

# Players, Fools & Thieves Liner Notes

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I wasn't going to write liner notes for this album, but then I began asking friends to try some of these new songs so I could hear them in a different light. What struck me as I listened to them was not the differences in approach and song styles, but the narrative thread the songs

formed. I found that I'd put together a sort of multi-textured mosaic about some of the ways people in this crazy time search for and express love, how it sometimes turns to hate, or slips through the cracks and is lost. I thought, I think this all works.

But since this is a unique way for a singer-songwriter to put together an album (maybe heresy in some quarters), I decided I'd better write and explain what I'd done here.

Also, I kept thinking, in the CD era, why not mix styles? We all program our machines for variety anyway.

I hope these notes might also serve as an introduction to these artists, since some of you may not yet know their work.

Enjoy!

*B. H.*

## The soloists:

**Bill Baker**—has a pure Americana voice and a distinctive style that connects to those raspy-edged, smooth syncopators going back to Hoagy and Teagarden. He's also a hell of a songwriter with a nearly unerring knack for beautiful melodies right out of momento scrapbooks from the heartland. A Washington Area Music Awards winner, Bill has also won several songwriting awards. His recently released CD, "Wolves In Winter," is an irresistible mix of spine and gentleness.

**Ron Holloway**—and his barrel-chested playing come out of the tradition of saxophonists with a background of bop and rhythm and blues, to which he's added his own approach and a sound that is inimitable. In his stance, he's reminiscent of past tuff-tenors like Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and Gene "Jug" Ammons; when you get on a stage with Ron, you better be blowin'. Holloway is best known for his tenure with Dizzy Gillespie, and his work with Gil Scott-Heron and the late Root Boy Slin, which pretty much sums up his range. He's won nine WAMA awards, leads his own group and is a guest sideman with several groups in town, including mine. Ron's fiery debut CD, "Slanted," is on Milestone Records.

**John Jennings**—has always been a source of wonderment to his colleagues because of his wide and inventive musical palette, and on-call brilliance on guitar. A multi-WAMA winner, he's best known for his long association with Mary-Chapin Carpenter as producer, arranger and guitarist, and co-writer of tunes like "Never Had It So Good" and "Goin' Out Tonight." John's also a producer of such diverse artists as Beausoleil, Niamh Cavanagh and John Gorka, and an undervalued singer/songwriter. His contribution here was the only cut not recorded at Gizmo. I sent him a

quickie demo and this is what he sent back! Way back, John played in my band Rent's Due and appeared on my second album, "It's About Time."

**Gantt Kushner**—is a well regarded freelance guitarist versatile in many styles. He also has huge "ears": as recording engineer of this album, he strapped on his guitar while we were laying down the basic tracks and, "just played along," as he put it later. Most of the marvelous guitar parts on the album are his instinctively right first takes. Gantt's worked with handfuls of area groups, going back to the Virginia Renegades and the North Star Band, and more recently with Mary Blankemeier and my group, among others.



Tommy



Al



Bruce, Ron and Steve



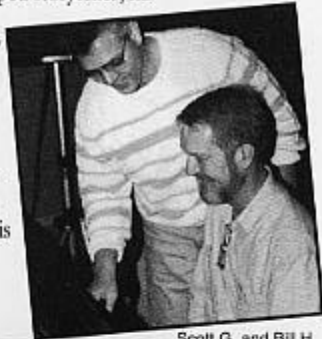
Mary Ann

**Tommy Lepson**—has won several WAMA awards for his soulful tenor voice, which can be as soothing as Al Green's one moment and as heated as Sam and Dave's the next. He has his own Lazy Boys band and a well blistering first album out, "Live and Durt" on Big Mo Records. Tommy was lead vocalist in the Assassins, kingpin B-3organist-singer in Cryin' Out Loud, the late Root Boy Slim's groups among many others. He's also a popular man on the studio scene, has his own recording studio, and is one of the leading musical equipment repair experts in town.

**Mary Ann Redmond**—is a standing ovation vocalist, period. She moved here from Richmond in 1985, and is best known recently for her electric club work performances with Al Williams and Friends. She too is a WAMA winner. Mary Ann's voice is big and effortless at the top and also possess at its foundation a husky timbre that stirs every audience I've seen her work, evidenced here by her explosive work on the duet "The Light In Your Eyes." It's baffling that a label hasn't yet snatched her up yet. Hopefully, they will.

**Bruce Swaim**—might be the best kept sax secret in the area outside the musical community. He came to the area from North Carolina in 1981, and his sonorous and always-interesting playing has been percolating ever since. Bruce also grew up with one foot in jazz and the other in rhythm and blues, and he's now a fully-developed storyteller; his solos always build in authority and inevitably turn out to be successful and delightful joyrides. He's worked or recorded with many artists such as Rosemary Clooney, Danny Gatton, Y-Not and Junior Cline and the Recliners. He also plays in my working group.

**Al Williams**—plays all of the lovely tenor sax solos on the ballads in this album. There are few in the area who can match him as an accompanist. He's best known for his multi-reed work in his own band, where the accent is on contemporary jazz and serious grooving. Al's recorded with Mongo Santamaria and Stanley Clarke, and is also known his work with Mary Blankemeier's aggregations. He has also won a WAMA award for his efforts.



Scott G. and Bill H.



Bill



Gantt, Maurice, Bill H. and Scott T.



John

## The featured players:

**Chris Battistone**—plays a particularly urgent solo on “Here.” He’s a busy freelancer, and plays trumpet in Ron Holloway’s regular jazz quintet and in many other local groups, most notably, Danny Gatton’s horn group and the Blues Alley Big Band.

**Maurice Cridlin**—was the strawboss for most of this album. He was a first call electric bass player in the area before going to the West Coast, which has treated him kindly. He’s recorded or toured with LaBelle, the Pointer Sisters, Steven Bishop and many others. (He also played in Rent’s Due and on my first album, “If It Ain’t One Thing.”)

**Scott Giambuso**—has been playing upright bass here since the late ’70s with a wide variety of musicians, including the wonderful vocalist Pam Bricker and the Grammy-winning arranger/pianist Bill Potts, among others.

**Scott Taylor**—is an in-demand freelance drummer with an individual approach who plays all styles well. He’s played in my band since 1992 (after convincing me I wasn’t too rusty to return to the scene). Way back, he played in Liz Meyer’s seminal group, among others, and even in Rent’s Due a bit. Recently, he’s worked with guitarist Paul Wingo, vocalist Toni Wilson and bluesman Robert Lighthouse.

**Steve Wolf**—is one of the most sought-after electric bass players in town. He was the driving foundation for Danny Gatton and Redneck Jazz, and groups led by guitarist Tom Principato, vibraharpist Bernard Sweetney and singer-pianist Deanna Bogart, among many others. Steve also played in Rent’s Due, and on my first album, and works in in my current group.