Just about the time “Little” Stevie Wonder was making a name in music as a kid sensation, “Little” Ronnie Foster was beginning to take up serious music himself on Woodlawn Ave. right here in Buffalo. These two artists, born only one day apart, are now close friends, and both are successful yet excitingly promising musical artists in their respective areas.

This issue will focus on Ronnie, as he is a real bright spot who has emerged from those streets, schools, nightclubs and people which we know as Buffalo.

First of all, let it be known that Ronnie is a hard dude to get ahold of—hopping from Toronto to NYC to Buffalo to Atlanta. We finally got in touch with him by phone in San Francisco, thanks to the help of his mother, who still resides in Buffalo.

Now let’s get a little history in here.

Born, May 12, 1950, Ronnie started “goofing around” with music at age 4. He attended Public School #8 through the eighth grade, then spent a year at Woodlawn Jr. High, went to McKinley Vocational for two years, with his last year at Lafayette. His restless moving around resulted from his ultimate desire to “do something besides build houses.”

Ronnie had no formal musical training at all, except for a brief month of accordian lessons. At around 13 or 14, he began to approach music seriously, seriously enough to play professionally at age 15. His first gig was at Shandu’s, playing behind a strip show. He explains it was pretty rough for a 15 year old boy to concentrate on his music while “watching chicks take their clothes off.” But with his power of concentration thus strengthened, he began to hook up with various local musicians and groups including such familiar local names as Elvin Shepherd and James Clark.

Eventually Ronnie formed his own group, and set out to expand musically in Buffalo. He played clubs like the old C Lounge on Dewey St., The Pine Grill, The Sheridan House in Williamsville, Ruby Red’s on Transit, and The Revilot, where he met Bemo Crockett, locally popular club owner and promoter, who Ronnie claims was “like a father” to him.

One of Ronnie’s favorite local clubs to play was the Ontario House in Niagara Falls.

Ronnie has had an impact in the local club scene by having the first group at the Club Soul at Jefferson and Utica, a place he says at that time was not constructed for music. He also played the grand opening of the Bleu Poyntt Supper Club on Michigan Ave.

Ronnie was influenced by musicians like Jimmy Smith, Jack McDuff, and Herbie Hancock. He liked the “different” style of Larry Young, and after listening to him decided he also wanted to be different.

And when Ronnie was influenced by a musician, there was nothing indirect about it. Young Ronnie would be at the doors of people like Smith, McDuff and Hancock whenever they were in town. So from age 14 he began to know and meet top jazz musicians, and they knew him.

George Benson, Ronnie’s present music director, who produced his latest album “On the Avenue”, is one who Ronnie met this way. Ronnie now finds George a man he can really work with, and with Benson’s great ability to put things together musically for production, Ronnie can concentrate on the writing, playing, and vocalizing.

What has Ronnie been doing lately?

After leaving Buffalo with his own group, he headed to New York City where the musicians eventually split up, but where Ronnie acquired a Publishing Company, and is now very interested in writing music.

In the near future he will write for such artists as
He has another album which will come out in February, which he hopes to add a little more of his vocal abilities to. He also hopes to have a new group by the beginning of the year, with a new sound - hopefully at least 6 pieces with 2 sets of keyboards.

Recently, Ronnie had a couple of weeks off and spent a lot of time in the studio and around town with his friend of 3-1/2 years, Stevie Wonder. As was mentioned before, both were born within a day of each other - Ronnie the 12th, Steve the 13th of May, 1950. Ronnie feels this fact has a lot to do with how well the two get along together; he feels there are certain astrological characteristics they share. You can't forecast what will happen day by day, he says, but the stars do affect personality and character. And so a good friendship.

How can a person from Buffalo enjoy so much success? Didn't the fact that he's from this city hold him back?

No, says Ronnie Foster.

His whole environment was made in Buffalo, and around the area. For him, there are "no negative vibes - it's my home". He admits he has been lucky, and he says he did every thing he could do in Buffalo before he had to move on to grow. But he also feels that Buffalo is going through a re-habilitation period, and hopes it can return to those times when it was a "really hot" jazz city.

Perhaps his feelings for his home town are most evident in the title of his latest album, "On the Avenue". Ronnie wrote the title song, and although he hopes he wouldn't have to say it, those city-in-summer feelings and experiences that he expresses really do come off "The Avenue" - Jefferson Avenue.

Editor's Column

Issue Number 10, what a thought. As we prepared our first issue in February of this year, we worked against great odds; mainly a lack of advertising, and the fact that most new publications, no matter what type, fail. However, Buffalo's need for a Jazz Newspaper could not be denied, or taken lightly; and the odds were overcome. Each month we learn and grow, steadily gaining new readers. We've had our mis-

prints, even a few blunders, but we're trying.

Throughout the past nine months we all have witnessed a change in Buffalo with regards to Jazz. The Revilot closed, but Bemo began to book groups into the Bleu Poynnt Club. The Old Royal Arms was brought to life again, renamed Ericson Lounge - so far with a jazz policy. Artpark hosted a series of jazz concerts, and hopefully will continue on a broader scale next season. The Statler Hilton surprised everyone by announcing a mellow jazz policy, starting with the Ruby Braff Geo. Barnes Quartet. Gabriel's Gate has been booking jazz, although less consistent than other clubs. Mark Murphy was there for two months. Most recent additions were Myron's with the Buffalo Jazz Ensemble, and a re-opened Revilot with Jive Soup! and Birthright. It may be a bit premature, but we are working out plans for concerts ourselves, using a well known group and local talent. The list just keeps growing.

WBFO still carries the best Jazz Radio programs although WEBR is doing a pretty good job in a kind of "safe" vein. Perhaps more stations will follow suit.

As for us - our circulation has jumped from 5,000 to 12,000, our size has doubled and we are getting advertising. Of course, as I've pointed out before, it is advertising that keeps the BJR alive, and keeps it FREE. I can't stress enough the importance that you, our readers, patronize the various businesses whose ads are in our various issues. Let them know where you saw their ad. If you'll make it a point to do that, I'll thank you in advance. Thank You!

In the months ahead we will, no doubt, fluctuate in size relative to our advertising volume. Keeping our
heads above water is far more important than creating or preserving an image. The concert idea has us excited, and we'll keep you posted on that.

In the meantime, all of us here at the BJR wish you the best for the holidays and the New Year. See you in '75.

B.W.

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recordings

LEONARD FEATHER PRESENTS - ENCYCLOPEDIA OF JAZZ ON RECORDS - MCA RECORDS

These records were originally released as a counterpart of Feather's original Encyclopedia Of Jazz (Horizon Press). Once a boxed set (Decca DSXF7-140), they are now in the form of three double-pocket sets.

The first, Vol. 1 & 2 (MCA2-4061) covers The Twenties & The Thirties, and scans the popular and important bands and leaders of that time - Glen Miller, James J. Johnson, Chick Webb, Sidney Bechet and others. Formats from solo piano to big band w/vocalist are covered.

The Forties & The Fifties (MCA 2-4062) are represented in Vol. 3-4, again in diverse settings featuring artists as well known as Woody Herman, Erroll Garner, Billie Holiday and King Cole; and, less popular names as John Graas and Ralph Burns.

Vol. 5 (MCA 2-4063) is more of the fifties, with tracks such as Two Funky People from Al Cohn & Zoot Sims; Lester leaps in by Tony Scott & The All Stars (which includes Red Rodney on trumpet) and tracks from Bean, Toots Thielmans, Bill Holman, George Russell, John Hendricks & others.

Feather states that he "did not select these items strictly on name value, but rather in terms of their retrospective interest as examples of the music that was being created during this phase of the evolution of jazz." He further points out that several artists included deserve far more recognition than they have ever achieved. As good as that thought is, it seems odd that such players as Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Sonny Rollins, Philly Joe Jones, Max Roach and Clifford Brown are omitted from the set. I suppose, however, that we must appreciate the difficulty in putting together a collection such as this. From the standpoint that the above mentioned artists can easily be heard elsewhere, Mr. Feather should be thanked for this collection of rare and educational recordings.

The sound quality varies, of course, due to the time span and large number of sessions involved. I can have no gripe about MCA's pressings; they are generally good.

BOBBY HUTCHERSON - CIRRUS - BLUE NOTE LA-257-G

Cirrus, from the standpoint of creativity as well as musicianship, is probably the best album of newly recorded music to come from Blue Note since Elvin Jones' Mr. Jones (released last year). Hutcherson has not been recorded lately as much as he deserves. His contributions to McCoy Tyner's Sama Layuca release were second only to Tyner himself.

The title tune is a typical 60's type Mainstream outing, for which Blue Note is most famous. After the ensemble passages, Woody Shaw turns out a fiery solo, followed by Bobby's long time associate Harold Land on tenor (I think), then its Bobby with one of his notorious single note messages with his unusually damp tone. Zuri Dance is a tribal style tune by the leader, similar to Tyner's recent compositions. McCoy's influence is heard again on Shaw's Rosewood. Bobby takes an extended solo, with Kenneth Nash on congas laying the foundation with bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Larry Hancock. Then its back to the head and out. The album is rounded out by Even Later - a gorgeous ballad feature from Hutcherson and Wrong Or Right, where it's 60's Mainstream and a touch of Tyner again.

If you've been wondering where Bobby's been the last few years, you can stop wondering and start saving. Bobby Hutcherson is back.

crazy ron haircutter

59 Kenmore Ave. 836-8869
(corner of Windemere) behind jewelry store
In Memoriam marks the end of a jazz institution. After nearly a quarter of a century as one of jazz's most respected and elite groups, the MJQ announced that it would disband in spring of this year.

At the same time, the album sums up the works of John Lewis, Milt Jackson, Percy Heath and Connie Kay. Their fusion of classical music and jazz, whether they be alone, or as they are here, with a symphony orchestra, they have never been less than excellent. This album is of the same degree. John Lewis, the composer of most of the material, feels that this is their best, and it probably is, as they always continue to grow. Jackson and Lewis solo in the melodic and refined manner they are known for; Heath is strong and always on time but relatively simple - never overplaying; Kay acting more as a percussionist with his exquisite cymbal and snare work; all very much at home with the orchestra. In short, they display charm and finesse on this totally gratifying album.

You'll hear some of the past, especially on the title tune, a work in two parts by Lewis. Part One was written as a tribute to his piano teacher, the head of the Music Dept. of the Univ. of New Mexico (Lewis grew up in Albuquerque); and Part Two for other musicians he admired that have passed on - such as Louie Armstrong, Igor Stravinsky, Bela Bartok, Lester Young, Coleman Hawkins, Bird, Eric Dolphy, Ben Webster and others. Adagio from the guitar concerto Concerto De Aranjuez by Joaquin Rodrigo has been recorded twice before by MJQ, this version (I feel) being the most moving.

Jazz has lost a lot this year - Duke Ellington, Gene Ammons, Harry Carney and in another, less permanent sense, the Modern Jazz Quartet. Their records will live on.

NTU WITH GARY BARTZ - SINGERELLA (A GHETTO FAIRYTALE) - PRESTIGE P-10083

Numerous critics have written that the sound of NTU has become stale, but Gary may have disproved that through this release. Singerella is a concept album, written about Bedford-Stuyvesant, from which Bartz recently moved to the West Coast. St. Felix Street, Gary explains, is a typical street in the ghetto, where our story begins.

Seven of the eight pieces here contain vocals by Gary, and he's sounding better. A sheet is enclosed with lyrics and a brief explanation. Pianist Hubert Eaves and drummer Howard King have been with Bartz for some time now, and new additions are bassist James Benjamin and guitarist Maynard Parker. Parker has performed on many Prestige dates over the last few years. Together they form a well-knit ensemble, are tight, funky as hell and imaginative. Bartz is heard on alto and soprano saxes, clarinet, mouth harp, synthesizers and percussion. His soprano work is improving, but alto is still his best axe judging by the results of this date. King is more in control than he used to be, but he's young and growing.

Check this one out if you can. Bartz and NTU say a good deal here. Its educational and enjoyable.

GEORGE BENSON - BAD BENSON - CTI 6045 S1

In retrospect, this may easily be George's best for the Creed Taylor label. His last was good, but its funkiness allowed it to grow stale on repeated listenings. This one holds up like a champ.

Paul Desmond's Take Five, a tune seldom recorded outside of the family of Brubeck veterans, opens the record in true Benson form. The tempo is quick and the octaves are flying. Summer Wishes, Winter Dreams is a short piece for guitar and orchestra - very light. Additional guitar work is by Phil Upchurch. My Latin Brother is as funky as it is Latin, with solos of merit coming from Benson and pianist Kenny Barron.

Side Two begins with medium tempo Upchurch original - No Sooner Said Than Done, again with Benson and Barron up front. Full Compass is the most modern of the 6 numbers, sounding a bit like Joe Farrell material - Barron shines. The Changing World is a mild ballad feature for George's guitar.

The arrangements are by Don Sebesky but don't let that hold you back. He stays away from the 101 strings sound here. A valid complaint, however, might be that CTI continues to limit their recordings to roughly 15 minutes per side. At todays prices, another 5 wouldn't hurt them.
Ronnie Foster is at the beginning of a brilliant career. He was first noticed for his work with Grant Green and now, at 23, he has already recorded two albums that have established him as a ranking jazz organist. And his third album, "On the Avenue," is now available. Its five new Ronnie Foster compositions leave little doubt that music has a new man on organ. "On the Avenue" is in the streets.

L.P. BN-LA261-G
8 TRK. BN-EA261-G

On Blue Note Records & Tapes
THAD JONES - MEL LEWIS - POTPOURRI - PHIL. INT'L. - KZ 33152

Well folks, it's been four years now since we last heard from the TJ-ML big band. The fact that their last album, *Consummation*, was a smash, five stars and 100% could make such a huge gap cause some questions and a rash of anger - which it has. The band tried - word is that A & M Records has had one in the can for some time which they won't release because "it's not commercial enough". At last, someone had the good taste to do what's right - record them and release the results to the public.

On first hearing, one might be faintly let down. After four years I know I started getting thoughts of supernatural monsters brewing in within the band - an album that might change the direction of jazz, at the least. The first spin was slightly anti-climactic, which is understandable. The fact is that many of the same cats are on this album - Roland Hannah, Pepper Adams, Jerry Dodgion, Billy Harper, Jimmy Knepper and The Leaders; and their basic sound remains very similar - big, fat and bluesy. Repeated listenings were delightful and still are.

The album opens with a blues romp - *Blues In A Minute*, from the pen of Jones. George Mraz turns out a fine bass solo introduction while accompanied by Lewis and Hannah. There are just too many exceptional solos on the album to cover here.

In addition to 3 more Jones compositions, two Stevie Wonder tunes are heard - *Don't You Worry About A Thing and Living For The City*, and Marian McPartland's lovely ballad *Ambiance*, arranged by Jerry Dodgion (all other arrangements are by Jones). *For The Love Of Money* is a popular O'Jay's tune, reworked to fit the band's style, with trumpeter Buddy Lucas doubleing on harmonica. *Yours & Mine and All My Yesterdays* are ballads (Jones is a bitch with ballads), and *Quiet Lady* is a joyful medium swinger in 3/4 with some nifty ensemble passages and light lines from Hannah on electric piano.

Hopefully, it won't be four more years before we hear from them again. It's strange when you think about some of the people that have a new album every 4 months while cats like these go unheard outside of live gigs. To give credit where due - thanks go out to Philadelphia Int'l., Columbia and (naturally) Thad and Mel.

THE BADDEST HUBBARD - CTI 6047 S1
THE BADDEST TURRENTINE - CTI 6048 S1

Having recently lost Hubbard and Turrentine, anthologies as these were a logical and predictable step for CTI. Freddie & Stanley were probably their hottest artists.

I doubt that either of these records would appeal to the regular fans of the leaders in mention, since they most likely have all or most of the albums from which the cuts were selected. All four of Turrentine's CTI releases are represented, and four out of Hubbard's five; excluding their joint live disc.

All the facts are on the outside covers, so these albums should fall only into the hands of people who can use them - mostly newcomers to the jazz spectrum, or regulars whose pocketbook prohibits buying 8 albums.

The material chosen is representative of the original records, except for Hubbard's *Here's That Rainy Day*, a mellow cut which is nothing like the busy/funky remainder of the record *Straight Life*.

BARNEY KESSEL - SWINGING EASY - BLACK LION 130

Recorded in 1968, *Swinging Easy* has been available from English Black Lion for some time; and, has recently been released here by Audio Fidelity. Its a trio session, with London based Kessel, joined by Englishmen Kenny Napper on bass and John Marshall on drums. Although not often talked about lately, Kessel is a gifted guitarist, often playing single note passages with chord bursts for good measure, while remaining quite melodic. Since his first gig with Chico Marx Orch. (led by Ben Pollack) in 1943, he has played in numerous settings - jazz, show tunes, movie scores, etc.

This album finds him in a relaxed, often mellow mood. A wide variety of tunes are covered - such as *Aquarius, Autumn Leaves, Corcovado (Quiet Nights)* and *The Look Of Love*.

Another Kessel album, a more energetic set from Montreux, has just been released by Black Lion, and will be reviewed soon. For now - *Swing Easy*.

CHARLIE BYRD - BYRD BY THE SEA - FANTASY F-9466

Byrd's third for Fantasy was recorded live at Howard Rumsey's "Concerts by the Sea" in Redondo Beach, Cal. His group here consists of himself or
guitar, his brother, Joe Byrd, on bass and Bertell Knox on drums.

The best cuts on the album are the Latin numbers; and the Beatles Norwegian Wood comes off very well, as Byrds style is quite compatible with that composition. Killing Me Softly, the popular Roberta Flack hit, is less successful for just the opposite reason, and Knox's drumming is not quite together. It could be that funky drumming and Charlie's guitar don't mix well, whatever, Knox sounds good on Byrd's Fantasy in B Minor and includes a brush break that draws some chuckles from the audience. Charlie of course is an accomplished guitarist and sounds good throughout. Joe is steady although not astonishing.

The results are a typical, average live session. No new ground is broken, but Charlie lets you know he's still around.

LIKE CHILDREN (NEMPEROR ATL.) - NE-430

--JERRY GOODMAN & JAN HAMMER

Ever since I heard that these two mainstays of the original Mahavishnu Orchestra were working together, I have been anxiously awaiting this lp, and I wasn't at all disappointed, to say the least. Comparisons with Mahavishnu Orchestra I are inevitable, and the album comes off well from them; it is as full of drive and fire as any of the 3 lp's they did with John McLaughlin.

Jan is, as usual, superb on keyboards, and his synthesizer work is just outstanding. His fine drumming, however, is the real surprise. Jerry's violin work sounds as passionate as ever, though his guitar playing tends to run to "jazz-rock" cliches.

All in all, it is an album that any full band could be proud of putting together, let alone just two musicians. The production by the two of them together with Ken Scott is better than average. The only major fault that I find on this album is the inclusion of some poor and unnecessary shouted vocals, but if you can ignore or accept them, the album is more than worthwhile.

M.H.

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what's happening


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