

James Blood Ulmer
Free Lancing
Arthur Blythe
Illusions
CBS

In the ceaseless search for new music, the man being widely tipped as the harbinger of styles to come is guitarist James Blood Ulmer. Blood, along with mentor Ornette Coleman, coined a new musical form, and gave it a name: harmolodic.

Harmolodic music is described as a mixture of funk and jazz, though that's rather simplistic. Unlike free jazz, it has its own set of rules. Basically, each instrument plays a parallel melody, ignoring orthodox keys, changes and bars. The melodies are quite complementary, although separate. The instruments mesh together, and the result is very tuneful, once you're accustomed.

For the new ground it breaks, and for the sheer vibrancy of the playing displayed, *Free Lancing* is a breathtaking record. Four of the tracks are a simple trio format, with bassist Amin Ali and drummer G. Calvin Weston. These show the harmolodic principle to best effect; a simple melody to start with, repeated as a guideline throughout the piece, but each player expanding around it as he goes. The pace is often furious, Blood's guitar hurling great shards of notes, Ali and Weston racing firmly alongside.

Blood sings on three tracks, which are slightly more conventional funk pieces in a very African setting. Three female singers help out and Blood's gruff, soulful vocals are very endearing. The remaining three tracks include saxists David Murray and Oliver Lake and trumpeter Olu Dara.

There's plenty of humour here. Try the sleazy, greasy 'High Time', with its fat, chuckling sound, or the spritely, smiling 'Happy Time'. It's not just an academic exercise.

Blood also plays on alto saxist Blythe's album, his third for CBS, but the first to be released here. This 1980 album mixes two disparate styles. One group includes Blood, a cellist, a tube player (Bob Stewart) and a drummer.



James Blood Ulmer

Blood stamps his style all over these three tracks, playing choppy rhythm under Blythe's mystical melodies.

Blythe is perhaps a little too tied down by his traditional roots. The other three tracks are in the older hard bop style with piano-bass-drums backing. While the melodies are certainly interesting and the playing first class, it all sounds rather familiar. I'll reserve further judgement on Arthur Blythe until I hear some of his more recent work.

Duncan Campbell

Yukihiro Takahashi
Murdered By The Music
Statik
Neuromantic
Alfa

How many drummers from successful bands do you know that have made worthwhile solo albums? Yukihiro Takahashi is drummer/percussionist with Yellow Magic Orchestra, one of Japan's much-touted electropop exports.

Murdered By The Music is Takahashi's first NZ release. You get straight pop ('Brainchild' and the title track) rubbing shoulders uneasily with atmospheric mood

inducers ('End Of Eden') and, believe it or not, ska ('Kidnap', 'The Dreamer'). All with every cliched sound effect you care to name, treated vocals, sub-Shadows guitar lines and the sound of smashing glass at the end of 'Mirrormaniac'. Special mention to the horrendous version of the Supremes' 'Stop! In The Name Of Love'.

Neuromantic fares slightly better. The rampant plagiarisms have disappeared, as have the failed attempts at sly wit (bar the title). Unfortunately, you are still left with Takahashi's weak and somewhat emotionless voice, and the proverbial everything-but-the-kitchen-sink electronic doodlings.

As an album of muzak, *Neuromantic* is passable, nothing more.

Barry Morris

Dolly Parton
Heartbreak Express
Waylon Jennings
Black On Black
RCA

Dolly Parton, facing the problem of a country singer who wants a bigger audience, approaches it from the unusual angle of studio soul. With sax solos by either Tom Scott or Jim Horn lacing her songs where pedal steel once played, her music works surprisingly well.

The title track of the album is a steamer, and while Dolly is no belter her perky high voice is stretched to the limits in a way that's quite attractive.

Oldtime fans may regret the changes though, and it's an odd move to include a pure country rerecording of one of her better early songs 'My Blue Ridge Mountain Boy'. Her music now probably reflects the realities of her life, but city listeners may like her most when she sticks to the nostalgia of her ole mountain home.

Waylon Jennings, on his new album, plants his cowboy boots firmly in the country of the past with versions of Johnny Cash's 'Folsom Prison Blues' and Hank Williams' 'Honky Tonk Blues'. But *Black On Black* is a disappointing album. Producer Chips Moman has come up with a muddy sound in which Jennings' tough voice slurs into the mix.

Jennings, who sparked the outlaw country movement with Willie Nelson, made one great album, *Honky Tonk Heroes*,

which was as lean and mean as its sexist, biting lyrics. But that was in 1973, and it's starting to feel like a long time ago.

Phil Gifford

Visage
The Anvil
Polydor

Though album number two from Visage is more consistent than their debut, it still doesn't add up to much.

I fail to see what musicians of the calibre of Barry Adamson and Dave Formula (both ex Magazine) are doing playing with would-be hairdressers like Midge Ure (Ultra-vox) and Steve Strange (famous for being famous).

The hit single, 'The Damned Don't Cry', starts things off, written to the same formula as 'Fade To Grey'. Then mostly it's just a run-through of various monotonous ditties that suit Strange's colourless voice down to the ground.

There are two exceptions. First there's 'Move Up', a great repetitive dance chant with a much-too-short piano break in the middle, reminiscent of Magazine. Pity John McGeoch wasn't on hand for guitar chores. It then kicks straight into the best song on the album, 'Night Train', where Visage actually come to life and get funky, complete with great driving sax.

Take those two songs, put them on a 12-inch single, and you have the only essentials on this album.

Barry Morris

Wynton Marsalis
CBS
Fathers and Sons
CBS

Wynton Marsalis is not quite 21, yet this trumpet player from New Orleans is regarded by highly respected jazz musicians with something approaching awe. Listening to his debut album, you can see why. His style has a maturity and discipline that is astonishing.

The respect accorded Marsalis is reinforced by the names backing him here. Herbie Hancock produces and plays on some tracks, along with fellow legends Ron Carter and Tony Williams. Elsewhere, Wynton is joined by (slightly) elder and no less talented brother Branford on sax, drummer Jeff Watts, bassist Clarence Seay and pianist Kenny Kirkland.

Wynton Marsalis already knows the Clifford Brown style inside out, but also has the cool delicacy of Fats Navarro and Freddy Hubbard. His playing has that youthful exuberance, sweet and fluid, and able to soar when needed. His own compositions make inventive use of tempo changes and allow plenty of room to improvise. He also does great credit to compositions by Hancock, Carter and Williams, and wraps it up with a tender interpretation of the old standard 'Who Can I Turn To'. A most impressive debut.

Both Marsalis brothers team up with their father, Ellis, a pianist of renown, for the *Fathers and Sons* LP. They contribute Side One, while the second side is by father and son tenor saxists, Von and Chico Freeman. A loving tribute to the post-war bop era in the main. Freeman senior's 'Time Marches On' is the most forward-thinking track here. Compared to Wynton's album, *Fathers and Sons* is an exercise in style, rather than content. Pleasant, but seldom inspiring.

Duncan Campbell



20 Solid Krypton Hits (Onset/Offset)

My copy hasn't got the proper cover so I don't know who does what on this intriguing Christchurch compilation album but the first half of Side Two is as good as any music made in NZ ever! Side One is modern, treated with lots of studio effects, and I feel the (good) songs suffer a little but when not worried about sounding a bit dated the people responsible relax into some lovely music. The South's already got this, it should be up North very soon. CK

The Picnic Boys
Here Comes the Jungle
(C90 \$5, TV Eye 002)

Invercargill? Great! 30 songs for five bucks, recorded on 4 track cassette and in three cases 8 track. All of it is interesting, some of it is truly stunning, none of it is boring. See jungle, see Picnic, C90. See if you like it and if you don't, tape over the two holes at the back and you've got a reasonably cheap cassette to do your master tape on. Buy it you slugs. (Write: TV Eye Enterprises, 506 Queens Drive, Invercargill.) CK

Spirit

Potatoland (Beggars Banquet)

Interesting artifact from the psychedelic period, recorded in 1973, but not available until now. Randy California and Ed Cassidy indulge themselves in a comic fantasy visit to Potatoland - a kind of McDonalds gone crazy. Side One is a series of loosely related songs and contains the album's highlights - 'Potatoland Theme' and 'Open Up Your Heart'. Side Two is a narrated story line, interspersed with increasingly spaced out instrumentation, but lacks the panache of say *Ogden's Nut Gone Flake*. Recommended for students of psychedelia. DP

Phil Manzanera

Primitive Guitars (Editions E.G.)

In his cover note, Phil Manzanera states that an abiding interest has been "the possibility of making a guitar sound as unlike a guitar as possible". The technical sound of that statement should not deter those interested in hearing elegant music to excite the emotions as well as the intellect. The ever-economic Manzanera draws an extraordinary mixture of styles and colours from his instrument, or, perhaps one should say, instruments, as he plays all instruments except for John Wetton's bass on one track. KW

Kim Wilde, Select (RAK)

If it's bright and sparkly pop we're after, I'll take the best five tracks from Kim Wilde's debut against any selection from *Dare* you like. This time out however, there's a slight case of the second album syndrome. The energy and exuberance is still there in heaps but no so many neat toons. Still, 'View From A Bridge' makes a snappy single, 'Can You Come Over' is better than the Go-Go's and you can dance to almost every track. PT

Levon Helm (Capitol)

The Band's former drummer turns in another album of pleasantly rocking Southern funk. Produced at Muscle Shoals with all the soulfulness expected of that worthy crew, the album confirms Helm as a song interpreter of the highest rank. His heartbreak reading of the ballad 'Even a Fool Would Let Go' would stand with anything he did with the Band. While the other songs are more routine, it's routine by the standards Levon set with the Band. KW

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