

## TERRY ADAMS Terrible

New World Records 80473

This is the first Terry Adams album in the history of the universe.

It's not the first album Terry Adams has ever recorded, of course. He's made a whole lot of them over the years, mostly in his capacity as the keyboardist, chief songwriter and occasional lead vocalist of NRBQ, the remarkable rock-and-roll band he helped found in the late Sixties. And he has shown up from time to time on other people's albums as well. But until now he's never had a whole album to himself.

Those of us who have been following NRBQ for a while know that Terry writes the kind of melodies that stay with you. We know that at any given moment in a set he can dash off a wildly inventive piano solo and make it look easy. And we know that he has a fondness--and an aptitude--for instrumental music in general, and jazz in particular. A lot of us have been wondering for a long time what a Terry Adams album, especially a Terry Adams *instrumental* album, would sound like.

One of the people who has been wondering that is Terry Adams himself, who says he might well have done something like this a long time ago if anyone had ever asked him. Another is Arthur Moorhead, the executive producer of New World Records' CounterCurrents series and a longtime NRBQ fan, who *did* ask him--because, he explains, "I always wondered what he would do as a leader if he had the chance."

Given the opportunity to do a jazz album, Terry says he discovered that putting the material together was in some ways easier than writing songs for NRBQ, because he could concentrate on what's most important to him. "I think I've always been a composer first and a songwriter second. It was nice for me not to have to think about lyrics."

Terry had a free hand in choosing the personnel and the repertory. The only stipulation was that all the materials be original, and that Terry include an instrumental version of "Yes, Yes, Yes," one of the prettiest of his many love songs, originally recorded by NRBQ in 1977. Terry happily obliged with a rendition that turned out to be the only trio performance on the album.

The bassist and drummer on "Yes, Yes, Yes" are Greg Cohen and Bobby Previte, well known to aficionados of the downtown New York music scene. The two had worked with Terry both on and off screen in the Robert Altman film *Short Cuts*, in which the three were members of Annie Ross's backup band, and are heard both as a team and with other rhythm-section partners on various other tracks here. A couple of tracks also feature the soprano saxophone of Jim Hoke, an active freelance musician in Nashville who has played tenor and baritone off and on with NRBQ since 1987. The biggest name in the supporting cast is Roswell Rudd, one of the unsung heroes of the jazz trombone, who is heard along with Hoke on the buoyant "Toodlehead" (named for Terry's young son) and featured prominently on the Spanish-tinged "Hilda."

Indeed, one of the attractions of this project for Terry was that it gave him a chance to record with Rudd, whom he first met when they both worked with Carla Bley's band in 1977 and about whom he

says without hesitation, "I've never heard him play a bad solo." (The first time they met, Terry impressed Roswell by singing to him, note for note, a solo he had played on an Archie Shepp album in 1964. They've been friends ever since and have recorded together from time to time, most recently on NRBQ's *Wild Weekend* album in 1989.)

Interestingly enough, several of the tracks on the world's first Terry Adams album feature the same musicians you'd expect to find on an NRBQ album--namely, the other members of NRBQ. "The first thing that goes through a musician's mind when he's been in a band and gets to do a solo album," Terry says, "is, 'Now I get to play with other guys.' But when I started thinking about it, I realized that no one can play better than them."

So it is that the rock-solid rhythm section of Joey Spampinato, a founding member of NRBQ, and Tom Ardolino, a member since 1974, supports Terry on four of the selections, with Joey's brother Johnny, the most recent addition to the band, on guitar. Those four tracks also feature the horn section of Marshall Allen, Tyrone Hill, and Dave Gordon, all of whom have been performing with the band for the past two years, and all of whom are also veterans of the legendary Sun Ra Arkestra. (Allen's alto saxophone was a key component of the Arkestra's sound from its earliest days until Sun Ra's death in 1993, and he has continued to work with the ensemble in its post-Ra incarnation.)

The most noteworthy of the NRBQ-plus-horn-section numbers, for all sorts of reasons, is "These Blues." For one thing, it features two guest stars: Jim Gordon, a Vermont-based harmonica player who is making his recording debut, and John Sebastian, who sits in on second guitar and who is *not* making his recording debut. For another thing, it has an unusual cinematic pedigree: it can be heard as an instrumental in the background of a scene in *Short Cuts* and (under the name "Evil California") as a vocal with an alternate set of words by Iggy Pop on the soundtrack album. And for yet another thing, it's the only vocal track on what is otherwise an all-instrumental album.

The other three NRBQ tracks have all been part of the band's working repertoire at one time or another. "I Feel Lucky" dates back to the early Seventies (or possibly even earlier; Terry can't remember for sure). The hard-stomping "Out the Windo," as its newly-coined name suggests, was a favorite of the late Gary Windo, the brilliantly demented saxophonist who worked frequently with NRBQ for a decade or so. And "Le Sony'r," as *its* name suggests, is dedicated to the man whom the reference books say was born Herman Blount in Alabama but who insisted to the end that he was born on Saturn and that his name was Sun Ra, or Le Sun Ra, or Le Sony'r, or various other alternate spellings.

The connection between Terry Adams and Sun Ra goes back a long way. NRBQ recorded Ra's "Rocket #9" on their first album, in 1968. The band and the members of the Arkestra got to be close friends over the years. The late saxophonist Pat Patrick, an original member of the Arkestra, also worked with NRBQ. And another Sun Ra alumnus, Noel Scott, was a participant in these sessions (he takes the alto saxophone solo on "Say When").

Looking for connections, though, is less the point of this music than digging it for what it is--and what it is, to use an adjective that gets misused too often but is completely appropriate here, is *unique*. It would be hard to mistake Terry's high-spirited piano playing for anyone else's, and there are all sorts of slightly off-center compositional touches here that are every bit as distinctive as Terry's piano playing.

"dog," for instance, has a chord progression that never goes quite where you expect it to go and a middle section that's five bars long instead of the conventional eight. "Say When" takes its basic structure from the blues but, unlike most blues, has a bridge--which, unlike the bridge of any other song you've ever heard, is a surprising *seven-and-a-half* bars long. And yet the unorthodox structure is not what's likely to grab you first about these songs, because Terry wasn't *trying* to write something unorthodox. He may have been following the advice of his old composition teacher Don Murray, who taught him years ago that the first rule is not to let the music get boring--but mostly he was just trying to write some great songs.

"Say When" also features an instrumentation you almost certainly haven't encountered before: two alto saxophones, two trombones (one of them played by Donn Adams, Terry's brother and longtime musical associate), flute, and muted trumpet. And the lineup on the dreamlike love song "Little One" is equally unlikely. The front line includes three flutes, two muted trombones, and muted trumpet. Pete Toigo, another musician making his recording debut here, plays bass alongside Greg Cohen. Bobby Previte plays a variety of unusual percussion instruments as well as drums. And Terry plays harmonica, adding a color to the mix that is as unexpected as it is beautiful.

And it seems safe to say that no one but Terry Adams could have created a solo performance like "Distant Instant"--in part because Terry is apparently the only person who owns a kalimba clavier, as he call the instrument he's playing here. "It was given to me about twenty-five years ago," he says. "It's an antique instrument. I bring it out once in a while. I don't know anyone else who's ever seen one."

Like the kalimba clavier, Terry Adams is one of a kind; you won't find anyone who's ever seen (or heard) anyone quite like him. Among other things, he's one of the few musicians you'll ever encounter who doesn't just *say* that he thinks arbitrary musical categories are irrelevant but *really does* think that--and whose own music reflects that notion.

To the degree that labels count for anything, this is a jazz album. But it's not like any jazz album you've heard before - because it's also the first Terry Adams album in the history of the universe.

—Peter Keepnews

Peter Keepnews, *who writes frequently about music and popular culture, is writing a biography of Thelonious Monk.*

### **SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY**

Carla Bley Band. *European Tour 1977*. ECM/WATT 23108.

Carla Bley Band. *Musique Mecanique*. ECM/WATT 23109.

John Candy and NRBQ. *American Heroes and Legends: Stormalong*. Rincon Children's Entertainment/Rabbit Ears 70228.

David Greenberger and Terry Adams. *The Duplex Planet Hour*. East Side Digital 8076.

Music From the Film *Short Cuts*. I-mago M21014-2.

NRBQ. *Message for the Mess Age*. Forward/Rhino R2 71427.

NRBQ. *Peek-a-Boo: The Best of NRBQ*. Rhino R2 70770.

David Sanborn. *Another Hand*. Elektra Musician 9 61088-2.

## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cunningham, Peter. "Terry Adams: Rockin' With NRBQ." *Keyboard*, May 1984.  
Rowland, Mark. "The Parallel Universe of NRBQ." *Musician*, January 1990.

Executive producer: Arthur Moorhead

Producer: Terry Adams

Recorded and mixed by Chris Andersen at Neve Production, Woodstock, NY

Assistant engineers: Pete Robertson, Billy Shaw

Recorded January 16, 17, 19, and 20, 1995

Digital mastering: Paul Zinman, SoundByte Productions, Inc., NYC

Cover photograph: Merritt Brown

Session photographs: Michael Hochanadel

Cover design: David Greenberger

"Thinking of You" originally commissioned by The Arts at St. Ann's for The Duplex Planet Radio Hour, 1994.

Special thanks to Bobby Previte.

**This recording was made possible with a grant from the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund. Additional funding was provided by the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council on the Arts.**

### FOR NEW WORLD RECORDS:

Herman E. Krawitz, President; Paul Marotta, Managing Director; Paul M. Tai, Director of Artists and Repertory; Lisa Kahlden, Director of Information Technology; Virginia Hayward, Administrative Associate; Mojisola Oké, Bookkeeper; Ben Schmich, Production Associate.

### RECORDED ANTHOLOGY OF AMERICAN MUSIC, INC., BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

David Hamilton, Treasurer; Milton Babbitt; Emanuel Gerard; Adolph Green; Rita Hauser; Herman E. Krawitz; Arthur Moorhead; Elizabeth Ostrow; Don Roberts; Patrick Smith; Frank Stanton.

Francis Goelet (1926-1998), Chairman

©1995 ©1995 Recorded Anthology of American Music, Inc. All rights reserved. Printed in USA.

**TERRY ADAMS** 80473-2

### TERRIBLE

- 1 dog (3:48)  
Terry Adams, piano; Jim Hoke, soprano saxophone; Greg Cohen, bass; Tom Ardolino, drums.
- 2 Le Sony'r (5:02)  
Terry Adams, piano; Johnny Spampinato, guitar; Joey Spampinato, bass guitar; Tyrone Hill, trombone; Dave Gordon, trumpet; Marshall Allen, alto saxophone; Tom

- Ardolino, drums.
- 3 Out the Windo (3:44)  
Terry Adams, piano; Johnny Spampinato, guitar; Joey Spampinato, bass guitar; Tyrone Hill, trombone; Dave Gordon, trumpet; Marshall Allen, alto saxophone; Tom Ardolino, drums.
- 4 Yes, Yes, Yes (4:09)  
Terry Adams, piano; Greg Cohen, bass; Bobby Previte, drums.
- 5 Say When (5:19)  
Terry Adams, piano; Marshall Allen, flute; Jim Hoke, Noel Scott, alto saxophones; Tyrone Hill, Donn Adams, trombones; Dave Gordon, trumpet; Pete Toigo, bass; Bobby Previte, drums.
- 6 Toodlehead (5:49)  
Terry Adams, piano, Japanese organ; Jim Hoke, soprano saxophone; Roswell Rudd, trombone; Greg Cohen, bass; Tom Ardolino, drums.
- 7 Little One (2:54)  
Terry Adams, harmonica; Marshall Allen, Jim Hoke, Noel Scott, flutes; Tyrone Hill, Donn Adams, trombones; Dave Gordon, trumpet; Pete Toigo, Greg Cohen, basses; Bobby Previte, drums.
- 8 I Feel Lucky (2:33)  
Terry Adams, piano; Johnny Spampinato, guitar; Joey Spampinato, bass guitar; Tyrone Hill, trombone; Dave Gordon, trumpet; Tom Ardolino, drums.
- 9 These Blues (5:00)  
Terry Adams, piano, vocal; Johnny Spampinato, John Sebastian, guitars; Joey Spampinato, bass guitar; Marshall Allen, Jim Hoke, alto saxophones; Tyrone Hill, trombone; Dave Gordon, trumpet; Jim Gordon, harmonica; Tom Ardolino, drums.
- 10 Hilda (5:38)  
Terry Adams, piano; Roswell Rudd, trombone; Greg Cohen, bass; Bobby Previte, drums.
- 11 Distant Instant (1:56)  
Terry Adams, kalimba-clavier.
- 12 Thinking of You (5:05)  
Terry Adams, piano; Marshall Allen, alto saxophone; Tyrone Hill, trombone; Dave Gordon, trumpet; Greg Cohen, bass; Tom Ardolino, drums.

All titles composed by Terry Adams and published by dollar clef, ASCAP except "Yes, Yes, Yes" which is published by Leeds and Hi Varieties, ASCAP.

**NO PART OF THIS RECORDING MAY BE COPIED OR REPRODUCED WITHOUT  
WRITTEN PERMISSION OF R.A.A.M., INC.**

**NEW WORLD RECORDS  
16 Penn Plaza #835  
NEW YORK, NY 10001-1820  
TEL 212.290-1680 FAX 212.290-1685**

Website: [www.newworldrecords.org](http://www.newworldrecords.org)  
email: [info@newworldrecords.org](mailto:info@newworldrecords.org)

LINER NOTES © Recorded Anthology of American Music, Inc.