

MUSICIAN

JARRETT

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Jackson Browne

A Precocious Pretender
Cuts It Away

EURHYTHMICS

ANYTHING GOES

KEITH JARRETT

BY DAVID BRESKIN

TECHNO-POP 1983

HUMAN LEAGUE, HEAVEN 17, TEARS FOR FEARS



MUSICIAN

Techno-Pop, 1983 is a bright new world of gloss 'n' groove promising better listening through technology. But after a year, the revolution seems more one of form than of real content, leaving us with the same old pop in new clothing. David Fricke probes the sticky dilemma of the Human League and the alternatives explored by Heaven 17, Tears for Fears, Japan and John Foxx. Page 38



Jackson Browne threw out a distinguished career of thoughtful, shy sensitivity, deciding to get his hands dirty and sweaty with crunch-intested rock 'n' roll. Jackson talks with Bill Flanagan about his new bar band thrills, the power of the songwriter's art, *Lawyers (and singers) In Love* and other musical insights. Page 48



Keith Jarrett continues to amaze his followers and confound his detractors, but some new demons have lately been sneaking up behind him: the rampant spread of George Winston good vibes and the audience's confusion with Keith's escalating struggle with his stern muse. David Breskin explores the concepts, concerts and contradictions of Jarrett. Page 56



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Working Musician

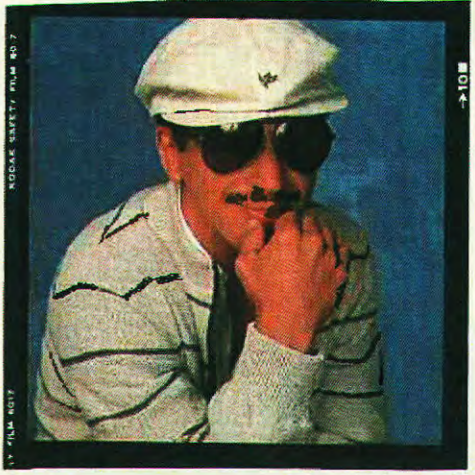
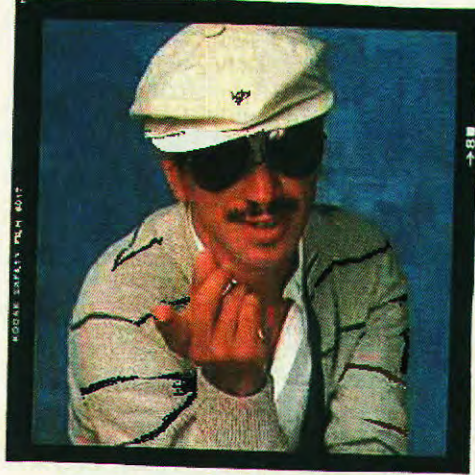
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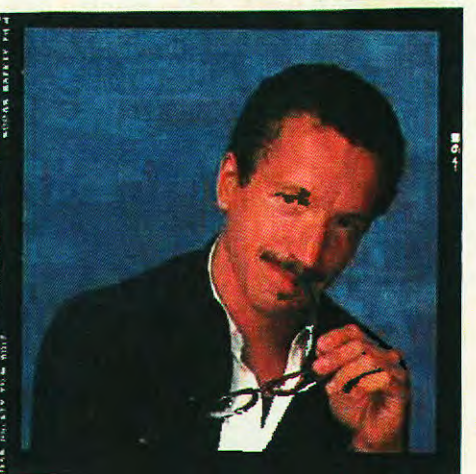
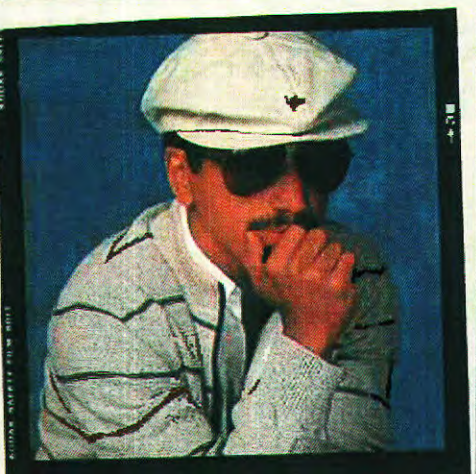
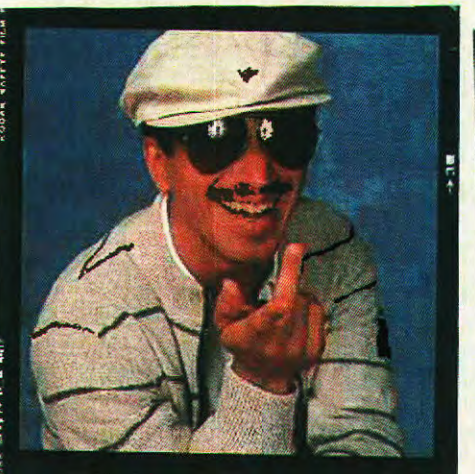
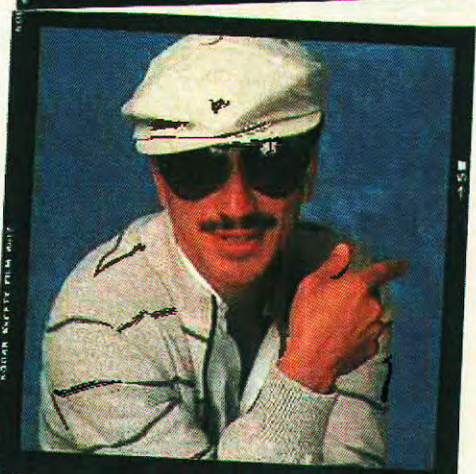
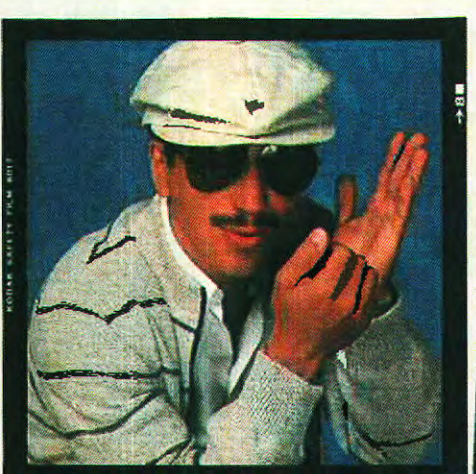
KEITH JARRETT

It's simply scandalous, but I'm telling you it's true.

In liberal-arts college dorms and suburban bedrooms, in big city apartments and bleached beach houses across this country, a goodly number of adolescents and young adults, for a period of a few years in the middle of the last decade, did willfully engage in certain indiscreet acts (back scratching, seductions, sweet nothings and the like) while under the influence of certain most-serious improvisations on the pianoforte. Now although the aiding and abetting of such acts through Romantic pianistic suggestion is not in-and-of-itself a federal, state or local crime, the improvising party in question would surely not fancy his art being used for such duplicitous purposes. Such are the hazards of being an artist: you just make the stuff, people gonna think 'bout it and do with it what they wanna.



**OH LORD
PLEASE DON'T
LET ME BE
MISUNDERSTOOD**



"There's a much different quality of energy on my most recent solo work, more contrapuntal, less harmonically interesting."

This is one of the sobering thoughts on my mind as I tool along Interstate 80 in my ECM-rented Hertzmobile, heading out of New York City towards the greener pastures of the Delaware Water Gap, where Keith Jarrett grows. The "Back Scratch Fever" phenomenon came to mind as I reflected on George Winston, that bearded granola-bar of a solo pianist, who, according to his label (Windham Hill), currently outsells Keith Jarrett ten to one. Perhaps to explain his popularity, Mr. Winston said recently in *New Age* magazine that while recording he "envisions a person in a car looking at some nice scene, or a couple making love. I mean, those are the things I use music for. Music is like sound incense." Mr. Winston also muses, "I sort of see art, music, as making a phone call to all the people I have ever loved." Driving to Jarrett's, I wonder if George Winston has MCI.

And how does Keith feel about all this? He has released something like twenty-two discs of solo piano in the past ten years (quite a phone bill!) and I don't think a person-in-a-car-looking-at-a-nice-scene has been responsible for any of it. No, Jarrett is alone out there, *up there*, alone with his remarkable gifts and his questionable tactics and his angst. It's been years since Jarrett played with a working group—the American quartet with Redman, Motian and Haden died in '76, the Scandinavian foursome with Garbarek, Christensen and Danielsson folded in '79—and though he strode out of solitary confinement in January long enough to record an album of "jazz" standards with Jack DeJohnette and Gary Peacock, his solo work remains his *raison d'être*. And not only Jarrett plays Jarrett, but Jarrett plays Bartók and Barber and so on.

By the time I pass Netcong, New Jersey, I'm compiling a shopping list of adjectives to describe Jarrett's solo work: radiant, mythic, humorless, excessive, extravagant, fearless, self-absorbed, self-serious, selfless, lucid, bloody, organic, confessional, verbose, facile, yearning, pat, philosophical, spirited, melancholic, Olympian, desperate, generous, precious, delirious, warm, encyclopedic. I stop at "encyclopedic" (where can you go from there?) and begin to question how many of my—and many other folks'—reservations about Jarrett's solo improvisations come from not the music itself, but rather his pretentious posturing (lecturing audiences on proper comportment); his pious tone (a lot of talk about the "blazing forth of a Divine Will"); and the reverential rhetoric which sometimes accompanies his solo work (1982's triple *Concerts* contained a somber black book with an essay comparing Keith to Orpheus and Proteus, and a long poem, "A Garden For Keith Jarrett," which reads in part: "The four continents, Europe, Asia, Africa/ And of course America formed the corners/ Of this immovable symmetry./ And when you had closed the creaking gate behind you, Jarrett,/ You found yourself in a paradigm/ Of Eden"). It is difficult, if not impossible, to listen to music openly after consuming such Deep Thoughts.

Oxford, New Jersey could not be mistaken for Eden, but here I get out to make a phone call for final directions to the Jarrett Homestead. ("Too complicated once you get that far,"

said Meredith at ECM in New York. "You'd better call Keith.") Down a dirt road by a lake, long driveway running parallel to a gurgling stream, up some stairs past a converted barn/studio stuffed with grand pianos, and on to a patio where the squeeze is tendin' the plants. "We better not talk here," Keith says, "the plants may not like the conversation." Okay. We head up to a large, rolling lawn in back of the white house and sit by the pool. As we make small talk before plunging in, I notice two things: one, gray has begun to infiltrate his close-cropped black hair, and, two, he possesses the smallest ears I've ever seen on a grown man. Nothing like a little irony to go with your interview on a sunny June afternoon.

MUSICIAN: To start with I'd like you to discuss your feelings about solo piano and the concerts. Your most recent interview indicated that you were really frustrated with the genre, and very negatively influenced by the success of your "imitators" and the "confusion" this has caused among listeners.

JARRETT: I'd been trailed by George Winston almost everywhere I was playing. I know that some possibilities have opened up since 1972 that would not have opened up had there not been someone doing what I did. It wouldn't have had to be me. This creates a common thing: the door opens, and some people rather than open their own doors—just walk right in. There's no way to talk about this without sounding personal, but it isn't a personal feeling regarding solo concerts—it's not a grudge or a resentment—it's a sadness I feel about other people. How confused a naive listener must be? Let's not say a naive listener, let's say a pseudo-intelligent



Jarrett allows himself a few "interesting" moments with Gary Peacock (seated), Jack DeJohnette and Manfred Eicher.

listener: the listener who is capable of hearing the right thing at the right time and dealing with it exactly as he would had he heard the wrong thing at the wrong time, depending on what's "in" and what's "out" at the moment for his friends and the rest of society. And so my frustration with solo concerts is that what I'm doing isn't being heard now...the job I'm doing is not cutting through.

MUSICIAN: Because the spirit has turned into a form? A "movement" that's giving people a set idea of what it's about before they even walk into the hall?

JARRETT: Because I've created my own expectations when I originally meant to dispel them. And I'm still dispelling my own expectations of the concerts. Unfortunately, the audience won't hear something that's happening now that wasn't happening last year because their expectations are overwhelming—they overwhelm their ability to really be there.

MUSICIAN: Other than George Winston, are there others who you feel are treading the same ground?

JARRETT: Well, he's an obvious example for a few reasons beyond him. His company (Windham Hill), the way it's pro-

duced, the cover designs, the whole thing. I don't like to name names but I have to name him because he's so graphic to me. And the implications of his music are interesting, because it's used for meditating, for relaxing, for falling asleep, for having conversations during—the exact opposites of my reasons for playing. If someone can fall asleep or meditate while the music is going on, to me that's spiritually not right. That person should be able to deal with silence, that person shouldn't need my music. So here's a guy (Winston) who has been considered—with a lack of historical perspective—to be doing the same thing as I, but just with a different vocabulary. That's been written in reviews....

MUSICIAN: So, what do the critics know?

JARRETT: Yeah, well the critics seemingly don't know much, but neither do the listeners.

MUSICIAN: *C'mon, you've felt in the past that it was the naive listeners, the unschooled, untutored listeners, with no formal musical backgrounds, who actually hear the most.*

JARRETT: Yes, when it comes to the process of improvising, they're the people who are sure they don't know anything about it, so they'll be much more able to hear the process itself. He or she will really be ready for what's happening. Now the musician thinks he knows all about it, so he won't be hearing the process, he'll be hearing, "Oh, he did interesting things with this voicing," or, "Oh, he's staying in A minor."

MUSICIAN: *You've said that next year will bring fewer solo concerts, that you are searching for, I'll quote you, "a positive way to affect a smaller amount of people at once rather than to completely confuse entire populations."*

JARRETT: I don't mean that I'll play for smaller audiences, for 500 people instead of 3,000; I mean more like two or three people in the rest of someone's life (laughs). The problem is, people have started thinking about the music as the end. If the music is good one night, that means: okay. And if it's not good: not okay. One night, a good experience; the next night, a not-so-good experience. Well, I'm not interested in perpetuating that kind of "pleasant" experience, even for myself.

MUSICIAN: *And so for you the frustration is that the process is going unnoticed and it's the final "product" that's being judged. You're afraid that you're playing just to make people feel good—and if you give them pleasure, they will have a good experience, and if there's no pleasure, they don't like it.*

JARRETT: That's very clearly and precisely true. And I'm not in a place to deliver that. I'll tell you what's freaky. I tape all these things for myself, just to keep a record. Sometimes I've written songs from parts of concerts. The last tour, I knew while I was playing the concerts how vital they were. If anything, they were far beyond anything up until then; the energy level was higher, the awareness was broader, I was hearing everything that was happening rather than a nice little melody here and there and wondering what to put under it. Every sound was a part of the experience. Well, I hate the tapes.

MUSICIAN: Why?

JARRETT: The music wasn't interesting.

MUSICIAN: *Not interesting in retrospect?*

JARRETT: Not interesting to listen to.

MUSICIAN: *But wasn't it interesting to play?*

JARRETT: No, it wasn't interesting on any level. It was just absolute—total involvement.

MUSICIAN: *Well, to say something is "interesting" or "fascinating" and to say that it is "boring" both come from the same point of view, the position of standing outside something and looking in—not truly being involved with something....*

JARRETT: Right.

MUSICIAN: *Which means that when people are "fascinated" by something chances are that it's no more of an experience than when they're "bored."*

JARRETT: And for listeners, pleasure is interesting and no pleasure is boring. But whatever the hell I did on this tour wasn't either of those. I mean, it was boring as a result of not being interesting, if we think of those as flip sides. And on these

"I feel there isn't anybody who's handled success better than I have, in my knowledge of history in the modern world."

tapes, it's boring to me. But my duty is to struggle, to struggle with the impossible on the stage. That's why the singing and the crazy sounds and the movements are there. I'm searching for something to connect to other people who are still strangers. And is there something? Now that's the right question. Does this music, this process, get to the point where there is no music which would represent the feeling behind it? And that I do believe is true. And that's where lying begins.

MUSICIAN: *Have you ever thought of stopping? Walking away from the piano?*

JARRETT: Oh, I've thought of that as early as 1965, '66. I was playing at Slugs with Charles Lloyd and I was sure I'd stop playing the piano in another year, publicly. Because I was happy with one note—that was my reason at the time. It's a hard question, because though I'm aware of all these problems, there's nothing on the level of how I feel sitting at the piano that suggests I should stop. It's a very difficult question. I'm supposed to be a pianist (laughs).

MUSICIAN: *While you're on the subject of your audience, I'd like to talk about your relationship with it and what seems to me to be a paradox. At the same time that you make a good case that everything happening in the concert hall is part of the music, that every person there affects the music, and that it's a participatory event in which you are not "performing" so much as being a channel, at the same time you also have a habit of lecturing audiences about coughing, demanding absolute silence, no laughing, etc., and when any of this happens you stop playing and throw a fit. So the paradox to me is: isn't the coughing, the laughing, the tension of a squeaking seat part of the music to begin with, and if it's going to affect you, why not let it affect you and the music and continue with it...?*

JARRETT: Because I can't deny its presence. If I could, I'd continue to play. I could continue only if the person who coughed became conscious as soon as he or she coughed (laughs). There is a sharing going on, but if everyone shared equally, then anyone could be onstage. And a cough from a cold doesn't stop the music, a baby crying doesn't stop the music. In fact, I've been in places like Tunisia where they don't have a tradition of going to concerts, and I played a free open-air concert where there was a carnival next door. And none of that sound was wrong or against the experience.

It's mostly that people can't deal with themselves, can't control their own quiet. As a result, George Winston records are meditated to. People would like not to cough—I know that—but they want me to make them not cough by playing an interesting enough thing so they're interested enough not to be nervous so they don't cough. I'm not interested in therapy. I mean, I expect something from them also.

MUSICIAN: *The form these concerts have taken—and you've done hundreds of them, nearly fifty this year—has been described as "organic." If they were truly organic wouldn't there be times when you'd be done with a piece in six or seven minutes and likewise, times when you'd play for two hours straight? Yet that doesn't happen. The concert conforms to a format, two pieces, roughly forty-five minutes in length.*



Really, can George Winston do this?

JARRETT: And this is a real sticky problem. I can't take responsibility on myself to stop after seven minutes because all I'm going to do is create furor. I'd rather keep the seven minutes and play on for forty-five totally meaningless minutes.

MUSICIAN: Then you're just surrendering the process to give the audience exactly what you say you don't want to give, a "product."

JARRETT: No, no. See, there's already so much misinterpretation about it that I don't want to be like John Cage to people. "Wow, that was fantastic! He stopped after seven minutes and we expected forty-five."

MUSICIAN: I thought you didn't care what all these opinions are. If it feels right to you on a given night, why not do it, and think, "Screw it if they loved it that I stopped, and screw it if they hated that I stopped. I stopped because that's what the music demanded." Plus, I'm not saying to end the whole concert there. You could go on and play another, separate piece.

JARRETT: Yeah, but I don't feel that way about an audience. I don't feel like "screw them," because they're involved in the same thing I am. They just don't understand as much about it as I do. It's like a child. You say, "Now I want you to concentrate on this for forty-five minutes," but if the kid's attention-span is only seven minutes, he or she stops after seven minutes and you're not gonna be upset. He or she has to learn.

MUSICIAN: You're avoiding the issue, I think. If the solo con-

certs really have organic form, you stop after seven minutes if you've said it in seven minutes.

JARRETT: (long pause) Well...that would be ideal. Yes, it would be ideal, if I could do that. But I don't think it's possible. Imagine what would happen backstage if I stopped after seven minutes.

MUSICIAN: Instead of one intermission there could be two or three, or why not no intermissions if you felt like playing one long, long piece?

JARRETT: Wait, wait. Let's take intermission for example. I usually don't want to ever play the second set.

MUSICIAN: You're drained?

JARRETT: Usually I've said it. Not to mention in seven minutes, but maybe in forty-five. Starting is a very difficult thing. Impossible. Then you get to something that's happening and you want to keep it happening by letting it happen. That's even harder than starting. If I achieve that during the first set, then I have achieved what I meant to do that night and there's no reason for a second set. Not to mention encores.

MUSICIAN: I suppose it's because it's how you make your living. And I would add that you make quite a good one.

JARRETT: Well, it turned out that way for a while, yes. But what do you do when, by the sheer appropriateness of whatever you're doing, it becomes historically timely? Most people haven't seen the success I've had and they have an envious feeling about it. I would like to say to those people, "Enjoy whatever situation you're in now because the pressures of being successful and still being an artist are greater than the pressures of not being successful and being an artist."

MUSICIAN: Very few artists handle success as well as they handle failure. How do you feel you've handled it?

JARRETT: I feel there isn't anybody who's handled it better than I have, in my knowledge of recent history in the modern world.

MUSICIAN: Do you worry about the dollar?

JARRETT: Well, I was robbed by my business manager and that just happened last year. And he had been doing it for four years. And it amounts to a lot of six-figure sums. So basically I'm broke, as we sit here.

MUSICIAN: Was it a handshake between you or a contract?

JARRETT: A handshake. He was a friend, an out-of-work friend.

MUSICIAN: How do you feel about the experience?

JARRETT: I feel that I could easily get into the same situation again. I can't do anything differently. I needed all the time I had, all the energy I had to make the music. Until you have an experience like this, you don't know how much more negative it can be than not having money, because it means things about people, not just things about money. I mean somebody who was that close to me; he was a trustee of my kids' trust funds and he stole their trust funds (laughs).

MUSICIAN: Are you litigating, taking his ass to court?

JARRETT: Yes, we're trying to attach property he has.

MUSICIAN: I think one of the happy circumstances of the 70s was that all these jazz artists were jumping on the fusion bandwagon going for the big bucks and many not finding them, and there you were with just your piano pulling fifteen grand for ninety minutes, alone, traveling with your suitcase. Something unique about that.

JARRETT: Yes. For instance, I went on this last tour wondering why I set up so many solo concerts for this year. Did I do it so that I could become solvent again? That's the kind of question I wouldn't have if I didn't get paid so much.

MUSICIAN: Is it still between ten and fifteen grand a night?

JARRETT: No, it's not so high anymore.

MUSICIAN: Why not?

JARRETT: Because there isn't an audience.

MUSICIAN: What's changed?

JARRETT: (laughing) They're off meditating with George Winston. No, I think simply what's changed is the music. Most of the people who would have filled up a large hall, say 6,000

seats, most of them have heard me play maybe a half-dozen times since their favorite album, let's assume it was *The Koin Concert*—okay, beautiful melodies, nice, wonderfully played, interesting recording, etc.—but people can't tell what they're hearing now. They're hearing a much different quality of energy on the most recent solo work. It's more muscular, there's an overall awareness rather than a melody/harmony awareness. More contrapuntal, less harmonically interesting. *Less interesting.* If I have a goal, it's to be less interesting (laughs). And so I end up with less people. That's the main reason, I think. People are tired, too. And they watch more TV than they did ten years ago.

MUSICIAN: *That statement about being less interesting connects to your statement in the book accompanying your Munich/Bregenz solo record that you don't want to be a stylist, you want to be the very opposite of unique.*

JARRETT: Yes, true....

MUSICIAN: *And if you extend that thinking farther and farther and so on, what you end up with is silence.*

JARRETT: That's right. *But,* the energy in silence can be made physical. The newer concerts are almost exactly like the piano—whatever it is—through it I am able to try to go even further into the process of hearing, of listening, and also show actively how incredibly vital the silence is. In a way that's what it's about: how active is the silence, how completely nothing is the action.

MUSICIAN: *I think people might be blocked from hearing these things because you've become, in a bizarre sort of way, a pop star. You know, people see you swimming in your pool in People and the like, and they lug all this cultural baggage into the hall when they come to see you.*

JARRETT: Oh yes, it makes it harder. It makes it worse. On the other hand, there are not many alternatives. I mean, how else would I get an audience?

MUSICIAN: *Glenn Gould gave up playing concerts.*

JARRETT: Well, yes, but what I'm doing now—the solo concerts—needs an audience. There are solo albums in studios, but they're not like people getting together to make music.

MUSICIAN: *Why not get together with other musicians?*

JARRETT: Because I am alone. I'm very much alone in terms of my relationship to music. I don't know anybody who knows what I'm talking about if I talk long enough (laughs). Except sometimes I don't, either. If you were going to work with other people, you would always have to be careful how permanent you made the arrangement, because unless everyone is unlimited in their scope about this, the limitations come very quickly in a group.

MUSICIAN: *Yet you choose to work with others to record these standards.*

JARRETT: I knew Gary and Jack had gone through standards as I had in the prime of our lives, and they became second nature to us. Like a cocktail pianist knowing two hundred tunes, all the bridges at the flip of a coin. I thought we could all share this as a tribal language we were given; a world of wonderful little melodies, and still, we're living in 1983. We had dinner the night before the session and it was like the way you'd have dinner before a conference, as if you were the people who had to deliver the information to a conference.

I talked about our spiritual involvement in something that is not our own. Something beautiful that is not ours; and we will make it ours, but we will not try. And what we ended up with is incredible; I think some of the songs' melodies have never been phrased as well as on this record.

MUSICIAN: *Will this yield more than one album?*

JARRETT: There's a second record of standards and a third record of some freer type things from the same session.

MUSICIAN: *But no plans for a working group?*

JARRETT: No, I don't think it would work. There's a funny point when something isn't potential anymore. Making a permanent thing out of it makes it too serious—like, here we are going "arty" again. Then it becomes "interesting" again, which

I don't want. [By press time, however, Jarrett had booked the trio into the Village Vanguard for a week.]

MUSICIAN: *You are not interested in shaping young musical minds or by leading others in any way other than by example?*

JARRETT: I think that's correct. If there's anything that interests me in a group context, it's the few times I've played, mostly percussion instruments and little recorders, with untalented, young, not-very-knowledgeable people. Non-musicians, people who might not have ever picked anything up. That interests me much more than forming a group with other "interesting" musicians.

MUSICIAN: *Don't you miss the democratic tension of a working group? Because some of the moments I value most in your music are not solo, but rather when I feel that tension between you and other musicians, exploring those group "limitations." It brings out something different in you.*

JARRETT: I think what you really mean is that it's easier to hear. Because it's so easy to attach to the ego what one person is doing. I mean, ultimately we are alone. We must deal with that. And dealing with that is not as much fun, and some of the things you hear with the groups are fun: the fun of being able to relate to something and not care what that is, and just take it. But when you play alone, whatever you hear, you can't have fun with because you just have it to yourself.

MUSICIAN: *So what's wrong with fun? It's one of things we were put here to have, no?*

JARRETT: I miss it. I miss the joy of it in solo work. I'm going through that while I'm playing, you just can't hear the joy. It doesn't come out the same.

MUSICIAN: *Ultimately we may all be alone, but we came from others, we're shaped by others and we live with others....*

JARRETT: But we're stuck with ourselves. Everyone should play a solo concert. No matter what the result, just to try. You can't really talk about it unless you do it. Andre Previn was asked what he thought of my solo albums and he said, "Anybody who plays for forty-five minutes must be able to come up with something." So he obviously hasn't done it.


MUSICIAN: *There's a feeling out there, which I think you know about, that there's a capital T on Keith Jarrett's Truth, like it's better or higher than my truth or Joe Blow's truth or another musician's truth. It's intimidating to people. What about it?*

JARRETT: It's a good question. What should I say other than, "This is the truth"? What would be a nicer word? Yes, everyone has truths of their own. Just because I say, "This is true" doesn't mean that the truth is gonna bite you. Some good poet whose name I can't remember said that the more personal something is, the more universal it is.


MUSICIAN: *Let me also broach the issue of Con Ed and what it has wrought on the musical landscape. It's now about ten years since your major anti-electric music proclamation.*

JARRETT: I think my argument is more persuasive today. Today there are a lot more "interesting" things happening with electronic music than there were ten years ago. And I think it's probably more dangerous than it was then.

MUSICIAN: *What do you mean, dangerous?*



"My duty is to struggle with the impossible onstage; that's why the singing and the crazy sounds and movements."



"If someone can fall asleep or meditate while the music is going on, to me that's spiritually not right."

JARRETT: I mean it is a kind of poison. Something that takes your connection from the soil away is a poison. I think that for a long, long time it will be a lot of fun, and then at a point electronic music will either go away or it will be all that we have. If it's all we have, then the poison has done its job. People are not able to listen to acoustic music after they've heard electric music. I know this is true for me, it's a very difficult, difficult thing to get used to.

MUSICIAN: Why poison? Why an image of sickness and death?

JARRETT: Because it's something people are doing to themselves.

MUSICIAN: Is electric music closing people up to feelings they can no longer have?

JARRETT: Let's talk about how it affects me. I've seen myself fall in love with it, just like everyone else. For minutes at a time, not years. It is a very seductive thing. It sounds fine, what can be wrong with it? I want to make clear that I am aware of that feeling. And so I think I've had to make more or less of a decision and I don't think about it any more.

MUSICIAN: My God, Keith, it sounds like you're an idealistic teenager denying yourself Playboy magazine.

JARRETT: (laughs hard) Well, I would think I would.

MUSICIAN: That's a puritanical notion.

JARRETT: Why? Do you know how bad fluorescent lights are for you? People have only known this for a few years—and there were people trying to figure out why they felt so bad, why the headaches? Could it be my job? Well, they finally found out that their bad feelings were connected to fluorescent lights. Now what is the worker supposed to do? Desensitize himself? What I'm saying about electronics is not that I get *only* pleasure from it and have to decide not to think about it; pleasure is always there as the initial feeling. It's like, "Oh, wow, we can do anything with this sound. It's so open."

MUSICIAN: What do you become desensitized to?

JARRETT: I feel first of all, there doesn't need to be art. Even acoustic music is, in the end, a secondary thing to the spirit that animates it. Likewise, the painting is not the most important thing; it's what the painter does to paint it. So I don't understand why we have to take ourselves so far away from basic, close, organic substances that are already far enough away in acoustic instruments. I know ultimately that it's a poison that either can get worse or get better and if it gets better we're lucky.

MUSICIAN: Lightning strikes the earth about eight million times a day, and in that lightning there's electricity, which is just as much of this natural world as the wood for the piano and the metal for the saxophone.

JARRETT: To think about it doesn't make any sense.

MUSICIAN: It's a feeling you have, is what I'm getting at, not a rational or logical decision.

JARRETT: Right. If I were under a fluorescent light all day and you told me that it was made up of this ray and that ray and it's in the sun too....

MUSICIAN: And the sun gives us skin cancer....

JARRETT: And we're left with nothing but words and words and words. You don't plug in lightning do you?

MUSICIAN: No, but I've never bumped into a Steinway grand while walking through a forest either. I don't mean to be irreverent here, I'm just trying to locate the source of your problem.

JARRETT: Oh, it's my problem?

MUSICIAN: Your problem with the experience and current dominance of electric music.

JARRETT: The source, the source is how it affects my physiological nature. That's why the thinking, in the end, doesn't mean very much. But I assume that if people were hip, they'd check that out, the way they started to be hip to fluorescent lights. What I'm saying isn't to avoid electronic music or regress from it, but to confront it.

MUSICIAN: When you see the new wonders such as the Synclavier or the Fairlight or Apple computer / keyboard hook-ups, is there no temptation?

JARRETT: No. Where's the struggle involved in composing? Where's the physical involvement in the whole process? It becomes so simple physically, and the result will be parallel to the input. From the beginning of keyboard instruments to the piano, every innovation was based on how much physical input you could make use of. After the piano, less and less and less. Turn volume knobs, push buttons. There's no touch, and if there's no touch, it's synthetic.

Everyone says, "But you made a record on electronic instruments!" Well, I enjoyed playing with Miles' band. Oh God, does that destroy my feeling? I even have an answer for that? Miles' playing was so strong and he didn't want a pianist to play the piano, so if I wanted to play with Miles—which I did—it wouldn't be the piano. In fact, I didn't like his previous band that much. I thought he could use a little... klick.

MUSICIAN: Have you gone to hear him since his comeback?

JARRETT: No.

MUSICIAN: Do you actually go out and hear other music or listen to it at home?

JARRETT: Not often. I'm so disappointed as a rule, I find myself thinking what I could have accomplished if I hadn't gone.

MUSICIAN: What disappoints you: the failure of musicians to live up to their potential, failure to connect to you emotionally? What's not happening out there?

JARRETT: Commitment to something other than the marketplace. Even Miles suffers from being committed to the marketplace. Much, much too much.

MUSICIAN: Is it fair to say that at one point you were quite influenced by Ornette Coleman?

JARRETT: You can say that. When I heard his playing, it was like hearing a friend. It was a shared way of looking at melody and line. It works out to seem that way because I used players whom he had in his band, but they were players who also had a relationship to the line.

MUSICIAN: What do you think of Ornette's post-76 electric music?

JARRETT: I haven't heard it. And one reason is that Charlie Haden always tells me not to hear it (laughs).

MUSICIAN: Is there nothing out there that impresses you?

JARRETT: What impresses me most in the last few years is the tendency to hear, see, to have played more authentic instruments in the performance of Bach, Handel, whomever. I haven't heard players—modern Western music players—who have knocked me out. Most of the music I've heard recently has an electric instrument of some sort in it, or a synthesizer, and as soon as I hear this, I just know how easy it is. Even when the music's great, I am simultaneously aware of how little time it might have taken to make it happen, how few people might be in the studio—even though it sounds big—how little physical involvement anybody has in it even though it sounds intense. I don't care how "interesting" it is.

MUSICIAN: I suppose then that the ultimate hemlock is the drum computer. Taking the world's oldest instrument, requiring the most physical exertion, and transforming it into buttons.

JARRETT: You know what I wonder? How do these musicians who are into electronics get rid of their musical feelings, if there's no effort between thought and reality, from concept to



Keith's son Gabriel, picking up a few polytonal pointers.

existence? And the Synclavier is actually that (laughs). I mean, you have to touch a few things. To me, no matter how "good"—and I use that with quotation marks—how "good" the music might be from that process, the process itself is the poison. And the poison will be seen at some future date as having corrected itself or we will become desensitized and immune to it. And in the latter case I hope I'm old enough not to live through it.

MUSICIAN: Speaking of physical effort, do you ever think of losing your hands?

JARRETT: Yes. In fact, I hope to get insurance soon. I can do it, but I don't really believe in insurance. Two years ago, I sprained my thumb while skiing, and that made me aware of my hands in a way I wasn't aware of them. But if I lost one, that would be it. Obviously, I could write. I've been saving most of my writing for the future anyway, because the physical thing—the playing—is not going to stay there forever.

MUSICIAN: You are an artist who seems to have continually felt misunderstood. How you would "profile" yourself.

JARRETT: The profile would be simple: there's a core to life, an essence, from which everything on the surface of life

comes, and I, as an artist, have decided, perhaps not so consciously in my early twenties, that no one was dealing with that core. They were dealing with the surfaces. We can talk about electronic music as being textures and surfaces and nothing else, because there is no core there. A core means something tied to the earth, such as a human being to be committed and involved in the thing for there to be any possibility of showing a personal center—that is indeed a universal center, which everyone can feel, too. Everything else is a trick.

MUSICIAN: I don't think that statement is going to keep you from being misunderstood, and it seems that you wrestle with this problem yourself: I mean, do you explain your art, as you did on the last solo record by way of essays by you and a critic as well as that poem, "A Garden For Keith Jarrett," or do you leave the music be, let it speak for itself in its own language?

JARRETT: The ideal thing would be to take it away completely. By elaborating on it I'm making something more important than it is. Then again, if I say nothing, except, "It's about the music"—that's not really right either. What would be right would be to erase the whole thing and only have now to talk about. And this is basically what I do when I play a concert.

What to do is to erase it up to now. I've got these symphonies and all these records and now I can get on all the red telephones across the world and say, "Burn all the albums I've ever recorded up to now." And then I could guarantee you one thing: all the misinterpretations would begin to fade.

MUSICIAN: Did you see the film *Diva*?

JARRETT: No.

MUSICIAN: The opera star, the diva, refused to record. She would not allow her voice to ever be documented, reduced to spinning around and around in a circle. We talked earlier about not performing, which goes against what you say your solo work needs. What about not recording? That's the single way to only have a Now and never have a Then.

JARRETT: But the only way to do that is not to have a single record. And, well, for me, it's already too late.

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