

metallic noise from Lonberg-Holm's cello and sounds so outrageous that it can only be the result of good-natured tomfoolery. Plus, it leads to the tune's second great bass clarinet solo.

Lonberg-Holm switches to tenor guitar on several tracks, lending something of a progressive-rock lilt to the music, which Anton Hatwich (bass) and Frank Rosaly (drums) drive along, especially in "Later News." He uses looping effects to shape "Simpler Days," a 10-minute ballad that follows the equally pensive "Lazy Day." Some of the wildest moments on *Gather* come from one of the two works penned by other band members. Jackson's "Roses" is full of brief sketches, pregnant pauses and a section where all six musicians blow trumpets or cornets. Even though Lonberg-Holm didn't write it, the work bears his compositional influence, which features a great sense of adventure.

The cellist reveals yet another facet of his style with *Seval*, which includes performers from Sweden's new music/improvising scene. For the group's sophomore album, Lonberg-Holm penned all eight selections, including clever lyrics. The chamber-like lineup includes cello, guitar, trumpet, bass and the soprano vocals of Sofia Jernberg. Arrangements are often spare and delicate with instruments echoing Jernberg's crisp enunciations perhaps a little too closely. "Revolution Song" breaks free, though, when the vocalist imitates saxophone shrieks and blends in with her comrades' swelling sound.

MIKE SHANLEY

HAROLD MABERN

MR. LUCKY: A TRIBUTE TO SAMMY DAVIS JR.
(HighNote)



Brisk, buoyant and gimmick-free, this straight-ahead quartet date is as unpretentiously satisfying as that first swig of cold beer after a hard day's work. In the liner notes to *Mr. Lucky*, pianist Harold Mabern proclaims Sammy Davis Jr. to be "the greatest performer ever," and this beaming tribute brims with the innocent insouciance of that Rat Pack era of the 1950s and '60s, when Davis palled around Vegas with Sinatra and Dean Martin and Mabern, now 76, was just entering adulthood.

The lead soloists here, Mabern and tenor saxophonist Eric Alexander, are both master craftsmen of underrated artistry, their stylistic conservatism camouflaging their creative refinement of the

blues and hard-bop idioms. Joined by their likeminded and frequent cohorts in the rhythm section—drummer Joe Farnsworth and bassist John Webber—on a project dear to Mabern's heart, they set their intuitions on high alert and allow their expertise and shared musical experience to hone their ensemble interplay. As a result, precious few records swing so efficiently and reliably as *Mr. Lucky*.

Most of the material here is not automatically associated with Davis, who was more of an all-around entertainer than a musician. But on the relatively iconic "I've Gotta Be Me," both Mabern and Farnsworth burst from the gate with joyous energy, while Alexander gradually builds the sort of gusto implied by the song's credo over the course of three solos. Mabern is also ecstatic—his right hand trilling, flecks of New Orleans stride spangled on his Memphis funk-soul-blues-bop amalgam—on "As Long as She Needs Me" and the finger-snapping title track. Sans Alexander, he lets the ballad breathe on "What Kind of Fool Am I?," a somber interlude that reminds us how segregation and accusations of being a racial sellout besmirched some of the luster of Davis' celebrity. But as the album title implies, Mabern prefers to honor his hero with music that puts the wind in your hair and tempts you to engage in a little soft-shoe celebration. **BRITT ROBSON**

LOU MARINI

STARMAKER (Blujazz)



Lou Marini's discography as a leader is relatively puny—*Starmaker* is only his fourth proper solo release in a career that stretches back some four-plus decades, and it was recorded in 1990, unreleased until now and actually predates his other albums. Not that the saxophonist has kicked back through the years; he's kept busy serving as a sideman for a long list of headliners running the gamut from Blood, Sweat & Tears to Frank Zappa, Levon Helm, James Taylor, the Saturday Night Live Band and, most famously, the Blues Brothers.

At the time he made *Starmaker*, Marini could easily have capitalized on his rock and pop associations. But he had a specific concept in mind—the album is inspired by Olaf Stapledon's sci-fi novel of the same title—so Marini handpicked a cast of ace player's players, among them pianist Gil Goldstein, bassist Bob Cranshaw, drummers Danny Gottlieb and Chris Parker

and a bevy of guitarists, keyboardists and horn men, to flesh out his concept.

The music is often appropriately cinematic and ambitious. The opening title track is a slow builder, tentative synth and percussion noodling giving way to the first of many brash Marini solos. When the saxophonist retreats midway to give the floor to Goldstein and keyboardist Robbie Kondor, the piece becomes wide-screen, announcing that nothing here will remain static for long. "Civilization Blues" runs on solid funk and Marini's more-soulful-than-expected, Mose Allison-like lead vocal. And on the epic "In My Dreams," guitarist Jeff Mironov, Cranshaw, Gottlieb and Marini lock into a sturdy groove that disintegrates deliberately as it fades, leaving shards in its wake. What all of this has to do with its 1937 source material is never quite spelled out, but the tribute stands on its own admirably enough. **JEFF TAMARKIN**

BILL McHENRY

LA PEUR DU VIDE (Sunnyside)



La Peur Du Vide sits uneasily between straight-ahead and free jazz, occasionally tipping to one side or the other. It's familiar ground for tenor saxophonist Bill McHenry—even more so for his quartet (pianist Orrin Evans, bassist Eric Revis and drummer Andrew Cyrille). By and large they handle this terrain superbly, solidifying the album's aesthetic with their personalities and a deep sense of tradition.

Sometimes that tradition is overt. "In Sight" is a straight cooker with a bop-pish head and deadly swing. Elsewhere, the band stretches out but keeps a foot in blues harmony. Though much of "Recognition" comprises freeform, softly stated interplay between McHenry, Revis and Cyrille, McHenry maintains edgy tonality that solidifies into dark spiritual chords when Evans rejoins him to conclude the piece.

Four of the six tunes pay homage to McHenry's favorite musicians, further unifying the program. "Today" was inspired by Stevie Wonder, whose style reverberates throughout McHenry's two-octave melody and in the soul that Evans and Revis place behind that melody. "Siglo XX," ostensibly a joint tribute to Woody Shaw and Paul Robeson, instead evokes Andrew Hill in its oblong structure and Evans' lustrous, dissonant voicings; McHenry even suggests frequent Hill col-