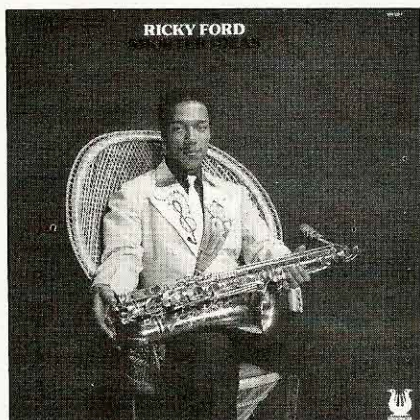


JAZZ

S·H·O·R·T T·A·K·E·S



Ricky Ford — *Shorter Ideas* (Muse). The young tenor saxophonist's dynamic work as a sideman with Charles Mingus, George Russell, Gil Evans and Abdullah Ibrahim promises more than he has so far delivered on his own LPs. Still, his sixth album for Muse comes closer to tapping his potential than its predecessors. His sextet scorings capture the motility and intrigue of Shorter's music without resorting to carbon-copy likenesses. Even more encouraging, his two originals (a pensive, semisweet ballad and a stutter calypso a la Sonny Rollins) suggest that he is quickly entering Shorter's league as a writer, and his enlargement of Duke Ellington's "Happy Reunion" (originally a quartet showcase for tenor saxophonist Paul Gonsalves) is a satisfying final touch. The colorful supporting cast includes pianist (and fellow Shorter-phile) Kirk Lightsey, trombonist Jimmy Knepper and the criminally neglected alto saxophonist and flutist James Spaulding.

Bobby Hutcherson — *Good Bait* (Landmark). Here's a convenient rule of thumb regarding Bobby Hutcherson LPs. If horns are present and Hutcherson's vibraphone is the only chording instrument involved, expect spacious, churning, sharp-edged music similar to his work behind Eric Dolphy and Jackie McLean on those prescient mid-60s Blue Notes. If a pianist is added to the lineup, expect no more than bland efficiency. The pianist on this new date is the efficient George Cables, and the lone horn is the ultra-efficient saxophonist Branford Marsalis.

Marty Ehrlich — *The Welcome* (Sound Aspects, available from North Country Distributors, Cadence Building, Red-

wood, NY 13679). Ehrlich's versatility (he plays alto saxophone, flute, clarinet and bass clarinet with equal authority) has served him well in interpreting the scores of such composers as Muhal Richard Abrams, Anthony Davis, Leroy Jenkins and George Russell. But on his first outing as a leader (with bassist Anthony Cox and drummer Pheeroan ak Laff), he displays an improvisatory reach that makes versatility seem the least of his virtues. Recommended.

Ronald Shannon Jackson & the Decoding Society — *Decode Yourself* (Island). According to the press release, the drummer decided "to further electrify the Decoding Society's sound" by adding a drum computer and Onaje Allan Gumbs' Yamaha DX7 keyboard synthesizer. That was his first mistake. The second was enlisting the services of intellectual hitmaker Bill ("Recontextualize That Funky Music, White Boy") Laswell, whose hyperbolic production values put the chill on whatever natural juices were still left. Is harmolodics an idea whose time has gone?

Horace Silver — *Live 1964* (Emerald, PO Box 7000-306, Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90274). In light of Silver's demonstrated rapport with audiences, it's odd that he's made so few in-person recordings over the years. This previously unissued date featuring the *Song For My Father* band (with trumpeter Carmel Jones and tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson) playing Silver compositions of a slightly earlier vintage ("Filthy McNasty," "Senor Blues," etc.) is therefore quite a find—a live album that kicks almost as hard as the 1962 classic *Doin' The Thing At The Village Gate* (out of print, naturally. Are you listening, EMI?).

Hank Mobley — *Far Away Lands*; **Lee Morgan** — *The Rajah* (both Blue Note). The rebirth of the Blue Note label means, among other things, previously unissued bounty from the Blue Note vaults, beginning with these two sessions from the late 60s, one led by tenor saxophonist Mobley, the other featuring him as Morgan's front line accomplice. Both albums are palatable examples of the Blue Note formula of the period, with tricky time signatures, exclamatory blowing, Billy Higgins' irresistible drumming, and bids for "The Sidewinder"-like jukebox hits. If your budget dictates choosing between them, go for the Morgan—the compositions are more far

reaching (particularly Calvin Massey's "A Pilgrim's Funny Farm"), Mobley's solos are even lustier, and Morgan bruises him harder than Donald Byrd, the trumpeter on *Far Away Lands*. Also recommended on Blue Note: *Tippin' The Scales*, powerful Jackie McLean from that fertile transitional period between *Let Freedom Ring* and *One Step Beyond* (previously issued only in Japan).

Bud Freeman — *The Real Bud Freeman 1984* (Principally Jazz Productions, available from Swingville Jazz, 3344 N. Clark St., Chicago, IL 60657). Few soloists Freeman's age (seventy-nine in April) are as harmonically intrepid, and fewer soloists of any age are as ebullient or inventive. Since the tenor saxophonist likes nothing better than for his sidemen to give him a real tussle, the bebopping busyness of the Chicago rhythm section on this new release is no drawback. Indeed, "The Man I Love" boasts one of the juiciest Freeman solos on record, and the rest is nearly as good, particularly the date's two ballads, one a duet with pianist Stu Katz, the other a duet with guitarist Bob Roberts. The Chicago-based label PJP is off to a promising start with this, and with *Conserving NRG* by cornetist/tenor saxophonist/vibist/drummer **Hal Russell** and his **NRG Ensemble**—an album of satisfying post-Coleman eruptions in the best Chicago iconoclastic tradition.

Joe Newman & Joe Wilder — *Hangin' Out* (Concord Jazz). Since both of these graybeard trumpeters are masters of the sly retort, it figures that their joint effort would be a battle of wits rather than a stratospheric duel to the finish. It also figures that any album they made together would be delightful, and *Hangin' Out* is—with the erudite Hank Jones interjecting some clever jibes of his own from the piano bench, and bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith making sure the youngbloods also get a say.

Shankar — *Song For Everyone* (ECM). The various minimalistic, ethnic and (surprise!) funk influences that have been peeking through on some recent ECMs is even more pronounced here, and it's a welcome development. Saxophonist Jan Garbarek brings much needed lyrical depth to violinist L. Shankar's music, and percussionists Zakir Hussain and Trilok Gurtu offset Garbarek's ruminations nicely. [CD]

Francis Davis