

Invisible jukebox

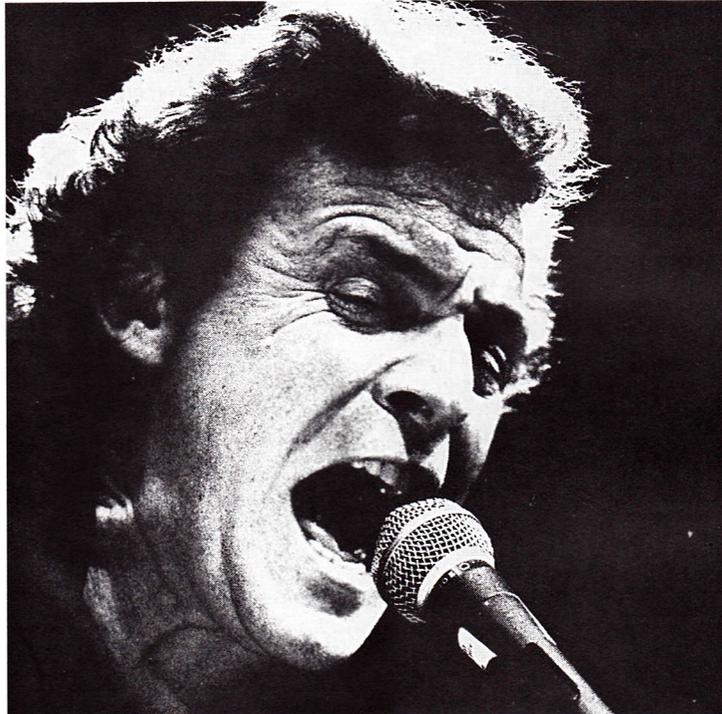
JACOPASTORIUS/CHARLIE MINGUS/JONI MITCHELL
“The Dry Cleaner From Des Moines” from *Mingus* by Joni Mitchell (Asylum)

It's Jaco. Joni Mitchell. Is it a James Moody song? Oh, it's the *Mingus* album. Charles is definitely the biggest influence on me as musician, partly because he was a bass player, but also because he was a composer bass player. He was a very early fusion musician if you like because he fused country blues into jazz, and all of those things have stayed with me. The very first person I listened to was Percy Heath. When I was about 11 or 12 my father took me to see the MJQ at the St Andrew's Hall in Glasgow and even though I was sitting in the back row, Percy just had this fabulous tone and that turned me on to want to play the bass. Then I listened to Scotty La Faro, Charlie Haden, Ray Brown of course — the list is endless — Oscar Pettiford, Leroy Vinnegar, Jimmy Blanton. But when I became aware of Mingus it changed my whole life. It was his total approach as a band leader and a bass player and a composer that appealed to me, and really touched me.

And Jaco?

Jaco was a fabulous player, and he certainly made his mark on the bass, but he was a very tormented person. I spent a night playing with him in a little club in New York shortly before he died, and half way through the jam he just sort of said to me, “Oh, you've got to come with me”, and I went outside with him and he just ran away. He just literally sprinted down the block and around the corner and I never saw him again — ever. At the end of his life he seemed to be going in all directions at once: he was kind of up for a second, then really down. There was no calmness there

Every month we play a musician a series of records which they're asked to identify and comment on — with no prior knowledge of what they're about to hear.



jack bruce
tested by Philip Watson

He will only admit to it jokingly, but singer, bassist, composer and multi-instrumentalist Jack Bruce is a rock'n'roll legend. Recently inducted, with fellow Cream members Eric Clapton and Ginger Baker, into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, Bruce has been making music for more than 30 years. He first came to attention in 1962 when he joined Alexis Korner's Blues Inc, quickly becoming an integral part of the 60s British R&B scene in bands led by Graham Bond, John Mayall and Manfred Mann, among others. But it was Cream that really propelled him into the stratosphere, the trio that (reportedly) sold 30 million

records in their three years together. Cream split because Bruce wanted to return more to his jazz and blues roots. Since 1969, he has explored these and other paths, including rock, latin and classical, and worked with Tony Williams, Carla Bley and Kip Hanrahan. He has also released several highly regarded albums — most recently *Somethin' Els* (CMP) which features Clapton, Dave Liebman and Dick Heckstall-Smith among others. This month he is touring with his regular trio of Blues Saraceno (g) and Simon Phillips (d) on dates which include a return to his home town for the Glasgow Jazz Festival.

at all. I can certainly relate to it, but it's very tragic that he didn't hang around any longer.

LIGHTNIN' HOPKINS
“Last Night Blues” from *Last Night Blues* (Prestige/Bluesville)

Should I know who this is? It sounds like Little Walter on harmonica, but it isn't him. Is it Sonny Terry? [*It is*] But it's not Brownie McGhee. No, you'll have to tell me. It's Lightnin' Hopkins.

Oh God, yeah, but I don't know this at all. I consider myself lucky for recognising Sonny Terry. I wouldn't claim to be anything like an authority on blues music, but Lightnin' Hopkins — you can't really say anything about liking him or not; he just is. Any slight knowledge I have of the real blues, the country blues, was gained through Eric. I knew about Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf, but Eric introduced me to people like Robert Johnson and Hopkins and Skip James. I think it's the reality of it that I liked. It's the link with Africa: you could imagine that music almost unchanged played in West Africa a couple of hundred years ago. It's like a little hint back to where we all come from, because no matter what colour we are, we all come from there. Like a race memory, something that echoes in our souls, that exists in all music — like a common language. It has to be the basis of the music I play — that search for the common thing, that something that cries out in the music. God, that's a bit philosophical. Let's move on before I get any worse.

LED ZEPPELIN
“Custard Pie” from *Physical Graffiti* (Swan Song)

Pah. Obviously I should know this. It's not Led Zeppelin is it? Why are you playing me session musicians? Do you want to listen to any more?



No. Oh, I'm only joking, but I never listened to them to be quite honest — it just didn't interest me. Funny enough I got asked to join that band. But I didn't — I don't know whether you noticed. I was more interested in the jazz-rock fusion thing, especially with Tony [Williams]. I'm not putting them down as musicians, and the lads have done well and everything, and it's not jealousy, but it's just the fact that their audience was created by us lot [Cream] and Jimi, and we threw it away. I don't envy what happened to them — I've been through the rock and roll madness as much as I really want to. That was part of the reason why Cream came to an end: when it got really big, I soon stopped being interested in it. I thought it had got out of hand, so I went deliberately in the opposite direction and played small jazz clubs. But Robert Plant — what was it that Pete Brown said about him? Oh yes: he uses the wrong kind of fertiliser.

PAUL CHAMBERS/JOHN COLTRANE
"Mr PC" from Giant Steps (Atlantic)

Coltrane. What can I say? *Do you want to listen to this more?* Yeah. It's Paul Chambers on bass isn't it? Again a tragic much-too-short life. He was a wonderful player, but the thing about him was that he was so influenced by Coltrane and the approach he had to improvising. I love great bass soloists, but that wasn't something I ever tried to emulate. I was more attracted to people like Mingus or Charlie Haden — the grooving approach as opposed to tremendous technique and soloing. To me the bass has always been more of a functional instrument — a catalyst really. But I always, obviously, loved Coltrane's playing. It's amazing to listen to him now: Coltrane changed the world for tenor players and his sound has become so much part of the language. Miles made some criticisms of Coltrane in his book, but I think Miles didn't like him because he didn't dress sharply enough. It was the same with Tony and Larry [Young] — Miles would tell his bands where to buy his clothes — it was a store called Parachute in New York — but, of

course, Miles wouldn't buy his clothes there — he went somewhere better. *Do you think it's overstating the case to say Coltrane's music has a spiritual dimension to it?*

No, I think we all get that from Coltrane — that's what it's all about. And that's the great thing about jazz or blues. It's that link to what we are and where we come from. I don't know if I would put it any higher than that, otherwise it gets difficult to talk about. But certainly it's something that strikes a chord. And that incredible *Ascension* album he did towards the end, which was put down, but I love that. Although it's maybe a little more difficult to listen to, it's still very happening. *Very happening.*

JAHWOBBLE
"Visions Of You" from Rising Above Bedlam (eastwest)

I've definitely no idea who this is. It's not Donovan. That's a joke. . . .

It's Jah Wobble.

I actually should have recognised that old-fashioned bass sound, yeah. I know of him, and I've heard a couple of things by him, but he's not somebody I know much about. And it's Shinehead on vocals isn't it? I thought it might be. It's quite interesting really. I would have to listen to it more I guess. . . . erm. . . but it's not really my kind of thing. *Let me play you another track ["Soledad"].*

It's sort of pleasant, but to me there's not a lot to listen to. It just sounds like back beats with reverb. It's almost New Agey, background stuff which I have problems with, I have to say. It's even like a lot of the straight music that they're pushing at the moment, like Tavener. I went to see his new opera the other day and it was kind of hypnotic, but I kept waiting for the music to happen. I like great rhythms and great melodies and shattering chords and Stravinsky and Messiaen — stuff that grabs you. Messiaen's music just has big chunks of sound — I love that — and it seems to have this very deep meaning in the way that Coltrane's music does. It's not like Beethoven where you get a theme and then 20 minutes of twiddly bits. I'm not trying to be controversial, but Beethoven only knew three chords

as well. I haven't heard this whole record obviously, but it has that feeling of mood music. And although there's a place for it, I would say it's probably the elevator.

BOOTSY COLLINS
"Jungle Bass" from Jungle Bass (Island EP)

I don't know.

What if I was to say Parliament/Funkadelic?

Oh God, I wish I'd said it now. It's Bootsy Collins. Again I've got links with Bootsy because I know George [Clinton] quite well and Bernie Worrell. Bootsy's great if only because his basses are better looking than anyone else's. He has that star-shaped one, remember? I like all this stuff, I mean I love it actually. There are probably better players than Bootsy technically, but he's solidly in the tradition of Larry Graham who really invented the slapping bass I guess. There's a lot of humour in that whole area. That particular track didn't grab me, but this is the funk. . . . the *Real Funk*.

JACQUELINE DUPRÉ
Elgar's Cello Concerto in E Minor, London Symphony Orchestra/Sir John Barbirolli (EMI Classics)

I know this. Give me a while. It's Jacqueline Du Pré — the Elgar. I've got chills — it's the sound, the tone. She had the most sublime sound. Tragedy [long pause]. Yeah. It's The Real Funk. I mean if you want to talk about spirituality, then it's right here in the same way it is with Coltrane. It's just a different way of approaching and achieving it. This must be the ultimate recorded performance of this piece and she very much made it her own. I was in love with her in the 60s, and followed her career, because I can't think of anyone that I know — even Casals and Fournier — with a more appealing cello sound, or more moving. I'm glad that recording exists.

You seem genuinely moved listening to this piece.

Yes. Initially by the sound, but then by her life. Although she was very brave and an inspiration to everyone, I still feel a loss.

BLIND IDIOT GOD
"Stravinsky/Blast Off" from Blind Idiot God (SST)

I've never heard of Blind Idiot God. *Although you might not think so, there's a classical link with the last piece: that track's called "Stravinsky/Blast Off".*

(Laughing) Erm, yes. . . . Stravinsky might have liked it, I don't know.

I've nothing to say about it.

But you like the guitar trio format. Yeah. The first jazz group I really liked was Ornette Coleman's trio, and the first jazz things I was involved in was just saxophone, bass and drums. So I keep returning to trios because there's a lot of freedom there — it tends to be more linear than harmonic which I like, and it gives you a lot of space to play. I'd have to listen to the whole thing, but it seemed deliberately undisciplined, which is fine. *Cream were quite noisy at times weren't they?*

Yeah, very noisy. But if you listen to the records there was also a lot of delicate playing. Ginger can be a very sensitive, filigree, melodic player. There was a certain amount of crashing guitars, but there was also dynamics. Good name though — Blind Idiot God.

JIMI HENDRIX
"Come On (Part 1)" from Electric Ladyland (Polydor)

Well, what can I say? We all know who that was. Great. He was a great guy and I wish he was around now. Around the time of his death we were planning a band with Tony and myself, and I think it would have been pretty great if it happened. Like all creative people, he was always developing, but at the end of his life he was up against a brick wall. He seemed to want it to go towards playing with people more on his own level. I mean that with all the respect in the world to the people he played with, but they were very much background players. Jimi opened up the possibilities of the electric guitar, but he was raw wasn't he? A lot of things you've played have this spirituality in common — this depth and reality, whether it's Jacqueline Du Pré or Jimi Hendrix. They tap into something that is almost beyond human music. There are too many people in my musical life who I miss because they are no longer here. And Jimi is certainly one of them. □