

## JAZZ BEAT

## FATHER TIME

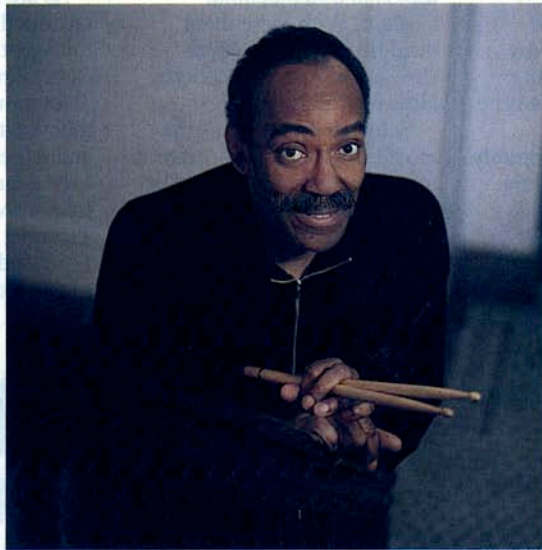
**I**N FACT, AFTER MORE THAN 40 years keeping time behind preeminent jazz talents who often died prematurely—from Bird to Monk to Coltrane and even Miles—Arthur Taylor remains one defiantly living jazz legend. As for *Musician* magazine's recent inclusion of Taylor in a back-page farewell to music personages who legitimately died this year—well . . . it just ain't so. "Not just yet," Arthur Taylor will tell you. "Not just yet."

Born up on Harlem's Sugar Hill 64 years ago, Taylor grew up with jazz giants, his teenage neighbors including saxophonists Jackie McLean and Sonny Rollins. Today, the roster of his performing associates is utterly inclusive—no musician of consequence active in the course of Taylor's career appears to have been missed.

"There's only been one guiding principle in my

career," he insists, reflecting on the 300-plus recordings his drumming has anchored—from *Miles Ahead* and Bud Powell's *Glass Enclosure* to Coltrane's *Giant Steps* and Monk's *Town Hall Concert*. "Play with the best."

After moving to Paris in 1963 (he ended up staying for eighteen years), Taylor began interviewing his fellow players, strictly out of personal curiosity. The results, eventually published as *Notes and Tones* (reissued this year by Da Capo Press; \$13.95), remain a revelation—peerless conversations in the purest jazz idiom; wide-ranging, unself-conscious, and brutally



Arthur Taylor: Alive and very well, thank you.

honest. Very much like the man who initiated them.

"I take the other side of a lot of things," he concedes, without apology. "I mean, this music comes out of the warehouses. It's supposed to

deal with fornication, that rhythm, you know? Now they're trying to preserve it in the concert hall. It's not going to die—unless they strangle it.

That's why I like playing with the young people."

Taylor's *Wailers*, his current ensemble, is dominated by players under 30. The quintet's new CD, *Wailin' at the Vanguard* (Verve), seethes with a youthful fire that their leader thrives on. "The kids wonder why I play with them, after who I've played with," he muses. "They think it must be a bore. But it isn't. Because they don't know everything, you see, and they want to

learn it all so bad."

Meanwhile, the struggle for gigs goes on, the eternal struggle to survive in a musical culture sympathetic to neither maturity nor the jazz tradition. But even this leaves Arthur Taylor largely without bitterness.

"Monk always said, 'Don't bitch—be grateful that they're listening to you at all. Be grateful they're paying for the privilege.'

"I am grateful that I never had to go to work nine to five," says Taylor, smiling. "Hey, it's like my favorite drummer, Art Blakey, often told me: 'Just be glad they spell your name right.' I am. I mean it." **BARRY SINGER**