

Dizzy Comes Home

by David Talento

In the Jazz world today, if there is one overused word, it is "great." There are "great" horn players, "great" bands, and "great" musicians springing up all over the world. All too often, however, these new artists disappointingly turn out to be anything but great and when this happens, Jazz, as a whole, suffers. There are of course exceptions to this and then there are those few artists who not only fulfill the expectations of the Jazz community but surpass them as well. Dizzy Gillespie is such an artist.

At age 66 Gillespie is far from a new comer to the modern and

progressive musical scene but his recent performance in Philadelphia proudly proclaims that he is still one of the best. This concert was a special treat for the audience because not only did Dizzy play with his own newly founded quartet, but he sat in on a few songs with the Penn Jazz Ensemble as well. Sauntering onto the stage with the bent horned trumpet that has become his trademark, Gillespie and the ensemble broke into his arrangement of Thelonious Monk's "Round Midnight." After a brief intermission, Gillespie returned to the stage declaring simply, "I'm back." Joined by three superb musicians, he swept

through a fast paced repertoire that included one of his signature tunes, "A Night in Tunisia."

For those who may be unfamiliar with the name Dizzy Gillespie a little biographical information may be in order. Dizzy was born in Cheraw, South Carolina as John Birks Gillespie. However, it was not long before his love of music brought him to Philadelphia in 1935 where he soon acquired his first trumpet and the nickname "Dizzy" which was awarded to describe the bebop sound that he helped create. Thus, Dizzy Gillespie was born as a musician and now claims Philadelphia as his hometown.

Throughout the years, Gillespie has continued playing with the same intensity and emotion that he developed as a young man on the road and with such musicians as tenor saxophonist Charlie Parker. At this, his most recent performance given at the Annenberg Center, Gillespie, seemed to fuse the past and the present together into one musical frenzy. In addition to playing trumpet, he played piano, sang, and pushed the beat further by often going over to the bongos, giving a "Dizzying" scat solo, or simply dancing. Highlights of his band's performance included a mind-boggling bass solo and a free-form Jazz ver-

sion of the Beatles' song "Yesterday" by Sayyid Abdul Al-Raabyr on clarinet. Blending perfectly with the youthful Penn Ensemble as well as with the serious and accomplished musicians of his quartet, Gillespie presented a most energetic and intricate performance. If it is true that Jazz is, "That Classical music of the future," as he declared it is, then certainly this man is one of the most important and "great" performers of then and now. His music has endured for over forty years and as he sang, "I'm 66 going on 22," there is little doubt that both Dizzy and his music will be around for quite some time to come.

Pat Metheny: Travel

by Steve Painter

During the past few years, Pat Metheny has garnered respect and glowing praise from critics and peers alike for his uniquely impressionistic approach to jazz-rock fusion. Consisting of Metheny on guitar and guitar-synthesizer, Lyle Mays on keyboards and synthesizer, Steve Rodby on electric and acoustic bass and bass-synthesizer, Dan Gottlieb on drums, and "special guest"

Nana Vasconcelos on percussion, the Pat Metheny Group represents a new generation of players born in rock but schooled in jazz. They have no need to crossover with an unnatural fusion of styles, because they are contemporary jazz players who grew up on the Beatles, the Stones, and the Animals. The sound is at once pleasing and accessible: Chime-like in tone, melodic in movement; fluid and graceful, stunning in its execution, though not technically

motivated; and acoustic in sound, though electric in origin.

Metheny himself is a moderate guitar technocrat. While his equipment is extensive, the end result of sound is most important. His use of the guitar-synthesizer, for example, transcends video game sound effects and communicates the true emotional element of his solos.

Travels is a live account of Metheny's most recent American tour. Because of the harmonious nature of these compositions the "live" setting promotes a laid-back atmosphere. "Songs for Bilbao" benefits from the infectious atmosphere. The band sets down a lively Latin rhythm and Metheny goes above and beyond mere improvisations in

his lightning fast runs. In Metheny's compositions, Solos take on a more melodic mode to form a cohesive whole. "Extradition" is a fine example of Metheny's use of his instrument to further the emotive quality of his compositions and solos. His fervent lead soars over his band's sprightly 7th chord progression in a combination melancholy/cheerful tone. Lyle Mays' cascading synthesizers duplicate the function of an orchestra rather than the sound, serving to produce an airiness to the music.

"Goin' Ahead" features Metheny's delicate guitar with sparse bass accompaniment by Steve Rodby, evocative of smoke-filled basement clubs in which jazz masters Charlie Parker and Bill Evans used to

perform, years ago. The distant sounds of approaching helicopters signal the ominous segue into "As Fall Wichita Falls, So Falls Wichita." Like an approaching thunderstorm, dark tones rumble and Nana Vasconcelos' improvised voice lead wails over his bubbling percussion. Metheny's pseudo-Oriental string sounds direct the band into a huge apocalyptic finale.

The performances by all are faultless and the recording is pristine. This music is instantly accessible yet because their compositions only provide the harmonious solutions (therefore avoiding tension), boredom can occur on the part of the listener. But this album is still highly recommendable.

Review:

Specimen: Batastrophe

by Butch Lauer

This specially priced six cut mini-album by Specimen, released in 1983, has created rather a large stir here in the United States. Most of the commotion has been centered around the band's goulish dressing and it's infamous club, the Bat Cave, that they have managed to bring to the U.S. for their shows. Yes, when Specimen gives a show, they bring their own DJ and show 1940's horror films. The spine tingling mixture of goulish garnishments are not just props, but a state of mind for this lot.

Specimen is comprised of five members; Ollie Voices, Jon Guitar, Kevin Bass, Johnny Keyboards, and Jonathen Drums. The music that they

create is Heavy Metal-New Wave. Now that isn't to say that they play new heavy metal, but it is to say that a searing guitar combined with a killer drumbeat creates for a wide range of listeners. Specimen may well be the missing link that created many an argument over rock verses punk bands.

The entire album stands out; no one track should be singled out as better than another. The single that was released is entitled, "Returning from a Journey." The B side is entitled "Kiss Kiss Bang Bang." So whether you dig banging your head, or thrashing about (slam dancing), you may find that this album is indeed needed for your collection.

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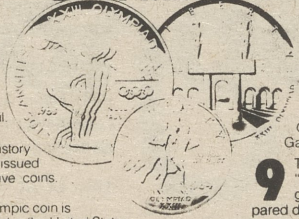
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