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cussion); Joe Pass, Bucky Pizzarelli (guitar); Ray Brown (bass); other musicians. *Inside a Silent Tear; All the Things You Are; Masquerade; Exactly Like You; Imagination; The Good Life; Where Are the Words; Straighten Up and Fly Right; How Could I Settle for Less; Sunshine of My Life;* and nine others. DENON © 33C38-7970 no list price.

Performance: *Facile*  
Recording: *Very good*

**CARMEN McRAE: Ms. Magic.** Carmen McRae (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. *I'm Coming Home; Burst In with the Dawn; Everything Must Change; The Masquerade Is Over; Mr. Magic;* and four others. DUNHILL © DZS021 no list price.

Performance: *Compelling*  
Recording: *Very good*

"Velvet Soul," with over an hour's playing time, represents a compilation of Carmen McRae sides from two Groove Merchant albums of the early Seventies: "Ms. Jazz" and "It Takes a Whole Lot of Human Feeling." The combination offers a nice variety, spiced by velvety strings and an occasional thought-provoking input from the likes of Zoot Sims. Denon's CD sound is a clear improvement over the previous releases, and while there are better McRae sets around, the extended running time gives this one an edge when it comes to value.

From an artistic point of view, my preference is for the more pop-oriented Dunhill CD release, "Ms. Magic." Its one hour and thirty seconds are taken from a much longer 1978 two-record Buddah album ("I'm Coming Home Again"), and while Mario Sprouse's arrangements are on the trendy side, the presence of Freddie Hubbard, Hubert Laws, and Hank Crawford adds a jazz tinge. I would not consider it excessive to buy both of these discs. C.A.

**ANITA O'DAY: This Is Anita.** Anita O'Day (vocals); orchestra, Buddy Bregman cond. *You're the Top; Who Cares; As Long As I Live; No Moon at All; Honcysuckle Rose; Fine and Dandy;* and six others. VERVE © 829 261-2 no list price.

Performance: *A fine O'Day*  
Recording: *Very good*

When Anita O'Day was with the Gene Krupa band in the early Forties, she elevated the art of jazz vocalizing. Hers was a smooth, slightly frosty style that often seemed to be headed off key but always ended up on just the right notes. It was a distinctly white approach to an art whose masters had always been black, and, indeed, O'Day's strongest influence was Billie Holiday. O'Day's cool style, on the other hand, spawned such imitators as June Christy and Chris Connor, who *did* go off key and, after a period of considerable success, seem to have sung themselves right off the market.

O'Day had her own down period, a vicious bout with drugs, but she pulled herself together, and she sounds as refreshing today as she did thirty years ago, which is when she recorded "This Is Anita," now reissued on CD. With a large orchestra and strings conducted by Buddy Bregman, who also did the arrangements, O'Day travels effortlessly through a program of familiar material, bending the works of Gershwin, Waller, and Cole to suit herself—and any connoisseur of the art of jazz singing. C.A.

**CECIL PAYNE: Patterns.** Cecil Payne (baritone saxophone); Kenny Dorham (trumpet); Duke Jordan (piano); Tommy Potter (bass); Art Taylor (drums). *Chessman's Delight; Arnetta; Saucer Eyes; Groovin' High;* and four others. SAVOY JAZZ © SJL-1167 M \$8.98.

Performance: *Polished gem*  
Recording: *Fine mono transfer*

You can count all the successful baritone saxophonists in jazz on the fingers of one hand. Naming them, most jazz fans would probably start with Gerry Mulligan and, if they were old enough, Harry Carney—and stop right there. The truly informed would add Cecil Payne, who first distinguished himself as a member of Dizzy Gillespie's band in the late Forties and whose debut album as a leader is again available on Savoy.

With a superb rhythm section headed by Payne's alter ego, pianist Duke Jordan, and with trumpeter Kenny Dorham appearing on four of the eight sides, "Patterns" remains one of the finest albums Payne has made. Low-keyed and drenched in subtleties, it shows a sensitive side of Payne that he somehow lost in later years, and those who regard the baritone as a cumbersome instrument will have to think again, for Payne makes it sound here as light as an alto. If you value fine bop, don't pass this one up. C.A.

**JOHN TROPEA: NY Cats Direct.** John Tropea (guitar); Warren Bernhardt, Richard Tee (keyboards); Steve Gadd (drums); other musicians. *Free Lunch; Moroccan Nights; Super Ascension; Just Blue; Mr. Music;* and four others. DIGITAL MUSIC PRODUCTS © CD-453 no list price.

Performance: *Uneventful*  
Recording: *Excellent*

Guitarist John Tropea is one of that handful of New York studio musicians whose anonymous work is heard on countless albums and singles ranging in style from the clamor of a Yoko Ono session to the more soothing sounds of Paul Simon—both of whom are, in fact performers for whom Tropea has provided background. On "NY Cats Direct," he steps up front to lead some of his fellow session men. Although all of the musicians are technically skilled players who never seem to miss a note, what they come up with is a routine exercise. C.A.