

VIJAY IYER

Hard to narrow it down, and I'm sure I'm forgetting some crucial ones, but these were some important albums of the 1990s for me:

- 1 Graham Haynes, *The Griot's Footsteps* (Antilles, 1995)
- 2 Cecil Taylor, *In Florescence* (A&M, 1990)
- 3 Abbey Lincoln, *The World is Falling Down* (Verve, 1990)
- 4 Dave Holland Quartet, *Extensions* (ECM, 1990)
- 5 George Lewis, *Voyager* (Avant, 1993)
- 6 Steve Coleman and Five Elements, *Curves of Life* (RCA, 1995)
- 7 Geri Allen, *Maroons* (Blue Note, 1992)
- 8 Jon Jang, *Two Flowers on a Stem* (Soul Note, 1995)
- 9 Ornette Coleman, *Sound Museum: Hidden Man* (Verve/Harmolodic, 1996)
- 10 Randy Weston, *The Spirits of Our Ancestors* (Antilles, 1992)
- 11 Dewey Redman Quartet, *Living on the Edge* (Black Saint, 1990)
- 12 Sun Ra, *Purple Night* (A&M, 1990)

—

DOUG WATSON

Here's the list of my own faves from the past decade. Go ahead, see if y'all can't connect Bill Laswell to each album in three musicians or less.

- 1 Kip Hanrahan, *Tenderness* (American Clave, 1990)
- 2 Sonny Sharrock, *Ask the Ages* (Axiom, 1991)
- 3 Adam Rudolph, *Moving Pictures* (Flying Fish, 1992)
- 4 Jimi Sumen, *Paintbrush, Rock Penstemon* (CMP, 1993)
- 5 Henry Threadgill, *Too Much Sugar for a Dime* (Axiom, 1993)
- 6 Graham Haynes, *Transition* (Antilles, 1994)
- 7 Bobby Previte's Empty Suits, *Slay the Suitors* (Avant, 1994)
- 8 Ornette Coleman, *Tone Dialing* (Verve/Harmolodic, 1995)
- 9 Nils Petter Molvaer, *Khmer* (ECM, 1997)
- 10 Phantom City, *Shiva Recoil* (Virgin, 1997)
- 11 Ponga, *Ponga* (Loosegroove, 1999)

—

BRIAN OLEWNICK

It was around 1990 when I began to lose my affinity for current jazz. There was increasingly little being produced that still excited me and what there was, tended to be created by "past masters," not vital 20-somethings. Hence my beginning to turn elsewhere (ultimately AMM and post-AMM improv) for my enjoyment. You get, of course, into definitional issues, but for me the following all fall under the "jazz" umbra, pretty much, and are my favorites of things I've heard that were recorded in the 90s. Alpha order:

- 1 Derek Bailey, *Guitar Solos, Volume 2* (Incus, 1991)
- 2 Anthony Braxton, *Willisau* (Quartet) 1991 (hatART, 1992)
- 3 Anthony Braxton, *Compositions 10 & 16 (+101)* (hatOLOGY, 1998)
- 4 Bill Dixon, *Vade Mecum II* (Soul Note, 1996)
- 5 Barry Guy, *Double Trouble Two* (Intakt, 1995)
- 6 Barry Guy, *Theoria* (Intakt, 1991)
- 7 Joseph Holbrooke, *Joseph Holbrooke '98* (Incus, 1998)
- 8 Evan Parker/Eddie Prevost, *Most Materiall* (Matchless, 1997)
- 9 Paul Rogers, *Time of Brightness* (Rare Music, 1999)
- 10 Cecil Taylor, *Nailed!* (FMP, 2000)

PHIL FREEMAN

Here's thirteen, in no order:

- 1 Other Dimensions In Music, Now! (Aum Fidelity, 1997)
- 2 Joe Morris Quartet, *A Cloud of Black Birds* (Aum Fidelity, 1999)
- 3 David S. Ware Quartet, *Third Ear Recitation* (DIW, 1993)
- 4 Matthew Shipp Trio, *Prism* (Brinkman, 1993)
- 5 Borbetomagus, *Buncha Hair That Long* (Agaric, 1992)
- 6 Painkiller, *Rituals: Live in Japan* (Toys Factory, 1993)
- 7 Last Exit, *Headfirst into the Flames: Live in Europe* (Muworks, 1990)
- 8 Cecil Taylor, *Olu Iwa* (Soul Note, 1990)
- 9 Jason Moran, *Soundtrack to Human Motion* (Blue Note, 1999)
- 10 Anderson/Drake/Jordan/Parker, *2 Days in April* (Eremit, 1999)
- 11 Greg Osby, *Banned in New York* (Blue Note, 1998)
- 12 Derek Bailey/Susie Ibarra, *Daedal* (Incus, 1999)
- 13 The Flying Luttenbachers, *Destroy All Music* (Skin Graft, 1998)

—

TOM HULL

- 1 Pharoah Sanders, *Welcome to Love* (Timeless, 1990)
- 2 James Carter, *The Real Quietstorm* (Atlantic, 1995)
- 3 David Murray, *Long Goodbye: A Tribute to Don Pullen* (DIW, 1996)
- 4 Nils Petter Molvaer, *Solid Ether* (ECM, 1999)
- 5 David Sanchez, *Obsesion* (Columbia, 1998)
- 6 Billy Jenkins, *True Love Collection* (Babel, 1998)
- 7 Massimo Urbani, *The Blessing* (Red, 1993)
- 8 George Coleman, *My Horns of Plenty* (Birdology, 1991)
- 9 Vandermark Five, *Target or Flag* (Atavistic, 1997)
- 10 Harry Allen, *Blue Skies* (John Marks, 1994)

—

DAN MELNICK

- 1 8 Bold Souls, *Sideshow* (Arabesque, 1992)
- 2 William Parker/In Order To Survive, *The Peach Orchard* (Aum Fidelity, 1998)
- 3 Greg Osby, *Banned in New York* (Blue Note, 1998)
- 4 Myra Melford Extended Ensemble, *Even the Sounds Shine* (hatHUT, 1995)
- 5 Douglas Ewart and Inventions Clarinet Choir, *Angles of Entrance* (Aarawak, 1990/1998)
- 6 Anderson/Crispell/Drake, *Destiny* (OkkaDisk, 1994)
- 7 Jon Jang, *Two Flowers on a Stem* (Soul Note, 1995)
- 8 Horace Tapscott, *Thoughts of Dar Es Salaam* (Arabesque, 1997)
- 9 Charles Gayle, *Touchin' on Trane* (FMP, 1993)
- 10 Anderson/Kowald/Drake, *Live at the Velvet Lounge* (OkkaDisk, 1999)

—

ETNOBOFIN

- 1 Uri Caine, *Urlicht/Primal Light* (Winter & Winter, 1997)
- 2 Kenny Wheeler, *Music for Large and Small Ensembles* (ECM, 1990)
- 3 Steve Turre, *Rhythm Within* (Antilles, 1994)
- 4 Ornette Coleman, *Tone Dialling* (Verve/Harmolodic, 1995)
- 5 Betty Carter, *Feed the Fire* (Verve, 1993)
- 6 Lester Bowie's Brass Fantasy, *The Fire This Time* (In & Out, 1992)
- 7 Tomasz Stanko Quartet, *Matka Joanna* (ECM, 1995)
- 8 Paul Brody Octet, *Turtle Paradise* (99 Records, 1995)
- 9 Dave Douglas, *The Tiny Bell Trio* (Songlines, 1997)
- 10 John Surman, *Proverbs and Songs* (ECM, 1997)

—

NATE CHINEN

Some of these hit me hard at the time, and have an almost sentimental value; others have come to loom larger in retrospect. It's far from a perfect list — no Latin jazz, for one thing, and no vocals — but I can say that every album on it is a personal essential.

- 1 Gregg Bendian, *Interzone* (Eremite, 1996)
- 2 Tim Berne's Caos Totale, *Nice View* (JMT, 1994)
- 3 Brian Blade, *Brian Blade Fellowship* (Blue Note, 1998)
- 4 Paul Bley, *Not Two, Not One* (ECM, 1999)
- 5 Anthony Braxton, *Quintet* (Basel) 1977 (Hat Hut, 2000)
- 6 Michael Brecker, *Tales from the Hudson* (Impulse, 1996)
- 7 Steve Coleman & Five Elements, *The Sonic Language of Myth: Believing, Learning, Knowing* (RCA Victor, 1999)
- 8 Dave Douglas, *Charms of the Night Sky* (Winter & Winter, 1998)
- 9 Bill Frisell, *This Land* (Nonesuch, 1992)
- 10 Kenny Garrett, *Pursuance: The Music of John Coltrane* (Warner, 1996)
- 11 Charlie Haden and Hank Jones, *Steal Away* (Verve, 1994)
- 12 Andrew Hill, *Dusk* (Palmetto, 2000)
- 13 Jarrett/Peacock/Motian, *At the Deer Head Inn* (ECM, 1994)
- 14 Joe Lovano, *Quartets: Live at the Village Vanguard* (Blue Note, 1996)
- 15 Branford Marsalis, *Crazy People Music* (Columbia, 1990)
- 16 Brad Mehldau, *Songs: The Art of the Trio, Vol. 3* (Warner, 1998)
- 17 Roscoe Mitchell & the Note Factory, *Nine to Get Ready* (ECM, 1997)
- 18 John Scofield Quartet, *Meant to Be* (Blue Note, 1990)
- 19 Henry Threadgill, *Carry the Day* (Columbia, 1994)
- 20 David S. Ware, *Go See the World* (Columbia, 1998)

—

JASON GROSS

- 1 Various Artists, *Jazz Satellites - Volume 1: Electrification* (Virgin, 1996)
- 2 Sonny Rollins, *Silver City* (Milestone, 1996)
- 3 Ornette Coleman, *Tone Dialling* (Verve/Harmolodic, 1995)
- 4 Ground Zero, *Plays Standards* (Nani, 1997)
- 5 Massacre, *Funny Valentine* (Tzadik, 1998)
- 6 Sonny Sharrock, *Ask the Ages* (Axiom, 1991)
- 7 Sun Ra, *The Singles* (Evidence, 1996)
- 8 Henry Threadgill, *Too Much Sugar for A Dime* (Axiom, 1993)
- 9 David S. Ware, *Go See the World* (Columbia, 1998)
- 10 Naked City, *Black Box* (Tzadik, 1997)

TAYLOR HO BYNUM

In reverse alphabetical order, cause I started at the bottom of my CD shelf and worked up. I probably missed a few things, but these stand out and are probably what I've listened to the most:

- 1 Cassandra Wilson, *Blue Light Till Dawn* (Blue Note, 1993)
- 2 Kenny Wheeler, *Angel Song* (ECM, 1997)
- 3 Randy Weston, *Spirit of Our Ancestors* (Antilles, 1992)
- 4 James 'Jabbo' Ware and the Me We and Them Orchestra, *Heritage Is* (Soul Note, 1994)
- 5 Henry Threadgill, *Too Much Sugar for a Dime* (Axiom, 1993)
- 6 Sonny Sharrock, *Ask the Ages* (Axiom, 1991)
- 7 Sun Ra, *Purple Night* (A&M, 1990)
- 8 Naftules Dream, *Smash Clap* (Tzadik, 1998)
- 9 Charlie Haden, *The Montreal Tapes* (Verve, 1994)
- 10 The Fully Celebrated Orchestra, *Live at the Latch String Inn* (Cud, 1996)
- 11 Deep Rumba, *This Night Becomes a Rumba* (American Clave, 1998)
- 12 Dirty Dozen Brass Band, *Open Up* (Whatcha Gonna Do With the Rest of Your Life) (Columbia, 1991)
- 13 Bill Dixon, *Vade Mecum II* (Soul Note, 1996)
- 14 Anthony Braxton, *Willisau* (Quartet) 1991 (HatART, 1992)

—

PAT DONAHER

- 1 Bill Frisell, *This Land* (Nonesuch, 1992)
 - 2 Maria Schneider, *Evanescence* (Enja, 1994)
 - 3 Dave Douglas, *In Our Lifetime* (New World, 1995)
 - 4 Wayne Shorter, *High Life* (Verve, 1995)
 - 5 Henry Threadgill, *Too Much Sugar for a Dime* (Axiom, 1993)
 - 6 Motian/Frisell/Lovano, *At the Village Vanguard* (JMT, 1995)
 - 7 Hal Wilner, *Weird Nightmare* (Meditations on Mingus) (Sony, 1992)
 - 8 Ornette Coleman, *Sound Museum: Hidden Man/Three Women* (Verve/Harmolodic, 1997).
- They are two records from the same session, so I'm lumping them together.
- 9 Myra Melford, *Above Blue* (Arabesque, 1999)
 - 10 Steve Coleman, *The Sonic Language of Myth: Believing, Learning, Knowing* (RCA Victor, 1999)

Just missed:

- Shirley Horn, *You Won't Forget Me*, (Verve, 1991)
- Bobby Previte, *Weather Clear, Track Fast* (Enja, 1991)
- Stan Getz/Keny Barron, *People Time* (Verve, 1992)
- Joe Henderson, *So Near, So Far* (Verve, 1993)

I have a feeling three of those will show up on some other lists...

Added bonus — the best records of the '90s even most jazz fans never heard:

- Nguyen Le, *3 Trios* (Act, 1997)
 - James Carney, *Offset Rhapsody* (Jacaranda, 1997)
 - Michael Cain/Ralph Alessi/Peter Epstein, *Circa* (ECM, 1997)
 - Art Lande/Mark Miller, *World Without Cars* (Synergy, 1999)
 - Either/Orchestra, *The Half Life of Desire* (Accurate, 1990)
- Have to represent Boston somewhere.

—

KELLEN YAMANAKA

1 Brian Blade, Fellowship (Blue Note, 1998)

A lush tapestry of saxes, guitars and piano, this album is absolutely gorgeous, sonically and harmonically. Plus, Blade has always been a favorite of mine.

2 David Binney, Free to Dream (Mythology, 1998)

Great showcase for Binney's alternately searing and sensitive playing (more of the latter here), not to mention his trademark hypnotic, melodic compositions.

3 Marc Johnson, Right Brain Patrol (JMT, 1993)

A wonderfully moody, broody, bluesy post-Bass Desires feature for Johnson but also notable as one of Ben Monder's earliest appearances on record.

4 Dave Douglas, Tiny Bell Trio (Songlines, 1994)

Jazz: the Balkan Connection. And you don't even miss the bass. Adventurous, avant-leaning playing has always been linked to the blues, but it's great to hear other folk traditions in the mix, too.

5 John Scofield, Quiet (Verve, 1996)

Sco's voice is so easily identifiable on electric, it's refreshing to hear him in an acoustic setting. (He didn't even own an acoustic guitar before the early '90s.) Of course, his irrepressible personality still shines through.

6 Charles Mingus, Epitaph (Columbia, 1990)

When the score to Epitaph was discovered in 1985, it was apparently riddled with chord misspellings, gaps and illegible notations. With Gunther Schuller's corrections — and in some cases, well-educated guesses as to what Mingus would have written — it's a stellar contemporary realization of Mingus's opus.

7 Michael Brecker, Time Is of the Essence (Verve, 1999)

Maybe not the most critically acclaimed Brecker date from this period, but hearing him surrounded by the warmth of Pat Metheny's guitar and Larry Goldings's organ is plenty rewarding. Plus the rotating drum chair (Bill Stewart, Elvin Jones and Jeff "Tain" Watts) keeps it fresh.

8 Maria Schneider, Evanesence (Enja, 1994)

Schneider's maiden voyage as a leader — powerful arrangements, dramatic melodies and focused performances from her band.

9 Pat Martino, Nightwings (Muse, 1996)

Not exactly a groundbreaking album, but one of my favorites of his since his return to the scene in the late '80s after recovering from his post-aneurysm amnesia. Lots of mind-bending chops, as always.

10 Mark Turner, In This World (Warner, 1998)

Fabulous playing from Turner, ranging from wailing to whispery with great songs to match — some dark but tuneful originals plus a few standards. Brad Mehldau's presence on piano and Rhodes is as essential to the album's vibe as Turner himself.

—

HANK SHTEAMER

I know this is somewhat scant, and I can think of a few more I could throw on for throwin' on's sake, but I don't want to include filler. I feel good about all these.

1 Sonny Sharrock, Ask the Ages (Axiom, 1991)

2 Whit Dickey Trio, Transonic (Aum Fidelity, 1998)

3 Bill Dixon, Vade Mecum (Soul Note, 1996)

4 Anthony Braxton, Willisau (Quartet) 1991 (hatART, 1992)

5 Andrew Cyrille, Mark Dresser, Marty Ehrlich, C/D/E (Jazz Magnet, 2000)

—

STEVE SMITH

The '90s were a great time for jazz. In making my selections, I limited myself strictly to one disc per leader, and primarily to records by artists whose music would have the biggest impact and the farthest-reaching influence during the decade. In some cases, I selected discs that were simply top-of-form expressions by consistently important creators (Tommy Flanagan and Charles Gayle, for instance). And a few, like Michael Blake's Kingdom of Champa, Frisque Concordance's Soundings and Charlie Haden's Dream Keeper, are simply all-time personal favorites. Strictly alphabetical order; no way are you going to get me to arrange them otherwise!

1 Tim Berne, Unwound (Screwgun, 1996)

2 Michael Blake, Kingdom of Champa (Intuition, 1997)

3 Anthony Braxton, Willisau (Quartet) 1991 (hatArt, 1992)

4 John Butcher, 13 Friendly Numbers (Acta, 1992)

5 Dave Douglas, Charms of the Night Sky (Winter & Winter, 1998)

6 Ellery Eskelin with Andrea Parkins and Jim Black, Kulak, 29 & 30 (hatOLOGY, 1998)

7 Tommy Flanagan, Sunset and the Mockingbird: The Birthday Concert (Blue Note, 1998)

8 Bill Frisell, Have a Little Faith (Nonesuch, 1993)

9 Frisque Concordance, Spellings (Random Acoustics, 1993)

10 Charles Gayle, Touchin' on Trane (FMP, 1993)

11 Charlie Haden, Dream Keeper (Blue Note, 1991)

12 Gerry Hemingway Quintet, Perfect World (Random Acoustics, 1996)

13 Brad Mehldau, Songs: The Art of the Trio, Vol. 3 (Warner, 1998)

14 Lawrence "Butch" Morris, Testament: A Conduction Collection (New World, 1995)

15 Paul Motian, Joe Lovano and Bill Frisell, At the Village Vanguard (JMT, 1995)

16 Bobby Previte, Empty Suits (Gramavision, 1990)

17 Sonny Sharrock, Ask the Ages (Axiom, 1991)

18 Henry Threadgill, Too Much Sugar for a Dime (Axiom, 1993)

19 David S. Ware, Godspelized (DIW, 1998)

20 John Zorn's Masada, Vav (DIW, 1995)

—

CHRIS MONSEN

1 Charles Gayle, Touchin' on Trane (FMP, 1993)

2 Sonny Sharrock, Ask the Ages (Axiom, 1991)

3 William Parker, The Peach Orchard (Aum Fidelity, 1998)

4 James Carter, Conversin' with the Elders (Atlantic, 1996)

5 David S. Ware, Flight of I (Columbia/DIW, 1994)

6 Lester Bowie's Brass Fantasy, The Fire This Time (In & Out, 1992)

7 David Murray, Shakill's Warrior (Columbia, 1992)

8 Ken Vandermark, Barrage Double Trio: Utility Hitter (Quinnah, 1996)

9 Pharoah Sanders, Welcome to Love (Timeless, 1991)

10 David Murray, Special Quartet (Columbia, 1992)

—

PETER BRESLIN

I decided to concentrate pretty much exclusively on the continued development of so-called avant garde or free jazz during a period when the “neo-mainstream” movement wanted to pretend it had been a “radical” 60s and 70s aberration. So here’s my list:

- 1 Ornette Coleman:
 - Naked Lunch (Soundtrack) (Milan, 1991)
 - Tone Dialing (Verve/Harmolodic, 1995)
 - Sound Museum: Hidden Man (Verve/Harmolodic, 1996)
 - Sound Museum Three Women (Verve/Harmolodic, 1996)
 - 2 Cecil Taylor:
 - with the Art Ensemble of Chicago, Thelonious Sphere Monk (DIW, 1991)
 - Celebrated Blazons (FMP, 1993)
 - Double Holy House (FMP, 1993)
 - Always a Pleasure (FMP, 1996)
 - with Dewey Redman and Elvin Jones, Momentum Space (Verve, 1999)
 - Almeda/The Light of Corona (FMP, rec. 1996, rel. 2005/03)
 - 3 Anthony Braxton:
 - Willisau (Quartet) 1991 (hatART, 1992)
 - Victoriaville (Quartet) 1992 (Victo, 1993)
 - Wesleyan (12 Altosolos) 1992 (hatART, 1993)
 - Braxton/Parker/Rutherford, Trio (London) 1993 (Leo, 1993)
 - Knitting Factory (Piano/Quartet) 1994, Vols. 1 and 2 (Leo, 1994)
 - Bergman/Brotzmann/Braxton, Eight by Three (Mixtery, 1997)
 - Four Compositions (Washington, D.C.) 1998 (Braxton House, 1999)
 - 4 Art Ensemble of Chicago:
 - Coming Home Jamaica (Dreyfus, 1998)
- Miscellany:
- 5 James Blood Ulmer, Music Speaks Louder Than Words (DIW, 1996)
 - 6 Sonny Sharrock, Ask the Ages (Axiom, 1991)
 - 7 David Murray, Sunrise, Sunset (Red Baron, 1990)
 - 8 Douglas Ewart and Inventions Clarinet Choir, Angles of Entrance (Aarawak, 1990/1998)

centrifuge

- 1 Simmons/Evans/Norton, Universal Prayer/Survival Skills (Parallactic, 1999)
 - 2 Die Like a Dog, Fragments of the Music, Life, and Death of Albert Ayler (FMP, 1993)
 - 3 Evan Parker, 50th Birthday Concert (Leo, 1994)
 - 4 Anthony Braxton, Willisau (Quartet) 1991 (hatART, 1992)
 - 5 Peter Brotzmann, The Chicago Octet/Tentet (OkkaDisk, 1998)
 - 6 Reggie Workman, Summit Conference (Postcards, 1994)
 - 7 Sonny Sharrock, Ask the Ages (Axiom, 1991)
 - 8 David S. Ware, Flight of I (Sony, 1991)
 - 9 Naked City, Heretic (Jeux des Dames Cruelles) (Avant, 1994)
 - 10 Dave Douglas’ Tiny Bell Trio, Constellations (hatART, 1995)
-

GARY GIDDINS

I narrowed my list to a neat 30, and can’t see the point of winnowing further. This list gives a pretty good idea of the breadth of the period the way I heard it, and while I might cut it to 20 without drawing blood, I am not disposed to cut past that.

- This list of recordings made between 1990 and 2000 is alphabetical.
- 1 Muhal Richard Abrams, Blu Blu Blu (Black Saint, 1997)
 - 2 Lester Bowie, Funky T, Cool T (DIW, 1991)
 - 3 Ruby Braff and Ellis Larkins, Calling Berlin (Arbors, 1995)
 - 4 Dee Dee Bridgewater, Live at Yoshi’s (Verve, 1999)
 - 5 James Carter, Jurassic Classics (Atlantic, 1994)
 - 6 Dave Douglas’ Tiny Bell Trio, Constellations (hatART, 1995)
 - 7 Tommy Flanagan, Sunset and the Mocking Bird (Blue Note, 1998)
 - 8 Stan Getz and Kenny Barron, People Time (Verve, 1992)
 - 9 Charlie Haden and Hank Jones, Steal Away (Verve, 1995)
 - 10 Roy Haynes, Trio (Verve, 2000)
 - 11 Andrew Hill, Dusk (Palmetto, 2000)
 - 12 Bill Holman, Brilliant Corners: The Music of Thelonious Monk (JVC, 1997)
 - 13 Keith Jarrett, Whisper Not (ECM, 2000)
 - 14 Lee Konitz, Another Side of Blue (Blue Note, 1999)
 - 15 John Lewis, Evolution (Atlantic, 1999)
 - 16 Abbey Lincoln, The World is Falling Down (Verve, 1990)
 - 17 Joe Lovano, Trio Fascination, Edition One (Blue Note, 1998)
 - 18 David Murray, Shakhill’s Warrior (DIW, 1991)
 - 19 David Murray, South of the Border (DIW, 1995)
 - 20 Ted Nash, Sidewalk Meeting (Arabesque, 2001)
 - 21 Hannibal Peterson, African Portraits (Teldec, 1996)
 - 22 Dewey Redman, Cecil Taylor, Elvin Jones, Momentum Space (Verve, 1999)
 - 23 Mark Ribot, Don’t Blame Me (DIW, 1997)
 - 24 Sonny Rollins, This Is What I Do (Milestone, 2000)
 - 25 Matthew Shipp’s New Orbit (Thirsty Ear, 2001)
 - 26 Cecil Taylor, The Willisau Concert (Intakt, 2000)
 - 27 Henry Threadgill, Spirit of Nuff.Nuff (Black Saint, 1990)
 - 28 David S. Ware, Go See the World (Columbia, 1998)
 - 29 Randy Weston, Saga (Verve, 1996)
 - 30 Cassandra Wilson, New Moon Daughter (Blue Note, 1996)
-

NATE DORWARD

I’m not a believer in lists or top-tens—what’s so magical about the number 10? So I’ve provided two different lists below, each of which I’m equally happy with. I have excluded all free improvisation as being at the outer limits of what I’d call “jazz”, though in the 2nd list Barry Guy’s London Jazz Composers Orchestra makes it because of the “Jazz” in its name (even if that’s only one strand in its aesthetic).

- 1 Ruby Braff/Roger Kellaway, Inside & Out (Concord, 1996)
The true successor to “Weatherbird.”
- 2 Marilyn Crispell, Santuerio (Leo, 1993)
This is where I first heard Mark Feldman, & it’s still one of his shining moments, as well as one of Crispell’s most magical & poetic albums.
- 3 Sheila Jordan, Lost and Found (Muse, 1990)
Recorded late 1989, released 1990, so it only makes it into this list by a whisker, but fortunately so! She often prefers the stripped-down voice+bass format, but this quartet album seems to me her richest work.
- 4 Hank Jones, Upon Reflection (Verve/Gitanes, 1994)

Tribute to the late Thad Jones with a chance to hear Elvin on brushes all the way. (The exception: a great mallets solo on the ballad "A Child Is Born")
5 Rodney Kendrick, *Dance World Dance* (Verve/Gitanes, 1993)

Kendrick (one of the few pianists who took Randy Weston as a model) seems to have nearly vanished from sight after his superb 1990s run of albums: one of the saddest losses to the music. As spirit-lifting an album as the title would suggest.

6 Sal Mosca, *Recital in Valhalla* (Zinnia, 1991)

Perhaps the best solo piano album of a period that was rich in them (thanks to the Maybeck Recital Hall series).

7 Paul Motian, *Bill Evans* (JMT, 1990)

I'm sure that the Broadway series or the trio albums will be more popular than this one among list-makers, but this is the one that has given me the most pleasure over the years.
8 Sonny Sharrock, *Ask the Ages* (Axiom, 1991)

A peak in a blighted, curtailed career that ought to have been far better documented. "Many Mansions" is one of the classic guitar performances of any genre.

9 Henry Threadgill, *Carry the Day* (Columbia, 1994)

A lot of HT's albums of this period just too darn long-wonderfully but exhaustingly weird. This one is the densest (in terms of the extraordinary range of musicians and instruments brought into play) yet the music seems utterly natural and uncluttered; & the LP-length playing-time helps snap everything into focus.

10 Yosuke Yamashita, *Canvas in Quiet* (Verve, 1997)

I can never figure out why Yamashita isn't better-known outside of Japan. This album has a companion (*Canvas in Vigor*, with a so-so Ravi Coltrane) but it's the lightning-strike speed & pinpoint delicacy of this solo disc that gets to me.

And the list, alternate take:

1 Muhal Richard Abrams, *Blu Blu Blu* (Black Saint, 1997)

A bit overpacked (see comments above on Threadgill) but the tribute to Muddy Waters alone makes this a winner.

2 Anthony Braxton, *Quartet* (Santa Cruz) 1993 (hatART, 1997)

The quartet's final statement, a little stronger I feel than the sprawling Willisau set. After this comes the Ghost Trance stuff, which still makes me scratch my head....

3 Alan Broadbent, *Personal Standards* (Concord, 1996)

Like the Hank Jones album above, a flawless example of the jazz piano trio.

4 Simon Fell, *Composition No. 30/Compilation III* (Bruce's Fingers, 1998)

One of the few jazz (?) albums to make brilliant & original use of studio overdubbing and editing.

5 Charles Gayle, *Touchin' on Trane* (FMP, 1993)

I love Gayle working with Ali—a cockeyed swing feel, rather than totally freeform.

6 Barry Guy/LJCO, *Portrait* (Intakt, 1994)

Harmos is 1989, otherwise I'd have picked that. A bit uneven—the jazz bits are sometimes flatfooted (the Gil Evans tribute in the 2nd section seems to me a misfire)—but the highpoints are many, especially the features for Evan Parker and Radu Malfatti. One of the key bands of the 1990s.

7 Joe Henderson, *So Near, So Far* (Verve, 1993)

A haunting elegy for Miles Davis, with Al Foster in particular just outstanding.

8 Joe Lovano, *From the Soul* (Blue Note, 1992)

Petrucci's most outward-bound playing (on the opening track he sounds like he's been listening to Paul Bley); a fond farewell to Ed Blackwell; & an announcement of Lovano's coming into his prime. Things gradually went downhill after this CD into a mire of tribute albums...so it stands as something of a one-off.

9 Tomasz Stanko, *Leosia* (ECM, 1997)

A lot mellower than the free-jazz-oriented *Bosonossa* and *Other Ballads* (GOWI), even though it shares several tunes with that album, but it's nonetheless the finest statement by Stanko's quartet of the period.

10 Mark Turner, *Mark Turner* (Warner, 1998)

I haven't heard *Yam Yam* (Criss Cross), which I'm told is in some ways better, but this one's certainly a terrific statement of intent by a musician who probably was harmed rather than helped by the major-label signing. A guesting Joshua Redman is in surprisingly palatable form on several tracks, including a stunning "317 E 32nd".

—

DJ DURUTTI

1 Don Byron, *Tuskegee Experiments* (Nonesuch, 1991)

2 Don Byron, *Music for Six Musicians* (Nonesuch, 1995)

3 Ornette Coleman, *Tone Dialing* (Verve/Harmolodic, 1995)

4 Dave Douglas, *Convergence* (Soul Note, 1999)

5 Dave Douglas, *Sanctuary* (Avant, 1997)

6 Dave Douglas' *Tiny Bell Trio, Constellations* (hatART, 1995)

7 Kenny Garrett, *Black Hope* (Warner, 1992)

8 Guy Klucevsek, *Flying Vegetables of the Apocalypse* (Experimental Intermedia, 1991)

9 DJ Krush & Toshinori Kondo, *Ki Oku* (Instinct, 1999)

10 DJ Logic, *Project Logic* (Which, 1999)

11 Liberation Music Orchestra, *Dream Keeper* (Blue Note, 1991)

12 Masada, *Alef* (DIW, 1994)

13 David Murray, *Shakill's Warrior* (DIW, 1991)

14 Eddie Palmieri, *Palmas* (Nonesuch, 1994)

15 William Parker, *Compassion Seizes Bed-Stuy* (Homestead, 1995)

16 Marc Ribot, *Marc Ribot y Los Cubanos Postizos* (Atlantic, 1998)

17 Pharoah Sanders, *Message from Home* (Verve, 1996)

18 Matthew Shipp, *Strata* (hatHUT, 1997)

19 David S. Ware, *Flight of I* (Sony, 1991)

20 John Zorn, *Naked City* (Nonesuch, 1990)

—

DARCY JAMES ARGUE

While I'm not sure these are necessarily the records I'd chose as the "best" or most representative albums of the decade, the following is a pretty accurate reflection of what I was listening to most obsessively during the actual 1990s:

1 Bill Frisell, *This Land* (Nonesuch, 1994)

2 Maria Schneider, *Evanescence* (Enja, 1994)

3 Dave Douglas, *Stargazer* (Arabesque, 1997)

4 Kenny Wheeler, *Music For Large and Small Ensembles* (ECM, 1990)

5 Bob Brookmeyer, *New Works: Celebration* (Challenge, 1999)

6 Jim McNeely/WDR Big Band, *East Coast Blow Out* (Lipstick, 1990)

7 Don Byron, *Music For Six Musicians* (Nonesuch, 1995)

8 Dave Douglas, *Convergence* (Soul Note, 1999)

9 Django Bates, *Winter Truce* (And Homes Blaze) (Winter & Winter, 1995)

10 Steve Coleman and Five Elements, *Def Trance Beat* (Modalities of Rhythm) (Novus, 1994)

Honorable mentions: Lan Xang (Dave Binney, Donny McCaslin, Scott Colley, Jeff Hirschfield), *Lan Xang* (Mythology, 1997); Paul Bley, *Bebop...* (Steeplechase, 1989); Uri Caine, *Urlicht/Primal Light* (Winter & Winter, 1997).