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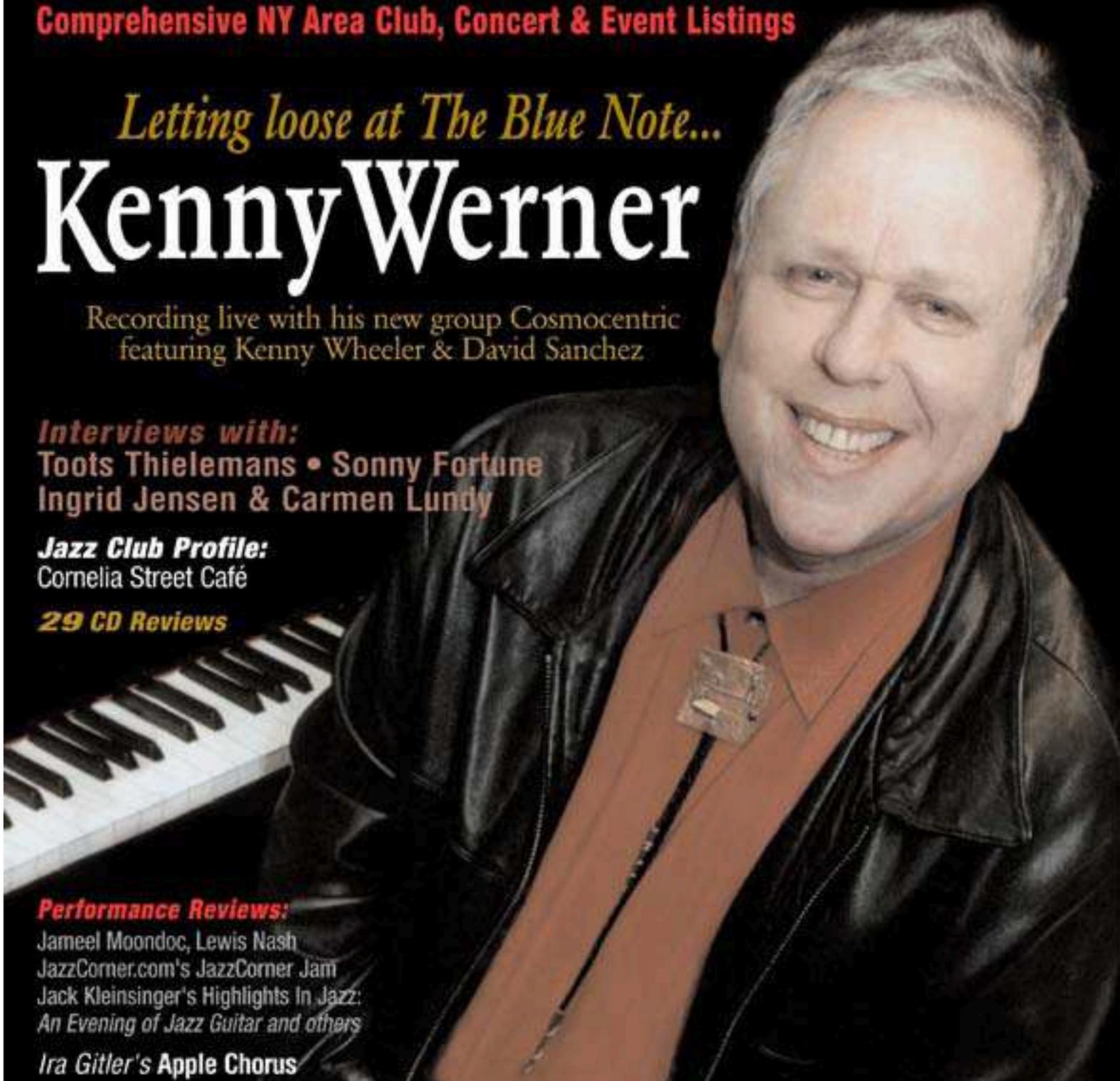
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An Evening of Jazz Guitar and others

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**Jack Kleinsinger's Highlights in Jazz:
An Evening of Jazz Guitar
Tribeca Performing Arts Center
January 5, 2006**

PERSONNEL: Bucky Pizzarelli, Gene Bertoncini, Frank Vignola, Russell Malone – guitars; Jay Leonhart, bass; Wycliffe Gordon, trombone; Martin Bejerano, piano; Tassilli Bond, bass; Jonathan Blake, drums.

By Dan Adler

The Tribeca Performing Arts Center is the home of the longest running jazz concert series in NY. I was surprised to find out that Jack Kleinsinger's 'Highlights in Jazz' has been delighting its loyal subscribers for 33 years! The setting is a formal concert hall, but the feeling was very informal and it seemed like everyone in the audience knew each other, knew Kleinsinger, and many of the musicians.

The evening started with the Russell Malone Quartet featuring the great Martin Bejerano on piano, Tassilli Bond on bass and Jonathan Blake on drums. Aside from Blake, this is pretty much the same quartet that played on Malone's latest album *Playground*. Malone opened with the title track from his earlier album, *Look Who's Here*, and from the first note you could sense the exhilaration in the audience at the beauty of his guitar sound and the great relaxed feel created by the group. Malone and Bejerano delivered satisfying solos that brought lots of applause from this jazz-savvy audience. The group went on to play two selections from *Playground*: "Blues for Mulgrew" and the title track, before changing pace by giving Malone a solo-guitar feature.

Hearing Russell Malone play solo guitar is always a treat. He is able to match his beautiful full sound with a seemingly effortless display of contrapuntal voice movement that creates a unique listening experience. Malone's quartet closed its set with his original composition "Mugshot" from the album, *Sweet Georgia Peach*.

Next up was a real surprise: A most unlikely duet of bass and trombone. Jay Leonhart started singing "Surrey with the Fringe on Top" while playing bass, and Wycliffe Gordon immediately interrupted him asking "Jay, what is a surrey?" starting a funny dialog that set the tone for the rest of their set. They were making musical and verbal jokes galore and the audience loved it! Looking around, everyone in the audience was either outright laughing or just smiling ear to ear the whole time. Both of these gentlemen are superb musicians with an amazing ear and great singing abilities and they were both scatting, singing harmony, singing while playing and every other combination you can think of. Gordon's trombone playing is at once ultra-chop

modern and at the same time deeply rooted in the tradition as he demonstrated by using his mute on Ellington's "Mood Indigo." The duo closed with a goofy Gordon original called, "Toast My Bread" which had the audience rolling in laughter and joy.

After the intermission, Jack Kleinsinger introduced the trio of Bucky Pizzarelli, Frank Vignola and Gene Bertoncini on guitars. He told the anecdote that Bucky and Gene were featured performers on the very first "Highlights in Jazz" show 33 years ago, and they quickly proved that all of these years have just added to their musical abilities and taste. The trio started out with the tune most associated with Charlie Christian: "Seven Come Eleven" with Vignola taking the first solo followed by Bucky and Gene. Frank Vignola may be half the age of the other two gentlemen, but his playing is deeply rooted in the swing guitar history with shades of Django Reinhardt, Charlie Christian and George Barnes who had a long association with Bucky Pizzarelli.

Next, the guitar trio played "If I Had You" and a version of "Limehouse Blues" which started out slow and quickly double-timed into a Gypsy-style romp that brought the audience to its feet. Pizzarelli's chord solos are legendary amongst guitarists and he delivered them with his usual great relaxed technique and superb taste. A solo spot by Gene Bertoncini playing amplified classical guitar gave the audience a taste of the magic that Bertoncini delivers every Sunday and Monday on his regular solo guitar gig in NY at "Le Madeleine" Bistro. Finally, no performance of Bucky Pizzarelli would be complete without Fats Waller's "Honeysuckle Rose", which he recorded with the late great George Barnes live at Town Hall many years ago. Whenever I hear Pizzarelli live, he plays a variation on the chord solo he played on that historic record, and it never fails to excite and delight and even surprise.

To close off the evening, Russell Malone came back on stage to join the other guitarists in an up-tempo four-guitar rendition of "Lester Leaps In" which featured superb solos by everyone and Malone even gave mini-homage to Tal Farlow by starting off with Farlow's famous bongo-effect by tapping the neck of the guitar. The four guitarists closed with "Body and Soul" as an encore and sent the audience home smiling and satisfied that the 'Highlights In Jazz' series has given them yet another full-evening concert by some of the biggest names in jazz for less than the price of one set at many jazz clubs in New York City.

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**Ray Barretto
Live at Smoke
October 21, 2005**

By Eric Frazier

There was naturally a huge line of people at the door and of course, this is what one would expect knowing that the great conga player, Ray Barretto was about to grace the presence of the Smoke Jazz Bar & Lounge. The room was lively with chatter and anticipation. Ray sat casually at the bar engaging in idle conversation and enjoying the atmosphere. He could easily be mistaken for a college professor if you did not know of his great accolades as one of America's premier entertainers. Ray was the first U.S. born percussionist to integrate the African-based conga drum into Jazz. He was due to receive The NEA (National Endowment for the Arts) Jazz Master award at the January 2006 IAJE (International Association for Jazz Education) Conference in New York. Nominated for eight Grammy's including the "Best Latin Jazz Album award" and a recipient of the Grammy award in 1990, Ray approached the stage in a deliberate and open-minded fashion. He smoothed off the heads of his drums and began playing solo. He was joined by the harmonic horn lines of Joe Magnarelli on trumpet and Chris Barretto (Ray's son) on alto sax. The piano chords of Robert Rodriguez, the Latin bass sounds of Ricardo Rodriguez and the soft brushes of drummer Vince Cherico accompanied the horns. The tune was called Murmullo from Ray's current CD "Time Was - Time Is." Together they produced a Jazz piece that was accented and augmented by Ray's congas. There were horn solos and a piano solo in which Ray laid down and an accompaniment that only the best of experienced players could so eloquently present. The drummer added a wealth of syncopated rhythms accented with his use of cymbals ever so gently throughout the tune. Ray stated to the audience that it was Dizzy Gillespie's birthday (October 21st) and that he felt forever indebted to him for introducing to the world the type of music he just played even though at the time, there was much resistance to this music. He then introduced a cut called Dizzy's Business by Joe Magnarelli. It was a classic bebop, which you could see that Ray truly loved. The trumpet of Joe Magnarelli was particularly crisp and creatively aesthetic. This was certainly no less true for young Chris Barretto on alto sax. Vince Cherico, on drums, was in his element. Robert Rodriguez, on piano, went through a solo that had heads bobbing in the audience. Ray then followed with a solo that was rich with a pot-pourri of rhythm patterns reflecting his great talent and experience. It was clear to see that his gift of timing and creative genius was forever implanted in his hands. It should be noted that no one in the room enjoyed this tune more than

emotive than your everyday technical bebopper, and often delves deep into visceral blues phrases to get his point across.

His improvisations are appropriate to the tune whether it has been around for fifty years or twenty. I'd sure like to see more people recognize Mr. Morgan as less an oddity for his late arrival than for his enormous talent in interpreting and improvising on a broad range of tunes.

With George Cables on piano, Curtis Lundy on bass, and Billy Hart on drums, Morgan has a dream rhythm section. Cables, having spent many nights behind Dexter Gordon (as well as an old contemporary, Art Pepper) is an expert accompanist to any saxophonist. This group is as comfortable with the floating out-of-time feel of "Nefertiti" as with the straight-ahead walking groove on "Tune Up."

For a live recording, the quality is excellent, and there is no interference from crowd noises. The best thing is that there is still one night left that remains unreleased!

Gerry Mulligan

JERU—Columbia CK 65498. *Capricious; Here I'll Stay; Inside Impromptu; You've Come Home; Get Out of Town; Blue Boy; Lonely Town*
PERSONNEL: Gerry Mulligan, baritone sax; Tommy Flanagan, piano; Ben Tucker, bass; Dave Bailey, drums; Alec Dorsey, conga drum

By Roger Crane

Long time Mulligan fans are well aware of this recording which came out initially on RCA in 1962 and has been reissued at least once previously (on a 1989 CBS recording titled *Quartets*). *Jeru* features yet another of Mulligan's famously relaxed well-integrated quartets (conga drums make it an occasional quintet) blowing on seven songs, all but Cole Porter's well-worn "Get Out of Town" quite obscure but also quite welcome. From the opening moments of Billy Taylor's bossa, "Capricious" you know you are on enchanted ground. The selections also include the Cy Coleman ballad "You've Come Home," an inexplicably neglected song from the 1960 show, *Wildcat*. Along with his many musical talents, Mulligan had impeccable taste in tunes, finding and giving many such unheralded tunes new life. Another example of his discoveries is Kurt Weill's unjustly overlooked "Here I'll Stay" (from the 1948 Broadway show *Love Life*) which is treated with a joyful bounce. His infectious swinging blues "Blue Boy" is a good example of Mulligan's own compositions. Unlike many jazz "originals" most of his songs are genuine pieces of music, carefully and beautifully composed in all respects (and not simply "all about chords").

The CD closes with Leonard Bernstein's "Lonely Town," (from the 1944 show *On the Town*). This lovely piece has subtle, constant modulation from minor to major, unusual chords and a distinct film noir feel, at least as interpreted by Mulligan and his quartet. They paint an enthralling musical portrait of wet streets, furs

shining with a faint halo and the flashing of a neon sign across a lonely street. There is certainly a "late-night" story here and Mulligan, with his melodicism and sense of form, digs into the emotional marrow and tells that story.

There is so much to admire on this CD, not least the rhythm section consisting of the marvelous Tommy Flanagan, bassist Ben Tucker, drummer Dave Bailey and, on some cuts, Alec Dorsey on conga drums. Thank heavens for jazz musicians such as Mulligan with his allegiance to beauty and lyricism. The seven songs are perfectly delivered - thoughtful and graceful. Melodic imagination is present here on every track.

Jimmy Ponder

WHAT'S NEW—High Note Records. *TNT; Polka Dots And Moonbeams; God Bless The Child; Besame Mucho; Please Give Me Someone To Love; What's New; That's All.*

PERSONNEL: Jimmy Ponder, Guitar; Gene Ludwig, Organ; Cecil Brooks III, Drums

By Dan Adler

Jimmy Ponder's new album is an old fashioned Organ Trio in the tradition of Jimmy Smith, Wes Montgomery and early Pat Martino. The trio swings mightily and the feel is relaxed and traditional with no alternate changes and very little contemporary influence.

The opener "TNT" is a blues which serves as a great vehicle for Ponder and Ludwig's exciting solos. The whole album feels like a live recording even though it's not. It's rare to get this kind of energy in a studio recording.

Ponder moves on to the ballad "Polka Dots and Moonbeams" which he plays with a light touch, making the rhythm dance and never allowing it to drag. In his solo, he has some lightening fast runs as well as a quote from "Surrey with the Fringe on Top" which he inserts into the bridge section.

"God Bless the Child" is taken at a medium-fast pace rather than the traditional ballad treatment and features a great organ solo followed by an octave solo where Ponder demonstrates that he can use the Wes Montgomery octave vocabulary to say something of his own. "Besame Mucho", in contrast, gets a slow Latin treatment and Ponder's solo evokes shades of early Pat Martino.

"Please Give Me Someone to Love" showcases Ludwig and Ponder in a traditional slow blues setting with a triplet back-beat feel, which they navigate masterfully without resorting to very many clichés.

A Bossa version of "What's New" breathes some new life into this old favorite with Ludwig taking the first solo before making way for a brilliant chord solo by Ponder, who again, proves that the Wes Montgomery chord solo vocabulary can be used tastefully to deliver an original statement. The beautiful ballad "That's All" ends the program featuring some of Ponder's deepest and most soulful playing.

Listening to this album is very relaxing. You know you are in good hands. These seasoned players have defined the boundaries of their jazz vocabulary, and do not veer outside of it. The feeling of relaxed swing and creative energy that comes so naturally to them creates an enjoyable listening experience. It would be even more enjoyable to hear this trio live in a small club.



Chris Potter

UNDERGROUND—Sunnyside Communication. SSC3034. www.sunnysiderecords.com. *Next Best Western; Morning Bell; Nudnik; Lotus Blossom; Big Top; The Wheel; Celestial Nomad; Underground; Yesterday.*

PERSONNEL: Chris Potter, tenor saxophone; Wayne Krantz, guitar; Craig Taborn, fender rhodes; Nate Smith, drums; Adam Rogers, guitar (on 6, 9).

By Marshall Zucker

I have followed the career of Chris Potter for many years, saw him when he played with The Jazz Mentality in the early 1990's. That group's straight ahead swing is a contrast to the many moods of Underground. The instrumentation is fascinating, and may possibly be unique to this recording. Potter on tenor is joined by Wayne Krantz, guitar; Craig Taborn, Fender Rhodes (and one other instrument to be discussed below); Nate Smith, drums; and Adam Rogers on The Wheel and Yesterday. Between Krantz and Taborn, there is no feeling of an absence of a bass.

There are nine selections, six of them Chris Potter originals. The three non-Potter originals are very distinctive. The closer, McCartney's "Yesterday," sounds as it could have been played by the Tristano group of 1949. It's reharmonization is original, and makes for an appropriate finale. Billy Strayhorn's Lotus Blossom is lovingly played, and it is the selection in which Taborn plays an instrument—the Celeste—that, although rarely heard, has been highly distinctive when it has been heard in jazz settings ("Profoundly Blue," as played by Meade Lux Lewis; "Pannonica," by Thelonious Monk; the almost unknown "I Can't Get Started" by Lionel Hampton, and its use by Sun Ra, Linton Garner and Oscar Peterson). Those other performances employing celeste now have a lovely companion in Potter's "Lotus Blossom." It is "Morning Bell," however, with its highly varying sections that is one of the two most fascinating tracks on the CD. An impressionistic mood

thing Must Change; You Don't Know What Love Is; Lush Life; In A Sentimental Mood; My Foolish Heart; All The Things You Are; Cry Me A River; Here's That Rainy Day; My One and Only Love; Someone To Watch Over Me; When I Fall In Love; Round Midnight; The Closer I Get To You; A Song For You.

PERSONNEL: Lynette Washington, vocals; either Lynette Washington or Dennis Bell, piano.



By Marshall Zucker

Lynette Washington sings fourteen songs on her CD *Smokey Dawn*. (Dawn is her middle name). For one hour and eleven minutes, Ms. Washington's powerful voice (with sensitive piano backing by either her or brother Dennis Bell, who is listed as co-vocal and musical arranger with Ms. Washington, is heard on songs all sung as ballads. Despite the variance of tempo or dynamics, the CD is eminently listenable in one session. This is due to the excellent quality of Ms. Washington's voice, and the superb selection of outstanding melodies. Three selections, "Everything Must Change," "The Closer I Get To You," and "A Song For You" are from the 1970s. All of the others are considered standards. Every melody is of high quality, and has earned its status as a standard. Even those few that have had far more minimal lives as vocal selections than as instrumental selections, such as "Lush Life" and "Round Midnight," are highly successful.

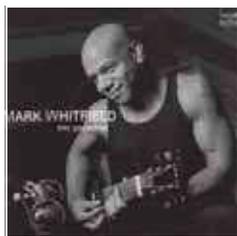
Ms. Washington's vocal qualities are on par with the great singers. This has sparked my curiosity and interest to hear her explore other settings. By the way, a number of the selections are associated with specific performers, or numerous performers: Julie London and "Cry Me A River," Bill Evans and "My Foolish Heart," Nat Cole and "Lush Life." Gertrude Lawrence introduced "Someone to Watch Over Me" singing to a little doll. Few would guess that "You Don't Know What Love Is" was introduced in the Abbott and Costello film *Keep 'em Flying*. Ms. Washington's versions of all the songs stand successful on their own.

Mark Whitfield

TRIO PARADISE—VEGA Records, Marksman Productions, 155 Washington St. Suite 1100, Jersey City, NJ 07302. www.markwhitfield.com. *Invitation; The Egg*

And Cinnamon Blues; The Man I Love; Chega De Saudade; Asami's Playland; The Very Thought of You; Too Young To Go Steady; Medger Ever's Blues; Willow Weep For Me; Wala Wala; The Way You Look Tonight.

PERSONNEL: Mark Whitfield, Guitar; Rueben Rogers, Bass; Donald Edwards, Drums.



By Dan Adler

I first heard of Mark Whitfield in 1990 when he was featured in Time magazine as a promising young jazz guitar talent. Since then, Mark has recorded many fine albums under his own name and as a sideman. This new trio album, released last year in Japan and available in the US only through Mark's website, is a classic jazz guitar trio album with a great selection of standards and originals.

Caper's classic standard "Invitation" is taken at a medium tempo, and Whitfield takes his time developing a tasteful and exciting solo, and then vamps behind a great drum solo by Edwards. Whitfield's sound on this whole album is beautifully dark and full, and the recording quality is very high.

"The Egg and Cinnamon Blues" sounds like a tribute to the late Barney Kessel based on the chordal style in its opening statement. It immediately breaks into a wonderfully melodic bass solo by Rueben Rogers, and the Mark comes in with a powerful solo that is fast and exciting and culminates in a chord solo before taking it out.

My favorite tracks are Gershwin's "The Man I Love" and Jobim's "Chega De Saudade", which are taken as slow Bossas back-to-back, with hints of a Pat Metheny vibe throughout and even a few of his signature licks thrown in. Whitfield's solo again shows off his excellent sound and great sense of melodic development.

Next are two back-to-back solo guitar pieces: "The Very Thought of You" and "Too Young to Go Steady". Both are played with a semi-acoustic sound and showcase Mark's sensitivity and respect for the tradition as well as his great sense of harmony. I especially like the way he interjects single-note and chordal fills into the song in a very organic way, always keeping the feeling and continuity.

"Willow Weep for Me" is taken as an up-tempo, as opposed to the more common ballad treatment, and again Mark shows his mastery of the blues and develops a memorable solo. The original "Wala Wala" provides a vehicle for some formidable group interaction, and the al-

bum closes with a Wes-inspired up-tempo version of Kern's "The Way You Look Tonight". In this day and age of overly-complex jazz originals, it's a joy to hear a contemporary jazz guitar trio recording of standards and blues originals.



Mary Lou Williams Collective

ZODIAC SUITE: REVISITED—Mary Records. www.marylouwilliamsfoundation.org.

Zodiac Suite: 1. Aries; 2. Taurus; 3. Gemini; 4. Cancer; 5. Leo; 6. Virgo; 7. Libra; 8. Scorpio; 9. Sagittarius; 10. Capricorn; 11. Aquarius; 12. Pisces; The BeBop Waltz; Intermission; Thank You Madam.

PERSONNEL: Geri Allen, piano; Buster Williams, bass; Billy Hart, drums; Andrew Cyrille, drums (13 & 15)

By Budd Kopman

This terrific album solves two problems at once: it brings back into the public eye the work of one of the most adaptive and exploratory pianists in jazz (never mind that she is a woman), Mary Lou Williams, and allows us to hear the extraordinary Geri Allen play music to which she seems directly connected. Allen is the music director of the Collective and different musicians will appear on other releases.

The extensive liner notes, by Rev. Peter F. O'Brien, S.J., who acted as Williams' personal manager for the last seventeen years of her life, lay out Williams musical life, the creation of *Zodiac Suite* and Allen's connection to Williams and hence the recreation of her music. To briefly summarize, Williams musical career reaches all the way back to the Andy Kirk band in 1929 for whom she arranged and eventually became a star soloist. She stayed with Kirk until 1942 with "Roll 'Em" became a huge hit for Benny Goodman. The most important thing about her is that her style of playing changed as jazz changed, and she moved from stride to bebop to modal, never resisting change. *Zodiac Suite* was written in 1944-45 and soon after, she recorded it. Performances and arrangements of the 12-part suite occurred over the years.

Geri Allen was introduced to the music of Williams by John Malachi at Howard University. She ultimately ended up living in the same Pittsburgh neighborhood as the Williams' family,