



File Photo

Butch Berman in full regalia

Prez Sez

It's been a long, strange trip

By Butch Berman

To my dear, faithful, loving friends, fans and supporters,

What a long, strange trip it's been. Even though I have no recollection of it, on the night of Sunday Oct. 1, after watching "Desperate Housewives" with my perfect darling wife, Grace, I guess I didn't feel well, went over to her house, and had some sort of weird seizure. They rushed me to the hospital, and to find out why I had the seizure they induced me into a six-day-long coma.

They luckily found only a little brain lesion that may have caused it, and had a bit of a time bringing me out of it. How odd to wake up

in an unfamiliar hospital room surrounded by all of your worried friends not knowing why you were there. With tears streaming down my eyes as I write this, I want to



File Photos

Butch and Grace Sankey Berman at a Nebraska Jazz Orchestra concert featuring Greg Abate in March 2005.

thank all of you for loving and praying me back to life, so to speak. I can't tell you all how much I love all of you for loving me so much.



The Cronin Brothers

I finally woke up, got back to my beloved home and within a few weeks even played again with my band The Cronin Brothers at the Zoo Bar, to a packed house of caring people

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who cried and danced at the same time seeing me back on stage. A moving experience I'll never want to forget.

Then a month later, the same problem kinda crept up on me again, where the same lesion started bleeding in my brain, causing me to suffer a small stroke. I was working out with my dear friend and personal trainer Cole Maranville, who noticed I wasn't driving or functioning like myself, and after I saw my neurologist a few days later and had an MRI of my twisted brain I was rushed into surgery where, thank God, I recovered, and regained my sort-of-normal self to this day, where I'm journaling this all to you.

Since then the pathology report was a little grim, but I'm not buying into the negative possibilities that all the well-meaning docs speculate. I continue to feel great and am enjoying the cherished, wonderful quality of life we all have the choices to embrace and am playing my guitar, piano and singing with my band and working out on a regular basis with Cole and truly feel my old self with just a little discomfort where the stitches and staples were. I'm able to walk my doggie, Peanut, a mile or two daily, and have regained all of my functions and hearty appetites that define our identities.

I believe in combining the amazing powers of mind, body and spirit to heal without resorting to some of the more unpleasant medical procedures suggested by the docs who don't really know the real Butch Berman like you and I know him. I just want to live out my life with the same pleasant goals I've always had. Thank God there were some benefits to all of this, as I cleaned up my act in many ways following the first seizure, stopping



Butch Berman and Norman Hedman in New York City in 2004.

my old hippie ways of smoking myself into oblivion and eating poorly and not truly appreciating what is really essential in the journey we call life.

I'm enjoying a clarity of thought I hadn't experienced for a long time and the loss of nearly 40 pounds. I went into surgery the healthiest I've ever been in my adult life, with all of my vitals intact and registering numbers of clean living that astounded me how much better the quality of life can be. Grace and I are now happier than ever before and I love every minute of it. Sure, we're all gonna croak someday, but I plan to stick around a lot longer than most of the docs. New dear friends like Jasung Kim, an excellent therapist, and his mate, Rose, my long-term massage lady and pal, Kassi Riorden, and best buddies like my legal eagles Tony Rager and Dan Stogsdil from the superb law firm of Cline Williams have formed the "Team Butch" to keep me groovin', hopefully for years to come.

Of course, along with the healing powers of music that have cre-



Butch's dog, Peanut, takes a breather.

ated and shaped an existence that has defined me for most of my life, you and the rest of my loyal pals have willed me back to where I sit tonight. Thank God for you all. I'm reading some wonderful literature to keep my mind on positive affirmations in the right direction, and I'm even doing some chanting with some of my Buddhist followers that keeps me from regretfulness, anger, sadness and the fear that can feed upon itself and block the blessed forms and tools of recovery that are getting me through all of this.

I would be remiss if I didn't single out some special friends who truly went beyond the call of duty to aid in my recovery. Dozens of Grace's and my African friends came out in droves to help cheer me up and express their kindness and caring, a well-known African tradition that is a total and lovely reality. Old pal Joyce Latrom brought over some of her mom's dynamite Xmas sugar cookies, some of the best medicine I had. My trusted BMF assistant Ruthann Nahorny came by on a regular basis to use her physical therapy skills. My long time hair stylist Tawnya Douglass, carrying her yet-to-be-born twins, was one of the first on the spot to check me out.

My 30-years-plus Ping-Pong buddies Brad Krieger and his mate, Kathy, were regular visitors, along with Daniel Nelson, who actually helped spoon-feed me some of that rotten hospital food when I was having trouble handling the silverware. His visible tears of joy upon my awaking will always be fondly remembered by me for the rest of our long-term friendship. My trusted *Jazz* newsletter editor, Tom Ineck, dedicated his entire KZUM "NightTown" radio show to me one Thursday night, which was beautiful and recorded for ever to remind

File Photo

File Photo

me of how important our friends are for all the good things about life we sometimes take for granted.

Two of my best friends ever, Wade Wright from San Francisco and Norman Hedman from New York City, checked in with heartfelt phone calls almost daily. Norman's been dealing with a few health issues himself, so please join me in sending him your kind thoughts and prayers for a speedy recovery as well. All of us in our late 50s and early 60s all plan to be happy, health old buddies for years to come and enjoy our shared interests.

And, of course, last but not least, my beautiful wife, the amazing Grace Sankey-Berman was and is truly my saving Grace, as her love and non-stop care of me chases away the fears and bad memories from all of this rather nightmarish experience, on a 24/7 continued basis. A god-sent nurse who gives me reasons to exist with positivity, with every breath I take, my loving angel. My sister-in-law Lois from Nigeria also showed up to lend love and support. Let's wish her a safe and restful journey home despite the usual first of December winter weather we're having as I write this.

Now, let's move away from me and get into the world of music that I have loved sharing with you within these *Jazz* newsletters over the past 13 years. Get ready for some good news ahead.

This was one Thanksgiving season I was overwhelmed with

gratitude. Even though I'm no longer doing my "Soul Stew" and "Reboppin' Revisited" radio shows, I do hope to be back on the air on perhaps another local radio channel in the very near future, as I miss and loved doing my shows and the opportunities to both entertain and educate my faithful fans with the gifts of music I've carried with me my entire life. I will keep you all posted on details when I hear more.

My old pal Doug Campbell and Marthana Florence from Jazz in June dropped by on a recent Sunday afternoon to gather input from me on the possibilities of the BMF being included for the upcoming 2008 season with some artists I feel will keep the tradition of Jazz in June

as jazzy as it was in the earlier days when the BMF was more active. Keep your fingers crossed for this situation to be continued.

Lots of new, great CDs have come to me over the past few months and I will share them with you in this issue's "Discorama" column. Dig it, music lovers

The Lied Center for Performing Arts is a nice venue when the sound system is engineered properly, and it was on Oct. 29, the night that "Solid Blues" was presented, featuring the still-powerful Mavis Staples. Grace and I saw her in 2003, during our honeymoon in Chicago, doing a tribute to Spike Lee's great musical soundtracks. The late, great Gerald LeVert gave one of his last shows that night.

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Editor and Designer:
Tom Ineck

Contributing writers:
Butch Berman and Tom Ineck

Photographers: Butch Berman, Rich Hoover and Tom Ineck (File Photos)

For inclusion of any jazz or blues related events, letters to the editor or suggested articles, mail them to the office, phone (402) 476-3112, fax (402) 475-3136 or e-mail bmusicfoundtn@neb.rr.com.

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Doug Campbell and Butch in 2004

File Photo

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Also on hand Oct. 29 was one of the best remaining harp players in the blues biz, Charlie Musselwhite, who cracked up the large crowd when he said it was great being back in Madison. Maybe he's had a few too many nights on the road. He did mention the Zoo Bar, and after the show he dropped by to jam with Magic Slim. The back-up band for all of them were the sensational, young North Mississippi Allstars, who cooked their asses off and are well on their way to becoming monster all-stars of the next few decades to come. It was a lovely night, indeed, and one of my first outings after my first sick spell.

If you don't already know this by now, my home, which is the base of my Berman Music Foundation, is legally a museum that I plan to keep preserving and protecting, with all forms of my incredible collection of great Americana music of a wide variety of styles, including 45s and LP records, VHS and DVD films and a huge library of books depicting all of the aforementioned. Hopefully, it will be preserved for many years after my final demise (I plan to stick around until I'm at least 91, as predicted by some of the spiritualists I believe and subscribe in). You know me by now—Berman's the name and positivity is the game.

Then my foundation and house



Mavis Staples



File Photo

Butch gives guests a personal tour of the Berman Music Foundation museum.

can be utilized by many a wide variety of folks, especially the younger ones who need to be aware of this invaluable musical heritage I've amassed since my youth, from the 1950s to the 21st century. People can come to study the history of some of the legends of our musical and film history. From Hendrix to Coltrane, girl groups to surf and garage, as well as embracing all the unforgettable film-makers of our time, from film noir, horror, comedy and classics to movies made abroad, including the works of Bergman, Fellini, Hitchcock and all of our current auteurs. There will always be staff working here to assist, and donations will help keep this project a valuable tool for years to come.

I finally found the right individual to index all of the above materials on my computer, to keep tract of a collection that took many years to accumulate. Thanks to my ever-so-handyman Terry Schwimmer, who introduced me to his pal and master historian Paul Kelly, this amazingly difficult chore is now in effect and set for future use for years to come. Paul's computer skills and brilliant mind are making

my long-time dreams a blessed reality. Bird lives and so do I, now sleeping well at night knowing all of my years of work and collecting were not in vain.

A major thank-you to Terry, Paul and the Cline Williams law firm that handles my trust and enables all of these worthwhile projects to become realities, for years to come. I know my time will come some day, but I plan to check out the same way I plan on living, with my zest and lust for life and the quality in which we all have the choice to follow and carry on. Please keep me in your thoughts and prayers, and I promise you my self and the Berman Music Foundation will carry on entertaining and educating you all because that's what we're all about.

With that I'll close with best wishes for you all for a joyous Christmas and a Happy and Rockin' New Year that we can all dig and groove on.

God bless you all,

Butch Berman

Tomfoolery

Winter hibernation to bear jazz fruit in the near future

By Tom Ineck

Here in the Heartland of America, we are deep in winter jazz hibernation, when live performances are in short supply and we hunker down in front of a warm fire with favorites from our own jazz libraries, which offer spiritual warmth and sustenance. For recommended listening, see the CD reviews in this issue.

Even so, we like to look ahead for the spring thaw on the live jazz horizon. What follows is a brief overview of what we have to look forward to.

Thankfully, the Nebraska Jazz Orchestra continues straight through the winter doldrums, with four more concerts in its 2007-08 season. Trombonist **Matt Niess** of Washington, D.C., is the featured soloist Jan. 12. For this year's "Learning from the Master" concert, Niess will perform with both the NJO and the 2007 Young Lions All-Star Band. He is director of jazz studies, associate trombone professor and director of The Criteria Jazz Ensemble at West Chester University. He also is a founding member of The Capitol Bones jazz trombone ensemble.

Scott Wendholt, acclaimed trumpet soloist for New York's Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, will join the NJO April 20 for a tribute to the music of Nebraska native Neal Hefti, a concert that also will feature the UNL Jazz Ensemble. Finally, the **Berman Music Foundation** will sponsor a May 23 concert featuring some of Kansas City's finest jazz musicians joining the NJO in a tribute to the music of late Kansas City icon **Russ Long**. Among the special guests who will perform compositions by Long are bassist Gerald Spaits, drummer Ray



File Photo

Drummer Ray DeMarchi (left), bassist Gerald Spaits and other KC musicians will join the NJO May 23 in a tribute to the music of Russ Long.

DeMarchi, keyboardist Roger Wilder and versatile reed man Charles Perkins.



Legendary trombonist **Bill Watrous** will front the Nebraska Jazz Festival All-Stars



Courtesy Photo

Joe Locke will be featured soloist April 12 with the Lincoln Symphony.



Courtesy Photo

Drummer Les DeMerle will bring his band to Jazz in June in 2008.

March 15 at O'Donnell Auditorium on the campus of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. A virtuoso much-publicized in the 1970s, Watrous worked extensively in big bands led by Quincy Jones, Maynard Ferguson and Woody Herman before establishing his own career.

Guitarists **Larry Carlton** and **Robben Ford** will team up for a March 5 performance at the Rococo Theatre in downtown Lincoln. Carlton is best known for his smooth fusion sound and for his playing on recordings by Steely Dan, Joni Mitchell, Michael Jackson, Quincy Jones, Bobby Bland and dozens of others. Ford combines jazz technique with a sure feel for the blues.

Even the Lincoln Symphony Orchestra is getting into the jazz act, presenting vibraphonist **Joe Locke** April 12 at Kimball Recital Hall on the UNL campus. Locke returns to Lincoln after a highly-acclaimed performance with the NJO at Lincoln's 2005 Jazz in June series, bringing with him a set of music arranged for orchestra by saxophonist Tim Garland. Local jazz musicians also will join Locke on

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stage.

Speaking of Jazz in June, the **Berman Music Foundation** returns to that series as a sponsor in 2008. The schedule includes **The Dynamic Les DeMerle Band**, with drummer DeMerle and vocalist Bonnie Eisele. See Butch Berman's review of their latest live release in this issue of the newsletter. The **Dan Thomas Quintet**, another BFM favorite, will travel from Kansas City, where Thomas is professor of jazz studies in the music department at the University of Missouri—Kansas City (UMKC). Also on the Jazz in June bill are the local **Darryl White Quartet**, with the trumpeter accompanied by pianist Tom Larson, bassist Rusty White and drummer Brandon Draper; and the Los Angeles-based **Lao Tizer**, a contemporary jazz keyboardist originally from Boulder, Colo. Tizer's sound is influenced by Spyro Gyra, the Yellowjackets, and David Sanborn.

About 200 miles south of here is Kansas City's acclaimed Folly Jazz Series. Beginning in October with the **Joshua Redman Trio**, the current series also featured the **Bill Charlap Trio** in November (*see the review in*



Courtesy Photo

Saxophonist Dan Thomas will front his quintet at Jazz in June.

this newsletter), and singer **Kurt Elling** in December. It continues Jan. 12 with the **Bobby Sanabria Latin Jazz Band**, Feb. 29 with the Terell Stafford Quintet, March 28 with emerging artist singer **Rachael Price** and May 10 with the **Monty Alexander Trio**.

A little further east is the always adventurous, non-profit "We Always Swing" Jazz Series, based in Columbia, Mo., where the

Karris Allyson Group will perform Jan. 27 at the LRW Ballroom at Stephens College. The **Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis** makes an appearance Feb. 10 at Jesse Auditorium. At Murray's jazz club in Columbia, the calendar includes the **Terell Stafford Quintet** on Feb. 24, the **Heath Brothers Quintet** (only saxophonist Jimmy and drummer Albert "Tootie" are still alive) on March 30, the **Brad Mehldau Trio** on April 13 and the **Ray Brown Tribute Band**, featuring bassist **Christian McBride**, pianist **Benny Green**, and drummer **Gregory Hutchinson** on April 27. For more information, visit www.wealwaysswing.org.

Speaking of non-profit jazz organizations, the newly founded Metheny Music Foundation, based in Lee's Summit, Mo., the hometown of brothers Pat and Mike Metheny, will present a kickoff fundraiser featuring the **Pat Metheny Trio** (with bassist Christian McBride and drummer Antonio Sanchez) March 7 at Unity Village, Mo. According to its mission statement, the MMF "preserves, promotes and perpetuates an informed appreciation for all styles of music, honoring the history of the Metheny family through four generations and the rich musical heritage of the city of Lee's Summit, the state of Missouri,



Courtesy Photo

Karrin Allyson (here with guitarist Rod Fleeman) will perform with her band Jan. 27 in Columbia, Mo.

and the surrounding region."

The March 7 concert will raise money for the foundation's educational and historical endeavors, which include summer music camp scholarships for Lee's Summit high school students.



Courtesy Photo

Monty Alexander front a trio May 10 at the Folly Theater in Kansas City.



Courtesy Photo

Pat Metheny will front a trio March 7 at Unity Village, Mo.

Concert Review

Charlap transcends all with sheer poetry

By Tom Ineck

KANSAS CITY, Mo.—Some jazz pianists are merely technical virtuosi, while others delve deeply into the territory of blues and soul, but lack proficiency. Bill Charlap transcends all of them with a poetic sense that combines both technique and soul without exaggerating either. His first priority is to the song and the story it tells, as though in compensating for the absence of lyrics he waxes lyrical on the keys.

Indeed, Charlap seemed especially inspired Nov. 16 during a trio appearance at the beautiful Folly Theater. With his longtime, stalwart drummer Kenny Washington and bassist Sean Smith (instead of the other Charlap veteran, Peter Washington), the pianist delivered a confident, moving, often astounding performance. Having already witnessed Charlap several times in recent years at the Topeka Jazz Festival, his keyboard mastery came as no surprise, but it was dazzling nonetheless.

Charlap last appeared at the Folly Theater in 2002 with saxophonist Phil Woods, his employer at that time. Since then, Charlap has established his own reputation as a leader, with six recordings on the Blue Note label. His latest, "Live at the Village Vanguard," was reviewed in the July 2007 issue of the BMF newsletter. Despite the difference in venues, it provided an obvious basis for comparison with the Folly concert.

The opener was George Wallington's "Godchild," also included in the Village Vanguard recording. Best known for its groundbreaking treatment by Miles



Bill Charlap in action

Davis in his "Birth of the Cool" sessions, it was treated imaginatively with Charlap employing percussive block chords. Irving Berlin's "The Best Thing for You" was an uptempo finger-bender that gave Charlap a chance to stretch out.

Charlap's sheer poetry and emotive powers are most evident on ballads, like Vernon Duke's "Autumn in New York," which featured an exquisite solo piano interlude. "I'll Remember April," taken at a medium tempo, featured Washington's sensitive brushwork. Another highlight was the Benny Carter ballad "Souvenir," dedicated by Charlap to all of the many jazz greats who have passed on in recent years.

The music of George Gershwin has long been a favorite of Charlap, whose 2005 tribute to the composer was subtitled "The American Soul."



The Bill Charlap Trio in performance

The trio performed four tunes from that recording, beginning with a mid-tempo "Somebody Loves Me," featuring an inventive bass solo. Continuing with a super-fast "Nice Work If You Can Get It" and the touching ballad "I Was So Young and You Were So Beautiful," the Gershwin set came to an end with an uptempo, but lyrical take on "S'Wonderful."

The second set began with a nod to jazz pianist Horace Silver, combining his tunes "Ecaroh" and "Summer in Central Park." Charlap introduced Jerome Kern's "The Way You Look Tonight" with a long solo statement before the trio took it uptempo and Washington added a tasty drum solo on brushes. From the Leonard Bernstein songbook came "Glitter and Be Gay" from "Candide," on which Charlap employed a unique, rolling-hands technique. Bernstein's heart-wrenching ballad "Somewhere" segued into the grand finale, a devastating version of the classic love song "Body and Soul."

The audience of several hundred wanted more, but how do you follow such brilliance? Charlap wisely declined.

Concert Review

Cartwright confirms reputation as KC's best

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—His blues-infused, post-bop technique and stylistic versatility have made Joe Cartwright Kansas City's most sought-after jazz pianist for some 20 years, equally respected by vocalists and musicians. His appearance Oct. 9 as guest soloist with the Nebraska Jazz Orchestra confirmed that reputation once again.

Cartwright had ample opportunity to display his considerable keyboard chops to an audience of about 220 at the Embassy Suites ballroom in downtown Lincoln. Beginning with the uptempo swing of Neal Hefti's "The Kid from Red Bank," named for Count Basie's New Jersey hometown, Cartwright drove the NJO with a full keyboard attack. Bobby Timmons' "Moanin'" was the inspiration for an especially soulful piano solo, as well as moving solos by Scott Vicroy on baritone sax and Darren Pettit on tenor sax.

Working up a visible sweat, Cartwright dove into an amazing interpretation of Thelonious Monk's "Well You Needn't," churning up the entire length of the keyboard with appropriate octave leaps and carefully timed fore arm smashes that dazzled the awestruck audience. It was a tour de force combining technique and pure emotion.

Most of the NJO left the stage so Cartwright, bassist George Bryan and drummer Greg Ahl could dig into a lush ballad rendition of Mal Waldron's "Soul Eyes," a Cartwright favorite and the title track of a recent CD. He proceeded to wring exquisite variations on the chord changes. The trio continued

*The Nebraska Jazz Orchestra**Joe Cartwright at the piano*

Courtesy Photos

with "I've Never Been in Love Before," a mid-tempo swinger from "Guys and Dolls." It proved a perfect vehicle for Cartwright's accelerating keyboard attack, as he finished with a rollicking intensity reminiscent of Oscar Peterson, Ray Bryant or Errol Garner. He's that good.

The rest of the NJO returned for Benny Carter's lovely ballad "Souvenir," Fats Waller's immortal "Jitterbug Waltz" and an uptempo take on the old standard "Yours is My Heart Alone." Cartwright's solo piano introduction on the last piece slyly quoted from "Jitterbug Waltz" before cutting loose with the entire band for a flag-waving finale.

The concert also featured an earlier selection of tunes arranged and conducted by special guest Eric Richards, a music teacher in Fremont who has impressive national credentials as well. Richards' own composition "Synergy" kicked off the show with a subtle complexity. His whimsical arrangement of Sonny Rollins' bluesy "Doxy" cleverly pitted Ed Love's piccolo solo against Tim Dickmeyer's bass trombone. "Ellesamba" was a gentle Latin tune lovingly dedicated to Richards' wife.

Special guest vocalist Christine Hitt took the stage for Richards' arrangement of Billy Strayhorn's "Lush Life," a difficult piece that Hitt handled with perfect intonation and intelligent phrasing. Paul Haar added a fine tenor sax solo to the band's sensitive performance.

"The Crawfish Stomp" was Richards' tribute to New Orleans funk, and his arrangement of Tadd Dameron's bebop staple "Hot House" was turned into a funk frolic, the only disappointment of the evening.

*Jazz on Disc***Brecker's final recording is a testament for the ages**

By Tom Ineck



MICHAEL BRECKER
Pilgrimage
Heads Up Records

As if this beautiful recording needed any more poignancy than is contained in its inspired performances, “Pilgrimage” also is Michael Brecker’s final document, recorded six months before his death of leukemia in January and mixed just days after his passing.

His health failing with complications from the rare blood disorder myelodysplastic syndrome, Brecker set out to make one last recording, enlisting the aide of close musical compatriots Pat Metheny on guitar, Herbie Hancock (on four tracks) and Brad Mehldau (on five tracks) alternating at the keyboard, John Patitucci on bass and Jack DeJohnette on drums. The result is a testament for the ages, devoid of maudlin sentiment but nonetheless brimming with emotional impact.

Of the nine original Brecker compositions, only one is a ballad. The others churn and roil and burn with varying degrees of intensity. The opener, “The Mean Time,” pits Brecker’s tenor against Metheny’s guitar, line for line, with Hancock lending jagged harmonic flourishes. Brecker’s early plaintive tone on the

lovely “Five Months from Midnight” subtly hints at melancholy, but later he delivers an unmistakably defiant and uplifting solo. The 10-minute “Anagram” is charged with electricity, mightily powered by DeJohnette, Patitucci and Metheny, who set the stage for a staggering tenor solo.

One of the many highlights of this recording is “Tumbleweed,” a lilting, breezy rocker with wordless vocal passages by DeJohnette, an outstanding Metheny solo on guitar synthesizer, and piano punctuation by Mehldau, leading into a transcendent Brecker solo. Mehldau then delivers a wonderfully funky solo before the ensemble returns to the powerful melody for an ecstatic conclusion. By contrast, the poignant ballad “When Can I Kiss You Again?” is the sole reference to Brecker’s illness, a question from his teenage son during the time of his father’s treatment when family members were not allowed to touch him. Metheny and Hancock deliver breathtakingly tender solos in preparation for the composer’s own heart-rending tenor statement.

The convoluted “Cardinal Rule” deftly alternates from Brecker’s tenor to Mehldau’s piano to Patitucci’s solo and DeJohnette’s driving percussion. Brecker and Metheny again join forces on the theme for “Half Moon Lane,” a lyrical mid-tempo tune. “Loose Threads” lopes and surges with ingeniously suspended stop-time passages that create tension without losing the “thread.” The title track, featuring Hancock on electric piano and Brecker soloing on EWI and tenor, brings the proceedings to a

close with an appropriately spiritual mood.

Despite his progressing illness, Brecker throughout this recording plays with seemingly boundless energy, pouring torrents of notes in non-stop, improvised passages. Tracks range from about seven minutes to more than 10 minutes, allowing plenty of time for the excitement to spread among all the players. It is, indeed, an inspiring musical “Pilgrimage” worthy of many repeat visitations.



ANDY BEY
Ain't Necessarily So
12th Street Records

In the course of a career spanning nearly 50 years, singer-pianist Andy Bey has been woefully under-recorded, so this release is a welcomed addition to his oeuvre, even though it was recorded in May 1997 and held from release for a decade.

Bey first made a name for himself in the late 1950s and early 1960s with Andy and the Bey Sisters, featuring siblings Salome and Geraldine. Since they broke up 40 years ago, Bey has released only five studio recordings—four in the 1990s—and “Ain’t Necessarily So” is only the second live

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release.

Recorded May 13-15, 1997, at New York City's legendary Birdland, it contains some of Bey's most impassioned singing and most tasteful keyboard work, not to mention the rock-solid accompaniment of bassist Peter Washington and drummer Kenny Washington. "Ain't Necessarily So" also is exquisitely produced, making it an absolutely essential document of an artist whose career has been inadequately documented.

Bey gives the full soulful treatment to Gershwin's title track, with special emphasis on Ira's cleverly rhymed biblical references. With a voice that ranges over several octaves and is capable of dramatic falsetto flights, Bey immediately establishes his credentials. The obscure "Hey, Love," by Mary Rodgers and Martin Charnin, is a wonderful vehicle for Bey, as he tenderly caresses each lyric and hangs on a single note for an eternity near the end of this nine-minute masterpiece.

The tempo rises for the Jerome Kern evergreen "All the Things You Are." Working in tandem with the fabulous rhythm section, Bey percussively punctuates each lyric line, stretching and repeating words and improvising phrases like a true bebop master. Ellington's gorgeous ballad "I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart" has Bey in a sweet, crooning mood, softly voicing the lyrics in falsetto, but not without soulful interjections. Throughout the nine-minute performance, there is never a doubt whether Bey believes the words. He seems to "live" them, embodying their sentiment in passages half sung and half spoken, with spontaneous cascades of blue notes.

"If I Should Lose You" is an instrumental, with Kenny Washington subtly driving the rhythm using brushes. Bey states the melody on

piano, following with playful, discordant variations on the theme. The mood returns to the sublimely romantic with Cy Coleman's "On Second Thought," in which Bey starkly demonstrates his ability to tell a moving love story with intelligence and total conviction.

Perhaps it is the swinging rendition of "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?" that best exemplifies how Bey puts all the pieces together—vocal and keyboard technique, unique harmonic ideas, blues inflection and humanity, as reflected in the Depression Era theme that still remains timely in the 21st century. The live recording ends as it began, with a Gershwin classic. Bey, alone at the piano, takes "Someone to Watch Over Me" at a very slow pace, drawing every drop of emotion from its timeless lyric.



THE HOT CLUB OF SAN FRANCISCO
Yerba Buena Bounce
Reference Recordings

The Hot Club of San Francisco celebrates its 15th year and its 10th release with a recording stretching across 17 tracks that go well beyond the one-hour mark and feature several guest appearances.

Lest you forget the guiding principle behind the band, "Yerba Buena Bounce" begins with a brief but blazing rendition of that old gypsy jazz favorite, "Mystery Pacific," by Django Reinhardt and Stephane Grappelli, the undisputed pioneers of the genre. Once their credentials have been established, leader Paul Mehling and

company slip into the comfortable mid-tempo swing of "Hot Lips," turning up the string intensity for more than four minutes.

Mehling is joined by current Hot Club members, Evan Price on violin, Jeff Magidson and Jason Vanderford on rhythm guitars and Ari Munkres on bass.

The Lennon-McCartney songbook has been represented in every imaginable musical style, so the Hot Club's rendition of "I'm Happy Just to Dance With You" seems perfectly logical. Seth Asarno adds an exotic flair on bandoneon. Special guest and friend David Grisman lends his mandolin virtuosity to a blazing version of "Sway." Also known as "Quien Sera," the tune was a hit for Dean Martin in 1954, but there's no mistaking the Hot Club take for Dino's.

Mehling's original "Number Two" purportedly found its inspiration while the composer was otherwise occupied in a restroom in Iceland. It features a nice bass solo by Munkres. The Grappelli ballad "Souvenir de Villingen" gets a lovely treatment by Price. Lester Young's whimsical "Tickle Toe" swings with bluesy gusto. The rhythm guitars churn up the water and Price soars high above them on "White and Black," another Reinhardt and Grappelli tune.

Grisman and Asarno are used to good effect on Mehling's tender "Lullabye," with Grisman stating the lovely theme, followed by a bandoneon solo. Mehling gleefully leads the charge on Reinhardt's frantic "Rhythm Futur," and ups the ante with lead guitar flourishes on his own composition "Yerba Buena Bounce," which also features an energetic solo by Price.

In an unconventional arrangement, Munkres takes the lead on "Stardust." Walter Donaldson's "Borneo" gets an aptly exotic treatment with everyone stoking the rhyth-

mic fire. The duo of Mehling and Price make “Georgia Cabin” sound like home, sweet home, and Mehling goes it all alone on Reinhardt’s “Improvisation #2.”

In a departure from form, two bonus tracks—“Gong Oh” and “Some of These Days”—feature Mehling on vocals, accompanied by an expanded Hot Club that includes Bill Carter on clarinet, Marc Caprone on trumpet and Clint Baker on trombone and tuba. The result veers close to traditional New Orleans jazz.



EDDIE DANIELS
Homecoming: Live at the Iridium
IPO Recordings

Double-threat reedman Eddie Daniels again scores a grand-slam homer with “Homecoming,” his second release on IPO Recordings. Stretching generously across two CDs, it documents a four-night stand at the famed Iridium jazz club in New York City in October 2006.

Again alternating between tenor sax and clarinet, Daniels this time is supported by a solid combo of veterans consisting of vibraphonist Joe Locke, pianist Tom Ranier, bassist Dave Finck and drummer Joe La Barbera. They prove very compatible teammates, each able to confidently carry his weight in the jazz group dynamic. And they swing!

Exploding from the starting gate, Daniels lunges—Sonny Rollins-style—into an uptempo “Falling in Love with Love” at a full

gallop on tenor sax, daring the others to follow, and they do so admirably. In his solo, Locke bears down on the vibes as the rhythm section keeps the pace. La Barbera is especially impressive.

Ranier’s “Resolution” is a jaunty, mid-tempo tune that proves an excellent vehicle for Daniels’ clarinet, with vibes doubling. The tenor sax brings appropriate warmth to the ballad “Not Alone.” Finck’s deeply resonant bass anchors the light, bouncy “Under the Wire,” as clarinet, vibes and piano blend and weave lines almost imperceptibly while the tempo escalates.

The ensemble aptly pays tribute to the stately sound of the Modern Jazz Quartet with Roger Kellaway’s “Déjà VU MJQ,” adding Daniels’ lyrical clarinet to the MJQ-patented instrumentation of piano, vibes, bass and brush-stroked percussion. Daniels, on tenor, gives Ellington’s luscious “Warm Valley” the elegant treatment it deserves, weaving intricate lines against the harmonic backdrop created by Ranier and Locke. Daniels turns the tenor every which way but loose on a lively rendition of Cole Porter’s “Night and Day,” which also features a dazzling solo by Locke.

Many of the 15 tracks stretch beyond seven minutes, with John Lewis’ classic “Django” expanding to more than 14 minutes as its various themes develop and resolve. Daniels himself contributes several worthy compositions, including the lovely ballad “Love’s Long Journey,” the frantically paced “That’s for Afta,” and the wistful closer, “Chosen Words,” a clarinet ballad of uncommon beauty.

To ensure radio play, the package also contains bonus edits of “Django,” “That’s for Afta,” and “Falling in Love with Love.”



CHARLIE HADEN & ANTONIO FORCIONE
Heartplay
Naim Audio

Charlie Haden’s penchant in recent years for moody ballads performed in duo collaborations, usually with pianists or guitarists, has drawn undeserved criticism from some quarters. On the contrary, his recordings with pianist Hank Jones (“Steal Away”), pianist Kenny Barron (“Night and the City”), guitarist Pat Metheny (“Beyond the Missouri Sky”), pianist Chris Anderson (“None But the Lonely Heart”) and pianist Gonzalo Rubalcaba (“Nocturne”) are some of the most finely crafted and eminently listenable projects of the bassist’s 50-year career.

Add 2006’s “Heartplay” to the list. The sensitivity that Haden and Italian guitarist and composer Antonio Forcione bring to their playing and writing makes them a perfect pair. Haden contributed three originals while Forcione wrote four tunes, beginning with the opener, “Anna” and continuing with “If...,” a lovely melody that Forcione has recorded before. Haden’s Spanish-tinged “La Pasionaria” dates from 1982’s “The Ballad of the Fallen,” by the bassist’s Liberation Music Orchestra. With his dazzling fretwork, Forcione gives it an aptly impassioned flair.

Throughout this evocative recording, emotion is the key. Forcione’s “Snow” is perfectly suited for fireside listening this winter, and Haden’s haunting “Silence” (also from “The Ballad

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of the Fallen”) is paced with stately grace. The only cover is Fred Hersch’s “Child’s Song,” a playful tune reminiscent of Haden-penned folk melodies and especially well suited to Forcione’s lyricism.

The brief “Nocturne” was written by the guitarist, but is equally appealing to Haden’s romantic sense. From the most distant past comes Haden’s “For Turiya,” first recorded by the bassist in the 1970s. Here, it is given a searching, 11-minute treatment that is dominated by the composer’s resonant, and uniquely plangent bass lines. Haden drops out long enough to allow Forcione a heartfelt solo statement, before bringing the tune and the recording to a satisfying close.



THE FRED HERSCH TRIO
Night & the Music
Palmetto Records

Fred Hersch has long been among the first rank of jazz pianists following in the hallowed footsteps of Bill Evans, alternating dazzling improvised runs with heart-wrenching ballads. Despite his prolific recording output—some 30 releases in little more than 20 years—he has carved out a singular reputation for consistently high-quality performances, whether in the format of solo keyboard, trio or larger ensemble.

With 2007’s “Night & the Music,” his sixth release on Palmetto, Hersch continues that sterling record for excellence, with longtime bandmate Drew Gress on bass and drummer Nasheet Waits. It is typical Hersch, with a tasteful

mix of originals, several standards and a couple of tunes by Thelonious Monk. It is, however, Hersch’s first studio trio recording since 1994’s “Fred Hersch Trio Plays...,” and that makes it essential listening.

Cole Porter’s “So in Love” begins tentatively before accelerating to an insistent Latin tempo. The haunting original “Rhythm Spirit,” with its swirling convolutions, is dedicated to drummer Billy Hart, while Hersch composed the lovely “Heartland” for pianist Art Lande.

For the “title” track, “You and the Night and the Music,” Hersch wrote a brief introductory passage he calls “Galaxy Fragment,” which seems to gently launch the listener into outer space, where the moon and stars seem within one’s grasp. The Dietz/Schwartz classic is thus transformed into a spacey rendezvous, with an appropriately soft landing. On the other hand, Monk’s playful “Boo Boo’s Birthday” sidesteps, crabwise, with jagged leaps and bounds.

The trio’s take on “Change Partners” continues the terpsichorean tendency, as Waits seems to dance lightly across the full range of drums and cymbals, accompanied by Gress’ bounding bass and Hersch’s acrobatic keyboard excursions. Berlin returns with a tender and relatively straightforward rendition of “How Deep is the Ocean.”

“Gravity’s Pull” is a wonderful Hersch melody that evolves kaleidoscopically in brilliant keyboard patterns. Gress composed the ballad “Andrew John,” with the bass ringing the stately changes. Monk’s “Misterioso” seems an apt closer to a beautifully mysterious recording.

According to Hersch, seven of the 10 tracks were captured on the first take, a testament to the trio’s compatibility and powers of collective interplay. Waits is a true percussionist, always creating the most appropriate rhythmic “colors” for the occasion, and Gress is virtually telepathic in his artistic simpatico.



PAUL BOLLENBACK
Invocation
Elefant Dreams Records

Guitarist Paul Bollenback established a stellar reputation during his long tenure with organist Joey DeFrancesco in the 1990s. Over the last decade, he has blazed his own stylistic trail with seven recordings as leader. For his latest effort, “Invocation,” Bollenback gathered an all-star band in a tribute to fallen jazz legends.

Bassist Ed Howard and drummer Victor Lewis comprise the rhythmic core around which Bollenback erects his fretwork constructions. Trumpeter Randy Brecker contributes his usual expertise on several tracks, and Chris McNulty adds occasional flourishes of vocalise.

Without specific references to musical heroes who have passed, the set opens with Bollenback’s own “Dancing Leaf,” employing the guitarist’s trademark exotic chord progressions and unique sense of time. The beautiful “Alter Ego,” by the late pianist James Williams, features McNulty’s crystal-clear voice against Brecker’s bright trumpet lines. “How Deep is the Ocean” gets an unconventional reading with blues-inflected guitar, a smooth shuffle rhythm and tasteful solo statements by Howard and Lewis. Perhaps the most evident reference to time and mortality is the ballad “Everything Must Change,” and Bollenback, with subtle assistance by Howard and Lewis, does it justice.

Of course, the centerpiece is the two-part, 11-minute “Invocation,” weaving guitar, trumpet and voice in an

erie sound tapestry. Pitched at approximately the same range, the three seem to clash uncomfortably before eventually finding resolution, perhaps a metaphor for the uneasy relationship between life and death.

The proceedings return to more conventional ground for Johnny

Mandel's gently waltz "Emily." Bollenback explores interesting harmonic variations and exhibits some lovely Wes Montgomery-inspired playing before returning to the theme. Bollenback's own composition "Songline" sings with appropriate lyricism and passion as the trio escalates

the tempo. Coltrane's classic "After the Rain" closes the set with the spiritual clarity suggested by the title. Brecker states the simple melody on his horn as Bollenback improvises with soulful guitar flourishes.

Discorama

Alaadeen recording captures essence of jazz

By Butch Berman



ALAADEEN
And the Beauty of It All:
Ballads
ASR Records

Kansas City's pure treasure, reedman personified Alaadeen is one of my best friends in the jazz biz and in the world. Even if I didn't know him as well as I do, I'd still consider him to be one of the most prolific disciples of John Coltrane.

He's a beautiful cat, spiritual and a deep thinker whose musical talent has great healing potential as well as being most entertaining. His lovely tribute to my wife, Grace, on his last CD release, "New Africa Suite," was one of the finest jazz outpourings of 2006. On his latest project, "And the Beauty of It All," he's moved up another notch in creating a piece of work that touches you with loving warmth that radiates throughout your entire body and soul, a most splendid creation and most beautiful, indeed.

Alaadeen captures what is most essential in the treasured art form we call jazz, a CD so full of love I recommend it for lovers only, as it totally transcends from the heart into our systems, making us, the listeners, truly appreciate what "the beauty of it all" is all about. We're both a couple of older cats that have beaten the odds of a variety of health issues that seem to go with the adventure of aging. Live to be 100 and a day, my friend, as your music is the tonic that rejuvenates us all and makes every new day a pleasure to breathe in God's love and the beauty of it all. A must for everyone's Xmas shopping lists, or any time of the year.



LES DEMERLE BAND
Cookin' at the Corner, Vol. 2
Origin Records

One of my fave labels in the biz is Origin, out of the great Northwest, which sends me a huge portion of their vast and fabulous catalogue on a regu-

lar basis. While I was recovering from my first bout of illness in early October, this wonderful new recording of "Cookin' at the Corner, Vol. 2" by The Dynamic Les DeMerle Band arrived and was brought to my hospital bedside by my precious wife, Grace, with her portable Bose CD player.

I dug it from the first listen, and it truly played a big part in my speedy recovery. It's a swinging five-piece band led by the terrific drummer and singer Les DeMerle, and featuring his lovely vocalist and wife, Bonnie Eisele, as well as bassist Ricky Ravelo and piano player Mike Levine, all out of Florida, I believe. Every track is a winner, from "In a Mellow Tone" to "Our Love is Here to Stay" to great instrumental classics like Nat Adderley's "Work Song" and the Juan Tizol immortal "Caravan."

There are beautiful renditions of "I'm beginning to See the Light," as well as "S'Wonderful," "Do You Know what It Means to Miss New Orleans?" "Let's Fall in Love," "How High the Moon" and "Autumn Leaves." An outta sight finale of "Jumpin' with Symphony Sid" rocked and swung me back into good health. When I arrived home, I immediately got on Amazon and ordered every other Les DeMerle CD

Discorama continued on page 14

available. I suggest that after you hear "Cookin" at the Corner, Vol. 2," done live, you'll follow suit.

In fact, this band knocked me out so much I brought them to the attention of the committee for Lincoln's annual Jazz In June series, so the Berman Music Foundation is back in the mix for this upcoming 2008 season. Looks like the committee members all dug the shit out of 'em, too, so expect to see this

incredible group live either the second or last Tuesday of June, an event not to be missed!

I had fun chats with both Les and Bonnie, so you'll be reading more about them in the spring edition of my *Jazz* newsletter, as well as hopefully hear their music and some interviews with them, if I get my jazz show back on the air, which I'm working on, sometime in early 2008. Stay tuned here for all the

groovy details. It's truly one hell of a great band. Check them out NOW, and you'll thank me for this info in the near future, I'm sure. I can't wait to hear them live. Get on it, jazz fans. These cats are TOO MUCH! Check out Origin's website at www.origin-records.com or call them at (206) 781-2589. Xmas is just around the corner, ya know, and this music is good any time.

Letters to the Editor

Friends, fans and musicians send best wishes

Editor's Note: What follows is a small sampling of the many e-mail messages from friends, fans and musicians nationwide who sent their best wishes and healing vibes to Butch Berman, on hearing that he was ill.

=====

So sorry to hear of Butch's illness, and my thoughts will be with him and Grace and all the foundation family.

*John Jessup
Kansas City, Mo.*

We wish Butch a speedy recovery and keep him in our thoughts.

*Jim Eigo
Jazz Promo Services*

Get well soon, Butch. I'll be eager to talk to you about being unconscious for six days. I've only managed to do that for a few minutes at a time, occasionally at your house! I'm checking your website to get updates on your condition. Hang in there, man. Us old cats got to stick together.

All the best,

*Ed Love
Nebraska Jazz Orchestra*

Hey Butch!!

We were very glad to hear that you were awake and conversing and we wish you a speedy and complete recovery. Sheila and I just returned from a European tour and we did a couple of gigs this weekend—one in Connecticut and yesterday in Schenectady, NY, trio, with the inimitable Steve Kuhn on piano. Next weekend we do a little New England tour with trumpeter Dave Ballou and the wonderful Adam Nussbaum on drums. We are at the Cornelia Street Cafe in Greenwich Village on Thursday, the Vermont Jazz Center in Brattleboro on Friday, Portland, Maine, on Saturday and finish with a concert at the U. of New Hampshire on Monday night.

Butch! Thank you for all your support and all you've done to help keep this music alive. We look forward to many more years of the same!

Lots of love from,
Cameron Brown and Sheila Jordan

Dear Butch,

I was shocked to hear about your sudden illness. I pray for a swift and complete recovery from this.

Prayerfully yours,

*Bobby Watson
Kansas City, Mo.*

Hey Butch,

Sooooooooooooo sorry to hear of your travel away from us. Glad to hear you're back to swing again!! Sending you lots of love and good wishes. Hod and I are headed to Russia with Harry Allen and band—we're so excited! We're back in Topeka with Harry in September '08. Hope to be able to visit with you again and talk jazz! Keep swingin', Daddy-o!

Love,

Stephanie Nakasian O'Brien, Hod O'Brien and 13-year-old Veronica

Hey Butch,

Wishing you the best and jazz healing energy, more strength to heal, live and play jazz.

Peace,

*John Carlini
Lincoln, Nebraska*

Butch,

Thanks to your staff for keeping me posted. I was so relieved to hear the words "full recovery expected." We had some great times and I hope we can reminisce sometime. Currently I keep busy with a full time teaching job, part time lesson studio, co-direct the Topeka Jazz Workshop Band, play the second Monday of every month at a coffee shop with a quartet, and free lance with various bands. I know you're busy, too, but I was thinking a lot about Pinky Black lately and wanted to say my thoughts are with you.

Sincerely,

*Jerry Boster
Topeka, Kan.*

Butch,

Well, I guess you live to fight another day. Glad you're back, man. Stay loose and clean and take care.

*Stanton Kessler
Kansas City, Mo.*

Butch,

I am very, very glad to read that you are doing better. Best wishes on recovery. I was sending you good vibes. I didn't want to bother you since the email said not to call last week. It is great that you are recovering. Hope you are jammin' out again real soon.

Sincerely,

*Andrew Vogt
Fort Collins, Colo.*

Dear Butch,

Hey there, friend! How are you?? I know you're recovering and glad to hear that. Have thought of you often.

Love,

*Karrin Allyson
New York City, N.Y.*

Hi, Butch

Things are progressing nicely on the Russ Long tribute concert. Gerald Spaits and I are getting everything organized. It's going to be a good show. I wish you all the best. Hope you get better soon.

*Ed Love
Nebraska Jazz Orchestra*

Hey Butch,

I got your phone message today. Thank you. We understand about the Jazz in June Festival. And we thank you very much for trying. We are very appreciative of your efforts. And we don't want you to worry about anything. We just want you to stay healthy and you don't need stress right now. So please don't worry about us. Just know that we are grateful for your efforts. And I am sooo excited to read your review. I'm so glad that you decided to do it yourself. I'd love to read it if you feel like e-mailing it to us and I promise that I won't circulate anything from it until you release it. Alaadeen is out of the country on Hajj now. He'll be gone for three weeks so we are in a spiritual place right now. Thinking of you and wishing you the Jannah Now (Paradise on earth).

Peace,

*Fanny (and Alaadeen)
Kansas City, Mo.*

Hi Butch!

You will never know how honored I am that you called last night. You sounded like you are burning up with a fire for life and that's fantastic! How blessed we are to have each day, each other, each song that fills our lives with spirit and soul. So glad that you are back at it and doing so well when the docs probably had you ready for the dump heap. Screw them! Let them go there and you can keep on keeping on like you have always done.

I read *Prez Sez* and loved it. What a story and it is one with a future. Sometime I really do want to get up there and see all of this live. Sounds like a good spring trip.

Karrin was asking about you not long ago. I will pass your update on to her. She's traveling over the next few days so will not get any of it until early next week.

Here's hoping and praying that you and all of yours have a wonderful Christmas/Holiday season and your best year ever in '08!!

Stay tuned . . .

*Dean Hampton
Kansas City, Mo*

=====

Tom,

What a pleasure it was to talk with you a couple of weeks ago. Thanks so much for the great article. I have received a lot of positive feedback from it and many people from around here and elsewhere found it very informative. You are a real pro and one of the good guys!

Take care and keep in touch,

*Andrew Vogt
Fort Collins, Colo.*



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Sax great Frank Morgan died Dec. 14 at age 73



File Photo

Alto saxophonist Frank Morgan died of kidney failure Dec. 14 in his hometown of Minneapolis. Age 73, he had just completed a European tour. Morgan was one of the great bop players in the style of Charlie Parker.

How can you help the foundation?

The Berman Music Foundation is a non-profit, tax exempt, 501(c)(3) private foundation, and your tax deductible donation is needed to help offset the costs of this newsletter and its programs.

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