

THE HOTTEST IN COUNTRY FROM MCA NASHVILLE

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COUNTRY

Ranch Romance's Impressive Sophomore Effort

Seattle quartet **Ranch Romance** has followed up their brilliant debut with an equally impressive second effort. *Blue Blazes* (Sugar Hill) fulfills all the hopes raised by 1989's *Western Dream* (Ranch Hand). Handling western swing, bluegrass, cowgirl harmony and honky-tonk styles with equal finesse, the foursome continues to have the freshest, most enthusiastic sound to be found in country music today. On *Blue Blazes*, the band's previous all-acoustic setup and standards repertoire has been augmented with electric guitars and

accordian, and now relies on lead vocalist Jo Miller's songwriting. The expanded instrumentation allows them a broader range, and Miller possesses a deep well of songwriting talent.

Marty Brown's MCA debut, *High and Dry* is the best thing to come from a major label this year, and his bare-bones, stone-hard sound of-

fers welcome relief from what has been a disappointing year for new talent. It is truly amazing that Brown could get away with this. We're not talking modern, radio-ready honky-tonk—Brown sings the real thing. He makes Alan Jackson sound like Kenny Rogers. Tony Brown, who coproduced this disc with Richard Bennett, usually lets artists be themselves, and does the same here; Brown is a backwoods hillbilly who was born to write songs, and it comes through in rich detail.

-Lee Nichols



Ranch Romance

JAZZ

Unknown yet influential: Meet Horace Tapscott

There is a group of highly influential jazz musicians whose names rarely become known to general audiences, or even to most jazz fans. These subaural pioneers are the knots tying jazz's history together just below the surface.

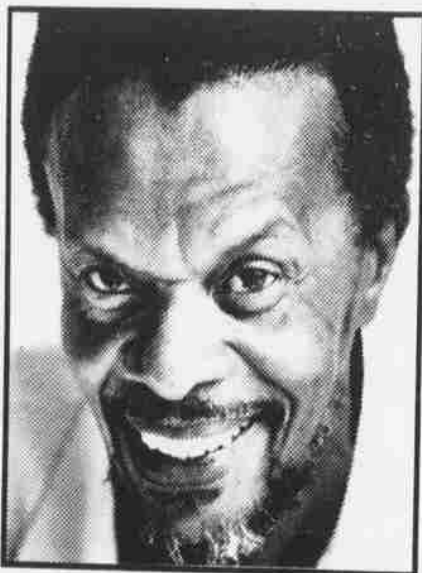
ostinatos that power the soloists into post-Ornette Coleman territory. The *Dark Tree* won't be a big hit among Kenny G fans, who prefer aural wallpaper. But its sheer surging feel will insinuate itself into the head of any jazz listener with even partially open ears.

Fifty-six-year-old **Horace Tapscott** is just one, albeit one outrageously powerful, example. Beginning as a trombonist until he was sidelined by a car crash in the early '60s, Tapscott switched to piano. Along with clarinet great John Carter and cornetist Bobby Bradford, he helped spawn a new generation that includes David Murray and Arthur Blythe, who made his recording debut with Tapscott.

-Gene Santoro

All of which makes the incendiary but disciplined sounds of *The Dark Tree* (hat ART) very welcome indeed. This stuffed-to-the-soundbytes two-CD set (available separately) joins Tapscott with Carter, bassist extraordinaire Cecil McBee and drum monster Andrew Cyrille. With the fabulous rhythm section and soloists the album boasts, it's a hypnotic force packing the wallop of Hurricane Bob.

As a composer/arranger, Tapscott can wax complexly lyrical, like on the haunting "A Dress for Renee." But on *The Dark Tree* he focuses primarily on driving



Horace Tapscott

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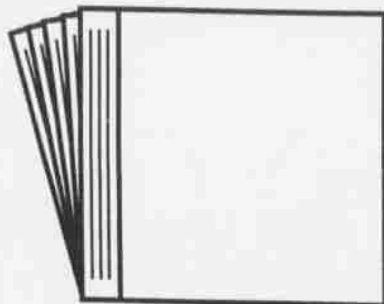
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