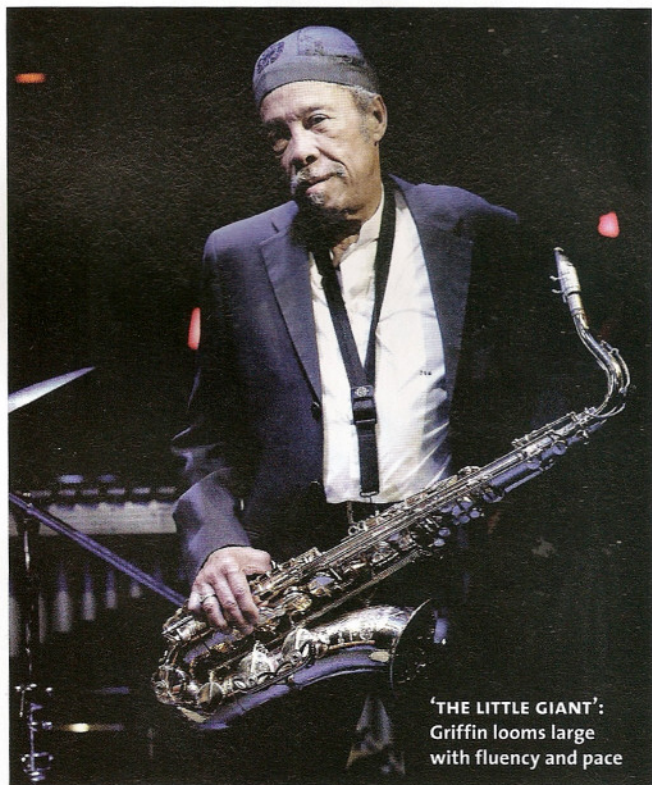


JAZZ

The **DARIUS BRUBECK QUARTET** deliver a lyrical set of originals and covers; **JOSHUA REDMAN** impresses with music for double-trio; plus presenter Geoffrey Smith falls under the spell of **BUNK JOHNSON**

A fitting farewell

BARRY WITHERDEN enjoys Johnny Griffin's last disc



'THE LITTLE GIANT': Griffin looms large with fluency and pace



JOHNNY GRIFFIN

Live at Ronnie Scott's

Johnny Griffin (saxophone), Roy Hargrove (trumpet, flugelhorn), James Pearson, David Newton, Paul Kuhn (piano), Billy Cobham (drums)
In and Out Records IOR CD 77095-2
 60:46 mins

BBC Music Direct £13.70

This album was recorded last May, five weeks after Johnny Griffin's 80th birthday. He died two months later. The vigour of his playing belies both facts. Nicknamed 'The Little Giant' and once known as the world's

fastest saxophonist, Griffin's playing had more depth and subtlety than these monikers suggest, qualities that were better recognised in the last couple of decades, but which were already in evidence in such earlier sessions as the 1957 encounter of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers with Thelonious Monk, and *White Gardenia*, the 1961 tribute to Billie Holiday.

His tone was still big and booting, if slightly less so than of yore, and his fluency, imagination and penchant for apposite quotes were undiminished. The band does him proud: bassist Reggie Johnson, credited in the notes, is reliable throughout and Hargrove is on blistering form.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★



DARIUS BRUBECK QUARTET

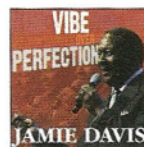
For Lydia and the lion

Darius Brubeck (piano, fender rhodes), Mike Rossi (saxophone), Matt Ridley (bass), Wesley Gibbens (drums)
Gathering Forces GF2 46:08 mins

BBC Music Direct £13.70

There's something hugely inviting about the mellifluous and tuneful style of this offering from yet another member of the Brubeck dynasty, mixing originals with, for want of a better term, cover versions rather than standards. All hold up very nicely with the possible exception of Brubeck's take on Bob Dylan, which may raise a cheer from the babyboomers in the audience but sounds too much like a college exercise for its own good. However, it's the only clunker in an appealing programme that skilfully juggles African lilt, Latin frisson and welcoming modern-to-mainstream arrangements. My only sonic gripe is an occasional clangorousness to the piano sound. *Roger Thomas*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★



JAMIE DAVIS

Vibe over perfection

Jamie Davis (vocals), Tom Scott, Charles McNeal, Marshall McDonald (saxophone), Dave Kiem, Clarence Banks (trombone), Mike Williams, Scotty Barnhart (trumpet), Tony Suggs (piano), Butch Miles (drums), James Leary (bass)
Unity Music DG133 39:42 mins

BBC Music Direct £13.70

Michael Parkinson's retirement from ITV and Radio 2 has left a significant gap when it comes to promoting the big band sound on the airwaves. Indeed, it was in Parky's final TV series that vocalist Jamie Davis, from San Francisco's Bay area jazz scene, blended

memorably with Laurie Holloway's house band.

Davis is backed on this disc by a full-to-capacity big band with key talent plucked from the ranks of the Count Basie Orchestra, of which he was a frontman from 2000-03. He's aided here by the production skills of Sly Stone drummer Greg Errico, delivering a polished mix of songs that range from 'Pennies from Heaven' to Bacharach's 'Look of Love'. But it's Davis's soaring take on Berlin's 'Blue Skies' that will stop you in your tracks. *Neil McKim*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★



JOSHUA REDMAN

Compass

Joshua Redman (soprano & tenor saxophones), Reuben Rogers, Larry Grenadier (bass), Brian Blade, Gregory Hutchinson (drums)
Nonesuch 7559 799 230 72:34 mins

BBC Music Direct £12.72

Saxophonist Joshua Redman graduated from Harvard and contemplated a career in law. We should be glad he followed the example of his sax-playing dad, Dewey Redman, and chose to apply his fine mind to jazz.

Now 39 years old, Redman junior has played in varied styles across genres, from groove-based funk to turbulent 1950s bebop. But we've never seen this before: improvisation using permutations of two trios. In other words, different numbers featuring different rhythm sections... or both playing together.

By rights, two drummers and two bassists should signal a train crash. But the 'double trio' concept works and the result is clear-headed improv with the added benefit of variations in the sound and dynamic.

It goes without saying that Redman's pure-toned horn of plenty dominates, his tenor issuing a torrent of notes in front of the whip-smart accompaniment. *Garry Booth*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★