

## Jazz ★

Collector

By Charles Waring

An undisputed giant of the modern jazz age, the enigmatic composer/pianist **THELONIOUS MONK** came to prominence during the bebop era of the late 40s, though his music – angular, quirky and sometimes dissonant – wasn't totally in tune with what Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie were doing. Monk, in fact, forged his own distinctive path in jazz, as is vividly illustrated on a terrific new 2CD compilation, **'Round Midnight: The Complete Blue Note Singles 1947-1952** (★★★★★ Blue Note). It contains 29 sides released as 78s (plus 18 alternate takes), including early versions of songs that would go on to become classics in the jazz repertoire, among them 'Round About Midnight, Well You Needn't, Epistrophy, and Ruby, My Dear. The newly remastered sound is superlative and reveals fresh detail in recordings that are almost 70 years old.

Still with Monk, the pianist's first ever trio LP, **Thelonious Monk Trio** (★★★★★ Essential Jazz Classics) is reissued. It was originally cut for Riverside in 1952, with Art Blakey and Max Roach alternating on drums, and is appended with nine bonus tracks, including four recorded at the 1958 Newport Jazz Festival.

A later, mid-50s, stint at the Riverside label yielded two classic Monk albums, **Plays Duke Ellington** and **The Unique Thelonious Monk**, which are brought together on an ace twofer (★★★★★ Essential Jazz Classics). In the 60s, Monk enjoyed a fertile spell at Columbia; his first album for the label – which became the bestselling record of his career – was the sensational **Monk's Dream** (★★★★★ Masterworks), a quartet studio date featuring Charlie Rouse on saxophone.

Like Monk, the incomparable and profoundly influential pianist/singer-songwriter **MOSE ALLISON** – who's inspired everyone from The Who and The Clash to Van Morrison and Pixies – developed his own unique, idiosyncratic style that melded an ironic sense of wit and humour with country-blues inflections and a bebop-esque vocabulary. Born in Mississippi, Allison went to New York and signed, aged 29, to the Prestige label in 1957. A splendid new box set, **Complete Prestige Recordings 1957-1959**

(★★★★★ Fresh Sound), presents his entire output for the label on three CDs (there are six albums in all: *Black Country Suite, Local Color, Young Man Mose, Ramblin' With Mose, Creek Bank* and *Autumn Song*).

Jazz's own Time Lord, **DAVE BRUBECK** – renowned for experimenting with unorthodox time signatures – also played piano with a singular style (largely the result of nerve damage he suffered after damaging his neck vertebrae in a beach accident). His classic quartet joined forces with classical conductor/composer Leonard Bernstein in 1960 for the album **Brubeck Plays Bernstein** (★★★★★ Essential Jazz Classics). Long out of print and criminally overlooked, it's a sensational example of symphonic jazz with the four-part Bernstein-composed orchestral suite, *Dialogues For Jazz Combo And Orchestra*, really catching the ear. Brubeck's *Jazz Impressions Of Japan* LP – another largely unheralded opus – is added as a welcome bonus on a CD whose audio quality is top-notch.

Also in 1960, another, younger, pianist – who was classically taught – was trying to make his way in the jazz world. **HAROLD CORBIN** was a young Philly musician whose musical legacy is sadly small, due to his death from a drugs overdose at 29. A few months before his demise he released a solitary LP, **Soul Brother** (★★★★★ Fresh Sound), which is now reissued for the first time and consists of energetic soul-jazz grooves.

Moving on to the 70s, Ace's Boplicity imprint has unveiled three hard-to-find and largely forgotten jazz albums. The most obscure is from saxophonist/flautist **HADLEY CALIMAN** (Santana devotees may remember his early 70s stint with the band), whose solo debut for Bob Shad's Mainstream label, **Hadley Caliman** (★★★★★ Boplicity), is an alluring synthesis of modal and spiritual jazz with funk undertones.

Also new to CD are a couple of mid-70s albums by journeyman South Carolina saxophonist **HOUSTON PERSON** (who's still going strong at 80). *Houston Person '75* and *Get Out'a My Way* (★★★★★ Westbound) are now combined on a tasty twofer and spotlight his melodic yet muscular brand of smoothly executed soul-jazz.

Soul-jazz is also in abundance on trumpeter **BLUE MITCHELL**'s 1971 debut for Mainstream, **Blue**



The wheel deal:  
Roller Trio

**Mitchell** (★★★★ Boplicity). A sideman with Horace Silver in the early 60s, Mitchell recorded for Riverside and Blue Note before landing at Mainstream, where he laid down six LPs. This, the first of them, is a solid yet eminently soulful session with the funky Soul Village and the hard-bop-infused *Blues For Thelma* being the standout tracks.

During the same timeframe, Bob Shad also signed singer **SARAH VAUGHAN** to his label. **A Time In My Life** (★★★★ Boplicity) was cut while the chanteuse's recording career was in decline, but it helped to revive her waning fortunes, thanks to ace charts from Basie arranger Ernie Wilkins, good contemporary material (including tunes by Marvin Gaye, Bob Dylan and John Lennon) and strong vocal performances.

1971 also saw Joe Zawinul and Wayne Shorter form **WEATHER REPORT**. Originally issued in a long-box format in 2006, the band's excellent career-spanning box set **Forecast: Tomorrow** (★★★★★ Columbia/Legacy) is now available again in downsized, compact packaging. Comprising three CDs and a two-hour DVD capturing a Jaco Pastorius-era line-up live in Germany, priced at £15 it represents an absolute steal and is highly recommended as an entry-level overview of one of the jazz-fusion movement's most exciting practitioners.

While Weather Report were experimenting with electronics, **KEITH JARRETT** was keeping the acoustic jazz tradition alive. **Hamburg '72** (★★★★★ ECM) is an absorbing previously unissued live recording with the pianist (who also multitasks on flute, soprano sax and percussion), accompanied by long-time confreres Charlie Haden and Paul Motian.

One of this month's best new albums is the stunning **Fracture** (★★★★★ Lamplightsocial), the

second long-player by the highly touted Leeds-based sax-guitar-drums combo **ROLLER TRIO**. By turns muscular and cerebral, it ups the ante from their acclaimed debut, marrying jazz improv with rock dynamics.

Another homegrown trio whose music evinces a keen exploratory edge is **TROYKA**, led by keyboardist Kit Downes. Their third outing, **Ornithophobia** (★★★★★ Naim), is an unclassifiable yet arresting synthesis of sounds and styles (including electronica, jazz and prog). Even more far out is the new album by noted US avant-gardist **MANTANA ROBERTS**. **Coin Coin Chapter Three: River Run Thee** (★★★★★ Constellation), is a haunting, densely textured aural collage of interwoven vocals and discursive instrumental tones.

Hailing from Norway is the brilliant young saxophonist, **MARIUS NESET**. **Pinball** (★★★★★ ACT), with its careening saxophone melodies riding on a blaze of polyrhythmic colour, is a stupendous quintet session and unequivocally the saxophonist's most impressive outing yet.

Neset is still in his 20s, so has a long way to travel if he can match the longevity of 81-year-old Louisiana sax veteran **SONNY SIMMONS**, who, together with French band **MOKSHA SAMNYASIN**, has unleashed **Nomadic** (★★★★★ Svart), a sensational mélange of psych-rock, Indian ragas and free jazz that's driven by Thomas Bellier's throbbing electric basslines and features mesmeric sitar drones.

Finally, the ubiquitous jazz man in the cap, Gregory Porter, turns up again alongside Melody Gardot and Lianna La Havas on **Round Nina** (★★★★★ Verve), an enjoyable various-artists' homage to the inimitable Nina Simone, featuring fresh takes on some of the chanteuse's classic repertoire.

Haines' latest skewed, cutting view of the world finds a Mark E Smith impersonator en route to a caravan holiday crashing his knackered car into Skrewdriver frontman, Ian Stewart's vehicle...

We're not making this up. Haines is. And, underneath the wacky, slightly disjointed narrative lay five of Haines' most satisfying songs of

recent years (and an unnecessary kazoo version of Jerusalem). When he does pastiche, he does it better than anyone – be it the Fall-like drones and lyrics of *Cats That Look Like MES* ("in tea tray laptop, on internet"), or the lilting dub of the closing title track. His voice is sharper than ever too, confident in its owner's

absurdity, scathing, but with an eye for detail that reels off the different types of caravans and cars featured in the story.

So, it's a mini album, of no fixed musical style, with a far from comprehensible but usually hilarious narrative. It's got to the point when you expect nothing less from Luke Haines. *Jake Kennedy*

## Half Japanese Volume 2: 1987-1998

★★★★★

Fire FIRECD 343 (CD / LP)

Latest instalment in brilliant reissue series

Arguably the most original and influential US band of the 80s (at least), David and Jad Fair's Half Japanese sound as exciting, dangerous and downright bizarre today as

they ever did. Fresh from the triumph of last year's wonderful new album *Overjoyed*, this is the second of four volumes reintroducing the band's entire catalogue to the world. The individual discs are reproductions of the original albums, grouped together along with new artwork from Jad and sleeve notes from both brothers.

Photos (Roller Trio): Tom Thiel