

# JAZZ

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

**Jim Pepper** — *Comin' And Goin'* (Europa); **Gato Barbieri** — *Para Los Amigos* (Doctor Jazz); **Jan Garbarek** — *Wayfarer* (ECM). These three tenor saxophonists (one a Native American, one an Argentine, one a Norwegian, all veterans of an era in which the tenor saxophone became the clenched fist of the black liberation movement in jazz, in Frank Kofsky's oft-quoted phrase) deserve respect for struggling to preserve their cultural self-identities, problematical though the results of their struggles often may be. Pepper's celebration of his tribal heritage may ultimately prove as tiresome and transparent a shtick as Barbieri's socio-political variation on the Latin spitfire routine did in the 70s. But all celebrations should be as celebratory as Pepper's! In limited doses, his hearty tenor leaps, and crusty chants and hollers are novel and tough to resist. And when you consider he's invited to record only once a decade or so, you find it easy to forgive him for reprising the infectious "Witchi Tia To" on each of his LPs, especially since this latest full-blooded effort is such a far cry from the paleface Brewer & Shipley cover most of you will remember. This production is flawless, and the supporting cast is stellar with Nana Vasconcelos, Collin Walcott, John Scofield, Kenny Werner and an uncharacteristically moist and Milesian Don Cherry among those comin' and goin'.

The Doctor Jazz live double is Barbieri's best showcase in some time, with a churning Latin rhythm section and absolutely no sweeteners. But four sides of Barbieri blowing full steam convinces me more than ever he's a one-dimensional character actor who was perfectly cast to type on several of Carla Bley's more scenic opuses, but who falters quickly under the burden of carrying a lead role.

I don't think I've ever heard Garbarek play better than he plays on *Wayfarer*; then again, I've never been much of a fan. But it would appear as though Garbarek's continuing maturation as a composer and bandleader is resulting in his becoming a livelier, less solemn soloist, too—witness the title track's Mingus-y accelerations of tempo, which playfully mock his dolorous timbre and the mea-

sured reserve of his phrases. And witness the care with which he has assembled a unit that beautifully underlines the catch-in-the-throat which has always been his most attractive characteristic as a player. (With Eberhard Weber, bass; Michael DiPasqua, percussion; and Bill Frisell, a sensitive guitarist who manages at times to sound as though he has a "catch" in his hands.)

**Amina Claudine Meyers** — *The Circle Of Time* (Black Saint/PSI). She's so versatile she's one of a kind, and that could be why she's been so grievously overlooked—it's hard to pin convenient labels on a pianist with so encyclopedic a style, much less a singer at once so dramatic and sweetly unaffected. Here, with valuable assistance from drummer Thurman Barker and bassist Don Pate, she does a little bit of everything, from sanctified rejoicing to free-form inward gazing. And does it all with skill, needless to say, and with the kind of absolute conviction that rules mere eclecticism out of the discussion.

**Randy Weston** — *Blue* (1750 Arch, from New Music Distribution Service, 500 Broadway, New York, NY 10012). The opportunity to spread his fingers across the length of a nine-foot Steinway concert grand has resulted in what is perhaps the most whimsically expansive of the many solo recitals this veteran pianist has recorded. And both his teasing homage to Ellington and his many sly paraphrases of Monk suggest that the wisdom of inimitable role models is that you'll eventually wind up sounding pretty inimitable yourself.

**Toshiko Akiyoshi & Lew Tabackin** — *European Memoirs* (Ascent, Box 20135, New York, NY 10025). Save for the co-leaders, the orchestra lacks convincing soloists, and Akiyoshi's travelogues of Italy, Germany and the Austrian Alps are too episodic to realize their programmatic intentions. But her memorial to Bud Powell is a haunting work, masterful both for its overall orchestral tapestry and for the piano stitchery that holds the tapestry together.

**John Patton** — *Soul Connection* (Nilva/N.M.D.S.). Under the direction of drummer Alvin Queen, Nilva is becoming a much-needed haven for veteran players who have dropped out of the

public eye and time-honored styles which have fallen out of fashion at the majors. Patton is as distinctive an organist today as he was when he was leading dates for Blue Note in the 60s, and over the years he has become more adventurous without sacrificing any of his earthiness. Here he leads a proud, tough quintet featuring trombonist Grachan Moncur III—himself an intriguing figure not much heard from these days.

**Stephan Roane** — *Keeping A Secret* (Mothlight, 7 No. Cottemet Street, Irvington, NY 10533). A sturdy young bassist steering a quartet/quintet through a thoughtful but fiercely swinging program of his own compositions (and Coltrane's "Naima"). With saxophonist Richard Grando, pianist Noreen Grey and drummer Gerry Fitzgerald—all likeable newcomers—and the shamefully neglected veteran altoist Frank Strozier.

**Space** — *An Interesting Breakfast Conversation* (1750 Arch/N.M.D.S.). Free improvisations, some alarming and alluring (credit Roscoe Mitchell and Gerald Oshita's powerful saxophone conjunctions), some arid (blame Tom Bruckner's "extended" voice, not as flexible or emotionally resonant an instrument), some recorded live at the Public last spring, all of them tightly focused—this last no small achievement in itself.

**Ned Rothenberg** — *Portal* (Lumina/N.M.D.S.). One comes away from these works for solo alto and soprano saxophones and bass clarinet (with Rothenberg simultaneously doubling ocarina on one piece and trap drums on still another, on which Gerry Hemingway also adds steel drums) impressed not only with Rothenberg's mastery of such performance techniques as multiphonics and circular breathing, but also with his broad vision and pristine sense of development as a composer. Difficult listening, and well worth the effort.

**Alan Broadbent & Putter Smith** — *Continuity* (Revelation/N.M.D.S.). Pianist Broadbent's overly brainy charts for Woody Herman in the early-70s hardly prepare you for the warm heart and solid muscle of his duets with bassist Smith on this record which started off near the bottom of this month's pile and has quickly worked its way up near the top.