the *scherzo* movements of the world's best-loved symphonies.

**Jimmy Lyons** — *Riffs* (hatMUSICS). The young bassist and drummer here are both very quick. Bassoonist Karen Borca has staying power and a big, agile tone, and it's always enlightening to hear the superb altoist Lyons away from the Cecil Taylor unit. But Lyons' solos here seem to go on way too long, probably because the riffs they're built on, however propulsive they are, can't really supply thematic continuity and can't channel Lyons' molten energy the way Taylor's piano can.

**George Sams** — *Nomadic Winds* (hat-MUSICS). The impressive if uneven debut (he's new to me at least) of a Bay Area trumpeter who achieves startling effects with Bowie-like valve manipulation, guttural overblowing and thick, thorny leads shared with India Cooke's violin. I just wish Sams hadn't sacrificed consistency for variety. And putting the most boring cut on side one, track one, is hardly the way to catch the ear of a weary reviewer.

**Kim Parker** — *Havin' Myself A Time* (Soul Note). **Kenny Drew** — *Your Soft Eyes* (Soul Note). Parker is Bird's stepdaughter (as well as Phil Woods'). Despite some intonation problems, she's also a very promising singer, with a mirthful sensitivity to lyrics and good taste in songwriters (Arlen, Porter, Ellington...). She rarely feels obliged to scat (hooray!). Drew's trio supports her nicely. The pianist's own date is the latest in the series of good ones he's made in Europe; he's a much more tuneful player now than when he was a ubiquitous New York sideman in the late 50s.

**Art Blakey** — *Oh, By The Way* (Timeless). Blakey's got himself a tuneful new pianist (Johnny O'Neal) and a new trumpeter too (Terence Blanchard). The latter is nineteen, looks about twelve, has a few precarious moments here, is no