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http://www.cuneiformrecords.com**FILE UNDER: JAZZ**

A composer, bass player, bandleader, educator and jazz author, **Graham Collier** is a key architect in the development of British jazz. He played a pivotal role in the coming-of-age of British jazz during the 1960s, and has nourished, shaped, and propagated this musical genre through his highly innovative work ever since. As the first British musician to receive a jazz degree (1963) from Boston's prestigious **Berklee College of Music**, which provided formal jazz instruction then nonexistent in England, and as recipient in 1967 of the first-ever jazz commission from the **Arts Council of Great Britain** for his composition "**Workpoints**," Collier laid the foundation for the formal training and the official support of jazz in Great Britain. His subsequent work helped construct Brit Jazz's distinct sound: a self-assured, often fiery brew that was equally confident with composition and improvisation, or any mixture thereof, and that was above all, unmistakably, idiosyncratically "British." In a career spanning 40 years, Collier has composed dozens of works for numerous commissions, released over 17 albums, led bands that helped incubate some of England's best jazz talents, led jazz workshops around the world, and served as a catalyst for the rise of jazz schools worldwide through his work as an educator, author and administrator.

Collier's work as a bandleader over the past 40 years is his most dynamic contribution to the legacy of British jazz. During the 1960s and '70s – a Golden Age of British Jazz – Collier was a key leader whose bands set European stages on fire, thrusting British Jazz out of America's shadow. Jazz writer Clifford Allen notes that Collier's bands were in the forefront of European improvised music during the 1960s, alongside those led by the reedmen **Ronnie Scott**, **Tubby Hayes**, **John Surman**, and drummer **John Stevens**. Allen also notes that out of all the ensembles that flourished during jazz's coming of age, only Collier's remains viable and innovative to the present day:

*"...A few groups in particular were veritable breeding grounds for avant-garde musicians in England – Collier, pianists **Keith Tippett**, **Mike Westbrook** and South African expatriate **Chris McGregor** ran the principal workshops... Collier's band...is, along with McGregor's **Brotherhood of Breath** probably arguably the ensemble with the longest-lived vitality and relevance. ...Collier's music – rather like a free version of early **Charles Mingus** – continued to embrace long-form pan-tonal compositional frameworks, angular and dissonant yet with a natural, even-toed penchant for measuring and tempering that freedom that frameworks provide. He has also maintained a constancy of direction throughout a career that is still going strong to this day."*  
– Clifford Allen, *Paris Transatlantic*

Collier's ongoing projects have continually attracted world-class players who are drawn to his respect for the individual and his open compositions; instead of imposing restrictions, Collier's compositions act more as structural engineering that provides starting points and inspiration to the improvisers. Throughout his multifaceted music career (performer, leader, composer, educator, author) Collier has emphasized jazz's temporal and dynamic nature, and the key role of improvisation, and defined his role as a composer and bandleader to be that of catalyst triggering a dynamic interaction between musicians, audience and written charts. For Collier, a great live band is the essence of jazz.

Commissions have enabled Collier to assemble some of his largest and finest bands, and execute some of his most important work. For his landmark 1967 Arts Council commission, Collier wrote "**Workpoints**," a four-part suite, and assembled an all-star big band to perform it – the **Graham Collier Dozen**, whose lineup read as a roll call of the leading talents in 60's British jazz. Performed across England at the time and recorded live, Collier's "Workpoints" was not released on a recording until nearly 40 years later, when the American label **Cuneiform** released it as part of a double CD. Released in 2005 under the title **Workpoints**, it was Collier's first release on Cuneiform, and featured two live performances by Collier's bands performing different sets of Collier's music. One disc featured the **Graham Collier Dozen** performing "Workpoints" in 1968 in Southampton; the other featured a sextet of stellar '70s players performing pieces from "**Darius**," "**British Conversations**" and other Collier works in 1975 in Middleheim, Belgium. Capturing two all-star, live performances from a Golden Age of British Jazz, Cuneiform's **Workpoints** release was critically acclaimed in the international jazz press as well as within England. *Jazz Journal* "Much recommended" the double disc, and *Cadence* agreed, noting that "filled with intoxicating moments, Collier's double disc whopper should be investigated." Crediting the release with helping to make it "increasingly clear that much vintage Brit jazz is far less derivative than its reputation allows," *All About Jazz* praised it for shining "some much-deserved limelight on one of British jazz's most neglected figures." Another *AAJ* writer noted: "Time has not eroded the impact of this music."

**Hoarded Dreams** is Collier's second release of a major commissioned work on Cuneiform. It features Collier's 7-part suite, "**Hoarded Dreams**," commissioned by the **Arts Council of Great Britain** for the ninth **Bracknell Jazz Festival**, performed by a 19-piece, all-star big band at the festival in July 1983. It was a tremendously important commission for Collier; in his own words, it was:

“the realisation of the jazz composer’s constant dream: to be able to hand-pick a group of star musicians to perform a long composition written with absolutely no outside restrictions.” He “came across the phrase ‘Hoarded Dreams’ in a book by **George Steiner**, it seemed an ideal title for this commission.” “**Hoarded Dreams**” provided Collier with an unprecedented opportunity to illustrate on a grand scale his core beliefs that live performance is the essence of jazz, and that jazz evolves over time, created in a dynamic interaction between individual musicians, the bandleader, and the written score. In the program notes that he wrote for the 1983 performance, reprinted as liner notes for this CD, Collier states that:

*“Overall the piece inhabits (as indeed does most of my writing) that area between the purely written and the purely improvised. ...There are some conventional big band sounds and some collective improvisations, but there’s a lot more besides. There’s a lot of collective interplay within the band where the dividing line between what is written and what is improvised becomes blurred.*

*The structure is simple and presents all of the musicians in solo situations, but situations which are affected strongly by the written framework and the interrelationship of ideas throughout the piece. Essentially there is a three-way process: the composer was affected by the improvisers, the improvisers will be affected by the writing, and we will all be affected by the interplay between these elements and the overall ambience of the actual performance.”*  
– Graham Collier

The 19-piece band that Collier hand-picked to perform his commission was also called **Hoarded Dreams**; it featured some of the best jazz players working in Great Britain (as well as on the international scene) during the 1980s. Led by **Graham Collier** as composer and director, the Hoarded Dreams big band featured alto saxophone and alto flute: **Geoff Warren**; tenor and alto saxophones: **Juhanni Aaltonen**; tenor and soprano saxophones: **Art Themen**; tenor saxophone and oboe: **Matthias Schubert**; baritone saxophone and bass clarinet: **John Surman**; trumpet and flugelhorn: **Ted Curson**, **Henry Lowther**, **Manfred Schoof**, **Tomasz Stanko**, **Kenny Wheeler**; trombone: **Conny Bauer**, **Malcolm Griffiths**, **Eje Thelin**; tuba: **Dave Powell**; guitar: **John Schroeder**, **Ed Speight**; piano: **Roger Dean**; bass: **Paul Bridge**; and drums and percussion: **Ashley Brown**. The Hoarded Dreams performance was recorded and filmed live at the 1983 Bracknell Jazz Fest. The video footage was broadcast in 1984 and 1985 as part of a Channel 4 documentary on Collier. But while the “Hoarded Dreams” composition was later played at the **Camden Jazz Festival** and at a show in **Cologne, Germany** in 1985, the music was never released on an album until now.

The CD *Hoarded Dreams*, recorded live at the 1983 Bracknell Jazz Fest premiere, features Collier’s long-form, 7-part composition: over an hour of music, played by 19 of the best players on the British and international jazz scenes during the 1980s. As the “dream band/dream project” of one of the key, longstanding bandleaders/composers on the British Jazz scene, **Hoarded Dreams** is a priceless document of British jazz’s aspirations for big band music during the 1980s. Within its 70 minutes of joyful music, it captures a Brit jazz dream.

Collier’s two releases on Cuneiform, *Hoarded Dreams* and *Workpoints*, together provide a concise overview of his work as a composer and bandleader over three decades. They also provide a cross-section of some of the best inside and outside jazz players active in Great Britain during the ’60s, ’70s and ’80s. *Hoarded Dreams* and *Workpoints* not only confirm the importance of Collier in the development of British jazz, but also shed more light on the development of British jazz over the decades.

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## HOARDED DREAMS

BRACKNELL JAZZ FESTIVAL, JULY 1983

Composer, director, bandleader: **Graham Collier** [For more info, visit Collier’s website at [www.jazzcontinuum.com](http://www.jazzcontinuum.com)]

### *Reeds:*

Alto saxophone and alto flute: **Geoff Warren**  
Tenor and alto saxophones: **Juhanni Aaltonen**  
Tenor and soprano saxophones: **Art Themen**  
Tenor saxophone and oboe: **Matthias Schubert**  
Baritone saxophone and bass clarinet: **John Surman**

### *Brass*

Trumpet and flugelhorn: **Ted Curson**, **Henry Lowther**, **Manfred Schoof**, **Tomasz Stanko**, **Kenny Wheeler**  
Trombone: **Conny Bauer**, **Malcolm Griffiths**, **Eje Thelin**  
Tuba: **Dave Powell**

### *Strings*

Guitar: **John Schröder**, **Ed Speight**  
Bass: **Paul Bridge**

### *Keyboards*

Piano: **Roger Dean**

### *Percussion*

Drums and percussion: **Ashley Brown**

## GRAHAM COLLIER: BIO

www.jazzcontinuum.com

Born in Tynemouth, **Northumberland**, **Graham Collier** (b. **James Graham Collier**) began playing trumpet at 11. At 16, he joined the **British Army** band and switched to bass. While getting his degree at **Berklee**, Collier played bass in the **Jimmy Dorsey Orchestra**. Returning to England c.1964, he began **Graham Collier Music**, the first of his many bands. Nearly every British jazz musician of note played at some point in Collier's bands, which became known as a "nursery for British jazz talent." Collier has also included numerous international players in his ensembles, which have ranged from wind quartets to symphony orchestras. Collier's current group is the **Jazz Ensemble**, a big band with a mutating, international lineup, which has recorded 2 discs.

Collier has released 17 critically acclaimed recordings, currently available on **Disconforme**, **JazzPrint** and **Cuneiform**. His debut albums, **Deep Dark Blue Centre**, came out on **Deram** in 1967. Collier signed to a major label – **Fontana**, a subsidiary of **Phillips** – for three subsequent recordings: **Down Another Road** (1969), **Songs for my Father** (1970) and **Mosaics** (1970). Collier's 5<sup>th</sup> recording, **Portraits** (1972) came out on indie label **Saydiscs**. In 1974, Collier started his own record label, **Mosaic** (not to be confused with the US label Mosaic), and subsequently released 6 of his own albums [**Darius** (1974), **Midnight Blue** (1975), **Something British Made in Hong Kong** (1986), **New Conditions** and **Symphony of Scorpions** (1976) and **The Day of the Dead** (1978)] as well as music by others. When these early recordings were recently reissued on **Disconforme**, the **Penguin Guide to Jazz on CD** stated that these reissues "May well prompt a serious reassessment of this important British artist, out of whom much of the most inventive latter-day British jazz, including that anarchic collective Loose Tubes, has emerged." Other Collier recordings have been reissued on or released by **Jazzprint**, including Collier's 1<sup>st</sup> CD, **Charles River Fragments** (1995 on **Boathouse**), **The Third Colour** (1998 on **ASC**), **Winter Oranges** (2000), and **Bread & Circuses** (2001).

Collier has received numerous commissions from around the world and won numerous prestigious jazz awards. He has also composed for theatre, film, and radio drama productions; his adaptation of **Josef Skvorecky's The Bass Saxophone** won a **Sony Radio Award**. In addition to his career as a composer and performing musician, Collier is world-renowned as a jazz educator. The recipient of Britain's **Order of the British Empire** in 1987, Collier has founded jazz departments in schools around the world. Collier founded and served until 1999 as director of the **Jazz Department** at London's **Royal Academy of Music**, founded the Jazz dept. for **Helsinki's Sibelius Academy**, and was a founder and board member of the **International Assoc. of Schools of Jazz (IASJ)**. He leads acclaimed jazz workshops worldwide and has written 6 books on jazz, jazz history, compositional technique and education. Currently living in southern Spain, Collier recently completed a new book, **The Jazz Composer** and is working on the composition "**From Acorns...**" commissioned to celebrate the **Derby Jazz Festival's** 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

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### SOME WORDS FROM GRAHAM COLLIER ABOUT HIS MUSIC

*"My work in jazz is as a composer/director and as an educator, and these are inextricably linked together. In each case, I use the individual voices of the musicians as improvisers, and the combination of those voices into textures, to create music which is only fully realised in performance. The methods used are designed to release the players' own creativity...*

*...musicians must be able to suspend their belief in a figure who has total control. The performance is the result of a continuous three-way process between the composer/director, the musicians and the given material.*

*The philosophy involved in these ideas – that it is the individual who is important, and that combining a set of individuals can provoke an interesting result – is behind all my work."*

– Graham Collier, excerpts from his writings, www.jazzcontinuum.com

*"Directing 14 Jackson Pollocks' is how an artist friend of a friend described my approach to performing, which, indeed, is my approach to jazz composing. ...she intuitively appreciated that I try to live the two truths of jazz: that it is about individuals, a lesson demonstrated long ago by Duke Ellington, and that, as Miles Davis and many others constantly showed, it happens in real time, once. ..."*

– Graham Collier, *The Jazz Composer*, Jan. 2006

### WHAT THE PRESS HAS SAID ABOUT

#### GRAHAM COLLIER

#### WORKPOINTS

#### CUNEIFORM [RUNE 213/214]

#### 2005

"...thanks to a spate of new ear-opening reissues...and this excellent two-disc set by bassist/composer/bandleader Graham Collier on Cuneiform – it's becoming increasingly clear that much vintage Brit jazz is far less derivative than its reputation allows...

Collier, who possesses a fiery, Mingus-like technique...was awarded the Arts Council of Great Britain's very first jazz commission to create "Workpoints," the four-part suite that makes up most of this so-named set's first disc.

This music is largely through-composed, moving constantly through a changeable panorama of moods and frequently erupting into spells of uproarious blowing or descending into breaks by one or two players. Recorded...during the March 1968 debut tour of "Workpoints," disc one features the colossal Graham Collier Dozen, a unit stocked with such budding stalwarts as saxophonist John Surman and trumpeter Kenny Wheeler, future Brotherhood of Breath trumpeter Harry Beckett and two future Soft Machine members, multi-instrumentalist Karl Jenkins and drummer John Marshall. Collier's Mingus muse is out of the bag right away with the eighteen-minute opener, "Deep Dark Blue Centre," which sports a rollicking "prayer meeting" bass line and dissonant section work from the brass and reeds. But, like the title track and much else in Collier's oeuvre, the piece takes several decidedly less-Mingus turns into tuneful introspection.

Disc two comes from a 1975 Belgian concert by a sextet... Leading off is "Little Ben," another eighteen-minute opus, but a much more open-ended one that's notable for some wild blowing... This date includes still another four-part suite, the loosely written "Darius,"...

Covering a palette that ranges from free to modern big band sounds, *Workpoints* shines some much-deserved limelight on one of British jazz's most neglected figures."

– Peter Aaron, *All About Jazz*, Feb. 3, 2006, www.allaboutjazz.com

“...With *Workpoints*, Cuneiform continues its commitment to rescuing important archival recordings and giving them the exposure they deserve... *Workpoints* documents two performances – a twelve-piece...performing the “Workpoints” suite, along with two other Collier compositions; and a ’75 recording for sextet. While the recording quality is less than optimal...the performances and compositions – most of which have never seen the light of day – render such concerns secondary.

...Collier’s conception of a large ensemble is akin to a more polite and straightforward version of William Parker’s Little Huey Creative Music Orchestra. Structure defines it, but so does collective improvisation, usually in instrumental subsets where the idea of pure freedom is belied by the horn orchestrations.

...both “Workpoints” and “Darius” are compelling examples of an emergent, distinctive approach to jazz that can only be described as British.”

– John Kelman, *All About Jazz*, June 3, 2005, [www.allaboutjazz.com](http://www.allaboutjazz.com)

“... Most of *Workpoints* is improvised between various subgroups of the band, linking Collier’s brief interconnecting passages and skimming over his supportive harmonies. But if Collier’s themes at that time were not always as vivacious as those of composing contemporaries on the 1960s London scene such as Mike Gibbs, Neil Ardley or Chris McGregor, the opportunities he offered to his improvisers were undoubtedly broader, and he attracted some of the best in the business.

Charles Mingus and Gil Evans were Collier’s most conspicuous models here, the former most apparent in the churning ensemble pattern that repeatedly returns to focus and accelerate various free-floating dialogues. John Surman plays some blistering baritone in the opener, and vibraphonist Frank Ricotti plays a fine high-speed break over some steaming John Marshall drumming in the furious conclusion.

For UK jazz listeners, even of a generation not yet born when this music was made, the quality of the improvising from familiar British musicians in their prime (and enhanced by Collier’s subtly prodding, if sometimes rather functional structures) may be a fascinating revelation. A bonus is the more accessibly theme-based, funkily-grooving (this was the dawn of jazz-rock) and tightly integrated music on the second disc, which is just as revealing of Harry Beckett’s vivacious talent... 3 Stars”

– John Fordham, *Guardian Unlimited*, July 29, 2005, [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk)

“...Disc I...features some superb compositional jazz that retains enough openness to allow the dozen members to roam freely within the musical guideposts provided by Mr. Collier. ...Collier’s “Workpoints” remains a very innovative and challenging piece of music that contains certain reference points but still has ample room for the dozen musicians assembled to breathe new and different lives into the piece with repeated performances. This recording marks the first time the suite has ever been released on record. Disc II showcases a sextet... An emphasis is placed on electric jazz during this 1975 performance in Belgium. We still get some superb Collier compositions where each member is given ample room to push the tracks in different directions, except there is more attention given to the electric guitar and piano, giving the numbers a slight fusion flavor... “Workpoints” is not a disc for the casual jazz fan. ... It is, however, an excellent double CD for fans of late 60s/ early 70s jazz who still enjoy a certain amount of composition and structure in their jazz, along with equal moments of freedom and artistic expression from talented musicians. 4 Stars”

– Yves Dubé, *Sea of Tranquility*, Aug. 21, 2005, [www.seaoftranquility.org](http://www.seaoftranquility.org)

“British bassist/composer/educator Graham Collier is credited with launching the British progressive-jazz movement as this program featuring live material recorded in 1968 (disc one), provides credence to his importance. Meanwhile, disc two was recorded live in 1975... these previously unreleased (on compact disc) recordings offer a historic viewpoint of Britain’s modern jazz aura [era]. The cast rings as a list of artists’ who later gained prominence, whether globally or in European circles.

The first disc highlights the talents of jazz heroes, saxophonist John Surman, drummer John Marshall, trumpeter Kenny Wheeler and many others of note...it was well-worth this record label’s time and investment to release these nuggets from yesteryear. Brimming with the soloists’ hearty exchanges, amid the band’s vibrant swing vamps, Collier’s charts boast several stop and start type episodes, topped off with contrasting soundscapes.

... On “Workpoints Part I,” the saxophonists veer off into the free-zone in certain areas atop odd-metered time signatures and yearning choruses layered with Afro-Cuban rhythms. Collier also uses space as an integral compositional element. Then on disc two, the sextet breezes through melodically tinged themes, fiery solo escapades, warm horns, and swaggering grooves, as the musicians enjoy ample stretching room. Overall, there’s a lot to be gained by listening to Collier’s innovative inclinations that show no hint of anything that would be considered dated or passé. It’s hot stuff for the mind and soul! (Vigorously recommended...)”

– Glenn Astarita, *Jazz Review*, [www.jazzreview.com](http://www.jazzreview.com)

“...innovations in contemporary composition and improvisation during the 1960s had an extraordinary effect on both the *structural* and improvisational direction of jazz in England, and by the latter part of the decade, the bands led by reedmen Scott, Hayes, John Surman, bassist Graham Collier and drummer John Stevens were at the forefront of European improvised music. ...

A few groups in particular were veritable breeding grounds for avant-garde musicians in England – Collier, pianists Keith Tippett, Mike Westbrook and South African expatriate Chris McGregor ran the principal workshops... Collier’s band, though it might be the most obscure of the list, is, along with McGregor’s Brotherhood of Breath probably arguably the ensemble with the longest-lived vitality and relevance. ...Collier’s music – rather like a free version of early Charles Mingus – continued to embrace long-form pan-tonal compositional frameworks, angular and dissonant yet with a natural, even-toed penchant for measuring and tempering that freedom that frameworks provide. He has also maintained a constancy of direction throughout a career that is still going strong to this day.

“Tempered freedom” might be the catchphrase of British jazz during this period, and Collier’s approach seems to be one of the more successful in this regard. Before beginning his Mosaic label in 1973...Collier recorded four records for Deram...Fontana...and Philips... Recorded live...in 1968, disc one of Cuneiform’s *Workpoints* catches Collier between two recording dates with a twelve-piece ensemble that looks back on the tightly arranged ‘avant-garde cool’ of the Deram session with new, much more unbridled eyes that would capture not only the sounds and colors but also the canvases used on his next several sides. ...

Starting off the set is an eighteen-minute reading of one of Collier’s most intriguing compositions, “Deep Dark Blue Centre,” which replaces the furry reading on the Deram session with a downright woolly one here. The tune itself is modal, the binding glue a fast waltz with Collier and Marshall reminiscent of Reggie Workman and Elvin Jones, and the written horn arrangement a knotty atonal melody reminiscent of Gil Evans at his most surly. Though the thrust lies in the free-time solos and duets that make up the non-thematic sections, I suspect the piece is written in a version of the AABACA format... Ricotti is a revelation here on what might be his first recorded appearance; he glides over and under the ensemble, a glassy sprite with echoes of Karl Berger’s ephemeral tone and hyperactive-child improvisations. ...

The title track is based once again on signposts, though they are significantly less tight than on the opener... “Workpoints,”...is necessarily freer, the title coming from Lawrence Durrell’s term for thematic roots that anchor his writing, allowing for pretty much anything to happen between those

signposts. The thematic material in Collier's suite is loose as well, a simple horn arrangement quickly fading into an alto-vibes duet, before Surman and Jenkins join in for a fiery baritone duel, soon served up in an Afro-Latin rhythmic stew... Rhythm is something that Collier began to make powerful use of in his pieces around this point, not only in the odd time signatures and superimposed rhythms that find their way into much of his work, but, as on "Workpoints," in the even more apparent percussive underpinning – traps augmented by vibes, bongos, cowbell and shakers flesh out the tonal colors of his brass and reed writing. Collier also knows how to use Beckett's talents – the trumpeter appears on most, if not all, Collier releases from his 1967 debut well into the 70s. Here, part two of "Workpoints" brings Beckett into the fore over a static rhythm, with Lowther contributing his own fire and Wheeler his terse, muted brilliance. Beckett...contains so much poise and lyricism that he cuts through the ensemble... Seven and a half years after "Workpoints" was recorded, Collier brought a pared-down ensemble to Middleheim, Belgium... this set...offers a view of where Collier went with the groundwork laid by the previous set. "Little Ben," the opener, is given somewhat to jazz-rock tendencies... Most of the space...is reserved for "Darius," a rather open suite that continues the process laid down in "Workpoints," though it is significantly more grounded rhythmically and harmonically than the earlier work and not given so readily to free group improvisation. The third movement offers the most driving music of the set, and not coincidentally, some of the most open. ...Dean is given quite a bit of harmonic wandering room, which frees Beckett and Themen to take very liberated solos and prods Speight into his most sensitive of the set. The Middleheim concert might not show Collier at his most formidable, but it does give a clearer idea of where he took freedom and how it was incorporated into a delicately balanced oeuvre of arrangement and sonic liberation."

– Clifford Allen, *Paris Transatlantic Magazine*, July 2005, [www.paristransatlantic.com](http://www.paristransatlantic.com)

"More important for jazz in its day than Wynton Marsalis winning the Pulitzer Prize for music, London-based bassist Graham Collier's "Workpoints" was awarded the first-ever commission for jazz from the Arts Council of Great Britain in 1967.

...it swings and it perfectly defines British jazz in that era, with the almost military precision that goes into the rhythm section work and the arrangements featuring cross cutting between brass and reeds. While complete into itself, you can hear echoes of the energy of Charles Mingus, the pastel coloring of Gil Evans, and at times, Afro-Cuban styled bluster reminiscent of Stan Kenton's bands. ...

Superior in conception and execution, "Workpoints" backing riffs mixed with vamps from the bongos, drums and vibes in the exposition show just how all-pervasive Kenton's influence were in those days. ...

...only Collier's throbbing ostinato seems placed in the late 1960s, giving the writing with its Evans-like neutrality, a Mingus-like impetus due to the upfront bass. ...

No better or worse than other British neo-fusion exhibitions of the time, performances on the second CD will be of most interest for those who already know of Collier's talents. As a composition that's historically as well as musically memorable, though, "Workpoints" should be noted, as it defines a strand of orchestral jazz composition from the U.K. It's a genre that's often overlooked because of the greater availability of Fusion and Free Music sessions from the 1960s and 1970s."

– Ken Waxman, *JazzWord*, [www.jazzword.com](http://www.jazzword.com)

"With Graham Collier's *Workpoints*, classic era British jazz steps a little further into the sun. ...

It's not only because of his profile as composer/bassist/bandleader that Collier can be compared to Charles Mingus – there's something of the great composer's sanctified sound in Collier's writing too. However, one might be closer to the mark in describing Collier's music to also mention the edgy, avant-garde sounds of some Blue Note dates of the mid-60s, like those of Jackie McLean, Grachan Moncur III, and Tony Williams – mixed together with some Ellington/Strayhorn exoticism and a dose of rock rhythms at the very dawn of their incorporation into jazz.

John Marshall is a defining presence on the "Workpoints" date: his sharp, up-and-down-on-the-beat stickwork calls to mind Tony Williams... The Marshall and Ricotti combination is a reason for the 60s Blue Note comparison too, though Collier's open-ended composition and arranging style forges the link. ...the music strikes a remarkable balance between composition and improvisation, and it's sometimes hard to figure where one stops and the other begins...

The second disc comes from a band half the size in concert seven and a half years later. ...the music is a surprise and has become the concert I prefer of the two. Beckett is back on trumpet, sounding 60s Miles-ish but with his own length-of-phrase, muscularity, and sense of resolution. ...

Collier and Webb make a great rhythm team here... Together, especially under Beckett's beautiful solo on the long opener "Little Ben", they sound more like Led Zeppelin's John Paul Jones and John Bonham in full flight than any jazz rhythm section I can think of.

...the group really takes off during Dean's very fierce piano solo... From there, the group goes into boogaloo territory with the electric piano-centric "Under the Pier", which features a soulful and patient solo from Speight and some nice Zawinul-esque comping from Dean.

The centerpiece of the concert is another extended suite: this one called "Darius"... The first part is a medium rock piece, comparable in style to some things Ian Carr was writing for Nucleus at the time. Part two is a more free-form uptempo piece comparable to music being made by the group Gilgamesh at the same time in the straight-eight sections, and somewhat like Miles Davis' late 60s group with Chick Corea, Dave Holland, and Jack DeJohnette in the swing passages. ...

The concert closes with "Clear Moon", a pleasant ballad, and "Mackerel Sky", which goes back into the Nucleus zone. ...all quite solid and good stuff. ..."

– James Beaudreau, *One Final Note*, July 4, 2005, [www.onefinalnote.com](http://www.onefinalnote.com)

"...Workpoints... was premiered in spring 1968 and is now making its first appearance on disc. And about time too, for it is an inspiring work, a four-part suite in which, in the composer's words, "the starting points, the motifs and devices used are simple, but, as jazz should, give the participating musicians the opportunity to express themselves". Which they do with style, Surman and Jenkins on baritone outstanding in the first part, the three trumpeters glorious in the second, with Ricotti a revelation in the fourth. While the piece might lack a single memorable theme, its cyclical structure and ensemble Mingusian exuberance give it drive and direction, resulting in a highly coherent, successful work. A storming version of Deep Dark Blue Centre, featuring Ricotti's shimmering vibes over Marshall's powerhouse drums, and a relaxed Barley Mow, a feature for the sublime Beckett on flugelhorn, complete the concert and disc.

Seven years on, a slimmed-down Collier band was in Middleheim... Speight's and Dean's electricity is quite a sonic contrast to the acoustic instrumentation of the first set, but their groove-based work is the perfect platform for both Beckett and new boy Art Themen... Clear Moon is a gorgeous ballad, Mackerel Sky the perfectly poised ending. On its own, this second set and its live Darius is well worth a listen, but with Workpoints it becomes one of the best 'new' Collier documents for some time. Much recommended."

– Simon Adams, *Jazz Journal*, Oct. 2005

"...a set of vintage British Jazz...featuring a cross-section of (then) young mainstreamers and "out" players. The music is densely orchestrated but nonetheless brimming with a rousing free spirit. Collier clearly was influenced by Mingus' arranging... But he certainly does not take well to being put in any kind of stylistic box. On the first disc, Collier favors long-form compositions which highlight the colors and expressive capabilities of the large ensemble. Much like Barry Guy's London Jazz Composers Orchestra, Collier...favors breaking the group down into sub-sections... It's here

that you can hear the most intense expressions... And one of the most vivid expressions is heard on "The Barley Mow," a beautiful tone poem where subtle brass voicings waft and eventually coax forth a gorgeous flugelhorn solo. Drums and bass and vibes usually keep things cooking along, but not at the expense of the occasional musical deep breath... But the heart of the disc is the long, 4-part title suite... Part 1 is somewhat exotic in its voicings, but spends much of its time crashing away with headlong abandon. Part 2 is a wonderful feature mostly for the horns...hot blowing. ...Part 3 is structurally similar...but the expansion and contraction is still a kick to listen to... Piano and vibes finally get some wide open space to themselves in the concluding segment, and Collier indulges in some of his most radical tempo juxtapositions here (almost anticipating some of Braxton's collage playing in places).

The Middleheim set features a mere six-piece combo, and it features a different aspect of Collier's working methodology. ...These are long blowing pieces, for the most part, with much the same kind of density as the large ensemble pieces but generated through spirited ensemble interaction rather than lengthy charts. ...the stuff has an exuberance about it that must have been more compelling in a live situation. Some of the best sections of this concert come courtesy of the piano trio, though also enjoyable are "Under the Pier" and the McLaughlin-inflected "Mackerel Sky," whose lightly funky guitar and electric piano bounce definitely sound like Miles of the same vintage. ...the almost pastoral modal piece "Clear Moon" is a beauty. ...filled with intoxicating moments, Collier's double-disc whopper should be investigated." – Jason Bivins, *Cadence*, Feb. 2006

"All About Jazz – New York's Best of 2005: UNEARTHED ARCHIVAL RECORDINGS: GRAHAM COLLIER – Workpoints (Cuneiform)" – *All About Jazz – New York*, [www.allaboutjazz.com/newyork](http://www.allaboutjazz.com/newyork)

"Graham Collier's emergence in the sixties heralded the presence of a jazz musician with a fertile and unbridled imagination. His voice was adventurous and provoking, and it helped underline the fact that jazz in Britain was setting a tone of its own. ...

The *Workpoints* suite appears on the first of two discs, recorded...with the Graham Collier Dozen. And what a lineup it was! Here were improvisers unafraid to fathom uncharted waters, the perfect cohorts for Collier, who left the middle open for the musicians to stamp the work in their own cast. "Deep Dark Blue Centre" is the cynosure for development, individual paths converging in symmetry and then branching out again. Straight lines are prodded and probed, spirited spirals slip into the sea of calm, and not a note is out of sync.

The suite makes for an impressive body of improvisation. ...There is constant flux and shift, but not before a statement is stamped and emphasized either in the charge of the horns or the gentle solitude of a solo. The fascinating aspects of improvisation continue into the next part, percussion jiggling the rhythm for a Latin-tinged foray, a little bit of swing nestling in, a dip into bop, and of course the prime invention of free jazz that exults in the players' sheer artistry. As they move along, the blues jump in, as does the shimmy of New Orleans jazz. This many-faceted suite opens up to a kaleidoscope of wondrous colours.

The second disc features a concert...from August of 1975. Collier's sextet here is no less engaging than the larger group. They get right off the bat with "Little Ben," a rumbling ride that is fuelled by drummer John Webb before Ed Speight takes it on and bends some notes on the guitar. It's rock solid! "Darius" is a four-part suite... an apt setting for the lissom lines that waft airily from the horns as the guitar permeates them with some melodic, luscious lines, ...

"Clear Moon" and "Mackerel Sky" are part of a suite called "British Conversations." The former piece is a resplendent ballad... "Mackerel Sky" has a funky blues riff fired by the sense of urgency Speight injects as he rustles on into the sphere of rock music. Time has not eroded the impact of this music." – Jerry D'Souza, *All About Jazz*, July 1, 2005, [www.allaboutjazz.com](http://www.allaboutjazz.com)

"...Both discs are an important page in British jazz, showing Collier's lucid vision pretty clearly; the music, be it in the hands of the "Dozen" or in the jazz-rock tendencies of the sextet, shows its age without reticence, preserving the fascinating charm of those well know codes that Collier loves to apply, even when the groups' cohesion is put under pressure by the centrifugal force of the soloists. His themes are strong, sustaining the weight of time admirably, although some of those years' clichés appear here and there – together with tape distortion – to remind us that we're listening to archival material; but this look into the past, as it always happens with Cuneiform's similar operations, conjures lots of forgotten enchantments..." – Massimo Ricci, *Touching Extremes*, Nov. 2005, [www.touchingextremes.org](http://www.touchingextremes.org)

"...it's possible to see bassist/composer/bandleader Graham Collier as something of a catalyst in the British jazz scene of the late 1960s and 1970s. The two discs here certainly lend substance to that impression, bringing together two different bands...and two different sets of original Collier compositions.

Of these, "Workpoints" is significant because it was the first jazz work to receive a grant from the Arts Council of Great Britain, and to be sure it was money well spent. Despite the weighty sound that the twelve-piece band frequently achieves, the deftness of touch here belies the size of the force deployed. The composed elements of all four parts of the piece provide stimulus for the soloists, yet at the same time they do not restrict the ensemble's freedom of movement. Furthermore, the reflective moments in themselves prove that these were players who collectively, and again with the benefit of hindsight, blazed something of a trail for British jazz in the post bop idiom. ...

The second disc is a comparatively more freewheeling affair, and the overall feel of the music leans a lot more towards fusion. This is thanks in no small part to guitarist Ed Speight and Roger Dean's use of electric piano. Happily...the excesses of which that form was often guilty are absent here...

...the band's knowledge of and appreciation for restraint keeps the music cooking. ...it's good to have this music out there, and both sets serve as further evidence of a scene, and indeed a period, in which the music was being taken in directions from which a lot of people have shied away in the meantime. Is it any wonder people get nostalgic?" – Nic Jones, *All About Jazz*, July 3, 2005, [www.allaboutjazz.com](http://www.allaboutjazz.com)

"Two valuable if obscure dates led by British bassist-composer Graham Collier are issued for the first time on this double CD. ...The music is adventurous and swinging in its own fashion, but also influenced by the avant-garde and looking towards the even freer British jazz of the 1970s. The second disc...is from 1975 and has Collier leading a sextet... The use of electric piano and some of the grooves hint strongly at early fusion such as that being done by Miles Davis circa 1969..." – Scott Yanow, *All Music Guide*, [www.allmusic.com](http://www.allmusic.com)

"...The title suite alternates episodes of creative postbop writing with sections of solo and collective improvisations. There's plenty of imagination at play – Collier's composed lines are affecting, and the soloists are fine..."

Collier's '75 small band is more effective. Although the tunes are somewhat remindful of Bob James-ish, Rhodes-centric '70s jazz-rock...the solos by trumpeter Harry Beckett and saxophonist Art Themen are very nice. ...of some historical interest." – Chris Kelsey, *Jazz Times*, Sept. 2005

“...Around the same time that Mike Westbrook was developing his ideas, bassist Graham Collier was sowing the seeds of a particular kind of British jazz, one that made use of the many accomplished horn players available and bridged the gap between freeform and trad styles.

Cuneiform, ever committed to jazz from across the pond, has graced us with *Workpoints*, a 2 CD set which presents Collier and two groups live in concert from 1968 and 1975. The 1975 disc is more in line with the numerous albums he did for his own Mosaic label when he, and indeed the rest of British jazz, had separated into different discrete quadrants. ...well written and with a quintet of fine players, it is of less interest than the first disc, a concert based around the “Workpoints” Suite... The concert begins with two pieces, one a bombastic dash from Collier’s first record and the second a short ballad from his second. The bulk of the disc is the suite, four parts which would go on to inform most of his work over the next decades. The crack band that includes chaps like John Surman, Kenny Wheeler, Harry Beckett, Karl Jenkins and John Marshall give their all, playing with the exuberance and thrill of discovery endemic in any British jazz of this period.”

– Andrey Henkin, *All About Jazz: New York*, July 3, 2005, [newyork.allaboutjazz.com](http://newyork.allaboutjazz.com)

“...in the late ’60s Britain developed a distinctive avant-garde culture, built as much on the ideas of ultramodernists like Karlheinz Stockhausen and Cornelius Cardew and the suddenly expanding vistas of art rock as on anything in the jazz tradition – least of all bebop. (The few exceptions to the no-bop rule included Tubby Hayes and Ronnie Scott...) These two concerts led by bassist Collier are good examples of the evolution of the new British jazz. The first is a large band...working in extended forms, striking in the intricate layering of horns and the muscularity of the rhythm. The other is a sextet, also working long pieces, this time centered around Ed Speight’s guitar. In both the composer maintains control while letting the bands work out the details – a mid-point between the arranger dominance of the classic swing bands and the pure improvisation just around the corner, but not transitional. More like a new foundation for a postclassical European music invigorated by jazz. A-”

– Tom Hull, *Static Multimedia*, “Recycled Goods,” July 2005, [www.staticmultimedia.com](http://www.staticmultimedia.com)

“Cuneiform’s combing of vaults, archives and collections for Brit Jazz rarities has yielded some real treasure...

The centerpiece of the 2-CD Collier collection is...“Workpoints,”...the first jazz composition to be commissioned through a British Arts Council grant. The volatile specter of Mingus looms over Collier’s [4]-part work, which juxtaposes frequently poignant scored passages and seam-ripping improvisations, punctuated by hollering riffs and ensemble eruptions. The bassist’s 12-piece ensemble includes several enduring heavyweights of British jazz, including Surman, Mike Gibbs and trumpeters Harry Beckett, Henry Lowther and Kenny Wheeler. Two musicians who would later join forces in Soft Machine are also essential to the proceedings: Karl Jenkins deepens the colors of the ensembles on saxophones, oboe and piano, while John Marshall provides the requisite Dannie Richmond-like pulse. The second disc...built around another LP-length composition, “Darius,”...is a welcomed opportunity to hear the criminally underheralded saxophonist Art Themen in a free-ranging setting.”

– Bill Shoemaker, *Point of Departure*, Issue #2, Nov. 2005, [www.pointofdeparture.org](http://www.pointofdeparture.org)

“...*Workpoints* explores large jazz ensembles, led by bassist Graham Collier. These concert recordings...display some dazzling music that is both modern and swinging. The personnel (of both bands) is illustrious, including saxophonist John Surman, trumpeter Kenny Wheeler and trumpeter Harry Beckett. There are a number of extended pieces... Most ambitious is the title work, a four-part, fifty-minute suite. “Workpoint Part One” includes hot saxophone charts, with brash *tutti* and stirring solos from Dave Aaron, Surman and Karl Jenkins. “Part Two” is a more freeform, modernist exploration, but it yields some interesting interactions and surprisingly sensitive deployments, given the relatively large group in this improvisational environment. Disc two’s “Little Ben” is a fusion piece... guitarist Ed Speight contributes some fine jazz-rock solos. *Workpoints*’ two concerts feature some fine music-making, and were well worth digging out of the vaults.”

– Christian Carey, *Splendid*, Aug. 2005, [www.splendidmagazine.com](http://www.splendidmagazine.com)

“The Observer: Best of the rest: Graham Collier, *Workpoints* (Cuneiform): Previously unreleased 1968 live recording featuring Harry Beckett, Kenny Wheeler, John Surman et al in their heyday.”

– Dave Gelly & Carol McDaid, *The Observer*, July 31, 2005, [observer.guardian.co.uk](http://observer.guardian.co.uk)

“...jazz fans shouldn’t miss out on this... Kicking off with a fantastic version...of “Deep Dark Blue Centre”, we’re soon into a whole unreleased Collier composition, the title track of the set, “Workpoints”. It’s a big band performance with lots going on, supremely testing and never less than very interesting. Disc two’s centerpiece, recorded in the mid 70s, gives an alternate version of “Darius”. It’s all well up to Collier’s very high standards...”

– Johnny Nostalgia, *The Fold Bulletin*