MAX ROACH
PERCUSSION BITTER SWEET

impulse!

GRP PRESENTS
THE LEGENDARY MASTERS OF JAZZ

COMPACT disc DIGITAL AUDIO

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PERCUSSION BITTER SWEET

1. **Garvey's Ghost** 7:51
2. **Mama** 4:48
3. **Tender Warriors** 6:51
4. **Praise For A Martyr** 7:08
5. **Mendacity** 8:52
6. **Man From South Africa** 5:12

All compositions by Max Roach (Milma Publishing/BMI), except **Mendacity**, by C. Bayen & Max Roach (Milma Publishing/BMI)

Produced by Max Roach
Reissue produced by Michael Cuscuna
Executive Producers: Dave Grusin & Larry Rosen

Recorded in New York City, 1961

Featuring:
Booker Little – trumpet
Julian Priester – trombone
Eric Dolphy – alto saxophone, bass clarinet & flute
Clifford Jordan – tenor saxophone
Mal Waldron – piano
Art Davis – bass
Max Roach – drums
Carlos 'Potato' Valdez – conga (on #1, 3, 6)
Carlos 'Totico' Eugenio – cowbell (on #1, 3, 6)
Abbey Lincoln – vocal (on #1, 5)

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THE MAN

Max Roach is generally recognized as one of the finest percussionists alive today. The incredible technique which he has developed over a period of years is awesome. It is this, added to the enormous sensitivity Mr. Roach displays to musical elements beyond the purely rhythmic, that constitutes his uniqueness.

Max Roach has played with the greatest jazz ensembles the world has known, in the company of such musicians as Coleman Hawkins, Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Charles Mingus, Miles Davis and Clifford Brown. He has also attracted the admiration of composers outside the jazz idiom who have written works especially for him. Harold Farberman has composed and recorded several works featuring Mr. Roach with the Boston Percussion Ensemble. "It seemed to Max and myself an ideal opportunity for combining music that has not been labeled jazz, with a man who is, in himself a jazz artist of the highest caliber," noted the composer. In another instance, composer Peter Phillips wrote a percussion concerto for Max Roach and symphony orchestra which was performed at the first Monterey Jazz Festival in 1958, and aptly titled *Concerto for Max*. Mr. Phillips said of Mr. Roach, "what impressed me most was his open-mindedness and acceptance of the work. He did not pre-judge in any area." And of Max's performance, "his improvised solo was incredible. He is not only the greatest drummer of the last two decades, but a prophet, for in his playing are contained the stylistic elements of the future."

Among his many innovations in the jazz field was the application of rarely used rhythms (time signatures such as 3/4, 5/4 and 7/4) to the music. And he is among the few who today endorse the free rhythmic and harmonic improvisation of men like Ornette Coleman and Eric Dolphy. The jazz history books are filled with the achievements and contributions of Max Roach from the time he began playing and recording.

THE REASON

There are elements beyond extraordinary technique and musical sensitivity which the listener must know about before he can truly understand and appreciate the contents of this album. Mr. Roach feels that each artist must determine his own manner of expression. He must survey the possibilities, dig deeply within his well of physical and emotional experience, and decide the way to best convey his inner self to the outer world. Historically, the artist has been the chronicler of his era, though to varying degree. And each has expressed his own concept or reality in different ways. Thus, we have classicists, romanticists, impressionists, expressionists, neo-classicists, etc. "The artist should reflect the tempo of his time," Max asserts. "He should also endeavor to bring about changes where possible. The newspapers are filled with cries for freedom from every corner of the world. It is impossible for a man to escape the world. There are no more ivory towers." This statement indicates the force with which Max Roach relates to his world. It indicates his attitude, best described in his music. And it is interesting to note that he cites Alban Berg as one of the composers who best expresses the social dissonance of contemporary times.

The music you are about to hear may shock you with its naked transmittal of outrage, desire, hopefulness, arrogance, demanding and tenderness. The voicing of the chords, the contours of the melodies, the drive and opposition of rhythms are astonishingly successful in conveying to all who listen to the picture that is being painted. The music is all the more potent for the cause it involves. The more deeply a man feels about an issue, the more vivid his expression is likely to be. The fact that the issue is freedom allows each listener to relate in his own way, taking from the music that which pertains to his own needs.

It is relatively impossible to make one man feel the extent of another's pleasure or pain. One

can say "I know how you feel," and not really know—or, "the same thing has happened to me," and yet similar incidents are never really the same when encountered by two separate beings. But in telling the story repeatedly, demanding to be heard under the guise of entertaining, appealing not only to the intellect, but to the very heart by way of the ears, Max feels he can make people aware...and that awareness is the first important step to understanding, feeling and acting. Therefore, the reason for the music lies within the needs of the man.

THE MUSIC

Max Roach has composed and arranged all the music herewith contained. He works within the jazz idiom, combining the most modern of improvising concepts with the oldest and strongest of African rhythmic elements. He works with musicians who are sympathetic to his feelings in order to sustain the original power of expression in his compositions. Because of their common beliefs and desires, the level of communication achieved is consistently high. Max also chooses his musicians for their ability to bring out the opposing emotional extremes which his music demands. A fine example is to be found in the playing of Eric Dolphy. Eric's use of several instruments underscores these extremes which are conveyed by the others on only one instrument. Within the same piece, one may hear a flute solo filled with rhapsodic tenderness and, moments later, a bass clarinet solo expressing confusion, helplessness and anger.

The harmonic freedom one hears in the improvisation is by no means coincidental to the central theme of the album. The original harmonies are outlined in the initial playing of the compositions. At this point, Mr. Roach feels that "sound" clusters (chords with foreign, unrelated notes added) rather than conventional chord structures should be used as the point of departure. This gives infinitely more freedom to the improvisor, who may use notes added to and implied by the cluster instead of being restricted to notes generally indicated by usual harmonies. A similar principle is applied to rhythm. The soloist is free to ride above, beneath, or around the "time," which is usually established by the rhythm section, or part of the rhythm section. This is well illustrated in **Man From South Africa,** a piece conceived in 7/4 meter.

The musicians are Abbey Lincoln, voice; Eric Dolphy, flute, alto saxophone and bass clarinet; Booker Little, trumpet; Julian Priester, trombone; Clifford Jordan, tenor saxophone; Mal Waldron, piano; Art Davis, bass; and assisting Max Roach, Carlos Valdez (better known as 'Potato') and Carlos 'Totico' Eugenio on conga drums and cowbells.

Miss Lincoln, well known in her own right as singer, actress and lyricist, performs on two tracks. Her voice is used purely as another instrument on **Garvey's Ghost,** and similarly, but also as a teller of stories on **Mendacity.**

"**Garvey's Ghost** is a composition written for Marcus Garvey, a leader in the organizing of hundreds of thousands of black people all over the world," describes the composer. "Because these people represented a large labor force, the movement became powerful. Garvey was deported from this country and died in confinement in England. Although he is supposed to have died of natural causes, there is still an aura of mystery surrounding his death. Many of Marcus Garvey's dreams and ambitions are currently reaching fruition in the new, independent nations of Africa." The bright 6/8 tempo provides the impetus and gives one the feeling that moving is so strong and steady a direction, nothing can hold back the progress already in motion. The use of Miss Lincoln's voice is highly effective as she issues her demands in harmony with the horns. Her unusual range of sound and emotion add enormously to the general texture of other instruments. The soloists are Booker Little, Clifford Jordan and Max Roach with percussion accompaniment.

Mama is dedicated to the women who work, fight and suffer along with men. "This piece does not look at women in the romantic sense, but rather as strong, self-sufficient human beings who take an active part in world problems," explains Max. One hears both delicacy and strength; a quality that is soft, but never flabby. The trombone solo is followed by tenor saxophone, trumpet and finally a marvelously conceived drum solo which is accompanied by the bass.

Tender Warriors is written for our youth who partake in our struggles for independence and equality. They are freedom riders, sit-in demonstrators and all others who actively participate in the fight for civil rights. Max's description is again portrayed musically, this time through a combination 3/4, 6/8 rhythm which expresses much tension and release. The solo flute plays a theme, melancholy in quality, against ensemble figures which voice agreement with the general mood. The following piano and trumpet solos are simple, but definite, and symbolize the "tender warriors." Opposition is heard in the bass clarinet solo which, in its harmonic freedom, implies disagreement with the lyricism which has preceded. The drum solo (accompanied by conga drum) further emphasizes the tension which the bass clarinet has introduced. The original mood returns, and the feeling persists that despite the opposition encountered, the "tender warriors" emerge with undaunted spirits.

Praise For A Martyr was composed in homage to all the men and women who have sacrificed their lives fighting for their individual and collective freedoms. There is, again, a pulling quality in the voicing of the chords which is both somber and respectful. As the improvisation section progresses, you begin to notice three repeated notes dwelled upon by the bass. This repetition gives one the feeling of a solid foundation being laid; a feeling that the martyr has not died in vain, but that his struggle will be continued by those who remember him. The soloists are Clifford Jordan, Julian Priester, Booker Little and Mal Waldron.

Mendacity is a ballad; in it we have the benefit of lyrics which speak for themselves. However, it is no ordinary ballad. Mr. Roach uses the singer as an integral part of the musical form. She is not simply singing a melody with instrumental accompaniment. Miss Lincoln is once again employed as a musician, and interprets her solo as do the instrumental soloists who follow. We hear Eric Dolphy, this time on alto saxophone, playing very much the same feeling which Abbey has transmitted. Max offers an extended drum solo, playing without the usual bass or percussion accompaniment. It is interesting to note that he uses silence in much the same way as instrumental accompaniment. Max describes it as "taking a breath," a technique often overlooked by many musicians, regardless of what instrument they play. Abbey Lincoln closes the piece with the original verse.

Man From South Africa is a piece in which a 7/4 rhythmic undercurrent helps to "express the anxiety, frustration and conflict involved in the struggle for independence by the indigenous South African man," Max tells us. While the piano and drums keep the insistent beat, the soloist chooses his own tempo in relation to the one already established. The bassist plays seven equal quarter notes, thereby placing himself in both areas. The soloist is then able to relate to the quarter note, superimposing any time relationship he chooses. These methods, designed to produce the conflict and anxiety mentioned, result in giving a vividly free feeling, too. Here, symbolically, is the freedom daily being achieved in Africa. The trombone and alto saxophone are the solo instruments, followed by the closing theme.

—Margo Guryan
1962

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Percussion Bitter Sweet

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1. GARVEY'S GHOST
2. MAMA
3. TENDER WARRIORS
4. PRAISE FOR A MARTYR
5. MENDACITY
6. MAN FROM SOUTH AFRICA

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