

... and all that jazz!

DESPITE the general unawareness of the fact that prevails, Jazz has always been a constituent and background influence in Soul music, and like Soul fans, Jazz fans have always been riddled with debate amongst themselves as to what constitutes the type of music that merits the label they love.

Very few people now recall the enormous debt that early Rock & Roll owed to Bebop; but without Bebop as the forerunner, it is doubtful, in my mind at least, if Rock & Roll could ever have emerged as it did and in the form it did.

Increasingly over the past five years or so, Funk has become a dominant factor in Soul music itself, and this too stemmed from Jazz themes and explorations which existed outside of the mainstream of hit records. Even a word like Jazz suffers in the same way as Soul does in being all things to all people, and the word Jazz has to be broad enough to encompass the neo-classical avant-garde of people like **Teddy Charles** and **Charlie Mingus** to the traditional Jazz of Dixieland from which the fleeting phenomena of Skiffle was a 50s offshoot.

Between these two extremes there is of course a vast area in which all shades of musical style can co-exist, but unlike Soul, Jazz fans learned long ago to break down their exclusive colour lines for

the sake of the music, and the creative desire amongst musicians of all colours was to explore the product rather than the personnel.

In this respect at least Jazz was ahead of us, and it was further helped too perhaps in that "respectability" was earlier coming. This was partly helped by the media who grasped the fact that Jazz has a universality whereas the universal appeal of Soul has yet to be supported by the mass media in general.

More and more however, one finds that there is a constant interplay between the musical strands of Jazz and Soul, and no longer do Jazz musicians need to feel slightly ashamed of the fact that they performed on Soul record sessions! Why, even **Ella Fitzgerald** made a Northern Soul monster on Reprise!

Jazz however has never openly pursued commercial success in quite the same way Soul has, and because this has been so, it can attract to itself more "intellectual" support which creates an elitist division between fans of American music in general.

A well known Jazz record shop could at one time always be relied upon as a source from which to buy a **Slim Harpo** or **John Lee Hooker** record, but once they had hits, then they discontinued stocking them! Jazz too has had the advantage of

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having labels devoted entirely to it — *Good Time Jazz*, *Prestige*, *Verve* — all these have at some time in their lives been dedicated exclusively to Jazz output, and now that Jazz is becoming more obviously popular, more and more product is being issued to cater for this cross-over market.

If Soul record stores nowadays find it increasingly difficult to know just what to stock, then Jazz shops must be finding themselves in a similar quandry. Right now there are some first-rate releases around which will illustrate many of the points I'm making, and which Soul fans may (to their own surprise even) find very much to their liking.

The *Pablo* label quietly sells LPs by the cartload without publicity or much media coverage, and their output and range is varied and

uniformly interesting. Their latest releases are three live sets consisting between them of seven LPs — "Milt Jackson At The Kosei Nenkin" (Double LP set *Pablo 2620 103*), **John Coltrane** "Afro Blue Impressions" (Double LP set *Pablo 2620 101*), and the first triple LP set I've ever come across, "Jazz At The Philharmonic Live In Tokyo" (*Pablo 2620 104*). All of these records show how deeply influenced American music in general has been by such music as they contain.

Verve too have some exciting stuff on offer. **Wes Montgomery** (joined by **Jimmy Smith** in places) is on "The Small Group Recordings" (*Verve Double 2632 064*), and uniform with the series is **Harry Edison** "Blues For Basie" (*Verve 2332 082*), **Stan Getz & Dizzie Gillespie** "Diz & Getz" (*Verve 2332 084*), and **Ella Fitzgerald** "These Are The Blues" (*Verve 2332 083*). (One nice point about the last three is that the original sleeve designs are reproduced in full colour on the back of their new ones).

Again, essential repertoire for anyone who wants to explore (and perhaps understand) the link between Jazz and much of today's Soul.

But what of today? Well, that's where the problems of cross-over are most keenly felt, because LPs come out that don't seem to fit entirely into a Soul bag, and yet don't fit into a Jazz one either! But

taking it just as music, there is some mighty good stuff coming out, and perhaps both the Soul and Jazz media are ignoring it because each is expecting the other to cover it!

A couple that I have recently enjoyed are **Herbie Hancock** "V.S.O.P." (CBS Double 88235), and **Hubert Laws** "The San Francisco Concert" (CTI 7071). Both in their differing ways illustrate not only the debt Soul has to Jazz, but how nowadays it's become a two way interchange, and Jazz now draws from Soul too. This of course is all to the good because it helps broaden musical horizons and allows innovation to take place without too much of a jolt.

However, if musical jolts is what you're after, then the avant-garde of Jazz might provide the unexpected thrills you're seeking! Two of my personal favourites in this area (one which sadly, like so much that is avant-garde, tends to have to justify its existence by pretentious prose on the sleeve) are **Synergy** "Electronic Realisations For Rock Orchestra" (see what I meant about pretentious claptrap?) (Sire 9299 752) and in particular the track "Synergy"; and the ethereal and altogether beautiful **Howard Roberts** "Equinox Express Elevator" (Impulse 8004), and in particular the magical and spine-tingling track "Unfolding In" (what fantastic music this would make for a film).

As yet, the avant-garde has hardly touched Soul consciousness, but touch it will in time...and then watch the sparks fly!



William Bell

Run-out groove

Daryl Hall & John Oates probably have the largest following from Soul fans of nearly all present day "blue-eyed" groups, and *Atlantic* have produced a first rate album which makes a fair claim to being sub-titled the best they did at that particular company, but which is really called "No Goodbyes".

It contains their original version of "She's Gone" as well as some previously unreleased material of great appeal to collectors. If you're wondering what all the fuss is about, then this set should prove a fine introduction to this great duo.

● Sticking on the outer perimeter

of pure Soul for a moment, **the Bee Gees** also have a fine double LP set out "Live" which contains most of their Soul orientated numbers, which have been variously recorded by several Soul artists over the years. Their popularity in the States shows no signs of waning (as the audience enthusiasm on these records shows), and it is remarkable how over the years this trio has assimilated and absorbed the basic facts about Soul music.

● More yet. **Valerie Carter** turned in a super version of **the Five Stairsteps** classic "Oooh Child" (with **Deniece Williams** in the backing line up) but it didn't do a thing over here. Strange, but I've

had faith in this song since it was first issued, and yet it has never clicked in Britain. However, I refuse to concede defeat and maintain that one day someone WILL have a hit in Britain with "Oooh Child".

● **Nina Simone** has been showing a very low profile of late years (rumour has it that she's now living in Africa), but her fans will welcome the UK reissue on *Bethlehem* of her "I Loves You Porgy" album. Not, I must admit to my personal taste, I have also to record that her performance as a vocalist here is immaculate, and it makes one miss her all the more.

● Interesting that on his new "Coming Back For More" LP **William Bell** sings his own composition "Malnutrition" which you may remember was the original "A" side of **James Fountain's** eventually successful "B" side "Seven Day Lover", on **William Bell's** label *Peachtree*.

● A good indication of the serious intent of the push *Pye* intends to put behind getting the *Casablanca* label away over here is seen in the fact that they've appointed a label manager just to handle this logo's product and nothing else. Wish him well because we've just GOT to see *Parliament* over here even if so far as Soul fans are concerned, **Kiss** can kiss....the wind?

● **Until next time then. Keep the faith — right on now!**