

New jazz from old masters

Steve Hacker

Columbia Records has put together another set of finds from its vaults of unreleased sessions of some jazz masters and, fortunately, four of the series have been released in Canada.

One of the most interesting is Miles Davis live at the Plugged Nickel, a 1965 double set featuring the influential quintet - Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter, and Tony Williams. This session is from the early days of that classic combination, and Davis was definitely in a playful, more

adventurous mood. Two songs written for the landmark *Kind of Blue* album are performed, but in a much quicker tempo. The strong performances of Shorter and the twenty-year-old drummer, Tony Williams, are just hints of the important music that was to come from these men.

The Master is a previously unreleased Stan Getz recording from 1975. This hard blowing session is a personal favourite of our female editor. The other two albums in the series are a live date with the late Thelonius Monk and his quartet, *Live at the Jazz Workshop* which mainly sticks to the Monk songbook (*Well You Needn't*, *Round Midnight*) and a double set of assorted live performances from Newport Jazz Festivals of the early '60's with the likes of Ben Webster

and Lester Young.

The Nightfly (Warner Bros.) Donald Fagen's first post-Steely Dan effort may provide these fans who suffered through the "Gaucho" period with a pleasant surprise. Fagen has eliminated the whining edge his voice had picked up over the last few albums and the lyrics have improved too. No longer do we have to endure songs about being trendy in California. Instead, Fagen has collected songs that represent (as the liner notes reveal) his fantasies as a suburban youth growing up in the late Fifties and early Sixties. The lyrics are nostalgic and optimistic: Love in the Bombshelter ("New Frontier"), the all-night jazz D.J. ("The Nightfly") and, of course, the single "I.G.Y."

The music itself is upbeat and jazzy and the production is slick a la Steely Dan. Many of the studio people Fagen has employed in the past are back, but gone thankfully are the Tom Scott horn arrangements.

There certainly is life after Steely Dan for Donald Fagen, but what of Walter Becker?

EXTRACTS

Wild Things Run Fast

Joni Mitchell

Geffen Records

Howard Goldstein

There are those who think that middle age has brought contentment to Joni Mitchell-Contentment that Great Evil, that most tepid of states.

The thinking is that this new smugness has taken away the cutting edge that was the heart of her work for many years.

On the basis of *Wild Things Run Fast*, one has to wonder where these critics get their information from. For while it is true that her new album is superficially a fun, fast paced recording, beneath it one can still detect enough of Mitchell's traditional bittersweet depictions to question her supposed contentment.

The album seems to borrow from each of her recent recordings. Aided by such able and diverse musicians as James Taylor, Lionel Ritchie, and Wayne Shorter, Mitchell has combined the best of her previous recording styles in a favourable way. The rock and roll energy and guitars of "Court and Spark"; the outright jazziness of "Mingus"; the meditative introspection of "Hejira"-they are all here. And they are brought together with those two qualities that make Joni Mitchell stand out among pop vocalists - taste and intelligence.

A must for those who take popular music seriously.

PATHS, PRINTS

JAN GARBARET

ECM RECORDS

Howard Goldstein

Paths, Prints is Norwegian reed player, Jan Garbarek's newest recording for ECM. For the most part, it features the same band that he brought to Toronto to highlight the recent ECM Jazz mini-festival (the only change being Jon Christensen replacing Michael DiPasqua on drums).

The album contains a wide variety of different composition from the jungle atmosphere of "Footprints", to the straightforward upbeat "Kite Dance". In each instance, it is Garbarek's playing that dominates and sets the mood. Whether it is on bamboo flute or tenor saxophone, Garbarek manages to inject the passion and high energy needed to make this otherwise lethargic music catch the listener's ear.

He is helped by the German electric bass stylist, Eberhard Weber, and American guitarist Bill Frisell (who sounds like a good 'ole country-picker who got an echoplex for Christmas); but in the end, it is Garbarek who makes the difference.

A fine introduction into the multi-musical world of one of Europe's finest musicians.

Fellini favorite

For that Fellini lover on your gift list, *Amarcord Nino Rota* (Hannibal Records) is sure to please. The late Nino Rota was the composer whose themes coloured Fellini films such as *Eight and One Half*, *Juliet of the Spirits*, and *La Dolce Vita*. The album consists of interpretations of Rota's music by an eclectic mix of jazz musicians including Steve Lacy, Wynton Marsalis, Jaki Byard, and Carla Bley's big band. Also included are Chris Stein and Deborah Harry of Blondie fame. This beautifully packaged album is faithful to the spirit of Rota's music and should satisfy music fans and Fellini/Rota fans alike.



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