



n disc

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The music is slightly more conservative with the emphasis on funky blues-oriented material. "Claw-Til-De" is an attractive swinging samba that should have been extended. It is highlighted by Mickey Roker's fine drumming. Morgan has a ballad feature on "Stormy Weather," "Mr. Johnson" is a jazz waltz by Coleman, and everyone gets in their licks on the blues "Untitled Boogaloo."

Although the first date is more innovative, *The Procrastinator* is a fine well-balanced two-LP set. It makes one wonder what other treasures lurk in the vaults of United Artists.

Scott Yanow

THE NEVILLE BROTHERS (Capitol)

DR. JOHN

City Lights (A&M/Horizon)

The Neville Brothers derive from the Meters, probably New Orleans' most distinctively indigenous band to achieve any sort of national reputation. This spinoff consists of two original Meters (Art and Cyril Neville) and two singing and drumming brothers (Aaron and Charles Neville). Producer Jack Nitzsche succeeds best with the Nevilles when he keeps them in the mood and style of New Orleans music: the rhumba funk of Leiber and Stoller's "Dancin' Jones" (a medium-sized hit for co-writers Dino and Sembello a few years ago); the voodoo sound of "Break Away"; and the hot horns that propel "All Night, All Right" demonstrate the Nevilles' capabilities at cooking a musical gumbo. The ballads, especially Aaron's reading of David Forman's "If It Takes All Night," are done with equal fervor and feel. The only place that the Nevilles fail is where they try to emulate more current musical styles, like the disco death of "I'll Take My Chances," or the War-sounding "Speed of Light."

Dr. John, another New Orleans homeboy, has been transported to a New York studio filled with that city's finest session musicians. It's a long way from South Rampart Street.

Though Dr. John has a great, guttural voice, very little of that emerges here. He sings of sleaze and honky-tonks, tears and pain that I'm sure he's seen, but the instrumentation and arrangements rob the lyrics of their rawness.

Dr. John still manages to pull off a few good ones. "Dance the Night Away with You" opens the album on the right foot with a joyous lyric, strong boogie piano, and crisp (as opposed to "clean") band playing. The title track closes the album with Dr. John singing in his best smokey Mose Allison style. What's left between the first and last cuts is some of the quirkiest music Dr. John's ever recorded—and that's sayin' somethin'. The Doc's gruff vocals do not blend with the clean session playing; his lyrics of sleazy romance don't blend, either, and the result is that Dr. John doesn't sound like he feels at home on his own album.

The Nevilles were allowed to stay in the swamp, and that's their strength. Co-producers Tommy LiPuma and Hugh McCracken took Dr. John out of the swamp. And what they replaced that with is totally incongruous, and an insult to Dr. John's roots, soul and style.

Tom Vickers

OREGON

Violin (Vanguard)

Though its spirit and rhythm should make it quite accessible to a rock audience, Oregon's

music doesn't fit within that genre. It has been called jazz on more than one occasion, but it isn't exactly that either; Oregon's biggest influences clearly include the baroque, Indian and classical fields.

At any rate, the outfit combines a rare degree of imagination with the large, diverse instrumental skills necessary to display it. Just as importantly, its members possess a shared vision that, even on improvised num-

bers, results in cohesive, strongly directed performances.

You really ought to check out all their albums; and this entry, a collaboration with Polish violinist Zbigniew Siefert, seems as good a place to start as any. The band's free-flowing, harmonic music has never been more graceful or invigorating.

Jeff Burger

On the Sixteenth Day of Christmas

BY ED CRAY

Confronting the Yuletide—which he welcomes only as an opportunity for a skiing vacation—Ampersand's stalwart of classical music makes his recommendations for Christmas giving from among the new releases.

1 *Bach-Malloch: THE ART OF FUGUING (TownHall)*. William Malloch's arrangement of J.S. Bach's titanic, problematic *Art of the Fugue* discards the pedantic settings which have stiffened audiences for five decades. Malloch's dry wit and musicianship capitalize on the sheer joy of J.S. Bach at work. The recording of the 40-piece ensemble conducted by Lukas Foss is pristine, ideal for the living room "concert hall." A record-of-the-year candidate.

2 *Vivaldi: ORLANDO FURIOSO (RCA)*. A delightful surprise that captures the theatrical glory of Venice in the mid-18th Century. Marilyn Horne's soprano and Claudio Scimone's brisk direction make this the best recording of Baroque opera in memory.

3 *Mahler: SYMPHONY NO. 4 (Deutsche Grammophon)*. Claudio Abbado renders up the most appropriately Viennese of available recordings, with orchestra and Mahler both well served by DG's engineers.

4 *Shostakovich: PIANO CONCERTOS NOS. 1 & 2 (Columbia)*. None of the heavy-handed, government-stifled Shostakovich here, but spunky, irreverent music performed by Eugene List and the Moscow Radio Orchestra.

5 *Bach: ST. MATTHEW PASSION (Vanguard)*. Johannes Somary conducts a performance of this masterpiece notable for the attention to detail and suave singing by soloists and chorus.

6 *Holst: THE PLANETS (Philips)*. Neville Marriner conducts the Concertgebouw in this almost irresistible crowd-pleaser of the post-2001 era. Excellent sound and surface.

7 *Telemann: MUSIC FOR WIND INSTRUMENTS (Nonesuch)*. Routine Telemann, but handsomely performed by flutist Samuel Baron et al. The best of the bargain records.

8 *Rorem: ROMEO & JULIET, PISTON: SONATA FOR FLUTE AND PIANO; FRANCAIS: SUITE FOR UNACCOMPANIED FLUTE (CRI)*. Ned Rorem's "tone poem" for flute and guitar is the deserved centerpiece here, but the Piston sonata has special pleasures. Ingrid Dingfelder's flute makes this an excellent gift for the contemporary music buff.

9 *Mozart: CLARINET QUINTET AND QUINTET FOR PIANO & WOODWINDS (RCA)*. Tashi, the expandable chamber music ensemble, scores again. This just may be the best of a crowded field, due to the sense of intimacy the recording engineers have captured.

10 *Beethoven: PIANO SONATAS NOS. 9, 10 & 18 (Vanguard)*. Pianist Bruce Hungerford died in an automobile accident before he could complete his recording of all 32 Beethoven sonatas. The loss is immense, as this record of No. 18 proves. A choice gift for pianists.

11 *Beethoven: PIANO CONCERTO NO. 4 (RCA)*. Rubinstein may not be the greatest Beethoven performer of our time, but he is close. Daniel Barenboim and the London Phil provide aid and comfort. A good gift for someone just getting into classical music.

12 *Vivaldi, Tartini and Boccherini: CELLO CONCERTOS (Deutsche Grammophon)*. Cellist Mstislav Rostropovich joins forces with the Zurich Collegium Musicum conducted by Paul Sacher in robust readings of these increasingly familiar works.

13 *Vivaldi, Nardini and Leclair: VIOLIN CONCERTOS (Columbia)*. Violinist Pinchas Zukerman both solos and conducts members of the Los Angeles Philharmonic in three less familiar compositions. His virtuoso fiddling marks this as the appropriate gift for someone fond of violin music.

14 *Brahms: PIANO QUINTET IN F MINOR (Odyssey)*. This reissue from the Columbia catalogue boasts Leon Fleisher and the Juilliard String Quartet in a staple of the chamber music repertoire. The sound may be somewhat dated, but the musicianship is as fresh as ever.

15 *WHAT PLEASURE HAVE GREAT PRINCES (RCA)*. This two-record set of sacred and secular songs from the court of Elizabeth I is the perfect gift for someone with highly cultivated tastes in classical music. The London Early Music Group is overly mannered, overly polite, but the music itself is outstanding.

16 *A GORGEOUS GALLERY OF GALLANT INVENTIONS (EMI)*. This was one of those serendipitous finds in a local record store, a raucous, rousing anthology of mostly bawdy songs from the 12th through the 17th Centuries. The City Waites treat their material as just what it was, the popular music of the day. This is a great antidote to all those prissy, "authentic" recordings of early music, a well-chosen selection of songs and instrumental pieces.

OREGON

Out of the Woods (Elektra)

RALPH TOWNER

Batik (ECM)

PAUL WINTER

Earthdance (A&M)

The group called Oregon, aptly, is a state or a trail (whichever you will) on the northern frontier of jazz, where a different order of fusion between elements of classical formality and jazz exuberance may sometimes occur. Oregon is four musicians of considerable authority and competence playing eleven acoustic instruments as well as assorted percussion devices. The gist of Oregon's music is chaste and complex, information imparted with ingeniously disciplined passion. In this album, they demonstrate again the richness of possibility within their self-set limitations. Each of them writes, and eight of the nine cuts are by Oregonians.

The inner mechanism of Oregon is both attractive and exciting, a balance of individual identity with ensemble role so that solo passages emerge without contrivance or disruption of the fabric. Since each is a virtuoso in his own right, the members of Oregon offer separate, interesting messages without marring the melodious, translucent unity so rare in any band. There are also fascinating dialogues between Glen Moore's bass and Colin Walcott's sitar, and again between the bass and the latter's tabla. Paul McCandless achieves an eerie spell with his reeds, occasionally echoing at the outer walls of the concept but never breaking away. Ralph Towner, perhaps the most celebrated of the four, is gifted equally at the piano, classical and twelve-string guitars, and the flugelhorn. Towner is also represented on another new album, *Batik*, playing his guitars and piano with Eddie Gomez, bass, and Jack DeJohnette, drums, as a further example of his energetic influence on current jazz—like *Out of the Woods*, a beautiful and satisfying LP.

Oregon, if this is new to you, had its antecedents in the highly original, lustrous Winter Consort, which emerged in the late 1960s, and which is currently represented by a retrospective repackage, *Earthdance*.

Leonard Brown

JULES AND THE POLAR BEARS

Got No Breeding (Columbia)

JACK TEMPCHIN (Arista)

It's hard to believe that Jules Shear and Jack Tempchin ever had anything to do with each other, but they shared leadership of the Funky Kings during their brief existence. Now, Tempchin has joined the mellowed southern California rock family (many of whom appear on his LP) while Shear takes up residence in his own slightly warped mind.

Tempchin's songwriting was responsible for two Eagles hits, one of which, "Peaceful Easy Feeling," he offers here at a pace slowed practically to a stop.

Shear sings the sort of lyrics that take quite a while to decipher and even longer to interpret, but once understood (no examples here, you'll have to trust me), they're much more penetrating and insightful than Tempchin's comparably bland stories of everyday life.

Musically, Tempchin's hand-picked session men provide little more than competent support, but Shear's band, the Polar Bears (so called because they're white, hairy and cute, I suppose) become an integral part of the songs themselves. Though Tempchin's songs are just as musically and philosophically valid as Shear's, and at first may seem more so, Shear's madman-looks-at-life songs entail more conviction, interest and humor.

Vicki Arkoff