

Village Voice July 29-97

LETTERS

“With a clear tone and soulful execution, [Wynton Marsalis] has made an indelible mark on all young trumpeters.”

BRANFORD MARSALIS *New Rochelle, New York*

ALTERCATION

Ken Silverstein’s article on me might have been improved if it had contained a single on-the-record quote concerning my various Satanic qualities [“Talk Is Cheap,” July 22]. For whatever record exists of such matters, the anonymous accusation regarding my alleged claims of insider access is a lie. So is the anonymous accusation regarding alleged discussions of my own income. So is the anonymous accusation that I have ever exploded at—or in any way abused—any of my assistants, not one of whom is quoted in the article. The rest of the piece was just silly.

The picture wasn’t bad, though.

Eric Alterman
Manhattan
Via Internet

Ken Silverstein replies: My sources had no reason to lie, and given the multitude of stories I heard about Alterman, I have faith in their accounts. Alterman

had a chance to respond when I was writing the story, but he refused to talk to me.

BLOOD BROTHER

Readings Gary Giddins’s dismal assessment of my brother Wynton’s recent masterpiece, *Blood on the Fields* [“Classic Ambition,” July 1], made me realize how pathetic critical evaluation of modern music is today. While Giddins’s writing skills display a modicum of improvement over the past decade, his ability to accurately review certain works of art is obviously marred by his own limited knowledge of music.

Giddins still insists Wynton’s improvisational trumpet style is a mere imitation of older musicians. In reality, Wynton is the one who has extended the vocabulary of jazz and classical trumpet playing over the past 25 years. With a clear tone and soulful execution, he has made an indelible mark on all young trumpeters.

In the article, Giddins makes the common mistake of comparing various elements of *Blood*

on the *Fields* to pieces of music that he, himself, is familiar with, all of which were composed by American jazz musicians. As the radio series *Making the Music* and the PBS series *Marsalis on Music* displayed, Wynton’s concept of music reaches farther than just the American jazz tradition. That Giddins did not refer to modern composers Wagner, Hindemith, Stravinsky, etc. is evidence that he cannot possibly comprehend the full spectrum of what *Blood on the Fields* or *In This House, In This Morning* represent. However, his ability to reduce three hours of musical content to one page of shallow analysis is a remarkable accomplishment—well, perhaps not.

When Arnold Schoenberg debuted his most diatonic work, *Gurrelieder*, he received a standing ovation. He did not, however, acknowledge the audience or the critics, realizing how quickly accolades would turn to condemnation. Such is the fate of composers and performers functioning at the brink of innovation. Though I do not expect Giddins

to understand or appreciate music as complex as *Blood on the Fields*, an unjust music review anywhere is a threat to just reviews everywhere.

BRANFORD MARSALIS
New Rochelle, New York

Gary Giddins replies: I’m as in favor of brotherly love as anyone, but “soulful execution”?

KEEPING THEM DOWN

Regarding Jennifer Gould’s articles “Tortured by UN Peacekeepers” [June 24] and “UN Soldiers Acquired” [July 15]:

I can’t see why anyone is so shocked by the behavior of European-dominated peace-keeping troops. This is the continuation of European “good ole boy” behavior that was the primary basis for the colonization of Africa beginning four-plus centuries ago.

The behavior and non-punishment of those involved tells me one thing: if you’re Black, no matter where you are on this planet, your life is dirt cheap to the European countries

that insist on portraying themselves as much more civilized than American society.

RENELL A. SHURN
Portland, Oregon

PRODI-GAY?

What were you thinking when you chose to print Peter Noel’s pathetic story on Abu Koss for your *Gay Pride* issue [“Allah’s Prodigal Son,” July 1]? Gay African Americans and the gay community in general need stories about empowered individuals fighting the good fight. We also need thoughtful analysis about the intersection of race, sexuality, and nationalism. Both these elements were missing from this soap opera manqué. The *Voice*’s tired formula of overweening sensationalist melodrama and cynical post-modernist posturing has again manifested itself in a contemptuous portrayal of black gays and a lost opportunity to educate gays and straights alike about our struggles. The next time you to print a story about black gays, I suggest you consult some members of the

communi-tay who can actually tell you the news.

ANTHONY J. WILLIAMS
Manhattan

Letters should be brief, and phone numbers must be included.

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CORRECTIONS

► Due to a production error, Karen Houppert’s byline was omitted from her book review, headlined “The Cervix Industry,” in last week’s issue.

► In Peter Noel’s July 1 article, “Allah’s Prodigal Son,” a reference to the Lost-Found Nation of Islam’s Saviour’s Day as being in August was incorrect. The celebration referred to was Founder’s Day.