

Album of chilling, stark images belongs to music of the future

Keith Jarrett/Jar. Garbarek: *Luminessence*, ECM
Luminessence strikes me immediately as a destined classic, but there is nothing classic about it yet. It seems rather to be music of the future.

Jarrett composed the cold, desolate forms played by Garbarek on tenor and soprano sax and the strings of the Sudfunk Symphony Orchestra of Stuttgart.

The strings are chilling. Icy, empty images are evoked, but behind all the desolation lies a pulse, asymmetrical and life-like. It's disturbing, but you cannot deny its probing, deeply personal vision.

Having been listening with interest to Jarrett for many years, I am not very surprised at this achievement. His own musical style, which for many years was conventional but acceptable, has evolved into a probing, sometimes austere, but always beautiful style. The albums produced from his German concerts in Bremen and Koln, and a Lausanne, Switzerland, concert are evidence of this searching.

The images and philosophies behind *Luminessence* are unsettling, transcending what we are accustomed to. If you think you're interested, buy the album. It has the plus of excellent musicianship. **Diane Wanek**

Tanya Tucker: *Lovin' and Learnin'*, MCA

You can't be too hard on Tanya Tucker. After all, she is only 16-years-old. One can't expect her to have the emotional depth that only a few added years can produce.

Considering the power of Tucker's voice, this is a restrained release—country music of the Olivia Newton-John variety. This is a wise choice on her management's part. Tucker has not learned to master her instrument. The rockers—such as "Ain't That a Shame"—overwhelm her.

But the main problem here is the artistic merit of the material. Most of this package is a collection of obsequious songs, except for the Eagles's "The Thrill Is Gone"—a strong rendition that proves Tucker's undeniable vocal talent. Given solid country-flavored material (it seems very unlikely that Tucker will ever be able to un-countrify her voice), the world will hear of Tanya Tucker for many years. **-Deb Gray**

Bill Evans/Eddie Gomez: *Intuition*, Fantasy Records

Intuition marks the first recorded duet album of Bill Evans (acoustic and electric piano) and Eddie Gomez, his bassist for nearly a decade, and it is a joy to the ear of the behearer.

Having played together for such a long time, it comes as no surprise that these two are so finely attuned to one

another. But the absence of the drummer gives us the opportunity to discover the crystal clear sound and rhythmic flexibility of their music.

Bee Gees: *Main Course*, RSO Records

Of all the British groups which have lasted into the '70s the Bee Gees probably are the least inventive. They are primarily imitators, not initiators. The Gibb brothers rely more on the studio than on their own vocal power to produce their full-bodied sound.

The Bee Gees have integrated some 1970s idioms, primarily funk, into their style with less than satisfying results here. "Jive Talkin'," which relies on a weak melodic theme, is endlessly repetitive.

But the group succeeds on cuts that adhere to the standard Bee Gees mold: Love ballads that are heavily produced, creamy harmonies, strings and whatever else is available to produce a lush blanket of sound. It's excessive, but, somehow, the Bee Gees make this excess work.

"Nights on Broadway" is a perfect example. There's syrup here, but it's well done, even exciting, and arguably the best Bee Gee recording ever. "Fanny (Be Tender with My Love)" is patterned after Thom Bell and his relaxed Philadelphia sound. "Songbird" also works; strong melodically, pleasant harmonically.

These high points are on side one. Side two deteriorates rapidly, either because of hokey lyrics ("I get pleasure, I get pain, it's a gravy train", for example), melodies that jump about spastically or indiscriminate noodling about on the synthesizer. **-Deb Gray**

The interplay between Gomez and Evans is brilliant; that's what this record is all about. The serene joy with which each tune is rendered makes the album a real delight. Even the brooding Ellington tune "Blue Serge" comes across in a refreshing manner.

"Show-Type," written by Evans, "Blue Serge" and "Nature" feature Evans on both electric and acoustic piano. Gomez gets his licks in on "Invitation" and fellow-bassist Steve Swallow's "Grace." The above probably are the best cuts on the album, though it's hard to decide since there isn't a bad, or even a mediocre, cut on the album.

The recording itself is superb. Every nuance of the sound of the instruments is captured and in perfect balance. Everything about this album makes it more than worth the price. **-Diane Wanek**



Photo by Steve Boerner

Keith Jarrett, composer of *Luminessence*, an album that evokes cold, empty and beautiful images.

out of my head | Dimly rooted Hillbilly Jazz alive, strumming once more

By Diane Wanek

It's been called Western Swing, Honky Tonk, Hillbilly Jazz and Switched-on Nashville. No matter what it's called, the ultimate product, born out of bluegrass, jazz, blues and Cajun music, currently is enjoying quite a revival nationwide.

The origins of Western Swing music are dim and disputed. The most likely suggestion is that it grew out of Louisiana's French, black and creole music and fused with Czech, German and Mexican music from Texas.

Before the advent of radio, the musician's role was that of entertainer at church picnics, barn raisings, harvests, weddings, reunions and dances. If the musician established a reputation, he might advance to a traveling medicine show and journey the phenomenal distance of a hundred miles.

Radio changed all that in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Enabling the musician to affect large numbers of people, it broadened his influence and made him a commercial product.

Dance halls popular

After the Chicago station WLS, then owned by Sears Roebuck & Co., popularized the National Barn Dance in 1924, southwestern cities established large dance halls from which shows were broadcast.

Stations rarely paid performers on these early radio shows. Usually the musicians were salesmen for one of the show's sponsors. Bob Wills's first broadcast for the Burriss Mills Company, and later for his own Playboy Flour, and the Hoosier Hotshots sold Alka-Seltzer.

A number of performers influenced the evolution of Hillbilly Jazz. On the guitar, Eddie Lang, Lonnie Johnson, Scrapper Blackwell, Charlie Christian and Django Reinhardt each played a part in the transition of the instrument's role from a rhythm to a melodic single-string function.

Lang and "hot" violinist Joe Venuti teamed to produce some important and innovative music in the 1920s. Charlie Christian left an Oklahoma territory blues band to join Benny Goodman's big band swing group in the late 1930s.

Considered by many as the major influence on be-bop, Christian explored and elevated the electric guitar to new heights.

Early Hillbilly Jazz fiddlers created their style by combining jazz ideas from Venuti and jazz violinist Stephane Grappelly with older Cajun and Texas fiddle tunes derived from Scots-Anglo-Irish traditions. Vassar Clements is probably today's leading jazz-oriented fiddler.

Hillbilly Jazz piano

Barrel house, Baptist and honky tonk with boogie-woogie comprise the piano style in Hillbilly Jazz, influenced by Pinetop Smith's boogie-woogie and the blues of

Leroy Carr.

America fell in love with Hawaiian music in the mid-1920s, and the ukulele, tippie and Hawaiian guitar became popular. The Hawaiian guitar was modified in 1925 by the addition of a metal resonator to make the notes sustain longer. Developed by the Dopera brothers, it was given the name Dobro. By 1935 it had evolved into the electric steel guitar, and was played by Bob Dunn of the Musical Brownies in Texas.

When the depression forced the cities' trained jazz musicians out of work, many drifted the country playing in rural bands. This contributed considerably to creation of Hillbilly Jazz.

About that time, Jimmie Rodgers, from Meridian, Miss., was discovered at a record audition in Bristol, Tenn. His "blue yodels" became big sellers for the Victor Recording Company, and had an enormous impact on hillbilly music. The rural poor could easily identify with Rodgers, the son of a section hand on the Gulf, Mobile and Ohio Railroad.

He combined popular, jazz and blues elements to form a simple, direct style that seemed unhurried, yet held the listener's attention. Though his audience was predominately white, black jazz players such as Louis Armstrong and Earl "Fatha" Hines musically accompanied him.

Driving instrumentals

In 1930 Bob Wills, destined to become the most famous Western Swing performer, formed his first group, the Bob Wills Fiddle Band. When they first recorded in 1932 for Victor, the band's music ranged from sacred to sentimental to comic. Yet they were perhaps best known for their driving instrumentals, including "El Rancho Grande" and the hoedown, "Old Joe Clark."

Wills bought a Tulsa, Okla. ballroom shortly thereafter. There he regularly played to crowds of 2,000 to 4,000, sold his Playboy Flour (his band now was known as Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys) and enjoyed profits from such hits as "Take Me Back to Tulsa," "San Antonio Rose" and "Yearning."

Bob Wills's Western Swing was a synthesis of Cajun music, big band jazz, Texas and delta blues, Dixieland and jug band. He was first to use the concept of instruments playing in sections, outside the swing bands of Duke Ellington and Count Basie.

World War II, a turning point in music, marked the Swing Era's end. By 1945 Western Swing had been assimilated into the styles of a large number of country and western performers.

Today, Doug Kershaw, Vassar Clements, Asleep at the Wheel and other musicians have revived Hillbilly Jazz, and the number of devotees is increasing. Perhaps this great musical style once again will influence other forms of music.

arts & entertainment



Photo courtesy Photogram, Inc.

Among those responsible for revival of what has been called Western Swing, Hillbilly Jazz and Switched-on Nashville is fiddler Vassar Clements.