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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

JOE HENDERSON: A BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY
OF HIS LIFE AND CAREER

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Arts

Joel Geoffrey Harris

College of Performing and Visual Arts
School of Music
Jazz Studies

December 2016

This Dissertation by: Joel Geoffrey Harris

Entitled: *Joe Henderson: A Biographical Study of His Life and Career*

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Arts
in the College of Performing and Visual Arts in the School of Music,
Program of Jazz Studies

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ABSTRACT

Harris, Joel. *Joe Henderson: A Biographical Study of His Life and Career*. Published Doctor of Arts dissertation, University of Northern Colorado, December 2016.

This study provides an overview of the life and career of Joe Henderson, who was a unique presence within the jazz musical landscape. It provides detailed biographical information, as well as discographical information and the appropriate context for Henderson's two-hundred sixty-seven recordings. His life is presented in the following categories: Early Years; Blue Note Period; Milestone Period; Intervening Years; and Verve Period. Thorough study and collation of published materials produced the framework of this document, while original interviews with those knowledgeable of Henderson's life and career provided insight into his personality and career decisions. The resulting body of research is the first and only thorough study of Henderson, and it provides critical historical contributions to jazz scholarship.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

Joe Henderson is an established member of the jazz canon of composers and performers, and he is frequently referenced in jazz academia. The number of jazz programs at the university level grows every year, and there is every indication that the subject area will be taught in perpetuity. Given these circumstances, it is completely reasonable to assume that Henderson will be referenced in jazz classrooms well into the future; therefore, he will be studied by many generations of students and scholars. Furthermore, future studies might increasingly focus on the details of Henderson's life as jazz academia continues to expand into the musicological realm.

This document is the first thorough, published study of Henderson's life and career. Future students and scholars will benefit from the original interview excerpts contained in this document, as they convey valuable insights from those with firsthand experience with Henderson and his career. Henderson was born in 1937, and his contemporaries will not be with us for many more years. The collection of their memories and impressions is an essential service to jazz scholarship. Printed documents from Henderson's life are also becoming increasingly inaccessible, as library archives gradually become damaged or go missing. Tangential print materials not found in

libraries are now extremely difficult to locate, and may become virtually extinct in the near future. This project preserves all of these elements, and provides future researchers with the most current bibliographical listing of existing materials on the subject.

Need for Study

Joe Henderson is widely recognized as a major figure in jazz, particularly among tenor saxophonists. Michael Brecker and Joe Lovano openly acknowledge Henderson's influence on their musical development. His high level of technique and his unique approach to the instrument have taken hold in today's jazz community. Furthermore, his prolific recording career, which included over two-hundred sixty album credits, disseminated his music to a large audience.

The need for study is clearly demonstrated by the lack of biographical material surrounding Henderson's life. There have been no thorough biographies in dissertation or any other format published to date. Two dissertations contain biographical portions but primarily focus on analysis of his music. Other sources include articles in periodicals such as *Downbeat*, *Jazz Journal International*, and *Jazz Educators Journal*. These pieces are usually brief and informal, and house biographical information within a feature piece on a then-current Henderson project. Obituaries, record reviews and liner material provide small amounts of biographical information, and are often listed as sources for the above-mentioned publications. If Henderson is mentioned at all in most traditional jazz history textbooks, it is within the context of his sideman experiences with little emphasis on his life and solo career.

The true impetus behind this project is the knowledge that those familiar with Henderson's life will not be among us forever. Many friends, fellow musicians, producers, family members and others with firsthand accounts of his life had not been previously interviewed on this topic. It would be a tragedy for the jazz community if these stories were permanently lost.

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Dissertations

George Weremchuk

This dissertation offers no biographical information on Henderson, and includes a transcription and brief analysis of Henderson's solo on "Night and Day" from his album *Inner Urge*.

Arthur Lynn White

White's dissertation contains thirteen pages of biographical information. What he lacks in depth he makes up for in his thorough citation process. It should be noted that the biographical portion does not contain any previously unknown information. As the title implies, his document focuses primarily on musical analysis of "Recorda-Me," "Black Narcissus" and "Inner Urge."

Sundar Viswanathan

Viswanathan's document is extremely thorough, and spans five-hundred forty pages. He included original interviews with Ron Carter, Andrew Hill, Ron McClure and Pete Yellin. The downside of Viswanathan's sixty-seven page biographical portion is that it is comprised of previously published information with the addition of his four interviews. The dissertation primarily focused on musical analysis, which essentially comprises the remainder of the document.

Musical Publications

Henderson's career is relatively well-documented through album reviews, feature pieces and interviews in musical publications such as *Downbeat*, *Billboard*, *JazzTimes*, *Saxophone Journal*, *Jazz Educators Journal*, *Jazz Journal International* and others. As previously mentioned, these pieces are not in-depth biographical works. They do, however, provide insight into critical reception of Henderson's music throughout his career.

Other Interviews with Joe Henderson

Other interviews with Henderson are available online in video and audio formats. These occurred mostly, if not entirely, after his career resurgence on Verve, and they serve as a glimpse into his views later in life. The most notable interview occurs between Henderson, John Scofield and Bret Primack, who is now associated with Sonny Rollins. In it, Henderson discusses his then-current *Big Band* release and his early career. Other interview materials include an interview for *Jazz Report*, and a taped North Texas masterclass.

Liner Materials

The Tom Lord Jazz Discography,¹ an invaluable resource for a project of this nature, states that Joe Henderson participated in two-hundred sixty-seven recording sessions. The liner notes from these sessions provide valuable insight and cultural context. Thorough research and collation of these materials alone proved beneficial.

¹ Tom Lord. "Joe Henderson," Tom Lord Online Jazz Discography, accessed August 3, 2016, <http://www.lordisco.com>.

Summary

After reviewing past and current literature, it is readily apparent that this study fills a need and will prove itself as a valuable resource within the jazz community. The balance of known and unknown information is incredibly suited for investigation of this nature. Henderson remains influential fifteen years after his passing, and should be comprehensively researched. This document stands on its own as an important service to the jazz community, and provides important firsthand information which will facilitate further research for years to come.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The document focused entirely on historical research, as this was of primary importance to the author. Musical analysis was avoided due to the presence of several analytical dissertations on the subject. It is also the author's opinion that Henderson's recordings are of a more permanent nature than previously unaccessed firsthand accounts of his life.

Thorough research was conducted on all published media surrounding Henderson's life and career, including, but not limited to, jazz history texts, magazine, television and radio interviews and feature pieces, dissertations, journal entries, album reviews and liner notes. These materials provided the newly-acquired personal interviews with proper context.

Personal interviews conducted by the author were of great importance to the project. Interviewees include Henderson's fellow musicians, record company executives, producers and family members. Steps were taken before each interview to ensure the interviewee consented to the interview and was aware of the nature of the project.

These interviews were recorded with a digital audio recording device. Phone interviews occurred when in-person sessions were not feasible. Prior to every interview, research was conducted on the interviewee and their relationship to Henderson. This included professional and personal associations, as well as a study of the interviewees'

recorded musical history if applicable. Given the comprehensive nature of this project, questions were tailored to each interviewee. Each was offered the opportunity to view, edit or delete any information they provided before its inclusion in the document.

The results of these interviews were transcribed and incorporated into the narrative. Methodology for personal interviews received approval of “exempt status” from the Institutional Review Board.

CHAPTER IV
BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY

Early Years (1937-1961)

Childhood in Lima, Ohio

Joseph Arthur Henderson was born on April 24, 1937,² at St. Rita's Hospital in Lima, Ohio.³ His father, Dennis Henderson, Sr., was a steel worker, and his mother, Irene Farley-Henderson, was a housewife.⁴ They both relocated to Lima from their hometowns in Georgia. Joe Henderson was one of fifteen children. In approximated chronological order, they included: Booker T. Henderson, Ocie Wilson, Dennis "Denny" Henderson, Gertrude "Gert" Jackson, William "Babe" Henderson, Fred Henderson, James Troye Henderson, Elmer Henderson, Doris Henderson-Smith, Robert Henderson, Theresa Stinson, Harold Henderson, Joe Henderson, Phyllis McGee, and Leon Henderson.⁵

Henderson's mother and father wanted their children to make the most of their lives, and they insisted that their children receive a quality education.⁶ The saxophonist

² Kenny Dorham and Bob Blumenthal, notes to Joe Henderson, *Page One* (1963), CD, Blue Note 7243 4 98795 2 2, 1999.

³ Phyllis McGee, interview by author, October 7, 2016.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

later spoke of his gratitude to his parents, and said, “What got me started on the right track was the information that I gathered from being around two great parents. That’s been largely responsible for my success.”⁷

Although Henderson’s mother and father did not raise their children in a religious household, Henderson’s father sang in the Baptist choir.⁸ Neither of his parents considered themselves to be musicians; furthermore, music was not incredibly prevalent in the Henderson household, and was mainly initiated by the children.⁹ Two of Henderson’s siblings did become musicians, however. Phyllis McGee sang in local choirs, talent shows, and nightclubs, and Leon Henderson became a jazz musician. Leon Henderson was a tenor saxophonist, who recorded two albums with Kenny Cox and the Contemporary Jazz Quintet for Blue Note Records in the late-1960s.¹⁰

Henderson attended Lincoln Elementary School¹¹ and was tested for musical aptitude when he was nine years old.¹² He explained:

I wanted to play drums. I’d be making drums out of my mother’s pie pans. But they said I’d gotten a high enough score that I could play anything, and they gave me a saxophone. It was a C melody. I played that about six months and went to the tenor. I was kind of born on the tenor.¹³

Henderson was exposed to jazz at a young age, by listening to his brother Troye’s record collection.

⁷ Zan Stewart, “Joe Henderson’s Year at the Top,” *Downbeat Magazine*, May 1993, 20.

⁸ McGee Interview.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

¹¹ McGee interview.

¹² Michael Bourne, “The Sound that Launched a Thousand Horns,” *Downbeat Magazine*, March 1992, 16.

¹³ Ibid.

I remember one of my brothers, in particular, who is a scientist, had this *Jazz at the Philharmonic* collection. He was a jazz buff and it was very important and good for me to have been around that early on, because before I started to play the saxophone, I knew what the saxophone was supposed to sound like. I heard a bunch of people like Lester Young, Illinois Jacquet, Coleman Hawkins and Wardell Gray.¹⁴

Troye also helped Henderson transcribe his first solo, as the saxophonist explained:

It was a Lester Young record of a tune called “D.B. Blues.” That was the one that did it for me. I can remember when I was ten, eleven years old, my brother, who was not a musician but a scientist, helping me learn that solo. It was like, just these first three notes, then these next three and I started to play right along with Pres. After a while that just gave me such a great feeling being able to do that.¹⁵

Henderson attended Lima South High School, and joined the school band.¹⁶

Henderson’s band director, Herbert Murphy, was a saxophonist, and he gave Henderson his first instrument-specific instruction. Henderson later credited Murphy for providing him with an “embryonic understanding of the instrument.”¹⁷ Sundar Viswanathan explained Henderson’s high school band experience in the following way:

Lima South High School had a busy music program. However, the focus was on marching and symphonic band as opposed to jazz. Joe's first music teacher was also his band director, Herbert Murphy. Murphy was a gigging bass viol, sax and clarinet player, a member of the symphony and of the Karl Beach dance band in the Lima area. Murphy was an intrinsic part of the musical network that played an important role in Henderson's early musical education. Henderson was an . . . introverted young man, who eschewed athletics in favor of time spent in the practice room.¹⁸

¹⁴ Mel Martin, “Joe Henderson,” *Saxophone Journal*, March/April 1991, 12.

¹⁵ David Woods, “Joe Henderson,” *Jazz Journal International*, December 1991, 6.

¹⁶ McGee interview.

¹⁷ Dorham and Blumenthal, notes to *Page One*.

¹⁸ Sundar Viswanathan, “An Analysis of the Jazz Improvisation and Composition in Selected Works from the Blue Note Records Period of Tenor Saxophonist Joe Henderson from 1963-1966” (PhD diss., New York University, 2003), 4.

Henderson received valuable musical instruction from the local pianists, Richard Patterson and Don Hurlless. The pianists attended school with Henderson's older siblings, and they gave the saxophonist a working knowledge of the piano.¹⁹ Viswanathan stated, "Hurlless recalls that he used to 'feed' Charlie Parker solos to Henderson at half the speed of the original recording and that Henderson would play the solos back in order to memorize them."²⁰ Henderson also received instruction from Louis Transue, a saxophonist who frequently performed in local hotels. Transue often discussed saxophone-related topics in an academic manner during breaks at these performances.²¹

Henderson was influenced by a wide variety of musical genres while in Lima. John Jarrette, a local drummer, suggested that he listen to Charlie Parker, Stan Getz, Lester Young and Dexter Gordon.²² Henderson was first influenced by Getz, and by Lee Konitz shortly thereafter.²³ While Charlie Parker would become Henderson's "greatest inspiration,"²⁴ the alto saxophonist was too advanced for Henderson at the time. Henderson stated, "Charlie Parker was too much for me to understand. My musical capacity wasn't up to it."²⁵

Henderson was also influenced by the popular music of the 1940s and 1950s, as he explained: "I had been listening to Rhythm and Blues, and I had gone through that generation. I was always around Country and Western music as well. I know as much

¹⁹ Dorham and Blumenthal, notes to *Page One*.

²⁰ Viswanathan, "Blue Note Records Period of Joe Henderson," 5.

²¹ Ray Townley, "The Herculean Tenor of Joe Henderson," *Downbeat Magazine*, January 16, 1975, 20.

²² Dorham and Blumenthal, notes to *Page One*.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Nat Hentoff and Bob Blumenthal, notes to Kenny Dorham, *Una Mas* (1963), CD, Blue Note 7243 5 21228 2 0, 1999.

about Johnny Cash as I do about Charlie Parker, because I grew up in that area.”²⁶ He said that he also listened to “a lot of Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley, and all those cats who were really doing things around that time. I’m talking about the real *deep* blues players.”²⁷ In addition, he was exposed to marches and other styles of music through his band program. He stated,

I started playing in high school bands, which didn’t play bebop, and thus got a full appreciation of other kinds of music – classical and marches. I liked Bartok and Stravinsky and Schoenberg instantly; nobody had to prepare me for that. I just liked that stuff; it tended to be a little further out, a little less conventional. And this predated me having heard Ornette Coleman by at least ten years. I was into an unconventional approach to sound, and so when people like Ornette and Eric (Dolph) showed on the scene, they didn’t appear to me to be that unusual or offensive.²⁸

He also began learning jazz standards and musical vocabulary while in high school.

Lima had an active music scene in the 1950s, as Viswanathan explained:

Lima itself was an unexpected goldmine for musical activity. An industrial town of about 52,000 in the early 1950s, it had been a hotspot for jazz from the 1940s. Lima was a logical midpoint on the railway circuit between Detroit and Chicago. Artists like the Stan Kenton Big Band and Duke Ellington used the town as a stopover point on tours between these cities.²⁹

Henderson attended these concerts, and learned from the musicians who performed in the groups. When he was fourteen, he performed with the Lionel Hampton big band when one of Hampton’s saxophonists fell ill. The group included saxophonist Johnny Griffin, and trumpeters Art Farmer, Quincy Jones and Clifford Brown.³⁰ Henderson explained:

²⁶ Martin, “Joe Henderson,” 13.

²⁷ Townley, “The Herculean Tenor of Joe Henderson,” 19.

²⁸ Mark Gilbert, “Joe’s Mode,” *Jazz Journal International*, August 1985, 8.

²⁹ Viswanathan, “Blue Note Records Period of Joe Henderson,” 6.

³⁰ Townley, “The Herculean Tenor of Joe Henderson,” 20.

It was a magic year for me. Lionel Hampton came to my town and some alto player that was working with him got ill. There was a guy who came from Chicago who came to my small town to take up residence. This guy could convince you that he knew Jesus Christ himself. So he told Lionel Hampton, “Man, I know this little kid in this town who could play that music. I know that.” Lionel is standing up there with a toothpick in his mouth, and he says, “Hey, man, go get your horn.” I boogied on home and got my horn. Next thing I know I’m up there on the stand. I’ve got all my friends out there, so I’m in good company.

All of a sudden, I’m looking at this music, watching these notes fly by [laughs]. I’ll never forget that. I mean, these notes were just flying by so fast. I thought, “how do these guys read so fast?” It took me a few years to get that skill together, where I could handle that a little bit. This guy named Bobby Plater, who played with Lionel’s band at that time, I was sitting to his right. Naturally, he knew the book, and he knew that I was lost, so he pointed out where we were and he kept me on track.

Just getting a chance to hear some players when I was younger was the greatest thing that could have happened to me. I definitely was within earshot of some very valuable information. You hear people talking shop. You learn more by that, sometimes, than with an instructor standing up there giving this spiel on twentieth-century contrapuntal harmonic technique and all that kind of thing. If you’re within earshot of people just running that down, you’ve got yourself a lot of information.³¹

Henderson composed his first piece at age fourteen or fifteen. It was a Latin tune, and was titled “Recorda-Me.”³² He enjoyed composing, and he “did quite a bit of writing for the school concert band and also for various ‘rock’ groups that came through Lima.”³³ Henderson’s early writing style was influenced by Bill Holman’s arrangements for the Stan Kenton band.³⁴

³¹ Josef Woodard, “Tales Out of School,” *JazzTimes*, October 1997, 194.

³² Martin, “Joe Henderson,” 14.

³³ Dorham and Blumenthal, notes to *Page One*.

³⁴ Bob Parsons, “Sittin’ In on Joe Henderson’s Big Band Dream,” *Downbeat Magazine*, January 1997, 23-24.

Henderson was able to practice composing for various performances around Lima, including local strip clubs. Henderson explained:

While I was playing gigs later on in strip joints I learned more about how jazz tunes are put together. I got more involved and we started playing my things on gigs and for dancers and other acts. I've written all kinds of things since then – marches while I was in the Army, commercial blues, whatever would fit the occasion.³⁵

Viswanathan described another venue where Henderson frequently performed, and said,

Joe Henderson and the group of musicians that mentored him were fixtures at Oliver's. The club was a classy venue for . . . Whites, that featured shows and singer acts twice per night, six nights per week. Henderson participated in the afternoon and after-hour jazz jams, sometimes playing string bass. At the age of sixteen he became part of the house band and backed up top Black entertainers from Detroit, New York, and Chicago. There was no written music for the shows – all of the parts were played by ear. Groups that were featured at other clubs in town would often drop in for the jam sessions at Oliver's.³⁶

College and Detroit

Henderson's brother Troye who exposed the young musician to his album collection, encouraged him to continue his education, and the saxophonist enrolled at Kentucky State College upon his graduation from Lima South High School.³⁷ Henderson was thankful for the encouragement, and he dedicated *Page One*, his first Blue Note album, to his older brother.³⁸ Henderson studied music, and attended the College for one year.³⁹

³⁵ Leonard Feather and Bob Blumenthal, notes to Joe Henderson, *Mode for Joe* (1966), CD, Blue Note 7243 5 80909 2 5, 2003.

³⁶ Viswanathan, "Blue Note Records Period of Joe Henderson," 7.

³⁷ Dorham and Blumenthal, notes to *Page One*.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

Henderson transferred to Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, and attended classes from the Fall 1957, through Spring 1959, semesters.⁴⁰ His transcripts indicate that he studied “instrumental music,”⁴¹ and a 1993 article stated that he studied music education.⁴² While at Wayne State, Henderson studied flute and string bass,⁴³ and he quickly began absorbing music theory concepts.⁴⁴ He received further instruction from the legendary saxophone pedagogue Larry Teal. Teal was not an instructor at Wayne State, but provided private lessons at the Teal School of Music. Henderson studied with Teal for three years, and this likely accounted in part for his extreme technical proficiency on the instrument.⁴⁵

When Henderson was not attending classes, he was taking advantage of the rich musical atmosphere in Detroit. Yusef Lateef and Curtis Fuller were Henderson’s classmates at Wayne State, and he and Fuller roomed together at the University.⁴⁶ Barry Harris helped Henderson get acclimated to the city scene, and the saxophonist performed with Sonny Stitt, Donald Byrd and Pepper Adams, among others.⁴⁷ Henderson also “sessioned privately” with Paul Chambers, Louis Hayes, Blue Mitchell, Thad Jones, Elvin Jones, and John Coltrane during this time. Michael Cuscuna explained Henderson’s experience with Coltrane:

⁴⁰ Wayne State University, Registrar’s Office, phone conversation with author, August 9, 2016.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Antonio Garcia, “Joe Henderson: Meaningfully Different,” *Jazz Educators Journal*, October 1993, 22.

⁴³ Dorham and Blumenthal, notes to *Page One*.

⁴⁴ Martin, “Joe Henderson,” 17.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Hentoff and Blumenthal, notes to *Una Mas*.

Joe told me about . . . [a time when] he was at someone's house with his tenor, and he was, as he described himself, "A typical Joe college" He was a real soft-spoken, articulate . . . be-speckled geek, kind of bookworm guy, and that really is his personality. So he was at this guy's house . . . and Coltrane came over. Coltrane was traveling with Miles at the time or something, and they said, "John Coltrane's coming over." And Joe said, "I didn't really have any fully formed idea about who John Coltrane was or what he was about." He said, "Everybody at the apartment was just mortified because I just shrugged and treated him with complete indifference. Everyone else was bowing down to him as a god. I really had no idea what his playing was like or who he was or anything."⁴⁸

Henderson also mentioned the experience, and said,

I first met Coltrane at a private recording session in Detroit in 1957 and he sat right next to me as we played, and I thought, "Wow, this guy sounds like he's got his scales together." As a result of his hearing me there, maybe a year later he used to talk about me and he appreciated whatever it was I had at that time.⁴⁹

Charlie Parker was Henderson's main influence upon his arrival in Detroit,⁵⁰ although Henderson gradually departed from the bebop tradition over the next three years. This was partially due to Henderson's appreciation of Ornette Coleman, and the reluctance of the Detroit musicians to embrace the avant-garde alto saxophonist.

Henderson explained in a 1975 interview:

Townley: That was the history of Coleman's life. People always put him down.

Henderson: Wow, forever! And for the life of me, I couldn't understand why. I didn't spend forever and days seeking people to help me understand that, but I just really couldn't understand it. Here's somebody whom I knew was into something but whom everybody else was down on, so I broke away from the bebop scene.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Michael Cuscuna, interview by author, July 27, 2016.

⁴⁹ Gilbert, "Joe's Mode," 9.

⁵⁰ Hentoff and Blumenthal, notes to *Una Mas*.

⁵¹ Townley, "The Herculean Tenor of Joe Henderson," 20.

Henderson married Etta Cummings during his time spent in Detroit. The marriage was very brief; Cummings was a dancer, and the couple's busy lifestyles were not conducive to a lasting relationship.⁵² There is no evidence to indicate the presence of any children from the marriage.

Henderson performed in Detroit with his own group in 1959, and had gained a local reputation as a composer.⁵³ Kenny Dorham elaborated:

Prior to his Army induction, he was commissioned by UNAC, an organization similar to the NAACP or the Urban League, to do a suite called "Swing and Strings" which showcased some originals arranged by him, played by an orchestra comprised of ten members from the Detroit Symphony Orchestra combined with the local dance band of Jimmy Wilkins, the brother of Ernie Wilkins.⁵⁴

Military Service

Henderson was drafted into the United States Army, and began training at Fort Benning, Georgia,⁵⁵ in August 1960.⁵⁶ He never graduated from Wayne State University,⁵⁷ and was prevented from joining Miles Davis's band, as Henderson explained:

I was supposed to be in [Miles Davis's] band before Wayne got there. Trane had recommended me to Miles when he was getting ready to leave the band in the early part of 1960. But Uncle Sam had more power than Miles did. I got drafted, went over to Europe and did my stint in the military for two years. Fate has a way of dealing our cards to us. And I don't regret having been in the military. I got a chance to learn French and

⁵² McGee interview.

⁵³ Dorham and Blumenthal, notes to *Page One*.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ *U.S. Veterans Gravesites, ca. 1775-2006*, accessed October 3, 2016, <http://search.ancestry.com/search/collections/VAcemeteries/1334297>.

⁵⁷ Wayne State University, Registrar's Office, phone conversation with author.

German and meet Bud Powell, Don Byas, Kenny Clarke and a lot of people who were living over there at the time.⁵⁸

Henderson joined a jazz quartet while in the service,⁵⁹ and they began competing in Army talent shows. In his 1969 feature story on Henderson, Barry McRae stated,

This combo did well in inter-unit competitions and actually reached the final of an area contest. Despite being beaten, Henderson was offered a job as a bassist with a touring services unit, on the strength of his own performance. This outfit played to forces throughout America and Europe and finally reached such places as Japan, Korea and Alaska. It was essentially a show band and featured little real jazz as such. Its only truly improvised moments came when Henderson deserted the bass for his tenor for certain specially selected items.⁶⁰

The touring group was billed as “The Rolling Along Show,” and Henderson arranged music for the band.⁶¹ As Henderson mentioned, he was able to meet and perform with the American expatriates Kenny Clarke and Kenny Drew, while stationed in Paris, France.⁶² There is no evidence to suggest that Henderson participated in active combat.

Blue Note Period (1962-1966)

Arrival in New York City

Henderson was officially discharged from the United States Army in August 1962, in Maryland.⁶³ He then spent three months in Baltimore before moving to New York City.⁶⁴ The liner notes for Henderson’s album, *Page One*, state that he arrived in New York in a “sleek, black Mercedes,” and that one of his first stops in town was a

⁵⁸ Bill Milkowski, notes to Joe Henderson, *So Near, So Far (Musings for Miles)* (1993), CD, Verve P2-17674.

⁵⁹ Dorham and Blumenthal, notes to *Page One*.

⁶⁰ Barry McRae, “Joe Henderson,” *Jazz Journal*, January 1969, 9.

⁶¹ Hentoff and Blumenthal, notes to *Una Mas*.

⁶² Dorham and Blumenthal, notes to *Page One*.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Hentoff and Blumenthal, notes to *Una Mas*.

party at tenor saxophonist Junior Cook's apartment.⁶⁵ Henderson met trumpeter Kenny Dorham at Cook's party, which began a lasting friendship between the two musicians.⁶⁶ At some point afterwards, the pair went to Birdland to see Dexter Gordon headline the Monday night Jazz Jamboree, where Gordon asked Henderson to sit in with the band. After soloing for fifteen to twenty choruses on a Charlie Parker blues, Henderson received a warm reception from the audience and impressed Gordon, and thus began his positive reputation on the New York music scene.⁶⁷

Henderson's first known gig in New York was with Dorham on Tuesday, January 15, 1963, at The Flamboyant Theater.⁶⁸ Dorham was very well established and connected by this time in his career, and would prove to be an invaluable friend to Henderson during the saxophonist's first years in the city. Dorham, who was twelve years Henderson's senior, moved to New York in 1944, where he became a regular fixture at Minton's Playhouse and frequently performed with Bud Powell, Fats Waller, Dexter Gordon and others.⁶⁹ Dizzy Gillespie chose Dorham to perform in his first bebop big band in 1945. Following his tenure with Gillespie, he performed in the bands of Billy Eckstine and Lionel Hampton, as well as in Charlie Parker's quintet. In addition, Dorham was an original Jazz Messenger, who helped define the group's classic ensemble sound through his arrangements and compositions.⁷⁰ He recorded with Sonny Stitt, Bud Powell

⁶⁵ Dorham and Blumenthal, notes to *Page One*.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁶⁹ Jim Burns, "Kenny Dorham," *Jazz Journal*, September 1967, 12.

⁷⁰ Hentoff and Blumenthal, notes to *Una Mas*.

and Kenny Clarke, and replaced Clifford Brown in the Clifford Brown/Max Roach Quintet following Brown's untimely death.⁷¹

Dorham was not Henderson's only friend in New York, however. Henderson was able to utilize a network of former Detroit musicians, including Yusef Lateef, Barry Harris,⁷² Curtis Fuller,⁷³ and Elvin Jones.⁷⁴ These musicians gave him work and helped further his reputation, and even came to his defense if necessary. Henderson spoke later about someone who came to his aid when he was criticized for sounding like other musicians:

This guy had known me when I was about fourteen in my hometown, prior to my going to Detroit and he said: "Man, Joe Henderson has been playing that way since I've known him." He was saying hands down and make no mistake about it. "This little young dude over here had this shit worked out a long time ago."⁷⁵

Initial Albums for Blue Note Records

Dorham enjoyed Henderson's playing so much that he asked him to perform on his album, *Una Mas*. The album was Dorham's fourth for the Blue Note label, and was recorded April 1, 1963.⁷⁶ It featured Henderson, pianist Herbie Hancock, bassist Butch Warren and drummer Tony Williams.⁷⁷ The group recorded three Dorham originals and the little-known standard, "If Ever I Would Leave You." The standard was omitted from the originally-issued album, and Blue Note producer Michael Cuscuna speculated that the

⁷¹ Burns, "Kenny Dorham," 14.

⁷² Bourne, "The Sound that Launched a Thousand Horns," 17.

⁷³ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁷⁴ Gilbert, "Joe's Mode," 8.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁷⁶ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁷⁷ Hentoff and Blumenthal, notes to *Una Mas*.

reasoning was likely that it did not fit thematically with the other selections.⁷⁸ The title track was certainly the best-received of the session. Lasting over fifteen minutes, Blue Note producer Alfred Lion allowed the group to stretch out upon hearing the infectious groove from these young musicians.⁷⁹

The album highlighted Dorham's appreciation for young talent. Henderson, at twenty-five, was the oldest sideman; Tony Williams was the youngest at seventeen. The rhythm section had previously worked together as a unit on Donald Byrd's *Vertigo* and quickly gained a positive reputation, as Hancock and Williams would join Miles Davis the following month.⁸⁰ In addition to the *Una Mas* group, Dorham played a key role in furthering the careers of Steve Kuhn and Charles Davis.⁸¹

Una Mas was Henderson's first studio recording in New York, and it proved to be a valuable and rewarding experience. First of all, the session allowed him the opportunity to be heard by Alfred Lion, who enjoyed Henderson's playing so much that he immediately signed him to the label.⁸² This was quite an accomplishment, as Henderson had only lived in New York for approximately five months. This association with Blue Note yielded numerous important albums as a leader and sideman, and established Henderson's reputation as an extremely capable musician.

Secondly, the recording date introduced Henderson to the typical jazz session protocol and routine. Under usual circumstances, Blue Note musicians rehearsed for two

⁷⁸ Hentoff and Blumenthal, notes to *Una Mas*.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

consecutive days, took a day off, and recorded the following day at Van Gelder Studio.⁸³ Henderson utilized the day off to study and practice the music for the upcoming recording session.⁸⁴ In this way, he absorbed a large amount of information and gained experience with varied styles of jazz. He explained: “You don’t just go in, do a record date, get the money and that’s it. You’re trying to do something that’s going to be out there for you so why not shoot your best shots?”⁸⁵

Henderson benefited even further from *Una Mas*, as the album was a commercial and critical success. Henderson himself received special praise, as Dorham stated, “Joe is full of ideas and he avoids clichés. He has lots of drive and imagination, and I’d rate him as one of the top young tenor players on the scene, next to Wayne Shorter.”⁸⁶ Leonard Feather gave the album four stars in *Downbeat Magazine*, and confirmed Dorham’s estimation of Henderson as accurate.⁸⁷ Additionally, Feather would issue consistently positive reviews of projects associated with Henderson throughout the saxophonist’s tenure with Blue Note. Bob Blumenthal eventually said of *Una Mas*,

[*Una Mas*] also represents the prototype Blue Note afternoon at Rudy Van Gelder’s, where new stars are discovered and the groove is so strong that producer Alfred Lion throws time constraints to the wind and lets the band stretch out.⁸⁸

The positive reception of *Una Mas* could not have been more fortuitous, as it provided Henderson with an ideal starting point for his New York career.

⁸³ Woods, “Joe Henderson,” 7.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Hentoff and Blumenthal, notes to *Una Mas*.

⁸⁷ Leonard Feather, “Kenny Dorham: *Una Mas*,” *Downbeat Magazine*, March 12, 1967, 25.

⁸⁸ Hentoff and Blumenthal, notes to *Una Mas*.

Six weeks after *Una Mas*, producer Alfred Lion brought Henderson back to Van Gelder Studio to record Grant Green's *Am I Blue?* on May 16, 1963.⁸⁹ The most important aspect of this recording was that it introduced Henderson to fellow musicians whom he continued to work with for years. Duke Pearson, who arranged the music for the album, was perhaps Henderson's most valuable contact. Pearson had recently stepped into Ike Quebec's role as liaison, assistant producer, and talent scout for Blue Note Records after the saxophonist's untimely death in January.⁹⁰ Trumpeter Johnny Coles, who was little-known at the time, would hire Henderson for his own session later that year.⁹¹

Am I Blue? allowed Henderson to display his versatility as a sideman. His work on *Una Mas* demonstrated his fluency in hard bop, while *Am I Blue?* was considered a far mellower "mood album."⁹² Additionally, every piece with one exception was strongly associated with a singer.⁹³ The album also provided Henderson an opportunity to showcase his skills in an organ-driven setting.⁹⁴

While the album increased Henderson's network of musicians, it was not very well reviewed in the press. Barbara Gardner gave the album two and one-half stars in her *Downbeat Magazine* review, and generally seemed to feel that the album was dull and

⁸⁹ Joe Goldberg and Bob Blumenthal, notes to Grant Green, *Am I Blue* (1963), CD, Blue Note 7243 5 35564 2 6, 2005.

⁹⁰ Duke Pearson and Bob Blumenthal, notes to Johnny Coles, *Little Johnny C* (1963), CD, Blue Note 7243 8 64475 2 4, 2005.

⁹¹ Pearson and Blumenthal, notes to *Little Johnny C*.

⁹² Goldberg and Blumenthal, notes to *Am I Blue*.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

unexciting.⁹⁵ Also, the criticism surrounding this album contained the first comparisons of Henderson to fellow saxophonists John Coltrane and Sonny Rollins, and carried the implication that Henderson was influenced in various ways by the senior musicians. The first comparison occurred in the liner notes themselves, as Joe Goldberg wrote, “One can also hear, as is true of most young tenormen, traces of Rollins and Coltrane.”⁹⁶ *Jazz Journal* called him an “obvious Coltrane follower.”⁹⁷ Henderson thought these comparisons were unfair, as he felt he had developed his own voice, and their continued recurrences bothered him for the rest of his career.⁹⁸

Henderson recorded *Page One*, his debut album as a leader, for Blue Note Records on June 23, 1963.⁹⁹ The album featured Kenny Dorham, McCoy Tyner, Butch Warren and Pete La Roca, and was produced by Alfred Lion at Van Gelder Studio.¹⁰⁰ Dorham likely recommended most of the musicians for the session, as he had previously worked with Warren and La Roca. In fact, he had given Warren his first break upon the young bassist’s arrival in New York, and had hired him previously for *Una Mas*.¹⁰¹ Pianist McCoy Tyner was not listed on the album jacket due to contractual obligations with a rival label. Bob Blumenthal explained:

After appearing on three Freddie Hubbard Blue Note albums in 1960 and ’61, Tyner had signed a contract with Impulse (Coltrane’s label), which explains the listing of four musicians and “Etc.” on the front cover. This first reappearance on Blue Note was the start of a slow but sure move back into the Lion orbit that led Tyner to more important sideman work with

⁹⁵ Barbara Gardner, “Grant Green: *Am I Blue*,” *Downbeat Magazine*, December 3, 1964, 23.

⁹⁶ Goldberg and Blumenthal, notes to *Am I Blue*.

⁹⁷ Sinclair Traill, “Grant Green: *Am I Blue*,” *Jazz Journal*, December 1964, 34.

⁹⁸ Townley, “The Herculean Tenor of Joe Henderson,” 20.

⁹⁹ Dorham and Blumenthal, notes to *Page One*.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

Henderson, Wayne Shorter and several others, and ultimately to his own recording contract and the similarly timeless *The Real McCoy* (with Henderson on tenor) in 1967.¹⁰²

The album was comprised mostly of Henderson originals, and gave the listening public a first glimpse into his considerable skill as a composer.¹⁰³ The most notable Henderson composition on the album was “Recorda-Me,” which is Portuguese for “Remember Me.”¹⁰⁴ While the details surrounding the conception of the piece are a bit murky, we may confidently assert that it was written in the early-to-mid 1950s.¹⁰⁵ It is a Latin tune, and it underwent changes as Henderson was exposed to the bossa nova music of the 1960s – most notably the music of Brazilian composer Antonio Carlos Jobim.

Henderson explained:

The first tune I ever wrote, as a teenager, was a tune that I later titled “Recorda-Me.” This was before the bossa nova was introduced to North America by Stan Getz and Charlie Byrd. My tune had a kind of generic Latin beat to it, without being any specific rhythm, like a pachanga or a bolero or a samba. But when I first heard this “bossa nova” (above the gunshots, because I was in military training at the time), it caused me to go back to “Recorda-Me,” not to rewrite it – but to change the rhythm of the melody line, in order to fit the bossa nova pulse. So Jobim had a profound effect on even the way that I proceeded with melodies that I already had going on in my brain.¹⁰⁶

Henderson’s additional compositions included “Homestretch,” which was written to serve as a closing blues “theme” for live performances.¹⁰⁷ “Jinrikisha” was influenced by Asian culture, and Dorham described a jinrikisha as “a Chinese cart used to pull

¹⁰² Dorham and Blumenthal, notes to *Page One*.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Richard Seidel and Joe Henderson, notes to Joe Henderson, *Double Rainbow: The Music of Antonio Carlos Jobim* (1995), CD, Verve 314 527 222-2.

¹⁰⁷ Dorham and Blumenthal, notes to *Page One*.

people along.”¹⁰⁸ “Out of the Night” is a funky, twelve-bar minor blues. Composed in 1957, it was another early Henderson composition.¹⁰⁹ Dorham contributed two pieces, including “Blue Bossa,” which became one of the most popular standards in jazz. His other piece, “La Mesha,” was a twenty-bar ballad named after his daughter.¹¹⁰

Henderson began to form preferences regarding his recording habits around this time. He preferred to record only one take for his own projects, and would only record additional takes if the first was “problematic.”¹¹¹ Also, he rarely listened to previous takes in the control room, as he explained: “One thing that helps is that when the studio plays back the take, I’m outside somewhere. To hear it again is to play it again; and it just hastens boredom. So if we do have to do another take, I’ll be fresh for new ideas.”¹¹²

Page One was released to mixed reviews. Don DeMichael gave the album two and one-half stars in *Downbeat Magazine*, and stated that it did not have much originality. However, he looked forward to Henderson’s future work and also included positive comparisons to Benny Golson, Sonny Rollins and John Coltrane.¹¹³

The album was received much more positively within Blue Note Records. Alfred Lion was so impressed by the results that *Page One* was released prior to Dorham’s *Una Mas* and Grant Green’s *Am I Blue?*, which effectively made *Page One* Henderson’s introduction to the listening public.¹¹⁴ The album also helped solidify his connection with

¹⁰⁸ Dorham and Blumenthal, notes to *Page One*.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Viswanathan, “Blue Note Records Period of Joe Henderson,” 399.

¹¹² Garcia, “Joe Henderson: Meaningfully Different,” 22.

¹¹³ Don DeMichael, “Joe Henderson: *Page One*,” *Downbeat Magazine*, November 21, 1963, 24.

¹¹⁴ Dorham and Blumenthal, notes to *Page One*.

Dorham. Beginning with *Una Mas*, Henderson and Dorham included each other on their own projects five times over a seventeen-month period.¹¹⁵ Dorham, who authored the liner notes for *Page One*, was very complimentary of his young friend, and stated, “The writer is convinced that year for year, this is indubitably one of the most musical young saxophonists to show since Charlie Parker.”¹¹⁶

Henderson was beginning to gain some traction in New York around this time. He had been performing with the Kenny Dorham Quintet since January 1963, and the group performed at the Carnegie International Endowment Center to benefit the Charlie Parker Memorial Fund Program on the evening of the *Page One* recording.¹¹⁷ Henderson also performed at Birdland fourteen days later with drummer Edgar Bateman.¹¹⁸

It should be noted that information regarding Henderson’s live performances is somewhat scarce from this era. Henderson had no affection for collecting a large amount of personal belongings, and there is no evidence to suggest that he kept any date books or calendars over time. Although Henderson surely performed in addition to the events reported in the media, careful attention has been given to eliminate editorial assumptions.

Duke Pearson likely connected Henderson with the Latin conga player, Antonio Diaz, who hired him to perform on his album, *Eso Es Latin Jazz...Man!* Henderson recorded for one day of the three-day session in New York during the first half of July 1963, and the album was released on the Audio Fidelity label.¹¹⁹ Reviews of the album

¹¹⁵ Dorham and Blumenthal, notes to *Page One*.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Jeffrey Lovell, ed. Michael Fitzgerald, “Joe Henderson Discography,” January 2006, accessed September 14, 2016, <http://jazzdiscography.com/Artists/Henderson/index.php>.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

were mediocre, and Pete Welding mentioned little to no solo space for “Joseph Henderson” in *Downbeat*.¹²⁰ Although facilitated by Blue Note liaison Duke Pearson, the album marked the first rare appearance of Henderson on another record label during his tenure with Blue Note Records.

Later that month, Pearson hired a condensed version of the Diaz group to record Johnny Coles’s *Little Johnny C* on July 18 and August 9, 1963, for Blue Note.¹²¹ In fact, every musician from *Little Johnny C* performed on Diaz’s album.¹²² Every piece on Coles’s album was a Pearson original, with the exception of Henderson’s Latin-flavored blues, “Hobo Joe.”¹²³ The inclusion of Henderson’s composition was a significant milestone for the saxophonist, as he went on to include his compositions on several prominent albums on which he was a sideman. This practice was an extremely prudent business decision, and it further showcased his abilities as a composer. The album was received well in the press, and Leonard Feather awarded it four and one-half stars in *Downbeat Magazine*.¹²⁴

Both Henderson and Leo Wright were appreciated enough by Pearson that the pianist hired them for Blue Mitchell’s *Step Lightly* four days later, on August 13.¹²⁵ For

¹²⁰ Pete Welding, “Antonio (Chocolate) Diaz Mena: *Eso Es Latin Jazz... Man!*,” *Downbeat Magazine*, January 30, 1964, 26.

¹²¹ Pearson and Blumenthal, notes to *Little Johnny C*.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ Leonard Feather, “Johnny Coles: *Little Johnny C*,” *Downbeat Magazine*, June 4, 1964, 24-25.

¹²⁵ Pearson and Blumenthal, notes to *Little Johnny C*.

reasons unknown, the album went unissued until 1980 on Blue Note.¹²⁶ The album contained another Henderson original, “Mamacita.”¹²⁷

Around this time, Henderson likely performed multiple dates with drummer Rufus Jones at Count Basie’s in New York.¹²⁸ He also likely performed multiple dates in September with the Kenny Dorham Quintet at The Coronet in New York.¹²⁹ According to Bob Blumenthal, the Blue Note albums of Joe Henderson and Kenny Dorham documented their working quintet in the mid-1960s.¹³⁰ Their quintet performed under either of their names, as Blumenthal explained:

It was an exceptional example of a common jazz practice then and now, in which two or more musicians with excellent individual skills but limited public recognition pooled their efforts and took jobs together under the name of whomever could get a gig.¹³¹

Although Dorham and Henderson could not create enough work to maintain consistent personnel, they were able to build a repertoire of original compositions.¹³²

Henderson and Dorham became fast friends by this time. Henderson later said of his friend:

He was a delightful person. Even off the bandstand, say when he and I were walking down the street just observing beautiful ladies or the day, the man was full of so much intelligence. Kenny was definitely a musical genius that slipped through without being properly acknowledged for his contributions. In a few ways Kenny was his own worst enemy, but all the

¹²⁶ Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

¹²⁷ Nat Hentoff and Bob Blumenthal, notes to *Trumpet Toccata* (1964), CD, Blue Note 0946 3 62635 2 6, 2006.

¹²⁸ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Leonard Feather and Bob Blumenthal, notes to Joe Henderson, *Our Thing*, (1963), CD, Blue Note 7243 5 25647 2 9, 2000.

¹³¹ Feather and Blumenthal, notes to *Our Thing*.

¹³² *Ibid.*

musicians knew about him. He was like a musician's musician, which is a high complement.¹³³

The next album to document this group was Henderson's *Our Thing*, which was recorded for Blue Note Records on September 9 at Van Gelder Studio.¹³⁴ The album featured Kenny Dorham, pianist Andrew Hill, bassist Eddie Khan, and Pete La Roca, who was previously hired for *Page One*.¹³⁵

The inclusion of Andrew Hill is especially notable, as it was Hill's first session for Blue Note Records.¹³⁶ Henderson and Hill had practiced together ever since Henderson's arrival in New York, and Henderson used this recording opportunity to offer his friend some needed exposure.¹³⁷ This proved beneficial, as Alfred Lion was so impressed with Hill's performance that he asked the pianist to return to the studio ten weeks later to record an album of his own.¹³⁸ One myth regarding Hill deserves clarification. Much publicity regarding Hill in the 1960s stated that he was born in Haiti. Hill frequently asserted this himself, and even went so far to say that native Haitian drum patterns could have possibly influenced his work.¹³⁹ This is untrue, as Hill was actually born in Chicago, Illinois, to Haitian parents.¹⁴⁰

Displaying the strength of their musical partnership, the compositions on *Our Thing* were split rather evenly by Dorham and Henderson. Dorham contributed "Pedro's

¹³³ Woods, "Joe Henderson," 6.

¹³⁴ Feather and Blumenthal, notes to *Our Thing*.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ A.B. Spellman and Bob Blumenthal, notes to Andrew Hill, *Black Fire* (1963), CD, Blue Note 7243 5 96501 2 8, 2004.

¹³⁸ Feather and Blumenthal, notes to *Our Thing*.

¹³⁹ Don Heckman, "Roots, Culture & Economics," *Downbeat Magazine*, May 5, 1966, 20.

¹⁴⁰ Feather and Blumenthal, notes to *Our Thing*.

Time,” “Back Road,” and “Escapade,” while Henderson authored “Teeter Totter” and “Our Thing.”¹⁴¹ “Teeter Totter” is an up-tempo blues, while “Our Thing” referenced a slogan that was made popular by a then-current Italian political movement.¹⁴²

Henderson’s small nod to political and social change foreshadowed his bolder decisions of the following decade. Additionally, he referenced the opening motif of his popular composition, “Inner Urge,” in the first bars of his “Our Thing” solo. This predated his landmark album, *Inner Urge*, by fourteen months.¹⁴³

The album received mediocre reviews, and earned an unenthusiastic three stars from Barbara Gardner in *Downbeat Magazine*.¹⁴⁴ It received a similar review from *Jazz Journal*.¹⁴⁵ Although *Downbeat* stated that Henderson was not an “exceptionally original saxophonist,”¹⁴⁶ the true issue might have been the lack of the “funky blues jam that became standard on Blue Note dates of the time.”¹⁴⁷ Additionally, Gardner may not have been inclined to enjoy the aesthetic of the album, as she did not rate any of Henderson’s Blue Note output higher than three stars.

Henderson returned to Van Gelder Studio on November 4 to record Grant Green’s *Idle Moments* for Blue Note Records.¹⁴⁸ He was joined by vibraphonist Bobby

¹⁴¹ Feather and Blumenthal, notes to *Our Thing*.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

¹⁴⁴ Barbara Gardner, “Joe Henderson: *Our Thing*,” *Downbeat Magazine*, July 16, 1964, 34-35.

¹⁴⁵ Sinclair Traill, “Joe Henderson: *Our Thing*,” *Jazz Journal*, September 1965, 32.

¹⁴⁶ Gardner, “Joe Henderson: *Our Thing*,” 34-35.

¹⁴⁷ Feather and Blumenthal, notes to *Our Thing*.

¹⁴⁸ Duke Pearson and Bob Blumenthal, notes to Grant Green, *Idle Moments*, (1963), CD, Blue Note 7243 4 99003 2 5, 1999.

Hutcherson, Duke Pearson, bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Al Harewood.¹⁴⁹ *Idle Moments* was another attempt at a mellow “mood album,” and was much more successful than Green’s previous *Am I Blue?* session.

The title track, composed by Pearson, who also organized and ran the session, was far and away the stand-out selection of the album. The format of “Idle Moments” was as follows: the opening melody, then one solo chorus from each soloist, followed by the closing melody. There was confusion among the musicians when the opening melody was played twice; they interpreted the melody statement as lasting for one chorus, and therefore soloed for two choruses instead of one. “Idle Moments” is a slow, sixteen-bar piece, and the error resulted in a track lasting just under fifteen minutes.¹⁵⁰ However, Alfred Lion was satisfied with the performance and it became the master take.¹⁵¹

The group recorded the other selections for the album prior to tracking “Idle Moments,” and a second session was scheduled for November 15 to shorten the length of “Jean de Fleur” and “Django.”¹⁵² The full-length versions may be found on the modern Rudy Van Gelder reissue CD.¹⁵³ *Idle Moments* was well received, and John Tynan awarded it four stars in *Downbeat Magazine*.¹⁵⁴ The album’s positive reception began to indicate a trend of popular albums that Henderson would record as a sideman within the upcoming years.

¹⁴⁹ Pearson and Blumenthal, notes to *Idle Moments*.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ John A. Tynan, “Grant Green: *Idle Moments*,” *Downbeat Magazine*, June 3, 1965, 28.

Henderson recorded Andrew Hill's *Black Fire* on November 8, during the *Idle Moments* interim. *Black Fire* was Hill's debut album on Blue Note Records as a leader, and was brought about by his appearance on Henderson's *Our Thing*.¹⁵⁵ Bassist Richard Davis and drummer Roy Haynes were also present on the album. Philly Joe Jones was originally asked to perform before Haynes, but had to cancel due to a scheduling conflict.¹⁵⁶

Hill enjoyed some success with this recording because, to many, he represented a more accessible second wave of avant-garde jazz.¹⁵⁷ Musicians such as Cecil Taylor had thoroughly puzzled critics, who were then relieved to hear Hill's blend of the avant-garde aesthetic layered over structures that were familiar to them. As such, *Black Fire* received five stars in *Downbeat* from Leonard Feather,¹⁵⁸ and it was selected as a "Pick of the Month" in *Jazz Journal*.¹⁵⁹ Michael Cuscuna later disagreed with their characterizations, and argued that it was Hill's uniqueness, rather than a lack of musical form or structure, that caused him to become lumped into the avant-garde category.¹⁶⁰ Henderson received praise from *Downbeat*, albeit in the form of a backwards compliment, "Henderson, heard on four tracks, shows great sympathy for Hill and displays an inventiveness more daring than could be detected in his own albums."¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁵ Spellman and Blumenthal, notes to *Black Fire*.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Leonard Feather, "Andrew Hill: *Black Fire*," *Downbeat Magazine*, May 21, 1964, 22-24.

¹⁵⁹ Michael Spera, "Andrew Hill: *Black Fire*," *Jazz Journal*, September 1964, 32.

¹⁶⁰ Spellman and Blumenthal, notes to *Black Fire*.

¹⁶¹ Feather, "Andrew Hill: *Black Fire*," 24.

One of the largest opportunities of Henderson's career occurred when he recorded Lee Morgan's *The Sidewinder* for Blue Note Records on December 21.¹⁶² Henderson knew pianist Barry Harris from their mutual time spent in Detroit, and bassist Bob Cranshaw previously performed on *Idle Moments*.¹⁶³ Drummer Billy Higgins completed the ensemble.¹⁶⁴

Morgan was initially known as a musical prodigy, but had faded from the music scene in the preceding two years due to a debilitating drug habit.¹⁶⁵ He had recently embraced sobriety, and *The Sidewinder* was his first new album as a leader.¹⁶⁶ In a fashion atypical of Morgan, he composed every piece on the album, including the surprise hit title track that was named after a villain on television.¹⁶⁷ "The Sidewinder," which essentially coined the new "boogaloo" rhythmic feel, skyrocketed to the top of the Billboard charts and was even used in a Chrysler commercial without permission.¹⁶⁸ The wide success of the piece made it a template for future Blue Note recordings, which frequently sought to replicate its appeal.¹⁶⁹ It should be noted, however, that Blue Note had embraced extended, funky groove-based recordings since *Una Mas*, although the commercial success of "The Sidewinder" certainly focused their efforts.

Henderson performed magnificently on the album, and garnered praise from his fellow musicians and the press. Lee Morgan stated,

¹⁶² Leonard Feather and Bob Blumenthal, notes to Lee Morgan, *The Sidewinder* (1963), CD, Blue Note 7243 4 95332 2 6, 1999.

¹⁶³ Feather and Blumenthal, notes to *Mode for Joe*.

¹⁶⁴ Feather and Blumenthal, notes to *The Sidewinder*.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

This was the first time I had ever recorded with Joe. I had never even played with him; but I heard the first record date he had done for Blue Note, and when Alfred Lion asked me who I wanted on this date, of course I thought immediately of Joe. I remembered that sound – and he has a kind of different approach. I can hear a lot of influences in him, of course – I can hear Sonny and Trane; and some Bird, too. But the important thing is, I think he’s finding his own identity now.¹⁷⁰

Morgan also foreshadowed future collaborations when he said, “Now that I’ve worked with Joe, I’m eager to get together with him again; he’s very efficient in every way. And maybe next time I can get him to do some of the writing too.”¹⁷¹

Although Morgan would hire Henderson for future studio work, Morgan’s renewed association with Art Blakey’s Jazz Messengers would prevent them from frequently working together in live performances.¹⁷² Leonard Feather called Henderson a “thoroughly able aide,”¹⁷³ and *The Sidewinder* received three and one-half stars from *Downbeat Magazine*.¹⁷⁴ More important than its critical success, however, was the fact that the album made Henderson a known commodity among the jazz-listening public.

Henderson closed out 1963 with Bobby Hutcherson’s *The Kicker*, which was recorded on December 29.¹⁷⁵ The album utilized the same musicians who performed on Grant Green’s *Idle Moments*, a fact which points to Duke Pearson’s likely involvement in

¹⁷⁰ Feather and Blumenthal, notes to *The Sidewinder*.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Leonard Feather, notes to Lee Morgan, *The Rumproller* (1965), LP, Blue Note BLP 4199.

¹⁷³ Feather and Blumenthal, notes to *The Sidewinder*.

¹⁷⁴ Harvey Pekar, “Lee Morgan: *The Sidewinder*,” *Downbeat Magazine*, October 22, 1964, 29.

¹⁷⁵ Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

organizing the session.¹⁷⁶ Additionally, Henderson composed the title track, which became a valuable asset in upcoming years.¹⁷⁷

Henderson's activities during the first few months of 1964 are unknown; however, he recorded *Brown Sugar* for Freddie Roach on March 18 and 19.¹⁷⁸ Roach, a soulful organist, wished to replicate the feeling of a high-energy live performance, and Alfred Lion allowed him to use popular soul tunes of the day.¹⁷⁹ Pieces included the Quincy Jones compositions "The Midnight Sun Will Never Set," and "The Right Time," which was popularized by Ray Charles.¹⁸⁰ This organ setting allowed Henderson to demonstrate his versatility in a soulful situation. John Tynan gave the album three stars in his review for *Downbeat Magazine*.¹⁸¹

Two days later, Henderson returned to Van Gelder Studio to record Andrew Hill's *Point of Departure* on March 21.¹⁸² Many years later, the saxophonist reflected on this session with pride, and stated,

I did feel the *Point of Departure* session was something special. In my mind it could not have been considered just another date. Andrew Hill's music was a bit difficult, plus his script was even more difficult. He definitely kept you on your toes. His music was new, fresh, daring and it brought some things out in me that I didn't even know were there. I was out into some uncharted territory there. He was a very inspiring composer.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁶ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

¹⁷⁷ Leonard Feather and Bob Blumenthal, notes to Horace Silver, *Song for my Father* (1964), CD, Blue Note 7243 4 99002 2 6, 1999.

¹⁷⁸ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

¹⁷⁹ Freddie Roach, notes to Freddie Roach, *Brown Sugar* (1964), LP, Blue Note BLP 4168.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ John A. Tynan, "Freddie Roach: *Brown Sugar*," *Downbeat Magazine*, February 11, 1965, 31.

¹⁸² Nat Hentoff and Bob Blumenthal, notes to Andrew Hill, *Point of Departure* (1964), CD, Blue Note 7243 4 99007 2 1, 1999.

¹⁸³ Woods, "Joe Henderson," 7.

Kenny Dorham, who was reluctant to do the session, joined the group at Henderson's urging. Henderson explained:

I can remember doing *Point of Departure* with Kenny, trying to convince him that he could do that date. He just thought it was not really his scene. If you check his history you will find that he'd been recording much more in the mainstream, kind of in the center, with a lot of breadth and depth. Andrew was out on the far left at that time. So I worked with Kenny on some of the tunes figuring out something for him to do. It was like, let's try this scale here on this chord progression . . . I'd give him three or four scales and he would immediately know what to do with them. The fact that I had to convince him to do this session really made me feel good, because I could give him something. He'd given me so much, and to watch him do it, well that made me so happy.¹⁸⁴

Point of Departure sounded in the same accessible avant-garde vein as Hill's previous *Black Fire*, and was received very well by critics. Pete Welding awarded the album four stars in *Downbeat Magazine*,¹⁸⁵ and it was positively reviewed by *Jazz Journal*.¹⁸⁶ The album was later referred to as Hill's "magnum opus."¹⁸⁷ Hill praised Henderson, stating,

Joe Henderson is going to be one of the greatest tenors out there. You see, he not only has the imagination to make it in the avant-garde camp, but he has so much emotion too. And that's what music is – emotion, feeling. Joe doesn't get into that trap of being so technical that the emotions don't come through.¹⁸⁸

Despite the success of both *Black Fire* and *Point of Departure*, Hill could not find enough work to support a consistent band.¹⁸⁹ He frequently turned down sideman jobs in

¹⁸⁴ Woods, "Joe Henderson," 7.

¹⁸⁵ Pete Welding, "Andrew Hill: *Point of Departure*," *Downbeat Magazine*, August 12, 1965, 26.

¹⁸⁶ Gerald Lascelles, "Andrew Hill: *Point of Departure*," *Jazz Journal*, September 1965, 32.

¹⁸⁷ Hentoff and Blumenthal, notes to *Point of Departure*.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

order to focus on his own music, but when he could not find work, he tended to stay home.¹⁹⁰ At one point, he even solicited the readers of *Downbeat* for their support through personal donations.¹⁹¹ For these reasons, it is doubtful that he and Henderson worked together in live situations with any frequency.

Henderson recorded *In 'N Out*, his third album as a leader, on April 10, 1964, at Van Gelder Studio.¹⁹² He called Kenny Dorham, McCoy Tyner, Richard Davis and Elvin Jones to join him on the date.¹⁹³ Henderson composed “In 'N Out,” “Punjab,” and “Serenity,” while Dorham contributed “Short Story” and “Brown’s Town.”¹⁹⁴ Henderson must have particularly enjoyed “Serenity,” as it remained a staple in his live performance repertoire well into the 1990s. *Downbeat Magazine* gave the album three stars, and the review was both complimentary and harsh to Henderson.¹⁹⁵ Dan Morgenstern called Dorham the highlight of the record and stated,

Henderson, who wrote the three other pieces, is a modally-oriented player, strongly touched by John Coltrane and has a flair for fluent improvisation in this currently fashionable style. His sound is well articulated and projected (when he doesn’t indulge himself in the also fashionable production of wails and screeches, an aspect of current playing that leaves this listener cold), and his interplay with the rhythm section is most often fascinating.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁰ Hentoff and Blumenthal, notes to *Point of Departure*.

¹⁹¹ Heckman, “Roots, Culture & Economics,” 20.

¹⁹² Don Heckman and Bob Blumenthal, notes to Joe Henderson, *In 'N Out* (1964), CD, Blue Note 7243 5 96507 2 2, 2004.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ Dan Morgenstern, “Joe Henderson: *In 'N Out*,” *Downbeat Magazine*, May 20, 1965, 24.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

The Horace Silver Quintet

After the *In 'N Out* session, Henderson was approached by Horace Silver to join his new band. Silver had been working with the same group for over four years, which included Blue Mitchell, Junior Cook, Gene Taylor and Roy Brooks.¹⁹⁷ The band had already recorded two sessions for the *Song For My Father* album,¹⁹⁸ and their previous effort, *Silver's Serenade*, had been met with moderate success.¹⁹⁹ However, after the second *Song For My Father* session on January 28, 1964, Blue Note producer Alfred Lion suggested to Silver that it was time to assemble a new band.²⁰⁰

Silver called Henderson, trumpeter Carmell Jones, and drummer Roger Humphries to join the group, and they rehearsed for one week in late May.²⁰¹ The initial bassist for the new band is unknown, although Silver eventually decided on Teddy Smith.²⁰² The band had their inaugural performance during the first days of June 1964, at Crawford's Bar and Grill in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.²⁰³ They then performed in Buffalo, New York, before playing in Westbury, New York, at Cork & Bib on June 6.²⁰⁴ They likely performed Friday and Saturday matinees at Crawford's Bar and Grill for several weeks following their initial performance.²⁰⁵ The call to Silver's band was significant for Henderson, as it provided him consistent work, financial peace of mind and increased

¹⁹⁷ Feather and Blumenthal, notes to *Song for my Father*.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Don Nelsen, "Horace Silver: *Silver's Serenade*," *Downbeat Magazine*, October 10, 1963, 33-34.

²⁰⁰ Feather and Blumenthal, notes to *Song for my Father*.

²⁰¹ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

²⁰² Lord, "Joe Henderson."

²⁰³ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

recognition among the listening public. Until his departure in April 1966, Henderson's outside commitments were scheduled around Silver's busy itinerary.

Silver proved to be a considerate, professional bandleader. He required time to compose and meet his business demands, which meant that his band did not live completely on tour.²⁰⁶ He preferred a tour schedule of three weeks of performances followed by one week at home.²⁰⁷ Also, he chose not to record more than two studio albums per year, in order to spend the proper amount of time composing and developing material.²⁰⁸ The band preferred nightclubs over shared billing in theaters, as they preferred the longer sets and dedicated audiences that the clubs provided.²⁰⁹ Silver asserted that jazz was experiencing a commercial slump during Henderson's tenure with the group, and he noted a specific lack of work in New York City.²¹⁰ This could explain the group's tendencies towards performing frequent tours and residencies.

Henderson's collaboration with Silver was very beneficial to both men, as they shared similar musical ideals. Silver explained that he enjoyed musicians who possessed the wherewithal to deliver his music in a meaningful, appropriate way:

It's beautiful when a young musician knows what to do, and when. Some young cats want to go outside on everything. I don't want to tie a cat's hands when he plays with me – he should have his freedom. But he should also play solos that fit the mood of the theme, that are in context.²¹¹

Henderson in turn enjoyed being the best interpreter he could be, as he stated,

²⁰⁶ Dan Morgenstern, "The Durable Silver Standard," *Downbeat Magazine*, December 16, 1965, 18.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

I wanted to be one of the greatest interpreters of music that the world has ever seen. If somebody put music down in front of me, I wanted to be able to interpret this music better than the writer.²¹²

The Horace Silver Quintet took a break the week following the Westbury performance,²¹³ during which Henderson performed on Grant Green's *Solid* on June 12, 1964, at Van Gelder Studio.²¹⁴ Green utilized the rhythm section of McCoy Tyner, Bob Cranshaw and Elvin Jones on a previous album, and Alfred Lion was satisfied enough to employ the group on *Solid*.²¹⁵ The timing was fortuitous, as McCoy Tyner and Elvin Jones had recently recorded John Coltrane's *Crescent*.²¹⁶ *Solid* included Henderson's piece, "The Kicker," which was still relatively unknown as Hutcherson's album had yet to be released.²¹⁷

Two days after the *Solid* session, Henderson performed with Silver for a week-long residency at the Jazz Workshop in Boston, Massachusetts.²¹⁸ Henderson then returned to New York City and performed with Dorham at Hunter College in late June.²¹⁹ He had a break in his schedule for approximately one month, and likely remained in New York. The Silver Quintet traveled to Europe to perform at the Antibes Jazz Festival in Antibes, France on July 25 through 29.²²⁰ It is unknown if the group made other

²¹² Martin, "Joe Henderson," 14.

²¹³ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

²¹⁴ Michael Cuscuna, notes to Grant Green, *Solid* (1964), CD, Blue Note CDP 7243 8 33580 2 1, 1995.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

appearances while in Europe, but it is known that they arrived ten days later for a performance in Bayshore, New York.²²¹

Henderson's first measurable success among jazz critics came on August 13, when he was mentioned in *Downbeat Magazine's* "International Critics Poll."²²² He placed fourth in the "Talent Deserving of Wider Recognition" category on tenor saxophone.²²³ Placed ahead of him were Booker Ervin, Paul Gonsalves and Stanley Turrentine.²²⁴

August 15 marked the ill-fated live recording of the Horace Silver Quintet at Pep's Showbar in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.²²⁵ Michael Cuscuna, who recounted the story Silver told him, explained:

Carmell [Jones] was from L.A., and everybody's nice in L.A., and friendly and sunny and everybody owns cars and has a parking space and all that stuff. He just wasn't used to the East Coast. That week we're at Pep's. It was a Sunday afternoon, [and] we were going to do a matinee. Rudy Van Gelder was setting up, and Carmell was on the bandstand, which is in front of the bar. You know the way guys in Philly are. So these two guys . . . say "You're the new guy, you're the guy from sunny California. You better be able to play, man, after what Blue Mitchell played." And they're just ragging on him.

Any New Yorker, Philly or D.C. guy would just take that in stride and maybe come back at them. It crushed Carmell so badly that he just imploded for that whole day of recording. That's what took the whole band down. He was just so sensitive and not used to the whole East Coast aggressive style It's an aggressive style, but it's mostly just people kidding each other. He crashed and burned and that took the whole thing down with him.²²⁶

²²¹ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

²²² "International Critics Poll," *Downbeat Magazine*, August 13, 1964, 18.

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

²²⁶ Cuscuna interview.

Years later, Silver and Cuscuna spent an afternoon in a recording studio listening back to the recording. It was, in fact, so unissuable that Cuscuna relinquished the master tapes to Silver, who destroyed them.²²⁷

The Silver Quintet began a residency at Birdland in New York City on August 20.²²⁸ There is confirmation that they played at least three evenings, although it likely extended much further through mid-September.²²⁹

Henderson joined Kenny Dorham in the studio for the last time on September 14, 1964, for Dorham's album *Trumpet Toccata*.²³⁰ The saxophonist contributed "Mamacita," which was first recorded a year prior on Blue Mitchell's *Step Lightly*.²³¹ Bob Blumenthal later asserted that "Mamacita" sounded contrived, in an attempt to recreate the success of "The Sidewinder."²³² This is possibly true of the performance, although Henderson penned the piece prior to recording the iconic Lee Morgan album.²³³ Henderson also composed the chord structure for Dorham's "Trumpet Toccata."²³⁴

The album received three and one-half stars from Don Nelsen in *Downbeat Magazine*, and the review was very complimentary of Henderson.²³⁵ Although he compared Henderson to Coltrane, he also characterized Henderson's "Mamacita" performance in the following way:

²²⁷ Cuscuna interview.

²²⁸ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Hentoff and Blumenthal, notes to *Trumpet Toccata*.

²³³ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

²³⁴ Hentoff and Blumenthal, notes to *Trumpet Toccata*.

²³⁵ Don Nelsen, "Kenny Dorham: *Trumpet Toccata*," *Downbeat Magazine*, November 4, 1965, 30.

Henderson discourses at some length, but his inventive flight is economical and to the point. The pace is medium, and Henderson lets the ideas roll out, linking one to another with deft control and little waste, to the final note.²³⁶

The intriguing aspect of Nelsen's glowing review is that Henderson's playing seemed to have changed relatively little from his previous performances, which had not been highly praised in the press. It leads one to wonder if Henderson's greater exposure via Silver had any influence over critical opinion.

Although Henderson and Dorham continued to collaborate, *Trumpet Toccata* was Dorham's last album as a leader. Bob Blumenthal explained:

Dorham had the misfortune of being a modern jazz diehard at a point when the simultaneous push for more commercial and more exploratory jazz styles forced many bebop and hard-bop veterans out of the spotlight.²³⁷

It seems that Dorham instead chose to focus on his involvement with Haryou-Act, a "youth organization in Central Harlem," where he served as a musical consultant.²³⁸

The Horace Silver Quintet traveled to the West Coast five days later and performed at the Monterey Jazz Festival on September 19.²³⁹ They gave another performance ten days later at the Synanon House in Santa Monica, California.²⁴⁰ They performed a two-week residency at the It Club in Los Angeles, played after-hours shows at the Adams West Theater, and possibly performed at the Jazz Workshop in San

²³⁶ Nelsen, "Kenny Dorham: *Trumpet Toccata*."

²³⁷ Hentoff and Blumenthal, notes to *Trumpet Toccata*.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

Francisco.²⁴¹ After their residency at the It Club, the band returned to New York in preparation for their first studio album together.²⁴²

Song For My Father was recorded for Blue Note Records on October 26, 1964, and would become the best-selling album of Silver's career.²⁴³ The previous band of Silver, Blue Mitchell, Junior Cook, Gene Taylor, and Roy Brooks had recorded two sessions of material for the album before they disbanded, and Alfred Lion hoped to freshen up the album with material from the new group.²⁴⁴ The band recorded for one day only, and tracked "Song For My Father," "The Natives Are Restless Tonight," "Que Pasa," and "The Kicker."²⁴⁵ Alfred Lion then supplemented the new material with that of the previous group, as Bob Blumenthal explained:

Alfred Lion, no doubt sensing that "Song for My Father" had enormous potential, and undoubtedly feeling that a new Horace Silver album was long overdue, did not wait for the new band to return and tape additional material. He added the two most atmospheric performances from the October 1963 date to obtain a full LP program.²⁴⁶

The most popular piece of the album was the title track, which was dedicated to Silver's father, who was pictured on the cover.²⁴⁷ Silver had visited Brazil the previous February, and was impressed with the bossa nova. He made a point of adding an authentic bossa flavor to the piece, as opposed to much music of the bossa nova wave that was sweeping the United States.²⁴⁸ Henderson's "The Kicker" was used on the

²⁴¹ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Feather and Blumenthal, notes to *Song for my Father*.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

album, and had the distinction of being the only piece not composed by Silver.²⁴⁹ The liners explain that the piece was named for “a jagged series of short phrases used to kick off the first two choruses in each of the solos.”²⁵⁰ In addition to bringing Henderson greater exposure, the inclusion of his piece on such a popular album surely reaped financial rewards in the form of royalty payments.

The album was highly praised by the critics. *Downbeat Magazine* awarded the album four stars and John Tynan described Henderson as “fervid, frantic at times, a ‘hot man’ of our era.”²⁵¹ *Jazz Journal* not only praised the album, but Henderson as well, and stated,

Many readers may regard Joe Henderson’s “The Kicker” as the piece de resistance in this album, since it is one of those up-tempo swingers which lets everyone off the ground, and Joe himself contributes one of the best solos of his recorded career.²⁵²

Bob Blumenthal later stated that *Song For My Father* was a quintessential example of Henderson as a sideman, as he both contributed a composition and “stole the show” with his solo work on the title track.²⁵³ There would seem to be little doubt at this point about Henderson’s value as an addition to any project. Silver himself was complimentary of his band’s performance, as he explained in the liner notes, “I feel we’re getting an invigorating freshness with the new group, and we’re working well toward the oneness that comes after being together awhile.”²⁵⁴

²⁴⁹ Feather and Blumenthal, notes to *Song for my Father*.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ John A. Tynan, “Horace Silver: *Song for my Father*,” *Downbeat Magazine*, February 25, 1965, 29.

²⁵² Gerald Lascelles, “Horace Silver: *Song for my Father*,” *Jazz Journal*, April 1965, 35.

²⁵³ Feather and Blumenthal, notes to *Song for my Father*.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

The next month found Henderson recording several side projects around Silver's touring schedule. Henderson recorded on Duke Pearson's *Wahoo* on November 6, 1964,²⁵⁵ before performing for a week at Birdland with Silver beginning November 17.²⁵⁶ He then recorded the final *Wahoo* session on November 24 before embarking on his own session, *Inner Urge*.²⁵⁷

Inner Urge was Henderson's fourth album as a leader for Blue Note Records,²⁵⁸ and his first in a quartet setting.²⁵⁹ Recorded at Van Gelder Studio on November 30, the album featured McCoy Tyner, Bob Cranshaw, and Elvin Jones.²⁶⁰ Tyner and Jones had joined Henderson on *In 'N Out* seven months prior, and the entire group had worked as a unit on Grant Green's *Solid*.²⁶¹

Henderson composed three pieces for the album: "Inner Urge," "Isotope," and "El Barrio." He said of "Inner Urge,"

I was consumed by an inner urgency which could only be satisfied through this tune. During that period, I was coping with the anger and frustration that can come of trying to find your way in the maze of New York and of trying to adjust to the pace you have to set in hacking your way in that city in order to just exist. Now I'm calmer, but this tune represents a particular stage in my life.²⁶²

²⁵⁵ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

²⁵⁶ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

²⁵⁷ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁹ Nat Hentoff and Bob Blumenthal, notes to Joe Henderson, *Inner Urge* (1964), CD, Blue Note 7243 5 92422 2 4, 2004.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

²⁶² Hentoff and Blumenthal, notes to *Inner Urge*.

“Isotope,” a modified blues, was composed “as a compliment to Thelonious Monk, a tribute particularly to the humor in his music.”²⁶³ “El Barrio” was influenced by the multicultural environment of Lima, Ohio, where Henderson grew up. He explained:

I lived in a kind of international neighborhood, and it was the Spanish influence that particularly hit me. My affection for it just grew, stimulated by a couple of years of studying the language in school and by getting to have a number of Spanish friends.²⁶⁴

“El Barrio” might possibly be the most intriguing piece of the session, as it was rather impromptu:

I just gave the other musicians two chords, B Major and C Major⁷. I asked them to play something on top of that with a Spanish feeling. And I improvised the melody. It worked so well that we did this in just one take.²⁶⁵

Henderson rounded out the album with “You Know I Care,” a ballad composed by Duke Pearson, and a reharmonized version of the Cole Porter standard “Night and Day.”²⁶⁶

Inner Urge was Henderson’s first recording as a leader without Kenny Dorham.²⁶⁷

Bob Blumenthal described Dorham as sounding uncomfortable in front of the powerful Elvin Jones on *In ’N Out*, which could possibly explain his absence.²⁶⁸ Although producer Alfred Lion’s intentions are unknown, the quartet setting of *Inner Urge* placed Henderson firmly in league with the heavyweights John Coltrane and Sonny Rollins.²⁶⁹ This comparison was made especially clear as Tyner and Jones recorded Coltrane’s

²⁶³ Hentoff and Blumenthal, notes to *Inner Urge*.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

²⁶⁸ Heckman and Blumenthal, notes to *In ’N Out*.

²⁶⁹ Hentoff and Blumenthal, notes to *Inner Urge*.

legendary *A Love Supreme* only nine days later.²⁷⁰ Perhaps it were these comparisons that led Henderson to utilize this instrumentation only rarely in future projects.

Inner Urge was released to mixed reviews. Harvey Pekar enjoyed the album and awarded it four stars in *Downbeat Magazine*, which was the highest rating he had given Henderson up to that point.²⁷¹ He made the usual comparisons to Rollins and Coltrane, but also said that Henderson “combines some of the best characteristics of post-bop and avant-garde tenor men.”²⁷² Interestingly, Pekar rated “El Barrio” as the best track.²⁷³ *Coda*, on the other hand, was disparaging.²⁷⁴ Doug Pringle did not think Henderson capable of carrying an album on his own, as he explained: “in the more consequential manner of leading his own group he cannot sustain his ingenuity over a whole record where everything depends on him.”²⁷⁵ In all fairness, the *Coda* review was issued in July 1967, during which interim many new developments had occurred, not the least of which was the Impulse!-driven “New Thing.”

Five days after recording *Inner Urge*, Henderson found himself performing a month-long residency with the Silver quintet at the Plugged Nickel in Chicago, beginning on December 5.²⁷⁶ It is unknown if the band took a break for the Christmas holidays. The group continued performing into January 1965, with performances at Crawford’s Bar and Grill in Pittsburgh, and a week-long run at Pep’s Showbar in Philadelphia.²⁷⁷ The group

²⁷⁰ Hentoff and Blumenthal, notes to *Inner Urge*.

²⁷¹ Harvey Pekar, “Joe Henderson: *Inner Urge*,” *Downbeat Magazine*, June 2, 1966, 29-30.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 29.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁴ Doug Pringle, “Joe Henderson: *Inner Urge*,” *Coda*, July 1967, 29.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁶ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

then took a hiatus until March,²⁷⁸ when they would resume the most successful year in the quintet's history up until that point.²⁷⁹

Henderson recorded one session for Andrew Hill's *One by One* on February 10, 1965.²⁸⁰ The album was recorded in three sessions, the last of which occurred in 1970.²⁸¹ It was shelved for years and was eventually released in 1975 under the leadership of Blue Note producer Michael Cuscuna.²⁸² The most consequential element of *One by One* for Henderson was that it provided a connection to trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, as it was the first time they recorded together.²⁸³

Hubbard was quick to utilize Henderson on his own project, and he hired him for *Blue Spirits*.²⁸⁴ Henderson participated on two of the three sessions, the first of which occurred on February 19, 1965.²⁸⁵ The album, which featured titles such as "Soul Surge" and "Cunga Black," was overtly political and was a reaction to "all the things that are happening today – the civil rights movement and the thrust for dignity beyond civil rights."²⁸⁶ Hubbard enjoyed working with Henderson, and stated that the saxophonist's large sound and inventiveness "is making me regard him as just about my favorite tenor."²⁸⁷ Although Henderson would later perform on the third and final session which

²⁷⁸ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

²⁷⁹ Leonard Feather and Bob Blumenthal, notes to Horace Silver, *The Cape Verdean Blues* (1965), CD, Blue Note 7243 5 90839 2 6, 2004.

²⁸⁰ Leonard Feather, notes to Andrew Hill, *One for One* (1965), LP, Blue Note 459, 1975.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

²⁸⁴ Nat Hentoff and Bob Blumenthal, notes to Freddie Hubbard, *Blue Spirits* (1965), CD, Blue Note 7243 5 94317 2 7, 2004.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

occurred a year later on March 5, 1966, only the material from the first two sessions would be issued on the album.²⁸⁸

There is some indication that Henderson worked locally in New York during the Silver hiatus, as he performed at the Café Au Go Go on March 14, 1965.²⁸⁹ The Silver Quintet resumed performances with a week-long residency at Pep's Showbar, which began on March 15.²⁹⁰ They performed at Le Carousel in Atlanta, Georgia, in late March or early April, and then performed a two-week residency at the Half Note in New York, which began approximately on April 2.²⁹¹

Lee Morgan's *The Rumproller* was recorded on April 9 and 21, and likely required Henderson to record in the afternoon before performing at the Half Note with Silver.²⁹² *The Rumproller* attempted to recreate the success of *The Sidewinder* by preserving the same instrumentation and rehiring Henderson and Billy Higgins.²⁹³ Although it did not achieve *The Sidewinder*'s immense popular success, *The Rumproller* was reviewed well in the press, and Michael Zwerin awarded it four stars in *Downbeat Magazine*.²⁹⁴ Silver's group closed out April with a week-long residency at the Jazz Workshop in Boston, before performing a date at the Village Gate in New York in early May.²⁹⁵

²⁸⁸ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

²⁸⁹ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Lord, "Joe Henderson."

²⁹³ Leonard Feather, notes to *The Rumproller*.

²⁹⁴ Michael Zwerin, "Lee Morgan: *The Rumproller*," *Downbeat Magazine*, March 24, 1966, 34.

²⁹⁵ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

Henderson recorded Pete La Roca's *Basra* for Blue Note Records on May 19, 1965.²⁹⁶ La Roca first met Henderson during several Kenny Dorham Quintet performances at The Coronet in September 1963, and had also performed on *Page One* and *Our Thing*.²⁹⁷ Bob Blumenthal asserted that this album is now probably best known as one that featured Henderson in a quartet setting, along with *The Real McCoy*, *Inner Urge*, and *Black Fire*.²⁹⁸ As a point of interest, La Roca soon left the music scene to become a lawyer in 1967.²⁹⁹ He also reverted to his given last name, Sims.³⁰⁰

Silver's group performed for one week at the Apollo Theater in Harlem around May 22, 1965.³⁰¹ They then performed for twelve evenings at the Plugged Nickel in Chicago, beginning on June 30. In the interim, trumpeter Carmell Jones left the group.³⁰² He did so at least in part due to tensions between Henderson and himself.

To provide the necessary context, it should be noted that Henderson was a very private person. He maintained a small number of friends with whom he generously shared,³⁰³ but he was known to most people as an intensely reserved, guarded individual.³⁰⁴ This facet of his personality, combined with several other factors, helped garner him the nickname, "The Phantom" among those that knew him.

²⁹⁶ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

²⁹⁷ Ira Gitler and Bob Blumenthal, notes to Pete La Roca, *Basra* (1965), CD, Blue Note 7243 8 75259 2 4, 2005.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Joanne Brackeen, interview by author, August 12, 2016.

³⁰⁴ Cuscuna interview.

Carmell Jones, whose personal sensitivity was fully displayed during the “Live at Pep’s” debacle, could not accept Henderson’s need for privacy. Michael Cuscuna, who related a story Horace Silver told him, explained:

He said, “We would be on the road, and we’d be in Anytown, U.S.A., in the hotel, and I’d come out into the lobby to get some breakfast, and there would be Carmell, knocking on Joe’s door. ‘Come on Joe, I know you’re in there. Joe, come on, open up. Joe! Joe!’ And after a couple of weeks of this, he couldn’t stand the rejection of Joe. And Joe was in his room. He just took it personally and he couldn’t stand the rejection, and he just folded and quit. He just couldn’t take it anymore. And then he actually ended up in Europe, because it was a much nicer, friendlier place to be.” But the point was that Joe was a very, very private guy. And if you were thin-skinned about him wanting his privacy, you could be hurt by that.³⁰⁵

He went on to explain Henderson’s desire for privacy:

Joe was “The Phantom” in a lot of ways. Number one, he’s one of those guys that’s comfortable with himself. He can be alone for weeks and be comfortable with his own company and his own thoughts. He didn’t need a lot of other people. He didn’t need social stimulus. He was his own universe I never talked to him about this, but I would suspect that was because he came from such a ridiculously massive large family where privacy was probably not at a premium, but impossible When he got out on his own, he was very private, very secluded. I think that informed a lot of his life.³⁰⁶

Carmell Jones was replaced with Woody Shaw, an up-and-coming trumpeter who went on to make numerous albums with Henderson. Horace Silver explained how it happened:

Woody was on the continent with Eric Dolphy shortly before Eric passed away. While Woody played in Paris at the Chat Qui Peche with Larry Young, I called him and guaranteed him three weeks’ work with us in the States, enough to justify his traveling home He’s been with us ever since.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁵ Cuscuna interview.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Feather and Blumenthal, notes to *The Cape Verdean Blues*.

Shaw, who joined the band one week prior to the Plugged Nickel engagement, set out with the group on a three-week West Coast tour in late July 1965.³⁰⁸ The quintet began the trip with as many as ten performances at Shelly's Manne-Hole in Los Angeles, before completing a week-long residency at the Jazz Workshop in San Francisco.³⁰⁹

August and September were quiet for Silver's quintet. It seems that Henderson performed in New York during this time; there are performances documented at Slug's Saloon, The Coronet and the Village Vanguard.³¹⁰ Henderson was once again recognized in *Downbeat Magazine's* "International Critics Poll," where he again placed fourth in the "Talent Deserving of Wider Recognition" category.³¹¹ Archie Shepp placed first, while Paul Gonsalves and Stanley Turrentine returned to the ranks of second and third.³¹²

Henderson entered Van Gelder studio to record his second album with Silver, *The Cape Verdean Blues*, on October 1 and 22, 1965.³¹³ Trombonist J.J. Johnson performed on the second session, and received co-billing on the album.³¹⁴ *The Cape Verdean Blues* also featured bassist Bob Cranshaw, who was a temporary replacement as Silver searched for a permanent replacement for Teddy Smith.³¹⁵

The music on the album was again inspired by Silver's travels, and drew from Cape Verdean Portuguese folk music, the Brazilian samba, and "good old American funky blues."³¹⁶ Silver composed every piece on the album except for Henderson's "Mo'

³⁰⁸ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ "International Critics Poll," *Downbeat Magazine*, August 12, 1965, 18.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

³¹⁴ Feather and Blumenthal, notes to *The Cape Verdean Blues*.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

Joe,” which was an up-tempo thirty-two-bar composition.³¹⁷ This again displays both Henderson’s compositional skills and savvy business acumen.

The Cape Verdean Blues received four and one-half stars in *Downbeat Magazine*, and Henderson received special praise from Michael Zwerin.³¹⁸ The review compared him to Coltrane, Stitt, and avant-garde newcomer Albert Ayler, and portrayed Henderson as a “dynamic synthesis” of these influences who was able to successfully bridge the styles of the past with the avant-garde.³¹⁹

The quintet began performing soon after the second recording session, with a residency at the Village Vanguard in late October.³²⁰ They performed a week-long residency at the Bohemian Caverns in Washington, D.C., during which time Henderson took on several side projects.³²¹ He performed with Freddie Hubbard at the Left Bank Jazz Society in Baltimore, Maryland,³²² which was only an hour removed from the Caverns. His most notable project, however, was his contribution to Larry Young’s *Unity*.

Silver’s band likely was on a break when Henderson and Shaw rehearsed and recorded *Unity* on November 10, 1965.³²³ Both of the musicians contributed pieces to the session – Shaw with “Zoltan,” “The Moontrane,” and “Beyond All Limits,” and

³¹⁷ Feather and Blumenthal, notes to *The Cape Verdean Blues*.

³¹⁸ Michael Zwerin, “Horace Silver: *The Cape Verdean Blues*,” *Downbeat Magazine*, March 24, 1966, 34.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

³²⁰ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

³²¹ *Ibid.*

³²² *Ibid.*

³²³ Nat Hentoff and Bob Blumenthal, notes to Larry Young, *Unity* (1965), CD, Blue Note 7243 4 97808 2 8, 1999.

Henderson with “If.”³²⁴ “If” utilized a tricky melody, but opened up into a blues reminiscent of “Isotope” during the solo section. Henderson’s performances on “Softly As A Morning Sunrise” and “Beyond All Limits” were especially notable. *Unity* received three and one-half stars from Bill Quinn for *Downbeat Magazine*, but has maintained a cult following among jazz listeners since its release.³²⁵

December 1965, was a productive month for Henderson. He recorded a demo album for Woody Shaw that was eventually released as *In the Beginning* in 1971,³²⁶ and performed numerous East Coast dates with the Silver quintet.³²⁷ Henderson was well represented in the *Downbeat Magazine* 1965 “Reader’s Poll,” in which he placed twelfth in the “Tenor Saxophone” category.³²⁸ Additionally, *Song For My Father* placed fifth in the “Record of the Year” category, behind John Coltrane’s *A Love Supreme*, *The “In” Crowd* by Ramsey Lewis, and Miles Davis’s *My Funny Valentine* and *Miles in Europe*.³²⁹ Lee Morgan’s *The Sidewinder* placed thirteenth.³³⁰

January 1966, seems absent of any Silver performances, and Henderson took the opportunity to work in New York.³³¹ He recorded on Nat Adderley’s *Sayin’ Somethin’* on January 13 for the Atlantic Records label,³³² and he gained a valuable lesson from the

³²⁴ Hentoff and Blumenthal, notes to *Unity*.

³²⁵ Bill Quinn, “Larry Young: *Unity*,” *Downbeat Magazine*, November 3, 1966, 32.

³²⁶ Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

³²⁷ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

³²⁸ “Reader’s Poll,” *Downbeat Magazine*, December 30, 1965, 20.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

³³¹ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

³³² Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

experience. He learned exactly how important a quality sound engineer was to the aesthetic of the album, as he explained:

I can remember doing a record for Atlantic which was the first one away from the Blue Note situation. I went into the control room, which is very rare for me, to listen to a take. The engineer had me sounding like I was down there somewhere in a tunnel. Up to that point I'd been in Van Gelder's studio exclusively and that experience made me not want to make any records for any other label or engineer outside of Rudy Van Gelder's. It made me appreciate him that much more.³³³

At any rate, *Sayin' Somethin'* was an entertaining, soulful album and earned three stars in a *Downbeat Magazine* review authored by Marian McPartland.³³⁴

Henderson returned to Van Gelder Studio on January 27 to record his own *Mode for Joe* for Blue Note Records.³³⁵ In the spirit of the expanded instrumentations that were popular with Blue Note at the time, the album featured Lee Morgan, Curtis Fuller, Bobby Hutcherson, Cedar Walton, Ron Carter, and Joe Chambers.³³⁶ Henderson first met Morgan in Detroit,³³⁷ and had performed on two of the trumpeter's previous albums.³³⁸ Fuller and Henderson had been college roommates at Wayne State, and *Mode for Joe* was the first album they recorded together.³³⁹ Henderson did not know vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson well at the time of the recording,³⁴⁰ but they had previously worked together on Grant Green's *Idle Moments* and Hutcherson's *The Kicker*.³⁴¹ Walton, who was

³³³ Woods, "Joe Henderson," 7.

³³⁴ Marian McPartland, "Nat Adderley: *Sayin' Something*," *Downbeat Magazine*, June 30, 1966, 28.

³³⁵ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

³³⁶ Feather and Blumenthal, notes to *Mode for Joe*.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*

³³⁸ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

³³⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁰ Feather and Blumenthal, notes to *Mode for Joe*.

³⁴¹ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

experienced in three horn writing from his time spent in the Jazz Messengers, entered the session already familiar with the pieces. Henderson explained:

Just before making this album we had a gig together in Pittsburgh, and we used it to rehearse his tunes and mine. So he came to the session familiar with everything, and played very eloquently.³⁴²

Henderson composed half of the pieces on the album, including “A Shade of Jade,” “Caribbean Fire Dance,” and “Granted,” which was named for the radio disc jockey Alan Grant.³⁴³ Cedar Walton contributed the title track and “Black,” while Morgan composed “Free Wheelin’” during the session. There is no ballad on the recording, and “Mode for Joe” served as the slowest piece. Henderson’s compositions were hard bop-oriented, and “Caribbean Fire Dance” demonstrated his continued interest in Latin music.³⁴⁴ “Free Wheelin’,” a bouncy blues obviously indicative of Morgan, sounds a bit out of place within the context of the album. Ron Carter later mentioned that Henderson often did not have enough material for his sessions on Milestone, and would ask his sidemen to bring compositions to fill out the album.³⁴⁵ Perhaps this was the case here. “Mode for Joe,” “Caribbean Fire Dance” and “A Shade of Jade” became staples of Henderson’s live performances for years, and can be heard most notably on *If You’re Not Part of the Solution, You’re Part of the Problem*.³⁴⁶

Dan Morgenstern gave the album four stars in *Downbeat*, which was his highest rating of any Henderson Blue Note project. Most importantly, however, he omitted any

³⁴² Feather and Blumenthal, notes to *Mode for Joe*.

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Viswanathan, “Blue Note Records Period of Joe Henderson,” 400.

³⁴⁶ Bill Kirchner and Orrin Keepnews, notes to Joe Henderson, *The Milestone Years* (1994), CD, Milestone 8MCD-4413-2.

comparison to other saxophonists.³⁴⁷ This was a turning point for Henderson, as it signaled a shift away from criticism which viewed him as derivative, and towards a progressive acceptance of Henderson as an individual artist.

February and March were busy months for Henderson. He recorded on pianist Joe Zawinul's *Money in the Pocket* for Atlantic Records on February 7, 1966.³⁴⁸ He recorded three of the six tracks on the album, which included his composition "If,"³⁴⁹ which appeared previously on Larry Young's *Unity*.³⁵⁰

Four days later, Henderson performed what was likely a week-long residency at the Half Note with Horace Silver.³⁵¹ Live broadcasts were issued from the venue on February 11 and 18, which may imply a week-long engagement.³⁵² The group performed at Pep's Showbar in Philadelphia on March 1 before beginning a ten-evening residency at the Village Gate on March 3.³⁵³ Henderson likely recorded his second session for Freddie Hubbard's *Blue Spirits* on March 5 before performing at the Village Gate that evening.³⁵⁴

Silver's group embarked on a lengthy West Coast tour, which began with an eleven-night performance run at Shelley's Manne-Hole in Los Angeles.³⁵⁵ They then began a residency at the Jazz Workshop in San Francisco on March 29, which was

³⁴⁷ Dan Morgenstern, "Joe Henderson: *Mode for Joe*," *Downbeat Magazine*, December 1, 1966, 33.

³⁴⁸ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁰ Hentoff and Blumenthal, notes to *Unity*.

³⁵¹ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

³⁵² Lord, "Joe Henderson."

³⁵³ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁴ Hentoff and Blumenthal, notes to *Blue Spirits*.

³⁵⁵ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

scheduled until at least April 10.³⁵⁶ It was at this point that Henderson quit Silver's quintet.

Citing issues with Roger Humphries's drumming, Henderson left Silver's quintet on April 2, and possibly made his departure while onstage during a performance.

Downbeat reported:

In a surprise move, tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson abruptly quit the Horace Silver Quintet in the midst of the group's performance before a Saturday night crowd at San Francisco's Jazz Workshop on April 2. Silver told *Downbeat* that the tenorist's reported reason for leaving was that drummer Roger Humphries's playing "was thwarting his solos." The pianist's group finished the Saturday night and played the following afternoon and evening performances as a quartet. Altoist Frank Strozier, who was "borrowed" from the Shelley Manne group in Los Angeles, substituted for Henderson through Silver's April 10 closing. The pianist, who said he did not plan to bring union charges against Henderson, indicated he would add a new sideman upon returning to New York City. Silver said he had no intimation Henderson was planning to leave, though the tenor saxophonist had asked the leader for a three-month leave of absence to form a recording group some months earlier. At that time, Silver refused on the grounds that by the time a replacement was taught the group's library, Henderson would be due to return. Asked then if he wished to leave, Henderson elected to remain.³⁵⁷

It seems illogical that Henderson would walk away from such a steadily lucrative venture solely on the grounds of sub-par drumming; however, the true reasons for his departure remain unknown.

Big Band Formation and Final Months at Blue Note Records

After leaving Silver, 1966 was a fairly slow year for Henderson, with April being particularly so. By differing accounts, the group was scheduled to perform at the Jazz Workshop until as late as April 24.³⁵⁸ This left him with newfound open dates on his

³⁵⁶ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

³⁵⁷ "News and Views," *Downbeat Magazine*, May 19, 1965, 14.

³⁵⁸ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

calendar. He returned to New York and performed with Jack DeJohnette at Slug's Saloon.³⁵⁹

Henderson's biggest accomplishment during the month of April was the formation of a big band, co-led by Kenny Dorham. Henderson explained:

Kenny and I put a big band together somewhere around 1966 right after I left Horace Silver. There was a bunch of musicians that were around in the New York area getting into all kinds of things they shouldn't, just being involved in that dissipating lifestyle only because they had nothing to do. So the big band filled that gap and gave them something to do.³⁶⁰

The group served primarily as a rehearsal band, which provided Henderson with opportunities to hone his big band compositional skills.³⁶¹ He made a point to write new music for each rehearsal, even if he only brought an eight-measure fragment.³⁶²

The big band rehearsed regularly and attracted top New York musicians, as Bill Kirchner explained:

The band rehearsed three afternoons a week at a nightclub in the East Village called The Dom; there were no music stands in the club, so the players set the music on chairs. Word quickly spread that this band was different, and Henderson soon had the cream of New York's jazz musicians showing up to rehearse. Among the regulars were trumpeters Bob McCoy, Charlie Camilleri, Lew Soloff, and Mike Lawrence; trombonists Jimmy Knepper, Julian Priester, Curtis Fuller and Kiane Zawadi; saxophonists Bobby Porcelli, Pete Yellin, Joe Temperley, and Pepper Adams; pianists Chick Corea, Bob Dorough, and Ronnie Mathews; bassists Junie Booth and Ron Carter; and drummers Joe Chambers and Roy Haynes.³⁶³

³⁵⁹ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

³⁶⁰ Woods, "Joe Henderson," 7.

³⁶¹ Bill Kirchner, notes to Joe Henderson, *Big Band* (1996), CD, Verve 314 533 451-2.

³⁶² *Ibid.*

³⁶³ *Ibid.*

The full repertoire of Henderson's big band compositions is unknown; however, arrangements of "Without a Song," "Isotope," "A Shade of Jade" and "Chelsea Bridge" were known Henderson contributions.³⁶⁴

Henderson returned to Van Gelder Studio to record Lee Morgan's *Delightfulee Morgan* on May 27.³⁶⁵ Henderson only performed on half of the album, as the other half was orchestral in nature and arranged by Oliver Nelson.³⁶⁶ It did provide him with needed visibility, and it received five stars in a *Downbeat* review.³⁶⁷

Henderson gave multiple performances in June, which included the Left Bank Jazz Society with McCoy Tyner on June 5, 1966.³⁶⁸ He also performed at the Village Gate with Freddie Hubbard as well as at Slug's Saloon with his own group.³⁶⁹

Bobby Hutcherson asked the saxophonist to record *Stick Up!* for Blue Note Records on July 14, 1966.³⁷⁰ Although Hutcherson viewed himself as a flexible musician who was capable of varying styles, he gained notoriety around this time as a "New Thing" musician.³⁷¹ *Stick Up!* therefore reflects some of the dissonance of this movement, albeit in a structured manner reminiscent of Andrew Hill. This provided Henderson one of his first opportunities to venture into the avant-garde, and to perform a

³⁶⁴ Kirchner, notes to *Big Band*.

³⁶⁵ Leonard Feather and Bob Blumenthal, notes to Lee Morgan, *Delightfulee Morgan* (1966), CD, Blue Note 0946 3 92770 2 5, 2007.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ Johnson, "Lee Morgan: *Delightfulee Morgan*," *Downbeat Magazine*, March 7, 1968, 30.

³⁶⁸ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ Leonard Feather, notes to Bobby Hutcherson, *Stick Up!* (1966), CD, Blue Note CDP 7243 8 59378 2 8, 1997.

³⁷¹ Allen Z. Kronzek, "Back to the Woodshed: Bobby Hutcherson," *Downbeat Magazine*, March 10, 1966, 17.

composition by Ornette Coleman, who was a musical influence. In fact, Henderson credited Coleman's music with leading him away from bebop.³⁷²

The month following *Stick Up!* was fairly uneventful for Henderson. He and Kenny Dorham debuted their big band at The Dom on July 17, and Henderson accepted a sideman role accompanying Betty Carter at the Five Spot.³⁷³ He led his own group at Slug's Saloon for a week in early August before giving another big band performance on August 16.³⁷⁴ He traveled to the West Coast in September, and performed with Elvin Jones at the Fillmore in San Francisco on August 11.³⁷⁵ Henderson performed with his own group consisting of Bobby Hutcherson, Dan Moore, and Elvin Jones six days later at the Monterey Jazz Festival.³⁷⁶ The performance was recorded, and "Isotope" was later issued on the *Live at the Monterey Jazz Festival, Vol. 1* LP.³⁷⁷ Henderson returned to New York by September 25 to perform at a memorial concert for Lester Young,³⁷⁸ who was one of his earliest influences.³⁷⁹

Henderson once again was well-represented in the *Downbeat Magazine* "International Critics Poll." He placed third in the "Talent Deserving of Wider Recognition" category behind Charles Lloyd and Albert Ayler, and Horace Silver's group placed eighth in the "Best Combo" category.³⁸⁰

³⁷² Townley, "The Herculean Tenor of Joe Henderson," 20.

³⁷³ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁷ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

³⁷⁸ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

³⁷⁹ Woods, "Joe Henderson," 6.

³⁸⁰ "International Critics Poll," *Downbeat Magazine*, August 25, 1966, 16.

The saxophonist performed with his big band on October 30, 1966,³⁸¹ before he quickly flew to Los Angeles to record *Live at Memory Lane* with Nat Adderley the following evening.³⁸² The album was recorded as part of a Monday night concert series, and was broadcast on the “Voice of Jazz” program on the KBCA radio station.³⁸³ The performance is intriguing, as it featured Henderson alongside the rhythm section of Joe Zawinul, Victor Gaskin, and Roy McCurdy, who are all strongly associated with the soulful alto saxophonist, Julian “Cannonball” Adderley.³⁸⁴

Henderson, who had at times received lukewarm or harsh criticism from *Downbeat Magazine*, was highly praised in the review of *Live at Memory Lane*.³⁸⁵ Dan Morgenstern stated of Henderson, “Henderson is the album’s outstanding soloist. He has an abundance of ideas, and his playing is charged with energy. He knows how to build a solo... and he knows the art of ‘kicking off’”.³⁸⁶ He continued, “The Henderson vocabulary is up to date, in terms of harmonics, squeals, and vocal inflections, but he doesn’t abuse the ear; in contrast, there is always evidence of his warm, natural tenor sound.”³⁸⁷

Through an odd sequence of events, Henderson was hired to record the soundtrack for the film *Blow Up* in November 1966.³⁸⁸ Pianist Herbie Hancock had been

³⁸¹ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

³⁸² Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

³⁸³ Les Carter, notes to Nat Adderley, *Live at Memory Lane* (1967), LP, Atlantic, SD 1474.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Dan Morgenstern, “Nat Adderley: *Live at Memory Lane*,” *Downbeat Magazine*, May 4, 1967, 28.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

³⁸⁸ Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

hired by the Italian filmmaker Michelangelo Antonioni to compose a soundtrack for his debut English-language film. What followed was a bit of deception on the part of Hancock in order to obtain the best possible product for the film. Hancock explained:

The trouble was, because we were filming the movie in England, the film company needed us to use musicians from the British Commonwealth, for tax purposes. So we figured out a little scheme. I told Antonioni I would fly to Canada – part of the British Commonwealth – and record the music there, with Canadian musicians. And I did in fact fly to Toronto and make recordings there, even though I knew already we weren't going to use them. I never told the Canadian guys that, of course, but as soon as I could, I hopped on a flight from Toronto to New York.

In New York I got all the top musicians into the studio as fast as I could – Jack DeJohnette, Ron Carter, Freddie Hubbard, Joe Henderson. We recorded the score, and I put those tapes in the boxes marked “Canada” and then flew back to London. I handed them over to Antonioni, and as soon as he listened to them, he knew! “Is that Joe Henderson?” he asked, his eyes lighting up. “And Jack DeJohnette?” He was such a huge jazz fan, he could tell who was playing by the sounds of their instruments and the way they played.

I felt bad misleading the Canadian musicians, but in the '60s there really was a vast gap between the quality of American jazz musicianship and that of the rest of the world. In order to give Antonioni the level of music he wanted, I had no choice but to use New York musicians, who fortunately didn't care a thing about getting credit. Eventually, when the *Blow Up* soundtrack was released, the New York musicians were listed on it, so the secret was out. But for a long time only Antonioni and I knew.³⁸⁹

Although Hancock mentioned that the personnel list was published on the soundtrack album, the musicians were not credited on the initial album pressing, as evidenced by critical reviews. Dan Morgenstern, writing for *Downbeat*, claimed to be unaware of the personnel, and thought the album was recorded in London.³⁹⁰ The

³⁸⁹ Herbie Hancock and Lisa Dickey, *Herbie Hancock: Possibilities* (New York, NY: Viking, 2014), 99-100.

³⁹⁰ Dan Morgenstern, “Herbie Hancock: *Blow Up*,” *Downbeat Magazine*, June 1, 1967, 32-34.

musicians on the album are instantly recognizable and include previously-reviewed musicians, so it is logical that Morgenstern chose not to get involved in the deception. *Jazz Journal*, however, named many of the correct musicians on the grounds that their editor, Sinclair Traill, initially connected Hancock with Antonioni.³⁹¹

Henderson performed for multiple nights with McCoy Tyner at The Drome in Detroit before returning to New York to record *Sweet Honey Bee* with Duke Pearson on December 7.³⁹² Pearson felt that he understood his audience, and provided a swinging, easy-going album.³⁹³ Henderson was able to reconnect with trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, who also performed on the album.³⁹⁴ Henderson remembered the album fondly, and he especially enjoyed the piece, “Gaslight,” as he later explained:

I remember a Duke Pearson session and that tune “Gaslight.” That’s a fantastic tune, man. It just did so much. I mean, as I was playing the tune I kept looking over at Duke Pearson and thinking “How did you come up with this?” There was so much in there to improvise on.³⁹⁵

Pearson in turn felt Henderson’s enthusiasm for his music, and voiced his appreciation, as he stated, “He likes to play my music; it falls right for him and whatever he plays, Joe is a complete musician.”³⁹⁶

³⁹¹ Mark Gardner, “Herbie Hancock: *Blow Up*,” *Jazz Journal*, July 1967, 31.

³⁹² Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

³⁹³ Nat Hentoff and Bob Blumenthal, notes to Duke Pearson, *Sweet Honey Bee* (1966), CD, Blue Note 7243 5 90834 2 1, 2004.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁵ Woods, “Joe Henderson,” 7.

³⁹⁶ Hentoff and Blumenthal, notes to *Sweet Honey Bee*.

Dan Morgenstern awarded the album four stars in his *Downbeat* review and said it was Pearson's best album to date.³⁹⁷ *Jazz Journal* also liked the album.³⁹⁸ Following the avant-garde *Stick Up!*, the positive reception of *Sweet Honey Bee* only continued to cement Henderson as one of the most versatile musicians in jazz.

Henderson placed for the first time in the *Downbeat Magazine* "Reader's Poll" in December 1966.³⁹⁹ He placed twenty-ninth in the "Jazzman of the Year" category, and fourth in the "Tenor Saxophone" category behind John Coltrane, Stan Getz and Sonny Rollins.⁴⁰⁰ The "Reader's Poll" is decided by mail-in ballots from the magazine's public readership, which makes it the most measurable metric of public opinion. Therefore, Henderson's high placement was a truly significant milestone in his career.

Milestone Period (1967-1976)

Time of Transition

Joe Henderson had come into the band early in 1967 because I was experimenting with a sextet with two tenors. And it was around that time that I started not even bothering to have breaks in between tunes but playing everything without breaks, seguing from one tune right into the next. My music was really stretching out from scale to scale, so I just didn't feel like breaking up the mood with stops and breaks. I just moved right into the next tune, whatever tempo it was, and just played it like that. My performances were becoming more like musical suites, and this allowed for more and longer periods of improvisation. A lot of people really dug the new move, but others thought that it was radical as a motherfucker and that I was definitely losing my mind.⁴⁰¹ – Miles Davis

³⁹⁷ Dan Morgenstern, "Duke Pearson: *Sweet Honey Bee*," *Downbeat Magazine*, June 1, 1967, 37.

³⁹⁸ Michael Shera, "Duke Pearson: *Sweet Honey Bee*," *Jazz Journal*, December 1967, 34-35.

³⁹⁹ "Reader's Poll," *Downbeat Magazine*, December 29, 1966, 17-19.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴⁰¹ Miles Davis and Quincy Troupe, *Miles Davis: The Autobiography* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 284-85.

Joe Henderson began 1967 with what would be considered a major highlight of his career: a four-month tenure with trumpeter Miles Davis. Henderson's first commitment with Davis was a rehearsal at the trumpeter's home, although the results were limited, as saxophonist Pete Yellin explained:

Wayne hadn't really stepped into the band that much. So . . . Miles was still looking a little bit. So he hired Joe . . . He had a rehearsal at his house but he watched television the whole time . . . Miles just said, "You know the stuff, right?"⁴⁰²

Henderson performed with Davis from January through April 1967, and gave performances of his own as time allowed. His schedule began with a three-night Miles Davis engagement at the Village Vanguard in New York, starting on January 19.⁴⁰³ Henderson led his own group in performances at the Five Spot on January 30, and at the Vanguard on January 31.⁴⁰⁴ Unfortunately, the identities of his sidemen remain unknown. He performed with Davis at the Philadelphia Arena on February 5, and at the Civic Opera House in Chicago on February 24 and 25.⁴⁰⁵ Henderson led a performance at L'Intrigue in Newark, New Jersey in February, and led a group at The Drome in Detroit, Michigan in March. The personnel from the Drome performance included trumpeter Mike Lawrence, trombonist Grachan Moncur, III, vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, bassist Herbie Lewis, and drummer Joe Chambers.⁴⁰⁶

The saxophonist found time to record with vibraphonist Roy Ayers on March 6, 1967. *Virgo Vibes* was recorded in New York and issued on Atlantic Records.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰² Viswanathan, "Blue Note Records Period of Joe Henderson," 433.

⁴⁰³ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

Although the album is less known today, it received four and one-half stars from Harvey Pekar in his *Downbeat Magazine* review.⁴⁰⁸

Henderson performed with Davis at Lennie's in West Peabody, Massachusetts in March, and the group gave a four-night performance at the Village Vanguard on March 9 through 12.⁴⁰⁹ The personnel of the Miles Davis group fluctuated greatly throughout this time, as Henderson noted while discussing his tenure with the band:

Miles, Wayne Shorter and I were the only constants in the band. I never knew who was going to show up. There'd be a different drummer every night – Tony Williams, Jack DeJohnette, Billy Cobham. Ron Carter would play one night, next night Miroslav Vitous or Eddie Gomez. Chick Corea would play one night, next night Herbie Hancock. It never settled Miles had a great sense of humor. I couldn't stop laughing. I'd be on the bandstand and I'd remember something he said in the car to the gig, and right in the middle of a phrase I'd crack up!⁴¹⁰

Henderson played at Slug's Saloon with his own group, which was comprised of Moncur, pianist Ronnie Mathews, bassist Arthur Harper, and drummer Mickey Roker on March 13 through 19.⁴¹¹

Henderson's last performance with Davis was in early April 1967, at the University of California Berkeley Jazz Festival,⁴¹² although there is a possibility of more performances surrounding their West Coast trip. The Berkeley performance was memorable, as Miles Davis recalled in his autobiography:

In April I did some gigs out in California We did our uninterrupted set in Berkeley in front of about ten thousand people in a gymnasium, after a rainstorm caused everything to be moved indoors. Our set just fucked up

⁴⁰⁸ Harvey Pekar, "Roy Ayers: *Virgo Vibes*," *Downbeat Magazine*, January 11, 1968, 26.

⁴⁰⁹ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁴¹⁰ Bourne, "The Sound that Launched a Thousand Horns," 18.

⁴¹¹ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁴¹² Ibid.

everybody. And it shocked me when even *Downbeat* gave us a great review.⁴¹³

The unfortunate aspect surrounding Henderson's tenure with Davis was that the group never recorded. Henderson lamented years later:

Miles asked me to put together a record date for him. But I was so into whatever it was I was doing that I never got around to doing it and it's something I keep kicking myself for. We never recorded and I don't think anybody's got tapes of the gigs we did. At the time the gig came along I had seven, eight of my own albums out and I was on so many others. So it was kind of anticlimactic which was unfortunate because something I had always wanted to do was make music with the Prince.⁴¹⁴

Multiple researchers have searched for bootleg recordings of this group over the years; however, the discovery of such tapes might not hold much historical significance.

Michael Cuscuna, who heard the group at the Philadelphia Arena, described the music in the following way,

They were all fucking phenomenal musicians, but it wasn't revelatory. It's not like he came in there, and he and Wayne bounced off each other and something spectacular happened. It was just another soloist added to the band. It didn't change the shape of it.⁴¹⁵

When asked if uncovering a recording would rank as highly as finding the tapes of John Coltrane and Thelonious Monk at Carnegie Hall, Cuscuna replied, "No, that's quite different."⁴¹⁶

⁴¹³ Davis and Troupe, *Miles Davis: The Autobiography*, 285.

⁴¹⁴ Woods, "Joe Henderson," 7.

⁴¹⁵ Cuscuna interview.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Milestone Records

Henderson was also released from Blue Note Records around the same time as his departure from Davis, prior to April 21, 1967.⁴¹⁷ Blue Note President Alfred Lion felt the need to leave the music business due to health reasons,⁴¹⁸ and Milestone producer Orrin Keepnews explained:

Way back in 1967, Blue Note Records had been acquired by a larger West Coast label, Liberty. According to a persistent story, Blue Note's founder, Alfred Lion, was able to arrange for the release from contract of some of his more non-standard artists, who he felt would be unhappy as part of a standard commercial label.⁴¹⁹

Keepnews met Henderson in 1964 through Kenny Dorham, and had been interested in signing him to the Riverside label.⁴²⁰ The timing was not appropriate, however, as Henderson was under contract to Blue Note, and Riverside was in the process of becoming defunct.⁴²¹ The timing was much improved in 1967, and Keepnews approached Henderson with an offer to join his newly-formed Milestone Records label.⁴²²

Milestone did not have the impressive budget of larger labels, but it had previously released albums that featured James Moody, Wynton Kelly, and the Pepper Adams/Mel Lewis Quintet.⁴²³ Keepnews found Henderson receptive to his offer:

Henderson wasn't that thoroughly new – he had made some albums for Blue Note as a leader and quite a few as a sideman – but he was scarcely known except by fellow musicians and the hardest core of listeners. No

⁴¹⁷ Nat Hentoff and Bob Blumenthal, notes to McCoy Tyner, *The Real McCoy* (1967), CD, Blue Note 7243 4 97807 2 9, 1999.

⁴¹⁸ Ted O'Reilly, "Duke Pearson Talks with Ted O'Reilly," *Coda*, December 1970, 45.

⁴¹⁹ Alan Heinman and Orrin Keepnews, notes to Joe Henderson, *Power to the People* (1969), CD, Milestone MCD-301 30-2, 2007.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*

⁴²² *Ibid.*

⁴²³ Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

other labels were competing for his services when I approached him, and I also had the advantage of Dorham's earlier approval.⁴²⁴

Keepnews also described the contract in the following way: "We signed an entirely routine contract (it was to be the first of three, eventually involving three different parent companies and relocation to California by both of us)."⁴²⁵ As Henderson was finding his footing, he freelanced in New York and performed with his big band.⁴²⁶

Henderson returned to Blue Note and Van Gelder Studio as a sideman to record McCoy Tyner's *The Real McCoy* on April 21, 1967.⁴²⁷ In addition to Tyner, Henderson joined Ron Carter and Elvin Jones on the session.⁴²⁸ This album has maintained popularity since its release, and is now considered to be a staple of the jazz repertoire. Additionally, it is a somewhat rare example of Henderson in a quartet setting.

Henderson performed one week later at Judson Hall in New York with Chris Swansen's New York Improvisation Ensemble.⁴²⁹ Henderson's schedule for the next several months is unknown; there is mention of a series of performances with Art Blakey,⁴³⁰ although there is reason to believe it to be inaccurate. According to Michael Cuscuna, Henderson first performed with Blakey during the 1986 Mt. Fuji Jazz Festival in 1986.⁴³¹ He performed with Roy Haynes at the Five Spot on July 27, 1967.⁴³²

⁴²⁴ Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

⁴²⁶ McRae, "Joe Henderson," 9.

⁴²⁷ Hentoff and Blumenthal, notes to *The Real McCoy*.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Cuscuna interview.

⁴³² Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

The saxophonist joined The Jazz Communicators around this time, and the group gave their first performances in the late summer to early fall. The band was led by the “Three Hs”: Louis Hayes, Freddie Hubbard, and Joe Henderson.⁴³³ Other members included pianist Kenny Barron, and bassist Herbie Lewis.⁴³⁴ Louis Hayes explained the formation of the group:

My brother and myself, one summer in 1960-something, were walking in Manhattan on Broadway, and I saw this club. I went in and said to the person that I would like to bring a group in for the summer. He asked me who I had in the group. So I mentioned Joe Henderson and Freddie Hubbard, myself, Kenny Barron and the bassist Herbie Lewis. So he said, “You have it.” At the time, Freddie Hubbard and myself lived in the same building on Park Avenue in Brooklyn. When I got back to the building, I mentioned it to Freddie. And Freddie was the one who said “Let’s do this,” and he came up with the name, The Communicators. Freddie came up with that name. So it was the three leaders, “Three Hs”: Freddie, Joe and myself, and that’s how The Communicators began.⁴³⁵

The Jazz Communicators began regularly performing at La Boheme in New York on Tuesday through Sunday evenings.⁴³⁶

Henderson entered Plaza Sound Studio in New York on August 10, 1967, to record the first of three sessions that would collectively yield his first two albums for Milestone, *The Kicker* and *Tetragon*.⁴³⁷ The first session was comprised entirely of material for *The Kicker*, and was produced by Orrin Keepnews.⁴³⁸ The session featured Mike Lawrence, Grachan Moncur, III, Kenny Barron, Ron Carter, and Louis Hayes.

⁴³³ Louis Hayes, interview by author, March 24, 2016.

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

⁴³⁷ Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

⁴³⁸ Jack Springer, notes to Joe Henderson, *The Kicker* (1967), CD, Milestone MSP-9008, 1990.

Lawrence made his recording debut on *The Kicker*.⁴³⁹ He was a regular member of Henderson's big band, and the saxophonist admired his playing enough to include him on the album.⁴⁴⁰ Louis Hayes and Kenny Barron were members of the Jazz Communicators, and Ron Carter was Keepnews's first-call bassist for recording sessions.⁴⁴¹

Henderson specifically requested a three-horn group for his debut album for Milestone.⁴⁴² Trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, the remaining "H" of the Jazz Communicators, was initially considered for the project. Keepnews explained the difficulties in acquiring him, and said, "Freddie was under contract to Atlantic Records and was considered a rapidly rising young star, so it may have seemed too difficult to get permission for him to take part in this album."⁴⁴³

All of Henderson's compositions on *The Kicker* had been previously recorded; "Mamacita" was included on Dorham's *Trumpet Toccata*, "The Kicker" was featured on Hutcherson's *The Kicker* and Silver's *Song for My Father*, "If" was most notably recorded on Larry Young's *Unity*, and "Mo' Joe" was included on Silver's *The Cape Verdean Blues*.⁴⁴⁴ The remaining pieces are peculiar in that they each foreshadowed a future Henderson project on the Verve label. "Nardis," written by Miles Davis, predicted the *So Near, So Far (Musings for Miles)*⁴⁴⁵ project, while "Chelsea Bridge" foreshadowed the *Lush Life* album.⁴⁴⁶ Henderson frequently performed "Without A

⁴³⁹ Springer, notes to *The Kicker*.

⁴⁴⁰ Woods, "Joe Henderson," 7.

⁴⁴¹ Heinman and Keepnews, notes to *Power to the People*.

⁴⁴² Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁴⁴⁵ Milkowski, notes to *So Near, So Far*.

⁴⁴⁶ Stanley Crouch and Dean Pratt, notes to Joe Henderson, *Lush Life: The Music of Billy Strayhorn* (1991), CD, Verve 0602498840375, 2003.

Song” with his big band, and his arrangement was included on the *Big Band* project.⁴⁴⁷ “O Amor em Paz” was composed by Antonio Carlos Jobim,⁴⁴⁸ and foreshadowed the *Double Rainbow* album.⁴⁴⁹

The first session was intended to record *The Kicker* in its entirety. “If” was not originally intended for the album, but was available in case the group needed additional material to meet their preferred time requirements.⁴⁵⁰ Even though “If” was recorded, Henderson and Keepnews realized that the recording of “O Amor em Paz” contained errors that rendered it unusable.⁴⁵¹ They needed another session to record the final take.

Henderson was recognized in the 1967 *Downbeat Magazine* “International Critics Poll” by placing first in the “Tenor Saxophone” portion of the “Talent Deserving of Wider Recognition” category.⁴⁵² He led a group at Slug’s Saloon on August 27, before performing with a modified version of the Jazz Communicators at the Laurel Jazz Festival in Laurel, Maryland, on September 2.⁴⁵³ The original Jazz Communicators lineup performed at the Front Room in Newark, New Jersey, on September 4.⁴⁵⁴

Henderson recorded an unaccompanied duet with alto saxophonist Lee Konitz on Konitz’s appropriately-titled *Duets* for Milestone Records on September 25, 1967.⁴⁵⁵ The pair recorded “You Don’t Know What Love Is,” which was combined with other duets

⁴⁴⁷ Kirchner, notes to *Big Band*.

⁴⁴⁸ Springer, notes to *The Kicker*.

⁴⁴⁹ Seidel and Henderson, notes to *Double Rainbow*.

⁴⁵⁰ Springer, notes to *The Kicker*.

⁴⁵¹ Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

⁴⁵² “International Critics Poll,” *Downbeat Magazine*, August 24, 1967, 16.

⁴⁵³ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁵ Gunther Schuller, notes to Lee Konitz, *Duets* (1967), CD, Milestone MSP-9013, 1990.

and ensemble pieces to complete the album. Konitz was an early influence on Henderson, as Henderson later explained: “When I first started playing the sax formally I used to favor the high register, you know, because I used to listen to Konitz quite a bit. I used to listen to the alto sax. I was always trying to get this sound.”⁴⁵⁶ The album received five stars in *Downbeat*. Dan Morgenstern wrote, “If you get only one record this year, make this the one.”⁴⁵⁷

The Jazz Communicators performed a weeklong residency at Slug’s Saloon from September 26 through October 1,⁴⁵⁸ and Henderson, Hayes, Barron, and Carter returned to Plaza Sound Studios during the day on September 27 to complete *The Kicker*.⁴⁵⁹ Milestone could not afford to assemble a session to complete only one piece; therefore, three other selections were recorded to put toward a future Henderson project after recording the final version of “O Amor em Paz.”⁴⁶⁰ The additional selections included “Tetragon,” composed by Henderson; “First Trip,” a Ron Carter composition; and the standard, “I’ve Got You Under My Skin.”⁴⁶¹ “First Trip” was likely recorded due to a lack of material, as Carter explained:

At those Milestone dates [Henderson] would never have enough music. And he would always be a tune or two too short so he would tell [us] before the date to bring a couple of songs in and he’d probably need to record them.⁴⁶²

⁴⁵⁶ Townley, “The Herculean Tenor of Joe Henderson,” 40.

⁴⁵⁷ Dan Morgenstern, “Lee Konitz: *Duets*,” *Downbeat Magazine*, March 6, 1969, 22.

⁴⁵⁸ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

⁴⁵⁹ Springer, notes to *The Kicker*.

⁴⁶⁰ Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

⁴⁶¹ Orrin Keepnews, notes to Joe Henderson, *Tetragon* (1967, 1968), CD, Milestone MSP-9017, 1995.

⁴⁶² Viswanathan, “Blue Note Records Period of Joe Henderson,” 400.

“Tetragon” also marked the first appearance of Henderson’s own publishing entity, “Johen Music.”⁴⁶³

After “O Amor em Paz” was successfully recorded, *The Kicker* was ready for release. Harvey Pekar awarded it four stars in his *Downbeat* review, and made special note of Mike Lawrence’s recording debut.⁴⁶⁴ In *Coda*, John McCaffrey enjoyed the album and noted that Henderson had developed an individual voice.⁴⁶⁵

Henderson worked with The Jazz Communicators during the remainder of 1967. They performed at Crawford’s Bar and Grill in Pittsburgh in mid-November, and at Slug’s Saloon in December.⁴⁶⁶ In December, Henderson was awarded fourth place in the “Tenor Saxophone” category of the *Downbeat Magazine* 1967 “Reader’s Poll,” behind Stan Getz, Sonny Rollins and Charles Lloyd.⁴⁶⁷

1968 began with Jazz Communicators performances on January 2 through 7 at Slug’s Saloon, and on January 12 through 14 at the Village Vanguard.⁴⁶⁸ They then traveled west, and began a ten-evening engagement at Marty’s-on-the-Hill in Los Angeles on January 19. Eight days later, they performed a two-week residency at the Both/And Club in San Francisco, which began on February 6.⁴⁶⁹ They closed their tour with performances at the Tropicana and Memory Lane in Los Angeles.⁴⁷⁰ Unfortunately,

⁴⁶³ Keepnews, notes to *Tetragon*.

⁴⁶⁴ Harvey Pekar, “Joe Henderson: *The Kicker*,” *Downbeat Magazine*, May 2, 1968, 27.

⁴⁶⁵ John McCaffrey, “Joe Henderson: *The Kicker*,” *Coda*, November, December 1968, 18.

⁴⁶⁶ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

⁴⁶⁷ “Reader’s Poll,” *Downbeat Magazine*, December 28, 1967, 22.

⁴⁶⁸ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

these performances would be the last for the Jazz Communicators. The rock genre had dominated recent music sales, which made it difficult to maintain constant work in other genres, including jazz.⁴⁷¹ The Jazz Communicators were not immune to these pressures, and disbanded as a result.⁴⁷²

Henderson recorded three pieces for Nat Adderley's *The Scavenger* just prior to leaving for the West Coast with the Jazz Communicators.⁴⁷³ The music was in the "soul" genre, which required Henderson to display his versatility as a sideman, as producer Orrin Keepnews explained:

This session can serve as an excellent example of Joe Henderson's professionalism and adaptability: this wasn't necessarily the direction that most interested him at this time, but he liked Nat and enjoyed working with him, so he went along with the program.⁴⁷⁴

The Scavenger was released on Milestone, and earned three stars in its *Downbeat* review.⁴⁷⁵

Henderson collaborated with the pianist, harpist and spiritual guru Alice Coltrane, for the first time on April 14, 1968, during a concert billed as "Cosmic Music" at Carnegie Hall. The other band members included Pharoah Sanders, Jimmy Garrison, and drummers Rashied Ali and Jack DeJohnette.⁴⁷⁶ He enjoyed working with Coltrane, and they would eventually record two albums together.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷¹ Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

⁴⁷² Ibid.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁵ Harvey Siders, "Nat Adderley: *The Scavenger*," *Downbeat Magazine*, October 8, 1970, 18.

⁴⁷⁶ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁴⁷⁷ Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

One week later, on April 21, Henderson performed at the Left Bank Jazz Society in Baltimore, Maryland with the Wynton Kelly Trio, which included bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Jimmy Cobb.⁴⁷⁸ This performance was recorded, and issued in 1994 as *Four!*⁴⁷⁹ and *Straight No Chaser* on the Verve record label.⁴⁸⁰ The Wynton Kelly Trio had worked together since their creation in 1959 within the Miles Davis Quintet, and Henderson felt honored to perform with such a unified group.⁴⁸¹ The band performed pieces that Henderson knew very well but had never recorded, such as “Autumn Leaves,” “On Green Dolphin Street,” and “Straight No Chaser.”⁴⁸² Additionally, this is one of the last recorded performances of the Wynton Kelly Trio.⁴⁸³

Henderson returned to Plaza Sound Studios on May 16, 1968, to complete the second and final recording session for *Tetragon*.⁴⁸⁴ The first *Tetragon* session was completed nearly nine months prior, but scheduling and financing issues at Milestone forced the delay.⁴⁸⁵ With the exception of Ron Carter, Henderson decided to record a different rhythm section, and hired pianist Don Friedman and Jack DeJohnette for the session.⁴⁸⁶ The group recorded “Invitation,” a jazz standard that would become a staple of Henderson’s live performances;⁴⁸⁷ “R.J.,” composed by Ron Carter; Henderson’s free

⁴⁷⁸ Michael Ullman, notes to Joe Henderson, *Four!* (1968), CD, Verve 314 523 657-2, 1994.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁰ Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

⁴⁸¹ Ullman, notes to *Four!*.

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁴ Keepnews, notes to *Tetragon*.

⁴⁸⁵ Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

⁴⁸⁶ Keepnews, notes to *Tetragon*.

⁴⁸⁷ Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

composition “The Bead Game;” and “Waltz for Zweetie,” composed by Walter Bishop, Sr.⁴⁸⁸

Tetragon was well received by the press. Alan Heineman awarded the album four stars in his *Downbeat* review,⁴⁸⁹ and *Jazz Journal* called the record “a set of riches with no dull tracks.”⁴⁹⁰ Additionally, *Coda* said the album was “the finest example of his work.”⁴⁹¹

The inclusion of “The Bead Game” illustrates a very important aspect of Henderson’s personality; he was an intense intellectual. The title of the piece was derived from the Hermann Hesse novel, *Magister Ludi*,⁴⁹² a fictitious biography in which the academic elite create, develop, and partake in “The Glass Bead Game.” The Game itself is never fully explained. It is only explained in the sense that it interweaves multiple academic and philosophical disciplines by seeking to reduce complex ideas down to a common denominator through the use of symbols. In this way it demonstrates how ideas are related with the goal of achieving universality. The book itself is a tribute to intellectualism, and extolls the virtues of living an ascetic, monastic lifestyle in the pursuit of developing one’s mind.

⁴⁸⁸ Keepnews, notes to *Tetragon*.

⁴⁸⁹ Alan Heineman, “Joe Henderson: *Tetragon*,” *Downbeat Magazine*, May 29, 1969, 21.

⁴⁹⁰ Mark Gardner, “Joe Henderson: *Tetragon*,” *Jazz Journal*, June 1969, 32.

⁴⁹¹ Don Lass, “Joe Henderson: *Tetragon*,” *Coda*, August 1969, 25.

⁴⁹² Hermann Hesse, *The Glass Bead Game (Magister Ludi)*, trans. Richard Winston and Clara Winston (Canada: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969).

Henderson's "main influence of how he was living and wanted to live his life was the German author Hermann Hesse's *Glass Bead Game* [an alternate title]." ⁴⁹³

Henderson, himself, explained:

Magister Ludi was, not to be sacrilegious, like a bible to me. I thumb through the pages regularly and turn other people on to the book. It meant so much to me, but not too many other people mention it. Isn't it unfortunate that so few people are reading? All of a sudden it's like the written word has become taboo! All musicians should expose themselves to literature; there's influence to be gained from that. ⁴⁹⁴

Henderson's intellectual traits were often noticed by his peers. Trumpeter Eddie

Henderson (no relation) commented,

He was a very quiet person, but very studious; very scientific in his approach at a very high intellect. He would read philosophy books, he diligently practiced, he would listen to classical music and study classical excerpts on the saxophone. He practiced all the time.

I was over at his house for a long time, and I commented, "I haven't heard you practice in a couple of days." He said, well since the mind rules the body, he does crossword puzzles and reads philosophy books and attunes his mind to a high rate of vibration. So after that he doesn't have to go through the physical motions. He'd practiced years beforehand, so if he attunes his mind to a high rate of vibration, it doesn't take that much time to get his body to follow since the mind rules the body. ⁴⁹⁵

Additionally, he had a photographic memory and spoke several languages, as pianist

Joanne Brackeen explained:

We went to many, many different countries, and every single country, whether it was when I was working with him or when he was on that State Department tour, he would speak that language. He would grab a book in the airport or something, and go. Every single person who heard him talking in that language would think he spoke the whole language because they said he had no accent. I counted them up one time, you know when

⁴⁹³ Brackeen interview.

⁴⁹⁴ Garcia, "Joe Henderson: Meaningfully Different," 25.

⁴⁹⁵ Eddie Henderson, interview by author, June 13, 2016.

you're on an airplane and have nothing else to do Seventeen languages.⁴⁹⁶

Saxophonist Pete Yellin corroborated Brackeen's account, and said that Henderson was fluent in Spanish and French, that he partially spoke Portuguese, and was studying Japanese.⁴⁹⁷

In a further display of Henderson's intellect, he also played the piano at a proficient level. Joanne Brackeen recounted,

Did anyone tell you that he worked playing piano? Oh yeah, he did it in New York when he lived in Brooklyn. He used to work around the corner. Also in San Francisco. There were little local places that hired him. He was getting paid! They may have just known him . . . as a local neighbor that could play the piano. They wanted him on Friday nights or whatever. He played very well.

One time when we were on the State Department tour, we were in Istanbul, and everyone was invited to go to this club, and they were just having a session. When I got there, he was playing the piano, and you wouldn't know that he wasn't part of the band. He played better than a lot of the piano players that I've heard professionally play.⁴⁹⁸

Another aspect of Henderson's personality, which was possibly related to his intellectualism, was his ability to be uncommonly honest and blunt in conversation, combined with a certain insensitivity for the feelings of others. Michael Cuscuna explained:

Joe was the kind of person who he could say stuff that could hurt a sensitive person. A person with a sense of humor it might roll off them, but it could hurt somebody. Cedar Walton never forgot that one day, a couple of years after *Mode for Joe*, one day at Bradley's or Vanguard, one of the clubs, [when] somebody came up to Joe and talked about how great *Mode for Joe* was. Cedar was there. I don't know if they were playing the gig together or if they were just hanging out. Joe said to this guy, "I got the recognition, but he got all the money," pointing to Cedar because

⁴⁹⁶ Brackeen interview.

⁴⁹⁷ Viswanathan, "Blue Note Records Period of Joe Henderson," 430.

⁴⁹⁸ Brackeen interview.

Cedar wrote the tune “Mode for Joe.” And Cedar was a very sensitive guy. I mean, for twenty years he carried a wound over what Joe said that night. But Joe was just being cavalier and casual and blasé about things. But I don’t think Joe sometimes ever realized . . . he’s like Miles, I don’t think he ever realized that the shit he said could affect people as deeply as it did.⁴⁹⁹

Henderson performed with Donald Byrd at the Fine Arts Festival at North Carolina College in Durham on July 18 through 25, 1968.⁵⁰⁰ Following these performances, he embarked on a two-month European tour, beginning with a four-week residency at Ronnie Scott’s in London.⁵⁰¹ He had a decently consistent group while in London, which included the fluegelhorn player and composer Kenny Wheeler, bassist Dave Holland, pianist Gordon Beck, and drummer Tony Oxley.⁵⁰² Holland was hired by Miles Davis to join his band after only a few performances with Henderson,⁵⁰³ and was replaced by Ron Mathewson.⁵⁰⁴ The group performed opposite Ronnie Scott’s band.⁵⁰⁵ Henderson also performed at the Molde Jazz Festival in Norway in August 1968.⁵⁰⁶

Henderson performed at the Jazzhus Montmartre in Copenhagen, Denmark in late September, as well as at the Le Chat Qui Peche in Paris.⁵⁰⁷ He recorded a studio album with trombonist Erich Kleinschuster in Vienna, Austria, on either October 10 or 13,⁵⁰⁸ before recording a television program with Lee Konitz in Vienna on October 16.⁵⁰⁹

⁴⁹⁹ Cuscuna interview.

⁵⁰⁰ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

⁵⁰¹ McRae, “Joe Henderson,” 9.

⁵⁰² Ibid.

⁵⁰³ Milkowski, notes to *So Near, So Far*.

⁵⁰⁴ McRae, “Joe Henderson,” 9.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁶ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁸ Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

⁵⁰⁹ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

Henderson closed his tour with a performance at the American Cultural Center in Paris on either October 19 or 20.⁵¹⁰

Upon his return to New York, Henderson recorded on trumpeter Luis Gasca's *The Little Giant* on November 13, 1968, for Atlantic Records.⁵¹¹ The album received two stars in its *Downbeat* review, and Larry Kart stated, "All this album has to recommend it are solid Henderson solos on '[Motherless] Child' and 'Afro-Blue'"⁵¹² Henderson also performed with his big band for a "pre-Christmas" party at a Brooklyn mansion.⁵¹³ This marked the last documented performance of Henderson's New York big band, prior to their brief reformation in the 1990s.

The Herbie Hancock Sextet

Henderson ended 1968 in a big way, by joining Herbie Hancock's sextet.⁵¹⁴ Hancock had left Miles Davis's band the previous summer,⁵¹⁵ and formed his own sextet in November.⁵¹⁶ Henderson, who replaced saxophonist Clifford Jordan,⁵¹⁷ joined Johnny Coles, trombonist Garnett Brown, Ron Carter, and Albert "Tootie" Heath in Hancock's new band. The group performed at the Village Vanguard during the last week of December.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁰ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁵¹¹ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁵¹² Larry Kart, "Luis Gasca: *The Little Giant*," *Downbeat Magazine*, October 2, 1969, 18.

⁵¹³ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁵ Herb Wong and Bob Blumenthal, notes to Herbie Hancock, *The Prisoner* (1969), CD, Blue Note 7243 5 25649 2 7, 1999.

⁵¹⁶ Hancock and Dickey, *Herbie Hancock: Possibilities*, 112.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁸ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

Hancock, in a departure from the repertoire of Miles Davis, was transitioning toward more accessible material. He explained: “I am trying to write hummable tunes with a kind of rhythmic element people can be infected with.”⁵¹⁹ Eddie Henderson explained further:

Well see, when Joe Henderson was in that band, it was a different repertoire that they were playing. The band that I was in, after that with Herbie Hancock . . . the Mwandishi band, was a little more avant-garde. Before I joined Herbie Hancock’s band, it was a little more commercial. They were playing music from the T.V. show *Fat Albert*.⁵²⁰

Henderson was awarded sixth place in the “Tenor Saxophone” category in the 1968 *Downbeat* “Reader’s Poll.” He placed behind Stan Getz, Sonny Rollins, Charles Lloyd, Wayne Shorter, and Pharoah Sanders.⁵²¹ He also performed at Carnegie Hall with Oliver Nelson in early 1969, and performed with Hancock’s sextet on March 2 at the Fillmore East in New York.⁵²²

Henderson returned to Van Gelder Studio to record Hancock’s *The Prisoner* for Blue Note Records on April 18, 21, and 23, 1969.⁵²³ Produced by Duke Pearson, the album included an expanded ensemble, and required Henderson to play flute and alto flute in addition to the saxophone.⁵²⁴ *The Prisoner* had the distinction of being Hancock’s last Blue Note album, and of being the first album from his new sextet.⁵²⁵ The album was reviewed highly; Harvey Pekar awarded it five stars in his *Downbeat* review, and stated,

⁵¹⁹ Wong and Blumenthal, notes to *The Prisoner*.

⁵²⁰ Henderson interview.

⁵²¹ “Reader’s Poll,” *Downbeat Magazine*, December 26, 1968, 18.

⁵²² Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

⁵²³ Wong and Blumenthal, notes to *The Prisoner*.

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁵ Tom Lord. “Herbie Hancock,” Tom Lord Online Jazz Discography, accessed August 3, 2016, <http://www.lordisco.com>.

Henderson is a real standout. He's become a consummate artist in recent years. His style contains elements of mainstream, modern and avant-garde elements, as his playing on *Prisoner* illustrates . . . His tone is big and tough and he plays with great vigor.⁵²⁶

Jazz Journal reviewed the album highly as well.⁵²⁷

Hancock's group traveled to the West Coast two days after completing *The Prisoner*, and performed at the Greek Theater at the University of California, Berkeley on April 25 and 26. Bassist Buster Williams replaced Ron Carter for these performances.⁵²⁸ Also, the sextet performed at the Both/And Club in San Francisco, and in Boston at the Jazz Workshop and the Black Music Festival at Northeastern University in May.⁵²⁹

Henderson recorded *Tell It Like It Is* for George Benson on May 20 at Van Gelder Studio.⁵³⁰ This was possibly Henderson's first experience with A&M and CTI Producer Creed Taylor, and several additional experiences would soon follow. The album was reviewed poorly, however, and received one star in *Downbeat Magazine*. Reviewer Chris Albertson stated, "Producer Creed Taylor should really get five stars for this album – a more skillful demonstration of how to thoroughly waste a very gifted performer would not be easy to find."⁵³¹

Henderson recorded his third album for Milestone, *Power to the People*, on May 23 and 25, 1969, at Plaza Sound Studios in New York.⁵³² Unlike his previous two

⁵²⁶ Harvey Pekar, "Herbie Hancock, *The Prisoner*," *Downbeat Magazine*, June 11, 1970, 21.

⁵²⁷ Michael Shera, "Herbie Hancock: *The Prisoner*," *Jazz Journal*, June 1970, 28.

⁵²⁸ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁰ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁵³¹ Chris Albertson, "George Benson: *Tell It Like It Is*," *Downbeat Magazine*, March 5, 1970, 20.

⁵³² Heinman and Keepnews, notes to *Power to the People*.

albums, these sessions were a mere six days apart, and could therefore be recorded and released in a timely manner. The album featured Mike Lawrence, Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter and Jack DeJohnette, all of whom, except Lawrence, had performed with Miles Davis.⁵³³ Hancock agreed to participate in the sessions as a courtesy to Henderson, as Keepnews, who produced the album, explained:

Extending what at least in those days was a fairly routine courtesy, Herbie agreed to play on his sideman's sessions. And the pianist must have played for something like musicians' union scale – because I certainly didn't have the ability to pay him any bigger fee.⁵³⁴

Ron Carter had remained Keepnews's first call bassist, and DeJohnette had recently joined the Milestone roster, and was therefore willing to contribute.⁵³⁵

Henderson composed the majority of the pieces on the album, including “Black Narcissus,” “Afro-Centric,” “Isotope,” “Power to the People,” and “Foresight and Afterthought (an impromptu suite).” Carter contributed “Opus-One-Point-Five,” and the group recorded the straight-ahead “Lazy Afternoon.”⁵³⁶ Henderson's titles became noticeably politically-oriented, as Keepnews explained: “For a period that continued for several years, Henderson was not only very conscious of political movement in America, but quite anxious to make public statements of his attitudes.”⁵³⁷ Henderson himself later elaborated:

I got politically involved in a musical way. Especially in the '60s, when people were trying to affect a cure for the ills that have beset this country for such a long time, I thought I'd use music to convey some of my thoughts. I'd think of a title like “Black Narcissus,” and then put the music together. I'd try to create a nice melody, but at the same time, when people

⁵³³ Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

⁵³⁴ Heinman and Keepnews, notes to *Power to the People*.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁷ Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

heard it on the radio, a title like “Afro-Centric” or “Power to the People” made a statement.⁵³⁸

Henderson continued to use loaded vocabulary in his groups and compositions, as his later “Black on Black” quintet would exemplify.

Power to the People marked the first use of electric piano and electric bass on a Henderson project.⁵³⁹ Additionally, Carter rarely performed on electric bass throughout his career. Mike Lawrence only attended the first session and therefore recorded “Power to the People” and “Afro-Centric” only. Hancock was omitted from the suite, as Keepnews explained:

Herbie’s new working sextet, including Joe, was going out on the road that very night; the band uniforms were still in the tailor shop – and the tailor would very shortly be closing for the day. Henderson, as a leader on the session, made an instant decision, which I have always suspected he had had in mind all afternoon. Hancock should take off immediately to retrieve the uniforms, but with no pressure on him to rush back – the final number would be recorded in a manner Joe was getting to find very intriguing, as a theme-less (and in this case also piano-less) improvisation. As can be heard, it worked out very well that way, perhaps foreshadowing Henderson’s frequent future use of the tenor, bass, and drums trio format.⁵⁴⁰

Jazz Journal gave *Power to the People* a glowing review, and stated that “This is Henderson’s best album to date.”⁵⁴¹

The Herbie Hancock sextet gave a string of performances throughout the summer of 1969, and Buster Williams replaced Ron Carter as the group’s bassist.⁵⁴² They possibly performed at the Village Vanguard in June, before working at Shelley’s Manne-

⁵³⁸ Bourne, “The Sound that Launched a Thousand Horns,” 18.

⁵³⁹ Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

⁵⁴⁰ Heinman and Keepnews, notes to *Power to the People*.

⁵⁴¹ Michael Shera, “Joe Henderson: *Power to the People*,” *Jazz Journal*, September 1970, 27-28.

⁵⁴² Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

Hole in Los Angeles for a twelve-night engagement, beginning on June 10.⁵⁴³ They also performed for Jazz By the Bay in San Diego that summer.⁵⁴⁴ The group performed at the Newport Jazz Festival in Rhode Island on July 6, before traveling to France to perform in Antibes on July 24.⁵⁴⁵ Hancock's band possibly performed at the Aqua Lounge in Philadelphia in August, and featured bassist Jimmy Garrison.⁵⁴⁶ In the later months of the summer, Henderson led his own group at the Texas Jazz Festival in Corpus Christi.⁵⁴⁷

In August 1969, Henderson became a temporary member of the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra. This commitment added to his busy schedule of his own record dates, freelance work and Hancock performances.⁵⁴⁸ The Orchestra likely performed at Spectrum in Philadelphia, and at the Laurel Jazz Festival in Laurel, Maryland in August, before embarking on a three-week European tour on August 25.⁵⁴⁹ The band began the tour with a weeklong engagement at Ronnie Scott's in London, and gave one-night performances in Sweden, Denmark, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Switzerland.⁵⁵⁰

Henderson was recognized in the *Downbeat Magazine* "International Critics Poll" on August 21. He placed ninth in the "Tenor Saxophone" section of the "Established Talent" category, behind Sonny Rollins, Stan Getz, Dexter Gordon, Archie Shepp, Paul Gonsalves, Ben Webster, Pharoah Sanders, and Wayne Shorter.⁵⁵¹

⁵⁴³ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁸ Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

⁵⁴⁹ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁵¹ "International Critics Poll," *Downbeat Magazine*, August 21, 1969, 18.

Henderson returned to New York after his European tour, and led his own group for a five-night engagement at the Village Vanguard, beginning on September 16. His sidemen included pianist Albert Daily, bassist Eddie Gomez, and “Tootie” Heath.⁵⁵² Although there are not many documented performances of Henderson and Gomez, they were close friends.⁵⁵³ Henderson also led his band at the Left Bank Jazz Society in Baltimore in October.⁵⁵⁴

Henderson recorded Miroslav Vitous’s *Mountain in the Clouds* for Atlantic Records on October 8, 1969.⁵⁵⁵ Vitous and Henderson had performed together with Miles Davis, and Henderson was invited to perform two pieces on his recording. The album was viewed as an important precursor to the fusion group Weather Report,⁵⁵⁶ and received four and one-half stars in Harvey Pekar’s review for *Downbeat*.⁵⁵⁷

The Hancock Sextet entered Van Gelder Studio to record *Fat Albert Rotunda* for the Warner Bros. label on October 16.⁵⁵⁸ Additional sessions were completed on November 26 and December 8.⁵⁵⁹ Hancock was approached by the comedian Bill Cosby to compose and perform the music for his new television program, *Hey, Hey, Hey, It’s Fat Albert*.⁵⁶⁰ Hancock accepted, and utilized an expanded version of his sextet to record the music featured on the program. He was then granted permission to produce and

⁵⁵² Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

⁵⁵³ Brackeen interview.

⁵⁵⁴ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

⁵⁵⁵ Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

⁵⁵⁶ Michael Cuscuna, notes to Miroslav Vitous, *Mountain in the Clouds* (1969), CD, Atlantic COL-CD-6238, 1999.

⁵⁵⁷ Harvey Pekar, “Miroslav Vitous: *Mountain in the Clouds*,” *Downbeat Magazine*, June 25, 1970, 23-24.

⁵⁵⁸ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁰ Hancock and Dickey, *Herbie Hancock: Possibilities*, 116.

record his own version of the soundtrack.⁵⁶¹ The television music focused on the funk genre, and Hancock brought his sextet to Van Gelder studio to focus on a rhythm and blues style.⁵⁶²

While the album sold 75,000 copies,⁵⁶³ it was reviewed poorly in the press. Jim Szantor gave the album two stars in his *Downbeat* review, and included vaguely racist comments such as, “Hancock . . . is back on the end of the fruit truck handing down more lugubrious objects d’fruit . . . his apron is still fairly clean,” and “The Fat Alberts may thrive on such music.”⁵⁶⁴ Steve Voce was more gracious in his review for *Jazz Journal*, and approached the album as a funk project aimed at a broad audience.⁵⁶⁵

Henderson performed at the Village Vanguard with Joe Chambers’s band on October 14 through 20, 1969.⁵⁶⁶ Henderson then joined the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra for an eight-day European tour, beginning on December 6.⁵⁶⁷ Their schedule included engagements in Denmark, Germany, Italy, France, and England.⁵⁶⁸ Recordings were later issued of their performances in Frankfurt and Ulm, Germany.⁵⁶⁹

Henderson was again recognized in the *Downbeat Magazine* “Reader’s Poll,” and placed fifth in the “Tenor Saxophone” category. He ranked behind Stan Getz, Sonny Rollins, Wayne Shorter, and Pharoah Sanders. Additionally, Hancock’s sextet placed

⁵⁶¹ Hancock and Dickey, *Herbie Hancock: Possibilities*, 117.

⁵⁶² *Ibid.*

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁴ Jim Szantor, “Herbie Hancock: *Fat Albert Rotunda*,” *Downbeat Magazine*, August 6, 1970, 22-23.

⁵⁶⁵ Steve Voce, “Herbie Hancock: *Fat Albert Rotunda*,” *Jazz Journal*, February 1973, 29.

⁵⁶⁶ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

⁵⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁹ Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

twelfth in the Jazz Combo category.⁵⁷⁰ Henderson closed out the year with a New Year's Eve performance at the Lighthouse in Hermosa Beach, California.⁵⁷¹

Alice Coltrane hired Henderson to play the alto flute in addition to the saxophone for her project, *Ptah, the El Daoud*, which was recorded on January 26, 1970, at her home studio in Dix Hills, New York.⁵⁷² It was Henderson's first and only encounter with Impulse! Records, and his first of two collaborations with Producer Ed Michel. The album also featured the avant-garde and "New Thing" saxophonist, Pharoah Sanders, as well as Ron Carter and drummer Ben Riley.⁵⁷³ The record received a lukewarm three-star review in *Downbeat*,⁵⁷⁴ but was praised by *Coda*.⁵⁷⁵

The next three days found Henderson in Van Gelder Studio, recording *Red Clay* for Freddie Hubbard and CTI.⁵⁷⁶ *Red Clay*, originally titled "Mississippi Mud," also included Ron Carter, Herbie Hancock, and drummer Lenny White.⁵⁷⁷ White was twenty years old at the time, and soon recorded Miles Davis's groundbreaking album, *Bitches Brew*.⁵⁷⁸ *Red Clay* was a popular album in the CTI catalog, and is frequently referenced in modern jazz pedagogy.

⁵⁷⁰ "Reader's Poll," *Downbeat Magazine*, December 25, 1969, 15-17.

⁵⁷¹ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁵⁷² Leonard Feather, notes to Alice Coltrane, *Ptah, the El Daoud* (1970), CD, Impulse! IMPD-201, 1996.

⁵⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁴ Bill Cole, "Alice Coltrane: *Ptah, the El Daoud*," *Downbeat Magazine*, January 7, 1971, 20.

⁵⁷⁵ Robert Rouda, "Alice Coltrane: *Ptah, the El Daoud*," *Coda*, February 1972, 23-24.

⁵⁷⁶ James Isaacs, notes to Freddie Hubbard, *Red Clay* (1970), CD, CTI EK 85216, 2002.

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁸ Lenny White, interview by author, March 23, 2016.

Two days after the final *Red Clay* session, Henderson traveled to the West Coast with Hancock's sextet to perform in Royce Hall at the University of California, Los Angeles.⁵⁷⁹ They performed at the Both/And Club in San Francisco on February 3, and likely performed at Shelley's Manne-Hole in Los Angeles.⁵⁸⁰ Hancock's sextet also performed on March 6 at Carnegie Hall, and at the Harlem Music Center on April 23 through 26.⁵⁸¹

July 31, 1970, marked Henderson's final appearance with Hancock's sextet.⁵⁸² The details of the performance are a bit peculiar; Hancock needed a band manager, and found an old college friend who managed the group Iron Butterfly. Hancock's sextet and Iron Butterfly were scheduled to perform together at the Schafer Music Festival in Central Park. Butterfly was "heavy metal before heavy metal," and the results of their shared billing were less than desirable.⁵⁸³

The dismal reception in Central Park was not to blame for Henderson's departure, however. Trumpeter Woody Shaw, who played with Henderson in Horace Silver's group, approached Henderson to join a group with him, which Eddie Henderson claimed accounted for his departure.⁵⁸⁴ The lack of constant work was also a factor, as Eddie Henderson explained:

The group that Joe Henderson was in with Herbie Hancock before me, they did not work that much because Herbie had just left Miles Davis and was just getting his group together as a leader. So he really didn't have

⁵⁷⁹ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸² Hancock and Dickey, *Herbie Hancock: Possibilities*, 122.

⁵⁸³ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁵⁸⁴ Henderson interview.

that much work. It was very sparse and sporadic. It wasn't like the Mwandishi group, who really worked constantly.⁵⁸⁵

Both Shaw and Henderson recommended Eddie Henderson to Hancock, and he was selected for the sextet. Hancock's group was rapidly changing, and was soon comprised of Eddie Henderson, trombonist Julian Priester, woodwind player Bennie Maupin, Buster Williams, and drummer Billy Hart. This new group became noticeably more avant-garde, and became known as Mwandishi.⁵⁸⁶

Continued Work with Milestone

After leaving both Hancock and the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra, Henderson focused primarily on his own projects. He formed his own group at some point after recording *Red Clay* in late January, and the group featured Woody Shaw, pianist George Cables, bassist Reggie Johnson, and Lenny White. The group rehearsed and performed in New York, and many people in the music scene were interested in Henderson's new group, including Miles Davis, who attended a performance.⁵⁸⁷

Henderson's group performed at the Both/And Club in San Francisco for two weeks, beginning on August 2, 1970. They also performed at Mandrake's in Berkeley around this time.⁵⁸⁸ Johnson had been replaced with Ron McClure at this point, who was recommended to Henderson by Bobby Hutcherson.⁵⁸⁹ McClure described his first rehearsals with the band,

He was very articulate, you know, and very precise. He always said, "Never panic, never panic. Take your time, plenty of time . . . relax." His music was very clear, and very well written out However, the rub was

⁵⁸⁵ Henderson interview.

⁵⁸⁶ Wong and Blumenthal, notes to *The Prisoner*.

⁵⁸⁷ White interview.

⁵⁸⁸ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁵⁸⁹ Viswanathan, "Blue Note Records Period of Joe Henderson," 377.

that these guys had changed everything in their minds about where certain rhythms were played, but they never changed the parts.⁵⁹⁰

This group would remain intact for approximately eighteen months, except for the bass chair.⁵⁹¹

Band members Shaw, Henderson and White performed one track on John Wood's album, *Nearer*, in Los Angeles around the time of their Both/And residency.⁵⁹²

Henderson was also recognized in *Downbeat*'s "International Critics Poll," on August 20. He placed fifth in the "Tenor Saxophone" portion of the "Established Talent" category, behind Sonny Rollins, Stan Getz, Dexter Gordon, and Zoot Sims.⁵⁹³

The group returned to the Lighthouse in Hermosa Beach for a weeklong engagement, and Orrin Keepnews employed the legendary sound engineer Bernie Grundman, to record three evenings with the hopes of capturing enough material for two live albums.⁵⁹⁴ The recordings were made on September 24 through 26, 1970.⁵⁹⁵ The repertoire mostly focused on Henderson compositions, including "Caribbean Fire Dance," "If You're Not Part of the Solution, You're Part of the Problem," "Recorda-Me," "A Shade of Jade," "Isotope," and "Gazelle." Other pieces included "Invitation," "Blue Bossa," "Round Midnight," and "Mode for Joe."⁵⁹⁶

Henderson utilized the electric piano and electric bass while traveling, due to the high cost of transporting an acoustic bass.⁵⁹⁷ Lenny White also fashioned a bass drum

⁵⁹⁰ Viswanathan, "Blue Note Records Period of Joe Henderson," 381.

⁵⁹¹ Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

⁵⁹² Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁵⁹³ "International Critics Poll," *Downbeat Magazine*, August 20, 1970, 14-15.

⁵⁹⁴ Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

⁵⁹⁵ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁵⁹⁶ Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

⁵⁹⁷ Viswanathan, "Blue Note Records Period of Joe Henderson," 379.

from an oil drum, and these factors combined to create a very loud stage volume. Ron McClure claimed that the volume was so loud that he could not hear himself while these recordings were being made.⁵⁹⁸ He elaborated:

[Henderson] doesn't move around, he doesn't say anything on stage, he doesn't direct, he doesn't get in your face . . . I had to deal with Lenny White's volume and George Cables's volume. If anybody talked to me it was Woody Shaw. Woody Shaw would turn around and say "Play some time, motherfucker!"

Woody Shaw became frustrated after the first night of recording, as Orrin Keepnews explained:

After the first night's work, Joe and Woody Shaw and I were briefly relaxing at the bar, and Shaw was explaining to us with growing intensity just how badly he had played, how he had undoubtedly rendered everything we had recorded entirely unusable. He was working himself up into quite a fit – and suddenly grabbed his horn case from the bar and in anger dashed it to the floor. Or, more accurately, toward the floor . . . I unthinkingly interposed my hand to break the fall. I succeeded, and nothing was broken, not even my hand.⁵⁹⁹

Roughly half of the live material was issued on *If You're Not Part of the Solution, You're Part of the Problem: Joe Henderson Quintet at the Lighthouse*.⁶⁰⁰ The album did not sell very well, as Keepnews explained:

When, despite an early sales flurry in the Midwest, the Lighthouse album failed to gain any kind of commercial success, it was the real beginning of my growing frustration with the jazz public's failure throughout those years to accept Joe Henderson.⁶⁰¹

⁵⁹⁸ Viswanathan, "Blue Note Records Period of Joe Henderson," 385.

⁵⁹⁹ Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁰¹ Ibid.

The album received a mediocre review in *Downbeat*, and was issued three and one-half stars. Reviewer Bill Cole's fundamental criticism was that the group failed to live up to its potential.⁶⁰²

Two additional business items should be addressed regarding this point in time. First, Orrin Keepnews sold several unused selections from the Lighthouse recording⁶⁰³ to Everest Records, who issued them as *Jazz Patterns* by Joe Henderson and Woody Shaw.⁶⁰⁴ This remains a point of contention, as the sidemen, and possibly Henderson, were never paid for its release.⁶⁰⁵ Secondly, Milestone Records retained its name, but was sold to Audio Fidelity Records just prior to this recording. This gave the label greater access to capital, and necessitated a second contract with Henderson.⁶⁰⁶

Henderson performed at the Café Extraordinaire in Minneapolis, Minnesota in October 1970, and performed four evenings at the East Village Inn in New York with his regular quintet, beginning on October 28.⁶⁰⁷ The East Village Inn constituted McClure's last dates with the band. The lack of work made the maintenance of a constant personnel all but impossible,⁶⁰⁸ and McClure felt the financial pressure. He explained:

Then Joe said we were supposed to go to the Vanguard; we were supposed to go to Europe. And he disappeared. We got back to New York, and these guys were getting high And when he got back to New York I never saw him. And I called him. I called him, like, several times and said, "Joe, what's happening?" [imitates Henderson] "Oh Ron, yeah, right . . . Gee man, I lost your number." He said that to me at least three or four times. I

⁶⁰² Bill Cole, "Joe Henderson: *Joe Henderson Quintet at the Lighthouse*," *Downbeat Magazine*, April 29, 1971, 20.

⁶⁰³ Viswanathan, "Blue Note Records Period of Joe Henderson," 383.

⁶⁰⁴ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁶⁰⁵ Viswanathan, "Blue Note Records Period of Joe Henderson," 383.

⁶⁰⁶ Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

⁶⁰⁷ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁶⁰⁸ Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

mean, the bottom line is that he didn't have anything . . . I got stranded. I was living in San Francisco, and I was back in New York.⁶⁰⁹

Lenny White eventually heard bassist Stanley Clarke perform with Horace Silver, and gave Clarke Henderson's phone number. Clarke was hired, and became the new regular bassist for the group.⁶¹⁰

Henderson recorded Freddie Hubbard's *Straight Life* for CTI on November 16, 1970. He was featured alongside George Benson, Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter, and Jack DeJohnette.⁶¹¹ Henderson was honored in the 1970 *Downbeat* "Reader's Poll," where he placed fourth in the "Tenor Saxophone" category, behind Stan Getz, Sonny Rollins, and Pharoah Sanders. Additionally, Hancock's sextet placed ninth in the "Jazz Combo" category, and *The Prisoner* placed nineteenth in the "Jazz Album of the Year."⁶¹²

Henderson's group performed at the North Park Hotel in Chicago in February or March 1971.⁶¹³ At this point, Henderson was employing additional personnel who seemed to rotate on an irregular basis. They included alto saxophonist Pete Yellin, guitarists Bill Washer and James "Blood" Ulmer, and trombonist Curtis Fuller. The rhythm section remained constant, and included George Cables, Stanley Clarke and Lenny White.⁶¹⁴ The music was becoming more adventurous during this period, as Yellin explained:

He had this attitude of . . . when you get to the bandstand, that's when you try stuff out. It didn't necessarily have to be a finished product . . . He'd .

⁶⁰⁹ Viswanathan, "Blue Note Records Period of Joe Henderson," 384.

⁶¹⁰ White interview.

⁶¹¹ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁶¹² "Reader's Poll," *Downbeat Magazine*, December 24, 1970, 16-18.

⁶¹³ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁶¹⁴ White interview.

. . . sometimes sing a bassline to . . . Stanley Clarke, who was playing bass at the time . . . and the tempo would start, and he'd start playing.⁶¹⁵

Henderson likely gave performances at the Village Vanguard in April, and at Howard University in Washington, D.C. on May 2.⁶¹⁶

Henderson's group recorded three tracks at Decca Studios in New York for the Milestone album *In Pursuit of Blackness* on May 12, 1971.⁶¹⁷ "No Me Esqueca," "A Shade of Jade," and "Mind Over Matter" were combined with the live Lighthouse performances of "Invitation" and "Gazelle" to complete the album.⁶¹⁸ The group featured Pete Yellin, Curtis Fuller, George Cables, Stanley Clarke, and Lenny White. *In Pursuit of Blackness* is the only studio recording of this working band.⁶¹⁹ The recording was given five stars in *Downbeat*, and John Klee was most impressed that Henderson was working with Blood, Sweat & Tears during the period in which his review was issued.⁶²⁰

"No Me Esqueca" has been a bit of a mystery to musicians since its release, as it was a retitling of Henderson's composition "Recorda-Me." Henderson never explained the name change, which led listeners to question his reasoning. The answer is very likely copyright-related. Henderson's piece "Recorda-Me" was first recorded on *Page One*, and was licensed through Blue Note Records (now EMI).⁶²¹ It appears here as "No Me Esqueca," and is licensed to Henderson's recently formed Johen Music.⁶²² Henderson

⁶¹⁵ Viswanathan, "Blue Note Records Period of Joe Henderson," 414.

⁶¹⁶ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁶¹⁷ Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

⁶¹⁸ Ibid.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid.

⁶²⁰ Joe Klee, "Joe Henderson: *In Pursuit of Blackness*," *Downbeat Magazine*, April 13, 1972, 28.

⁶²¹ Dorham and Blumenthal, notes to *Page One*.

⁶²² Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

likely wanted the larger revenue share via his own company. It is also possible that Blue Note's permission was required to record the piece again.

In general, Henderson struggled to find enough work for his group in 1971. This made it difficult to maintain a consistent band, as previously exemplified by Ron McClure. The lack of documented performances supports Pete Yellin's claims, when he stated, "The work was too difficult so Joe had to keep getting different bands, and playing with different people. People quitting, and you know, going this way, going that way, going into rock, going into the fusion thing."⁶²³ Only four performances are documented from the summer of 1971; Henderson performed twice in Cleveland, once at The East in Brooklyn in July, and his group performed at the Aqua Lounge in Philadelphia.⁶²⁴

Henderson recorded on trumpeter Blue Mitchell's *Vital Blue* for Mainstream Records on June 26 and 27 in New York.⁶²⁵ The album earned three stars in its *Downbeat* review.⁶²⁶

Henderson embarked on a brief tour of Japan in late July 1971.⁶²⁷ He performed a weeklong engagement at the Junk Club in Tokyo, beginning on July 29.⁶²⁸ He traveled to Japan as a "single," and worked with local musicians, including pianist Hideo Ichikawa, bassist Kunimitsu Inaba, and drummer Motohiko Hino.⁶²⁹ *Joe Henderson in Japan* was

⁶²³ Viswanathan, "Blue Note Records Period of Joe Henderson," 418.

⁶²⁴ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁶²⁵ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁶²⁶ John Litweiler, "Blue Mitchell: *Vital Blue*," *Downbeat Magazine*, May 11, 1972, 23.

⁶²⁷ Notes to Joe Henderson, *Joe Henderson in Japan* (1971), CD, Milestone M-9047, 2000.

⁶²⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶²⁹ *Ibid.*

recorded during the last evening of the Junk Club residency, on August 4.⁶³⁰ It was recorded by Milestone's Japanese licensee, Victor Musical Industries of Japan, and was never intended as a Milestone album.⁶³¹ However, when Keepnews and Henderson learned of the tapes' existence and listened to the recordings, they found them suitable for a proper Milestone release.⁶³² The album consists of the Henderson compositions "Out 'n In" and "Junk Blues," as well as "Blue Bossa" and "Round Midnight."⁶³³ The performance was well received by the Japanese audience, as Keepnews explained:

The country's jazz listeners came to the music full of appreciation that grows from deep knowledge, and they knew Joe Henderson. No young modern jazz player had created more excitement and interest in Japan.⁶³⁴

Henderson also recorded another live album, *Sunrise in Tokyo*, with Japanese musicians the following evening.⁶³⁵

Henderson began a West Coast tour with his band shortly after returning from Japan,⁶³⁶ and they contributed to Luis Gasca's *For Those Who Chant*, which was recorded on August 17 and 18, 1971, in San Francisco for Blue Thumb. The full lineup of Henderson's band is unknown; however, Gasca's album featured Henderson, Cables, Clarke and White.⁶³⁷ This is the last documented performance of Henderson's Lighthouse-era group.

⁶³⁰ Notes to Joe Henderson, *Joe Henderson in Japan*.

⁶³¹ Ibid.

⁶³² Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

⁶³³ Notes to Joe Henderson, *Joe Henderson in Japan*.

⁶³⁴ Ibid.

⁶³⁵ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁶³⁶ White interview.

⁶³⁷ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

Henderson was recognized in the *Downbeat Magazine* “International Critics Poll,” and placed tenth in the “Tenor Saxophone” portion of the “Established Talent” category.⁶³⁸ He placed fifth in the “Tenor Saxophone” category of the *Downbeat* “Reader’s Poll,” behind Stan Getz, Sonny Rollins, Pharoah Sanders, and Dexter Gordon.⁶³⁹ He gave several documented performances throughout the remainder of 1971. A performance at Shelley’s Manne-Hole on September 5 most resembled his previous group, and featured Pete Yellin, trombonist Kiane Zawadi, Cables, Clarke, and drummer Doug Sides.⁶⁴⁰ He performed at The East in Brooklyn on November 12 and 13, and featured Eddie Henderson, Zawadi, Cedar Walton, bassist Hakim Jami, and drummer Clifford Jarvis.⁶⁴¹ Joe Henderson disbanded this group soon after this performance, due to lack of work.⁶⁴²

Blood, Sweat & Tears

Henderson joined the 1970s jazz-rock group Blood, Sweat & Tears in the latter part of 1971, likely in mid-to-late November. He replaced saxophonist and arranger Fred Lipsius,⁶⁴³ and remained with the group for four months. The well-spoken Henderson best explained the situation himself in 1975:

It was more like an abortion than anything else. We were together for four months. You know, I think they abort babies at just three months.

I joined soon after my return from Japan, so it must have been the latter part of '71. Bobby Colomby was unofficially the leader of the group.

⁶³⁸ “International Critics Poll,” *Downbeat Magazine*, August 19, 1971, 14.

⁶³⁹ “Reader’s Poll,” *Downbeat Magazine*, December 23, 1971, 16-18.

⁶⁴⁰ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

⁶⁴¹ Ibid.

⁶⁴² Townley, “The Herculean Tenor of Joe Henderson,” 41.

⁶⁴³ Elliot Meadow, “Downbeat News,” *Downbeat Magazine*, February 17, 1972,

When you have ten people involved, somebody has to call the shots, so Colomby more or less took on that role.

So, anyway, after two months, the singer got fired. Then, after another month, one of the arrangers who had stayed on from the old band decided he wanted to leave. That meant we had to find a new arranger and organizer. It was just a series of setbacks that caused me to lose interest, despite all the money I was supposed to have made, you know, every year for a couple of years.

My share of the corporation was supposed to be over \$200,000 a year. But since I've never had that, I couldn't really relate to it. How would you relate to the mumps if you've never had the mumps . . .

They were a bunch of nice guys and they seemed to have a nicely organized corporation going on, but they used to get a lot of flack from other musicians. Musicians would come up and act very belligerent toward them because they had this image of being a jazz group and a lot of people couldn't take that. So they got self-conscious about it. They started looking around for jazz personalities. Plus, they had no blacks in the group. So they got me there. I was sort of three-in-one oil for them: I was black, I had a rep as an improvising musician, and there were soul possibilities there.

Their first album, *A Child Is A Father To The Man*, was a very good album. Very nicely done. But right from the start they were guided by things that would sell and after a point you get locked into that thing. You're no longer guided by the things that guided you when you made that album that you didn't know was going to sell four million. So the thing was always to try to keep their sales in that zone, which got uncomfortable for me because I never really paid much attention to those considerations.

A lot of people were really drugging me for doing that. "Well, you sold out, mother!" "Damn, why are you going there?" A lot of people called me from all over the world. "Did you really go with BS&T?" At the same time, I couldn't get gigs for my six-piece band, so I disbanded. The minute I disbanded they called me to join the band. It happened one day to the next. On the aesthetic level, I was looking at it as a chance to be around five horns. I was looking at the arranging, overdubbing, and all the musical possibilities. It wasn't until that time that I realized there were people out there who maybe know who I was. "Wow, Joe, you do things, man, and people start to wonder." I've never been on any kind of ego trip, but at that point I said to myself, "Wow, it's all very interesting," and here all this time I couldn't even get a write-up in *Downbeat*.

A Swedish guitarist named Georg Wadenius joined the new band. I guess it was a big deal, him coming with the band. I used him on one of my albums [*Black is the Color*]. So when I went to Sweden last year to play some concerts, the crowds were just unbelievable based on the fact that I had been associated with BS&T. That gig really did a lot for me exposure-wise. Wow, man, I had one sound company give me \$3,500 worth of equipment – tape decks, cassettes, reel-to-reel, monstrous speakers, a record changer, just super equipment. And here comes my reed company giving me four horns – a brand new baritone, brand new alto, brand new soprano, brand new tenor. So I kind of resented the fact that they validated me. I said, “Where were these dudes when I really needed this shit?” Now they’re going to come along and give it to me!

As I said, they were nice cats, but I kind of lost interest. The whole thing just didn’t get off the [ground]. I’m not used to taking two months to make a record. I do it in one day . . . I was trained to do that shit in one take.⁶⁴⁴

Keepnews said that Henderson’s tenure with the band “turned out to consist primarily of rehearsals and some incomplete recording.” He also stated that the above-mentioned equipment was supplied by the Selmer company.⁶⁴⁵ Pete Yellin discussed Henderson’s reasoning for accepting the position, and said,

He had a dog . . . a very expensive dog – an Afghan! He had an Afghan, he had a motorcycle, you know, he had a lot of things that he enjoyed. He had them right here in Brooklyn He wanted to pursue some things, he wanted to have a good life, and stuff. So, here comes some money, down the road. He took it.⁶⁴⁶

Although the exact circumstances of Henderson’s departure from the group in mid-to-late April 1972, are unknown, his difficult behavior might have contributed to the situation. Michael Cuscuna described an example and said,

I remember Bobby Colomby telling me that when Joe was living in Brooklyn and he was in Blood, Sweat & Tears for about four months, that they used to send a car to pick him up to take him to the airport. That car would sometimes have to sit there for two hours before he would saunter

⁶⁴⁴ Townley, “The Herculean Tenor of Joe Henderson,” 41.

⁶⁴⁵ Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

⁶⁴⁶ Viswanathan, “Blue Note Records Period of Joe Henderson,” 419.

down and get in the car. So, either you dealt with Joe on his own terms or you didn't.⁶⁴⁷

Henderson likely recorded on Bill Cosby's *Bill Cosby Presents Badfoot Brown And The Bunions Bradford Funeral Marching Band* in 1972 for Sussex Records.⁶⁴⁸ His participation is debatable, as the album features many musicians and Henderson is not easily distinguished. In any case, Alan Heineman gave the album one and one-half stars in his *Downbeat* review. Heineman criticized Cosby for creating his own self-indulgent album, when he could so easily promote actual jazz musicians.⁶⁴⁹

Henderson recorded *Black is the Color*, his seventh Milestone album, in March and April 1972, at Mercury Sound Studios in New York.⁶⁵⁰ The album featured Georg Wadenius, David Horowitz on synthesizer, Ron Carter, Airto Moreira, percussionist Ralph MacDonald, and Jack DeJohnette, who played electric piano on the title track.⁶⁵¹ Henderson composed the selections for the album, which included "Terra Firma," "Vis-à-vis," "Foregone Conclusion," "Black is the Color," and "Current Events."

This album marks the beginning of a two-year period in which Henderson was fascinated with the possibilities of overdubbing.⁶⁵² Mercury Sound Studios owned a sixteen-track recorder, and Henderson took full advantage of the new technology.⁶⁵³ The group recorded the basic tracks for each selection, and Henderson took the tapes home in order to study them. He returned to the studio with detailed notes and ideas for

⁶⁴⁷ Cuscuna interview.

⁶⁴⁸ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁶⁴⁹ Alan Heineman, "Bill Cosby: *Badfoot Brown and the Bunions Bradford Funeral and Marching Band*," *Downbeat Magazine*, October 1, 1970, 22.

⁶⁵⁰ Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

⁶⁵¹ Ibid.

⁶⁵² Ibid.

⁶⁵³ Ibid.

overdubbing possibilities. He dubbed his performances of instruments likely supplied to him during his tenure with Blood, Sweat & Tears, including soprano and alto saxophones, flute, alto flute and percussion.⁶⁵⁴ Henderson was pleased with the results, as Keepnews explained:

Joe was particularly intrigued when he played the final results for George Cables, who was unaware of what had happened after the initial session, and realized that George had no idea that he was listening to performances on which he was the pianist.⁶⁵⁵

Black is the Color received four stars in *Downbeat Magazine*, although Gary Giddins was less than enthusiastic in his review. He made a positive note regarding the album's sense of urgency, but felt it was excessively overdubbed and busy.⁶⁵⁶

Henderson first hired pianist Joanne Brackeen to his band in 1972, and the two worked steadily together through 1975.⁶⁵⁷ Brackeen shed some light on this relatively-undocumented period, by first describing her initial experience:

Then I got a call. This was in 1972; Joe called and I became a band member. He had a house over on Henry Street . . . in Brooklyn Heights, so we used to rehearse over there. We worked. We worked for three years. We went all over the place.⁶⁵⁸

The group seemed to perform much more than what is currently documented, and she explained that they gave performances in “Kansas, San Francisco, New York, Washington, Vancouver . . ., Florida, many times to Chicago. We just did so many tours

⁶⁵⁴ Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁶ Gary Giddins, “Joe Henderson: *Black is the Color*,” *Downbeat Magazine*, February 15, 1973, 23.

⁶⁵⁷ Brackeen interview.

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid.

that I really cannot remember them all.”⁶⁵⁹ The group traveled to Europe and was received well, as she stated,

People probably understood that music better in Europe. I wouldn't say that it wasn't understood here. I mean he did great in Chicago. We always had audiences; it was never half-full or anything. But the people in Europe were really excited. They knew what they were hearing, whereas in this country it was not so many people in that timeframe. I don't think it's like that so much anymore.⁶⁶⁰

Brackeen also spoke about the band's repertoire, and about the experience of performing with Henderson:

It was a lot of fun and every time you played, it felt like you went into a zone, a place, and your whole thing was right there. It was like a living reality here on Earth, but you're in a world of music. In other words, you wouldn't have any kind of thoughts going through your head because you're just busy enjoying the sound that the band is making, or that you are making and feeling.

We used to go to Chicago a lot . . . there on Rush Avenue. He sometimes would play a solo We didn't have that many tunes on a set. We would play long solos on the set. He maybe played twenty-five minutes and would just leave. I wouldn't see him. So it's a piano solo and I had to play until he came back. With a twenty-minute solo you really get involved in it. This happened quite often.

We played a lot of standards and a lot of his original music. He played “Good Morning, Heartache.” That was one of the ballads; it was really pretty. That just brings the memory of hearing him play. He used to do “Round About Midnight” and do a whole solo, period . . . which not too many people do now. We would always do “Recorda-Me” We'd do “Invitation” along with a lot of the tunes that he played. “A Shade of Jade,” “Inner Urge” and many other tunes It wouldn't be a lot of tunes. Like I said, we would do long solos, he and I. Bass solos and drum solos were not that long.⁶⁶¹

⁶⁵⁹ Brackeen interview.

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁶¹ Ibid.

On the occasion that Henderson traveled as a “single,” his repertoire consisted of standards that were firmly embedded in the jazz canon, as Ron McClure explained:

He seemed like he would play with anybody. It didn't really matter. And that's why he played those easy tunes It seemed like he would show up and you would probably see him one time with like, Joanne Brackeen and Ben Riley or somebody. The next time would be with Larry Willis and somebody else. And he'd go around . . . sort of like what Lee Konitz does. Goes around and plays with all these different rhythm sections everywhere and they just play the same tunes that everybody knows.⁶⁶²

Henderson performed with the Gil Evans Orchestra from April 5 through 10 at the Westbeth Cabaret in the West Village in New York, and continued to perform with them during weekends through May 21, 1972.⁶⁶³ The group also likely performed at the Kennedy Center Concert Hall in Washington, D.C. in April.⁶⁶⁴

Henderson recorded on Bill Evans's album, *Living Time*, in mid-May for Columbia Records. Several of his fellow musicians included Jimmy Giuffre, Sam Rivers, Garnett Brown, Eddie Gomez, and Tony Williams.⁶⁶⁵ He performed at Diggs' Den in New York on May 26 through 28 with The Horn Blowers, which featured the horn section of George Coleman and Curtis Fuller.⁶⁶⁶ He also performed at Slug's Saloon during the week on June 20,⁶⁶⁷ and recorded David Amram's album *Subway Night* on July 11 in New York.⁶⁶⁸

Henderson performed two engagements with his group, titled the “Black on Black Quintet,” in October and November 1972. Unfortunately, the personnel are unknown

⁶⁶² Viswanathan, “Blue Note Records Period of Joe Henderson,” 388-89.

⁶⁶³ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁵ Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

⁶⁶⁶ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁸ Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

from this short-lived group. They performed at the Jazz Showcase in Chicago on October 27 through 30, and at the Needle's Eye in New York in November.⁶⁶⁹ His last documented performance in 1972 was at Slug's Saloon on November 19 through 24.⁶⁷⁰ Henderson did not place in the 1972 *Downbeat Magazine* "International Critics Poll,"⁶⁷¹ but did place sixth in the "Reader's Poll," behind Sonny Rollins, Stan Getz, Gato Barbieri, Pharoah Sanders, and Dexter Gordon.⁶⁷²

By 1973, Henderson had developed a strong reputation as "The Phantom." These behaviors were beginning to affect his relationship with Milestone Records, as Keepnews explained:

By 1973, I had taken over the expanding jazz program at Fantasy, and had moved from New York to San Francisco. Within the year, Joe had made the same move, but we didn't see that much of each other. I really don't know how or when he had picked up his nickname of "The Phantom," but it referred to his ability at times to not show up for scheduled work, or to have his whereabouts be unknown for long stretches of time. Like other friends and close associates, I might have no word from him for several months, and then a sudden long-distance phone call ("Hey, Orrin! This is Joe") and maybe a far-ranging half-hour or more conversation while he was waiting to change planes at some distant airport.⁶⁷³

Joanne Brackeen gave a more well-rounded explanation of this phenomenon, and said,

If you had the connection, you would know. If you didn't, you would be calling him "The Phantom," or you worked with him and he was a friend. Whatever he could see you could know, that's what you would experience with him. He was a real people person. He knew in detail everybody's thing. It wasn't "I like you" or "I don't like you." It was from a high level.⁶⁷⁴

⁶⁶⁹ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁷¹ "International Critics Poll," *Downbeat Magazine*, August 17, 1972, 14-17.

⁶⁷² "Reader's Poll," *Downbeat Magazine*, December 21, 1972, 16.

⁶⁷³ Heinman and Keepnews, notes to *Power to the People*.

⁶⁷⁴ Brackeen interview.

Henderson recorded his album *Multiple* for Milestone on January 30 and 31, 1973, at Mercury Sound Studios.⁶⁷⁵ His sidemen for the sessions included pianist Larry Willis, James “Blood” Ulmer, guitarist John Thomas, Dave Holland, Jack DeJohnette, and percussionist Arthur Jenkins. Henderson composed the pieces “Tress-Cun-Deo-La,” “Song for Sinners,” and “Me, Among Others,” and included Holland’s “Turned Around” and DeJohnette’s “Bwaata.”⁶⁷⁶

Orrin Keepnews saw *Multiple* as a sequel album to *Black is the Color*, due to its focus on overdubbing and its electric aesthetic.⁶⁷⁷ This album also marks the only instance where Henderson’s voice is heard on an album.⁶⁷⁸ Additional overdubbing was completed two months later on April 5 and 13.⁶⁷⁹ Milestone had recently been acquired by Fantasy Records, which relocated Keepnews to California and made it difficult for him to return to New York to complete the sessions.⁶⁸⁰ The Milestone acquisition also prompted another recording contract for Henderson.

In the time between April and October 1973, Henderson permanently relocated to a large home in San Francisco, California, which he financed through his savings from Blood, Sweat & Tears.⁶⁸¹ He wanted to step back from the hectic New York music scene, as he explained:

I moved to California because I was trying to make a nice, dignified withdrawal from the scene, and then my record company, Milestone, moved out West. So I figured I’d just do some records, maybe do a few

⁶⁷⁵ Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁸¹ Brackeen interview.

special projects, go over to Japan occasionally, and maybe do a couple of George Wein's things. That would be enough.⁶⁸²

Eddie Henderson described the home, as well as the saxophonist's ascetic, eccentric lifestyle:

He lived in this big four story house by himself. I mean, in San Francisco . . . It was millions of dollars. It looked like a Spanish villa. He lived in there by himself. I remember one time when he had been there six months, and he invited me over to see his house. In the first floor, there's a King Arthur table in the living room. We go to the next floor, and there are two or three bedrooms, so he opens the door, and maybe one piece of furniture in each room. You go up to the next floor, and there are two bedrooms, with one piece of furniture in each one. Looked at the third floor, and it's an empty room! And he said "No shit!" He had been there for six months, but had never been up to the room to look at it. And he only inhabited one room of the house. Must've been like twelve rooms. He would stay downstairs in the first floor with his big King Arthur table. And that's the only room he would inhabit. He was a very eccentric guy Isn't that something?⁶⁸³

Joanne Brackeen explained:

He lived in Los Palmas in San Francisco, and it was four or five bedrooms. It was huge. He had a sunroom and a dining room and a living room, and upstairs were three or four more bedrooms. He lived in the dining room, and occasionally he even went into the kitchen! But that was his house.⁶⁸⁴

Henderson also hoped to teach at a university, and was contemplating whether or not to return to touring at all. He was getting tired, as he explained:

I don't know if I'll go back on the road again. I made that asphalt trip, wow, for a long time I have to say, "Joe, you've been out there for a little while, you don't have to go through that shit again, man."

He began teaching private lessons in his basement, which was an apartment suite, although his pedagogy was a bit peculiar, as Eddie Henderson stated,

⁶⁸² Townley, "The Herculean Tenor of Joe Henderson," 41.

⁶⁸³ Henderson interview.

⁶⁸⁴ Brackeen interview.

When the students came in on the ground floor, he let them in. There was a basement apartment, so they would never come upstairs to the regular house level. He'd just go let them in, and put them like in a dungeon, and then come upstairs and we'd finish our conversation. But he'd just write out maybe a line of music and have them practice for a half hour, and then go downstairs and collect the money and the next student would come in. When he'd be upstairs talking to me the whole time during the lesson. *Supposed* lesson . . . He might go upstairs and do a crossword puzzle. But you could hear the student downstairs, and then he'd go down and I heard him say, "On a professional level you sound good."⁶⁸⁵

Although Henderson moved away from the New York scene, he was still equally able to work internationally and at jazz festivals, as Pete Yellin described,

At that time, if you were an international star you didn't have to be in New York anymore. You could just do your business . . . Fax machines were starting to get popular . . . An agent would book you anyway.⁶⁸⁶

Henderson recorded another album, *Canyon Lady*, for Milestone on October 1 through 3, 1973, at Fantasy Studios in Berkeley, California.⁶⁸⁷ His rhythm section included pianist George Duke, pianist Mark Levine, bassist John Heard, and drummer Eric Gravatt. Henderson composed "Las Palmas," and included the Mark Levine compositions "All Things Considered" and "Canyon Lady." The album also included the Latin piece "Tres Palabras," which was suggested and conducted by trumpeter Luis Gasca.⁶⁸⁸ Producer Orrin Keepnews had granted Gasca permission to recruit musicians, but did not expect him to bring fifteen members, as he explained:

In our brief period in the area, both of us had come to know an undoubtedly talented, highly energetic, and hard-to-control trumpet player named Luis Gasca. Largely persuaded by him, we agreed to put together a Latin-flavored album . . . The first number to be recorded was a Latin standard proposed by Gasca; he was to arrange it and to call the mostly-local musicians. This was still an era in which rehearsal was rarely a part

⁶⁸⁵ Henderson interview.

⁶⁸⁶ Viswanathan, "Blue Note Records Period of Joe Henderson," 428.

⁶⁸⁷ Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid.

of the jazz picture, so when I walked into the studio during a run-through of “Tres Palabras” about a half-hour before starting time, I had no advance warning of what looked like a solid roomful of players. I was expecting an agreed-upon ten, but I had not anticipated the expansive nature of Gasca . . .⁶⁸⁹

Downbeat issued *Canyon Lady* an unenthusiastic three and one-half stars in its review,⁶⁹⁰ and Steve Voce followed suit in his review for *Jazz Journal*.⁶⁹¹

Henderson collaborated with Alice Coltrane for their second album on October 15 and 16, 1973, at Village Records in Los Angeles. Together with violinist Michael White, Charlie Haden, and percussionists Kenneth Nash, “Ndugu” Leon Chanler, and Baba Duru Oshun, they recorded *The Elements* for Milestone. Henderson wanted to work with Coltrane again since the recording of *Ptah, the El Daoud*, and Keepnews was able to accommodate his request.⁶⁹² *The Elements* presented Henderson in a style that conformed to Alice Coltrane’s aesthetic, and featured spoken word passages by Nash. The album has the significant distinction of being the only Henderson project which features his compositions exclusively. Every other Henderson project throughout his career contains at least one composition written by someone else. In their intended order, Henderson’s elements are “Air,” “Fire,” “Water,” and “Earth.”⁶⁹³

Henderson traveled to New York and recorded two albums at Van Gelder Studio for CTI. Ron Carter’s *All Blues* was recorded on October 24, and Johnny “Hammond” Smith’s *Higher Ground* was recorded on October 31 through November 1, 1973.⁶⁹⁴ He

⁶⁸⁹ Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

⁶⁹⁰ Eric Kriss, “Joe Henderson: *Canyon Lady*,” *Downbeat Magazine*, June 5, 1975, 19.

⁶⁹¹ Steve Voce, “Joe Henderson: *Canyon Lady*,” *Jazz Journal*, June 1975, 29.

⁶⁹² Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

⁶⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹⁴ Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

participated in a brief European tour, during which he performed on November 4 through 10 in Germany, Yugoslavia and Italy.⁶⁹⁵ His fellow musicians included saxophonist Jimmy Owens, Gary Burton, Cedar Walton, bassist Larry Ridley, and Roy Haynes. The group was named both “The Second Generation with guest Roy Haynes,” and the “Young Giants of Jazz.”⁶⁹⁶

Henderson returned to California and recorded three pieces for Flora Purim’s *Butterfly Dreams* on December 3 and 4, 1973.⁶⁹⁷ The album earned four stars in its *Downbeat* review, and Herb Nolan stated that the album was reminiscent of Return to Forever, a group in which Purim, Moreira and Stanley Clarke had performed.⁶⁹⁸

Henderson returned to Fantasy Studios one week later to record organist Charles Earland’s *Leaving This Planet* for Milestone on December 11 through 13. He joined fellow horn players Freddie Hubbard and Eddie Henderson for the session.⁶⁹⁹ The album earned four stars in its *Downbeat* review,⁷⁰⁰ but it was Earland who gave Henderson the highest praise, stating,

Now maybe I wouldn’t fit in as well on one of their sessions, but [Joe Henderson and Freddie Hubbard] were really fired up for mine, Joe Henderson particularly. Every time he stuck his horn to the mic I was amazed. I always knew he was a bad mother, but I couldn’t believe he was playing like this on my session.⁷⁰¹

⁶⁹⁵ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

⁶⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁷ Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

⁶⁹⁸ Herb Nolan, “Flora Purim: *Butterfly Dreams*,” *Downbeat Magazine*, October 10, 1974, 24.

⁶⁹⁹ Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

⁷⁰⁰ Marv Hohman, “Charles Earland: *Leaving This Planet*,” *Downbeat Magazine*, September 12, 1974, 22.

⁷⁰¹ Vernon Gibbs, “Charles Earland: Fed Up with that Funk,” *Downbeat Magazine*, March 27, 1975, 16.

Documentation is sparse for the majority of 1974. Henderson recorded Luis Gasca's *Born to Love You* in February for Fantasy in California, and recorded Patrice Rushen's *Prelusion* on August 8 and 9 for Prestige, which was an imprint of Fantasy Records.⁷⁰² Henderson performed on August 14 through 18 at The Happy Medium in Chicago. Brackeen was the only mentioned accompanist.⁷⁰³

Henderson recorded the first sessions for what would become his final Milestone album on October 1, 3 and 6, 1974, at Studios Europa Sonor in Paris, France.⁷⁰⁴ The French sessions for *Black Narcissus* featured pianist Joachim Kuhn, bassist J.F. Jenny-Clark, and drummer Daniel Humair.⁷⁰⁵ Henderson recorded his original pieces "Black Narcissus," "Hindsight and Forethought," "Power to the People," and "The Other Side of Right." He enjoyed working with Kuhn while in France, and it is unclear whether or not Henderson intended these sessions for wide release.⁷⁰⁶ Henderson also likely performed at the German Jazz Festival in October.⁷⁰⁷

Henderson assembled a group comprised of pianist Tom Grant, bassist John Toulson, and drummer Ron Steen, and gave two performances in Canada. The first occurred on October 27, 1974, at the University of Alberta, and the second took place at the University Theatre in Calgary in November.⁷⁰⁸ Henderson led a group at the Lighthouse in Hermosa Beach on November 12 through 17, although the personnel is

⁷⁰² Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁷⁰³ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁷⁰⁴ Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

⁷⁰⁵ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁷⁰⁶ Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

⁷⁰⁷ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid.

unknown.⁷⁰⁹ He placed fifth in the *Downbeat* “Reader’s Poll” “Tenor Saxophone” category, behind Sonny Rollins, Gato Barbieri, Stan Getz, and Pat LaBarbera.⁷¹⁰

On January 16, 1975, *Downbeat Magazine* published the first Joe Henderson feature story and interview to appear in print, excluding Henderson’s own liner material.⁷¹¹ Pete Townley conducted the interview, and gave Henderson the opportunity to voice his opinions regarding his portrayal in the media – specifically about his influences, his lack of recognition, and other musicians who were influenced by him. The following is an excerpt:

Townley: The other night listening to you on stage, I noticed your style seemed to be a healthy fusion of Rollins and Coltrane.

Henderson: Well, that may be, but now we’re getting into something that has been a constant disturbance factor if and when I ever read articles about my own playing.

Townley: Well, you know

Henderson: Just let me continue. Of the saxophone players that I’ve heard recently, say, within the last two or three years, more sound like me than any other player around. Granted, I’m not hearing every saxophone player around. . . . At one point, Sonny Rollins influenced me quite a bit. But I think the same people who also influenced Newk, also influenced me. As a result, we both came out sort of the same. Naturally, I can appreciate him. Wow, it’s like seeing somebody walk down the street who looks exactly like you but has a different mother and a different father, all total. You dig. But I strongly feel that as recently as five, six, maybe seven years ago, I developed elements about my own playing that are very uniquely my own

Because the saxophone players that I heard sound like me, they didn’t sound like Newk, they didn’t sound like John. I heard things that I know I developed over a period of years And I’m just flattered that someone could use something that I just really don’t think twice about.⁷¹²

⁷⁰⁹ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

⁷¹⁰ “Reader’s Poll,” *Downbeat Magazine*, December 19, 1974, 15.

⁷¹¹ Townley, “The Herculean Tenor of Joe Henderson,” 18.

⁷¹² *Ibid.*, 20.

The theft, or perceived theft, of his ideas would irritate Henderson for the rest of his life. He said in 1992:

I heard eight bars at a time that I know I worked out. I can tell you when I worked the music out. I can show you the music when I was putting it together. But when guys like this do an interview they don't acknowledge me. I'm not about to be bitter about this, but I've always felt good about acknowledging people who've had something to do with what I'm about. I've played the ideas of other people – Lester Young, Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, Sonny Rollins, Lee Konitz, Stan Getz – and I mention these guys whenever I do an interview. But there are players who are putting stuff out as if it's their music and they didn't create it. I did.

Other musicians felt similarly to Henderson, and came to his defense. Joanne Brackeen stated,

He was playing incredibly. There was nobody else that sounded like him. There was nobody else who phrased like he did. Then afterwards a few years go by and Michael Brecker comes up. Well Michael Brecker is copying. These people that studied and came up after him were all these people getting all this recognition.⁷¹³

Pete Yellin concurred, and said,

I'm telling you, every tenor player, and many alto players who were coming up in New York: Michael Brecker, included, and Bob Berg and all these guys They just imitated Joe Henderson, period. Imitated! Like Gary Bartz, for instance He used to come with a tape recorder to Joe's gigs, and Kenny Garrett also. They used to come to all of Joe's gigs. But when it came to the liner notes or something, they would never give Joe his due.⁷¹⁴

Henderson was subtly prideful of his achievements, which likely intensified his frustrations with other musicians. Pete Yellin recalled,

He wanted to be the best saxophone player that he could be, or that ever could be. He wanted to be the best, period, number one. He had a lot of

⁷¹³ Brackeen interview.

⁷¹⁴ Viswanathan, "Blue Note Records Period of Joe Henderson," 424.

pride . . . he's competitive but in a quiet way. And he'd just work hard to be the best, you know?⁷¹⁵

Kenny Burrell hired Henderson to record on his *Ellington is Forever* album on February 4 and 5, 1975, for Fantasy Records.⁷¹⁶ The album was a tribute to Duke Ellington, who had passed away the previous year. The album featured tunes such as “Chelsea Bridge” and “Take the ‘A’ Train,”⁷¹⁷ and received four stars in its *Downbeat Magazine* review.⁷¹⁸

Henderson recorded the basic tracks for his penultimate Milestone album, *Black Miracle*, on February 14 and 15, 1975. His rhythm section included George Duke, Ron Carter, and drummer Harvey Mason. Overdubs were recorded on April 1, September 24 and 25.⁷¹⁹ The album completed the overdub process prior to *Black Narcissus*, and was therefore issued first. The Henderson compositions “Gazelle,” “Immaculate Deception,” “Soulution,” and “Black Miracle” were included as well as Stevie Wonder’s “My Cherie Amour” and George Duke’s “Old Slippers.”⁷²⁰

Keepnews and Henderson were “trying for a hit” with *Black Miracle*, and the album therefore reflects a slightly commercial sensibility.⁷²¹ However, the album did not sell well, and received a lukewarm review in *Cadence*. Reviewer Kevin Yatarola wrote,

⁷¹⁵ Viswanathan, “Blue Note Records Period of Joe Henderson,” 416.

⁷¹⁶ Bob Blumenthal, notes to Kenny Burrell, *Ellington is Forever* (1975), LP, Fantasy F-79005.

⁷¹⁷ Ibid.

⁷¹⁸ Mikal Gilmore, “Kenny Burrell: *Ellington is Forever*,” *Downbeat Magazine*, April 22, 1976, 24.

⁷¹⁹ Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

⁷²⁰ Ibid.

⁷²¹ Ibid.

“The musicians know what they’re doing, so if you don’t find Return to Forever and the Brecker Brothers insulting to your jazz intelligence, you might enjoy this album.”⁷²²

Henderson performed at the Kuumbwa Jazz Center in Santa Cruz, California on April 6. The event coordinators had difficulty in paying Henderson, as they recounted: “We had to pay Joe Henderson with rolls of quarters from the donations. The average donation was thirty-five cents.”⁷²³ He also performed at Gunn High School in Palo Alto on April 17.⁷²⁴

The final ensemble tracking session for *Black Narcissus* took place on April 26, 1975, at Fantasy Studios.⁷²⁵ Henderson realized that pianist Joachim Kuhn was traveling through California, and quickly organized the session to complete the album. Henderson was able to assemble the rhythm section of Dave Friesen and Jack DeJohnette on short notice, and they recorded Henderson’s “Amoeba” and the standard “Good Morning, Heartache.”⁷²⁶ Henderson would complete the overdubbing process in July and September 1976.⁷²⁷

Henderson performed multiple times throughout 1975, including a weeklong residency at Northern Illinois University.⁷²⁸ He assembled a quintet for a five-evening engagement at Ratso’s in Chicago, which began on October 15. He also performed with Hank Crawford in Redondo Beach, California on December 9 through 15.⁷²⁹ He

⁷²² Kevin Yatarola, “Joe Henderson: *Black Miracle*,” *Cadence*, May 1976, 29.

⁷²³ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

⁷²⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷²⁵ Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

⁷²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷²⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷²⁸ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

⁷²⁹ *Ibid.*

performed with a quintet, which included guitarist Ross Traut, pianist Bill Bell, bassist Ratzon Harris, and drummer Ralph Penland for a performance at the Great American Music Hall in San Francisco on December 19.⁷³⁰ Recordings of this performance exist, and may be purchased and streamed online.⁷³¹

Henderson was honored in both the *Downbeat Magazine* “International Critics Poll” and “Reader’s Poll.” He placed fifth in the “Established Talent” category of the “Critics Poll,”⁷³² and third in the “Reader’s Poll,” behind Sonny Rollins and Stan Getz.⁷³³

Henderson recorded three pieces on percussionist Coke Escovedo’s album, *Comin’ At Ya*, in March 1976, at Different Fur Studios in San Francisco.⁷³⁴ He performed at the Pioneer Banquet in Seattle, Washington on March 16 with Tom Grant, Dave Friesen, and Ron Steen, and performed at the Lighthouse on May 18 through 23. He also returned to Northern Illinois University during the summer.⁷³⁵ Henderson overdubbed solos for three pieces on Flora Purim’s *That’s What She Said* and *Encounters* on September 25 and 26, 1976.⁷³⁶

This would be Henderson’s last session for Milestone Records under contract. Orrin Keepnews explained: “It was the beginning of another down period for jazz; the company was reducing its roster, and they had been carrying his artistically rewarding but

⁷³⁰ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

⁷³¹ Ibid.

⁷³² “International Critics Poll,” *Downbeat Magazine*, August 14, 1975, 16.

⁷³³ “Reader’s Poll,” *Downbeat Magazine*, December 18, 1975, 19.

⁷³⁴ Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

⁷³⁵ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

⁷³⁶ Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

fiscally undistinguished projects for a number of years.”⁷³⁷ Henderson’s albums had failed to sell, despite their quality. Keepnews said,

There are few albums that mean more to me than the body of my work with Henderson. He and I were very much aware of how distinctive almost every one of them was And we were equally aware of one disturbing element they all seemed to have in common – the absence of sales impact. “We have made just about every kind of album together,” I have been known to say, “except one that sells.”⁷³⁸

The circumstances of Henderson’s departure from Milestone are a bit murky. Keepnews asserted that the label released Henderson, while the saxophonist spoke as if he left the label voluntarily due to lack of promotion and support. Arthur White summarized the situation in his 2008 dissertation:

Fantasy, a multimedia company that produced the film *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, bought out Milestone in the early 1970s and spent the bulk of the company’s creative energy producing motion pictures, not promoting the musical roster of Milestone. Henderson theorized that Fantasy purchased Milestone to create a tax shelter to pay off the debts it had accrued while making *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*. Henderson noted, “I wished they would have shared their game plan with me. There’s no way I would have spent five minutes with a company like that.”⁷³⁹

Whatever the reason for his departure, Henderson would endure fifteen years of relative obscurity before receiving the recognition he sought on the Verve label.

Intervening Years (1976-1991)

Freelance Period

The period between September 1976, and November 1985, found Henderson’s career in a lull. The saxophonist stated that the reason for his relocation to San Francisco

⁷³⁷ Kirchner and Keepnews, notes to *The Milestone Years*.

⁷³⁸ Heinman and Keepnews, notes to *Power to the People*.

⁷³⁹ Arthur Lynn White, “Joe Henderson: An Analysis of Harmony in Selected Compositions and Improvisations.” (D.M.A. diss., University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2008), 15.

was because he “was trying to make a nice, dignified withdrawal from the scene,”⁷⁴⁰ and his recent departure from Milestone Records provided him with the opportunity to do so. Luckily, he faced only modest financial pressures during this time, as his tenure with the group, Blood, Sweat & Tears had financed his large home in Las Palmas.⁷⁴¹ This is not to say that Henderson was completely inactive until 1985: he recorded three of his own albums; he traveled domestically and abroad; he performed and recorded with Freddie Hubbard, Chick Corea, and Mal Waldron; and fulfilled his wish of teaching at the university level. In fact, Henderson’s output during this time would be considered a high point for the careers of many other musicians; however, it is designated as a “lull” only in comparison to Henderson’s previously illustrious career.

Following Henderson’s departure from Milestone, he embarked on a European tour in December 1976.⁷⁴² His fellow musicians included pianist Tom Grant, bassist Rick Laird, and drummer Ron Steen. While in Europe, the rhythm section recorded two albums for the Timeless label. The albums were recorded on December 10 and 11, in Weesp, Holland.⁷⁴³ *Mystified* was led by Tom Grant,⁷⁴⁴ *Soft Focus* was led by Rick Laird,⁷⁴⁵ and Henderson produced both. Henderson performed several tracks on each album, and composed the pieces “Outer Surge” and “Tranquility” for *Soft Focus*.⁷⁴⁶ *Soft*

⁷⁴⁰ Townley, “The Herculean Tenor of Joe Henderson,” 41.

⁷⁴¹ Brackeen interview.

⁷⁴² Bob Henschen, “Joe Henderson: *Barcelona*,” *Downbeat Magazine*, January 1980, 42.

⁷⁴³ Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

⁷⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴⁶ Bob Henschen, “Rick Laird: *Soft Focus*,” *Downbeat Magazine*, January 1980, 42.

Focus received three stars in its *Downbeat* review.⁷⁴⁷ Henderson also placed fourteenth in the 1976 *Downbeat Magazine* “Reader’s Poll” in the “Tenor Saxophone” category.⁷⁴⁸

Henderson participated in the Third-Annual Midwinter Jazz Combo/Improvisation Clinic at Fort Hays State University on January 2 through 8, 1977. His fellow faculty members included Jamey Aebersold, David Baker, Ed Soph and Rufus Reid.⁷⁴⁹ This is the first event in which the saxophonist engaged in the relatively new jazz education movement, which was primarily led by Aebersold.

Henderson traveled to Europe in April with a group comprised of guitarist Steve Erquiaga, Ratzo Harris, and drummer Mike Hyman, and they performed at the Postaula in Bremen, Germany, on April 12, 1977. They returned to the States, and Henderson recorded the first session for his album *Barcelona* on June 2,⁷⁵⁰ during a Jamey Aebersold Summer Jazz Workshop at Wichita State University. Henderson was a faculty member at the Workshop, and he recruited fellow faculty member and drummer Ed Soph and bassist Wayne Darling to record the twenty-eight-minute original title track.⁷⁵¹ He would record two additional original compositions, “Mediterranean Sun” and “Y Yo La Quiero (And I Love Her),” to complete the album. These tracks were recorded with Darling in Munich, Germany, on November 15, 1978.⁷⁵² Bob Henschen awarded the album four stars in his *Downbeat* review.⁷⁵³

⁷⁴⁷ Henschen, “Rick Laird: *Soft Focus*.”

⁷⁴⁸ “Reader’s Poll,” *Downbeat Magazine*, December 16, 1976, 20.

⁷⁴⁹ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

⁷⁵⁰ Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

⁷⁵¹ Ed Soph, email message to author, August 3, 2016.

⁷⁵² Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

⁷⁵³ Henschen, “Joe Henderson: *Barcelona*.”

The saxophonist was reunited with his good friend, trumpeter Eddie Henderson, for two days of recording at Fantasy Studios in Berkeley, California on June 30 and July 1, 1977. In a similar manner to the 1976 European sessions, the two days yielded bassist Richard Davis's *Way Out West* and *Fancy Free*.⁷⁵⁴ Henderson then performed for six evenings at the Village Vanguard with Joanne Brackeen, Ratzo Harris and drummer Danny Spencer on October 15 through 20.⁷⁵⁵

Henderson recorded on Woody Shaw's major label debut, *Rosewood*, on December 15, 17 and 19, 1977, for Columbia Records.⁷⁵⁶ Although Shaw utilized two different ensembles for the album, and each group recorded roughly equal amounts of material, Henderson appeared on five of the six issued tracks.⁷⁵⁷ Upon its release, *Rosewood* proved successful for Shaw, who was gaining renown among jazz listeners and critics.⁷⁵⁸ Chuck Berg awarded the album five stars in his *Downbeat* review, and stated that, "Overall, *Rosewood* presents contemporary acoustic playing at its best."⁷⁵⁹

Additionally, Michael Cuscuna, who produced the album, spoke of events which further solidified Henderson's reputation as "The Phantom":

We were doing Woody Shaw's first Columbia album, *Rosewood*. Joe was on half the album. We were doing it at Columbia 30th Street, which was a large converted church on East 30th Street in Manhattan. Basically the building was this large converted church with a control room and a corridor, and there was half a flight downstairs where there were bathrooms, and that was it. That's the entire scope of it. A large building, but that was it, basically three rooms.

⁷⁵⁴ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁷⁵⁵ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁷⁵⁶ Michael Cuscuna, notes to Woody Shaw, *Rosewood* (1977), CD, Columbia, CK 65519, 1998.

⁷⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁸ "International Critics Poll," *Downbeat Magazine*, August 10, 1978, 17.

⁷⁵⁹ Chuck Berg, "Woody Shaw: *Rosewood*," *Downbeat Magazine*, June 1, 1978, 24.

We did a take, we finished a tune, and I said, “Let’s just take twenty minutes and then we’ll go on to the next tune.” Woody and I are in the control booth listening to playback, and he said, “Well let’s go. Let’s do more.” So I said, “Alright, let me go get Joe.” I went down to the bathrooms, I looked in the men’s room, looked in the women’s room, no Joe. I went down the sidewalk to see if he was out there for a smoke, no Joe. I went to the bar on the corner, no Joe. I went back into the studio, no Joe. I said, “I don’t know. I don’t know where the fuck Joe is.” And as we’re saying that, he materializes in front of his fucking microphone in the middle of the studio. We still to this day don’t know how he got back in, except through like, the Star Trek thing where they transmit you But it was fucking freaky. Woody just said, “He does this all the time, and no one knows how, but he does this all the time.” And that’s of course how he got the name, “The Phantom.”⁷⁶⁰

By 1978, Henderson had achieved his goal of teaching music at the collegiate level. Although it is unknown when his duties began, he certainly taught saxophone at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music from 1978⁷⁶¹ through 1982.⁷⁶² He was also a clinician for the National Stage Band Clinics organization in 1978.⁷⁶³ Henderson led his own group for a five-evening engagement at the Jazz Showcase in Chicago, on February 15 through 19, 1978.⁷⁶⁴

Henderson joined flutist Hubert Laws, George Benson, Kenny Barron, Ron Carter, Jack DeJohnette, and keyboardist Dale Oehler for Freddie Hubbard’s album *Superblue* on March 30 through April 1, 1978.⁷⁶⁵ The album, recorded for Columbia Records, focused on the funk genre in a manner similar to Herbie Hancock’s efforts. *Superblue* received mediocre reviews in the media. Chip Stern rated the album three and

⁷⁶⁰ Cuscuna interview.

⁷⁶¹ Don Sickler, *The Artistry of Joe Henderson*, (New York, NY: The Big 3 Music Corporation, 1978), 4.

⁷⁶² San Francisco Conservatory of Music, e-mail message to author, March 10, 2016.

⁷⁶³ Sickler, *The Artistry of Joe Henderson*, 4.

⁷⁶⁴ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

⁷⁶⁵ Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

one-half stars in his *Downbeat* review, and suggested that Hubbard return to his foundation in straight-ahead jazz.⁷⁶⁶ Reviews in *Jazz Journal*⁷⁶⁷ and *Cadence*⁷⁶⁸ expressed similar opinions, and said that the album was predictable.

Henderson gave a performance in Stuttgart, Germany, on April 4, 1978.⁷⁶⁹ He quickly returned for a series of performances at Parnell's in Seattle, on April 7 through 9.⁷⁷⁰ Additionally, he performed with Joanne Brackeen, Ratzo Harris, and Danny Spencer at the Village Vanguard in April. Their repertoire included Henderson's "Isotope," "Serenity" and "Afro-Centric," and the performance was highly praised in a *Downbeat Magazine* review.⁷⁷¹ Henderson began a lasting collaboration with pianist Mal Waldron on June 24, at a performance in Paris, France.⁷⁷² Although the Paris concert was the only documented engagement of the trip, several additional, lengthier tours would follow.

Henderson recorded Roy Haynes's *Vistalite* for Galaxy Records on July 12, 1978, at Fantasy Studios in Berkeley, California.⁷⁷³ He then led his group for a three-week residency at Sandy's Jazz Revival in Boston, on September 9 through October 1.⁷⁷⁴ Henderson gave performances at the University of Pittsburgh on October 26 through 28, before completing the final session for *Barcelona* on November 15 in Munich,

⁷⁶⁶ Chip Stern, "Freddie Hubbard: *Superblue*," *Downbeat Magazine*, October 5, 1978, 26.

⁷⁶⁷ Alun Morgan, "Freddie Hubbard: *Superblue*," *Jazz Journal*, November 1978, 40.

⁷⁶⁸ Spencer R. Weston, "Freddie Hubbard: *Superblue*," *Cadence*, September 1978, 38-41.

⁷⁶⁹ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁷⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷¹ Chuck Berg, "Caught in the Act: Joe Henderson, Village Vanguard/New York City," *Downbeat Magazine*, April 20, 1978, 37.

⁷⁷² Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁷⁷³ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁷⁷⁴ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

Germany.⁷⁷⁵ He performed with his group, including Joanne Brackeen, John Lockwood, and Danny Spencer, in Freiburg, Germany, on November 20, and again on December 3 in Selestadt, Germany.⁷⁷⁶ The Selestadt set featured Henderson's compositions "Serenity," "Black Narcissus," and "Inner Urge."⁷⁷⁷

The saxophonist returned to Berkeley, California, to record two tracks for two Galaxy Records compilation projects on December 5, 1978.⁷⁷⁸ "Relaxin' at Camarillo" was issued on *5 Birds and a Monk*,⁷⁷⁹ and "Good Morning, Heartache" was issued on *Ballads by Four*.⁷⁸⁰ Both selections featured the rhythm section of pianist Stanley Cowell, bassist John Heard, and Roy Haynes.⁷⁸¹ Henderson returned to Europe with Brackeen, Lockwood, and Spencer, and they performed in Lelystad, the Netherlands, on December 12.⁷⁸² He joined Eddie Henderson, Freddie Hubbard, and Julian Priester for a New Year's Eve performance at Keystone Korner in San Francisco to close out the year.⁷⁸³ Henderson also placed thirteenth in the *Downbeat* "Reader's Poll" in the "Tenor Saxophone" category.⁷⁸⁴

Henderson returned to Milestone Records and to the Van Gelder Studio in New Jersey to record Ron Carter's *Parade* in March 1979.⁷⁸⁵ He was joined by Chick Corea and Tony Williams. Corea and Henderson knew each other from Henderson's 1960s-era

⁷⁷⁵ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁷⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁸ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁸¹ Ibid.

⁷⁸² Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁷⁸³ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁴ "Reader's Poll," *Downbeat Magazine*, December 21, 1978, 22.

⁷⁸⁵ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

big band, but *Parade* was the first time the two musicians recorded together.⁷⁸⁶ In April, Henderson recorded on trumpeter Art Farmer's *Yama* at the Power Station in New York. Several of his fellow musicians included pianist and composer Don Grolnick, pianist Fred Hersch, Eddie Gomez, and drummer Steve Gadd.⁷⁸⁷

Henderson and Mal Waldron traveled to Europe in mid-June 1979, and were accompanied by John Lockwood and drummer Makaya Ntshoko. Either Henderson or Waldron was announced as the group's leader, and sometimes they shared top billing. They began their trip with a performance in Frankfurt, Germany, on June 10, and performed at the Ljubljana Jazz Festival in Yugoslavia on June 15. They gave a performance for Jazz Holidays Velden in Austria on June 29 through July 1, and closed their trip at the Lugano Jazz Festival in Switzerland on July 3 and 4, 1979.⁷⁸⁸

Henderson led his first session for a "one-off" project for Contemporary Records, on August 20 in Los Angeles. He called Chick Corea, Richard Davis, and Tony Williams for *Relaxin' at Camarillo*, and they recorded Corea's compositions "Crimson Lake" and "Yes, My Dear." Future Verve producer Richard Seidel was the assistant producer for the album. Henderson returned to the studio on December 29, with Corea, bassist Tony Dumas and drummer Peter Erskine. They recorded Henderson's composition "Y Todavía La Quiero," as well as Charlie Parker's "Relaxin' at Camarillo" and the standard "My One and Only Love." These selections completed the album, and it was released in

⁷⁸⁶ Kirchner, notes to *Big Band*.

⁷⁸⁷ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁷⁸⁸ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

1981.⁷⁸⁹ *Relaxin' at Camarillo* marked the beginning of the phase in Henderson's career, in which he accepted short-term album contracts in exchange for a quick payout.⁷⁹⁰

Trombonist J.J. Johnson utilized Henderson for his album *Pinnacles* which was recorded on September 17 through 19, 1979, at Fantasy Studios in Berkeley. The saxophonist joined trumpeter Oscar Brashear, Tommy Flanagan, Ron Carter, Billy Higgins, and Kenneth Nash for the recording.⁷⁹¹ Several months later, Henderson recorded the piece, "Flamenco," for Chick Corea's *Tap Step*, in either December 1979, or January 1980. The album was recorded at Love Castle Studio in Los Angeles for Warner Bros. Records.⁷⁹² Henderson was awarded eleventh place in the *Downbeat Magazine* "Reader's Poll" in the "Tenor Saxophone" category.⁷⁹³

Following the completion of *Relaxin' at Camarillo*, Henderson quickly returned to the studio to record *Mirror, Mirror*, in January 1980. The album was recorded for the Pausa label at Studio Master in Los Angeles, and it featured Chick Corea, Ron Carter, and Billy Higgins.⁷⁹⁴ Henderson relied heavily on the compositions of his sidemen; *Mirror, Mirror* featured Corea's title track and "Blues for Liebestraum." It also featured Carter's "Candlelight" and "Keystone," as well the standard "What's New" and Henderson's own "Joe's Bolero." Arthur Moorhead, a reviewer for *Downbeat*, stated that the album lacked intensity, and awarded it three and one-half stars in his review.⁷⁹⁵

⁷⁸⁹ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁷⁹⁰ Rufus Reid, interview by author, June 22, 2016.

⁷⁹¹ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁷⁹² Ibid.

⁷⁹³ "Reader's Poll," *Downbeat Magazine*, December 1979, 22.

⁷⁹⁴ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁷⁹⁵ Arthur Moorhead, "Joe Henderson: *Mirror Mirror*," *Downbeat Magazine*, April 1981, 40.

Henderson led a group comprised of Fred Hersch, John Lockwood and Joe Chambers at Seventh Avenue South, which was owned by the Brecker Brothers, in New York in April 1980.⁷⁹⁶ He traveled to Europe with the George Gruntz Concert Jazz Band, and they recorded a live album at the Quartier Latin in Berlin, on April 7 and 8.⁷⁹⁷

Around this time, Henderson began to be viewed as a jazz “all-star.” As someone who was thoroughly established in the genre, with twenty years of professional experience, he began to receive a higher level of respect from jazz audiences and critics. This led to increased bookings at jazz festivals with all-star “jam session” performances. One such event was Concerts by the Sea in Redondo Beach, California, on April 24 through 27, where he performed with Joe Farrell and George Cables.⁷⁹⁸

Henderson joined Eddie Gomez and Jack DeJohnette to record Joanne Brackeen’s *Ancient Dynasty* in May 1980.⁷⁹⁹ Brackeen described her music as “ridiculously hard for that era,” and Henderson rose to the challenge. Brackeen’s composition, “Egyptian Dune Dance,” was not featured on the recording, but the saxophonist’s approach to learning this piece exemplified his process. Brackeen explained:

He had never had anything like that; it was in five-and-one-half/four. I remember he said, “Can we maybe play this on the second set?” This was his way. You never heard him play a beep on his horn, but he was ready to play it, and it was totally perfect.⁸⁰⁰

⁷⁹⁶ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

⁷⁹⁷ Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

⁷⁹⁸ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

⁷⁹⁹ Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

⁸⁰⁰ Brackeen interview.

Henderson's favorite piece on *Ancient Dynasty* was the waltz, "Remembering."⁸⁰¹ Arthur Moorhead awarded the album four stars in his *Downbeat Magazine* review.⁸⁰²

On June 21 and 22, 1980, Henderson participated as a member of the Contemporary All-Stars at the Playboy Jazz Festival at the Hollywood Bowl in Hollywood, California. He was joined by Joe Farrell, Freddie Hubbard, George Cables, John Heard, and drummer Ralph Penland.⁸⁰³ He led his group at the Keystone Korner on July 28, and recorded on bassist James Leary's *Legacy* for Blue Collar Records in August and September.⁸⁰⁴

Henderson participated in another all-star lineup for the Aurex Jazz Festival in Japan, and was joined by Joe Farrell, Michael and Randy Brecker, Freddie Hubbard, guitarist Robben Ford, George Duke, bassist Alphonso Johnson, and Peter Erskine. The group performed in Tokyo on September 2, in Osaka on September 6, and in Yokohama on September 7. These performances were recorded and released as *Jazz of the 80s* by East World.⁸⁰⁵ Henderson then performed at the Keystone Korner with Mal Waldron on September 17 through 21, 1980.⁸⁰⁶

Henderson began 1981 with several performances at Sweet Basil in New York, on January 20 through 24.⁸⁰⁷ He then traveled to Europe with pianist Tete Montoliu, John

⁸⁰¹ Brackeen interview.

⁸⁰² Arthur Moorhead, "Joanne Brackeen: *Ancient Dynasty*," *Downbeat Magazine*, April 1981, 40.

⁸⁰³ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁵ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁸⁰⁶ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁸⁰⁷ Ibid.

Lockwood and Mike Hyman, and they performed in Vienna, Austria, on January 26, and in Dusseldorf, Germany, on February 17.⁸⁰⁸

Henderson briefly joined Chick Corea's band around the time of June 30, 1981, for a performance at Avery Fisher Hall in New York.⁸⁰⁹ The group, comprised of Corea, Henderson, bassist Gary Peacock, and Roy Haynes, performed at the Nimes Jazz Festival in Nimes, France, in July, as well as in Velden, Austria, on July 4, and at the Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland on July 15.⁸¹⁰ Henderson returned to the U.S. and participated in the "New Jazz at the Public" radio series at the Public Theater on November 5 and 6, in New York. His group consisted of former bandmates Pete Yellin and Curtis Fuller, as well as Fred Hersch, bassist Cecil McBee and Roy Haynes.⁸¹¹

Henderson performed for three evenings at Keystone Korner, with Freddie Hubbard, Bobby Hutcherson, pianist Billy Childs, bassist Larry Klein, and Steve Houghton, on November 27 through 29, 1981. These evenings resulted in the three Hubbard albums, *Keystone Bop*, *Classics* and *A Little Night Music*. The pieces, which included "Red Clay," "Body and Soul," and "Sky Dive," among others, each averaged approximately fifteen minutes in length.⁸¹² The albums were well received; *Keystone Bop* is frequently mentioned in jazz academia, and *A Little Night Music* received three and one-half stars in its *Downbeat* review.⁸¹³

⁸⁰⁸ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁸⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁸¹⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹¹ Ibid.

⁸¹² Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁸¹³ Fred Bouchard, "Freddie Hubbard: *A Little Night Music*," *Downbeat Magazine*, January 1984, 32.

Henderson recorded two albums for drummer Lenny White over a consecutive five-day period in December 1981, or January 1982.⁸¹⁴ White, who produced the albums, wished to assemble a group which would minimally rehearse, and would track two albums in the recording style of previous Billie Holliday sessions.⁸¹⁵ He called together a group that was largely comprised of his former employers, including Freddie Hubbard, Henderson, Chick Corea, Stanley Clarke, and vocalist Chaka Khan.⁸¹⁶ *Echoes of an Era* was recorded over three days; the first day was dedicated to the group's only rehearsal, and the remaining two days were allotted for recording. The selections were allowed a maximum of two takes each.⁸¹⁷ The album featured the classic pieces "All of Me," "I Mean You" and "Take the A Train," among others.⁸¹⁸ The album was well received; although it was only awarded three and one-half stars by *Downbeat*, Khan earned a Grammy nomination in the "Best Jazz Performance, Vocal" category.⁸¹⁹

The Griffith Park Collection was recorded in the remaining two days at Corea's Mad Hatter Studios in Los Angeles, and utilized the same group of musicians, sans Khan.⁸²⁰ The group did not rehearse the music at all, and they allowed themselves no more than two recording takes.⁸²¹ The music was slightly more adventurous than the previous session, and featured Corea's "October Ballade," Clarke's "Why Wait," and

⁸¹⁴ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁸¹⁵ White interview.

⁸¹⁶ Lenny White and Chaka Khan, notes to *Echoes of an Era* (1981, 1982), CD, Elektra/Rhino R2 73781, 2003.

⁸¹⁷ Ibid.

⁸¹⁸ Ibid.

⁸¹⁹ Ibid.

⁸²⁰ Lenny White, notes to *The Griffith Park Collection* (1980), LP, Elektra Musician E1-60025.

⁸²¹ Ibid.

White's "Guernica," among others.⁸²² The album received three stars in its *Downbeat* review. Reviewer Cliff Radel felt the album would have benefitted from additional preparation and enthusiasm, although he praised Henderson's performance.⁸²³

Henderson joined Dave Friesen and Billy Higgins for Mal Waldron's album, *One Entrance, Many Exits*, on January 4, 1982, in Menlo Park, California, for Palo Alto Records.⁸²⁴ The album was primarily comprised of Waldron originals, although Henderson was especially pleased to perform the ballad "How Deep is the Ocean."⁸²⁵ Waldron was complimentary of Henderson's performance, and stated, "Joe is like a champ . . . a genius!"⁸²⁶ Henderson then performed at the Lush Life in New York, with Joanne Brackeen, Ron Carter and drummer Adam Nussbaum in early-February.⁸²⁷

The Griffith Park group reconvened for a series of performances in early April, and began a five-day tour of California's Bay Area.⁸²⁸ The performances from this tour were recorded, and selections were issued as *The Griffith Park Collection 2: In Concert* on Elektra Musician.⁸²⁹ The group added vocalist Nancy Wilson, and performed at Wolf and Rissmiller's Country Club in Reseda, California on April 7, 1982.⁸³⁰

⁸²² White, notes to *The Griffith Park Collection*.

⁸²³ Cliff Radel, "The Griffith Park Collection," *Downbeat Magazine*, July 1982, 35, 38.

⁸²⁴ Herb Wong, notes to Mal Waldron, *One Entrance, Many Exits* (1983), CD, Palo Alto PA 8014-N.

⁸²⁵ Ibid.

⁸²⁶ Ibid.

⁸²⁷ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁸²⁸ Lenny White, notes to *The Griffith Park Collection 2: In Concert* (1983), LP, Elektra Musician 60262-1-I.

⁸²⁹ Ibid.

⁸³⁰ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

Henderson joined Freddie Hubbard and Bobby Hutcherson for performances at the UC Berkeley Jazz Festival on May 28 through 30.⁸³¹ He then performed with an all-star group which included George Benson, Ron Carter and Tony Williams at the Hampton Jazz Festival in Hampton, Virginia, which most likely occurred in June.⁸³² He recorded for Dave Eshelman's *The Jazz Garden: Dave Eshelman's Jazz Garden Big Band* album on June 21 and 25, and July 1, 1982, in Menlo Park, California.⁸³³ Eshelman was the director of the jazz program at San Jose City College, and it was around this time that he hired Henderson to perform with his student big band. Drummer Sylvia Cuenca performed with the band at the time, and first met Henderson during his visit. Henderson was so impressed with Cuenca's performance that he asked about her for the next three years and eventually hired her for his band, upon her move to New York.⁸³⁴

The saxophonist performed in Saratoga Springs, New York, for the Saratoga Jazz Festival on July 4, 1982. He participated in an all-star jam session which featured Gerry Mulligan, trumpeter Wynton Marsalis, George Benson, Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter, Tony Williams, and vocalist Bobby McFerrin.⁸³⁵ He then traveled to Europe with Freddie Hubbard, Kenny Barron, Ron Carter, and Tony Williams, where they performed in Copenhagen, Denmark, and at the Umbria Jazz Festival in Perugia, Italy, in July. They also performed in Wiesen, Austria, on July 16, and at the North Sea Jazz Festival in the Netherlands on the following day.⁸³⁶

⁸³¹ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁸³² Ibid.

⁸³³ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁸³⁴ Sylvia Cuenca, interview by author, April 29, 2016.

⁸³⁵ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁸³⁶ Ibid.

Henderson led a group at the Lush Life in New York in mid-August 1982, with Joanne Brackeen, Charlie Haden, and Al Foster.⁸³⁷ He then performed at the Detroit Institute on September 24 with Brackeen.⁸³⁸ He was recognized in the *Downbeat Magazine* “Reader’s Poll,” and placed fourteenth in the “Tenor Saxophone” category.⁸³⁹ Henderson closed 1982 with a New Year’s Eve performance with the Joe Bonner All-Stars.⁸⁴⁰

Henderson recorded David Friesen’s *Amber Skies* in January and April 1983, for Palo Alto Records in Los Angeles. He joined flutist Paul Horn, Chick Corea, Paul Motian and Airto Moreira for the sessions.⁸⁴¹ Friesen, who composed every piece on the album, wrote “Underlying” and “In the Place of Calling” to specifically serve as solo vehicles for Henderson.⁸⁴² The album was awarded five stars by Owen Cordle in *Downbeat*, and he stated that Henderson “sounds like the best of John Coltrane and Ornette Coleman combined.”⁸⁴³

In approximately October 1983, Henderson performed in an all-star setting with Joe Farrell at the IV Festival Internacional De Jazz De Granada, in Granada, Spain.⁸⁴⁴ He was recognized in the *Downbeat Magazine* “Reader’s Poll,” and placed eleventh in the “Tenor Saxophone” category.⁸⁴⁵

⁸³⁷ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

⁸³⁸ Ibid.

⁸³⁹ “Reader’s Poll,” *Downbeat Magazine*, December 1982, 20.

⁸⁴⁰ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

⁸⁴¹ Herb Wong, notes to David Friesen, *Amber Skies* (1984), LP, Palo Alto PA 8043-N.

⁸⁴² Ibid.

⁸⁴³ Owen Cordle, “David Friesen: *Amber Skies*,” *Downbeat Magazine*, July 1984, 38.

⁸⁴⁴ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

⁸⁴⁵ “Reader’s Poll,” *Downbeat Magazine*, December 1983, 22.

Properly documented engagements in 1984 are currently scarce; however, Henderson did perform in Stockholm, Sweden, with Lenny White, pianist Adzik Sendekci, Ron McClure, and violinist Michael Urbaniak on May 30.⁸⁴⁶ He traveled to Europe with Freddie Hubbard, and they performed in Comacchio, Italy, on July 8, and at the Montreux Jazz Festival in Montreux, Switzerland, on July 11. They were accompanied by pianist Michel Petrucciani, Buster Williams, and Billy Hart.⁸⁴⁷ Henderson also performed one piece with Van Morrison at the Montreux Festival. The live set was recorded and issued as *I Can't Go On... But I'll Go On*.⁸⁴⁸ Henderson was a “special guest soloist” with the French Ornicar Big Band for their album, *Mais Ou Est Donc Ornicar?* The album was recorded on July 26 through 29, 1984, in Paris, and was issued on the Big Blue label.⁸⁴⁹

Henderson participated in a Blue Note reunion concert at the Town Hall in New York on February 22, 1985. He performed Herbie Hancock’s “Cantaloupe Island” and his own composition “Recorda-Me” with Freddie Hubbard, Hancock, Bobby Hutcherson, Ron Carter, and Tony Williams. This concert was recorded and issued as *One Night with Blue Note Preserved*.⁸⁵⁰ He recorded *S'Wonderful* for vocalist Miki Yamaoka in Los Angeles in July, for the Denon label.⁸⁵¹

Although the titles of Henderson’s compositions no longer reflected the political activism of his 1960s and 1970s output, he maintained a willingness to speak against

⁸⁴⁶ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

⁸⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁴⁸ Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

⁸⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁸⁵¹ Ibid.

injustice. While traveling through Portland, Oregon, on May 18, 1985, he signed a pledge that stated that he would no longer perform in South Africa.⁸⁵² A press release stated,

We, the Black United Front (B.U.F.) and Portlanders Organized for Southern African Freedom (P.O.S.A.F.), are very pleased to be in a position whereby we are able to join Mr. Joe Henderson at this historic occasion. But of even greater importance, we are publicly commending Mr. Henderson for taking a personal and courageous stand against apartheid. His agreeing never to return to South Africa is music to the ears of all antiapartheid activists here in the U.S., and he will be heard by the Black majority population in South Africa.⁸⁵³

The State of the Tenor

Henderson returned to Blue Note Records and recorded his most significant album of the period, *The State of the Tenor*, live at the Village Vanguard on November 14 through 16, 1985.⁸⁵⁴ The recordings, which were compiled from all three evenings, were divided into two volumes. The album was first conceptualized by the jazz critic Stanley Crouch, who had heard Henderson perform at the Village Vanguard with a quartet. He enjoyed the sound of the group when the pianist stopped playing, and he thought that Henderson would sound best in a trio format.⁸⁵⁵ He then presented his idea to Blue Note president Bruce Lundvall, and to Blue Note producer Michael Cuscuna.⁸⁵⁶ Cuscuna elaborated on the conception of the album:

Stanley Crouch came to me and said, “Joe Henderson is playing better than he ever has in his entire life.” He said, “Why don’t we do something live with just bass and drums, and really put him in that Sonny Rollins challenging type of situation.” I said, “I’m game. Let me call Joe and talk

⁸⁵² Portlanders Organized for South African Freedom, “For Immediate Release,” Portland Anti-Apartheid Materials (Benjamin Priestley Collection), Michigan State University Libraries Special Collections, May 18, 1985.

⁸⁵³ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁴ Stanley Crouch and Michael Cuscuna, notes to Joe Henderson, *The State of the Tenor, Volume 1 & 2* (1985), CD, Blue Note CDP 7243 8 28879 2 8, 1994.

⁸⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁶ Ibid.

to him about it.” I talked to Joe about it and he was up for it, so we suggested Ron Carter and Al Foster, and he said, “Okay, fine.”

Then I said, “Stanley and I have a bunch of tunes that we thought would really be ideal. What we could do is . . . if you hit on Tuesday at the Vanguard, come in on Sunday. We’ll rehearse Sunday, Monday and Tuesday at Don Sickler’s studio, then you’ll hit.” And he said, “Okay. That sounds fine to me,” and we worked out the financials on the record deal. So he came in.⁸⁵⁷

The pieces on the album included the Henderson compositions “Isotope,” “Y Ya La Quiero,” and “The Bead Game.” Other selections included revivals of Sam Rivers’s “Beatrice” and the Thelonious Monk composition “Ask Me Now.”⁸⁵⁸ Henderson had never performed most of the pieces on the album, as Cuscuna explained:

We had just hit him with twelve or fifteen tunes that he had never dealt with before, and he was completely open to all of them . . . He just dove in headfirst, enjoyed the challenge and tackled all these tunes. The ones that didn’t work in rehearsal, we scrapped, and the ones that did went to the gig. Basically . . . most of the material that he played that week that we recorded was material that he had played for the very first time. It was very challenging and he just dove in.⁸⁵⁹

Henderson, who was widely known as “The Phantom” by this time, received special, pre-emptive attention from both Cuscuna and Crouch, as Cuscuna explained:

Stanley and I split up. We took alternate days where we would become Secret Service agents. We would get with him by mid-afternoon and make sure that he got to the Vanguard in time, and then one of us would stay with him from the minute the Vanguard closed until seven in the morning or whenever he crashed to make sure he got home safely. We were so paranoid about “The Phantom” act that we just shadowed him the whole fucking week [laughs]. And he didn’t mind because he liked us, so it was very funny. It made for a longer work day⁸⁶⁰

⁸⁵⁷ Cuscuna interview.

⁸⁵⁸ Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

⁸⁵⁹ Cuscuna interview.

⁸⁶⁰ Ibid.

The album was received very well within Blue Note Records and with the listening public. Former Blue Note president Alfred Lion offered the following praise:

I think this is truly a classic album. What Joe plays is unbelievable. With Ron, it's also the state of the bass. This is one of the most important albums that I have ever heard. It is definitely one of the best ever made on Blue Note. And I don't mean the new Blue Note. It's one of the best ever, including all of the records that we did in the fifties and sixties.⁸⁶¹

Michael Cuscuna added, "Once we put those records out, they were very well received. I don't know what those sales figures were initially . . . but they sold surprisingly well for Joe Henderson records."⁸⁶² The only aspect of the album that Henderson disagreed with was the title, when he said, "That's a bit pretentious for me. I had nothing to do with that title. Absolutely nothing."⁸⁶³

The success of *The State of the Tenor* improved Henderson's career, and brought him much sought-after recognition by the jazz community. Cuscuna summed up Henderson's career just prior to these recordings, and said,

Prior to [the recording], he was basically freelancing. His Milestone contract had come to an end, and he did a one-off on Contemporary, and here and there. When he toured, he would tour as a single. When he came to New York and he played Seventh Avenue South or the Village Vanguard, he would pick up a local rhythm section. Of course in New York, local is first class, but the point is what he would do everywhere.⁸⁶⁴

The most significant positive change to the saxophonist's career was that he had enough resources and promoter interest to hold together a consistent band.

Henderson chose several pieces from his album to incorporate into his live performances for the remainder of his career, which pleased Cuscuna:

⁸⁶¹ Crouch and Cuscuna, notes to *The State of the Tenor, Volume 1 & 2*.

⁸⁶² Cuscuna interview.

⁸⁶³ Woods, "Joe Henderson," 8.

⁸⁶⁴ Cuscuna interview.

Sometimes as a producer you suggest things to musicians and they take them or they don't. But when a musician takes things that you suggested and it becomes something that they carry through the rest of their professional life, that is kind of an honor. I was very proud that Joe chose to use the bass and drums configuration for many years thereafter. And two of the tunes that I gave him to play, Sam Rivers's tune "Beatrice" and Thelonious Monk's "Ask Me Now," he continued to play those for the rest of his life. I was just very gratified that he liked those ideas enough to absorb them into his ongoing career.⁸⁶⁵

Although *The State of the Tenor* was successful for both Henderson and Blue Note, it would be the last album Henderson recorded for the label. Given its success, the logical next step would have been to create additional Blue Note material, and to possibly extend Henderson a Blue Note recording contract. The reasons that Henderson's Blue Note relationship did not continue were both logistical and personal; Cuscuna was simply too busy to make an offer, and Henderson was not the type of person to ask for one.

Cuscuna explained:

I was busy doing a thousand different things for Blue Note and for Mosaic, and I didn't follow up. Joe was not the kind of guy that's going to pick up the phone and say, "You want to do another date? How about we do this, how about we do that?" He was not an initiator. If you came to him with a good idea he was receptive, but he was not an initiator. He had a noticeable lack of aggression in his personality. I don't mean that in a positive or a negative sense, I just mean he was not the kind of person that would push for things.⁸⁶⁶

Henderson traveled to Europe in December 1985, and performed in Hamburg, Germany, with Joanne Brackeen, bassist Walter Schmocker, and drummer Ken Hock.⁸⁶⁷

⁸⁶⁵ Cuscuna interview.

⁸⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁷ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

The Female Band

By late January 1986, Joe Henderson began to assemble an all-female rhythm section, which would remain largely intact for two years. The first indication of Henderson's idea was his hiring of bassist Kim Clarke, who joined the group of Henderson, Brackeen and drummer Keith Killgo for a performance at the Jazzhus Montmartre, in Copenhagen, Denmark, on January 29.⁸⁶⁸ The group performed in Koln, Germany, on January 30, and in Bologna, Italy, on February 4.⁸⁶⁹

Henderson joined the Paris Reunion Band, which included pianist Kenny Drew, Slide Hampton, and Woody Shaw, among others, for several performances in the latter half of June 1986. The group performed at the Blue Note in New York on June 16, at the Nightstage in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on June 26, and in Montreal on June 30.⁸⁷⁰

The saxophonist then joined McCoy Tyner's group for a tour of the European festival circuit during the first half of July. The group, comprised of Henderson, Freddie Hubbard, Tyner, bassist Avery Sharpe, and Louis Hayes, performed at the Blue Danube Jazz Summit in Austria on July 6, before performing at the North Sea Jazz Festival in the Netherlands on July 12. They performed the next day at the Ost-West Jazz Festival in Nuremberg, Germany, and performed at the Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland the following day, on July 14, 1986. Other festival performances included the Umbria Jazz Festival in Perugia, Italy, the Antibes Jazz Festival in France, and the Jazz a Vienne in Vienne, France.⁸⁷¹ Henderson returned to the U.S. and led performances at the Village

⁸⁶⁸ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁸⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷¹ *Ibid.*

Vanguard with Jim McNeely, bassist Delbert Felix, and Al Foster on August 5 through 10.⁸⁷²

Henderson performed at the Mt. Fuji Jazz Festival in Tokyo, Japan, on August 29 through 31, 1986.⁸⁷³ He joined a group led by Andrew Hill, and Michael Cuscuna described the event:

One of the times [Henderson] blew his cool was during this first Mt. Fuji Festival. The first day we were hit overnight with a typhoon that almost put us out of business, but we went on. The Japanese were just amazing that way. They rebuilt half the stage, replaced instruments and seating for 15,000 and dug irrigation ditches to get the flooding out of the site. Instead of starting at noon we started at 2pm. How do you like that for work ethic?

But there were still high winds as an aftermath of the typhoon. One of the bands that Joe was in was this all-star Andrew Hill set that I had put together with Joe and Woody Shaw and Bobby Hutcherson and Billy Higgins and Ron Carter. They're playing and the winds are picking up. Bobby Hutcherson, all his fucking music went flying, I mean flying. It was not retrievable; it went flying forty feet away. So the Japanese crew started putting clothes pins on everyone else's music on the stand Bobby's just faking it, trying to get along, trying to get on as best he can from memory. As they're playing, Andrew gets up from the piano and starts moving from music stand to music stand. I thought he was doing that to try to secure the music, to make sure no one lost their music.

But during one piano solo, I walked behind the stage and I was walking towards the dressing rooms, and Woody and Joe came running after me. Joe said, and I've never heard Joe so animated in my life, he said, "You gotta make this guy stop. This music is difficult enough to play, but he's rewriting it as we play it!" [Laughs] I said, "Joe, I don't know. What can I do?" But I never saw Joe lose his cool as much as he did at that moment.⁸⁷⁴

Henderson participated in an all-star jam session on August 31, and fulfilled his goal of sharing the stage with drummer Art Blakey, as Cuscuna stated:

⁸⁷² Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁸⁷³ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁴ Cuscuna interview.

The nice thing was that night, at the jam session which had to be held indoors because of the typhoon, Joe came up to me. I was throwing together different ensembles of people, ad hoc, you know I was just making it up as I went along to do a jam session for the audience. Joe came up to me and he said, “You know, Michael, if you don’t mind, could you put me in a jam session with Art Blakey?” I said, “Yeah, sure,” and he said, “I’ve never played with Art Blakey, and that’s just one of my deepest wishes.” So you know, that night he got to play with Art Blakey. But it was out of character in the sense that usually somebody like Joe wouldn’t say shit. You know, if it happened it would be nice, if it didn’t He rarely was that overtly demonstrative. That night he was, and I’m glad he was because we threw it together and he had a great time playing with Art With Joe, there’s a lot of type-casting, and he was pretty consistent to type, but he could always surprise you, too.⁸⁷⁵

Henderson was also enamored by the minimalist customs and accommodations of Japanese customs. Cuscuna described an interaction with Henderson at the festival:

When we went to Mt. Fuji the first year The thing I remember about Joe was the first morning when we left Tokyo and we got up to Mt. Fuji. He and I were walking down to the elevator to go to the breakfast room. One of the doors was open, and it was an austere Japanese room. You know, the Japanese rooms have tatami mats and no furniture and a Japanese bathroom which is a squat kind of bathroom. Very austere; very monastic. And Joe said, “Oh, how come I didn’t get a room like that?” I told him “That’s a Japanese room. You gotta ask for that. They don’t put Westerners in those rooms.” He said, “Well if I come here again, next time I want to be in one of those rooms.” I said, “Okay, that’s fine.” He had a real austere way about him, you know. He didn’t take up much room in the world, except with his music.⁸⁷⁶

Henderson recorded on Randy Brecker’s album *In the Idiom* on October 19 and 20, 1986 for the Denon label.⁸⁷⁷ He quickly traveled to Europe to record *For Klook* with the Paris Reunion band on October 23 and 24 in Stockholm, Sweden.⁸⁷⁸ The group gave a series of performances in Germany, which included events in Hamburg on October 29,

⁸⁷⁵ Cuscuna interview.

⁸⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁷ Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

⁸⁷⁸ Ibid.

Schongau on November 1, and Ludwigsburg on November 8.⁸⁷⁹ Henderson was recognized in the 1986 *Downbeat Magazine* “Reader’s Poll,” and placed seventh in the “Tenor Saxophone” category, behind Sonny Rollins, Stan Getz, David Murray, Michael Brecker, Branford Marsalis, and Wayne Shorter.⁸⁸⁰

In February 1987, Henderson led a group at Ronnie Scott’s in London. He then led a month-long European tour with his new all-female band.⁸⁸¹ Pianist Renee Rosnes joined the group that same month,⁸⁸² bassist Kim Clarke had previously worked with Henderson, and drummer Sylvia Cuenca replaced drummer Keith Killgo.⁸⁸³ In 1991, Henderson gave the following comment about the group:

Over the past five years or so I’ve started to do things in projects and this is one of them. I set the band up because the people were talented and I strongly believed in them. I wasn’t trying to make any kind of statement. When we played Paris, the club was packed with a bunch of musicians. Several of them came down and said, “Joe, when I first heard about you coming down here with these ladies, man, I thought this was just some kind of gimmick.” But these musicians would be around for seventy-five percent of the time and that’s the proper endorsement. A lot of women all around Europe would come up and thank me. I didn’t want to upset their apple carts but I said these people wouldn’t be in this band if they didn’t take care of the needs of the music. I think the ladies in the band appreciated me saying that.

The piano player was Renee Rosnes. Actually Terri Lynn Carrington was the first person I called to put this group together but Wayne Shorter called her about three days later and she decided to go with Wayne’s band. This meant I had to rediscover this lady I had met when I was teaching in a little town in California called San Jose. She played drums in this big band when she was about sixteen years old, very shy but with an enormous amount of talent. I looked for her for about three years, kept asking people whatever happened to her. Then one night at the Vanguard I

⁸⁷⁹ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

⁸⁸⁰ “Reader’s Poll,” *Downbeat Magazine*, December 1986, 21.

⁸⁸¹ Cuenca interview.

⁸⁸² Renee Rosnes, interview by author, May 16, 2016.

⁸⁸³ *Ibid.*

finished the set, walked off the bandstand and out came this hand. There she was sitting at the table with another of my students, a lady saxophone player. She said she'd been in New York for about a year which I couldn't imagine with her being as shy as she was. Anyway, about a month later we started a tour in Klagenfurt, Austria, and her name was Sylvia Cuenca.

The first bass player was Kim Clark who was six months pregnant when we came on the tour. I kept saying to the promoter I don't know what to do if she has a premature birth as we are stretched out on a blues. But the promoter said, "No Joe bring her, she only has to play the bass," so I brought her along. When it got around time for the baby to be born I found another bass player from Chicago called Marlene Rosenberg. We've had some great tours over in Europe where the group has got a lot of well-deserved attention and we're definitely going to record.⁸⁸⁴

There is truth in what Henderson said regarding the talent level of the musicians, as well as their deservedness to share the stage with him. Although there is no reason to believe Henderson had exploitative motivations, he did specifically seek out female musicians for the group.⁸⁸⁵ It seems as if he assembled a high-level group of musicians that would also command attention.

Henderson performed with Jim McNeely, Cecil McBee, and Sylvia Cuenca at the Village Vanguard on April 3 and 4, 1987.⁸⁸⁶ Henderson returned to Europe and recorded *Sins 'n Wins 'n Funs* with the George Gruntz Concert Jazz Band. The group recorded in Geneva, Switzerland, on April 12, and in Hamburg, Germany, on April 15.⁸⁸⁷ Henderson performed on his fiftieth birthday at the Jazz Showcase in Chicago with tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin on April 24.⁸⁸⁸

⁸⁸⁴ Woods, "Joe Henderson," 7-8.

⁸⁸⁵ Marlene Rosenberg, interview by author, March 29, 2016.

⁸⁸⁶ Cuenca interview.

⁸⁸⁷ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁸⁸⁸ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

Henderson recorded Neil Swainson's *49th Parallel* in Toronto in May.⁸⁸⁹ He then traveled to Venezia, Italy, to perform with an all-star line-up, which included guitarist Larry Coryell, Miroslav Vitous, and Airtio Moreira, on May 7, 1987.⁸⁹⁰ Bassist Marlene Rosenberg replaced Kim Clarke in Henderson's group, and they performed at Jewels in Philadelphia on May 15 and 16.⁸⁹¹ Henderson traveled to Chicago to record guitarist Akio Sasajima's *Akio with Joe Henderson* on May 17.⁸⁹²

Henderson's band traveled to Europe for a two-week residency at the Magnetic Terrace in Paris, France, on May 26 through June 6, 1987.⁸⁹³ It was during this time that a concert attendee recorded a performance at the venue, and distributed the unauthorized "bootleg" recording as *Punjab*, through the Arco label.⁸⁹⁴ The group was unaware of the recording at the time, and was never compensated for its release.⁸⁹⁵ However, *Punjab* is beneficial to listeners, because although Henderson wished to record this group, they never entered the studio; therefore, *Punjab* is the only recording of Henderson, Rosnes, Rosenberg, and Cuenca.

Henderson led a group of European musicians in Stockholm, Sweden, on June 2,⁸⁹⁶ and performed with Charlie Haden and Al Foster at the Genova Jazz Festival in Genova, Italy, on July 9, 1987.⁸⁹⁷ The Genova concert was recorded, and issued as *An*

⁸⁸⁹ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁸⁹⁰ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁸⁹¹ Cuenca interview.

⁸⁹² Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁸⁹³ Cuenca interview.

⁸⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁹⁵ Rosenberg interview.

⁸⁹⁶ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁸⁹⁷ Notes to Joe Henderson, *An Evening with Joe Henderson* (1987), CD, Red 123215-2.

Evening with Joe Henderson by the Italian Red Records label.⁸⁹⁸ Henderson was awarded fourth place in the *Downbeat Magazine* “International Critics Poll,” and placed fourth in the “Tenor Saxophone” category, behind Sonny Rollins, Stan Getz, and David Murray.⁸⁹⁹

Henderson’s female group performed at the Village Vanguard on August 5 through 9.⁹⁰⁰ Drummer Cindy Blackman had occasionally performed with Henderson’s group,⁹⁰¹ and she hired Henderson to record on her album *Arcane* at Rudy Van Gelder Studio on August 8 for Muse Records.⁹⁰² She would host a second recording session for the album on December 23.⁹⁰³ Henderson embarked on a lengthy European and Asian tour with his female group, including pianist Aki Takese, on August 19 through September 23, 1987.⁹⁰⁴ Confirmed performance locations included Germany and Japan.⁹⁰⁵

Henderson performed with the George Gruntz Concert Jazz Band at the Greenwich House in New York on October 8 through 11.⁹⁰⁶ The group recorded a live album during performances in Fort Worth, Texas, on October 16 and 17.⁹⁰⁷ Henderson led his female band at Yoshi’s in Oakland, California, on October 21 through 24, and at the Catalina Bar & Grill in Los Angeles on October 29 through November 1, 1987.⁹⁰⁸ Henderson traveled to Berlin, where he performed on November 4 with the Two Tauri

⁸⁹⁸ Notes to *An Evening with Joe Henderson*.

⁸⁹⁹ “International Critics Poll,” *Downbeat Magazine*, August 1987, 22.

⁹⁰⁰ Cuenca interview.

⁹⁰¹ Ibid.

⁹⁰² Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

⁹⁰³ Ibid.

⁹⁰⁴ Cuenca interview.

⁹⁰⁵ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

⁹⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁰⁷ Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

⁹⁰⁸ Cuenca interview.

Band, which he co-led with Johnny Griffin. The band was so named because Griffin and Henderson shared the same birthdate and horoscope sign.⁹⁰⁹

Henderson's female group performed at Fat Tuesdays in New York on November 10 through 15.⁹¹⁰ He then traveled to London to perform with the George Gruntz Concert Jazz Band at Ronnie Scott's on November 27 and 28.⁹¹¹ He placed seventh in the "Tenor Saxophone" category of the *Downbeat Magazine* "52nd Annual Reader's Poll."⁹¹²

Downbeat documented a seven-day domestic George Gruntz Concert Jazz Band tour, in which Henderson participated. This likely happened in January 1988. The band featured Lee Konitz, Kenny Barron, Sheila Jordan, and Adam Nussbaum, among others.⁹¹³ Robert Gaspar's review of their performance at the Greenwich House noted that the group performed an arrangement of Henderson's "Inner Urge," and regrettably suffered from a lack of rehearsal.⁹¹⁴

Henderson joined alto saxophonist Frank Morgan, Bobby Hutcherson, Mulgrew Miller, Ron Carter, and Al Foster for Morgan's album *Reflections*. The recording was produced by Henderson's previous employer, Orrin Keepnews, for Contemporary Records in Fantasy Studios in Berkeley, on January 11 and 12, 1988.⁹¹⁵ The musicians were personally selected by Keepnews, and none of them had previously worked with

⁹⁰⁹ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁹¹⁰ Cuenca interview.

⁹¹¹ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁹¹² "Reader's Poll," *Downbeat Magazine*, December 1987, 21.

⁹¹³ Robert Gaspar, "Caught in the Act: George Gruntz Concert Jazz Band, Greenwich House/New York," *Downbeat Magazine*, February 1988, 51.

⁹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁹¹⁵ Orrin Keepnews, notes to Frank Morgan, *Reflections* (1988), CD, Contemporary C-14052, 2000.

Morgan.⁹¹⁶ The album received four stars in its *Downbeat* review, and reviewer Kevin Whitehead focused almost entirely on Henderson's exceptional performance.⁹¹⁷

Henderson co-led a performance with Andrew Hill at the New Morning Club in Paris, France on March 25.⁹¹⁸ He also participated in a "Tenor Tribute" with fellow saxophonists Arnett Cobb and Jimmy Heath on April 30 at the Ost-West Jazz Festival in Nurnberg, Germany.⁹¹⁹ Henderson was a featured guest artist at the Norwegian Jazz Festival on May 25, where he performed with a Norwegian rhythm section. The performance was recorded and issued on the Nattjazz label.⁹²⁰ The saxophonist traveled to Europe with the Paris Reunion Band, and they performed in Berlin on June 4, in Stuttgart on June 9, 1988, and also in Vilshofen, Germany.⁹²¹

Henderson recorded Akio Sasajima's *Humpty Dumpty* for Enja Records in August. His bandmates included Renee Rosnes, bassist Kelly Sill and drummer Joel Spencer.⁹²² He performed as part of a Duke Ellington tribute concert at the Lincoln Center in New York, on August 10.⁹²³ He joined Mulgrew Miller, Ron Carter, and Tony Williams for Miller's *The Countdown*, which was recorded on August 15 in Berkeley, for Landmark Records. The album featured the Henderson composition "Tetragon."⁹²⁴

⁹¹⁶ Keepnews, notes to *Reflections*.

⁹¹⁷ Kevin Whitehead, "Frank Morgan: *Reflections*," *Downbeat Magazine*, November 1989, 29-31.

⁹¹⁸ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹²⁰ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁹²¹ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁹²² Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁹²³ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁹²⁴ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

Henderson traveled to Chicago the next day, and performed a six-evening engagement at the Jazz Showcase with Renee Rosnes, Delbert Felix, and drummer Billy Drummond.⁹²⁵ Henderson performed multiple concerts at the 1988 Mt. Fuji Jazz Festival in Tokyo, on August 26 through 28. He performed with various groups, including a concert that he co-led with Johnny Griffin, an all-star jam session, and a performance with his own group, which included Renee Rosnes, Marlene Rosenberg, and Cindy Blackman.⁹²⁶ This was the last documented performance of Henderson's female group. Henderson was recognized in the *Downbeat Magazine* "Critic's Poll," and placed fourth in the "Tenor Saxophone" category, behind Sonny Rollins, David Murray, and Stan Getz.⁹²⁷

Continued Efforts

Henderson performed at the Florence Gould Center in San Francisco in October 1988, with George Cables and bassist Rob Wasserman.⁹²⁸ He then performed with Freddie Hubbard in Irvine, California, in November.⁹²⁹ He also joined Jim McNeely, Herbie Lewis, and Sylvia Cuenca at Yoshi's in Oakland, on November 2 through 5.⁹³⁰ He performed with the Freddie Hubbard All-Stars at Royce Hall at UCLA, with Cedar Walton, bassist Andy Simpkins and drummer Ralph Penland, on November 12.⁹³¹

The saxophonist gave a four-evening performance at the Catalina Bar & Grill in Los Angeles with Billy Childs, Herbie Lewis, and Sylvia Cuenca, on December 1

⁹²⁵ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁹²⁶ Ibid.

⁹²⁷ "International Critics Poll," *Downbeat Magazine*, August 1988, 22.

⁹²⁸ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁹²⁹ Ibid.

⁹³⁰ Cuenca interview.

⁹³¹ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

through 4.⁹³² Henderson also recorded Jon Ballantyne's *Sky Dance* in Montreal in December.⁹³³ Henderson placed seventh in the *Downbeat* "Reader's Poll" in the "Tenor Saxophone" category.⁹³⁴

Henderson began 1989 with a five-evening engagement at the Knitting Factory in New York with pianist Andrew Hill. Hill's group included Henderson, Bobby Hutcherson, Eddie Henderson, Rufus Reid, and Ben Riley.⁹³⁵ Henderson performed two college concerts in April, and he granted the university big bands access to his reading band arrangements. He performed with the James Williams trio at Harvard University on April 15, and with the Columbia Jazz Band at Columbia University on April 18.⁹³⁶ Henderson performed for multiple evenings at Kimball's East in Emeryville, California with Freddie Hubbard in May. He also led a performance at Elario's in San Diego with George Cables, bassist Marshall Hawkins, and drummer Jim Plank.⁹³⁷

Henderson joined Charlie Haden and Al Foster for a concert at the Montreal Jazz Festival on June 30, 1989. The performance occurred on the first night of an eight-evening tribute to Haden, in which Haden performed with a different group every night. Other groups included Don Cherry and Ed Blackwell, Paul Bley and Paul Motian, and the Liberation Music Orchestra.⁹³⁸ Henderson's concert featured mostly standards, with the inclusion of a free jazz piece, which he requested. Haden explained:

⁹³² Cuenca interview.

⁹³³ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁹³⁴ "Reader's Poll," *Downbeat Magazine*, December 1988, 22.

⁹³⁵ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁹³⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹³⁸ Charlie Haden, notes to Charlie Haden, *The Montreal Tapes* (1989), CD, Verve B0001979-02, 2003.

[Henderson] came to me in my dressing room and said, “Charlie, let’s play something free like you did with Ornette.” Remembering that up to that point in time I had only experienced playing chord changes with him, I answered, “Joe, are you sure you want to do that?” and he answered, “Yeah! Chords and key signatures are just excess baggage, let’s throw them overboard.” The result is found in the interplay between Joe, Al and I in my composition, “In The Moment.”⁹³⁹

The performance was recorded and issued as *The Montreal Tapes*, by Verve. The album was released in 2003, after Henderson’s death, and was subtitled, “Tribute to Joe Henderson.”⁹⁴⁰

Henderson performed at a house concert in Oakland with Haden and Sylvia Cuenca on August 12, 1989,⁹⁴¹ before co-leading a group with saxophonist Charles McPherson at the Jazz Showcase in Chicago, on August 15 through 20.⁹⁴² Henderson placed second in the *Downbeat Magazine* “Critics Poll” behind Sonny Rollins.⁹⁴³

It was around this time that criticism of Henderson’s music and career became increasingly romanticized in the media. Kevin Whitehead reviewed *Inner Urge* in 1989, which was originally recorded and released in 1964. He offered the following comments:

Discussing ’60s Henderson . . . Charles Mitchell described him as one of the tenorists “who sat on a cutting edge of modern jazz, at the interface of hard bop and ‘the new thing.’ They knew their bebop, were well-schooled in the blues . . . could move outside if the muse dictated; but it seemed as if their chief concern was resolution between form and freedom, a synthesis that would establish a logical, coherent right to examine all possibilities.” Exactly.

It is possible that this romanticism may have been caused by a combination of Henderson’s perseverance in the music business, and by a sense of nostalgia for

⁹³⁹ Haden, notes to *The Montreal Tapes*.

⁹⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁹⁴¹ Cuenca interview.

⁹⁴² Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

⁹⁴³ “International Critics Poll,” *Downbeat Magazine*, August 1989, 22.

Henderson's earlier work, as well as for the classic Blue Note output in general. A contrasting view is that sufficient hindsight afforded jazz critics enough clarity with which to properly appreciate Henderson's contributions to jazz.

Henderson performed at the Regattabar in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in September, with Charlie Haden and Al Foster.⁹⁴⁴ The saxophonist joined Freddie Hubbard for a concert at the Chicago Jazz Festival on September 3, before leading his own group at the Catalina Bar & Grill on September 5 through 10.⁹⁴⁵ He traveled to London for a string of performances at Ronnie Scott's, beginning on September 20. He recorded Klaus Ignatzek's *Day for Night* in the Netherlands on October 3 and 4, 1989.⁹⁴⁶ He returned to Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, to record Donald Byrd's *Getting Down to Business* on October 10 and 12, for Landmark Records.⁹⁴⁷

The Joe Henderson Big Band made a rare appearance at Slim's in San Francisco on October 26, 1989.⁹⁴⁸ The personnel was comprised of local California musicians.⁹⁴⁹ Henderson closed out 1989 with a six-evening engagement at the Blue Note in Tokyo, on December 4 through 9.⁹⁵⁰

In 1990, Henderson was featured as a guest artist on a television broadcast with Bruce Hornsby. Henderson performed on two selections. His fellow guest artist was the Grateful Dead guitarist, Jerry Garcia.⁹⁵¹ Henderson recorded Mel Martin's *Bebop and*

⁹⁴⁴ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁹⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁴⁶ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁹⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁴⁸ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁹⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁹⁵¹ Ibid.

Beyond Plays Thelonious Monk in Berkeley on February 13.⁹⁵² He also paid Renee Rosnes the favor that Herbie Hancock previously paid him, and recorded on Rosnes's *For The Moment* on February 15 and 16 in New York.⁹⁵³ Rosnes had the following to say about Henderson's participation:

In 1990, I recorded my second album for Blue Note, *For The Moment*, and I had invited Joe to record with me. The band also included Steve Wilson (alto, soprano saxes), Ira Coleman (bass) and Billy Drummond (drums). We had one rehearsal for the date. One of the pieces I was going to record as a trio was Monk's "Four In One." When Joe heard us rehearsing it, he became intrigued with the melody and wanted to learn it. I remember that he learned it quite quickly by ear, and ended up recording it with us on the album – playing a brilliant solo. The album was recognized with a Canadian Juno Award in 1992.

On the compositions that Joe Henderson and Steve Wilson play together, the phrasing and tonal qualities of their individual sounds blend beautifully together. It shows that although Joe was a master soloist, he was also a "team" player.

One interesting note about Joe in the studio, is that he would use the microphone as a tool while recording. At various times he would purposely put the bell of his horn into the mic, or alternately move the horn away or to the side of the mic, while holding a note. He was using the mic as a singer might, in order to adjust the tone of the note(s). Engineers would often not understand that this was a purposeful technique that he used. It would annoy him when engineers would instruct him to "stay on the mic," and he would explain that the resulting variances in tone and dynamics was something that he desired. This might be a technique that was pretty unique to Joe.⁹⁵⁴

Henderson led a group, which included Kenny Barron, bassist Mike Richmond, and Al Foster at Fat Tuesdays in New York, on March 1 through 4, 1990.⁹⁵⁵ He also

⁹⁵² Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁹⁵³ Ibid.

⁹⁵⁴ Rosnes interview.

⁹⁵⁵ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

performed at the Jazzhus Montmartre in Copenhagen, Denmark, with Mike Hyman on May 6.⁹⁵⁶ Henderson recorded with Ernie Wilkins's large ensemble for *Kaleido Duke*, which was tracked on May 28 and 29 in Paris.⁹⁵⁷ He performed at the Montreal Jazz Festival on July 6, and at the Top O' The Senator in Toronto, on July 17 through 21.⁹⁵⁸ His group included pianist Jon Ballantyne, bassist George Mitchell, and drummer Barry Romberg.⁹⁵⁹

Henderson recorded *El Matador* for pianist Kevin Hays in New York in August. The group featured saxophonist Steve Wilson, bassist Scott Colley, and drummer Bill Stewart. This rhythm section would soon become associated with saxophonist Chris Potter.⁹⁶⁰ Henderson again placed second in the *Downbeat Magazine* "Critics Poll" behind Sonny Rollins.⁹⁶¹

The saxophonist performed at Elario's in San Diego, with Hays, Tony Dumas and Mike Hyman on October 10 through 14, 1990.⁹⁶² He performed at the SF Jazz Festival on October 28, and at One Step Down in Washington, D.C. on November 2.⁹⁶³ Henderson performed in Madrid, Spain, on December 2 with guitarist Randy Vincent, Kenny Werner, Tony Dumas, and Mike Hyman.⁹⁶⁴ He also recorded for the George

⁹⁵⁶ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁹⁵⁷ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁹⁵⁸ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁹⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁶⁰ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁹⁶¹ "International Critics Poll," *Downbeat Magazine*, August 1990, 20.

⁹⁶² Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁹⁶³ Ibid.

⁹⁶⁴ Ibid.

Duke/Stanley Clarke Project in December,⁹⁶⁵ and placed sixth in the *Downbeat* “Reader’s Poll.”⁹⁶⁶

On January 17 through 19, 1991, Henderson recorded Donald Byrd’s *A City Called Heaven* in Berkeley for Landmark Records. His fellow musicians included Bobby Hutcherson, Donald Brown, Rufus Reid, drummer Carl Allen, and vocalist Lorice Stevens.⁹⁶⁷ Rufus Reid recalled several details about the sessions:

I watched [Henderson] transpose his chord changes back to concert, because he didn’t like to look at transposed chord changes. I thought that was interesting. He got in the studio and didn’t play a note. He just found a pencil and changed it. We played it, recorded it, and it sounded like he wrote the music. It was amazing.⁹⁶⁸

The album earned three and one-half stars in *Downbeat*, and reviewer Owen Cordle stated that Byrd should get “extra points for hiring Joe Henderson, whose career from the start has been an extrapolation of extraordinary ideas.”⁹⁶⁹

Henderson recorded with pianist Stephen Scott, for Scott’s *Something to Consider* for Verve, on January 30 and 31.⁹⁷⁰ The group returned for the final session on March 18. The album was produced by Richard Seidel,⁹⁷¹ and received four stars in its *Downbeat* review.⁹⁷² Henderson then recorded Rebecca Coupe Franks’s *Suit of Armor* on February 2 through 4 for the Justice label.⁹⁷³ He led a group for four evenings at the Regattabar in

⁹⁶⁵ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

⁹⁶⁶ “Reader’s Poll,” *Downbeat Magazine*, December 1990, 23.

⁹⁶⁷ Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

⁹⁶⁸ Reid interview.

⁹⁶⁹ Owen Cordle, “Donald Byrd: *A City Called Heaven*,” *Downbeat Magazine*, March 1992, 33.

⁹⁷⁰ Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

⁹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷² Owen Cordle, “Stephen Scott: *Something to Consider*,” *Downbeat Magazine*, November 1991, 38.

⁹⁷³ Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

Cambridge, which featured Kevin Hays, Peter Washington, and Mike Hyman.⁹⁷⁴ The same group performed at the Catalina Bar & Grill in Los Angeles on February 19 through 25.⁹⁷⁵

Henderson performed for one week at Fat Tuesdays with Rufus Reid and Al Foster in March 1991, and quickly recruited the group to record *The Standard Joe*.⁹⁷⁶ Henderson had recently been approached by Richard Seidel from Verve, and the saxophonist urgently needed to complete his contract with Red Records. Rufus Reid stated,

That was his last recording before his first major record, *Lush Life*, for Verve. We were working at a place called Fat Tuesdays, and we finished on a Sunday night. He came in and said that we were going to record on Monday. He said he had to make this recording because he had a commitment to Red Records and he had to get it done, or else he would be in trouble. He couldn't really do the Verve dates, having owed someone else a recording.⁹⁷⁷

Henderson recorded *The Standard Joe* on March 26, 1991, which completed his obligations with Red Records.⁹⁷⁸ He was then able to accept a contract with Verve, which would prove to be the most commercially successful decision of his career.

Verve Period (1991-2001)

Transition to Verve Records

Richard Seidel, the senior vice president of A&R at Verve Records, approached Henderson in 1990 or 1991, and initiated conversations about signing him to the label. Seidel said that he engaged Henderson after hearing him perform at Fat Tuesdays in New

⁹⁷⁴ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁹⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁷⁶ Reid interview.

⁹⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁷⁸ Notes to Joe Henderson, *The Standard Joe* (1991), CD, Red RR 1232448-2.

York, and it is possible that Seidel was referring to the previously-mentioned residency in March 1991, which featured Rufus Reid and Al Foster.⁹⁷⁹ Henderson did, in fact, rush the trio of Reid and Foster into the studio after their residency, in order to complete his recording obligations with Red Records.⁹⁸⁰ The exact date of Henderson's commitment with Verve is unknown; however, he and Seidel had certainly discussed the possibility prior to March 26, 1991.⁹⁸¹ Seidel summarized the terms of Henderson's contract in the following way:

In those days you might sign an artist for anywhere from six to eight records. But only the first one would be what they called "firm." What this meant is that it would be up to the record company to decide if they wanted to continue, on a record by record basis, by exercising what was called in the contract "the option." Usually with each successive record where the option was exercised, the artist's advance and the recording budget would be increased incrementally. When an artist had significant success, the advance/budget could be arbitrarily increased substantially for a particular record, as was the case for Joe's fifth and last Verve album, *Porgy and Bess*.⁹⁸²

Henderson continued to work during the five-month interim between the recording of *The Standard Joe* and his first project for Verve. He recorded on McCoy Tyner's *New York Reunion* on April 3 and 4, 1991, in New York, for Chesky Records.⁹⁸³ In addition to Tyner, Henderson joined *The State of the Tenor* sidemen, Ron Carter and Al Foster.⁹⁸⁴ The album featured Henderson's "Recorda-Me," as well as compositions from Tyner and Carter, and several standards.⁹⁸⁵ The album was well received, and was

⁹⁷⁹ Richard Seidel, interview by author, September 6, 2016.

⁹⁸⁰ Reid interview.

⁹⁸¹ Notes to *The Standard Joe*.

⁹⁸² Seidel interview.

⁹⁸³ Bret Primack, notes to McCoy Tyner, *New York Reunion* (1991), CD, Chesky 5173324.

⁹⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁸⁵ Ibid.

awarded four stars by Frank-John Hadley in his *Downbeat Magazine* review. Hadley romanticized the performances of Tyner and Henderson, and wrote,

On their first studio date in decades, Tyner and Henderson evince the characteristics of jazz oracles: remarkable technique in playing fused with spontaneity and vast conception; a profound dramatic sense shaped by self-confidence and intransigence; a staggering ability to swing effortlessly.⁹⁸⁶

Henderson recorded Louis Scherr's *Warm Valley* one week later, on April 11 and 12, 1991, in Washington, D.C., for the What's in a Name label.⁹⁸⁷ The group was comprised of local Washington, D.C. musicians, which included pianist Louis Scherr, bassist Tommy Cecil, and drummer Tony Martucci.⁹⁸⁸ The album received four stars in its *Downbeat* review. Reviewer Kevin Whitehead described that Scherr's group was fortunately able to hire Henderson, who would be completely unavailable for such work one year later.⁹⁸⁹

Henderson joined Donald Brown in Van Gelder Studio four days later, on April 16 and 18, to record the pianist's *Cause and Effect* for Muse Records.⁹⁹⁰ Brown composed the music for the album, except for the standard "I Should Care" and Henderson's "Black Narcissus." Henderson returned to Van Gelder Studio to record Valery Ponomarev's *Profile* on May 2, 1991.⁹⁹¹ He then traveled to Frankfurt, Germany,

⁹⁸⁶ Frank-John Hadley, "McCoy Tyner: *New York Reunion*," *Downbeat Magazine*, November 1991, 44.

⁹⁸⁷ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁹⁸⁸ Kevin Whitehead, "Virtue(s) Rewarded," *Downbeat Magazine*, June 1994, 48.

⁹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹⁰ Lofton A. Emenari, III, notes to Donald Brown, *Cause and Effect* (1992), CD, Muse 5447.

⁹⁹¹ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

to perform at the Bockenheimer Depot with Lew Soloff, bassist Charles Jackson, and drummer Victor Lewis on May 31.⁹⁹²

Henderson gave numerous performances in Europe in July 1991, with a group led by pianist and composer Don Grolnick. He was joined by Randy Brecker, Eddie Gomez, and Victor Lewis. The group's itinerary included Vienna, Austria, on July 7, the Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland on July 11, the North Sea Jazz Festival in the Netherlands on July 13, and the Pori Jazz Festival in Norway on July 19. They also performed at the Umbria Jazz Festival in Perugia, Italy, that same month.⁹⁹³

Henderson was recognized in the *Downbeat Magazine* "International Critics Poll," and placed fourth in the "Tenor Saxophone" category, behind Sonny Rollins, Stan Getz, and David Murray.⁹⁹⁴ He participated in a program entitled, "A Coltrane Serenade" at Alice Tully Hall in New York, on August 9, with McCoy Tyner, bassist Christian McBride and Roy Haynes.⁹⁹⁵ He then recorded the Walter Norris Quartet album *Sunburst* on August 13 and 14, in San Francisco, with pianist Walter Norris, bassist Larry Grenadier, and Mike Hyman.⁹⁹⁶ Owen Cordle awarded the album four and one-half stars in his *Downbeat* review.⁹⁹⁷

The Composer Songbook Projects

During a very substantial part of the second half of the twentieth century, Joe Henderson was among the more significant creative artists in jazz. However, for the bulk of that time, very few of those who make up the basic audience for this area of American music were particularly aware of

⁹⁹² Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁹⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁹⁴ "International Critics Poll," *Downbeat Magazine*, August 1991, 22.

⁹⁹⁵ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

⁹⁹⁶ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

⁹⁹⁷ Owen Cordle, "Walter Norris: *Sunburst*," *Downbeat Magazine*, March 1992,

him. To me, who had worked as his record producer on a dozen projects over a full decade of that period, it became one of the rare occasions when even my basic stubborn streak could not keep me from admitting defeat. It was clearly the jazz world's fault; certainly not Joe's or mine or that of anyone else who worked with him and believed in his special approach to the instrument, but he was not going to be breaking through.

Except that, suddenly, he did. – Orrin Keepnews⁹⁹⁸

Henderson recorded his first album for Verve Records on September 3, 6 and 8, 1991, at Van Gelder Studio in Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey. His fellow musicians included trumpeter Wynton Marsalis, Stephen Scott, Christian McBride, and drummer Gregory Hutchinson.⁹⁹⁹ *Lush Life: The Music of Billy Strayhorn* was the first of four Henderson composer songbook projects for Verve. Richard Seidel, who produced *Lush Life* with Don Sickler, conceptualized the songbook idea when Henderson related that he had not composed any new music. Seidel elaborated:

When talking with Joe about signing him to Verve, I met with him in his tiny room at the old Edison Hotel on 47th Street in New York City's Times Square. I asked him what he had in mind for repertoire for a new record and he told me that he hadn't been writing and was open to ideas. That's when I came up with the composer songbook idea which he embraced immediately, especially the Billy Strayhorn idea, which, of course, became the first record. We also talked about a Bud Powell project, but for some reason that one never came up again and so it didn't happen. I think it would have been quite challenging but probably great musically.¹⁰⁰⁰

Seidel also explained the financial details of the project:

The budget for the first record was actually relatively low for what major labels were paying at the time. I think it was around \$28,000, which was enough to pay Joe a decent advance, pay the three young rhythm section guys, pay Wynton Marsalis to appear as a guest, pay Don Sickler as my co-producer and musical director, and record at Rudy Van Gelder's So A&R-wise the record wasn't a big investment. But we did invest

⁹⁹⁸ Heinman and Keepnews, notes to *Power to the People*.

⁹⁹⁹ Crouch and Pratt, notes to *Lush Life*.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Seidel interview.

significantly in the marketing. That was indeed where we bet on Joe. I'm sure we spent way more money than any label ever had on him. And we were reasonably confident we had the music to back up what we were pitching and fortunately everything fell into place.¹⁰⁰¹

Lush Life was comprised entirely of Strayhorn compositions, and included “Isfahan,” “Johnny Come Lately,” “Blood Count,” “Rain Check,” “Lotus Blossom,” “A Flower is a Lovesome Thing,” “Take the ‘A’ Train,” “Drawing Room Blues,” “U.M.M.G. (Upper Manhattan Medical Group),” and “Lush Life.” The instrumentation varied greatly throughout the album, and ranged from a full ensemble on “Johnny Come Lately,” to an unaccompanied Henderson solo piece on “Lush Life.”¹⁰⁰² Henderson appreciated the varied textures, and said,

The variety of the compositions is approached in a variety of situations – solos, duos, trios, quartets and five pieces. So in this situation, my work becomes the unifying factor. That means that there are only two things that are consistent in this session – my sound and Billy Strayhorn's. Nothing else can be taken for granted.¹⁰⁰³

Henderson was also pleased to further Strayhorn's reputation, as he explained:

Musicians have to plant some trees – and replant some trees to extend the life of these good things. Billy Strayhorn was one of the people whose talent should be known. Duke Ellington knew about him, so that says something. There are still a lot of people who haven't heard Strayhorn's music, but if I can do something to enable them to become aware of Strayhorn's genius I'd feel great about that.¹⁰⁰⁴

Upon its release, *Lush Life* was the greatest commercial success of Henderson's career, up to that point.¹⁰⁰⁵ Richard Seidel explained the contributing factors of the success of *Lush Life* and subsequent projects:

¹⁰⁰¹ Seidel interview.

¹⁰⁰² Crouch and Pratt, notes to *Lush Life*.

¹⁰⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Bourne, “The Sound that Launched a Thousand Horns,” 17.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Stewart, “Joe Henderson's Year at the Top,” 17.

I think there were several factors involved in the success of *Lush Life, So Near, So Far, and Double Rainbow*. Joe was, at least in part, filling a void in the world of the tenor saxophone. Dexter Gordon had died in 1990 and Stan Getz in 1991. Verve had experienced tremendous success in the early years of the CD (beginning in 1983 and still going very strong by 1991) which gave us both the freedom and the resources to really properly record and market a new project. We had a small but very enthusiastic, mostly young, staff at the label that was part of a larger division called PolyGram Classics & Jazz, with a national and regional marketing staff capable of really supporting a record. Initially, we were able to get the internal company staff excited about the album, and then in turn the distribution company, the retail stores, press, radio, and television. In those days it was possible to get an artist like Joe on *The Tonight Show* (which would be unheard of today), and even more so to get full-page stories on a new record/artist in not just *Downbeat* and other jazz magazines, but in general interest publications like *Time* and *Newsweek*, not to mention the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*.

The general interest press coverage, I believe more than anything, made the difference. As soon as one of those articles would hit you would see the sales take off. And it seems hard to believe but in the case of *Lush Life, So Near, So Far, and Double Rainbow*, we ended up selling more than 100,000 copies in the U.S. and over 200,000 worldwide! This is such a far cry from today it's hard to wrap your head around the idea that this actually ever happened, but it did! We were fortunate in having just about all the resources we could have asked for to promote these records, but I would like to think they would never have been as successful as they were if Joe hadn't made really great music on each of them.¹⁰⁰⁶

In addition to selling 200,000 copies worldwide, *Lush Life* earned Henderson a Grammy in 1992, in the "Best Instrumental Jazz Solo" category, for the unaccompanied title track.¹⁰⁰⁷ *Lush Life* also occupied the top position of the Billboard charts for seven weeks, in the "Jazz" category.¹⁰⁰⁸ The album received four and one-half stars in its *Downbeat* review.¹⁰⁰⁹ As Richard Seidel stated, the success of the album was partially

¹⁰⁰⁶ Seidel interview.

¹⁰⁰⁷ "Grammy Search Database," The Grammys, accessed October 8, 2016, <https://www.grammy.com/nominees/search>.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Garcia, "Joe Henderson: Meaningfully Different," 21.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Owen Cordle, "Mr. Low Blow," *Downbeat Magazine*, March 1992, 33.

due to Henderson's excellent musicianship, and also to Verve's promotional efforts.

Their efforts did not go unnoticed, as Kevin Whitehead noted in 1994:

Amazing: three years ago Joe Henderson was just another underrated tenor giant. Then he signs with a big label, whose publicity machine would strong-arm jazz magazines for coverage even if his Verve albums weren't smashingly good. The result is a double-rarity: a master gets acclaimed while still breathing; a public blitz rains on the right guy.¹⁰¹⁰

The success of *Lush Life* both pleased and frustrated Henderson. He appreciated the recognition, but wished that it had occurred much sooner. Michael Cuscuna explained Henderson's frustrations:

Joe was a musician's musician – he was an inside guy, and no one ever thought he would connect that much with the public. The irony is that until he got to Verve, his best-selling album was his first album, *Page One*. That's never stopped selling, and I think that was mostly because of Kenny's tune "Blue Bossa." But Joe was never able to get anything bigger than his very first album, which I guess is a little depressing, you know? When you're going to bed fourteen years later thinking "Shit, I can't even beat my first record." Of course he made masterpieces. I mean the live Lighthouse stuff with Woody, *Mode for Joe*, *Inner Urge*. He made just fucking startlingly brilliant music.¹⁰¹¹

Henderson also stated,

I guess I'm supposed to be so taken aback by all this late adulation, all of this acknowledgement that's coming down the pike now, and I am. But I'm busy doing what I've been doing all the time, for over twenty years. I'd like to consider myself a pretty serious person about music. Not overly serious to the point where the fun is gone from it. This game has been pretty good to me. And this is probably why I'm here.¹⁰¹²

His fans in Europe were surprised to hear of Henderson's resurgence in the United States, as they had appreciated him throughout his career. Henderson said,

In Europe, they hear things like "the return of Joe Henderson!" It kind of seems ridiculous – I've talked to some people in Germany that I've seen

¹⁰¹⁰ Whitehead, "Virtue(s) Rewarded."

¹⁰¹¹ Cuscuna interview.

¹⁰¹² Stewart, "Joe Henderson's Year at the Top," 17.

pretty much every year over the last twenty, twenty-five years. And they're like, "What are those people talking about? I've seen you at least once every eight months, if not once a year, every year." They don't understand it; I mean, they laugh, like it's a big joke or something. I did some interviews in Holland with people who said they were downright angry about it. "People in the U.S. wait 'til this guy gets to be fifty, fifty-five years old to tell him something that they should have told him thirty years ago."¹⁰¹³

Orrin Keepnews recounted that "in one interview, he wondered at having to have a financial advisor after all those years of just worrying about paying his bills."¹⁰¹⁴

Henderson's late success was also frustrating to his fellow musicians who worked with him during his less commercially successful years. Joanne Brackeen,¹⁰¹⁵ Ron McClure,¹⁰¹⁶ and Pete Yellin¹⁰¹⁷ said as much, and they felt that Henderson performed underneath his abilities on his Verve projects, which allowed the listening public to "catch up" and accept him.

Henderson recorded on bassist Todd Coolman's *Lexicon* in New York on September 14, 1991, with Renee Rosnes and Lewis Nash.¹⁰¹⁸ He then performed at Fat Tuesdays for three evenings, on September 20 through 22, with Kenny Barron, Rufus Reid and Al Foster.¹⁰¹⁹ Henderson joined James Williams, bassist James Genus, and drummer Tony Reedus, for the pianist's album, *James Williams Meets the Saxophone Masters*, on September 23 in New York.¹⁰²⁰

¹⁰¹³ Stewart, "Joe Henderson's Year at the Top."

¹⁰¹⁴ Heinman and Keepnews, notes to *Power to the People*.

¹⁰¹⁵ Brackeen interview.

¹⁰¹⁶ Viswanathan, "Blue Note Records Period of Joe Henderson," 390.

¹⁰¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 436.

¹⁰¹⁸ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

¹⁰¹⁹ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

¹⁰²⁰ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

Henderson participated in an all-star jam session at the Oakland Jazz Festival on October 6, before performing a duet concert with pianist Eddie Palmieri at the SF Jazz Festival in San Francisco, on November 1.¹⁰²¹ He then recorded pianist Joe Gilman's *Treasure Chest* in Berkeley, on November 12 and December 12, for Timeless Records.¹⁰²² Henderson was recognized in the *Downbeat Magazine* "Reader's Poll," and placed seventh in the "Tenor Saxophone" category.¹⁰²³

Henderson recorded three tracks for Kenny Garrett's *Black Hope* in 1992, for Warner Bros. His fellow musicians included pianist Kenny Kirkland, Donald Brown, bassist Charnett Moffett, drummers Brian Blade and Ricky Wellman, and percussionist Don Alias.¹⁰²⁴ He also recorded Bruce Forman's *Forman on the Job*, in San Francisco, for the Kamei label.¹⁰²⁵ He performed at the Catalina Bar and Grill in Los Angeles, on February 18 through 23, with pianist Eric Reed, Charlie Haden and Joe Chambers.¹⁰²⁶

Henderson assembled a big band for a performance at Alice Tully Hall in New York, on March 14, 1992.¹⁰²⁷ The personnel included many members of the original 1960s reading band, and also included Freddie Hubbard.¹⁰²⁸ Larry Birnbaum explained Hubbard's involvement in the following way:

Although Dorham had split after the band's first year, Hubbard, a frequent Henderson partner, was recruited to fill his shoes in exchange for top

¹⁰²¹ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

¹⁰²² Lord, "Joe Henderson."

¹⁰²³ "Reader's Poll," *Downbeat Magazine*, December 1991, 30.

¹⁰²⁴ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

¹⁰²⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰²⁶ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

¹⁰²⁷ Kirchner, notes to *Big Band*.

¹⁰²⁸ Larry Birnbaum, "Caught in the Act: Joe Henderson/Freddie Hubbard, Alice Tully Hall/New York," *Downbeat Magazine*, June 1992, 60.

billing and a first-half showcase for his own compositions, orchestrated mostly by Bob Belden and Slide Hampton.¹⁰²⁹

The second half of the concert featured Henderson's music, which the saxophonist himself had arranged.¹⁰³⁰ He performed the following evening in Boston, with Freddie Hubbard, Kenny Barron, Christian McBride, and Victor Lewis.¹⁰³¹

Henderson entered the Power Station, Studio C, in New York on March 16, 1992, to record the first session of his *Big Band* album on Verve. The album was produced by Henderson and Don Sickler, and Richard Seidel was the executive producer.¹⁰³² The saxophone section included Bob Porcelli, Pete Yellin, Rich Perry, Craig Handy, and Joe Temperley. The trumpet section included Lew Soloff, Marcus Belgrave, Virgil Jones, Idrees Sulieman, and Jimmy Owens. The trombone section included Robin Eubanks, Kiane Zawadi, Jimmy Knepper, and Douglas Purviance. The rhythm section included Ronnie Mathews, Christian McBride, and Joe Chambers. Hubbard was a featured soloist.¹⁰³³ The group recorded Henderson's arrangements of "Without a Song," "A Shade of Jade," and "Chelsea Bridge."¹⁰³⁴ Richard Seidel mentioned a fourth selection, which was never released:

There was one other studio track we did not use, which was Joe's excellent arrangement of his own "Punjab." Again, he wasn't happy with the results. On re-listening to it again many years later, the ensemble sounds okay but Freddie Hubbard's solos on the three takes are not great. Freddie's chops were already starting to go at that point, although we didn't actually realize it at the session, and maybe that's why Joe was disappointed in the track and did not want it released.¹⁰³⁵

¹⁰²⁹ Birnbaum, "Caught in the Act: Joe Henderson/Freddie Hubbard."

¹⁰³⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰³¹ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

¹⁰³² Kirchner, notes to *Big Band*.

¹⁰³³ Ibid.

¹⁰³⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰³⁵ Seidel interview.

The recordings remained shelved for four years, until a second session completed the album.

Henderson performed at the Pacific Coast Collegiate Jazz Festival in Berkeley, in early April 1992. He then performed at the Jazz Note in San Diego on April 10 through 12.¹⁰³⁶ Henderson traveled to Europe in May, with Renee Rosnes, Larry Grenadier, and Al Foster. They performed in London, Copenhagen, Paris, and Sweden.¹⁰³⁷ Henderson was highly honored in the *Downbeat Magazine* “International Critics Poll,” where he won his first “triple crown.” He was named the “Jazz Artist of the Year,” he placed first in the “Tenor Saxophone” category, and *Lush Life* was named the “Jazz Album of the Year.”¹⁰³⁸ He then traveled to Jerusalem, Israel, where he performed at the Red Sea Jazz Festival on August 26.¹⁰³⁹ He also performed in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on September 24, with Larry Willis, Larry Grenadier, and Al Foster.¹⁰⁴⁰

Henderson entered the Power Station in New York, to record his second project for Verve, *So Near, So Far: Musings for Miles*, on October 12 through 14, 1992. The album was produced by Richard Seidel and Don Sickler, and co-produced by Henderson. Together they decided to hire John Scofield, Dave Holland, and Al Foster, who were all Davis alumni.¹⁰⁴¹ Foster, who had the longest tenure with the trumpeter, taped a photo of Davis to his cymbal for the duration of the sessions. In his autobiography, Davis even said of Foster,

¹⁰³⁶ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

¹⁰³⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰³⁸ “International Critics Poll,” *Downbeat Magazine*, August 1992, 22-24.

¹⁰³⁹ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

¹⁰⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴¹ Milkowski, notes to *So Near, So Far*.

Al Foster was the person closest to me in my new band because he had been with me longest. He was a real spiritual person, nice to be around. It was Al that kept me in touch with the music scene when I was out for those years. I used to talk to him almost every day when I was retired. I really trusted him during that time.¹⁰⁴²

The album, which was partially inspired by Davis's death in 1991,¹⁰⁴³ moved in a more modern direction from the previous *Lush Life*, and its intention was explained by

Seidel:

While the concept here continues the jazz composer songbook vein begun by last year's *Lush Life: The Music of Billy Strayhorn*, the intent was to create a more open and adventurous sound covering a later era in the development of the music than the more classic and traditional approach reflected by *Lush Life*. This is one of the reasons for the inclusion of electric guitar as opposed to acoustic piano in the instrumentation. The guitar was also an integral element in Miles' music from the late '60s onward and in the context of this album, it adds a new perspective to the material drawn from earlier periods as well.¹⁰⁴⁴

The recording featured the compositions "Miles Ahead," "Joshua," "Pfrancing (No Blues)," "Flamenco Sketches," "Milestones," "Teo," "Swing Spring," "Circle," "Side Car," and "So Near, So Far." Not every selection on the album was a Davis composition; however, every piece was strongly associated with the trumpeter.¹⁰⁴⁵

So Near, So Far was another large success for Henderson and Verve. It sold over 200,000 copies worldwide,¹⁰⁴⁶ and received five stars in its *Downbeat* review.¹⁰⁴⁷ The album won a Grammy in 1993 for "Best Jazz Instrumental Group," and Henderson

¹⁰⁴² Davis and Troupe, *Miles Davis: The Autobiography*, 335.

¹⁰⁴³ Seidel interview.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Milkowski, notes to *So Near, So Far*.

¹⁰⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴⁶ Seidel interview.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Bill Shoemaker, "Joe Henderson: *So Near, So Far*," *Downbeat Magazine*, March 1993, 33.

received a Grammy for “Best Jazz Instrumental Soloist” for his performance on “Miles Ahead.”¹⁰⁴⁸

Henderson traveled to Europe and performed in Warsaw, Poland, with George Mraz and Al Foster on October 25, 1992.¹⁰⁴⁹ He then performed in Leverkusen, Germany, in November, with Dave Holland and Al Foster.¹⁰⁵⁰ He returned to the States, and performed in New Jersey on November 3 with Charnett Moffett and Al Foster.¹⁰⁵¹ He then performed at the SF Jazz Festival, in San Francisco, on November 8, before performing at Fat Tuesdays with Larry Willis, Holland and Foster on November 20 through 22.¹⁰⁵² He performed at Yoshi’s in Oakland, California, with Willis, Larry Grenadier, and Foster on December 3 through 5.¹⁰⁵³

Henderson was awarded his second *Downbeat Magazine* “triple crown” in the “Reader’s Poll” in December 1992. In addition to receiving top honors in the “Jazz Musician of the Year,” “Jazz Album of the Year,” and “Tenor Saxophone” categories, Henderson placed seventh in the coveted “Hall of Fame” category.¹⁰⁵⁴ Henderson finished 1992 by recording Mulgrew Miller’s *Hand in Hand* on December 16 and 18, in New York.¹⁰⁵⁵ Trumpeter Eddie Henderson also performed on the session, and said,

I remember on one of the practice sessions before we actually did the taping, Mulgrew told Joe Henderson to take the first solo, and told Steve Nelson, a great vibes player, to take the next solo. And I remember Steve Nelson said, “Oh man, please. I don’t want to solo after this cat!” Everybody laughed. For some reason, that stands out in my mind. That

¹⁰⁴⁸ “Grammy Search Database.”

¹⁰⁴⁹ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

¹⁰⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵² Ibid.

¹⁰⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵⁴ “Reader’s Poll,” *Downbeat Magazine*, December 1992, 26-27.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

tickles me. And I don't blame him. Nobody wanted to play after Joe on the record, because he would just wipe the slate clean. There would be nothing left to play, you know. That's more indicative, in general, of my recollections about Joe. He was so thorough on everything. It would be difficult to play after him. People would always try to play before him. Because to play after him, it makes you sound amateurish . . . He always played on the professional level.¹⁰⁵⁶

Henderson began 1993 by joining an all-star lineup at President Bill Clinton's Inaugural Ball in January, during which he met the President.¹⁰⁵⁷ Henderson stated,

When I saw [President Clinton] as a candidate on the Arsenio Hall show, it was the first time I had seen him because I was out touring over the world. And he had his shades on, and he had a *tenor* wrapped around his neck. I went over to the television and turned it up, and he went over and played one with the band; and I said "I can't believe this!" That was the door I walked through to try to get to know this man better and became interested in his politics; and I think a lot of other people came through that same door. The appearance spoke volumes to me about the possibilities of the artistic community under his potential administration; I felt perhaps we would be treated less like unwanted children and instead receive some respect and meaningful consideration.

When I met him at the Inauguration I was about ten or fifteen feet off the ground: meeting the President of the United States! And that finally meant something to me; before, it would have meant absolutely nothing. I feel it is my responsibility to help in any way I can, much like I felt when I was drafted into the Army. As much as I did not want to go into the military and be part of any war situation, I did feel that I owe something to this country. We can't just take and take and take; we've got to give something back – like I do here as a teacher of jazz. So that really came home to me as I was standing there on the bandstand with President and Mrs. Clinton at the Inaugural Ball.¹⁰⁵⁸

Henderson recorded one selection for vocalist Holly Coles's *Don't Smoke in Bed*, in Toronto, for Manhattan Records. The recording sessions occurred in February and March 1993, although it is unknown which session Henderson attended.¹⁰⁵⁹ He

¹⁰⁵⁶ Henderson interview.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Garcia, "Joe Henderson: Meaningfully Different," 25.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

performed at the Blue Note in New York, with guitarist Mike Stern, Dave Holland and Al Foster, on February 7.¹⁰⁶⁰ The same group also performed for a week at Fat Tuesdays that month.¹⁰⁶¹ Henderson traveled to Berlin, Germany, and performed at a concert which protested against racial discrimination on May 13.¹⁰⁶² He also appeared on the television program *Good Morning America* on May 31.¹⁰⁶³ Henderson was featured on the cover of *Downbeat Magazine* in the May 1993, issue, and was the subject of the “Joe Henderson’s Year at the Top” feature story.¹⁰⁶⁴ He performed at Fat Tuesdays on June 1 through 6 with Renee Rosnes, George Mraz, and Al Foster.¹⁰⁶⁵

Henderson performed at the JVC Jazz Festival in New York on June 20, 1993, and then at the Toronto Jazz Festival on June 25, with Dave Holland and Al Foster.¹⁰⁶⁶ Henderson traveled to Europe in July with the same group, and they performed at the Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland on July 4.¹⁰⁶⁷ They then performed at the North Sea Jazz Festival in the Netherlands, on July 10. They also performed in Vienne, France during their trip.¹⁰⁶⁸ They performed in London in August 1993.¹⁰⁶⁹

Henderson received his third “triple crown” in the 1993 *Downbeat* “International Critics Poll.” *So Near, So Far: Musings for Miles* was named the “Jazz Album of the Year,” and Verve placed first in the “Record Company” category, in addition to

¹⁰⁶⁰ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

¹⁰⁶¹ Stewart, “Joe Henderson’s Year at the Top,” 18.

¹⁰⁶² Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

¹⁰⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶⁴ Stewart, “Joe Henderson’s Year at the Top,” 17-20.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

¹⁰⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

Henderson's wins in the "Jazz Artist of the Year" and "Tenor Saxophone" categories.¹⁰⁷⁰ He recorded one piece for pianist Bheki Mseleku's *Timelessness*, for Verve, on August 19, 1993.¹⁰⁷¹

The saxophonist traveled to Brazil, and performed with guitarists Oscar Castro-Neves and Paulo Jobim, pianist Gonzalo Rubalcaba, Ron Carter, Harvey Mason, and percussionist Alex Acuna for the Free Jazz Festival in São Paulo, on September 27, 1993.¹⁰⁷² He also performed in Rio de Janeiro around this time, and it was during this trip that Henderson first met the Brazilian composer Antonio Carlos Jobim.¹⁰⁷³ Henderson performed at the Jazz and Blues Festival in Orange, California, on October 17.¹⁰⁷⁴

Henderson then participated as the "Guest of Honor" at the Jazz in the City Festival in San Francisco.¹⁰⁷⁵ He performed with his quartet, comprised of John Scofield, Dave Holland, and Al Foster, along with his big band and the Kronos Quartet, over the duration of the festival, in early November 1993.¹⁰⁷⁶ Henderson said of the experience, "That's an awesome undertaking. I've never imagined myself as being a whole festival."¹⁰⁷⁷

He received his fourth and final "triple crown" in the 1993 *Downbeat Magazine* "Reader's Poll," where he was named the "Jazz Musician of the Year," and placed first in the "Tenor Saxophone" category. *So Near, So Far: Musings for Miles* was selected as the

¹⁰⁷⁰ "International Critics Poll," *Downbeat Magazine*, August 1993, 26, 29.

¹⁰⁷¹ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

¹⁰⁷² Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

¹⁰⁷³ Seidel and Henderson, notes to *Double Rainbow*.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

¹⁰⁷⁵ Stewart, "Joe Henderson's Year at the Top," 20.

¹⁰⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

“Jazz Album of the Year.” Henderson surpassed the *Downbeat* triple crown record by receiving the award during three sequential periods, and his fourth award further solidified his position as a revered jazz musician.¹⁰⁷⁸

Henderson performed at the annual International Association for Jazz Education conference in January 1994, with his quartet, comprised of Scofield, Holland, and Foster.¹⁰⁷⁹ He then recorded two pieces for Roy Hargrove’s *Roy Hargrove with the Tenors of Our Time*, on January 16, in New York, for the Verve label.¹⁰⁸⁰ He led a performance in Ventura, California, on January 23, and gave a series of performances at the Blue Note in New York, on February 18 through 20.¹⁰⁸¹ He also appeared on *Good Morning America* on April 4, with Herbie Hancock, Christian McBride, and Abbey Lincoln.¹⁰⁸²

The saxophonist participated in the “Carnegie Hall Salutes the Jazz Masters” concert at Carnegie Hall, on April 6, 1994.¹⁰⁸³ Richard Seidel elaborated:

In April 1994, at the Carnegie Hall celebration of Verve’s 50th Anniversary, Joe and Jobim reunited for a performance of “Desafinado” that was a true highlight of the event. After this, the plans were set in motion for the sessions that have resulted in *Double Rainbow*.¹⁰⁸⁴

Henderson performed multiple concerts with George Mraz and Al Foster. They performed in Cleveland on April 10, in Houston on April 22, in Wichita, Kansas, on April 24,¹⁰⁸⁵ and at the University of Northern Colorado Jazz Festival on April 29,

¹⁰⁷⁸ “Reader’s Poll,” *Downbeat Magazine*, December 1993, 20-21.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

¹⁰⁸⁰ Lord, “Joe Henderson.”

¹⁰⁸¹ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

¹⁰⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸⁴ Seidel and Henderson, notes to *Double Rainbow*.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

1994.¹⁰⁸⁶ He led performances at the Mellon Jazz Festival in Pittsburgh, and at the Boston Globe Jazz Festival in Boston, in June.¹⁰⁸⁷

Henderson assembled a quartet, comprised of pianist Bheki Mseleku, George Mraz, and Al Foster, and traveled to Europe in July. They performed in Lugano, Switzerland, on July 1, in Vienna, Austria, on July 7, and at the North Sea Jazz Festival in the Netherlands, on July 10. They also performed at the Umbria Jazz Festival in Perugia, Italy, during their trip.¹⁰⁸⁸ The saxophonist led a performance at the Blue Note in New York, on July 12, and performed at Lincoln Center on August 3. He then participated in a Lincoln Center tribute to saxophonist Jimmy Heath the following evening.¹⁰⁸⁹ Henderson also performed at the Monterey Jazz Festival in Monterey, California, with George Mraz and Al Foster, on September 17. He was recognized in the *Downbeat* “International Critics Poll,” where he placed first in the “Tenor Saxophone” category. He also placed sixth in the “Jazz Artist of the Year” category.¹⁰⁹⁰

Henderson entered Oceanway Recording in Los Angeles, on September 19 and 20, 1994, to record “Suite II” for his third Verve album, *Double Rainbow: The Music of Antonio Carlos Jobim*. Richard Seidel explained the concept of the album, and its use of two rhythm sections:

The plan was to record the project with two [distinct] rhythm sections. The first would explore repertoire from a North American point of view, and be recorded in Los Angeles. This session went off without a hitch.

¹⁰⁸⁶ *Joe Henderson: April 29, 1994*, archival footage, Skinner Music Library, University of Northern Colorado.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

¹⁰⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹⁰ “International Critics Poll,” *Downbeat Magazine*, August 1994, 21-22.

The intention of the second session was to record in Rio with Jobim himself on piano, Nico Assumpcao, and Paulo Braga: the music interpreted in a more purely Brazilian style. Just days before we were to leave for Rio, we learned that health problems were going to make it impossible for Jobim to participate. The album was then completed in New York City with Paulo, Nico, Eliane Elias, and Oscar Castro-Neves.

It's our deepest regret that Jobim did not survive to participate in what was designed as a living celebration and collaboration with the premier tenor saxophonist in jazz, Joe Henderson.¹⁰⁹¹

The first rhythm section was comprised of Herbie Hancock, Christian McBride, and Jack DeJohnette. They recorded the Jobim compositions "Triste," "Photograph," "Portrait in Black and White (a.k.a. Zingaro)," "No More Blues," "Happy Madness," "Passarim," and "Modinha."¹⁰⁹² The second recording session took place on November 5 and 6, 1994, at Clinton Recording Studios in New York.¹⁰⁹³ The group recorded "Suite I," which included "Felicidade," "Dreamer," "Boto," "Ligia," and "Once I Loved."¹⁰⁹⁴

Although Henderson had not performed two-thirds of the selections on the album prior to recording, he enjoyed the bossa nova, as he explained: "I feel there's a side of me that the bossa nova appeals to, a real soft side."¹⁰⁹⁵ Richard Seidel discussed Henderson's amount of creative control on his Verve projects, and included information regarding an unreleased track from the *Double Rainbow* sessions. He said,

Joe had as much creative control as he wanted. But he did cede a lot of it to me and my co-producers – Don Sickler on *Lush Life* and *So Near, So Far*, and Oscar Castro-Neves on *Double Rainbow*. The first big band session was in actuality really produced by Don Sickler, although Joe shared credit with him. Ditto for the 1996 big band session which was actually produced by Bob Belden, although Joe shared credit. For *Porgy and Bess*, although Joe received sole credit as producer and Belden is

¹⁰⁹¹ Seidel and Henderson, notes to *Double Rainbow*.

¹⁰⁹² Ibid.

¹⁰⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Ibid.

credited as Musical Director, Belden again was really the producer. And further to how much creative control Joe had, nothing would have been issued from these sessions if Joe didn't approve of the recorded results, which is why "Punjab" (from the first *Big Band* session) was never released. And the same for an excellent version of what was supposed to be the title song of *Double Rainbow*, which he insisted on being dropped after the record was already mastered! Fortunately, the stars were aligned and just about all the other songs on these records came off beautifully, so Joe was satisfied and approved them for release.¹⁰⁹⁶

Double Rainbow was awarded four stars by John McDonough in his *Downbeat* review, although his statement indicated the beginning of a lack of enthusiasm for Henderson's continued Verve output:

Though this is a fine CD, I don't regard Henderson as "one of the greatest tenors in history." But he's one of the few of the post-bop lost generation who navigated the '60s and '70s without being drawn into too much of its esoterica. His value and success today probably derive from both the scarcity of such players and the fact that he managed to preserve a balanced voice in an era of extremism.¹⁰⁹⁷

Henderson led a performance at the Newark Jazz Festival, with Charnett Moffett and Al Foster on November 3, 1994, and he joined the George Gruntz Concert Jazz Band for a performance in Berlin on November 16.¹⁰⁹⁸ The saxophonist performed a weeklong engagement at Jazz Alley in Seattle, on November 21 through 27, with George Mraz and Sylvia Cuenca.¹⁰⁹⁹ He also performed at the Blue Note in New York with John Scofield, George Mraz, and Al Foster, on December 6 through 11.¹¹⁰⁰ He then travelled to Spain, and performed in Terrassa on December 23 through 26 with pianist Tete Montoliu,

¹⁰⁹⁶ Seidel interview.

¹⁰⁹⁷ John McDonough, "Joe Henderson: *Double Rainbow*," *Downbeat Magazine*, May 1995, 41.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

¹⁰⁹⁹ Cuenca interview.

¹¹⁰⁰ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

bassist Pierre Boussaguet, and Gregory Hutchinson.¹¹⁰¹ He was recognized in the *Downbeat Magazine* “Reader’s Poll,” and placed first in the “Tenor Saxophone” category. He placed fifth in the “Jazz Musician of the Year” category.¹¹⁰²

Henderson performed with the Danish Radio Jazz Orchestra in January 1995. The group performed in Umea, Sweden, on January 13, and in Copenhagen on January 22.¹¹⁰³ He performed at the Catalina Bar and Grill in Los Angeles, on February 15 through 19, with Billy Childs, Tony Dumas, and Ralph Penland.¹¹⁰⁴ He also performed in Pittsburgh on April 29, with Oscar Castro-Neves, pianist Helio Alves, bassist Nilson Matta, and percussionist Duduka DaFonseca.¹¹⁰⁵

Henderson recorded two pieces on *The Main Ingredient* for fellow Verve artist, vocalist Shirley Horn. The album was recorded in Horn’s home in Washington, D.C., on May 15 through 18.¹¹⁰⁶ The recording received four stars in its *Downbeat* review.¹¹⁰⁷ Henderson then performed at the Blue Note in Tokyo, on May 29 through June 3, 1995.¹¹⁰⁸ He also performed at the SF Jazz Festival in San Francisco on June 10.¹¹⁰⁹

Henderson formed the “Double Rainbow Quintet,” and the group gave a series of performances in June and July 1995. The quintet included Oscar Castro-Neves, Helio

¹¹⁰¹ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

¹¹⁰² “Reader’s Poll,” *Downbeat Magazine*, December 1994, 28, 34.

¹¹⁰³ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

¹¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰⁶ Shirley Horn, notes to Shirley Horn, *The Main Ingredient* (1995), CD, Verve 314 529 555-2, 1996.

¹¹⁰⁷ Frank-John Hadley, “Shirley Horn: *The Main Ingredient*,” *Downbeat Magazine*, June 1996, 46.

¹¹⁰⁸ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

¹¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

Alves, Nico Assumpção, and Paulo Braga.¹¹¹⁰ With the exception of Alves, this group was utilized on the *Double Rainbow* project. They performed at the JVC Jazz Festival in New York on June 23, and traveled to Europe for performances at the North Sea Jazz Festival in the Netherlands, on July 15, and at the Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland, on July 18.¹¹¹¹ Henderson joined bassist Ray Brown for a performance at the Stanford Jazz Workshop, on August 9, in Palo Alto, California.¹¹¹² The saxophonist was recognized in the *Downbeat Magazine* “International Critics Poll,” and placed third in the “Jazz Artist of the Year” category, behind Joe Lovano and Wynton Marsalis. *Double Rainbow: The Music of Antonio Carlos Jobim* placed second in the “Jazz Album of the Year” category, and Henderson placed second in the “Tenor Saxophone” category, behind Sonny Rollins.¹¹¹³

Henderson performed at the Russian River Festival in Guerneville, California, on September 9 and 10, 1995. He then performed at an all-star benefit for a local drummer in poor health, at Kimball’s East in Oakland, on September 11.¹¹¹⁴ Henderson travelled to Europe, and performed in Leverkusen, Germany, on October 21, and in Warsaw, Poland, on October 22.¹¹¹⁵ Henderson’s last documented performances of 1995 occurred on December 19 through 24, at the Blue Note in New York. His group included trumpeter Claudio Roditi, Mike Stern, Helio Alves, Nilson Matta, and Paulo Braga.¹¹¹⁶

¹¹¹⁰ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

¹¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹¹³ “International Critics Poll,” *Downbeat Magazine*, August 1995, 26, 30.

¹¹¹⁴ Lovell, “Joe Henderson Discography.”

¹¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹¹⁶ Ibid.

Henderson began 1996 with a performance in Detroit, on January 19, with his Double Rainbow Quartet.¹¹¹⁷ He then performed at Yoshi's in Oakland, on February 10, in Tarrytown, New York, on March 30, and in Vancouver, on May 19, with the same group.¹¹¹⁸ He performed at the Iridium in New York on June 19, with George Mraz and Al Foster.¹¹¹⁹

Henderson entered The Hit Factory, Studio 1, in New York, on June 24 and 26, 1996, to complete his fourth Verve project, *Big Band*.¹¹²⁰ Henderson began recording the album in March 1992, but the project had been shelved as the saxophonist and Verve focused on other albums. Richard Seidel explained:

When we did the first session in '92 we didn't have enough for an album. The weekend before the studio session Joe had played live at Jazz At Lincoln Center, which we were using as a way to rehearse for the record, but he wasn't satisfied with the performance of the band on "Homestretch" (which by that point he was calling "Joe's Blues") and felt it wasn't ready to be recorded (it was a very long and difficult arrangement) . . . After we did the sessions for the big band album, *Lush Life* was released and really took off. One thing lead to another with all the success we were having and before you knew it we were doing *So Near, So Far* and *Double Rainbow*. So the big band project just remained on the shelf. But we always intended to get back to it and complete the album, and in 1996 we were able to make that happen.¹¹²¹

The saxophone section included Dick Oatts, Steve Wilson, Tim Ries, Charles Pillow, and Gary Smulyan. Henderson requested five lead trumpet players for his section,¹¹²² which included Jon Faddis, Byron Stripling, Tony Kadleck, Michael Philip Mossman, and Ray Vega. The trombone section included Conrad Herwig, Keith

¹¹¹⁷ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

¹¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹¹²⁰ Kirchner, notes to *Big Band*.

¹¹²¹ Seidel interview.

¹¹²² Parsons, "Joe Henderson's Big Band Dream," 23.

O'Quinn, Larry Farrell, and Dave Taylor. The rhythm section included Chick Corea, Christian McBride, and Lewis Nash. Slide Hampton, Earl Gardner, Al Foster, Nicholas Payton, Helio Alves, Nilson Matta, and Paulo Braga also appeared on the album.¹¹²³ The session was comprised entirely of Henderson compositions, which included his arrangement of "Isotope," Slide Hampton's arrangements of "Inner Urge" and "Serenity," Bob Belden's arrangement of "Black Narcissus," and Michael Philip Mossman's arrangement of "Recorda-Me." Belden and Henderson co-arranged "Step Lightly."¹¹²⁴

The employment of additional arrangers demonstrated a large allocation of Verve resources to Henderson's project. This shows that Henderson did not have enough album-worthy material, but Verve decided to pursue the project and finance the arrangements. Verve also hired Bob Belden and Don Sickler to co-produce and conduct the pieces for the album, and Studio 1 was known to be one of the most expensive studio spaces in New York at that time.¹¹²⁵ Michael Cuscuna explained:

Even that Joe Henderson *Big Band* thing on Verve, I mean that was Richard Seidel and Bob Belden and Don Sickler. They all moved mountains to get the money to make this thing and pull it off. Because the whole Joe Henderson/Kenny Dorham rehearsal big band from the late '60s . . . it was legendary. All the musicians that used to play in it talked about it. For a long time, nobody could find the charts and all this stuff. But it wasn't ever Joe's driving force to get this thing documented. It was all the people that loved him and gave a shit about him that wanted this to get documented. In same the same way he was not an initiator for stuff. When it was brought to him, if it made sense, he was in it the full one-hundred percent. But he was not someone who would instigate stuff.¹¹²⁶

¹¹²³ Kirchner, notes to *Big Band*.

¹¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹¹²⁵ Parsons, "Joe Henderson's Big Band Dream," 23.

¹¹²⁶ Cuscuna interview.

Bob Belden described his own role in the following way:

My job has been to make the situation what Joe wants it to be. Joe is very specific, but he expects you to understand what he wants without going over every single detail. If you miss what he's telling you, he won't go over it again.¹¹²⁷

Verve's efforts and financial investments paid off, as the album won a Grammy in 1997, in the "Best Large Jazz Ensemble Performance" category.¹¹²⁸ The album received five stars in its *Downbeat* review.¹¹²⁹

Two days after the final *Big Band* session, Henderson performed at the Wildwood Jazz Festival in Little Rock, Arkansas, on June 28, 1996.¹¹³⁰ He then performed at the Umbria Jazz Festival in Perugia, Italy with his Double Rainbow Quartet in July. He participated in another all-star benefit at Kimball's East on July 29, and performed at the Brecon Jazz Festival in Wales, on August 1.¹¹³¹ Henderson was recognized in the *Downbeat Magazine* "International Critics Poll," and placed third in the "Tenor Saxophone" category, behind Sonny Rollins and Joe Lovano.¹¹³² The Joe Henderson Big Band performed at the Blue Note in New York, on November 5 through 10.¹¹³³ He was recognized in the *Downbeat* "Reader's Poll," and placed fifth in the "Tenor Saxophone" category.¹¹³⁴

¹¹²⁷ Parsons, "Joe Henderson's Big Band Dream," 25.

¹¹²⁸ "Grammy Search Database."

¹¹²⁹ Frank-John Hadley, "Big Thrills & Subtle Chills," *Downbeat Magazine*, January 1997, 56.

¹¹³⁰ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

¹¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹³² "International Critics Poll," *Downbeat Magazine*, August 1996, 30-31.

¹¹³³ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

¹¹³⁴ "Reader's Poll," *Downbeat Magazine*, December 1996, 38.

Henderson performed for Verve's "JazzFest" in San Francisco, on January 8, 1997, with George Mraz and Al Foster.¹¹³⁵ He then performed for the Verve Jazz Festival at Town Hall, in New York, on January 25, with the Double Rainbow Quartet.¹¹³⁶ He travelled to Hong Kong with the same group, and they performed on March 5.¹¹³⁷ Henderson participated in another all-star benefit at Kimball's East, on March 10.¹¹³⁸

Henderson entered Avatar Studios in New York, to record *Porgy and Bess*, his fifth and final album for Verve, on May 25 through 28, 1997. The album featured Conrad Herwig, John Scofield, Stefon Harris, Tommy Flanagan, Dave Holland, and Jack DeJohnette. Chaka Khan and Sting also made guest appearances. Henderson produced the album, and Richard Seidel was credited as the executive producer. Bob Belden served as the musical director.¹¹³⁹

The selections originated from the musical *Porgy and Bess* and were composed by George Gershwin. Henderson arranged the majority of the pieces, which were presented in three acts. Act I included "Introduction: Jasbo Brown Blues," "Summertime," "Here Come De Honeyman/They Pass By Singin'" and "My Man's Gone Now." Act II included "I Got Plenty O'Nuttin'," "Bess, You Is My Woman Now," "It Ain't Necessarily So," and "I Loves You Porgy." Act III included "There's A Boat Dat's Leavin' Soon For New York" and "Oh Bess, Oh Where's My Bess?" The album

¹¹³⁵ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

¹¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹¹³⁷ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

¹¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹¹³⁹ Joe Henderson, notes to Joe Henderson, *Porgy and Bess* (1997), CD, Verve 314 539 046-2.

received three and one-half stars from John McDonough in his *Downbeat* review, who said,

Porgy and Bess may not be the most imaginative vehicle on which to extend Joe Henderson's string of theme albums, but the Gershwin musical/opera is such a natural, it would be hard to imagine Verve not asking him to tackle it sooner or later.¹¹⁴⁰

Henderson performed with a large ensemble, which was likely his big band, on June 3 through 8, 1997, at Yoshi's.¹¹⁴¹ He then performed at the Blue Note in New York, with Conrad Herwig, Renee Rosnes, George Mraz, and Al Foster, on June 24 through 29.¹¹⁴² He travelled to Europe with Randy Brecker, Herwig, Mraz, and Foster, and the group performed in Vienne, France, on July 12, and at the North Sea Jazz Festival in the Netherlands, on July 13.¹¹⁴³ Henderson also performed with McCoy Tyner at the Marciac Jazz Festival in Marciac, France, on August 13.¹¹⁴⁴ He recorded one piece for Mal Waldron's *Soul Eyes* in Antwerp, Belgium for the BMG label on August 16.¹¹⁴⁵

Henderson was recognized in the *Downbeat Magazine* "International Critics Poll," where he placed third in the "Tenor Saxophone" category, behind Sonny Rollins and Joe Lovano.¹¹⁴⁶ He performed at the Chicago Jazz Festival on August 28, 1997, and at the University of Houston on September 29.¹¹⁴⁷ He then returned to Europe with Herwig, guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel, Mraz and Pete La Roca, and they performed in the

¹¹⁴⁰ John McDonough, "Joe Henderson: *Porgy and Bess*," *Downbeat Magazine*, November 1997, 46.

¹¹⁴¹ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

¹¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴⁵ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

¹¹⁴⁶ "International Critics Poll," *Downbeat Magazine*, August 1997, 30.

¹¹⁴⁷ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

Netherlands on October 13, and in Leverkusen, Germany, on October 17.¹¹⁴⁸ Henderson performed with Tommy Flanagan, Dave Holland, and Al Foster at the SF Jazz Festival in San Francisco, in late October.¹¹⁴⁹

Henderson performed at the Paramount Theater in San Francisco, on November 1, with vibraphonist Stefon Harris, Conrad Herwig, Tommy Flanagan, Dave Holland, and Al Foster.¹¹⁵⁰ He then made a featured appearance on the Charlie Rose show on November 6, with John Scofield.¹¹⁵¹ He also performed at the Jazz Alley in Seattle, on November 12.¹¹⁵²

At this point, Henderson formed the front line for his group that would remain largely intact for the remainder of his career. Henderson hired trumpeter Rex Richardson, who joined Conrad Herwig and Stefon Harris, and the group performed at the Iridium for five evenings in December.¹¹⁵³ Richardson explained the nature of the group, and said,

Well, of course it was great. I never got to hang out with Joe because he didn't "hang" but I was thrilled to be onstage with him and those other great musicians The learning experience was astonishing. Musically it was a bit frustrating because we never rehearsed, and Joe, despite playing at his typical ingenious level, was never feeling great and was often kind of "checked out" – that is, we didn't learn new tunes, didn't do anything creative with forms, sets, etc. Joe would just call tunes as we went, and every tune had a solo from every single band member; even though the band was strong, it must have gotten difficult for audience members to sit through at times. One time in a concert in Cleveland, I think it was, he looked around at us and asked "Everyone know 'Beatrice'?" – the Sam Rivers tune – and I looked at him in surprise and nodded, thinking "dang . . . I learned 'Beatrice' from Joe's *Live at the Vanguard* record, but haven't played it in like five years," and then he counted it off about three times faster than I'd ever heard it! So, that kind

¹¹⁴⁸ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

¹¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹¹⁵² Ibid.

¹¹⁵³ Rex Richardson, interview by author, June 13, 2016.

of thing kept you on your toes, but didn't make for the best "band" experience. I often felt like we were just a bunch of musicians trying to deal with whatever our brilliant, mercurial leader wanted to do, rather than really functioning as a "band" the way Dave Holland's quintet does. But, don't get me wrong . . . it was nonetheless amazing to be up there playing many of my favorite tunes with those legendary musicians, and I wouldn't trade those experiences for anything.

As for life on tour, it was good and mostly easy with Joe; the tours were short and high budget, which meant great festivals, great hotels, etc. and mostly flights rather than long, grueling tours on a bus.¹¹⁵⁴

Henderson's health was also beginning to fail around this time, which caused him to miss performances. Richardson stated,

To be honest, he didn't always show up for his own performances. I don't think he was blowing them off, sitting in the hotel watching TV or something; rather, I think his health was bad enough that, at times, he just couldn't function. For whatever reason, he didn't always communicate about this to his hosts, manager or the band, so sometimes we were left in the lurch.

I don't "blame" him for this – I truly think it was a consequence of health problems rather than of carelessness or irresponsible behavior.¹¹⁵⁵

Henderson's group performed at the Jazz Bakery in Los Angeles, in late 1997 or early 1998.¹¹⁵⁶ Henderson was recognized in the *Downbeat* "Reader's Poll," where he placed third in the "Tenor Saxophone" category. *Big Band* placed second in the "Jazz Album of the Year" category, and Henderson placed eighth in the "Hall of Fame" category.¹¹⁵⁷ Henderson's group toured Japan in early 1998,¹¹⁵⁸ and the saxophonist recorded on Niels Lan Doky's *Something Special* in January or February.¹¹⁵⁹

¹¹⁵⁴ Richardson interview.

¹¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁵⁷ "Reader's Poll," *Downbeat Magazine*, December 1997, 30, 38, 47.

¹¹⁵⁸ Richardson interview.

¹¹⁵⁹ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

Henderson recorded four pieces for vocalist Keiko Lee's *If It's Love*, on March 6 through 11, 1998, in New York.¹¹⁶⁰ He then made the final recorded appearance of his career on Terence Blanchard's *Jazz in Film*, which was recorded on March 17 and 18.¹¹⁶¹ Henderson's group performed in Cleveland, on March 21, and in Dayton, Ohio, on March 23.¹¹⁶² He then performed with Conrad Herwig, John Scofield, Tommy Flanagan, George Mraz, and Bill Stewart in Bern, Switzerland, on May 10.¹¹⁶³ He performed at the Catalina Bar and Grill in Los Angeles, on June 7.¹¹⁶⁴

Henderson's group performed in Toronto, Calgary, Edmonton and Montreal during the summer of 1998. They also performed at the Jazz Alley in Seattle, in either late summer or early fall.¹¹⁶⁵ Eventually, Henderson's health declined to the point where he was no longer able to perform. Richardson elaborated:

In August of 1998, Joe's illness got to the point that he no longer toured. I have the sad honor of having played Joe's last public performance, at the Stern Grove Festival [in San Francisco] that month. Then he went right into the hospital after the concert finished, and never toured again until his death in 2001.¹¹⁶⁶

Final Years

Henderson's health had noticeably declined since December 1997.¹¹⁶⁷ No definitive diagnosis has been discovered, although the consensus is that years of cigarette smoking¹¹⁶⁸ and living the musician's lifestyle on the road gradually wore him down.

¹¹⁶⁰ Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

¹¹⁶¹ Lord, "Joe Henderson."

¹¹⁶² Lovell, "Joe Henderson Discography."

¹¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶⁵ Richardson interview.

¹¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶⁸ Heinman and Keepnews, notes to *Power to the People*.

Following his hospital admittance in August 1998, Henderson remained in San Francisco,¹¹⁶⁹ where he suffered a stroke prior to 2000.¹¹⁷⁰ He was also diagnosed with emphysema.¹¹⁷¹ Joanne Brackeen described her brief conversations with Henderson during his illness:

Of course he would only talk fifteen minutes a day. That's all they told him he could do; his energy was so low the last couple of years. I would call him in those fifteen minutes. Who knows – that's just how we were from the beginning to the end . . . that was our thing. Once again [it was] never spoken to each other because that was us When it felt like I was supposed to call him, I would just call.

The one thing that he said . . . was that the thing he missed most of everything was talking with all of his friends. That's not something you hear everybody say when you can hardly speak. But that was how he felt. It felt like he reached a very high spiritual level, even though his energy level was not that much with him.¹¹⁷²

Music constituted an integral role in Henderson's life, and he felt defeated after learning that he could no longer play his instrument. Jason Koransky explained:

Henderson's close friend, Mariko Kuwajima Hopps, who was with the saxophonist when he suffered his stroke, told writer Kevin Lynch about a time in '99 when, after weeks of intensive physical therapy, Henderson asked her to bring him his saxophone. "It took a half hour for him to assemble his own instrument," Hopps recalled. "He played a few phrases. Then he stopped and just looked down at his knees. A few minutes later, he started to cry. When he realized he couldn't play anymore, Joe's life actually ended."¹¹⁷³

¹¹⁶⁹ Ben Ratliff, "Joe Henderson, Saxophonist and Composer, Dies at 64," *The New York Times*, accessed November 8, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/07/03/arts/joe-henderson-saxophonist-and-composer-dies-at-64.html>.

¹¹⁷⁰ Jason Koransky, "Inspiration from Dedication," *Downbeat Magazine*, September 2001, 12.

¹¹⁷¹ Ratliff, "Joe Henderson, Saxophonist and Composer, Dies at 64."

¹¹⁷² Brackeen interview.

¹¹⁷³ Koransky, "Inspiration from Dedication."

Joseph Arthur Henderson passed away on June 30, 2001, in San Francisco, due to heart failure caused by emphysema.¹¹⁷⁴ He was sixty-four years old. He is buried in the Dayton National Cemetery in Dayton, Ohio.¹¹⁷⁵

¹¹⁷⁴ Ratliff, "Joe Henderson, Saxophonist and Composer, Dies at 64."

¹¹⁷⁵ "Joe Henderson," Find a Grave, accessed October 2, 2016, <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=5860871>.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND TRIBUTE

I'm really pleased that whatever my career has been about has come largely from being my own self, not from being associated with other people. I think I've had my own fingerprints on the music right from Day One. Since I was in Detroit, you knew it was Joe Henderson on the saxophone. I feel very proud about that.¹¹⁷⁶

– Joe Henderson

The jazz community lost one of its most innovative, thoughtful, creative and original musicians when Joe Henderson passed away in 2001. In a show of respect, *Downbeat* readers elected Henderson to the magazine's "Hall of Fame" after his passing.¹¹⁷⁷ A tribute concert, which featured Nicholas Payton, Charlie Haden, Al Foster, Joe Lovano, and John Scofield, was also held in October 2001, to honor Henderson's memory.¹¹⁷⁸

It is impossible to know the trajectory that Henderson's career would have taken if he had remained in good health; however, Lenny White offered a valuable insight. He said that Henderson had spoken with him in 1997, and the saxophonist was interested in a "contemporary" project. This album would have consisted of more ambitious material

¹¹⁷⁶ Stewart, "Joe Henderson's Year at the Top," 20.

¹¹⁷⁷ "Reader's Poll," *Downbeat Magazine*, December 2001, 48.

¹¹⁷⁸ White, "Joe Henderson: An Analysis of Harmony," 19.

than was featured in his Verve output, although no other details of the project are currently known.¹¹⁷⁹

Summary

Joe Henderson's career is a study in perseverance. Although he enjoyed early success on Blue Note Records with Horace Silver and Lee Morgan, his career faded into semi-obscurity during his tenure with Milestone Records in the 1970s. He considered leaving the music scene during this time, but he continued to perform locally and internationally nonetheless. His career experienced an uptick with the recording *The State of the Tenor* in 1985, but it was not until his contract with Verve Records in 1991 that he achieved the level of fame and success that he desired.

Henderson was known as an intellectual, and his greatest contributions to jazz stem from his study of the music. He arrived on the music scene as jazz was transitioning away from bebop and towards the avant-garde, and his interest in the new music paired excellently with his willingness to perform and record in different jazz genres. In this way, Henderson exposed large audiences to extended techniques and adventurous tonal palettes within the context of mainstream hard bop groups such as the Horace Silver Quintet.

Henderson's technical facility on the tenor saxophone was unprecedented. The logical objection to this point is the prowess of John Coltrane; however, Henderson was the first tenor saxophonist to incorporate an extreme level of technical subtlety and nuance into his improvisations. Whereas Coltrane revolutionized the speed and complexity of improvised solos, Henderson placed intention and nuance on each note.

¹¹⁷⁹ White interview.

This aspect, combined with his interest in diatonic sequences and patterns, and exotic scales and tonalities, greatly influenced the tenor saxophonist Michael Brecker.

Henderson's technical facility was likely a result of his time spent with Larry Teal, although this is not proven and would benefit from further study.

Henderson left behind an outstanding catalog of compositions, many of which continue to be performed today. Pieces such as "Recorda-Me," "Serenity," "Inner Urge," "Isotope," and others have become staples of the jazz repertoire, while "Black Narcissus," "Afro-Centric," and "Gazelle" continue to challenge experienced musicians. Additionally, his unique treatment of jazz standards provides an example to all saxophonists who work in trio or quartet formats.

Henderson successfully assimilated the styles of bebop, hard bop, and the avant-garde, and he created a unique aesthetic from this blend which influenced younger musicians. In fact, his role in the history of the music could be seen as providing a critical link from Parker, Coltrane, and Coleman to Michael Brecker, Joshua Redman, and Chris Potter. In this way, Henderson's contributions to jazz are indispensable, noteworthy, and worth further study.

Tribute

The following anecdotes and statements from Henderson's friends and fellow musicians are presented below, in order to preserve his legacy.

Joe was an unusual person; like many jazz legends, you saw quirky traits. While his disposition was pleasant, he almost never spoke to the band other than calling the next tune. But a handful of times that year, after my solo on a given tune, Joe would say quietly, "Yeah, Rex!," and man, I was on cloud nine each time that happened. He never stopped being a huge hero to me, and knowing he had played with my biggest trumpet influences (Lee, Freddie, Woody) made his approval even more special. I miss him and his playing; he left us when he was far too young, and I

think if he'd been healthy he would have had a tremendous amount of music left in him.

– Rex Richardson¹¹⁸⁰

I was amazed at Joe's level of consistency from night to night. He constantly played at such a high level and he had complete command of his instrument. He was always “on” and always gave two-hundred percent. It was so inspiring to share the bandstand with someone that played with that kind of energy and level of expression!

– Sylvia Cuenca¹¹⁸¹

I have this thing sometimes if I see someone. It happened with Mel Torme, when he was singing at this concert hall that held six or seven thousand people in Ocean Grove. He sang this concert that was totally out of this world. It was unbelievable. I turned to the people sitting next to me and I said, “This is the end of his life. He doesn't have anything more he can do here on Earth.” And the next day he was gone.

I saw Joe Henderson at the Blue Note with his group, and this was different. He played his solo and was amazing as always. But when I was watching other people on the bandstand take their solo, it was like his energy and his total attention He was seeing, hearing, feeling and knowing everything that person was doing. I've never ever seen that on a bandstand with anyone. It was like it was he, himself playing their solo.

No influence on them. Of course my thought was then “I don't know how long he'll be here, because he's already graduated.”

– Joanne Brackeen¹¹⁸²

Hi Joe,

We miss you greatly. When I think about your musical contribution to our art form, it brings me joy. I was very fortunate to have you present on some of my recordings. You made them special. God Bless you, and have a wonderful time on your journey.

¹¹⁸⁰ Richardson interview.

¹¹⁸¹ Cuenca interview.

¹¹⁸² Brackeen interview.

Your friend,
McCoy Tyner¹¹⁸³

Joe was always a consistent soloist. He wasn't hot one night, cold the next. I never heard Joe have a bad night. He told me one day on the phone, "I can't understand why I'm so popular [now]. I'm playing the same thing I've always played." It took people awhile to catch up to him.

He was kind of a loner. He was on good terms with everyone in the band, but he wasn't the buddy type of guy who would hang out with everybody in the band, or go out drinking. When the gig was over, he went to his room. Of course, Kenny Dorham discovered him first. But if I hadn't, somebody else would have recognized his abilities and pushed him up the ladder of fame. I'm glad I was the one who primarily did.

– Horace Silver¹¹⁸⁴

I was consistently awed by Joe's incredible artistry. From night to night, he played with such joy and command, and he inspired the same from his band mates. He wasn't a leader who directed verbally, but rather spoke through his horn. Joe used to say, "Heaven is on the bandstand," and could often be found looking skyward with his hands in a prayer-like stance, as he listened to the sounds being created around him. It was almost as if he was summoning the muses. I have many cherished memories of playing with him.

– Renee Rosnes¹¹⁸⁵

He was just a first-class musician and artist. His compositions are going to endure. The way he phrased, and the syncopation, made you pay attention. I like *Inner Urge*. That was probably one of the most intricate albums. You can listen to it forever, it's so beautiful.

– Elvin Jones¹¹⁸⁶

He was really a one-of-a-kind guy. I remember when we were doing that Village Vanguard session with Ron and Al... I must tell you that in the early '80s, Joe was very soft-spoken, but he had a very wry sense of humor. He always had this bemused look on his face. I remember calling him once in the early '80s and I got his answering machine, and it was him a cappella singing "Happiness is a Thing Called Joe," and then the beep

¹¹⁸³ Paul de Barros, "Joe Henderson: Hall of Fame," *Downbeat Magazine*, December 2001, 42.

¹¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹¹⁸⁵ Rosnes interview

¹¹⁸⁶ de Barros, "Joe Henderson: Hall of Fame," 42.

for the message. To me that was the epitome of his sense of humor. He was a motherfucker. He was so great and he was so warm and so wonderful, but he could also fuck with you mercilessly if he wanted to, you know. He just had a unique mind.

– Michael Cuscuna¹¹⁸⁷

The thing I loved about Joe’s playing was, first of all, his sound. It was a very personal sound... For me, the legacy is the tunes. The songs he wrote have become standards. He definitely will be missed. He was one person I always looked forward to playing with.

– Kenny Barron¹¹⁸⁸

He was able to do things in his mind. We played “air chess” one day at the airport. He was sitting behind me. We were in those booths, back in the day of the phone booth. He said something like “Pawn two, left.” I said, “Oh Joe, I play chess, but I’m not that good.” He would do crossword puzzles. He was very thoughtful about things. Very philosophical, very detailed.

The words he would use He said, “You know what it took to make that carpet?” Like a Turkish rug or something. I said, “Joe, it took a lot of time and diligence.” He said, “Right, yeah, yeah. But no. Love, love. That’s what it took.” I said, “Wow, why didn’t I think of that?” It did take love. It takes all that other stuff, but it’s more than that. Love. That’s what it took to make that tapestry. He was trying to make a philosophical point, that that’s what it takes to make music, when you create your tapestry. The essence of it is really love, and he focused on that aspect of time spent, rather than just time spent. The impetus, the motivation, was love, to create something.

That was pretty moving for me, and it gave me a better perspective. In America we’re always about time and energy and money, and we always think of those things first, as opposed to the passion of something, and the love that drives to do those things, and to take that time, and to create the things we create. He’s certainly right. Why else would we do this? It’s a labor of love. That was pretty big for me.

He would ask me things like, “Do you know how to filet a fish?” Just goofy things The details of how things were put together or taken apart . . . were important to him. The way he cut his food always made me

¹¹⁸⁷ Cuscuna interview.

¹¹⁸⁸ de Barros, “Joe Henderson: Hall of Fame,” 41.

giggle. When we were eating, this is silly and I don't mean to make fun, but . . . Before he ate his food, he would prepare it. It would be cut. All the little shrimps would be cut, and everything would be very meticulous. And then he would eat. I thought, "Okay, I kind of like that." He was preparing and prepared with focused intent, demonstrated by as simple a thing as eating.

Something else about Joe was that he was always even. He never walked fast. Joe walked at the same tempo for as long as I knew him, always. It was pretty interesting, because he would joke with me. He said, "You like to rush up to the stop sign and then stop." I said, "Yeah, I guess so." But not Joe! Joe was so even in how I saw him. He was un-swayed by whatever timeframe, or whatever it was. You'll never catch Joe run. Never. The pace was consistently cool.

– Marlene Rosenberg¹¹⁸⁹

He was the king, and they were the princes, and the world still sees the other people as kings. It would be good for the sake of balance to turn that around.

– Joanne Brackeen¹¹⁹⁰

I would like to say that the feeling Joe had playing the saxophone, I would love for him to still be around so I could get that feeling some more. I didn't get enough of it. I would like to be able to sit down at the drums on stage and have him playing his saxophone, so I could get that feeling, his feeling, his body, his sound, his feeling again. I would love to be able to do that. Other than that, there's nothing I can say. That can't be accomplished. I enjoyed [him] so much, and I'm very happy that we were able to come together as men and as musicians, and we had the time that we had while he was here, and I was here at the same time. I'm glad that we were able to make that history together.

– Louis Hayes¹¹⁹¹

¹¹⁸⁹ Rosenberg interview.

¹¹⁹⁰ Brackeen interview.

¹¹⁹¹ Hayes interview.

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¹¹⁹² The albums listed below are presented as they were originally issued. This allows the reader to choose the subsequent release that best fits their needs.

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APPENDIX A
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



Institutional Review Board

DATE: January 8, 2016

TO: Joel Harris, D.A.
FROM: University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [846314-2] Joe Henderson: A Biographical Study of his Life and Career
SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: APPROVAL/VERIFICATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE: January 8, 2016

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB approves this project and verifies its status as EXEMPT according to federal IRB regulations.

Joel -

Thank you for swiftly submitting the requested revisions for review. You may proceed with participant recruitment and data collection; be sure to use these amended materials in that process. Please additionally make one minor change to your consent form and note that "recordings" are audio so there is clarity available to the potential participants. This change does not need to be resubmitted for further review.

Best wishes with your research and don't hesitate to contact me with any IRB-related questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Dr. Megan Stellino, UNC IRB Co-Chair

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records for a duration of 4 years.

If you have any questions, please contact Sherry May at 970-351-1910 or Sherry.May@unco.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB's records.