

## ARTS

# Jazzers make beautiful music together

by Trevor Campbell  
Bluesiana  
A&M Records

When I first heard the term "New Age" Music and learned of its low-key style, I immediately rejected it.

My denial of the New Age experience was not based on insight gained through hours of listening. I simply concluded that it was another fad for urban professionals to indulge in. I sensed that this ambitious generation, growing weary of their race for the brass ring, now needed to slow down.

I pictured people dressed in earth coloured sarongs sitting crossed-legged in their candle-lit living rooms, sipping herbal drinks and talking in hushed tones. Incense would permeate air that barely moved with the resonance of the pastoral waves created by this non-threatening music.

It made sense that after a day of high powered business dealings, that these people would need to slow down to an easier pace.

I prefer a balance of loud and soft tones as opposed to the monotonous tranquility favored by some "boo-

mers" of the present age. Be it jazz, hip-hop, or classical, I like dynamic music because of the varied moods it produces.

Give me a trumpeter's loud burst of notes racing up a scale that can go no further; the music extending itself into a tight mix that needs the release of a screaming crescendo that trails off into a low lament.

As I understand it, New Age music refuses this dynamism and instead prefers the middle-range where it can float, neither on nor above ground, neither in front nor behind real objects.

This music is an aural decoration meant to aid relaxation and designed to ease the listener into green pastures and azure skies.

I have not listened to much of this Zen-spirituality-captured-on-vinyl, but I am familiar with Zamfir, who was New Age during the Old Age. Assuming that the late seventies, early eighties, when Zamfir first gained prominence, was the Old Age.

For me, Zamfir represents a person who perhaps, at one time, was

employed in the relaxation tape business. He probably dabbled with his flute before realizing the similarities between the sound of his instrument and the sound of the summer breezes, often used on relaxation tapes.

Being smart and having access to the leisure-recording studios, he produced his first album, became a success, and waited for the New Age.

This theory brings me to the *Bluesiana Triangle*, a new album by the late Art Blakey, Dr. John, and David "Fathead" Newman, three musicians versed within the dynamic styles of jazz and blues.

Surprisingly this collection has very little to do with jazz and blues but instead approaches the muted tones of New Age music.

Each song floats along at a cut-time pace that rarely changes tempo. However, to my astonishment, these songs possess a strength that I never imagined could even remotely be associated with this genre.

Granted, Blakey et al are jazzers and bluesman first, and therefore I

could argue that *Bluesiana Triangle* is simply a laid-back collection mannered within these two styles. However once I heard the uninspired vocals on "Shoo Fly," and felt myself fading into conscious limbo, I knew that these three musicians had crossed-over.

Fortunately they have not compromised their past preferences but have instead infused the energy of jazz and the emotion of blues into their album. Thus creating a hybrid that produces pastoral images where a gusting wind occasionally rustles the grass.

They have achieved this blend by reducing the music's dynamic range while maintaining the tension and release present within their usual idioms.

After all, the root of "Bluesiana" is blues, a music style known to use redundant laments and low-keyed progressions.

Due to its emotive qualities, I could never criticize blues for being background fodder. Listening to good blues is like listening to a friend tell me an unfortunate story. By

empathizing with the storyteller I feel connected with them, I feel like I am helping them and therefore I feel good about myself.

Although *Bluesiana Triangle's* pace is consistent, the musical styles are not. This album moves from New Age, to folk, to progressive jazz with an ease reminiscent of Elton John's 1976, album *Blue Moves*. An album that also fluctuates between the twang of country music and the "cool" progressions of night-club jazz.

Indeed the "Blue" in both album's titles definitely alludes to the Afro/Anglo-American influences found in most contemporary North-American music.

Perhaps, because of the turmoil caused by the mixture of styles, this fusion of genres demands vibrant sounds. Either way, *Bluesiana Triangle* has made me re-evaluate my feelings about New Age music by challenging me to listen more sensitively. So with my ears opened wide, I am off in search of narrow dynamic ranges which might possess the energy that I previously missed.

## Dark film uses comedy to avoid dramatic overkill

by Kim Yu

*Cyrano De Bergerac*  
directed by Jean-Paul Rappeneau  
produced by Hachette Premiere et Cie

Jean-Paul Rappeneau's *Cyrano De Bergerac*, starring Gerard Depardieu in the title role, is a dark and somber film.

The story is naturally familiar to all who endure the pangs of unrequited love. Cyrano, in love with his beautiful cousin, Roxanne (Anne Brochet), cannot bring himself to express this sentiment, especially after she reveals her secret adoration for Christian, (Vincent Perez), a Gascon under his command. Instead, in some masochistic twist, he convinces Christian to allow him to write letters of love for the inarticulate soldier.

Rappeneau, along with co-writer Jean-Claude Carriere, manages to inject humour into what would appear to be a tragic story. Winner of the Best Actor Award at Cannes last year, Depardieu gives a brilliant performance as the poetic swordsman with the slightly oversized proboscis. Playing on the audience's sympathies, he manages to convey noble suffering without becoming too melodramatic or sappy.

Perez is wonderful as the inept Christian whose limited eloquence amounts to repetitions of "I love you" and "I love you a lot." Brochet is also convincing as the delicate damsel who swoons with the slightest poetic provocation.

*Cyrano De Bergerac* features grand battle scenes and impressive cinematography. It was shot on location in France and Hungary, with over 2,000 extras. The death scene is a little long, but, then again, perhaps that is the challenge for a true thespian or film, lover.

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