

JAZZ

1981

By Jon Pareles

SHORT TAKES

In a daring break with tradition, this columnist would like to start out by recognizing the accomplishments of AC/DC, Manhattan Transfer, Foreigner and Stevie Nicks — said accomplishments adding up to the fact that Atlantic Records apparently considers itself solvent enough to write off six reissues of albums that never should have been deleted: **Ornette Coleman's** *Twins* (a 1971 compilation), **Mingus' *Pithecanthropus Erectus*** (1956), **Hubert Laws' *The Laws of Jazz*** (1965), **Joe Turner's *The Boss Of The Blues*** (1956), **Keith Jarrett's *Somewhere Before*** (1969) and **Milt Jackson's *Plenty, Plenty Soul*** (1957).

Three of the four tracks on the Mingus LP have rightfully appeared on Atlantic's two best-ofs; the restored-to-print one is the 15-minute "Love Chant," a blues-bop-and-vamp outing with some fine spiky Mal Waldron piano. It's also a pleasure to read Mingus' own liner notes, which say how the music is put together and then shut up. *The Laws Of Jazz*, with young Chick Corea's *bomba* infiltrating Laws' blues, features the best jazz piccolo I can think of, and makes me wish Laws had never discovered strings or classical paraphrases. On *Boss Of The Blues*, Joe Turner shouts great good-hearted joy as always, and the horn section work from 25 years ago is better than any money could buy these days. *Plenty, Plenty Soul* had Jackson fronting a nonet (side one) and a sextet (side two) with horns arranged by Quincy Jones, including Cannonball Adderley, Frank Foster and Lucky Thompson. The nonet was kicked into gear by Art Blakey, which makes Connie Kay sound even more mild-mannered than usual on side two; the tradeoff is that pianist Horace Silver gets more space to be sly. Jackson is at minimum polished, and in "Heartstrings" Adderley encourages him to drop a few tears on his tux.

Heard now, *Somewhere Before* sounds like Jarrett, Charlie Haden and Paul Motian were warming up for *Expectations* — as if the volumes of Jarrett's jazz encyclopedia were still on opposite shelves, marked "melodic" and "deranged" — but they had already worked out their intersecting-tangents trio style. As for *Twins*, which comprises Coleman outtakes from *Free Jazz, The Shape Of Jazz To Come, This Is Our Music,*



Ornette and Change Of The Century — i.e., 1959-61 — the performances are a bit more relaxed and playful than those on the other LPs, and every bit as worthy, especially the double quartet's "First Take."

Listening to *Twins* back-to-back with the new live **Old And New Dreams** LP, *Playing* (ECM), brought home the difference between the band with and without Coleman. Simple: the blues. At their headiest, Old and New Dreams can sound like Rapidograph doodling — all exquisite fine lines — begging for a big funky blot. Don't get me wrong, they're a helluva band and they know exactly what they're doing, but it's quite a ways from Coleman's earthiness to Old and New Dreams' one-worldism. *Playing* is even breezier than last year's ECM debut; the time together shows mostly in Cherry's wonderful sense of leisure amid the band's bustle. Hey Manfred — howabout some bass on the bass drum?

The happy surprise of the month is a band (and album) called **Commitment** (Flying Panda Records, 62 St. John's Place, 1st floor, Brooklyn, NY 11217, or via New Music Distribution Service, 500 Broadway, NYC, 10012. I've never heard of Jason Hwang (violin), Will Connell Jr. (flute, alto sax, bass clarinet), William Parker (bass) or Takeshi Zen Matsuura (drums), which is definitely my loss; Commitment is one of those abstractionist bands that makes you forget you're listening to separate instruments as the music pulses and twines. Hwang's violin, once I wrested it from its quizzicality that reminds me of Peking Opera sopranos; his compositions use stillness and sustained notes pur-



posefully. The closest comparison is to Air; Commitment is less droll and telegraphic, more earnest and meditative, and thoroughly individual.

More deliberate and less successful Air lore comes from the Swiss trio of percussionist **Pierre Favre**, bassist **Leon Francioli** and reedman **Michel Portal**, whose *Arrivederci Le Chouartse* (hat Hut 2R22, via NMDS), could have used stricter editing in the players' heads and in the studio. Favre and Francioli both get around their instruments well and have a way with funny noises, but the full trio settles too often for derivative freebop.

Contemporary (Box 2628, Los Angeles, CA 90028) has reissued two good 'uns: **Hampton Hawes, Vol. 2 *The Trio*** (C 3515), with Hawes as a voracious youngster, ca. 1955-56, using more angular harmonies and a little more out-and-out flash than he would later on, and **Teddy Edwards' *Teddy's Ready!*** (S7583), his 1960 solo debut, everything you could ask from a mainstream tenor album (and rarely get). Edwards' laconic phrases and unsentimental tone put new twists into "Scrapple from the Apple" and "What's New?," even "Take the 'A' Train;" and "You Name It" is an Edwards original that should have entered the standard repertoire. Billy Higgins earns the tune dedicated to him by actually not playing where he doesn't have something to add.

Best blues of the month is **Memphis Slim's *I'll Just Keep On Singin' The Blues*** (Muse MR 5219), a 1961 session on which the Chicago-based (yes) piano man sang with such intensity that Matt "Guitar" Murphy's licks barely