

PEYOTE MUSIC

Comanche Peyote Songs, Vol. 1. Indian House 2401.

Washo Peyote Songs. Folkways Fe 4384.

Musiques Mexicaines. Ocora 73 (Side A-8, "Music for the peyote ceremony" of the Huichol Indians, 4:15 long).

The use of peyote in religious and curing ceremonies is widespread among Native Americans of the western United States and is an integral part of the cosmology of the Huicholes of northwestern Mexico. These three records represent a good introductory sampler. The Comanche of the southern Plains were one of the first tribes where, in the latter part of the last century, use of peyote became widespread. Very intense singing, a fast high-pitched drum, rattles, a fast syllabic singing style, 2 octave (?) range generally starting high and descending. . . The Washo are a tribe of Nevada and the eastern slopes of the Sierra Nevada of California. This record is an oldie and an old favorite, recorded in 1954; but it is very compelling music, again that nervous drum beat, and the rattle. . . I think these were especially good singers that were recorded here; and it is also moving because it was recorded under conditions of secrecy, when memories of recent persecutions were still fresh. The Huichol peyote music on the Ocora record (recommended for all the other cuts too) is entirely different. Ecstatic, to be sure; high, falsetto singing of the shaman, accompanied by a hand-made guitar and violin, the music high-pitched and fragile, lyrical. . . stamping, laughter, exclamations, whistles. . .

—Peter Garland

* DAVID PATE

David Pate is a young, experimental tenor player from NYC. His playing and conception are unique, and like that of Anthony Davis, George Lewis, Anthony Braxton, and a few others, spans quite naturally both the avant-garde jazz and classical idioms. Pate creates his own musical genre. Lately he has been pursuing an active solo concert career and has begun to produce his own records (*Soliloquies*, Patetoe Productions, available through Pate, 34 McFarlan St., Dover, NJ 07801).

One of the things that makes Pate's playing so unusual, besides his impeccable taste, time, and sophisticated musical instincts, is his tendency to create short, clear, and elegant single-idea compositional structures. "Reiteration" on his album is a good example of this. He is a "free-improvisor" only nominally, for the compositional ideas in his pieces are extremely rigid and interesting a priori. Technically, he is quite remarkable and improving all the time. Along with clarinetist Dan Goode, Pate seems to be doing some of the most interesting experimentation with circular breathing. Pate plays around with other groups quite frequently (with Sahib Sarbib and Larry Simon in NYC, and he was lead tenor in my own band there), and he shines in a wide variety of musical contexts—from "out" jazz through R&B and fusion to complicated chart playing. His version of "Amazing Grace" (also on the album) is a classic, and though I hate the term, has become the "definitive" version of the tune.

—Larry Polansky

ART PEPPER

When you think of great saxophone players, names like Parker or Coleman or Coltrane or Rollins or. . . come to mind, but most people don't usually include Art Pepper in this select group. And it's not because he was white and from California when most of the other prime honkers and screamers of the day were/are black and came from the east coast or the southwest; and it's surely not because he didn't have the "chops" seeing as how he was a virtual child prodigy, playing the clarinet at age nine and shortly thereafter taking up the alto sax and playing professional club dates by the time he was in high school. The only reason why Art Pepper may be missing from the ranks of outstanding jazz artists is because of the turmoils and tragedies in his life; his weaknesses and excesses which for one reason or another left him almost unable to do anything substantial during what should have been the best years of his life. Quick and easy fame introduced Pepper to pills and grass and finally to heroin. Possession put him in jail, addiction led to robbery and landed him in San Quentin. Along the way there were three wives, attempted suicides (not his), various affairs, lots of time tied up in sanitariums, hospitals, rehabilitation programs, and finally his voluntary surrender to Synanon to help kick his drug habit once and for all. In 1971, with three years at Synanon behind him and his third wife, Laurie, at his side, Art Pepper began a comeback that would just about make up for the past 20 years which he'd more or less lost. His smooth, bluesy sax and clarinet were more powerful than ever on a series of impressive concerts and records (on *Galaxy*, *Contemporary*, and *Artists House*). He died last summer from a heart attack at the age of 57. An intensely honest autobiography, *Straight Life—The Story of Art Pepper* by Art and Laurie Pepper (Schirmer Books), gives the graphic history of one of modern jazz's more robust figures, and is recommended to anyone whether they like jazz or not.

—Rory Houchens



Huichol people of the Nayar Mountains, Mexico

