

THE YEAR IN THE ARTS

POP & JAZZ/1994

PETER WATROUS

Saxophonists Sounded a Revival As a Trumpeter Took Up The Sword

The Young Lions The saxophonists Joshua Redman and James Carter got into a slash-and-burn cutting competition at the Iridium in Manhattan in September. Two completely different conceptions were served up by two players performing at a very high level of improvisation, even if they were young and not completely formed. It was a sign, written in powerful language, that the jazz renaissance was heating up.

Coleman, Back From Oblivion The news over the summer that the saxophonist Ornette Coleman had returned from jazz oblivion — via a recording contract with Polygram and a new acoustic group with the pianist Geri Allen, the bassist Charnette Moffit and Mr. Coleman's son, Denardo, on drums — was both shocking and welcome. The word filtered back from his performance in San Francisco in the fall that Mr. Coleman was playing as well as ever. That he didn't play New York made him spectral and the news tantalizing.

Showdown at Lincoln Center Jazz's ideological war of the last several years led to a pitched battle in August between John Lincoln Collier, the writer, and Wynton Marsalis, the trumpeter, in a debate at Lincoln Center. Mr. Marsalis demolished Mr. Collier, point after point after point, but what made the debate unpleasant was the crowd's blood lust; humiliation, not elucidation, was the desired end.

Farewell to a Band Wynton Marsalis's septet began its final engagement in late November. On opening night, at the Village Vanguard, the band played striking and dissonant reharmonization of tunes by Thelonious Monk, some deep blues and New Orleans parade beats. The event made it clear that there is nothing like the band in jazz; a working group that is literate, swinging and immensely resourceful.

Ornette Coleman, above left,
and Joshua Redman.



Jack Vartogian

JON PARELES

An Elder Statesman, Young Turks, A Fallen Hero And a Leap Of Faith

Dylan's Benediction At Woodstock '94, the silver-anniversary ritual of rainy communal bonding in August, there were epiphanies for two generations. Baby boomers rallied to the renescent Bob Dylan, 53, dressed in outlaw black and singing from the heart. He riveted the throng with songs both apocalyptic and cautionary; then he obliquely blessed the younger crowd with a long-awaited chorus: "Everybody must get stoned."

A Muddy Green Day Woodstock '94 went gleefully haywire when, all of a sudden, Green Day and its fans dissolved any peace-and-love nostalgia. The three-man band from Berkeley, Calif., supercharges tuneful songs about boredom and lack of motivation; it faced a weary but eager crowd. Fans decided to show their excitement by pelting the band with mud and then rushing the stage, ending up in a melee of audience members, security guards and band members — an outbreak of pure punk anarchy.

The Canon of Cobain A shattering, defining moment for rock occurred in private, when Nirvana's leader, Kurt Cobain, killed himself with a shotgun in April. Nirvana had proved that abrasive alternative rock, and particularly Cobain's cryptic songs of self-mockery and desperate complaint, had a gigantic audience. But just as alternative rock was taking its place as the next big thing, Cobain's suicide made clear that the torment and confusion of his songs had not been solved by fame and fortune. There was more behind his fierce, bitter songs than the urge to cash in.

A Flight of Love Cobain's widow, Courtney Love, channeled her shock and anger into music when her band, Hole, performed a blistering set at the Academy in September. "I am the girl you know / the one that should have died," she sang while Hole blared and churned out furious hard rock. At the end of her set, she hurled herself off the stage into the audience — a brave, defiant leap into an audience that wasn't necessarily friendly.

