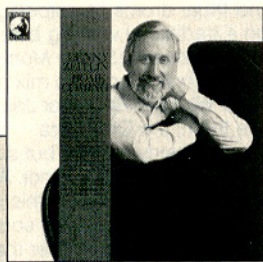


and Sonny and Trane, and his muscular soprano on the title cut is a spectacular update of Bechet. He pushes the old melody to some very untraditional places, as Al Foster and Ron Carter create a fire-and-ice backdrop.

Even better is the bebop reworking of Gershwin's *Strike Up The Band*, which fades in on a furious walk by Charnett Moffett. Marsalis starts out cool, playing angular runs and alluding to the melody. He builds a swirling line around Larry Willis' piano punctuations, then abruptly downshifts into half-time. The rhythm section stretches behind him, then they snap out of it together and swing to the end. It's a neat trick, one that shows just how bold Branford Marsalis the *player* can be. It would be nice if Branford Marsalis the *leader* showed the same kind of audacity. He's proven here he can bridge jazz styles from 1920 to 1960—why stop there? I don't think a fusion album is necessarily the answer, but let's hope for something a little more daring next time.

—jim roberts



## DENNY ZEITLIN

**HOME COMING**—Living Music 0011: *FIRST LIGHT; HOME COMING; WALTZ FOR JOSEPHINE; MORNING TOUCH; HYMN; JUST PASSING BY; BRAZILIAN STREET DANCE; MILLPOND; MAYFLY; QUIET NOW.*

**Personnel:** Zeitlin, piano.

★ ★ ★ ★

## PAUL HALLEY

**PIANOSONG**—Living Music 0009: *PIANOSONG; KITES IN THE WIND; SEPTEMBER NOCTURNE; MEADOWS OF LOOSE HORSES; MOONS OF JUPITER; FISHERMAN; ST. LEONID; THE ROAD TAKEN; WITHIN THE MIND OF THOMAS; ANTHEM.*

**Personnel:** Halley, piano, pipe organ.

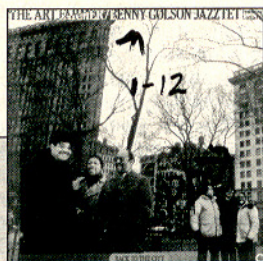
★ ★

Both of these releases by this pair of solo keyboardists were co-produced by Paul Winter for Living Music. There their similarities end. Denny Zeitlin, as we've come to expect, gives us an ongoing, fluid dialog between mind and instrument, done with more than a usual helping of wistful, reflective moods, held in a delicate balance of thought and feeling. It's a measure of Zeitlin's subtle skill as an improviser that repeated listenings are required to delineate where Zeitlin's thematic material ends and his improvisations begin, so organic is his conception. This quality gives an aura of freshness to Zeitlin's music—with the exception of

his tranquil *Quiet Now* there is seemingly nothing premeditated in his work. On *Waltz For Josephine*—and throughout—Zeitlin's poised intensity makes lines seem to grow out of themselves as his music follows the fine thread of his invention. This music invites the listener into a freely associative conversation with its substance, both logical and intuitive as he openly allows his lines to weave where they will. And if the vision of the fiery pianist of *Cathexis* has mellowed into comfortable maturity, it's the listener's gain, for the pleasures of Zeitlin's reflective moods are many.

Paul Halley, organist and choirmaster at New York's Cathedral of St. John the Divine and member of the Paul Winter Consort, apparently begins with quite different premises regarding keyboard improvisation than does Zeitlin. In this collection of totally spontaneous pieces he opts for repose over tension, similarity over diversity, and the intelligible over the tangential. At first, as on *Pianosong*, his role as "a balladeer of songs without words" seems poised, open, and fresh, but his vision soon turns monochromatic as the listener waits for something—anything—to transpire. Worse, as on *Kites In The Wind*, Halley hands us melodic and harmonic commonplaces as though they were profundities, naively portioning out his themes in too palatable little morsels, continuously playing down to his listeners. Never were consonances quite so cloying. As we wait for a catharsis that never comes, we may well conclude that there is less here, far less, than meets the ear.

—jon balleras



## ART FARMER/BENNY GOLSON JAZZTET

**BACK TO THE CITY**—Contemporary 14020: *BACK TO THE CITY; FROM DREAM TO DREAM; WRITE SOON; VAS SIMEON; SPEAK LOW; WITHOUT DELAY/TIME SPEAKS.*

**Personnel:** Farmer, flugelhorn; Golson, tenor saxophone; Curtis Fuller, trombone; Mickey Tucker, piano; Ray Drummond, bass; Marvin "Smitty" Smith, drums.

★ ★ ★ ★

On tv these days, reunions of classic teams are depressing affairs: Old Masters appear awfully decrepit. But the reborn Jazztet combines the best of old and new. In a front line first yoked together almost three decades ago, three horns blend in seamless phrasing and harmony. A new rhythm section keeps them hopping.

You may not have noticed, but for several years now Benny Golson has been hitting new peaks as a player. His sound has both ripened