CODA MAGAZINE

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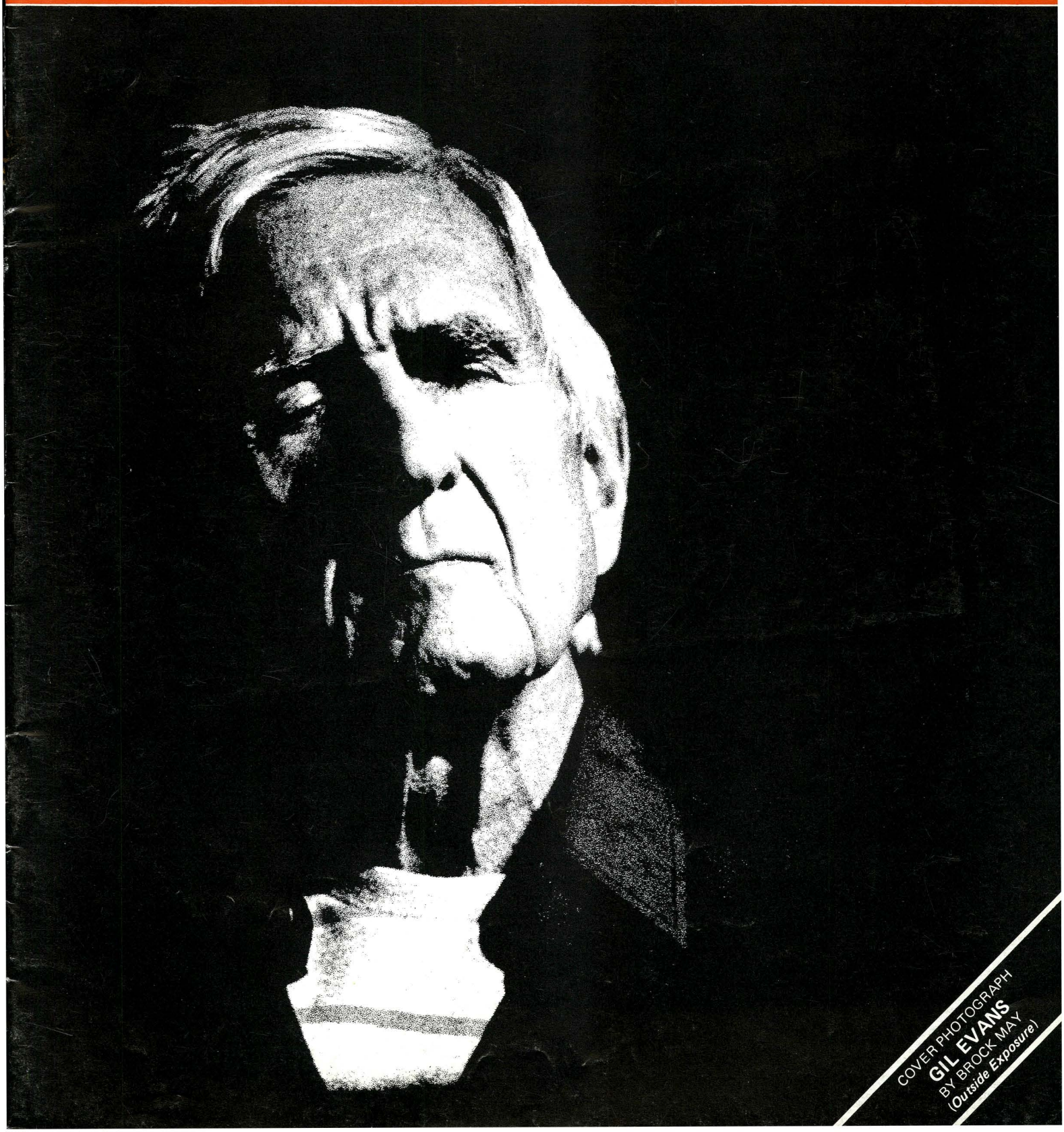

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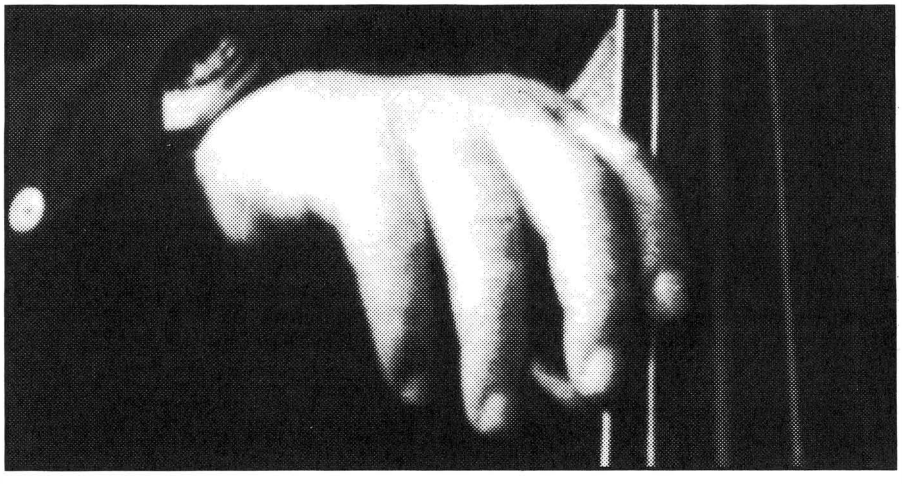


IN THE NEXT ISSUE –

CODA MAGAZINE profiles the great music and the great players of THE BASS. Features will include bassists from Jimmy Blanton to William Parker, with articles on Peter Kowald, Charles Mingus and Dave Holland... and much more, in issue 206 of CODA MAGAZINE.

The Basie Band After Basie

"Does it still *sound* like Count Basie's Band?" That's the first question most jazz buffs would probably want answered.

Having heard the Count Basie Band in three separate 1985 New York-area engagements (at the Blue Note, the Glen Island Casino and at a Hunter College "Battle of the Bands" with Woody Herman's Herd), I can assure you the answer is an unqualified yes. Whether they're playing a laid-back blues or an uptempo rouser, an old standby or a new tune whose title you'd have no way of knowing, there's just no way you'd mistake the band for any other. The broad, confident ensemble sound, the distinctive attack of the brass, the way they'll bend notes, the frequent changes in dynamics, the recurring flashes of wit – all of these things combine to tell you that you're listening to the one and only Basie Band. Would that there were more bands with so strong a sense of identity. Even Woody Herman – great as he is – will sometimes take out bands filled with kids fresh out of North Texas State and other schools, whose playing is clean, accurate, well-rehearsed, but frankly non-distinctive. They'll get a sound not all that different from any number of first-rate college jazz ensembles. But the Basie Band plays with real authority and an unmistakable sense of identity. And in conversations with members of the Basie Band, one thing that comes through loud and clear – whether you're talking to veterans in the organization or to the very youngest members of the band – is a real commitment to the music.

Having a rather stable personnel no doubt contributes highly to the band's strong sense of identity. It might be noted, for example, that when Thad Jones took over as leader in February, he found in each section of the band a musician who had been in the band when he had been in it – even though he had left the band fully 22 years before! Anchoring the trombone section was Bill Hughes. In the trumpet section there was Sonny Cohn. Among the reeds was tenor saxist/arranger Eric Dixon. And governing the rhythm section was the ageless Freddie Green, who had first joined the band 48 years before.

When Basie died in April of 1984, there were those who believed that the band would soon die with him. There was no point in even trying to continue without Basie, some argued, for without Basie's inspired playing and guidance they believed there would be nothing. But the band continued filling its engagements as usual, with pianist Tee Carson occupying Basie's chair as he often had done during Basie's illnesses in the preceding four or five years. Trombonist Grover Mitchell and a couple of the other younger members of the band left shortly after Basie's passing, but the great majority of the players stayed on. Replacements well-versed in the Basie idiom were found for the few who had left. And when the band played New York's "Blue Note" for a week in January of '85, music critic John S. Wilson noted with some surprise in the New York Times: "The band is playing with more spirit and fire and fun than it has shown in years."

Eric Dixon comments: "I remember Basie saying long before he died: 'Whenever I go, keep it going as long as people want to come and listen to it; you all keep it going.' And that's what we did. From the time he died, it's been going, and we've tried very hard to keep it in that Count Basie vein. So far it's been working."

Fifty-four-year-old Dixon (who had played with Cootie Williams, Quincy Jones and Johnny Hodges before joining Basie in 1961), served quietly as musical director of the Basie Band for nine and a half months after Basie's death, before Thad Jones was brought on board. He states: "I was a temporary leader. It was never my desire to really be a leader, but in order to help the organization, somebody had to do it, and somebody that was down front. (Anybody in back of the first row would have had to come down front, to be seen). But it's like, you don't really need nobody to *lead* this band. All you need is a downbeat and a cutoff. The band has played itself ever since I was a little boy. I think the band's in excellent shape right now. I'm not being braggadocious. It's a band that always fired itself up. Even before I was in it, it used to amaze me to watch it, how the fellows would just want to play."

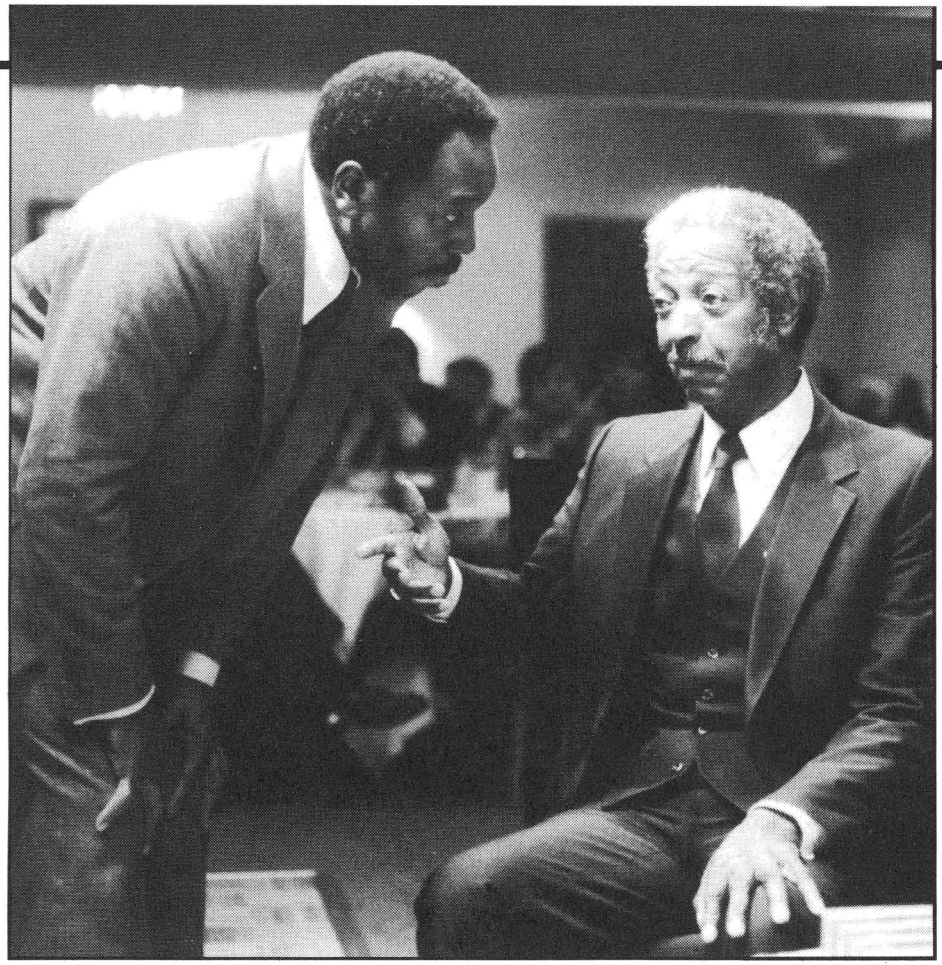
The two youngest members of the band (who might be said to symbolize the band's future), lead trumpeter Byron Stripling and alto sax player Danny House, both of whom are 23, make it clear that they "want to play" no less fervently than any of their predecessors in the Basie Band.

Stripling joined the organization about three months after Basie's death, having previously played in the big bands of Lionel Hampton, Woody Herman and Clark Terry. How did he get picked for the Basie Band? Stripling explains: "I had been following the band so much – I was writing different guys in the band letters. They'd known me since I was in junior high school, because I'd follow them around and I'd say, 'Hey, I'm Byron,' and they got to know me. And I got their addresses, a couple cats, and I would write them letters. Kind of a little kid, just bugging them. That was in Minneapolis, when I was in junior high and high school. Whenever they would come around, I'd always be there. They'd be waiting for me. I've just been following them around. So when I came into the band, it was like joining some people that I had really known for 10 years. Bill Hughes and Sonny Cohn, basically those two people were the ones I got to know. (Some of the other ones I got to know, too, have left). And those were two important people in the band.

"They gave me tips on playing with this band. For instance, Sonny Cohn has gone through – You see, with the Basie Band there's a foundation, a trumpet legacy that's been established, a tradition that's been laid down, starting with Buck Clayton, and you go to Joe Newman, and then you have Snooky Young. In fact, the section that played the "Basie At Birdland" record: Snooky Young, Sonny Cohn, I think William Johnson, and Thad Jones, that was a very important section in jazz big band playing. Because that section, on the Roulette records that they made, was very important for style concepts of all bands. People would say, 'Play like the Basie trumpet section.' Because of the way that they played. And it would be like the same with the sax section. Marshall Royal became important not only to this band, but to music in general, so the influence went beyond just this band.

"Well, I had studied the band's music and I must have seen the band 10-15 times before I joined. Obviously, I was familiar with the records. Because you can't come into the organization without having a strong familiarity with the style concept with which the band plays. So if I were to walk in here cold – I mean, it's possible on other bands, and I did it on other bands, where I wasn't familiar with the music – but here the stylistic concept has been established throughout the years. For instance, with the trumpet there'd be Snooky Young in the chair I play. He laid down how that was supposed to happen, how you're supposed to play lead trumpet with this band. So I had to study his style in order to perform this music."

Danny House, who joined the band a



month after Basie's death, also is quick to point out: "I had seen the band many times before Basie died. I was recommended by Chris Woods, who was the alto player before me. I knew Chris, and knew a couple other people in the band. I grew up in Santa Barbara, California, and went to school in Los Angeles, and worked around Los Angeles a lot. In '81, I had played in Clark Terry's Band."

Being in the Basie Band is "great, couldn't be better," House affirms. He adds that before joining the band, he *thought* he was familiar with a lot of the band's music and arrangements. "But when I got in the band, it became obvious the music's always sort of evolving," he says. "And a lot of it can't be written down, like where the end of a note should be, how late, how early, how long of a drop, and stuff you can't really write down. You play charts with other bands and you think, 'Oh yeah, I'll be able to handle Basie' – but this is a whole different ballgame. You get here, I mean you got to listen a lot. You really have to listen."

Stripling declares: "The band's whole concept of phrasing – really, a lot of it came from Lester Young. The way he would - [Stripling scats a Lester Young type of phrase] - 'buh-bah, buh, bubba-bubba-dudit - uhhh-uh.' And the way he would lay back on a phrase set the style of phrasing when the band got music. Because this band originally played without written music. And you have like 16 cats sitting up there, everybody killing with no music. That's because the Afro-American tradition is based on the oral tradition. Okay, then things got a little bit more complex. The band progressed with jazz, and it also helped jazz progress." It is often said that superior arrangements have been the key to the success of the modern Basie Band. But new member of the band, Stripling emphasizes, truly learn the Basie tradition from the rest of the band, not simply from reading what's on paper. For the often-played stuff, he notes, no one is referring much to the paper anyway.

"Now for me, playing lead trumpet, there was no reason to really look at *One O'Clock Jump*, for example, because I had heard it so much," Stripling says. "And also, because the way that we play it cannot be notated. Because notation is really inadequate for what this music tries to express. You can't notate - [Stripling scats a typical Basie trumpet section lick] - 'split'n doddle dooh-ah -- dow, bip boodle a dee -- ow.' How do you notate that? You can't put it on paper, and a composer will tell you that. That's why people have to sing what they want me to play."

Dixon says that new members are typically brought into the band on the recommendation of present and/or past members of the band. "They pick somebody that they know could play to suit the Basie Band. Somebody could be a heck of a player, but maybe his playing doesn't fit with Count Basie's style. And that does make a difference. Clark Terry and Chris Woods recommended Danny House, for instance, which I consider to be a very good recommendation. He's young, but he's thinking in the vein that we're playing. Young people are needed. People like Freddie Green, Bill Hughes, Sonny Cohn and myself – we can't do it forever. Let's hope we can get a group of young ones to think in the same vein. Maybe when we're finished, there'll be a group of them under us that can set up the next bunch of youngsters. And maybe this thing can really go on forever, as far as this sound."

Has the band changed since Basie's passing? Trombone virtuoso Dennis Wilson, who has been with the band eight years, answers without hesitation: "It's still a cookin' band. The only change is that we're missing one person, that's all. It's the same band, the same band."

Duffy Jackson, who had drummed in Basie's Band in 1979 and '80 and then returned earlier this year to fill in as drummer for several months (the present drummer is Dennis Mackrel, who had also drummed with the band before Basie's death), says he believes that the '85 Basie Band plays with more excitement than the band had shown in the final years of Basie's life. Jackson's belief is that the spirit of the band has simply reflected the spirit of its leader. And, he says, when Basie started going into his physical decline around 1980, the band started to sound tired at times, too. Jackson adds that he had found himself restraining his drumming back then, out of concern for Basie's poor health. "You had to be aware of things when you played, you know. He was uncomfortable. Rim shots were actually painful for him then. The last eight weeks I was in the band in '80, I think he played only two gigs with us. He was getting very sick."

Wilson says that the band's schedule has gotten tougher since Basie's passing. The Willard Alexander booking agency had worked periodic breaks into the schedule, to allow Basie chances to rest and regain strength. "It was *easy* before. Now it's getting hard. We're doing a lot more. I don't know if I can take this," Wilson adds with a laugh. "But then, there are those who think maybe the band's not working, so it's almost a necessity to work more, so people find out you *are* working."

THAD JONES & FREDDIE GREEN (Photograph by Chip Deffaa)

What do band members envision as the future direction of the band? Wilson comments: "The band had direction for almost 50 years with Basie. So you can't change that direction. (If you change that direction, then you'll see changes in the band. Then I won't be with the band, either.)" But preserving the Basie legacy does *not* mean simply playing the old Basie favorites, Wilson stresses. "This band always did new things as well as old things. I think to stop doing these new things and to start doing just the old things would make it almost a dead band. You keep bringing in new life. That keeps it going."

Dixon says: "We've been playing some new material. And we've gone back and got some old material that we hadn't played in a while, too. And we've got stuff we haven't even had a chance to run over yet – new material to study."

Wilson adds: "I still write for the band. I'm writing now and I'll always write. Basie told me years ago, 'Write anything at any time and don't even ask permission to do it."

One of the first things Thad Jones did upon assuming leadership of the band was to tell people who had contributed great Basie arrangements in the past – such as Ernie Wilkins, Frank Foster, Frank Wess, and Sammy Nestico, as well as arrangers within the current Basie band, such as Dixon and Wilson – that he was eager for them to continue contributing new material. Jones has been arranging himself since he was a teenager in Pontiac, Michigan, in the late '30s, when he wrote his first chart (*Little Coquette*) for "The Arcadia Club Band," led by his uncle. But he had no intention of taking over all of the Basie Band arranging work himself, nor of asking the band to play any of the arrangements he had written for the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra, which he co-led from 1965-'78. This is "the Count Basie Orchestra, conducted by Thad Jones," It is *not* "Thad Jones' Orchestra."

Jones takes care, when he introduces numbers at concerts, to give credit to each of the soloists (and almost all members of the band seem to solo at one time or another), and to each of the arrangers as well. Jones currently features his cornet playing on only three numbers: the classic *Shiny Stockings, Lover Man* (arranged by Eric Dixon), and *It Might As Well Be Spring* (arranged by one of the band's newest members, trumpeter Bob Odjea). He conducts the band with zest, almost dancing in place at times to the music.

Jones remembers a good deal of the band's book, he notes, from his years as a Basie sideman (1954-'63). And he's been kept busy learning the full extent of the current Basie repertoire, getting counsel at times from Dixon and Freddie Green (who he says is a kind of spiritual advisor to the band, a keeper of the flame). Sometimes Jones will kid the audience, announcing that they're now going to play a ballad – and then counting off a classic high-energy Basie swinger.

At the Glen Island Casino, a dance instructor from the local Arthur Murray school implores Jones to have the band play a waltz. Jones wants to oblige. He asks Dixon: "What waltzes do we have in the book?" Dixon answers that they don't have any. Jones decides that they'll fake the old Wayne King favorite, *The Waltz You Saved For Me*. The older musicians in the band will all remember it, anyway. No one in the audience seems the wiser as Jones and Sonny Cohn begin playing the melody straight, and most of the other musicians in the band pick it up. At a table near the bandstand, Jones' Danish wife, Lis, sits with friends. Their five-year-old son, Thad Jr., is obviously enjoying his father's music. He's out on the dance floor now, dancing to the sweet melody with one of his parent's woman friends.

"It's been wonderful ever since I've been back," Jones tells you during a break. "Just wonderful."

"Dad thought highly of Thad. Dad had a great deal of respect for him," comments Basie's adopted son, Aron Woodward. And the feeling was certainly mutual. Jones notes that he named his five-year-old son Thaddeus Joseph *William* Jones, Jr. The "William," he says, was put there in honor of William "Count" Basie. "My son loves Basie! He recognizes Basie's picture everywhere he sees it," Jones adds. "You know, when I took him to see Miles Davis in concert recently, I asked him how he was enjoying the music. He answered, loud enough for everyone to hear him, 'I like Count Basie!' "

Woodward stresses that the hiring of Jones as leader signified no personal dissatisfaction with Dixon's work. "I thought Eric was doing a fantastic job. But the public determines when an act will be terminated," he says. The booking agency stressed that a "name" leader fronting the band would be needed if the band was to survive. And the choice of Jones, Woodward adds, was endorsed by the senior members of the band.

Is the band's future now secure? Woodward states frankly that it is not. And then he brings up a curious reality. The Basie Band is, he says, the finest institution of its kind in existence in the world today. You find Basie charts played by stage bands and jazz ensembles in high schools and colleges from coast to coast. "So many colleges play our charts. And yet the band, right now, can't crack the college/university touring circuit," Woodward notes with concern. "If we could just do that – just get a good flow of college bookings – *that* would secure the band."

Jones notes there are now 19 members of the Basie Band, including himself. And to meet the payrolls of 19 prime musicians means that the band not only has to have bookings, but a continuing flow of quality bookings, in order to make touring viable. "All big band payrolls are, you know, a little difficult at times," Jones reflects. He adds with a confident smile: "But we survive!" – *Chip Deffaa*

COUNT BASIE (Photograph by Fred Miles)

Dukes Diminuendo And Crescendo

The failure of the majority of jazz critics and indeed writers dealing with twentieth century music in general to comprehend the nature and magnitude of Duke Ellington's achievements is unfortunate. Perhaps they cannot believe that a black man without academic training or an academic background can really be the outstanding figure in the music of our time. The jazz critics seem to prefer to concentrate on small segments of his vast output – the Miley years, 1940, "Such Sweet Thunder" – in order to be able to spend more time extolling the work of minor figures and thus give the illusion of broad-mindedness. It is also true that such an approach makes their task an easier one, avoiding the need to study in depth the music of a man who was a subtle and often elusive artist, as well as one who may have upset some cherished prejudices.

Many years ago Andre Hodeir speculated on why Duke Ellington's 1956 Bethlehem recording of *Ko Ko* was inferior to the 1940 original. Inferior it certainly is, a fast, perfunctory run-through of a score which deserves, indeed demands, a thoughtful interpretation. The strange thing is that Hodeir chose to concentrate on this one failure on "Historically Speaking The Duke," an lp of twelve tracks of which only one other contains a less than first-class Ellington performance. The lp includes the best version of the 1926 *East St Louis Toodle-oo* on record; another masterpiece of the big band jazz playing in the re-make of Billy Strayhorn's *Midriff*; and a new Strayhorn score of great originality in *Upper Manhattan Medical Group*. Yet the most written about item is the mediocre *Ko Ko*.

This is a good example of jazz writers - for Hodeir's followers in this matter are many - turning their backs on Duke Ellington's achievements. In recent years air shots have been released showing that the band had started to play *Ko Ko* at a faster tempo very soon after the 1940 Victor recording, that far from being a 1956 innovation this was close to the tempo at which the 1940 band had played *Ko Ko* most often. Yet writers continued to write about the Bethlehem as if Duke had indulged in a deliberate act of musical vandalism.

The non-studio recordings by the Ellington band from the late thirties onwards which are now available show that the performance of old repertoire by the band was a much more complex affair than it appeared at the time when M. Hodeir first accused Duke of desecrating a masterpiece.

Another Ellington recording which is a favourite target of those who wish to denigrate his achievement is the 1956 Newport Jazz Festival recording of *Diminuendo And Crescendo In Blue*. Again simplistic thinking, insufficient knowledge and dulled sensibilities lead to the cry that here is another masterpiece despoiled. Yet any person who listens to the available versions of this piece will soon find a much more complicated pattern than such judgements suggest.

Diminuendo And Crescendo In Blue, in the version heard on the first recording, consists of 10 choruses of 12 bar blues plus a 6 bar coda in its first part and 12 choruses plus a 10 bar coda in its second part. The first two choruses of *Crescendo* are extended by two bars each via some curiously syncopated breaks for the trumpet section. The last chorus and coda of *Diminuendo* are played by solo piano; otherwise the piece is ensemble throughout with brief functional contributions from (in the original recording) Cootie Williams, Harry Carney and Barney Bigard. There are no improvised solos. The tempo is medium fast in 1937, tending to increase later although the version of 9 June 1945 is fractionally slower than the original. The harmonic structure is basically twelve bar blues with characteristic Ellington variations. The piece is built on sequences of blues riffs, highly melodic cells or motifs which are scored in call and response patterns between the sections. As is so often the case in Ellington's writing the trombones have an important and independent role throughout, while in *Crescendo In Blue* a clarinet trio is used to provide a contrasting tone colour. The brass remain open throughout. The dynamics are exactly as described in the title *Diminuendo And Crescendo In Blue*. Suggestions that Ellington performed the piece in reverse sequence – that is to say with the climax in the middle – appear to be entirely erroneous.

The first recording of *Diminuendo And Crescendo In Blue* is the September 1937 studio version which was first issued on two sides of a 10 inch 78 r.p.m. record. As was the case on all popular music recordings of this era the dynamic range is severely restricted, a crucial factor in this piece as the title indicates. The band's performance is rather stiff, especially on -2 which has only been made available in recent years and sounds like a first recording with the -2 indicating a second choice. The band's playing makes one suspect that they were not too familiar with the piece and this indeed could be one of the many Ellington creations which were presented to the band for the first time in the recording studio.

One of the most interesting questions raised by a study of Ellington's recorded output is that of how many times some of his masterpieces were actually performed in public. Andrew Homzy has made an in depth study of *The Battle Of Swing* and has been unable to find evidence of a single performance outside the recording studio. Basic information in this area of Ellington research is so scanty, however, that we simply do not know how often, if at all, Duke performed many of his scores outside the recording studio until the proliferation of off-the-air recordings, concert recordings, etc., which occured in the early forties. The information conveyed by these is only partial, but the overall impression is helpful even if it is inconclusive for any particular number.

After the original *Diminuendo And Crescendo In Blue*, the next known recording dates from the middle of 1945. Accounts exist, however, of the piece causing a near riot at a big band festival on Randall's Island in 1939. As at Newport the audience could not contain its joy. One wonders if Duke recalled this event at Newport in 1956; certainly he was a man with a long memory.

When *Diminuendo And Crescendo In Blue* re-appears in the discography in 1945 we learn an interesting fact about Ellington's attitude to the work. He was dissatisfied with the transition between the *Diminuendo* and *Crescendo* sections and it is unfortunate that no earlier 'live' recordings exist to show how he handled this problem in the late thirties and early forties. The 1937 version has *Diminuendo In Blue* on one side of the disc and *Crescendo In Blue* on the other, the transition being the break while the listener turns over the record, so the original has nothing to tell us on this aspect.

The 1945 versions all have a third 'movement' inserted between the two parts. This is always an already extant Ellington composition: *Rocks In My Bed, Carnegie Blues* and *I Got It Bad* were tried out until Duke settled on *Transblucency* as the most suitable piece. These triptych versions were given the overall title *Blues Cluster* and there are five recordings of this in the Duke Ellington Treasury Series plus several more from other broadcasts and concerts in 1945 and 1946. On broadcast the station announcer usually invites Duke to the microphone to introduce the *Blues Cluster* to the audience.

The *Blues Cluster* is never wholly satisfactory because none of the other

compositions used sounds like an integrated part of *Diminuendo And Crescendo In Blue*. But these mid-forties performances are first class. It should perhaps be pointed out that there can be no question of commercialism here, for in 1945 one did not extend a six minute piece to nine minutes in order to enhance its selling potential. Popularity was a three minute thing. So too oddly enough was the 1946 studio version of the work as *Diminuendo In Blue* was recorded for Musicraft but without *Crescendo*; the reasons for this curious state of affairs are now unfortunately lost. But we do know why the V-Disc recording, which is taken from the 7 July 1945 D.E.T.S. broadcast, has no interpolation: *Carnegie Blues* has been edited out of this particular *Blues Cluster* for V-Disc issue.

A version of *Diminuendo And Crescendo In Blue* can be found on a rather poorly recorded lp of material from a Cornell University concert on 30 April 1947. This is of particular interest as here the two parts are separated by a piano solo by Ellington; after *Diminuendo In Blue* has ended Duke's piano moves out of tempo and introduces new thematic material. When he re-introduces the original tempo and the rhythm section reenters into *Crescendo In Blue*. This may have been in the nature of an experiment, for the *Blues Cluster* format is used again on some later performances.

When *Diminuendo And Crescendo In Blue* next appears on record it is on an lp taken from a broadcast from Birdland on 30 June 1951. Here, five years before Newport, we find the two parts joined by a long tenor saxophone solo by Paul Gonsalves. When the 1956 Newport performance was first reported and the record issued it was pretended that the Gonsalves solo was a spontaneous event. More latterly it has been claimed that Paul played this interlude once in 1951 and that in 1956 Duke recalled the reaction of the Birdland audience. But this is not true either. In April 1953 Charles Wilford reported an Ellington concert in Pasadena for the "Melody Maker" and *Diminuendo And Crescendo In Blue* was performed. Between the two parts Paul Gonsalves played "a seemingly unending succession of choruses that must have lasted quite five minutes and duly aroused the fans as intended." In his recollections of his year in the Ellington band (1951-1952) alto saxophonist Willie Smith recalls (in Stanley Dance's "The World Of Swing") that "people used to get up in the middle of a number and start yelling.. *Diminuendo And Crescendo* was one (such)". It was not just at Newport in 1956 that the piece had this effect on audiences; it happened at Randall's Island in 1939, at Birdland in 1951, at Pasadena in 1953 and doubtless on other occasions too.

So we arrive, chronologically, at the famous Newport 1956 version. This is an inspired performance with superb Ellington piano, a hard swinging rhythm section and fiery band work. From about halfway through Paul Gonsalves' solo (which is characteristically off mike) the crowd noises build up and partially mask the music. The success of this performance and the attendant publicity meant that for the next few years *Diminuendo And Crescendo In Blue* became a regular standby at Ellington concerts and dances. Many recordings have survived from these events and several have been issued on lp. For those who find the excited atmosphere of Newport 1956 not to their taste these later recordings are to be preferred and they do give a better impression of how the great Ellington band of 1956-59 interpreted this score. The June 1957 Carrolltown recording and version thought to come from Stockholm in November 1958 are the best, and on these both the Gonsalves solo and the band are recorded better than at Newport. The July 1956 version from Fairfield was done shortly after Newport; there are flaws in the tape during *Diminuendo And Crescendo* (Jerry Valburn tells me that a good quality transciption does exist) but the remarkable thing here is the Paul Gonsalves solo, 38 choruses compared with 27 at Newport and in excellent sound with Paul clearly 'on-mike.' When Cat Anderson comes down front to add his high note trumpet decorations to the final ensemble on this version he stands right in front of the recording microphone with the result that the band suddenly recedes into the background. This is a less than ideal version overall, but for the Gonsalves solo it is undoubtedly the best.

An interesting aspect of the 1957 Carrolltown recording is that the first two ensemble choruses of *Crescendo In Blue* are missing. This is not because they are edited out, for other (unissued) versions exist with this same cut. All such performances that I have heard come from dances and it may be that the syncopated brass breaks in these choruses 'threw' the dancers and were therefore omitted when the piece was played at a dance.

Eventually Duke seems to have tired at last of his masterpiece and in 1959 he started to alternate the full version with one consisting of *Diminuendo In Blue* and the Gonsalves solo only, the latter now accompanied by the band in its later stages. By the early sixties this completely replaced the full version until even *Diminuendo* was dropped and the tenor improvisation alone remained under the title *Blow By Blow*. Later still this became a three way tenor saxophone battle entitled *In Triplicate*, but by then the thread with the 1937 *Diminuendo And Crescendo In Blue* was effectively broken.

DUKE ELLINGTON & PAUL GONSALVES (Photograph by Val Wilmer)

For 21 years after its first recording *Diminuendo And Crescendo* remained in the Ellington repertoire, sometimes played only occasionally, as in the late forties, sometimes receiving performances as in 1945 and 1946 or the years after 1956. The Newport 1956 recording documents one of the occasions when the audience couldn't contain themselves and wait until the end of the number to applaud. The performance is immensely exciting and the recording, despite the audience noises and the rough edges toward the end of *Crescendo In Blue*, is a classic – jazz history in the making. Before this concert George Wein had doubted if his Newport audience would accept Ellington, fearing that he might be thought too old-fashioned. With his Newport triumph Ellington removed an age barrier from the minds of jazz festival organisers. The event also sparked off a popular renaissance of his own orchestra which had many positive results. The Columbia lp "Ellington At Newport" was a best seller owing mainly to *Diminuendo And Crescendo* and following its success Duke spent six very fruitful years with the company. In these years he recorded 24 lps of superb music (actually 23½ and one of those pre-dates "Ellington At Newport") most of which would probably not have been recorded had Ellington not achieved a best selling lp at the outset. Owing to lack of advocacy by jazz critics the majority of these lps are unknown to most of the jazz audience, but they are in catalogue on French CBS (thanks to Henri Renaud) awaiting "discovery". That they exist at all is in no small way due to "Ellington At Newport" and *Diminuendo And Crescendo In Blue*'

As *Diminuendo And Crescendo In Blue* is a composed piece without solo improvisations which was recorded on many occasions perhaps the non-specialist reader would benefit from a few 'best buy' suggestions. Personally I regard several versions as essential: the 1937 original in order to hear the piece played by the band for which it was conceived; at least one of the D.E.T.S. versions from the mid-forties because these are by a band which played the piece frequently and knew it well; the 1956 Newport recording for its atmosphere and impact; and one of the versions from the late fifties because these have the best sound quality. Of these last perhaps the 1957 Carrolltown recording has the edge over the Swedish 1958 version, but there is not much in it. The best overall performances are from the D.E.T.S. broadcasts and there are five of these each with its own particular virtues. On the D.E.T.S. recording of 9 June 1945 the opening of *Crescendo In Blue* has a magic quality as the clarinet and trombones enter in hushed dialogue. The most rousing D.E.T.S. performance is that of 4 May 1946 which is topped by some exciting Cat Anderson high note trumpet, while the 13 October 1945 version has Sidney Catlett on drums, an unusual and fascinating feature. With mono recording the high note trumpet is inclined to mask the orchestral detail and for this reason my own favourite is the 7 July 1945 recording which does not have the Cat Anderson additives. This can be heard as a *Blues Cluster* on D.E.T.S. or with *Carnegie Blues* edited out on issues deriving from V-Disc.

I have yet to hear a recording of *Diminuendo And Crescendo In Blue* which fails to add something to my knowledge of this fascinating work. Anyone believing that the 1937 version says it all has a long way to go in the appreciation of Ellington's music. As indeed does anyone who fails to respond to this most exciting and original composition – certainly one of the most imaginative twelve bar blues in the history of jazz music.

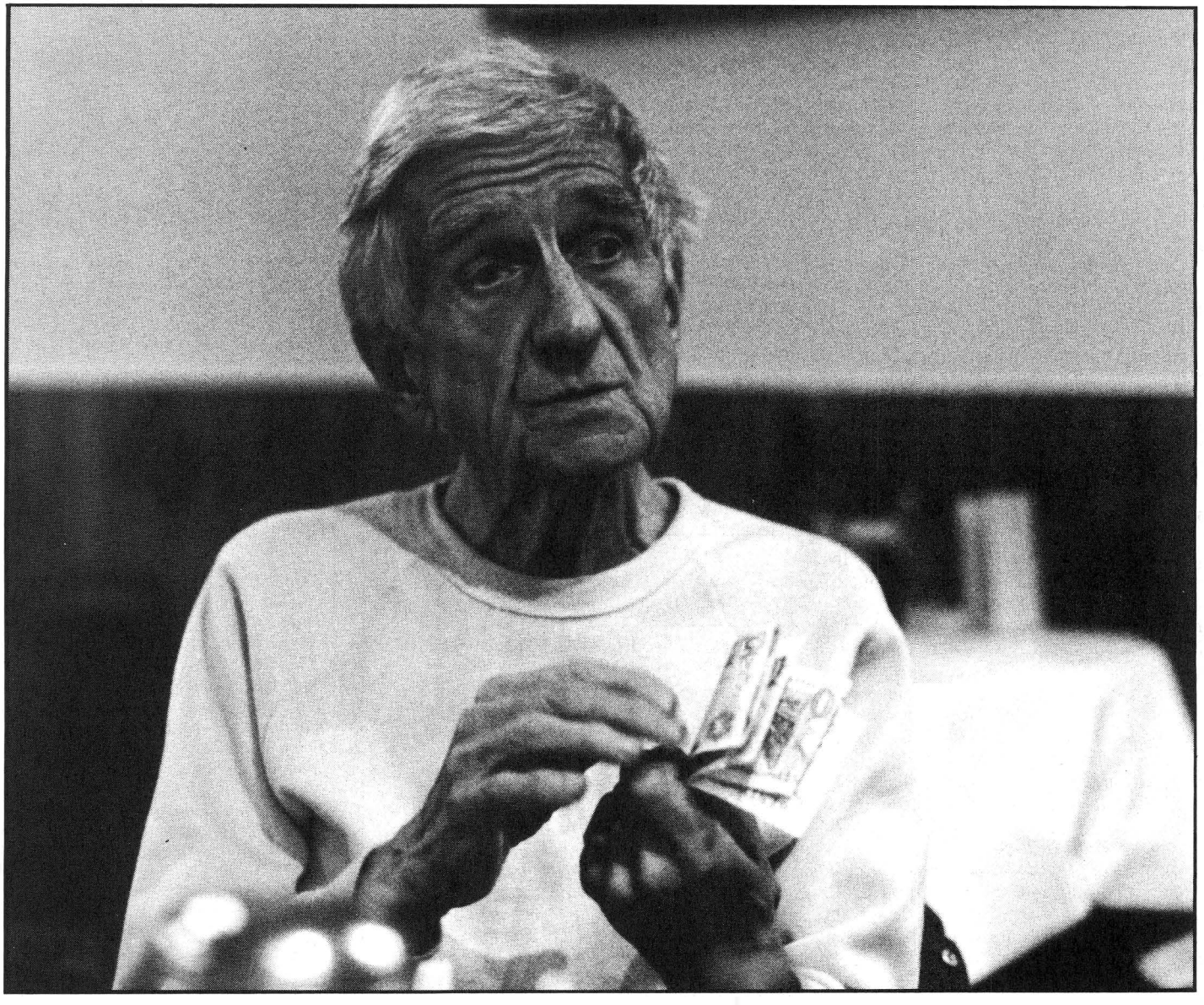
– Eddie Lambert

APPENDIX

Issued version of *Diminuendo And Crescendo In Blue:*

20 Sept 1937 - Original version - French CBS 88210
20 Sept 1937 - Alternate take - French CBS 88210
9 June 1945 - *Blues Cluster* with *Rocks In My Bed* - D.E.T.S. 9
7 July 1945 - *Blues Cluster* with *Carnegie Blues* - D.E.T.S. 13
7 July 1945 - ditto minus *Carnegie Blues* from V-Disc - FDC 1013
21 Sept 1945 - *Blues Cluster* with *Rocks In My Bed* - Joyce 1066
13 Oct 1945 - *Blues Cluster* with *I Got It Bad* - D.E.T.S. 26
4 Jan 1946 - *Blues Cluster* with *Transblucency* - Prestige P24074
20 Jan 1946 - *Blues Cluster* with *Transblucency* - D.E.T.S. 33
4 May 1946 - *Blues Cluster* with *Transblucency* - D.E.T.S. 36
23 October 1946 - *Diminuendo In Blue* only - Musicraft MVS 2004
30 April 1947 - Cornell University - Stardust 204
31 Aug 1947 - *Blues Cluster* with *Transblucency* - Unique Jazz U-001
30 June 1951 - Birdland - Stardust 202
7 July 1956 - Newport - Fr CBS 84403
28 July 1956 - Fairfield - Queen Disc 044
June 1957 - Carrolltown - Dr Jazz W2X39137
c6 Nov 1958 - Sweden - Black Lion BLM 52031
26 July 1966 - *Diminuendo In Blue* solo only - Verve SVLP 9170

GIL EVANS · Out Of The Cool



Don J. Lahey: *Watching your rehearsals, it seemed to me that, as an arranger, you give the musicians a lot of freedom.*

Gil Evans: Yeah, I have been; I've been letting them do the arranging. A lot of those numbers, we play them differently every day. At the concert, the numbers that we did improvise were different from any of the ways we'd played them before.

And yet, when the band does play those pieces, there is a distinctive Gil Evans sound to it.

Gee, I don't really know [laughs]. It's a hard question to answer. There are certain ways that I don't like to sound, so that if something is happening that I don't like the sound of then I keep narrowing it down by getting rid of that. That's one way of doing it. Sometimes I can just say something, you know, like "soft" or "distant," or maybe a word might give a person the idea that they were supposed to play it a certain way, with maybe not the usual approach to it. Maybe I want them to play it as though it's their own song even though they're all playing the same unison. So they can vary it a little bit, just like if a group of people are singing together, you know; it's not *exactly* together.

I was talking to some of the musicians about the rehearsal process and they all mentioned the incredible amount of freedom you give them both as a band and as individual soloists. But they also said that if they were playing those same tunes and you weren't there, the pieces would sound very different, which seems paradoxical. On the one hand, you're there as arranger and director yet, on the other, your direction is really to place more responsibility on the musicians.

Yeah, the only thing I do is play cheerleader piano; so if I feel like raising the intensity of the music, I raise it on the piano and they automatically get the message. Sometimes they might pick up the actual notes that I play and make a figure out of it. Or they get the idea of what I want and do something of their own in that same feeling, you know. Sometimes a number gets too modal and I change it to a very earthy type blues sound just to relieve the mind of modality which can

GIL EVANS (Photograph by Mark Miller)

numb you out after awhile. So I change things like that on the piano and then the band picks it up; that's really the way I conduct it in that sense. I conduct more emotionally than I do musically or orchestrally, because I don't know who's going to pick up what I suggest. So, I'm not really orchestrating; it's an emotional message that I give most of the time.

Do you think that puts more pressure on the band?

It isn't a question so much of pressure; it's a challenge which they're all ready and willing to accept. I can throw them the ball and they love it; I mean, they just go right in and do it with assurance, you know? I got that feeling from that Toronto band.

And yet, it seemed that perhaps you were drawing them more into a sense of freedom than they were normally used to?

The only thing that I *don't* want to do is draw them into some kind of freedom that they're not really that interested in. That's why I say to them right away that I don't like duty; I don't want anyone to do me a favour. *Please* don't do me a favour. And once in awhile I'd have to say to them, "help him out." They'd leave a soloist playing for a long time, so I'd just say, "help him out." And all of a sudden something wild would happen.

You know, I get restless after a certain length of time when there's a certain sameness to it, harmonically, rhythmically and all that. So I try to get the bass and drums not to stay too long in one kind of mood either. I ask them not to play a formal type of swing, a 4/4 type of thing, because that's more historical and I don't like to have any historical music in my band; I like it to feel like it's alive *now*. Even though there are historical moments, I don't really like to be historical. So I ask the bass player to break it up a little bit more, not to play a straight 4/4 for too long. It's so unimaginative and finally it becomes so steady that it isn't needed at all, so I ask them to play more of a funky bass and drums. Even though the top, the music, may be from the bebop era, it doesn't have to have that kind of rhythmic underpinning.

In the concert, there were pieces by Monk, Mingus, Hendrix and Parker. What sort of things attract you in a composition? What do you look for when you do an arrangement?

It's the emotion, I think, that attracts me to a piece. I think I'm always attracted to a certain melancholy; if it's a beautiful melancholy, I like it. Both of the Mingus tunes we played, *Goodbye Pork Pie Hat* and *Orange... then Blue*, both have a kind of melancholy sound to them, you know what I mean? They're crying. There's a lot of crying in them; but it's an artistic and musical kind of cry. All great music has to have a cry, somewhere; all players and all music, they have to have that.

And, of course, [Jimi] Hendrix's music had that.

It sure did.

Did you get a lot of flak when you put out that Hendrix album ("Gil Evans Plays the Music of Jimi Hendrix")?

You know, I get more people that would really like to buy that album, but it's out of print. When a new administration comes into a record company, they don't care about what happened before they got there because they've got their own projects and their own budget, right? And so whatever you did doesn't mean anything; it goes out. They don't even keep it in the catalogue. If they put it out now, they could make some money on it, but it's hard to get someone to do that until you're dead – rich or dead [laughs].

But you can't collect any royalties from a record company; by the time the record's made, it's cost so much to make the record that they never sell enough to pay it back, right? I made a record in 1957, the first record I ever made. It was called "Gil Evans And Ten"; it was a little band. I did it out in New Jersey, in Rudy van Gelder's living room. He used to use his folk's living room; he had his little booth there. The record cost $2,500; man, you'd have thought it was $250,000 the way the owner of Prestige Records thought he was doing with that. You know, I still get a statement from them that I owe them $800 from that $2,500 – now how is that possible? But they send it to me from the Bahamas so I can't go out and punch them [laughs].

Are you still doing the Monday night sessions at Sweet Basil with your New York band?

Yes, in fact, I just added a trombone and a baritone. I hadn't had it before on account of the cost of transportation, but I decided it was cramping my style too much. I really did miss having two trombones and three saxophones so I just added them.

Are you doing anything with the band outside of New York?

Well, we flew to Paris a couple of weeks ago. They flew us all the way to Paris and back just to play for an hour and 15 minutes. We played in a new place called Le Palais de Sport in Bercy and there were 16,000 people there. Can you imagine that? We went to Japan last August and we played in Japan the summer before, but it's just little odds and ends like that.

I suppose transportation is the prohibitive cost.

It's the problem, especially when you travel internally in Europe; it's really wild. The last time I went to Europe was in 1981 and we did 18 concerts in 21 days. So we flew a little bit and then we ran out of money, in the sense that I was guaranteeing everybody a thousand dollars a week. So in order to do that, we bought Eurail passes; you can go anywhere in Europe on them on the train – they're really nice things to have. But some of the trips were wild. We had to go from Finland to Bolzano, Italy; it took two trains and two planes to get there and then we only got there at ten o'clock at night, just in time to work. Then we went from Nice to Vienna on a train; it took 22 hours with no dinner, so you know everybody was miserable. So I said, why don't you fly? It'll cost you $100 – so you only make $900 this week? Nobody wanted to do that! [laughs]. That's funny; they'd rather complain. So then we went from Vienna to Bologna by bus and that took about 15 hours, but it was beautiful though through the Alps.

Any thoughts given to working with a smaller band?

I need at least 10 men to cover me [laughs]. I tried a duo with Lee Konitz; we worked some jobs in Italy. It was tough, man, for me because I'm not a fluent piano player. I went to bed bloody every night, but then I'd wake up feeling great. We played 10 concerts in 10 nights and we made $500 apiece every night. I never made that much money; it was great.

And then there's "Bemsha Swing" that you did with Steve Lacy on Hal Wilner's tribute album to Thelonious Monk, "That's the Way I Feel Now." How did that project come about?

That's another duo, right. They wanted Cecil [Taylor] to do that, but he wouldn't, so I did it with Steve – it was a substitute thing. Because Cecil had recorded *Bemsha Swing* on his very first album back in the fifties with Lacy.

Lacy himself has done so many of Monk's compositions.

Oh yeah, he really knows Monk. Lacy worked with me on that Paris gig a couple of weeks ago, playing in the band. George Adams had to go to Japan – he was in the middle of a tour over there. I didn't have a tenor player, so I just had Lacy come and play soprano. Jesus, he can play. He has a range from the lowest note on the soprano which is A-flat below middle C to the top A-flat on the piano. You can write any of those notes for him. A lot of times when you're improvising you can try a thing like that and maybe you make it, but to be able to guarantee it... he can read it *and* play it. Fabulous.

Do you do much writing these days?

I'm just starting to write again; I hadn't been writing for a long time. I don't know why; I just felt more like improvising. That's why I treasured those Monday night sessions so much. Every

Monday night's a big release for me and it gives me a chance to develop a certain kind of writing that I couldn't do alone. I'm doing it there with the rhythm section accompanying me and that allows me to think of things and play in ways that I wouldn't ever think of by myself. It's just a question of time. I was in front of that piano for 30 years trying to figure out different ways to voice a minor seventh chord and I finally got tired of sitting there. So that's why I got the band together, for the adventure of it a lot plus the fact that it would help me develop musically.

What specific things have you picked up from those sessions? How does that process work?

Well, there's a lot more contrapuntal thinking and construction than I ordinarily have used that I know I'm going to use now. I've been using a lot of triads lately too, just simple major triads. And quite a few melodic lines have come to me, in octaves most of the time. Things like that.

How have the sessions affected you as a pianist?

Well, I'm not a pianist. I'm an *amateur* pianist. I'll tell you, I never play the piano unless I play with the band; I don't practice and it's not a thing for me to sit down and play *piano* piano; I don't do that. So sometimes after I'm through playing at night I have to take this thumb and push it back becuase it won't go back by itself; it's cramped out, from playing those chords. You know, I'll be playing chords like that [indicating wide hand span] all night and finally a cramp will come. So I'm not really a piano player.

Have you found it difficult being an arranger in a music industry that venerates the star soloist?

Oh yeah, I've been affected by that. You see, when I used to arrange all the time, I had such a good time arranging that it never dawned on me that I was never going to get any royalties – ever. Arranging, financially, is a loser's game because, no matter what tune you do, if the composer's protected by copyright, then no matter what you do with that old line, it's still his royalty. Columbia even had a clause where they wouldn't pay royalties on a public domain song. Finally, the publisher I have talked to the lawyers and he talked them into changing that, so that now I collect royalties. But it isn't retroactive. I wrote an arrangement for Miles Davis in 1957 of *The Maids of Cadiz* but I don't get the royalties from '57; I only get them from last year. So, the arranger's racket is really a loser's one economically, unless you make a special contract where you get a point on the album. But in the past, it was never a lucrative thing.

Was getting a big band together again some way of getting around that?

Well, I wanted to be able to make some money, to make a living with the band. But I wanted it really for the adventure and the musical development; that's really why I got the band together. As an artist you don't get any revenue. You get a small advance – I do, I mean – to make an album and that's the end of it; you don't get any more because the record never pays itself off.

It's really ironic, isn't it, because almost anyone who's even marginally interested in jazz has heard of Gil Evans, if only through the work you've done with Miles.

Well, I'm a living example of the fact that fame and fortune are not synonymous.

Why do you think "Sketches of Spain" stands out as such a success to most people?

Well, the melody in *Concierto de Aranjuez* is beautiful. I think the main thing about that album is that beautiful song. The other songs are interesting, and I think the music filled some kind of an emptiness in the popular repertoire, you know? Somebody gave Miles that album when he was in Hollywood one time. He brought it back and we played it and decided to do the middle movement. At that time, the record he had was the only one that had ever been made of *Concierto de Aranjuez*; it was by the Spanish Madrid Symphony Orchestra with Narciso Yepes as guitarist. Well, at the last count in a record shop, there's 16 albums with that number now. So not only did our version of it fill a void, but the tune filled a void in everybody; everybody needed that tune apparently in their library. I think the thing about that record is that Miles is a beautiful player and a beautiful interpreter and the music itself is so beautiful. It's a powerful melody.

It's also powerful in the sense that it stands up to most of those interpretations.

That's right, it's almost a fool-proof melody itself. And Rodrigo did it very simply, you know. He did it with only three lines: a melody, an obligato and a bass line; that's all he used. And the only chords he used were for the harp.

I'd heard through a funny experience I'd had at the Five Spot one night.... a guy wanted to interview me and I was so impatient with him because I came to hear Monk and Coltrane who were working together at the time. So I said to him, "Well, gee, this is not the time now" or I said "later" – something like that, and he got very mad at me. He was from Europe and he was very insulted, so he said, "Well, I understand that Joaquin Rodrigo is very angry at you for doing that arrangement of his number." That's how he got even with me [laughs]. Later, Teo Macero told me that the lawyer wrote to him and lodged a complaint, wrote to Columbia from Madrid. So Columbia, being what they are, a conglomerate and arrogant and all that, they didn't even answer his letter. They sent him a cheque, his first royalty cheque, for $40,000 and they never heard from that lawyer again.

So you don't know what the nature of the complaint was?

Oh I do, I mean, I can imagine. I know exactly what it would be. Basically, it would be, "What are you fucking around with a beautiful original for? Why do you want to change something that's so beautiful?" I can understand exactly how he felt.

Do you ever feel that way? Are there pieces that you hear that you say, "There's nothing that could be done to this that would improve it?"

Well, the ones I like, I never think of hearing them again any better, unless the same musician tried it again and did a better version. Everything is an experiment and, if it's a success, then it's a masterpiece. Even all the masterpieces started out as experiments, all of them. Whatever you play, the next thing you do is an experiment. And some part of the component parts of the music is an experiment. The form or the sound or the harmony or the melody or the rhythm – all those things. And everybody has an inclination toward one or more of those elements more than the others. My inclination is more toward sound than anything. I'm more attracted by the idea of timbre indicating what I feel, musically.

It's more of an emotional response....?

It's the sound, technically speaking, the sound wave; the sound wave can do for me what I need to have done as far as expressing myself musically.

You have just finished a week of four rehearsals and a final concert with this Toronto band where you were acting as an arranger/composer in residence, in a largely instructional situation. What do you think that those musicians who have played with you will take away from this experience?

An opinion of themselves. They'll have an opinion of themselves.

More than they had before?

I didn't say that. How can I know that? It doesn't have to be more or less; it can be a reminder, or an emphasis, or a realization but it's not more or less. It's just who they are. It might light up something about them, or it might discard something. But for all of us, it was something that made us leave there not the same as we were when we arrived.

– Don J. Lahey
August 1985

JAZZ LITERATURE

CLOSE ENOUGH FOR JAZZ

by Mike Zwerin
London/New York, Quartet Books

I'll say at the onset that I recommend this book highly. Not only for the fact that it is so creatively written, but also for the fact that it tells us something very important, something we really need to know, about "Jazz" and those involved with it.

Erstwhile music and social critic Zwerin (he holds the prestigious position of being the resident "jazz" critic for the International Herald Tribune as well as the author of two "social commentary" books), expatriate (he's lived in Paris since the late sixties) and jazz trombonist (Zwerin has worked with Claude Thornhill, Maynard Ferguson, Earl Hines and the Orchestra USA among others) – gives one the "un-jazz critic" impression that he's indeed "done it all."

But aside from some very "fresh" musical information concerning "Jazz" that Zwerin's experiential eclecticism engenders, this is also a very explosively charged work within the established jazz commentary canon. As a matter of fact, one could say that he's like the Seymour Krim or Ed Sanders of jazz commentary. Which, given his credentials and clout internationally speaking, is a very "pioneering" position to be in.

But before we go any further, a bit of Zwerinology: Zwerin's family was into steel. To be exact, the Dome Steel Corporation was the family business. When Mike became president of the Corporation after his father's death he says he "..... was guilty, swinging at the end of my tether, hung up you could say, for having committed the capital crime of killing time." Obviously, not the kind of life for a journalist and jazz musician – I mean, we surely don't want to *kill time*(!).

Or do we? But then, that's whole "other" story. One that I'd like to go into... but.....

Zwerin has passing conversations throughout the book with the likes of "Fatha" Hines, Claude Thornhill, Miles Davis, Maynard Ferguson, John Lewis, Budd Johnson, Eric Dolphy, Michel Petrucciani, Alan Silva, Charles Mingus, Jimmy Knepper, Albert Mangelsdorff, Kenny Clarke, Bud Powell, Steve Lacy, Barre Phillips, Archie Shepp, Allen Eager, Larry Rivers, Paul Desmond, John Surman, John Cage, Elvin Jones, Sun Ra and quite a few others. Not a bad host of characters for a middle-class Jewish lad who fell in love with "Jazz" and became,

ERIC DOLPHY (Photograph by Paul J. Hoeffler)

in time, "Everybody's Only President."

To retrace our steps once again: we can say that by what is documented within these pages Zwerin has had a very authentic life in "Jazz." Despite the fact that he wasn't born poor, is not an African-American and at one point in his life was president of a steel company. I mean, none of this has allowed his trip to spoil into decadence. Interesting, too, is the fact that Zwerin feels at home in all "styles" and "manner(s)" of improvised music. He's played with Claude Thornhill (father of the fifties Cool School of Jazz music) and "Fatha" Hines, has recorded with drummer Bob Pozar and the famed Sextet of Orchestra USA (Zwerin also produced the date – using his own money – and arranged the Kurt Weill material for the session).

He even worked in a band at the old Five Spot (1960) known as the "Upper Bohemia Six" which had the rhythm section of such gifted players as pianist Freddy Redd (later Dick Katz), bassist Richard Davis and drummer Joe Chambers. The other horns were rendered by painter Larry Rivers – who played "at" the alto saxophone (at least, that's what everyone says). Another painter, one Howard Kanovitz, played the second trombone. Zwerin says the "Six" "....featured wrong changes, time turned around, forgotten key signatures and misplaced bridges."

Zwerin's motives as they relate to his life and experience within the jazz panorama are more than illuminating. As are all his observations, generally speaking, concerning the improvisor's art. His feeling, for example, that he'd like his writing to spark a musical reaction from musicians is a way of thinking that has, to say the least, ("heavy") implications. His observations concerning Third Stream music (the "conscious" combination of "Jazz" and classical musical elements) and the problems the Orchestra USA (early sixties aggregation put together by John Lewis, Gunther Schuller and Harold Faberman) encountered in making this ideal a reality are worth reiterating too. Zwerin says Schuller blew when he attempted to "conduct swing." *"You cannot conduct swing...."* (italics mine), says Zwerin. Or take this breezy observation of the implications of free improvisation in Communist Russia: "Before free jazz, Russians were good copiers but they were playing somebody else's music. Free jazz discarded harmony, tonality and the strict rhythm of traditional jazz. With the appearance of the new music, Russian jazz began to develop its own identity." Or how about this in regard to the "status" of the expatriate musician: "The golden age of expatriatism is over. American jazz musicians are no longer automatically welcomed by Europeans. We are considered carpetbaggers rather than evangelists. Inflation has crippled our lifestyle and the competition has become both tougher and less friendly. The level of musicianship has improved to the point where many Europeans are now world-class. They resent the heavy flow of one-way traffic from America."

A change of course in Zwerin's musical musings came, for a period anyway, when his long time French lady Odile informed him one night that she's "... found a lover." Zwerin, of course, somewhat stunned – but then, a man of his age (Zwerin is in his early fifties) would have to know what's up long before being *told* anything – cleverly surmised that: "This was obviously no one-night stand but a real occasion."

But..... let us not go too far afield. I brought this episode up to illustrate the experiential spark that prompted Zwerin to accept an invitation to join the French rock group "Telephone."

By doing so, Zwerin was able to observe the workings of a successful rock group first hand (interestingly, Telephone is the first French rock group to rally French youth). Yet like most of us who meander within the cans of "Jazz" and the jazz like, Zwerin is, deep down, an "art music" snob. Although he did, at one point, maintain a passing flirtation with the Beatles' later music ("Sergeant Pepper" and beyond), he nevertheless was to say after it was all over that he'd "... come... back" to his "...original distaste for pop music (the music's fault, not mine)." Pop is "a murder mystery" while "jazz, Hemingway."

Or, put even more succinctly: "Telephone made me aware of one major difference between rock and jazz – rock musicians would rather play a mediocre concert for 10,000 people than a great one for 100; jazz musicians basically play for each other."

The last section of the book is labeled "Tags." The eighth tag, the last one, is a short conversation with Sun Ra. Suppose we turn to his words for our concluding pronouncements:

The Iranian government said that music was impure and they banned it. Well they were not entirely wrong, but why not just put out some music that's pure? The people who play pure music tend to stay out of the way, they don't want to get hurt by people's crude remarks. There's a lot of pure music hidden away, but I'm the only one brash enough to jump out and face the world.

Black people haven't really latched onto what I'm talking about. They're talking about freedom, I'm dealing with discipline. We're on opposite poles. Freedom sounds like a nice word, but it kills people. Peace is another word like that. A gun is also a piece.

People think they are going to be saved by God. God is love, they say. Which limits God, you know. I'm giving God a chance to be more than love. The only way we know there is a God is from all the bad things happening to people. What really happened in the Garden of Eden? We haven't heard God's side of the story. Maybe Eve did not eat the apple at all, maybe she just told Adam she did so he'd eat it and she could see what would happen to him first. Then Adam told God she ate it too to protect himself. And he punished them for lying.

– Roger Riggins

JAZZ: America's Classical Music

by Grover Sales.
Prentice Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey. $9.95

Although meant primarily as an introduction to jazz, Grover Sales' study of what he calls "America's Classical Music" covers a lot of territory, including areas not generally covered by jazz historians. The result is a highly informative and entertaining work that should give even seasoned jazz enthusiasts food for thought, without choking.

Without making technical demands on the reader, Sales examines the nature of jazz and the elements that go to make this America's only original music form - not just its classical music. A commendable feature is the author's attempts to relate jazz to its historical eras as well as other arts, particularly European classical music.

His contention is that, like any other music, jazz must be listened to in its historical context. All major composers, he points out, "wrote their time.... No one expects Bach to sound like Bartok any more than one looked to Bartok to compose in the style of Bach..." By the same token one shouldn't expect John Coltrane to sound like, say, Sidney Bechet or vice versa, though both were giants of their time, and so, all of jazz.

Aware of the factionalism among jazz enthusiasts (and of course critics), Sales invites fans old and new to visit the "many mansions" of the house of jazz "with open ears and open mind..." However personal preferences persist in the best of jazz writers and critics, as they do with fans, and Sales, despite a leaning to-

ward the Bop era and its technicians, steers hard to keep out of critical controversy by not overly championing favorites.

Thus all jazz styles, if not all its stylists, are adequately covered with commendable objectivity. Seminal figures in the idiom - Armstrong ("The Prometheus of Jazz"), Ellington ("Our Greatest Composer"), Morton, Goodman and of course Gillespie and Parker are given appropriate credit for shaping the course of the music, with well-chosen quotes and usually enlightening insights into how their backgrounds influenced their styles.

Throughout it all, Sales ties jazz to its historical eras as well as other artistic areas, with references to Bach, Brecht and the Beatles; Cezanne, Chopin, Chaplin, Chubby Checker and Cheech & Chong; Beethoven, John Belushi and Brooke Shields ("that embodiment of infantile regression, a child molester's fantasies exalted as sex goddess of the eighties") and many others. A sketchy chronology takes this theme further: "1935 Rise of Hitler and Mussolini. Goodman launches overnight Swing Era, Big Band craze; 1945 Atom bomb dropped. World War II ends. Parker-Gillespie's "Groovin' High"; 1980 Reagan elected. Bebop has modest revival....." and so on, leaving the reader to speculate on what calamity must befall mankind in order to see anything significant in jazz.

In Sales' view, "no major development of lasting consequence has surfaced since jazz-rock-fusion in the late 1960s," all current jazz movements, from Ragtime to Crossover, being "rooted in the past."

In fact, according to Sales, "jazz stands today where classical music has stood frozen for more than half a century." One of the reasons for this state of affairs, says Sales, citing music critic Henry Pleasants, is that "The atonal and arhythmic techniques that dominate much of today's 'serious' music are addressed solely to a small coterie of composers, critics, and academics and have failed to communicate either musically or emotionally to contemporary audiences that stubbornly cling to the familiar music of the past."

Seeing a relationship to present-day jazz, Sales states: "Many young musicians and critics still work under the spells of Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor, Anthony Braxton, and the Coltrane of *Ascension* that carried free jazz to its extremes of anarchic cacaphony. The atonal movement that backed European music down a blind alley now threatens jazz with the same prison.... With Cecil Taylor and Anthony Braxton, American music has come full circle from the European tradition by producing intellectualized, nonrhythmic, nonmelodic hurricanes of sound that even the most cultivated audiences find unlistenable. The music speaks only to those who make it and to an intimidated clique of critics and agitprop writers more attuned to politics than to music."

If jazz is to survive, Sales believes, governments, multi-national corporations and foundations should sponsor and underwrite "our resident jazz talents - beyond those occasional jam sessions in the White House." Sales' plea to the nation to finally recognize and support jazz "for what it has struggled against shameful obstacles to become America's classical music," is well intended. But jazz, as its history clearly indicates, is noted for its amazing survival qualities and its past that its branches continue to blossom, without benefit of so-called "respectability." – *Al Van Starrex*

WE DON'T PLAY REQUESTS: A Musical Biography/Discography of Buddy Rich.

by Doug Meriwether, Jr.
KAR Publications (P.O. Box 48968, Chicago, Illinois, 60648)
$22.95

Some may dispute Buddy Rich's claim to be "The World's Greatest Drummer" as he was once billed, but no one can deny that he is one of the most enduring (if not always endearing) precussionists in the history of jazz – if we go by the record. For Buddy, who began his career as "Traps – The Drum Wonder" at the age of seven (and was the world's highest paid child star after Jackie Coogan) in the 1920s, has graduated into becoming an undeniable virtuoso, a drummer's drummer and a man of many parts. Today Buddy Rich, drummer, bandleader, singer, tap-dancer, TV talk-show star, actor, entertainer, sports car enthusiast and karate champion, has truly earned a place among jazz olympians. Consequently, this bio-discography – a labor of love – is a belated tribute that deserves the widest attention.

Doug Meriwether, Jr., has done some methodical digging on the Rich lode, listing just about everything Buddy put down on disc, tape or movie track, along with air checks, broadcasts, private tapes, to regale jazz fans' memories and moods. Some surprises emerge. How many know that Buddy's first record with the Andrews Sisters' great hit *Bei Mir Bist Du Schon*, when he subbed for drummer Stan King in the Vic Schoen Orchestra for this one number on November 24, 1937 – although the Decca-MCA files don't note it? That's just to give you Meriwether's thoroughness. Only the Tommy Dorsey and Harry James material is omitted because of space limitations.

The biographical part covers all the highlights of Buddy's long and remarkable career concisely, without missing a significant beat. (If you haven't read Whitney Balliett's book "Super Drummer: A Profile of Buddy Rich", Bobbs-

BUDDY RICH (Photograph by Ctibor Moravek)

Marrill, 1968), most of this will be news to you.

Beginning his pro career at the age of eighteen months in his parents' vaudeville act, Buddy became a top child drumming and dancing attraction, making his movie debut in a series of sound-on-disc Vitaphone shorts in 1929-30 (the films exist, the discs disappeared). Buddy gravitated toward jazz in his early teens, playing drums for the bands of Bunny Berigan, Artie Shaw, Tommy Dorsey and (briefly) Benny Carter, among others.

Backed by his friend Frank Sinatra, Rich formed his first big band just after World War II, and it is well documented on Armed Forces Radio Service and other broadcast material, as well as records made by the band before the Musicians' Union recording ban in 1947.

Keeping a fulltime big band working became too much of a problem for Rich however and he signed up with Norman Grantz for the first of a series of appearances with Jazz At The Philharmonic – much of it recorded. Quality of the JATP dates varied from the inspired Carnegie Hall session with Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young and Charlie Parker, to the contrived "drum battles" between Rich and Gene Krupa, a close friend.

While recording with Grantz, Rich kept going back to Tommy Dorsey and then Harry James. (Almost at will Buddy would be in and out of the James band, often returning at a higher salary until Rich became the most expensive back-up drummer in the business). He also recorded profusely with his own and other groups in the next decade and took part in numerous JATP and other concerts, going from strength to strength and ultimately winning just about every jazz poll in the world.

When Rich suffered the first of a series of heart attacks in 1959, he contemplated a career as a crooner in the Sinatra mold. (He recorded as a vocalist with strings for the Mercury label). Four months later he was leading a small group at Birdland, before rejoining James.

But Rich was never quite satisfied until he was fronting a contemporary new big band in 1966, surprising many detractors who couldn't believe that Rich, twice as old as his musicians but ten times more dynamic, could survive in an age of rock-rot. "What was happening to the music I couldn't take," Rich told his reviewer at the time. "It affected me like someone taking my daughter out on the street and beating her up. I had to do something..." (His teenage daughter Cathy occasionally sang with the band).

For Rich the beat goes on, with several editions of his big band – called from time to time The Big Band Machine (when he had his own night spot called Buddy's Place in New York), The Killer Force, and back to the more recent Buddy Rich and his Orchestra.

In January 1983, Rich survived another heart attack that required multiple bypass surgery. Fifty-four days later he was on the road again, at Ronnie Scott's in London, playing (as one observer reported) "better than ever... it's as if he had been reborn."

If you are looking for something to quibble about, it's the book's modest format: It's little more than a photocopied typewritten manuscript, with some good illustrations. It is a shame (and a reflection of the publishing industry) that no big publisher could be found to give this work a much-deserved wider distribution. – *Al Van Starrex*

ATTENTION:
To all the writers and photographers who contribute to CODA MAGAZINE – **DEADLINE** for the next issue (Feb. 1986) is JANUARY 1st.
(This is also the deadline for Writers' Choice submissions of the 10 best records of 1985).

SONGSTERS AND SAINTS: Vocal Traditions on Race Records

by Paul Oliver.
Cambridge University Press, 1984.

In this meticulously researched book, well-known British blues historian Paul Oliver turns to some of the other vocal traditions that predated the blues and arguably influenced their evolution, from the end of the Civil War to the early years of the Depression. His focus is on the way in which these other traditions survive in the Race records made primarily between 1926 and 1931, the first phase of recording of black performers. Among the genres present are dance songs, minstrel and medicine show numbers, ragtime and coon songs, social commentaries, parodies and comic songs and ballads. Vaudeville and jazz-blues singers will be dealt with in a subsequent work.

Oliver's interest in these various genres is not primarily in their relationship to the blues, but in their value in themselves. In fact, he regards the gradual decline of these forms with the rise of blues with ambivalence. In his concluding chapter, Oliver notes: "Blues gained from its individualism (i.e., its emphasis on the personal outlook of the singer), but it lost in a number of ways. The variety of tunes, the complexity of instrumental accompaniments and the dexterity of the musicians were reduced as blues guitarists and singers settled for an ever narrower range of stanza structures.... Blues opened up the potential of music-making and expression to a far greater number of musicians, while its basic structure, if not its more subtle expression, could be learned very rapidly. In the face of this it was perhaps inevitable that the appeal of the old songs would wane." Much the same happened in the 1950s with the rise of rock and roll.

Oliver's "songsters" on the Race records – secular performers – were born in the 1880s and 1890s. Those born by 1905, as he notes, went on to sing blues almost exclusively. The theoretical underpinnings of Oliver's research do not get in the way of his frequently fascinating tracing of the origins of songs, many of which (although Oliver does not bother with this) have survived, if in garbled form, in popular music to this day. *St. James Infirmary*, for example, is traced to an Irish ballad, "The Unfortunate Rake." *Champagne Charlie* was the work of an English music hall writer, and an early example of an advertising jingle – in this case the advertisers were a firm of champagne merchants – to catch the public ear. Performers as diverse as Little Junior Parker, Bob Dylan, Howlin' Wolf and Leiber and Stoller have successfully reworked themes that were 50 to 75, and more, years old.

Oliver's other subject is the "saints" – the preachers with their sermons and the rudimentary, relatively unarranged attempts to recreate services with their call-and-response of preacher and congregation. Here he delineates the different types of religious recordings, which were well represented on Race record, namely the work of the itinerant evangelists, the Baptists, and the members of the Sanctified Churches, who had a disproportionate influence to their membership, due to their acceptance of music and dance, frequently frowned upon by their more numerous and more mainstream Baptist brethren.

Much of the material in this book is available elsewhere, in books and articles by other writers, but it would take an enormous effort for the average reader to dig it all up. Oliver has in any case added significantly to the scholarship on the "other" vocal traditions. The book is illustrated with numerous reproductions of record company advertisements, songsheets, archival photographs of singers and locales and more recent ones taken by the author himself.

The book is complemented by two double albums on the English Matchbox label, "Songsters and Saints, Volume One and Two," containing examples of the various genres discussed in the book. Highly recommended. – *Chris Probert*

BIG BAND RECORDS

Jazz began as a community music but the personality of the musicians who performed it quickly established the dominance of individual creativity. It has always been this way and big bands reflect this influence rather than establishing directions of their own.

By the 1920s big bands had become part of the jazz world. Before that, there had been large orchestras performing popular music of one kind or another. European concert music, military bands and hotel salon orchestras were the most common. But none of these played jazz although many of them incorporated arrangements of ragtime into their repertoire after ragtime became a national craze. Some of these stock arrangements have survived but the "Red Backed Book of Rags" is structured in a formal, European manner. This music is best executed by musicians with the right kind of formal training.

The early black orchestras of New York and Chicago seem to have had little relationship with jazz. Neither **Jim Europe's Clef Club** musicians nor such Chicago bands as **Erskine Tate** show much empathy with the new music which was transforming the world. The first successful attempts at arranging jazz were for a small group — and in **Jelly Roll Morton**'s case it is unlikely that they were written down. But by any standards his 1926 arrangements for The Red Hot Peppers are among the most successful adaptations of jazz music. Some sixty years later these performances still sound as fresh and as intriguing as when they were first recorded.

The first major band of any size to tackle the inherent problems of adapting jazz to a larger ensemble was led by pianist **Fletcher Henderson**. The larger size became a necessity when the band took up residence at New York's Roseland Ballroom in 1924. **Don Redman** became the band's chief arranger as well as doubling on various reed instruments. Redman had studied music at a number of conservatories and he applied his extensive knowledge in writing arrangements which duplicated the intricate ensemble style of King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band. The Henderson band's exposure to jazz music through the fourteen month residency of Louis Armstrong turned everyone around but Redman never completely overcame the difficulties facing him at that time. A comparison between the King Oliver version of ***Dippermouth Blues*** (1923) and Redman's adaptation of it for Fletcher Henderson (1924) when it became known as ***Sugar Foot Stomp*** emphasises the arranger's shortcomings. He was not alone. In the mid-west **Bennie Moten** was working on the same problems and his early recordings have similar difficulties. It wasn't until the early 1930s that such arranger/composers as Benny Carter, Edgar Sampson and Jimmy Mundy really solidified the techniques of scoring jazz performances for a big band.

Henderson, himself, became a successful arranger following the departure of Don Redman in 1927. The evolution of his writing from that point is wonderfully illustrated in the recently reissued "Study In Frustration" four lp set by French CBS. Henderson's greatest successes were to come in the 1930s when he re-worked many of his arrangements for the Benny Goodman band. They proved to be the catalyst which launched the Swing Era and turned big bands into the most popular music craze since ragtime. The effects of that decade still haunt anyone writing charts for a big band. Since the early 1940s it has forced composers and arrangers to search harder and harder for fresh directions. These directions, beginning with Claude Thornhill and Eddie Sauter, have leaned more and more towards European musical concepts. Since the 1950s, especially, most serious writing for big bands has tipped the centre of its gravity away from the jazz muse in its search for inspiration. Even the soloists are beginning to relate less and less to the music's original heritage.

Fletcher Henderson's charts, written originally for his own band and then for Benny Goodman, refined the jazz dialect in such a way that it could be performed by musicians unfamiliar with the inner forces which made the music such a vital, innovative and creative language. It reduced the music to a formula in the same way that Eddie Condon's musicians unwittingly reduced small band traditional (dixieland) music to a formula. Before long the same fate was to be inflicted upon the music of Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie.

Only **Duke Ellington**, of all the bandleader/composers, avoided the obvious. And he managed to do this throughout his entire career. Despite his middle class Washington background Ellington intuitively felt the cultural pulse of his African heritage and always carried it on his musical sleeve. The language of the blues and the instinctive ensemble concept of New Orleans jazz never left him even though he never openly practiced either idiom. But it is there — in all his music.

The broadness of Ellington's palette sets him apart. Other outstanding arrangers/bandleaders have touched upon his world for their inspiration but the results, while wonderful, are all too often one dimensional. Gerald Wilson, Charles Mingus and, more recently, David Murray seem to have sought some of the same ways to bring out the beauties of black expression in an orchestral sense and their music is often of lasting beauty.

Count Basie, and his many arrangers, chose a different route. They built frames around which soloists (often some of the finest of their time) improvised. Arrangers such as Tadd Dameron, Gil Fuller and Benny Golson voiced the angularities of bebop into larger ensembles which, again, were usually cushions upon which the soloists built.

Evidence of the diversity and completeness of Duke Ellington's use of the jazz dialect and how he made it into a personal statement through his orchestra can be clearly heard in a recent collection of material recorded for CBS between 1956 and 1962. These two-record sets, simply titled **Duke 56/62 (CBS 88653 and 88654)** gather together an assortment of performances which never appeared on the original lps from that period. Of the 69 titles on these lps perhaps 24 have been previously issued on singles, sampler lps, special collections, "The World of Duke Ellington" collections from the 1970s or in alternate form from the version on the original lp. The others are unissued recordings which have remained in the vaults until now.

This was a period of rejuvenation for Duke Ellington. His new contract with CBS gave him the opportunity to record extensively and to be creative in his repertoire. He was musically stimulated by the return of Johnny Hodges, and Irving Townsend proved to be an enthusiastic catalyst in the documentation of Duke's ideas. Duke Ellington (like all great songwriters) never stopped writing music but the motivation of writing for a specific purpose gets the adrenalin moving and this period of Elling-

DUKE ELLINGTON (Photograph by Gerard Futrick)

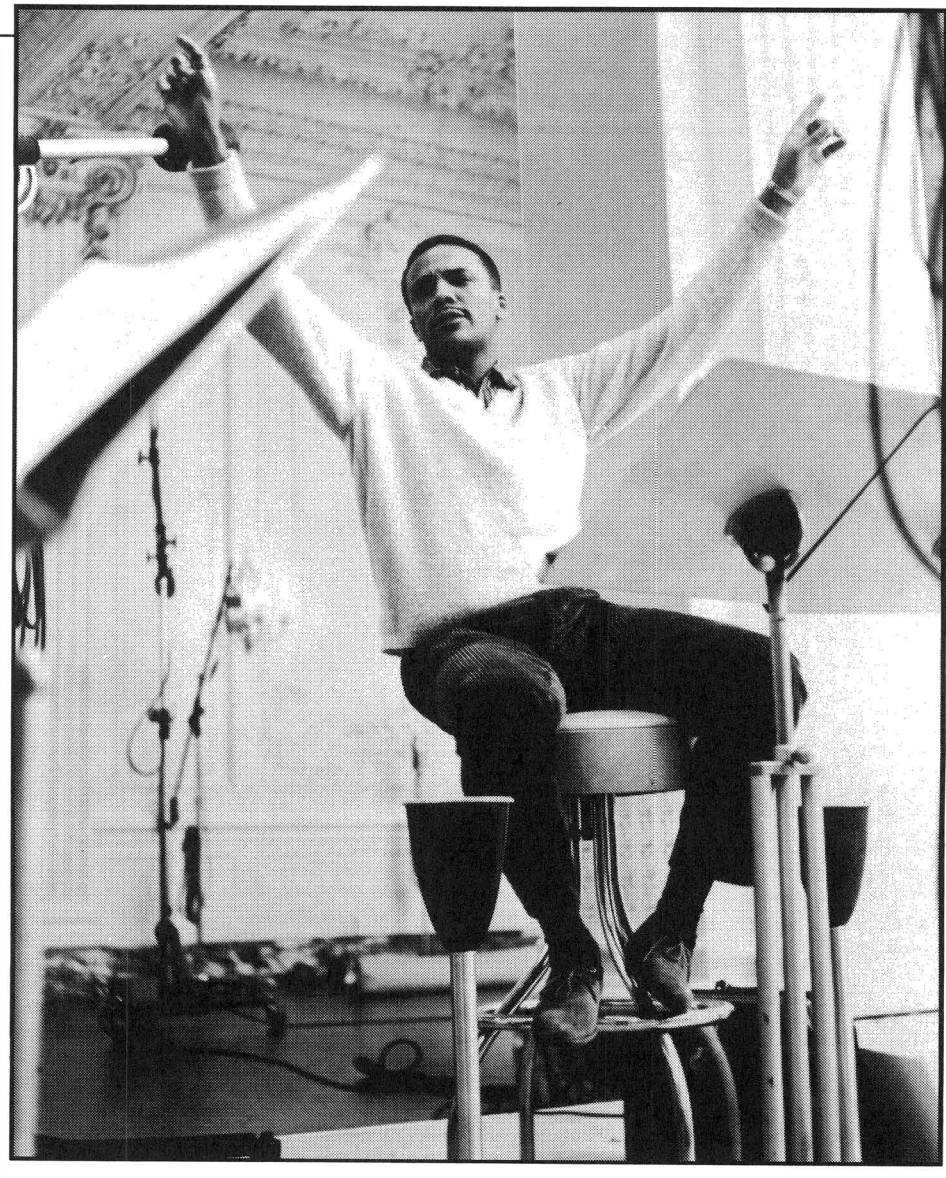
ton's career is comparable to the early 1940s. He was happy with the band, the soloists were outstanding and in Sam Woodyard he had a drummer who felt Ellington's music better than any drummer since Sonny Greer.

While these performances may not be the best from the period they certainly reflect the consistency and continual invention to be found inside an Ellington performance. The first three selections, alone, set the scene for what follows. ***Black And Tan Fantasy*** is an unissued performance from the 1956 Newport Festival. It is unusual in a number of ways. It features Cat Anderson in the trumpet role and his muted effects in his solo are wonderful. The reeds set up a riff behind the trumpet solo which is fresh and gives Anderson's contribution added weight. Up next is a boppish line called ***A-Flat Minor*** that features the fluid solo voices of Johnny Hodges and Paul Gonsalves. ***Suburban Beauty***, on the other hand, has many elements of conventional swing writing in its voicings for the brass. Perhaps this was Ellington's tongue in cheek look at an idiom whose supporters had occupied the suburbs in such large quantities. New Ellington compositions dominate the collection but there are also old favourites (***Just A Settin' And A Rockin', Mood Indigo, Satin Doll***) and alternates of well known performances (***Jones, Red Carpet, Willow Weep For Me, The Swinger's Jump***) as well as some surprising performances of other composers' works. There are three attempts at George Shearing's ***Lullabye Of Birdland*** (none of which were issued) and an unissued version of Gerald Wilson's ***The Wailer***.

There are many wonderful solo spots for Paul Gonsalves (***Cop Out, Where Or When, Just A Sittin'***) Johnny Hodges (***Brown Penny, Sentimental Lady, Dreamy Sort Of Thing***) and Ray Nance (***Cafe Au Lait, Red Carpet, Slamar In D Flat***). There are also tasteful reminders of the skills of trumpeters Harold Baker and Willie Cook and trombonists Quentin Jackson, Lawrence Brown and Juan Tizol.

A third volume **(CBS 26306)** from the same period will have less appeal. It brings together 21 vocal selections by band singers Ozzie Bailey, Margaret Tynes, Jimmy Grissom, Lil Greenwoods and Milt Grayson, as well as performances by Rosemary Clooney and Johnny Ray! There's enough solo space to satisfy the Ellington enthusiast but the singers, like most of those employed by Ellington, are unexceptional. Even his best singers (Ivie Anderson, Al Hibbler) fall so far behind the vocal qualities of his instrumentalists that they seem only an incidental part of his music. And yet, without his success as a songwriter, it is unlikely that Ellington would have been able to sustain his orchestra as his instrument over such a long career.

Ellington collectors will also want to obtain volume seven of **Duke Ellington — The Studio Years** on **Up To Date 2008** (it's published by the Meritt Society, P.O. Box 156, Hicksville, N.Y. 11802). ***Just A Settin' And A Rockin', Frillie Trillie (When I Trilly With My Filly), Brown Penny*** and ***Sentimental Lady*** are all on the CBS sets but an intriguing session from September 13, 1962 finds the band performing ***Monk's Mood*** as well as an Ellington composition dedicated to his fellow Harlem pianist (Frere Monk) and a tune titled ***Cordon Bleu***.



The results are fascinating even if the band's tentativeness precluded them being released previously. Side one of the disc opens with a newly mastered version of ***Cincinnati Daddy*** — a 1929 recording which never appeared on 78. The quality of sound is so superior to the previously issued version on **Ace of Hearts** and **Decca Jazz Heritage** it is like hearing the music for the first time. Three obscure takes of ***Old Man Blues*** from August 20, 1930, an alternate of the Ellington/Blanton duet of ***Body And Soul*** and four previously unissued Ellington trio sides from 1953 (two have vocals by Jimmy Grissom) complete a musical and historical treat.

A different look at Duke Ellington can be experienced by anyone who chooses to obtain the latest reissue of his 1946 Musicraft sessions. For some dumb and unexplained reason the lp is titled **Carnegie Hall Concert** but **Musicraft 2004** contains studio recordings from the period immediately following the termination of his Victor contract. It seems each time Ellington changed recording companies a flow of new material followed. RCA itself, in 1940, captured the Ellington band at its peak and proceeded to record great instrumentals following a period with Columbia (Brunswick) when commercial considerations predominated. The same held true at RCA in 1945 and the Musicraft sessions are startling in their contrast to what came immediately before. This contrast, it should be noted, is less startling today now that so many broadcast and transcription performances from the period have been issued. These studio dates, however, seem to have motivated the band into giving performances above the ordinary. As always, it is the soloists who give the special texture to the music. Al Sears in ***Happy Go Lucky Local,*** Johnny Hodges in ***Magenta Haze*** and ***Sultry Sunset*** (these performances are marvelously sensual), Harry Carney in ***Golden Feather***, Jimmy Hamilton in ***Flippant Flurry***, Taft Jordan in ***Hiawatha*** and all the trumpets in ***Blue Skies (Trumpet No End). Jam A Ditty*** is a vehicle for Taft Jordan, Lawrence Brown, Harry Carney and Jimmy Hamilton and, like ***Trumpet No End***, is derived thematically from a popular song. Al Hibbler's rich voice is ideally suited to ***It Shouldn't Happen To A Dream*** while Nance's flip style suits the nonsense of ***Tulip Or Turnip***.

Ellington's compositional limits had begun to stretch with his epic ***Black Brown And Beige***. It marked the beginning of compositional techniques he was to utilise more and more

QUINCY JONES (Circa 1960)

in the ensuing years. These Musicraft performances are among the earliest examples of this approach. ***Overture To A Jam Session*** and ***The Beautiful Indians (Hiawatha, Minnehaha)*** fall into this category while ***Happy Go Lucky Local*** (from "The Deep South Suite") and ***Jam A Ditty*** (from "Concerto For Four Horns") are excerpted from longer works. ***Diminuendo In Blue*** is one half of one of Duke's earliest attempts at extended writing. These pieces stand on their own and this is a truism for all of Ellington's works. His mastery of the short form (jazz) is unparalleled. He simply linked together related pieces rather than using the extended compositional style of European music. It was perfect for jazz and perfect for Ellington.

These Musicraft performances have been reissued many times. The most recent occasion was the Prestige twofer ("Golden Duke") where they were coupled with the Mercer sessions. This new Musicraft issue offers the long-suffering collector a decided bonus. The outstanding sound quality is the work of Jack Towers and only their transfer to compact disc would improve matters further. This is an important reissue of music of major importance.

The strength of **Count Basie**'s band was always its soloists. They embodied all of the elements crucial to jazz expression — great rhythmic drive (instead of good time), solo virtuosity and a deep sense of the blues. A glimpse into this band's music can be gained from some recently issued location recordings which form part of **Everybodys EV-3006: 1940: The Bands of Count Basie, Louis Armstrong, Andy Kirk and Jimmy Lunceford**. Solo work from Lester Young, Buddy Tate, Harry Edison, Buck Clayton, Vic Dickenson, Dicky Wells, Jack Washington, Earl Warren and Basie himself occupy most of the musical space. ***Indiana, Topsy, Twelfth Street Rag*** and ***I Left My Baby*** were part of the band's regular repertoire but neither ***Basin Street Blues*** (with Warren handling the vocal) nor Ellington's ***Rockin' In Rhythm*** were featured often. The latter performance is a gem and gives a fresh insight into the band's repertoire.

Louis Armstrong had provided the inspiration for the transformation of the early Fletcher Henderson band but by 1940 Armstrong's own bands were sadly lacking in musical imagination. They were a functional backdrop for the leader's solos and his performances were locked into well worn patterns. ***Keep The Rhythm Going, Lazy River*** and ***Struttin' With Some Barbecue*** offer us nothing new.

Count Basie's band was a summation of all the qualities developed by musicians in the mid-west. The key ingredient they contributed to the jazz language was swing and by 1940 these elements had taken hold throughout the jazz community. **Andy Kirk** led one of the early bands in Kansas City. His recordings never justified the enthusiasm of commentators and musicians but a better idea of the band's qualities can be gained from this location performance of ***The Sheik Of Araby***. It's a feature for Mary Lou Williams and she digs into her solo with ferocious abandon. It captures one of the best examples of the pianist's style.

The **Jimmy Lunceford** band, like others in the east (Hines, Erskine Hawkins), always displayed a greater orchestral sense than the mid west organisations. The band peaked musically in 1939 during the period when it recorded for Vocalion using outstanding arrangements from Sy Oliver, Billy Moore and Eddie Durham. It always found a way to please both the jazz audience and those who were looking for casual entertainment. The dual roles of the band can be heard in the two location performances included here. ***In The Shade Of The Old Apple Tree*** is a subtle, but polite reading of an old popular song while ***Make Believe*** is opened up to give solo space to Willie Smith, Joe Thomas and Snooky Young.

Between the 1930s and the 1950s dramatic changes took place. Where once musicians were employed in large bands and jammed in small combinations for pleasure and relaxation, the reverse was becoming a reality. Only the old line leaders were out on the road with organised bands. Those who did try to maintain full time personnel had an increasing struggle to make ends meet. One of these was a bright young arranger who made his debut with the Lionel Hampton band at the age of 19. **Quincy Jones** quickly established himself in the competitive music field of the 1950s. His organisational qualities matched his abilities as an arranger and by 1959 he was in a position to form a band for recordings at Mercury. He handpicked his personnel from New York's session musicians and the initial "Birth of a Band" recording drew attention to his efforts in a dramatic fashion. **The Birth Of A Band Volume 2 (Mercury 195J-30)** is a Japanese compilation of material which was originally issued as singles (***Choo Choo Ch'Boogie, Syncopated Clock, Marchin' The Blues, The Preacher***), unissued alternates (***Moanin', Happy Faces, G'Wan Train***) or unissued performances (***Daylie Double, A Parisian Thoroughfare, The Midnight Sun Will Never Set, Pleasingly Plump***). It displays the diversity of Jones' writing — some of the charts are committed jazz performances while others were obviously aimed at a broader market. The thematic unity of the original "Birth of a Band" lp isn't here, of course, but this collection complements the other Quincy Jones material from the same period. The recordings were made in New York both before and after Quincy took his band to Paris for what was to have been a lengthy stay with Harold Arlen's Free And Easy show. The collapse of this endeavour forced the band to scuffle in Europe for several months before returning home. While there they recorded for Mercury and ***Parisian Thoroughfare*** and ***Pleasingly Plump*** come from that session.

In 1961 Jones returned to Europe and **The Great Wide World Of Quincy Jones: Live (Mercury 195J-32)** captures this band in performance in Zurich, Switzerland on March 10, 1961. This previously unissued concert recording captures the excitement generated by top flight jazz musicians in a big band setting. Quincy Jones lets his arrangements serve as a backdrop for the soloists who include Freddie Hubbard, Benny Bailey, Ake Persson, Phil Woods, Budd Johnson, Eric Dixon, Sahib Shihab and Patti Bown. Among the highlights are Budd Johnson's solo on ***Banjaluka***, Phil Woods' interpretation of ***Bess You Is My Woman Now*** and the arrangement of ***Stolen Moments*** showcasing Freddie Hubbard and Eric Dixon.

Quincy Jones, in a sense, pioneered the direction big bands were to take in the next two decades. Forceful and imaginative arranger/composers with the determination to have their music performed were able, in the major music centres, to put together bands of seasoned musicians who could quickly give life to the charts. New York had Gerry Mulligan and the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis band, California had bands led by Gerald Wilson, Bill Berry, Louie Bellson and Toshiko Akiyoshi, Europe had the Clarke-Boland Band and Toronto had The Boss Brass and Nimmons 'N' Nine Plus Six.

These bands and the remaining veterans from the road (Basie, Ellington, Herman, Kenton) were the inspiration for the growth of the Stage Band movement — the introduction of this music into the educational system. It began in the colleges and has gradually worked its way down to the high schools. It has created an increasingly large pool of musicians whose technical fluency is remarkable, but whose training and background give the music a different feel. It is the difference between seeing an original or a print of a Picasso or Van Gogh painting. The original bristles with a vitality and uniqueness of texture which is smoothed away by the copy.

There is nothing smoothed out in **Dizzy Gillespie**'s music. In 1956 he made a last attempt at leading a big band on a permanent basis. A State Department tour motivated its organisation and several recordings for Verve document its music. Ernie Wilkins, Melba Liston, Quincy Jones, Benny Golson and Pete Anson were the principal arrangers for the two versions of the band which performed in 1956 and 1957. **Live In Hi-Fi From Birdland Summer 1956 (Fanfare 46-146) — 4870 S.W. 103 Avenue, Cooper City, FL 33328 USA)** is a recently released lp of music by the band recorded on location. Both the performance and sound quality are excellent — especially the first broadcast where the band play ***Dizzy's Blues, Night In Tunisia, Stella By Starlight, Doodlin', If You Could See Me Now*** and ***Groovin' For Nat***. The personnel of this band is probably close to that which recorded the "World Statesman" lp for Verve but ***Whisper Not, Tangorine*** and the brief excerpt from ***Dizzy's Business*** is by the later (1957) band which recorded ***Birk's Works***. Benny Golson, Ernie Henry and Wynton Kelly can be identified here and the final credits say the program is from a Bandstand USA broadcast. More research is obviously needed but in the meantime these are available as alternate performances to those on the Verve lps.

Gerry Mulligan's early career was more notable for his arranging than his playing. It was only after the formation of his pianoless quartet in California that he attracted widespread attention as a musician. Since then he has managed to balance his two careers successfully. What sets Mulligan apart from many of his contemporaries is his passion for both order and freedom in his music. His big bands aften give the impression they are merely an overblown edition of one of his small groups while those groups often have the written parameters one expects from a big band. This is particularly evident in the sextet Mulligan formed in New York in the summer of 1955. It featured four horns (Jon Eardley, Zoot Sims, Bob Brookmeyer, Gerry Mulligan) with bass and drums.

Its genesis had been a performance the previous December in San Diego with the same front line. This band, whose lifespan was quite short, recorded five times for Emarcy. Three lps were issued from those sessions (**Presenting Gerry Mulligan Sextet, Mainstream Of Jazz, A Profile of Gerry Mulligan**) and now two further volumes have appeared on Japanese Mercury. **Mainstream of Jazz Volume 2 and 3 (Mercury 195J-35 and 36)** contains alternate versions of tunes on the originally issued lps. Some only vary in detail in the overall structure while ***Sweet And Lovely*** and ***Bernie's Tune*** are abbreviated versions which were presumably intended for release as singles. Mulligan's arranged sketches, like Morton's three decades earlier, gave the individual musicians considerable latitude in finding their own parts in the overall ensembles. Ellington, too, was a master at this and the music, when played by musicians experienced in the idiom's vocabulary, is often of the highest order. These two lps offer us further glimpses into the working relationship of this band as well as giving us many additional solos from Zoot Sims and Gerry Mulligan — two of the music's more gifted soloists.

The highest accolade which can be given to an artist is when his work can be instantly identified. His uniqueness, his originality, immediately captures the senses. **Gerald Wilson** has this gift. His long experience as arranger/composer blossomed into greatness in the 1960s when he recorded a series of lps for Pacific Jazz. They established his reputation but, more importantly, gave to the world an unique blend of sounds which were different and texturally invigorating. He utilised the contemporary sounds of his time (especially the harmonic progressions of Coltrane) in arrangements which leaned heavily on blues and voicings and added to this mix a touch of the distinctive music of Mexico — all sounds reverberating daily around the urban communities of Southern California. Wilson has remained true to this concept and **Calafia (Trend TR-537)** is the third of his recordings to appear in the 1980s following a decade of recording inactivity. This recording features outstanding solos from tenor saxophonists Ernie Watts and Harold Land, trumpeters Al Aarons and Oscar Brashear, trombonist Buster Cooper, pianist Milcho Leviev and guitarist Anthony Wilson. All of the material was newly written and arranged by Gerald Wilson for this album except for a reworking of ***Viva Torado***. Both ***Calafia*** and ***3/4 For Mayor Tom*** are characteristically haunting Wilson themes that feature Ernie Watts on tenor and alto saxophones respectively. ***Polygon*** and ***Prince Albert*** are vigorously paced charts while ***The Redd Foxx*** gives Buster Cooper an opportunity to extoll some older traditions of big band music through his muted effects. ***Viva Torado*** completes the cycle between the decades and emphasises the uniqueness of Gerald Wilson's band.

Just Buddy's (Trend TR-539) is trumpeter **Buddy Childer**'s first big band recording as a leader. He was part of Hollywood's musical establishment for many years but this music was recorded in Chicago by a band of young musicians assembled there by Childers. They worked together every Monday for a year and function as a support system for the trumpeter who solos generously throughout the album. He has an impersonal style but there is some variety. There's a brashness to his solo in ***Looking Up Old Friends*** which begins life as a smoothly swinging chart but the band are unable to sustain the momentum. ***The Underdog Has Risen*** finds Childers in a more quizzical frame of mind but the solos on ***Nica's Dream*** and ***Just Buddy's*** are characteristic of his overall approach. Other solos of note come from altoist Mike Smith (especially ***Arriving Soon***) but it is Childers who dominates this lp.

Jimmy McConnell, like Childers, is a trumpeter/arranger who also leads his own band. It has been resident in Kansas City for the past six years and **In The Wind (Fifth Street Records 409029 - 228 W. 5th, Kansas City, Mo)** is a studio recording made in 1984 which features him extensively. His arrangements are much more functional than those of Buddy Childers and the musicianship of the band is not at the same level. The solo work, reflecting the Kansas City tradition, is closer to the core of jazz expression but the intensity one experiences from world class players is missing.

Things are much better in New York where both Toshiko and Mel Lewis have found long term residences for their bands. Frank Foster has also been active with his big band (at Small's Paradise) but these are not the only bands in New York. **The Grover Mitchell Big Band: Live at the Parrot (Hemisphere 1006)** is a recording by a part-time organisation which performed when the Basie band was idle. The arrangements are by Eric Dixon (except for Frank Foster's ***Hip Shakin'*** and Bobby Plater's ***Prancin'***) and the voicings and rhythmic touches are all ingredients which the musicians have inherited from their associations with Basie. Nonetheless, the band has its own personality even though their solo strengths are limited. Alto saxophonist Danny Turner is prominent with Eric Dixon's flute work on ***St Thomas*** another highlight. The location recording captures the exuberant spirit of the band which seems set to perpetuate the spirit, if not the letter, of Basie's big band philosophy.

While Grover Mitchell's band is still working towards its direction it seems that **Charli Persip's Superband (11)** has arrived. **In Case You Missed It (Soul Note SN 1079)** is the band's second recording and features some of New York's outstanding younger musicians. The arrangements by Jack Walrath, Bobby Watson, Orpheus Gaitanopoulos and Frank Gordon utilise a wide variety of contemporary devices as well as pulling back into use many elements from earlier eras of the music. The arrangements of ***'Round About Midnight, Willow Weep For Me*** and ***Killer Joe*** will instantly establish the credentials of this band through their intense and forthright reworking of familiar materials. These balance the original compositions from within the band. The title selection is a vehicle for its composer (Bobby Watson) while ***Marching Out And Dancing In*** is a rhythmic cauldron devised by Jack Walrath as a feature for his articulate trumpet riding high over the percussive fireworks of the leader. ***Plutonian Images***, on the other hand, is an abstract vehicle which borrows heavily for its conception and organisation from The Jazz Composers' Orchestra's Communications No. 11 recording of 1968. That piece was written by Mike Mantler as a solo vehicle for Cecil Taylor's piano improvisations. ***Plutonian Images*** is an uncomfortable echo of that masterpiece with Richard Clements re-enacting the piano role.

Charli Persip, like Gerald Wilson, is keeping the flame of big band burning with his choice of young and talented players who are bringing their concepts into the idiom in a fresh and provocative way.

Bill Holman personifies the role of arranger within the jazz tradition. He shares with Benny Carter the ability to write arrangements which seem to flow without effort. **The Third Stone (Panda 4 - Jaffestr. 8, 2012 Hamburg 93)** is a collaboration between Bill Holman, trombonist Jigs Whigham and drummer Mel Lewis. Holman wrote all the music as a showcase for Whigham who performs with the WDR Big Band and Strings. The trombonist is showcased on a bright swinging version of ***I'll Be Around***. This is followed by a heartfelt rendition of ***Emily***, George Gershwin's ***Bess*** and ***What Might Have Been*** — an original composition of Jigs Whigham. The second side is devoted to ***The Third Stone*** — a three part suite for orchestra which is masterfully put together as an extended showcase for Jigs Whigham's virtuosity. Whigham's command of the instrument parallels that of J.J. Johnson and Bill Watrous. The suite offers the listener a variety of moods and tonalities as the big band and strings are utilised to set different moods. Much of the music, though, seems to be incidental to the dexterity of the performers. Its greatest weakness is a shortage of thematic material. As jazz has become more universal in its scope the particular qualities which gave it its distinctiveness seem to be fading.

This situation is even more marked in a recording by Finland's **UMO New Music Orchestra**. They play **The Music of Koivistoinen & Linkola (Finley FL 5123 - Fredrikinkatu 65, B 00100 Helsinki, Finland)** and there is a marked contrast between the two composers. Jukka Linkola has written three pieces which are designed as solo vehicles for Pentti Lahti on alto sax (***Ben Bay, Syrene***) and tenor saxophonist Teemu Salminen (***One For T.S.***). The writing is within contemporary frameworks for jazz expression and the music moves nicely with excellent solo work from both saxophonists as well as pianist Thomas Clausen. These performances mirror the way the music is being performed in the U.S. and other countries today. It is idiomatically well put together.

The spread of jazz on a worldwide basis has finally begun to have its effect. Much of the music being written and performed by orchestras such as the UMO is incorporating elements from many different cultural ideas. While the music written by Eero Koivistoinen for his suite ***El Viejo Almacen*** has been touched by jazz music it is not wholly of it. In that sense it mirrors what has gradually occurred everywhere where the particular musical qualities which made jazz music so distinctive have been replaced with approaches and ideas which have a broader relationship to international culture — contemporary popular music.

Big band jazz began life as a means of interpreting the music on a larger scale. It has since become the springboard for orchestral music which reflects the wide diversity of approaches and feelings available in contemporary music. It is as different as the philosophies of the musicians from all the different countries who perform music today. ***— John Norris***

Dick Johnson · Artie Shaw · 2nd Chorus

Reedman Dick Johnson decided he'd like to become a musician in the early forties when he saw Artie Shaw play in the movie "Second Chorus," but he didn't take music seriously until he was stuck aboard a navy ship with some musicians who needed a saxophonist, and he didn't take clarinet seriously until much later. He's glad he finally did. In 1980 Johnson, then a fifty-five year old man with swept back gray hair and alert, dancing eyes, recorded *Carioca* on clarinet (it's found on "Spider Blues," Concord Jazz): the record was sent to Artie Shaw, who said that Johnson was the best clarinetist he had ever heard. When Shaw decided to form a new band – his first since the early fifties – he called upon Johnson to lead it. The group, which appeared triumphantly at the 1984 Kool Jazz Festival, has been an astounding success. Largely made up of young musicians from around Boston, it played a date in Rochester, New York. Twenty-two hundred tickets were sold in this town not generally known as a haven for jazz musicians, and the promoters said they could have sold more than eight thousand. Audiences – the nostalgic as well as the curious – dancers, listeners and musicians, have been enchanted. Johnson has walked into the audiences at dances and seen people in tears. They never expected to hear again the suave, intelligent, swinging Shaw arrangements of *Star Dust, Begin The Beguine, Rose Room*, or his eerie theme, *Nightmare*.

Johnson never expected to play them. When I talked to him in his Brockton, Massachusetts home, he seemed both thrilled and surprised by Shaw's support. He calls Shaw's appeal "magic," and notes that musicians he'd barely heard of started calling him last year so that they could see the man Shaw called the best clarinetist in jazz. Before that, Johnson had a solid, but unspectacular career, hampered somewhat by his decision to stay in the Boston area where he was born and raised. Not that he hasn't kept busy. A trim, energetic, good-humored man, he has a reputation as someone who would rather work than sleep: he's had as many as five jobs in a single day, and he practices every morning.

When he got out of the navy, Johnson studied for several years at the New England Conservatory of Music and with private teachers. Then in 1952 he went on the road with a series of big bands: "I went out with Charlie Spivak and then Buddy Morrow – we made the "Night Train" album together, and then "The Golden Trombone" on which he featured me – there were a lot of trombone and alto things on that album. Then I did a little bit with Neal Hefti, and a little bit with Benny Goodman, and with Buddy Rich. And something with Xavier Cugat – oh well, you've got to make a living. I was on the road from 1952 to 1959, and then I came back to Boston and taught at the Berklee Conservatory of Music. I taught jazz saxophone. Briefly though – I discovered I'd rather play all day than teach for a few hours. I had made my own album for Mercury in 1956, and another for Riverside in 1957 with (pianist) Dave McKenna, but when I came back here to Boston I floundered for a little bit, working for society orchestras.

"Then I got a little group together with Lou Colombo (Colombo, a trumpeter, plays with the new Artie Shaw orchestra - he does the introductory solo

Photograph courtesy of Cinephile

on *Star Dust*). Colombo and I were together eight or nine years. After that I played for a while with Dave McKenna and people like Bobby Hackett on the Cape. I came back to Brockton and started experimenting, writing for four horns and I said, 'This is the kind of band I want.' " The result was Swing Shift, a "small big band" that has played around Boston and elsewhere and which has recorded for Concord ("Swing Shift", Concord 167). It's a flexible, modern sounding group that, as Johnson says, can sound like a small or big band, and that plays dance music as well as modern arrangements of things like miles Davis' *Milestones*. They play swing as well as surprising versions of bebop tunes. Johnson plays Charlie Parker's uptempo alto classic *Donna Lee* on clarinet: he gives it a quick, clean rustling quality unlike the urgent blues feeling of Parker's original. "Swing Shift" may be based on the band Artie Shaw was leading when he quit the music business in the early fifties, a band whose recordings have been recently reissued by the Book of the Month Club ("Artie Shaw: A Legacy"). Johnson heard the Shaw "bebop" band then, and he still thinks of Shaw as a modern musician who was way ahead of his time: "That was the best band I ever heard in my life. But Shaw always was modern. You can hear some of the licks that Bird (Charlie Parker) played and Shaw played them first. Cannonball Adderley admired Shaw. On his old records Shaw was actually playing bebop. Those soaring things on the ballads."

Shaw quit, he says, because he was tired of playing his old hits in the old way, and because the public wasn't ready in 1952 to accept his newer music. He had in fact outlasted the big band era, roughly a ten year period whose most feverish period began after Benny Goodman's enormous success on the West Coast in 1935. What Goodman did was to turn a vital, original music into a national fad, and to some, an obsession. Couples fell in love to the smoothly balanced sound of the rather martial looking Glenn Miller, and the fact that Tommy Dorsey had a quick temper and an acid tongue did not prevent fans from thinking of him as the "Sentimental Gentleman of Swing." People argued then, and still argue, whether Artie Shaw or Benny Goodman was the better clarinetist. (The answer is simple: Shaw was better on ballads, and Goodman on uptempo pieces). Dance bands were avidly watched, the habits, temperaments, and marital status of the leaders as well as the music they played. Real fans scrutinized the sidemen as well. As Dick Johnson told me, "It was a time when people on the street knew who played second tenor with Kay Kyser. Swing was a way of life."

Then the war came, travel expenses for a big band became prohibitive, and a 20 percent entertainment tax was imposed. Some musicians were drafted and others enlisted, and for two years a recording ban was in place. By the end of the war big bands seemed economically impossible, and people's tastes had changed. Those who would still go to hear a big band wanted to hear the old tunes. As Shaw told me, "The musicians kept evolving on a bell curve, and the audiences stayed on a straight line. They left each other. The audiences strayed away saying, 'Where's the melody?', and they found Lawrence Welk at the other end."

Shaw's postwar experience is instructive. "The last few years I had my band, starting in 1949, the audiences looked at me, 'What are you doing?' I had a lot of records made at that time that nobody ever heard of. It got to be ridiculous. I was playing off on some limb, and they were saying, 'Go back to 1938.' Well, eleven years in a jazz person's life is a lifetime. I couldn't do it."

It was his sense that interest in big band music was reawakening that encouraged Artie Shaw to put together a new band, over thirty years after he gave up playing and walked away from the business. (He still won't touch a clarinet, remarking that it would take a year of agonizing practice to get to where he could stand the sounds he'd be making). Shaw wanted another chance at a modern band. He is reconciled to the fact that people want to hear his old hits, and he is surprised, he says, at how well the music holds up. He modernizes, not by changing the notes, but by updating the phrasing. Dick Johnson has been playing Shaw's clarinet solos note for note. That's what the people expect, he says, but also it's a challenge. "It's like a lesson to me - if you can learn those things you're some kind of clarinet player." Shaw appreciates the compliment, and Johnson appreciates Shaw's expertise.

The musicians in the band are in awe of the seventy-three year old Shaw, and of what Johnson calls Shaw's genius: "He runs the rehearsals completely. The whole band is amazed at his skill. At the first rehearsal, he told us, 'I'm going to nitpick.' Afterwards the guys gave him a round of applause. They had never seen rehearsals like that. Shaw knows how to tell them exactly how to get all the effects that made his band different from all other bands. Stuff that you wouldn't even notice. Like the saxophone parts in *Star Dust* that are supposed to sound like strings. He stopped the saxes and said, 'Remember strings can't play a legato line like the saxophones.' Well, he came up with a million things like that. He brought magic out of the band."

I went to a rehearsal of the Artie Shaw - Dick Johnson band in The Satin Doll, a club in the basement of Back Bay's Hilton Hotel. When I got there at eleven, Shaw, in a checkered sweater, designer jeans, running shoes, and a fur cap that he had absentmindedly left on, was already bouncing around, checking parts and chatting. For the next six hours he was genial, authoritative, chatty, and as Johnson promised, awe-inspiring. Again and again he took a relatively pedestrian phrase or background figure, and by subtly changing the accenting, balance, or values of the notes, made it exciting. He heard everything and knew exactly what must be done. He began with his faintly menacing theme, *Nightmare*, urging the band to "get those little nuances straight." The brass should be crisp and sustain their long notes so that they didn't seem to die on the vine; the reeds should play a grace note cleanly so that it wouldn't be heard as a smear. Repeatedly he stressed crisp, clear, forthright playing, proper balance ("We want to hear the inner voices"), and definite, lively accenting. Everything must be played with clear intention.

During a break, Shaw told me that what he is trying to do is to "play the musical notes of about a half a century ago with the musical sensibilities of today." Hence the strong accenting, a legacy of bebop rather than of the more legato styles of the white swing bands. Shaw drew on his experience, telling the band at one point to exaggerate the difference between their loud and soft playing so that the distinction would be heard on the dance floor. He wants the band to play with assurance: "I'd like it nice and crisp so it won't sound like we're fumbling." When Johnson, usually a formidable technician on the clarinet, had trouble reaching a high note, Shaw immediately mimed an alternate fingering.

"I am," he said, "cursed with an affliction for trying to reach as close to perfection as you can get. Nobody pays for perfection, or wants it, but you do it anyway. The guys in the band say, 'My God, *nobody* takes this trouble.' But for me, that's what it's all about. People don't understand how sophisticated jazz has become. They understand that Bartok is sophisticated, but they don't understand that jazz is *very* sophisticated. The nuances and the phrasing are more sophisticated than anything done in so-called legitimate music. There's a right way of playing *every note*. You know, I didn't realize until I put the band back together again, how durable this stuff is. It really

holds up. It'll be played forever, as far as I can see. Obviously the playing, the phrasing, the dynamics, that's everything. But the notes are there. The notes hold up."

Perhaps not remarkably for someone who quit the music business because he didn't want to play *Begin The Beguine* every day for the rest of his life, Shaw is not nostalgic. "A lot of older people say, 'Boy, you rolled the clock back thirty years today. You took thirty years off my life.' I tell them, Well, I'm not your doctor.' I don't want to capitalize on nostalgia." He's willing, as he always said, to "play three chords for beauty's sake, and one to pay the rent." More importantly for the future of big bands, Shaw wants to lead a real "kickass contemporary band. That's what I want. We're saying, 'This is what we do. Take it or leave it.' We're not apologizing, and I don't want anything unassured coming out of the band." Shaw is looking for contemporary charts for the band to play. When I left the Satin Doll at five o'clock, the band was still rehearsing. – *Michael Ullman*

ARTIE SHAW: Time Is All You've Got

A Bridge Film Production released by Cinephile. Produced, directed and narrated by Brigitte Berman. Associate Producer: Don Haig. A film about Artie Shaw featuring Polly Haynes, John Wexley, Lee Castle, John Best, Helen Forrest, Mel Torme, Buddy Rich, Mack Pierce, Frederic Morton and Evelyn Keyes.

"Time Is All You've Got" is a cautionary fable about the price of success, American-style, scored for clarinet and strings. It is the poignant tale of a kid with talent and a burning ambition to make it who seized his opportunity to become the Clarinet King of the Swing Era. At the height of his career with starlets on his arms and a nation of jitter-buggers at his feet, Artie Shaw walked away from it all. Brigitte Berman has skillfully sketched the details of the meteoric rise and vertiginous decline of a musician who as much epitomized his era as did the character of Jay Gatsby for the Roaring Twenties.

Artie Shaw was born on May 23, 1910 in New York City to a poor Jewish family. From an early age, Shaw was a loner and highly motivated to make something of himself. By the age of fifteen he was gigging with local bands and before he was twenty he was a much sought after session musician. Rejecting the life of a "jingle" player, Shaw made the first of his many decisions. He gave up music for a year to write a novel based on the life of Bix Beiderbecke. The writing proved to be a failure and Shaw returned to New York where in 1936 he led his first band – one which featured string and swing musicians. The result was a critical success but a popular failure. Shaw broke up that band to form what he termed the "goddamned loudest" orchestra of the era. Two years of exhausting tours, one-nighters and limited engagements followed. The Shaw band's signature tune was *Nightmare*, an appropriately moody piece that summarized their leader's emotional state.

In 1938, with the Swing Era at its height, Artie Shaw's music suddenly arrived as an "overnight success." *Begin The Beguine*, that bittersweet Cole Porter tune, became Shaw's refrain. Berman evokes that melody in the film as Shaw recounts the heady days of his greatest fame. Every week Shaw was making $60,000. He was as big as Elvis was in the 50s, as the Beatles were in the 60s. Teenagers flocked to his concerts. With Billie Holiday and Helen Forrest as vocalists, Shaw had two of the finest singers of the Big Band Age. His hiring of Billie was unprecedented. She was the first black singer to be featured in a popular white big band. Later, Shaw engaged two other notable black players, "Hot Lips" Page and Roy Eldridge. An outstanding liberal, he helped to make people aware of the artistry of the black musicians who were at the heart of the Big Band movement. At the same time, his engagements were breaking records wherever he went. In late 1939, as quickly as fame and fortune had hit, Shaw suddenly quit the scene to go to Mexico. In the film, Shaw claims that "jitterbugging morons" forced him to stop, that imbecile displays of juvenile enthusiasm disgusted him so much that he had no choice but to leave.

Over the next two years, Shaw lived in Hollywood, made movies, married and divorced Lana Turner and formed and broke up two fine big bands. In 1942, he joined the Navy. Berman captures the feeling of that time particularly well in a sequence in which Shaw describes his Naval band descending into the depths of an air-force carrier that held over one thousand applauding fans, who were now part of the military. Archival images of that era are particularly well-chosen as Shaw recounts the emotions he felt during his stay in the Pacific.

By late 1944, Artie Shaw had suffered a nervous breakdown. Released from his Naval commission, he returned to Hollywood. During this time he made many contacts with filmdom's radical community. An intellectual, Shaw was finding it increasingly difficult to function as a popular Big Band leader. Many of the people that Shaw knew during this time were later investigated by the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), including his old friend, writer John Wexley, who makes an unexpected appearance in this film. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, Shaw attempted two different careers, as a classical clarinetist and, once again, as a novelist. Although both attempts were reasonably successful, neither was as lucrative nor as wildly popular as his Swing Era playing had been.

In 1953-54, Artie Shaw achieved the dubious honour of being the only Jazz musician to be investigated by HUAC. A proud man, he must have found it difficult to name names of old friends for the Committee. Soon afterwards, angry and disengaged, Shaw left the USA for Europe.

In Spain, Shaw built his own villa overlooking the ocean. He married again, this time to actress Evelyn Keyes. Of all of his eight wives – which included Ava Gardner – Keyes appears to be the one who regarded Shaw as a friend as well as a lover. Her interview with Berman is the emotional center of the film, evoking the presence of a questing, intractably perfectionist man who needed love without having the capacity for accepting it when it was granted. Pictures of their home in Spain are intercut with Keyes talking about Shaw in retirement, still needing to be the best, whether it be in fly fishing or constellation watching.

The figure Evelyn Keyes helps Brigitte Berman bring to light is sad but oddly heroic. One begins to think of Artie Shaw as another Charles Foster Kane stuck in Xanadu with his "Rosebud" being his desire to write the Great American Novel. Berman's film – a mixture of historic footage including some vintage items from Toronto archivist Joe Showler and revealing contemporary interviews – is quite successful in presenting the sad tale of the Swing Era's greatest clarinetist. As a Gemini, Shaw would surely appreciate this line by another member of his astrological family, Bob Dylan: "There is no success but failure / and failure is no success at all." – *Marc Glassman*

AROUND THE WORLD

CANADA — A widely diverse group of musicians passed through Toronto's clubs recently. The city gained a new spot (The Stage Door Cafe) but soon thereafter lost another (Bourbon Street). The heightened competition seems to have been good for the scene as the quality of the visiting performers has been high.

Benny Golson was one of the last artists to play Bourbon Street and he beguiled everyone with a cross-section of his compositions as well as interpreting a few standards. George McFetridge, Neil Swainson and Jerry Fuller were the rhythm section. These musicians also backed up **Johnny Griffin** a few weeks later at East 85th. It's unlikely that either musician would have worked here under such circumstances five years ago. Times have changed but neither musician seemed less than satisfied with the musical support.

The Stage Door's opening season was highlighted by the duet playing of **Jim Hall** and **Steve La Spina**. The delicacy and empathy of their improvisations was stunning... **Harold Ashby** and **Booty Wood** combined in some delightfully executed standards which focused particularly on Duke Ellington's music. Both were outstanding, but seldom heard musicians who would be ideal for the Jazz Party Circuit. So too would **George Kelly** who was at the same location the last two weeks of October.

The fall lineup at the Cafe des Copains has been particularly strong. **Ray Bryant** started thngs off and he was followed by **Kenny Barron, Adam Makovich, Cedar Walton, Hilton Ruiz** and **Tommy Flanagan**. It has been quite a diverse and fascinating cross-section of jazz piano stylings.

The Dirty Dozen Brass Band were at Massey Hall September 26 along with Scott Hamilton and Warren Vache who worked with Ian Bargh, Ed Bickert, Steve Wallace and Spike McKendry. ... **The Ogilvie Brothers** were at Basie's October 25... **The Boss Brass** worked the Imperial Room at The Royal York Hotel when Peggy Lee had to cancel. Many substitutes didn't affect the overall quality of the music. The band has two recently released recordings on Innovation — one of which features **Phil Woods** as a guest soloist... Unisson Records is a new company being artistically guided by CJRT-FM's Ted O'Reilly. Just off the press is a guitar duet set by **Lorne Lofsky** and **Ed Bickert** with Neil Swainson and Jerry Fuller on bass and drums. Quintessential Canadian sounds. Also expected by the time you read this is a **Rob McConnell Sextet** lp with Guido Basso, Rick Wilkins, Ed Bickert, Steve Wallace and Terry Clarke which was taped over a year ago.... Terry Clarke packed his bags and moved to New York in September. Our loss is New York's gain but it will open up opportunities for other players in this city.

The Music Gallery has been focusing attention on Toronto performers with "A Weekend of New Jazz" each month. **Fred Stone** and **Tim Brady** were there in September with **Paul Cram** and the Pan-Galactic Bop Quartet showcased in November. The December dates are 13/14 with the legendary **TBA** featured both nights. The preceding weekend features the **Bill Smith Ensemble** (6th) in concert. This event is the official launching of his new book of photographs and commentary under the title of "Imagine The Sound". The following night features two of Canada's veterans of the New Jazz Scene: **Eric Stach/Doug Innis** and **Stu Broomer/John Mars**.

The Toronto Blues Society has established itself. If you like the blues you should join the organization (Box 1263, Station F, Toronto, Ontario M4T 2V8) immediately. Their monthly newsletter is well put together and is packed with news and views. The termination of the blues based policy at The Brunswick has made things tough for blues fans.

Jazz Beat is a CBC radio program heard nationally Saturday nights between 8:05 pm and 10 pm. It features, on a regular basis, location recordings of Canadian and U.S. performers which reflect the diversity of jazz being performed today. Upcoming in January are **Paul Cram, Dirty Dozen Band** (4th), **Bernie Senensky, Muhal Richard Abrams** (11th), **Hildinger/Elias, Pat Metheny** (18th) and **Fraser MacPherson, Louis Bellson** (25th).

Marty Grosz, Ralph Sutton and **Milt Hinton** did a quick tour of Southern Ontario with **Jim Galloway** and **Don Vickery** over the Thanksgiving weekend (October 11-13). They performed in Kingston on Friday, headlined a private jazz party in Toronto on Saturday and were in the small, but culturally conscious village of Blythe on Sunday afternoon. The band also performed at the Sheraton Centre for the weekly Toronto Alive radio show on CKFM.

CJRT's winter series at The Science Centre began November 4 with **Dave McMurdo's Quintet** the featured band. The series continues through the winter every second Monday. The concerts are broadcast the following Saturday. Admission to the one hour concerts now costs a modest $2.00. Scheduled are Moe Koffman (December 16), Ralph Bowen (January 6), Fred Duligal (January 20), Bob Murphy (February 3), The Hot Club Quartet (February 17), Claude Jones (March 3), and The Swing Sisters (March 17).

The Andrew Homzy Big Band is a recently formed jazz repertory orchestra who debuted at Concordia University in Montreal on December 6 with a program which included four movements from ***Such Sweet Thunder,*** Francy Boland's three movement jazz suite, ***All Blues*** and Homzy's ***For Those Who Loved Nick***... **Richie Cole, Pepper Adams** and **Sheila Jordan/ Harvie Swartz** are among those who have performed recently at Edmonton's Yardbird Suite.

Don Thompson's Concord collaboration with John Abercrombie ("A Beautiful Friendship" was the winner in the jazz category at this year's Juno Awards... Lorraine Desmarais' new recording for the CBC is now available. Michel Donato and Camil Belisle complete the trio.

—John Norris

MONTREAL — (Sept. 4, 1985) **Philly Joe Jones**, the prolific jazz drummer who died last Friday in his home in Philadelphia at the age of 62, once swore he'd never retire. "I'd just rather play on out," he said, talking about death and retirement in an interview during one of his five gigs in Montreal. "You only retire when you're physically or mentally incapable of continuing, " he said back then. "I won't stop. It's what I do best."

Philly Joe, mostly famous for his partnership with jazz giant Miles Davis, recorded on more than 500 jazz albums throughout his career, which spanned four decades. He "messed around" on a snare drum when he was growing up, but said he only got into drums in a big way when he left the army in 1945 and took up a job as a streetcar driver in Philadelphia to support himself. He borrowed and then bought his own drums and soon was working at some of jazz history's finest clubs, like the Blue Note. He was the house drummer for the Prestige, Blue Note and Riverside record labels in the 1950s and 1960s.

While his expertise at drums was mostly self-taught — an education he never gave up — his musical training originally came from his grandmother, who taught her seven daughters, including Philly Joe's mother, classical piano. His favorites were Beethoven and Chopin.

"I'm still studying," he said in the Montreal interview, at that point a 39-year veteran of drum beating and percussion. "You never achieve what you want. You're always forging ahead."

Philly Joe kept forging ahead even late in life, leading an exhausting schedule on tours that took him from Saskatchewan and Seattle to Santa Cruz and sometimes faraway places like Japan, three out of every four weeks. He started playing with Miles Davis in 1954. The two were a steady trumpet and drums duo, with Philly Joe recruiting the extra partners for each new gig until Miles insisted they put a band together. That mix became legendary: Miles Davis, Red Garland, John Coltrane, Paul Chambers and Philly Joe.

"The very first time we played together," he recalled, "we just looked around at each other and said, 'hum, here it is right here. We've got musical telepathy here. We have five people who always know what's going to happen next.'"

Philly Joe refused to say who his own musical favorites were. "My favorite people are all the beautiful people I play with," he said. "There are no favorites." Pause. "Now, are you talking about drummers? I'm my very favorite drummer."

— Kathryn Leger

BOSTON — A busy summer has given way to an even busier fall here in New England. Among the highlights were a **Peter Kowald** quartet with Michel Ratte and Yves Charuest from Montreal and Joe Morris from Boston on July 2nd at Mobius Theater, the **Andrew Cyrille** trio with Fred Hopkins and Henry Threadgill at 1369 Club on July 18th and 19th, and the **String Trio of New York** at Charlie's Tap on July 19th and 20th.

The musical event of the summer, with all due respect to the many fine hometown and visiting musicians, was **Steve Lacy**'s solo perfor-

mance in front of SRO crowds at 1369 on August 22nd. His first set was all Monk tunes, which always gain something new in Lacy's translation from the piano to the straight horn. He blew the opening chords to ***Little Rootie Tootie***, and deliberately placed the single notes of the melody of ***Evidence*** in the oddest locations. In Lacy's playing one note takes on multiple meanings, like the single syllable titles to many of his own compositions. The next two sets were all Lacy's tunes. His melodies, written and improvised, grow and fork assymetrically on empty space, like plum tree branches in a Japanese pen and ink scroll. He was sometimes weary and blue, sometimes tender and ironic. His tone could be thin, but strong like piano wire, or fat and full. Lacy commands many contradictory, elevating feelings with brevity and ease.

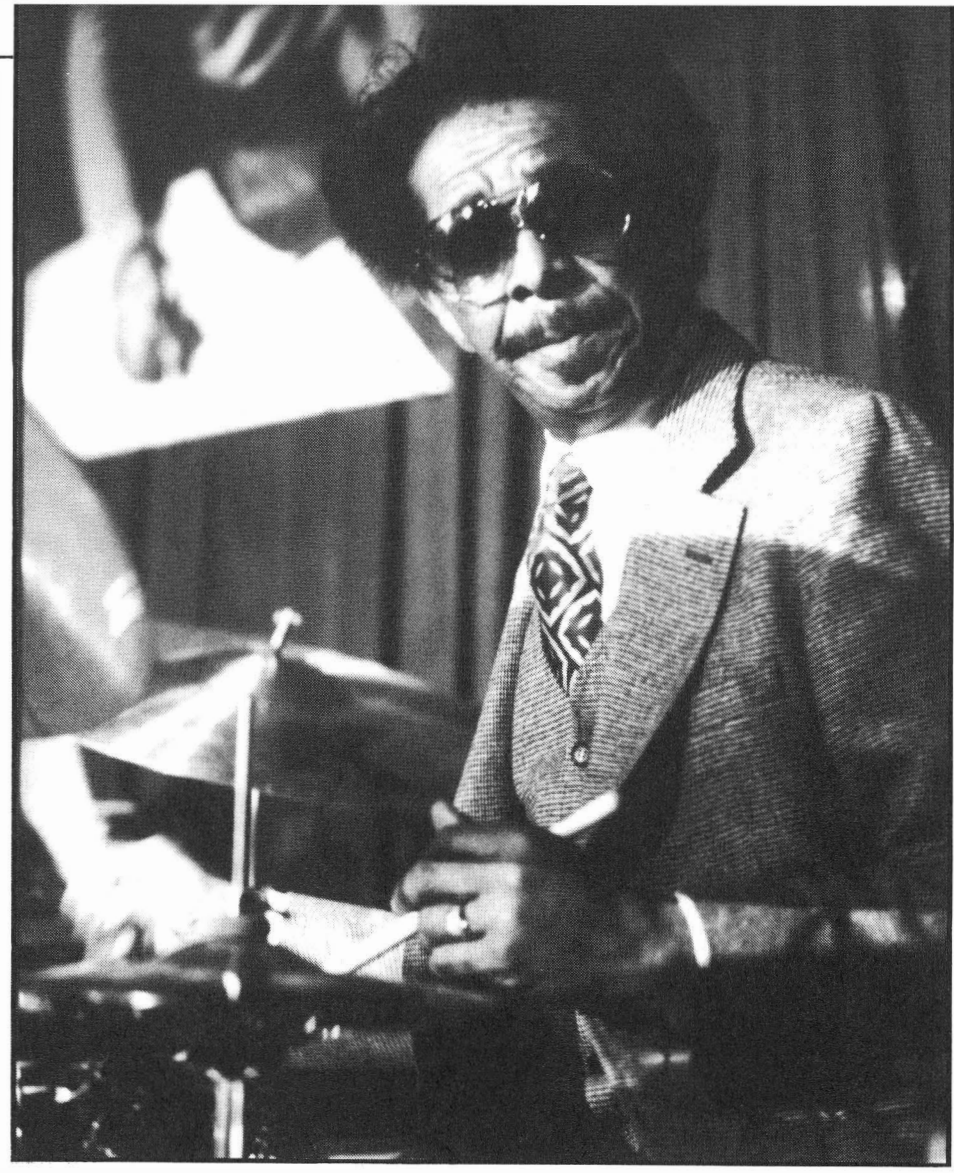
Randy Weston's thundering sound and personal warmth imbued his two solo sets at 1369 on September 30 with both grandeur and intimacy. Like Ellington and Monk before him, Weston plays the whole piano. He orchestrates the instrument's extreme registers, wide dynamic range and tone color into an organic whole. Using both hands, he can play counterpoint and call and response. His sets included a Monk/Ellington standards medley, wideranging variations on ***Hi-Fly*** and a noble ***African Sunrise***.

On September 28, the night after hurricane Gloria tore up trees and rattled windows in Boston, the **Julius Hemphill** quintet blew up a storm of their own at the 1369. Baikida Carroll (tp); Abdul Wadud (cello); Allan Jaffe (g); and Mike Clark (dr) played two generous sets, highlights of which were versions of ***Hard Blues, Sweet D***, and a stark ballad, ***Testament No. 5***.

The **Dewey Redman/Ed Blackwell** duet at Charlie's Tap, October 11 and 12, was a celebration between two longtime friends who still surprise and delight each other and their audiences. One rimshot or a single tenor sax note was enough to signal a change in direction in the music. Blackwell's buoyant, unerring swing and Redman's darker, more bittersweet musings blended into an emotionally complex, shapely whole. Repertoire ranged from Parker to Coleman.

The **Henry Threadgill Sextet**'s elaborate ensemble work contrasted with Redman and Blackwell's straight ahead blowing. This version of the sextet included Ray Anderson (tb); Rasul Sadik (tp); Deidre Murray (cello); Santi Debriano (b); and Thurman Barker and Reggie Nicholson (dr). Composition and ensemble improvising predominated during their three night stand at Charlie's from October 3 to 5. Shifting ensemble voicings, three melody counterpoint over a maelstrom of drumming made the music varied and exciting. The acerbic Threadgill, Anderson and Murray all soloed especially well.

Barbed wit and a seemingly infinite knowledge of the jazz repertoire highlighted **Jaki Byard**'s gig at the Starlight Lounge with Whit Browne (b) and Alan Dawson (dr) on September 5 to 7. **Bobby Naughton Trio** returned to Charlie's on September 26 and October 10. **Archie Shepp**, in fine form, roared through his two nights at 1369 on September 13 and 14. Also at 1369, a Hammond organ week with Jack McDuff, Don Patterson and Lonnie Smith from October 14 to 19, the **Willem Breuker Kollektief** on October 21 (and the next day at Tuft's University), the **Joe Morris Trio** with Thurman Barker on October 8, and **Johnny Griffin** quartet on October 25 and 26, among others.



At Charlie's Tap **Dave Holland**'s passionate, intelligent quintet with Julian Priester, Kenny Wheeler, Steve Coleman and Marvin "Smitty" Smith appeared September 20 and 21, **Joe McPhee** and his group showed up September 27 to 28, and a surprisingly straight ahead **Jemeel Moondoc** quintet with Rahn Burton, Bern Nix, William Parker and Dennis Charles played the weekend of October 18 to 19.

The Starlight Lounge booked **Phil Woods** on September 12 to 14, **Tal Farlow** on September 26 to 28, and **Sheila Jordan** on October 3 to 5. Jordan sat in for a few numbers with **Roswell Rudd, Beaver Harris, Bob Dorough** on their appearance at 1369 on October 3.

– Ed Hazell

DETROIT – Stray phrases from the notebooks.... Montreux-Detroit, take 6, no longer Kool, but still looking healthy despite the lost funds, in its traditional position at the end of the summer (Labor Day weekend on this side of the Detroit River). It was nice to see the music supported by the tobacco people's large advertising budget, for a while... but... this is after all an artform with a lot to do with Breath. And then there was the slogan... if there were only one way to play it, we would all be listening to something else by now.

Among the "name" (read ticketed) performances was a concert by the **Michel Petrucciani Trio**. We went down for the early performance at the Detroit Institute of Art's Recital Hall (8/30), and it looks like I'll have to learn how to spell Mr. P's last name. There's a little hucksterism left in jazz, a legacy of the tent show/vaudeville days, and Petrucciani's dimunitive height (a childhood disease left him shorter than my 5-year-old daughter) could be misinterpreted – but listen to the music and ignore the man nearly invisible behind the piano, and it's obvious Petrucciani is the real thing.

His trio was powered by Palle Danielsson, bass and Eliot Zigmund, drums. They did a set of mostly originals (no announcements) along with ***Softly As In A Morning Sunrise*** and ***Autumn Leaves***. Michel has drawn much from the late Bill Evans (not the least of which is one of Evans' later drummers), but already there are strong signs of an individual voice. For one thing, Petrucciani's lines are much more angular, more able to seek their own paths

PHILLY JOE JONES (Photograph by Peter Danson)

rather than lean on the changes. Petrucciani likes to worry a little phrase, displace it rhythmically, stretch it to fit unlike chords. Danielsson is a strong, sonorous player, Zigmund loose and propulsive. I expect to hear much more from this young Frenchman.

We spent our usual weekend afternoon at Hart Plaza, listening to fragments of different performances. **Larry Nozero**'s band with pianist Dennis Tini (a Wayne State University professor) put on a well-received set in the main amphitheatre. Nozero is mostly a saxophonist, although his flutework (heard on a nice jazz waltz version of ***Mr. Bojangles***) is also worthy of note. Trumpeter **Louis Smith,** of the University of Michigan, also offered some excellent bebop, with Johnny Griffiths, piano, Don Mayberry, bass, and Pistol Allen, drums. There was also a Motor City Jazz Quintet powered by drummer Danny Spencer.

This year marks the tenth anniversary season for Eclipse Jazz of the University of Michigan, and the performers this season included several of more than usual interest. **The Dirty Dozen Brass Band** began things with a march down Liberty Street in Ann Arbor on 9/22. The **Chick Corea Elektric Band** did a set at the Michigan Theater in Ann Arbor on 9/28. **Chief Ebenezer Obay's African Ensemble** followed on 10/11, with the **Willem Breuker Kollektief** from Holland on 10/19. **David Murray** and **Stanley Cowell** joined forces on November 2, and were followed by Windham Hill's "Allstars" on 11/9 and **Wayne Shorter** & his own (quartet) on 11/17. David Chertok will show his films on 12/5.

We stopped by Mendelsohn Theatre on the UM Campus to catch **Willem Breuker**'s performance. Breuker managed to get funding from the Dutch government (the band is based in Amsterdam, and most of the musicians are Dutch), and the difference was immediately apparent — a ten piece group, a slick booklet bound in plastic with biographical and discographical information about the Kollektief and its members, and a floppy plastic promo record given away free following the concert.

It's really hard to describe this band. What can you say about a group whose orientation is towards the new music, whose players are all strong technicians, able to handle some very tough charts, which includes strong soloists — and which approaches its music with a viewpoint somewhere between Spike Jones and Benny Hill? The group started virtually on time and played, nonstop, for about two hours, followed by three encores. I can't say too much about the composition — it seemed designed to mix and mismatch a nearly indigestible range of musicial idioms. The soloists are all quite competent, but alto saxophonist Andre Goudbeek stands out in my mind, for a long unaccompanied solo that was inventive and built firmly on the new traditions. The bassist Arjen Gorter has a strong, solid sound, most noticeable to me in his walking behind the soloists on a mid-fifties hard bop type tune that appeared halfway.

The group's comic sense is commensurate with its musical ability. As the performance wore on the bits of stage business became stranger and stranger. The two trumpeters pretended not to be able to read their part of an ending based on the old Miles Davis ***Theme*** — and after two successive botched readings, Breuker chased them both off the stage. There was a Maypole dance (striped socks, cloth caps, and Goudbeek's violin). Most enjoyable.

The new **Count Basie Orchestra** under the direction of ex-Pontiac native Thad Jones played the New Center One on 9/15. Larry Nozero mixes his saxophone and flute with a variety of accompanists for duets at Hunter's Run in Livonia Thursdays through Saturdays; included on the bandstand in September were pianists Dennis Tini and Bess Bonnier and guitarist Gale Benson. James Dapogny's Chicago Jazz Band played the Ark in Ann Arbor 9/8. George Goldsmith's sextet (which goes under the name of Endangered Species) played Sunday's at Bert's Place downtown in September and October, and did a Sunday afternoon concert at Ann Arbor's Blind Pig 10/20. The Detroit Jazz Orchestra presented Donald Walden and the Monk Dynasty with special guests Barry Harris and Marcus Belgrave at Detroit Institute of Art 9/21. Pianist James Tatum and trio played at the David Whitney Building 10/4. Vocalist Leon Thomas at Aubree's Second Floor in Ypsilanti on 9/23, backed by saxophonist Wendell Harrison and pianist Harold McKinney.

— David Wild

HARTFORD — Real Art Ways premiered **Leo Smith**'s new opera, ***The Seventh Prayer***, April 27 at the Wadsworth Atheneum's Avery Theater. Using a multi-media approach that combines operatic convention, Creative Music, reggae, slides, video, sculpture and dance, The Seventh Prayer depicts the spiritual journey of Sister Kika through Eastern and Western mysticism to Rastafarian enlightenment.

Taken strictly as a work of Creative Music, The Seventh Prayer is an original, sometimes innovative piece. It is not without its faults, however. Although Jeanne Lee sang the part of Sister Kika with her customary spirit and skill, the score didn't make full use of her abilities. Although the slides and videotapes complemented the music nicely, dancer Christina Jones detracted from The Seventh Prayer's visual aspects because her fixed facial expression and limited repertoire of movements belied the work's changes of mood.

The work's changes of mood, moreover, did not develop the dramatic conflict that is essential to the operatic form as I understood it. Although its nature as a "ceremonial ritual drama" might free The Seventh Prayer from some of opera's formal requirements, the absence of plot makes more of an oratorio, in terms of formal structure. If, for example, Smith had created an antagonist to challenge Sister Kika's spiritual development, he would have fulfilled the requirements of the opera form — and strengthened The Seventh Prayer's dramatic effect immeasurably.

After its concert season ended with performances by **Hank Crawford** and **Paquito D'Rivera,** the Hartford Jazz Society did not take a summer vacation. It joined with the Artists Collective to stage an all-day benefit concert for bassist Paul Brown, who was recuperating from a major illness. **Earl Coleman, Jackie McLean, Archie Shepp** and a host of other musicians performed at the June 23 benefit. Then, the Jazz Society geared up to launch its twenty-fifth season with its annual riverboat cruise, which featured **Joy Spring** and the **Nat Adderley Quintet.**

Betty Carter opened the Jazz Society's concert season October 6 with a typically dazzling performance. Her trio of twenty-two year old musicians followed her unpredictable shifts and fed her ideas of their own. Winard Harper seemed to anticipate her every move, building snare patterns beneath her free-spirited scatting to guide her where she wanted to go and lead her a step further. Carter's interaction with pianist Benny Green and bassist Tarik Shah was more a continuing dialogue than a sequence of solos. The results of Carter's interplay with her musicians is always surprising; even the most familiar pieces unfold in fresh and unique turns.

The Bill Barron Sextet opened Wesleyan University's concert season September 14. Barron's ***Blues Shuffle*** opened the program with a symmetrical line that spurred the tenor saxophonist to snort smoke and fire over Ed Blackwell's deft shuffle beat. ***Yes, No, Maybe So*** displayed Barron's sense of compositional symmetry on a more complex structure. Bill Lowe, whose compositional style usually contrasts with Barron's, presented the boppishly elaborate ***Yet Again (For Now)*** that served as a vehicle for his lively, loquacious trombone.

At Michael Duva's Hillside Restaurant, the engagements of clarinetist **Perry Robinson** and bassoonist **Michael Rabinowitz** were among the musical highlights of the spring and summer.

Robinson's style is a curious but exciting amalgam of 1930s music with the strident freedom of the contemporary vanguard, tempered with a highly personal logic. In his June 1 performance at the Waterbury Club, the clarinetist veered from Artie Shaw to Albert Ayler over Simon Nabatov's sympathetic dissonances on Henry Grimes' ***Farmer Alfalfa***. On a bouncy ***Ain't Misbehavin'*** Robinson bent his instrument's warm, woody tone into wooly growls and trills. Bassist Ed Schuller captured the tune's spirit with an exuberant solo. ***Perriwinkle Blues***, a Robinson original, opened with a tossing, turning vamp that introduced Nabatov's churning piano chorus. Following Nabatov, Robinson shifted his improvisational gears from mainstream to vanguard as deftly as drummer Ernst Bier shifted from backbeat to walking four behind him.

Like Robinson, Michael Rabinowitz is an intriguing stylist. In his Hillside engagement, he made full use of the bassoon's rich and varied textures; the boldness of a baritone saxophone in the bottom register; the warmth of a Rollins tenor in the middle; and the urgency of bass clarinet and alto and soprano saxophone at the top. His articulation on the unwieldy instrument is clean and confident, his ideas compelling .

Mike Musillami established himself as a solid, versatile guitarist with his recent work at the Hillside and at Hartford's 880 Club. Appearing with a trio May 2 at the 880, Musillami displayed a subtle, introverted style. Filling in for Don DePalma during **Dewey Redman**'s May 2 engagement and **Carter Jefferson**'s July 27 appearance, the young guitarist played with an aggressiveness that heightened the superb work of the tenormen. He also blended nicely with the understated intensity that characterized the **Mario Pavone-George Slovak Ensemble** during its June 6 and September 12 appearances. Trumpeter Rick Alfonso also turned in some bright solos with the Ensemble.

September 14 **Brian Alden** staged a benefit at the Bushnell Memorial for the Connecticut Food Bank, which distributes food to the needy. **Sarah Vaughan, Kevin Eubanks** and **Toshiko Akiyoshi** offered their talents for the benefit.

Archie Shepp returned to the Iron Horse in Northampton, Massachusetts September 27 with a quartet that included Emery Smith, Wade Mikkola and Steve McCraven.

— Vernon Frazer

LOS ANGELES — Of late I've been checking out the blues bands. Running kin with my emotions. And I never cease to be amazed at the genius simplicity of this form of music. But not everybody can play it. There has got to be that feeling.

I rarely pick favorites in music, but with the harmonica **Rod Piazza** is so far ahead of any other players currently on the scene that the choice is obvious. And his band The Mighty Flyers is no misnomer either. Debbie "Honey" Alexander on piano caused the late Muddy Waters to remark that she must've cut Otis Spann's hands off. Bill Stuve on upright bass and vocals. Ed Mann replaced Bill Swartz on drums who moved to Nashville a year ago. Jr. Watson has to rank as one of the top blues guitarists of his generation, playing a variety of antique guitars. His searing leads on the Honey original ***Texas Twister*** seal the decision. This working band is finally starting to be available on record. And at last count, Rod's recorded output covers 24 albums. I've been working on a discography towards this, if you have any information please contact me at 1559 Shelly Ave., Upland, CA 91786.

Guest appearances by the likes of 1950's Excello artist **Guitar Cable** who arrived on the West Coast August of this year, managed by Byrd "Harmonica" Hale, excited audiences with his pyrotechnics — guitar behind his back, guitar held away from his body flailing it, or hammering notes with his elbow, laying on his back, etc. Also sitting in one evening was one armed guitarist **Steve Samuels**. Missing left forearm doesn't hinder him, nor having upside-down strings. His album available from Full Deck Records, 3822 Patrick's Pt. Dr., Trinidad, CA 95570. Another evening bassist **Willie Brinlee** and guitarist **Steve Kilman** of the L.A. Jukes tore up a couple tunes. I'm uncomfortable with superlatives so it will have to suffice that I wouldn't have mentioned any of these artists if they hadn't moved me in one way or another. The Mighty Flyers are found on Murray Brothers Records, 4426 Linwood Place, Riverside, CA 92506.

Smokey Wilson had car problems or he would've come on out too. Rod has supported him on all three of his albums. I dropped in on Smokey at his Pioneer Club, 88th and Vermont, Watts, where he works the door, tends bar with his wife Celie, and when he has reason, can be coerced to play. He has been at this location almost ten years. Joe Kincaid has filled the second guitar chair for several years. One of the locals has it right when he says, "Smokey he's different, he has something special." Which he does. Once he's tuned up and after a little Mingus-like direction gets the band into a groove that suits him, he lets loose with scorching leads and spine-tingling vocals. Truly some kind of voodoo taking place.

At the second day, Sept. 15, of the **Long Beach Blues Festival** I caught Joe Liggins and The Honeydrippers, Charlie Musselwhite, Papa John Creach, Albert Collins, and The Blasters fronting Margie Evans. Being associated with ***Coda*** allowed me red carpet treatment. Of note: this version of The Honeydrippers has original member Little Willie Jackson, as; Bill Upchurch, b; Frank Wilson, d; Shelly Thomas, ts; Gary Bell, g; Bill Bryant, bari; Harry "Little Caesar" vcls. Musselwhite played one of my old favorites, ***Christo Redemptor***. Papa John had Louis Spears on bass and New Orleans pianist Henry Butler. Henry told me that he was to record with Charlie Haden and Billy Higgins with whom he's been gigging of late. Butler moved to L.A. in 1982. Albert Collins continues to remain in my Top 5. Six horns with Coco Montoya, g; Leon Blue, keyboards; and Soko Richardson, d. The Blasters sported legendary saxophonist Lee Allen.

— Mark Weber

NEW YORK — Living in Toronto is not really akin to being in a musical wasteland; in fact, based on the amount of money that I normally have available for the investigation of live performance, there is ample selection when one considers the variable and active local scene, to satisfy my musical appetite. However, a visit to New York city is so spectacular that suddenly one wonders if there is any music in Toronto at all. There are so many performances taking place each night in Manhattan, that it is truly impossible, both financially and time-wise, to even participate in a small amount of its total glory. My usual tactic is to purchase the Village Voice and check through all the advertisements and listings, and choose two events per evening. This is possible because a great deal of the events are located in the area of Greenwich Village and the East Side, which in time is a matter of only some 15 minutes from one location to the next.

This particular visit, four days in October, was no different than most, there was the **MJQ** and the **Akiyoshi/Tabackin** big band at the Blue Note, **Nat Adderley** at 7th Avenue South, **Johnny Griffin** at Sweet Basils and **Abbey Lincoln** at Smalls Paradise. And those are the events that I did not manage to attend.

I was on my way to perform in the Second Philadelphia Free Music Festival, and I had arranged to travel there, from New York, with the bassist that I would play with, one William Parker, who of late has been appearing with the Cecil Taylor Unit.

WILLEM BREUKER

"Let's arrange to get together beforehand. So do you have a gig tonight, Wiliam?"

And that was really the start of four fantastic days of music.

"Yeah — I'm playing with the Just Gru Orchestra over in the East Side. See you there."

This series, which I did not see listed anywhere, has been happening in the same location, in the rear of a bookshop called "Neither/Nor" on East 6th Street between Avenues C and D, for over a year. The only place that I had read about this previously was in Coda and the English magazine, Wire. In the ensuing days however, it became apparent that everyone in NY knew about this orchestra. But I am rushing on. Earlier that evening I had gone to the Village Vanguard, with Coda writer Flora Wilhelm Bush, to catch a set of the **Jon Faddis** quintet, that played solid, if somewhat predictable, bebop music. The audience seemed to consist of mostly Japanese tourists, who applauded every moment. Apart from the good feeling that I received from the music, the real surprise was that the legendary Max Gordon sported me a free beer. Thanx Max.

The majority of people that I care for in NY are those that are commonly referred to as the "avant-garde", and although on such a short visit it is not possible to contact them all, this situation was partly compensated for by the number of players who live on the East Side of NY, and were in attendance on this particular evening. Greeted at the door by violinist Billy Bang, beer in hand and ready to chat, was a fine opener for what would unfold over the next two hours. The orchestra, under the direction of Jemeel Moondoc, is music for all to enjoy and a loose description, for identification purposes only, would be to say that there is an extension of the music that Sun Ra has been developing for all these years. A wonderful feeling of community exists in this space, a gathering of local players participating in a music form that draws you into its expanding organic nature like a friend. The formality of being an observer removed. The orchestra has a changing personnel, the function of a community, but the ones that I recognised included **Jemeel Moondoc, William Parker** (the friend that I was to meet), **Bernie Nix, Gunter Hampel, Roy Williams** and **Susan Fasteau**. It was very late and time to sleep.

The intersection of Cooper Square, which includes Saint Marks place, seems to me to be the natural division between east and west, and instantly activates my past memories; memories of the Five Spot, the Electric Circus and the Dom. This great Bohemian gathering place has been worn away by the changing times, leaving only the ghosts of history in the air. The Great Hall of Cooper Union, where many concerts take place, that Friday evening sponsored a concert by **Leroy Jenkins** performing a selection of his chamber compositions. Apart from Leroy the quintet was **Robert Dick, J.D. Parran, Vincent Chauncey** and **Marty Erlich**. For me, the music — which in itself was extremely fragile — was marred by the fact that the audience, due to the free admission, were very inattentive, constantly creating a disturbance that interfered with the concentration needed to imagine the acoustic music being played.

Now it is Monday, I have returned from Philadelphia and the Free Music Festival, finished with performing and ready to be a jazz

fan again. Well, there I am walking up 7th Avenue South on my way to Sweet Basils to hear **Gil Evans Orchestra**.

"Hi Leroy. How you doing."

"Do you know my friend Elaine Cohen?"

So Elaine, just back from England where she launched her new book, "Unfinished Dream", which she wrote in co-operation with the subject, Red Callender, and I spent the evening together enjoying the vibrant music of Gil Evans. A large orchestra, very bluesy and powerful, rambled its way through the first set which was one hour and forty minutes in length. Full of happiness with open solo sections for everybody to jump in and explode. I didn't know that your son was called Miles, Gil. The second big band in only two attempts, such luxury. Thanks to the owners for extending their hospitality to me once again.

One more day left, and what better way to spend it than with Jimmy Lyons. Such a warm man who is, in this period, the victim of ill health. But that will change soon. The evenings are cold, so after dinner I arrange to spend the rest of my visit with Cecil Taylor.

"Meet me at the 55 Club about 9."

Such a charming bar located at 55 Christopher, smack in the middle of the Village. And you get to meet the most unlikely people. Two artists arguing about the relative social structure of their people, one a poet and the other a painter, deciding which part of the social strata different disciplines of art occupy. A conversation with no apparent ending. Then they are gone.

"Aren't you a musician?", the bar maid said to the gentleman that remained. "Didn't you used to play at Charlies?"

So that was how I met the writer James Lincoln Collier. Then CT arrived. Then Judy Sneed. The party complete. Before I forget, they serve draught Bass there.

Surely there can't be any more big bands playing in NY. I have only been here four days. Once more to the Village Vanguard for the **McCoy Tyner** big band. Just a wonderful conclusion, hanging out in the kitchen after the performance, hobnobbing with the who's who of the jazz scene.

As I reflect on these four days, my first visit to NY in four years, I think back to my youth. I believed at that time that when you walked the streets of Manhattan, all the people you would see would be jazz musicians, that if there was a musical paradise then this would be where it was. Although the faces have changed, this dream is still the truth and New York City is indeed WHERE IT IS.

— Bill Smith

PHILADELPHIA — All through the summer and into the fall there has been an abundance of quality jazz in the Philadelphia area. The Wednesday night jazz policy at Curtains Theater on Sansom Street opened with the **Phil Woods Quintet** in June and continued through the summer with the likes of Betty Carter, Hank Jones, McCoy Tyner, Jimmy Heath and Sonny Rollins. This fall it has presented Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, Ahmad Jamal, Kenny Burrell, Charlie Byrd, Michel Petrucciani and Joe Henderson.... Jazz "Live" at the Afro-American Museum burst forth with the explosive sounds of the **Cecil Taylor Unit**. Besides Taylor, the band was made up of Jimmy Lyons on alto, the Reverend Frank Wright on tenor and bass clarinet, bassist William Parker and drummer Steve McCall. On hand October 18th was Lester Bowie and the amazing "Brass Fantasy" followed by the Don Pullen - George Adams Quintet featuring Cameron Brown and Dannie Richmond on November 15th. Actual Truth Productions presented **Khan Jamal** and **Sunny Murray** at the Ethical Society on September 29th, with tenor saxophonist Middie Middleton, pianist Bernard Samuels and bassist Reggie Curry.

A local favorite, saxophonist **Joe Sudler**'s 16-piece "Swing Machine" holds forth at the Chestnut Cabaret. Guest soloists have included Stanley Turrentine, Phil Woods, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and Jon Faddis.... November attractions at Grendel's Lair, 5th and South Streets, have included the Tal Farlow Trio, David Chertok's "Jazz On Film," Sun Ra and his Arkestra and John Abercrombie.... The 2nd reunion concert by "Catalyst" (**Odean Pope** saxophone, **Eddie Green** piano, **Tyrone Brown** bass and **Sherman Ferguson** drums) took place at the Painted Bride Art Center October 26. Other events at the Bride featured **Olu Dara** and his Natchezsippi Dance Band, the **Tim Berne Quintet, Jemeel Moondoc's Jus Grew Orchestra**, and an all star quintet comprised of **Carter Jefferson, Wallace Roney, Stanley Cowell, Mickey Bass** and **Eddie Gladden** on December 14.... Long a showcase for vocalists, Jewel's Jazz Club hosted blues immortal Jimmy Witherspoon, Arthur Prysock, Betty Carter, James Moody and Gloria Lynne.... The Philadelphia Jazz Society presented its Fall Festival of Jazz at the Chestnut Cabaret October 28th. Main attractions were the local fusion group Reverie, violinist John Blake's quintet and the guitars of Larry Coryell and Emily Remler.... The outrageous antics of the **Willem Breuker Kollektief** opened the Alternative Concert Series at Haverford College on October 4th. The series also featured Craig Harris, Ronald Shannon Jackson and Mose Allison.

Philadelphia saxophonist and pianist **Jack Wright** is mainly responsible for the **2nd Annual East Coast Free Music Festival** held October 26th and 27th at the Community Education Center. On hand were musicians from various parts of the U.S., Canada and Europe; including *Coda*'s own **Bill Smith, Joe McPhee, William**

JEMEEL MOONDOC & BILLY BANG (Photograph by Anko C. Wieringa)

Parker, Borbetomagus, British percussionist **Roger Turner**, saxophonist **Andreas Stehle** from Germany, alto man **Jimmy Stewart** and his Philadelphia-based group "**Kuntu**" and many more.... Using the Allentown Arts Center as a base of operations, Improvco's most recent concerts boasted the **James Emery Ensemble** (James Emery guitar, J.D. Parran reeds, Rob Schwimmer piano, Ed Schuller bass and Pheeroan Ak Laff drums), and the Willem Breuker Kollektief. — *Gerard Futrick*

SAN FRANCISCO — 7.12-14: It is cause for celebration when **Cecil Taylor** returns to the Bay Area after a four year absence, this time for three nights to the continually packed Kimball's club. Taylor, first drummer in his unit, overwhelms with density at times (the image is a pyramid), while a sweetly lyrical thread wove throughout. Given the fact that the piano was not absolutely up to par, Taylor was still able to find some room between the keys and the soundboard. His comment: "Somebody is going to get hurt playing this piano." I was never sure whether he meant himself or the piano. The ritual chanting, the constant invention, kept me at the club for eight of nine sets. My only break was to catch Luther Vandross down the street.

8.4: Charming, elegant, the ageless giant **Red Callender** presented a Sunday afternoon/evening setting at Koncepts Cultural Gallery in Oakland. Callender was a beam of light on stage conducting, cajoling, driving his sidemen (Omar Clay, drums, Bruce Foreman, guitar) effortlessly through a program of standard jazz repertoire. At one point in the evening Callender began issuing instructions to his accomplices in a way that made me think of his student Charles Mingus: Like this is where Mingus must have learned that too.

9.1-2 The Berkeley Jazz Festival: **Abdullah Ibrahim** is not in exile, he is in strategic retreat. So he told us while entertaining questions at a post-performance press conference. He sat there patiently, like a visiting diplomat (which he is) cutting off only one question: "Where do you (the ANC) get your guns?"

The band was Ricky Ford, tenor; Sonny Fortune, alto; David Williams, bass; Charles Davis, baritone; Dick Griffin, trombone and Ben Riley, drums. At one point Ibrahim announced a tribute to Duke Ellington. My feeling was that the whole program had been one. Following was a tribute to Thelonious Monk! An essential performance by this brilliant drum and choir orchestra.

On the political front Ibrahim encouraged all to work for divestment and consciousness raising to effectively destabilize the South African government in every way. He made clear that it was not just a struggle between black and white because "it would have been over long ago." The struggle, he said, was to build a just society. He said "Botha and his gangsters can tell me how to live but not how to die."

Later that evening **Miles Dewey Davis** kept us waiting in anticipation charged with expectation. Miles flashes on stage like lightning. Pure material electricity. Glitter and pop is the band. Young faces, clean. Traps, tymbales, congas, keyboards, bass and guitar. Fresh and of relative interest. He struts on, phoenix embroidered on the back of his jacket of basic black. A big red eye staring out. Clothing (and band) aside, Miles played, and for two hours the sweetness, grandeur and subtlety never once lost me.

9.2: Started out with **Jack Dejohnette's Special Edition** with Howard Johnson, Rufus Reid, John Purcell and Greg Osby. Electrifying acoustic music that worked well in the big outdoor ampitheater called Greek Theater. I'm skipping all of the fusion acts except for one comment: "mmmbuzz." Later in the day Archie Shepp and Abbey Lincoln came out to do an abbreviated set. The high point for me was Abbey singing "You can never lose a thing if it belongs to you — THROW IT AWAY." Such beauty and poise on stage.

9.12: Back on the west side of the bay a special programe produced by the Chinese Cultural Center was New Yorker **Fred Houn's Asian-American Art Ensemble**. Consisting of Houn on baritone sax, Allen Won, alto; Francis Wong, tenor; Jon Jang on piano and (a real surprise) Taru Alexander (Roland's son) on drums and Jodi Long on vocals. The program was built on Houn's compositions and poet Janice Mirakatani's words. The music was based in the African-American tradition while the words dealt with the alienation, upheaval and growing cultural awareness of being Asian in America. A powerful evening of creativity that enlightened and thrilled a broad spectrum of San Francisco's Asian population. Fred Houn has a new lp about to be released on Soulnote.

9.21: **Randy Weston** returned to the bay area for the re-opening of the renovated Koncepts. After **Steve Turre**'s tribute to Rahsaan with Billy Higgins and others, the Gallery closed for six weeks. In that time they created a more airy breathing space.

Weston came on stage glowing, very happy to be back in the bay area. He treated us to three composition/improvisations and then was joined by Ghanaian drummer, bay area resident Kwaku Daddy. Randy's music continued to expand multi-dimensionally with the addition of Kwaku. Weston talked backstage about performing in Switzerland with a twenty-five piece big band while in America he is only able to get solo gigs. Even in a solo setting Randy's music is orchestral. Every time I hear Randy Weston I am reminded of how far behind the USA is in supporting its own music.

9.28: Another taste of New York exploded on stage at Kimball's club. The presence of **David Murray, Ed Blackwell, Reggie Workman** and **Stanley Cowell** shook us to our very roots on an opening night Thursday. They began with ***Morning Song***, a wrap-around spirtual, followed by ***Flowers For Albert***, played in a chromatic calypso mode, very different from the recorded version (in keeping with the music's tradition).

10.1: A rare and exciting performance took place at the Great American Music Hall in San Francisco. **David Holland** and his quintet of Julian Priester, Kenny Wheeler, Steve Coleman and Marvin "Smitty" Smith grabbed ahold of us listeners and did not let go until the last silence after the last note of the second set. Collectively and individually the group made the notion of rhythmic magic a powerful reality. Holland's quintet is an amazing organization. Holland's earthy passion, Wheeler's clarity, Priester's grace and fluidity and Coleman's directness brought out thrilling nuances of the music. I was not ready for "Smitty" Smith.

This man has so much going on in such a subtle, succinct manner that I was sure he had a third arm hidden under his coat. Holland and group re-affirm the collective nature of the music. The sound they created as five was sometimes as huge as a symphony orchestra. Never once, over two sets, losing the intimacy of the small collective.

10.5: Koncepts Cultural Gallery continued with its cultural work by presenting pianist **Dorothy Donegan** for two evenings. Ms Donegan combines phenomenal chops, unbelievable energy and historical perspective with gutbucket wisdom realism. If history were a shot glass she would have to be poured at least twice. First downed, then sipped. The seamless transitions in her playing brought to mind the collages of Romare Bearden. You can see individual parts or the whole picture depending on your perspective and knowledge. When she played a medley of ***I Can't Get Started, Love Me Or Leave Me*** and ***All The Things You Are*** I realized that she can extrapolate an entire repertoire from one note.

10.7: Back at the Great American Music Hall with their diverse programming. Another piano master named **Memphis Slim**. I came to hear Memphis Slim for inspiration and got it. "Lonesome traveler hand me down my walking shoes... I love all the music but I've got a right to sing the blues." Toward the end of the second set Memphis brought out singer/guitarist Brownie McGee. Together they created beautiful music and were clearly enjoying themselves.

10.8: **Willem Breuker's Kollektief** came through the GAMH as part of a tour of the western hemisphere sponsored by the Dutch government. The 11 players created some tight music sprinkled with twisted humor and satire. The piece I enjoyed most was a very funny look at the European dealing with American jazz. In the middle of this satire was a deadly serious alto solo by Breuker.

10.12: **John Carter** and **Bobby Bradford** came to Koncepts as a duo. The music made of stories, images, sounds can be abstract at times while retaining a solid grounding in the blues. They imply the rhythm section and create ensemble textures as a duo. After listening to Carter and Bradford over two nights I decided that ensemble is not in the number of players but in the tightness of playing, the strength of concept and force of presentation. This was a rare visit by these Los Angeles based musicians who haven't played in the bay area together for four years.

10.13: Bay Area poets **O.R. Hand** and **Reggie Lockett** gave a mixed media performance with alto saxophonist **Lewis Jordan** (of United Front) at the Hotel Cadillac in San Francisco's Tenderloin district. Pre-columbian wisdom and cross-sections of today bloomed out of O.R. (especially his reading from "I Have Spoken; American History Through Voices of Indians.") Oakland based poet Lockett's stories of coming of age in that city were vivid. Lewis Jordan moved easily between alto sax, alto clarinet and acoustic guitar. One of the audience was heard to comment: "How often do you get to hear ***Come Sunday*** played live?"

10.19: **Anthony Braxton** brought a quartet into Kimball's with Marilyn Crispell on piano, Mark Dresser on bass and Gerry Hemingway on drums. Braxton is beginning a three year residency at Mills College in Oakland. This evening's presentation was of written music. An image came from the composition of the creative artist surrounded by a highly mechanized, cold society. What added to this impression was Braxton playing slightly off mike the entire set. The music required intense listening and concentration. It seemed somewhat out of place in a club environment.

10.25: **Sam Rivers** brought a trio into Kimball's after a long absence from the bay area. The set I heard was a tour through the history of the music "from as far back as we can remember," said Rivers. Tubaist Joe Daley is a source of unending wonder as he moves on his instrument from brass directness to slap style bass sonorities. Rivers was smoking on tenor, flute, soprano and piano. Drummer Steve McCraven rounded and grounded beautifully.

10.26: The first part of a two part **Asian American Jazz Festival** celebrated its fifth anniversary at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park. We were treated to wonderful music made by James Newton and a quartet made up of Roberto Miguel Miranda on bass, Kei Akagi on piano and Anthony Brown on drums. They opened the first set with Charles Mingus' ***Meditation On Integration***. Such an orchestral sound out of these four. Especially enlightening on this piece was pianist Akagi's solo. They moved on to Ellington's ***Black And Tan Fantasy*** which Newton called a "gutbucket bolero."

The highlight of the second set was Wayne Shorter's ***Beauty And The Beast***. This composition became a first setting for the incredible playing of bassist Miranda and secondly a showcase for the interplay between Miranda and drummer Brown. Miranda created a high level of tension and excitement not only for the audience but for himself. He played every inch of his bass, plucking, scratching and drumming. I discovered later that he comes from a family of drummers. It was quite evident from his performance this evening.

10.27: Kimball's producer Sharlene Hirsch presented a benefit for the East Bay Youth Development Foundation with **Dizzy Gillespie** and group, **Max Roach**'s quartet and **Nancy Wilson**. It took place at the arena of Oakland's Kaiser Center. This basketball court was not the best place to hear music but the feeling came through. Dizzy got off some clowning, Max some outrageous drumming along with contributions from Odean Pope, Cecil Bridgewater and Tyrone Brown. Nancy Wilson's trumpet-like voice and beautiful presence brought down the house. A nice evening with many of Oakland's "beautiful people" turning out.

I also celebrated Monk's birthday with Barry Harris and Clifford Jordan at Kimball's, and look forward to the World Saxophone Quartet, Horace Tapscott, Dewey Redman and a positive, progressive '86. *— Brian Auerbach*

SAN FRANCISCO — Something Cool is anything but. It's a hot little quintet that gigs Monday evenings at Bajones, a funky club in the Mission district. With its line-up of Kent Cohea, reeds, Jon Davis, piano, Frank Tusa, bass, Gaylord Birch, drums, and Nika, vocals, Something Cool can hold its own with most better-known ensembles.

Although several San Francisco groups feature a front-line combination of voice and saxophone, Something Cool utilizes the arrangement more effectively than the others I've heard. Nika gives standard tunes sensitive readings without the cloying moodiness some singers exude. ***My Funny Valentine*** ached with a genuine affection tempered by a strong dose of realism. Her stylishly offhanded interpretation of ***As Long As I Live*** only underscored the strong commitment the lyrics suggested. In the ensembles, her flutelike voice blends deftly with Cohea's horns. When she scats, she combines the saxophonic vocabulary of avant-gardists like George Adams with the structural clarity of a Charlie Parker. Kent Cohea, her partner in the front line, employs a pre-bop style on tenor, but ranges into the vocabulary of contemporary viscera when he reaches a climactic moment. Cohea's baritone work is rich with throttling intensity, as he showed on ***Sweet Georgia Bright***.

The rhythm section is more than solid. Jon Davis sings a variety of styles from the piano. As he backed Nika on ***My Funny Valentine***, he ranged from romantic rhapsodies to rockish rumblings. He built linear passages of layered intensity to a crashing climax on ***Spain*** and dug into swinging dissonance as he soloed over the agitated 6/8 pulse of ***Summertime***. Frank Tusa provided a bedrock bottom for the soloists as he worked in tandem with Birch. His melodic solo on ***Sweet Georgia Bright*** built to a slashing chordal climax. On ***Spain***, Tusa pealed harmonics behind Birch's powerful hand-drummed statement, then droned his way into a raga-like arco solo that culminated in a burst of flamenco flurries.

Although the band has only a modest local following, its powerful music rivals the name

LARRY CORYELL (Photograph by Henry J. Kahanek)

acts that appear in San Francisco's more prestigious clubs. If you're looking for something hot, check out Something Cool. You won't be disappointed. — *Vernon Frazer*

HONG KONG — It is now around a year since I reported on my earthly peregrinations (*Coda* 200 — "Odds & Sods"); a rapid 1985 updating may stimulate your imaginations and tickle my memories.

January's penultimate eve took me and old friends to the Ballroom of the Hong Kong Hilton to hear — with a goodly and good-humoured crowd — the **Louisiana Jazz Repertory Ensemble** who performed politely the popular songs of the good old days assisted by mighty loudspeakers appropriately displaced within the great volume of the room ... amplified trad jazz, well-received, the sole jazz content of this year's Hong Kong Arts Festival. 'Tis to be hoped that the jazz fare for the 1986 Jan/Feb festivities may also extend to expositions of more recent forms of the art.

June brought us (still in HK) further traditional provender: **The Melbourne Jazz Band,** brewer-backed, flush with recent success at the Sacramento Jazz Festival, for a one-night stand before a full and enthusiastic house at the well-known "Dicken's Bar" of the Causeway Bay Excelsior Hotel; it is at this venue that the big band of **Tony Carpio,** one of Hong Kong's leading musical personalities, can be heard swinging through a wide variety of songs each first Sunday afternoon of the month, with his smaller, fusion-oriented group playing intervening Sabbaths.

July was my **United Kingdom** month, music from diverse sources at various centres. Chronologically, the noteworthy were:

Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson playing relaxedly but with authority along with a Yorkshire trio in the cosy Liverpool Unity Theatre, for a small but appreciative audience;

Mike Westbrook Trio (he, she (Kate) and reedsman Chris Biscoe) performing a little late night music as participants in the Chester Arts Festival, exquisite eleventh hour stuff, particularly the voice work of Kate Westbrook;

an abysmal **Max Collie** and band endeavouring to bring New Orleans to life in Leeds, the load lightened at times by the participation of Ken Colyer and, lesser star in the firmament, Cy Laurie;

at the Bloomsbury Theatre, a London University venue, in close proximity to Euston, **Evan Parker**, tenor & soprano sax and **Derek Bailey**, guitar, freely improvised solo and duo sets — superb pre-prandial performances...;

a return to Chester for a disappointing evening with the "Berliner Band" doing, inter alia, scored music to silent Dada film footage, a boring piece by Michael Nyman (?) and, with a relative measure of success, songs from the Brecht/Weill repertoire.

This August had the family Parry in **Paris** briefly: so much to see, no time for music; amongst several pleasant social visits, a Sunday evening with **Steve Lacy** and **Irene Aebi** included discourse on a project to release on cassette material of theirs (and eventually others) which otherwise may never reach the public eardrum.

A passing recommendation here for the excellent **Edward Burra** exhibition which I viewed at London's South Bank Hayward Gallery on the August morn of my return to Hong Kong; Burra, who died in 1976, was, in the late twenties, "an amused observer of the champagne bohemia" of the times doing paintings which include descriptions of the Harlem of the Jazz Age. Among those promoting interest in Burra is George Melly, British jazz singer, art critic and lecturer. This exhibition is now touring England (Norwich, Leeds and Southampton).

September 20th through 22nd saw me in **Toronto** lodged with good Etobicoke friends. A very satisfying renewal of acquaintance with **Bill Smith** and **David Lee**, at the Fallout Shelter as two thirds of the group known as "Whispers"; some material by them has been released by the Toronto-based blewointment press on audio cassette 002. Caught some fine playing by guitarist **Larry Coryell** making a surprise visit (as a replacement for an indisposed friend) to a solid-packed E. 85th Street club. Rounded out a pleasant weekend in good company with the first of two Sunday evening sessions at Basin Street by the **Dave Holland Quintet**, all in very good form.

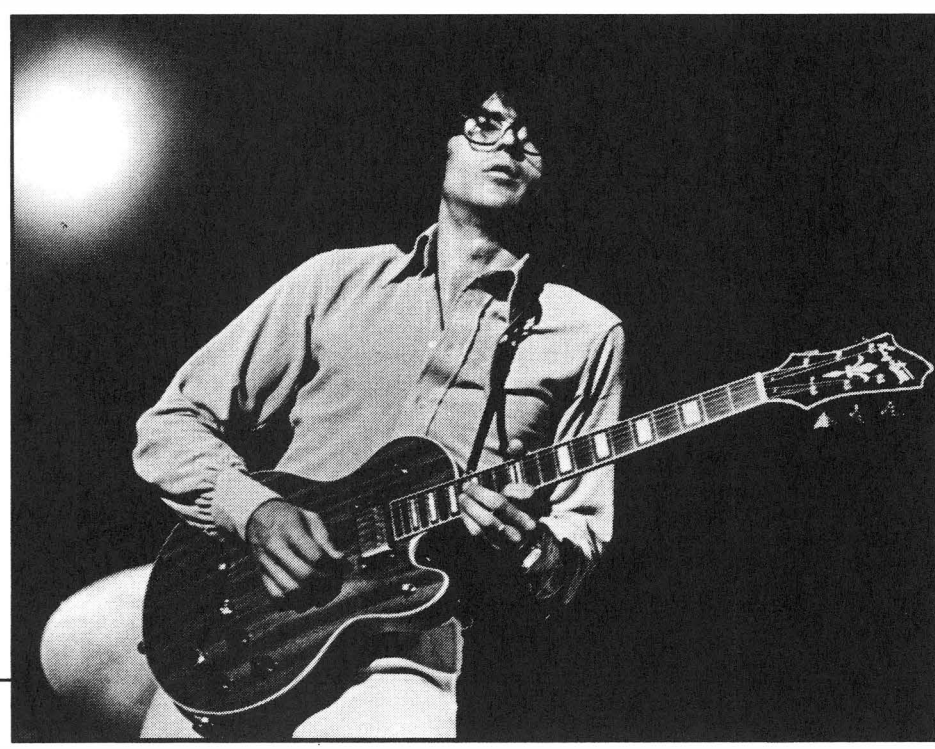
The opportunity being there, I went along to a performance September 26th by the **Pina Bautsch Wuppertal Tanzteater** at **Ottawa**'s village hall, the National Arts Centre, it being part of a whole week's festival of dance; I thought it was great, but from subsequent discussion and published reports, this was a minority view....

October 11th, back in **Hong Kong**, took off in the evening for Portuguese Macau, some fifty minutes away by high-speed jetfoil, to attend the first night of the two consecutive nights of the **3rd Macau Jazz Festival**. The proceedings opening, in the smaller 500-seat theatre of the recently constructed "Forum," with the **Lisbon Jazz Quintet**, a competent group of enthusiastic young players who eventually overcame "sound" problems, but never really took off. After the interval the Japanese **Shegeharu Mukai Quartet** took over — cooking from the first blow of the leader's joyful trombone — and the audience really came alive. I was unable to make it for the last night which featured the Hong Kong group One Finger Snap, led by **Ric Halstead** (saxes/flute) and a trio led by American bassist **Saheb Sarbib**. All performances were recorded (video and sound) by TDM (local broadcasting station) and the soundtables are being broadcast currently by Radio Television Hong Kong.

October 22nd, a Tuesday evening of performances by Afghan and Arab musicians, one of numerous items in Hong Kong's **Tenth Festival of Asian Arts; Ustad Essa Kassimi**, Rubab provided excitement and a degree of improvisation — the three voice of the five-man **Sabri al-Mudallal** group from Alleppo executed strong and long excursions of vigour and beauty. — *Roger Parry*

ODDS & SODS

NEW YORK — Building a better support system for jazz was the theme of this year's (fourth) **Jazz Times Convention** which was held at New York's Roosevelt Hotel September 11-14. It attracted close to four hundred participants including many prominent musicians, critics, record producers, magazine editors, festival promoters, jazz club organisers, researchers and business people connected with all aspects of the jazz community. There were panel discussions on many different aspects of the music, but the event seemed largely unfocused. The panels were only as good as the panelists and the degree of preparation and organisation of their moderators. Some people offered a great deal of valuable information (CD Market, Jazz Clubs and Concerts) while others degenerated into bickering and backbiting. The Record Distribution panel was especially negative — and perhaps reflected the most difficult and weakest chain in the link between the recording artist and the consumer. What makes this convention so valuable is that it brings together so many influential people in a setting where it is possi-



ble to meet on an informal basis and exchange information and ideas. The open debate format of the panels obviously frustrated the many newcomers trying to generate momentum for their careers by producing their own recordings and organising their own tours. Their questions never seemed to be satisfactorily answered. But they had obviously come looking for guidance and advice.

The Museum of Broadcasting (1 East 53rd Street) is presenting a series called "Jazz on Television" which continues until January 30 with many important and historic TV programs featured. The Robert Herridge programs (Sound of Jazz, Miles Davis, Jazz from Sixty-One), Timex, Art Ford, Ralph Gleason Jazz Casual, Goodman and Ellington specials are among the obvious choices. But there are some other gems which are rarely seen. Missing from the series are some of the important jazz TV programs from Canada and the U.K. Canadian programs which come to mind immediately are the one hour conversation and music by Duke Ellington and Byng Whittaker, the Paddy Sampson Blues Show which captured Muddy Waters, Otis Spann, Big Joe Williams, Bukka White, McGhee and Terry, and Jesse Fuller at the height of their powers, Charles Mingus' ***Meditations Suite*** (from Toronto) and the quintet show from Vancouver. These are the tip of an iceberg which needs to be investigated further. Despite these observations it is obviously a rare opportunity to see a lot of wonderful music.

The Jazz Times Convention was a backdrop for some memorable music in New York. **James Moody** blew the joint apart on opening night at Sweet Basil with equally strong support from Harold Mabern and the continually swinging drums of Idrees Muhammad.... Bradleys focused on the marvelous empathy between **Tommy Flanagan** and **George Mraz**. They also insisted on silence during the performances — and no one complained! It was business as usual the next week when **Ray Bryant** and **Jimmie Rowser** occupied the stand.... Mims is a new restaurant in the Village which seems headed for oblivion despite its excellent food and comfortable ambience. **Ronnie Mathews** and **David Williams** filled the room with the rich textures of their music but, sadly, there was no one listening to it.... Mikells hosted the **Milt Jackson-Ray Brown Quartet** with **Cedar Walton** and **Mickey Roker** completing the lineup.... Even further uptown, at Smalls Paradise, the **Frank Foster Band** was in residence on Monday nights. The music was closer to Coltrane than Basie but the setting and the audience indicated that Basie style charts would be better received. The people go there to dance, listen and have a good time.

The Art Ensemble celebrated 20 years of Great Black Music with a weeklong engagement at Sweet Basil November 19-24.... **Steve Tintweiss**'s Space-Light Band was heard over WKCR Radio November 13.... Vocalist **Daniella** was at J's (2581 Broadway) with **Richard Wyands** at the piano.... The publicity continues on 15 year-old alto saxophonist **Christopher Hollyday**. He and his brother were at The Blue Note November 18 with John Medeski (piano), John Lockwood (bass) and Alan Dawson (drums). The band also have a recording available on Jazzbeat Records.

Jay McShann was brought back to New York for a concert at the Public Theatre on October 21 in which he was featured with a big band made up of musicians from various jazz persuasions. The concert received wide notice but both John S. Wilson and Gary Giddins seemed to agree that the best moments were when McShann got a chance to cut loose on his own. It seems a somewhat misguided use of arts funding.

John Carter's "The Castles of Ghana" was premiered November 4 at the Public Theatre. Bobby Bradford, Baikida Carroll, Benny Powell, David Murray, Terry Jenoure, Richard Davis and Andrew Cyrille completed the band.... The music of Capetown was featured by **Abdullah Ibrahim** and friends at the Great Hall of Cooper Union on November 22.... The **Rory Stuart Quartet** were at St. Peter's Church November 24.... **Dan Pratt's Big Band** is heard Sunday nights at the Jazz Hall of Fame — a new club at 21 Hudson Street.... **The Kronos String Quartet** performed works by Muhal Richard Abrams, Anthony Braxton, Leroy Jenkins and Leo Smith at Carnegie Recital Hall on November 22.... The Alternative Museum (17 White Street) has decided to focus entirely on ccmposers of New Music and Jazz for its 1985/86 season.... **Frank Foster, Cecil Bridgewater** and **Arvell Shaw** headlined the first three concerts in The International Art of Jazz's winter series in Garden City. **Carol Fredette** (January 12), **Bross Townsend** (February 2), **Bobby Rosengarden, Milt Hinton,** and **Derek Smith** are to follow.

Jimmy McGriff headlined the Boston Jazz Society's first scholarship fund dinner/dance on November 15.... **Phil Woods** was guest soloist with the Eastman School of Music's Summer Ensemble July 26 in Rochester.... Hofstra University's music clinic November 8 was headlined by **Randy Brecker**.... Traditional jazz fans had a great time in Conneaut Lake August 23-25 when some 20 musicians delighted the capacity crowds. Among the highlights were a **Bud Freeman** duet with **Dave McKenna** and the **Scott Hamilton Sextet** set with Joe Wilder, Dick Hyman, Howard Alden, Michael Moore and Gene Estes. Trombonist Dan Barrett joined in later for more fireworks. The 1986 festival is set for August 22-24.... **Marshall Vente** and Project Nine performed November 22 at the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee.... The 1986 Mid-America Jazz Festival takes place March 21-23. Already booked are **Jay McShann** and **Ralph Sutton, The Happy Jazz Band, Eric Schneider** and **Tal Farlow**.

Jazz educators will assemble at the Anaheim Marriott from January 9 to 12 with an impressive array of West Coast talent on hand to keep things moving.... The Dallas Jazz Society gave scholarships to North Texas State University's Joe McBride (piano) and Bruce Sanders (guitar) in August at a special fundraiser concert at Dallas' Dick's Last Resort. North Texas' One O'Clock Band will tour Australia next summer.

The World Saxophone Quartet were on the road in November with dates in Vancouver, California and the midwest... George Russell gave his original manuscript to ***All About Rosie*** to the BMI Archives.... "Ornette: Made In America" is **Shirley Clarke's** film about the alto saxophonist. It premiered in September at Toronto's Festival of Festivals and Dallas'

Caravan of Dreams.... "Passing It On" is a 23-minute documentary film about pianist **Barry Harris**.

"Made In London" is the title of a six night program of improvised music taking place December 16-21 in London, England at the Soho-Poly Theatre, 16 Riding House Street.... **The Pizza Express All Star Band** is touring England during December: the personnel are Danny Moss, Roy Williams, Brian Lemon, Colin Smith, Len Skeat, Dave Shepherd and Ronnie Verrell.... Recent attractions at Zurich's Widder Bar have included **Buddy Tate, Lou Donaldson, Shorty Rogers & Bud Shank** and the **Ralph Sutton Trio**.... **FMP's** Total Music Meeting 1985 took place at the end of October.... European musicians dominated the 1985 version of the Berlin Jazz Festival which takes place at the same time as FMP's festival.

Recently published books include "Milestones II" by Jack Chambers (University of Toronto Press); "Stride: The Music of Fats Waller" by Paul Machlin and "Lester Young" by Lewis Porter (G.K. Hall); "Dance Bands and Big Bands" by Alice Rogers (Jellyroll Productions); "Women in Jazz: A discography of instrumentalists 1913-1968" by Jan Leder (Greenwood); "Wes Montgomery" by Adrian Ingram - a comprehensive biography/discography (Ashley Mark); "The Pony Express: Memoirs of a Jazz Musician" by Pony Poindexter (JAS Publications, Eschbornerlandstr. 14, D-6000 Frankfurt 90, West Germany); "Russian Jazz New Identity" by Leo Feigin and "Unfinished Dream: The Musical World of Red Callender" by Red Callender and Elaine Cohen (Quartet); "Monk on Records" by Leen Bijl and Fred Cante - a second edition with much updated information; "Collection Jazz" is the heading under which a series of books is being published in Germany which assess the recordings and careers of major musicians. John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Duke Ellington and Charles Mingus are now available (in German) from Oreos Verlag, Pater-Koster-Weg 1, 8035 Gauting, West Germany.

Jazz Calendars are proliferating. Richard Gaines, for the second year, has published his from Washington. The focus of this year's illustrations range from such legends as Doc Cheatham and Jay McShann to international stars Annie Ross, Michel Legrand and Kazumi Watanabe. It's available from Richard Goines & Associates, P.O. Box 25581, Washington, D.C. 20007 at a cost of US$13.20 including postage.... Offbeat Jazz is the newsletter of the Overseas Jazz Club. Recent issues have included a series of articles by Chuck Folds on musicians he has been associated with over the years. They are warm and insightful remembrances of some legendary figures.... The No Name Newsletter (Jazz/Art Publications, P.O. Box 3381, Clearwater Beach, FL 33515) will give you details of jazz activity in Florida.... "Guia De Jazz" is Argentina's jazz magazine. It is published from Yerbal 2291, 3ro. "62", 1406 Buenos Aires, Argentina.

New records: Jazzizz Records (P.O. Box 148, Salem, Or 97308) has released a Tete Montoliu Trio lp. Their catalog and the growing selection from Pete Christlieb's Bosco Records are available from the one Oregon source.... Ted Harris' latest release is a low fidelity souvenir of a New Jersey Jazz Festival concert featuring the reedman with Virgil

Jones, Gerald Hayes, Jimmy Rowser, Kiane Zawadi and others. It's available from Harris & Dyer, P.O. Box 34, Teaneck, N.J. 07666.... Arnett Cobb's "Keep On Pushin' " is the latest from Bee Hive. Joe Newman, Al Grey, Junior Mance, George Duvivier and Panama Francis are also present.... Mosaic Records, now located at 197 Strawberry Hill Avenue, Stamford, CT 06902, has five new box sets in circulation.... An unissued Ben Webster club date from 1961 and newly recorded performances by Frank Morgan and George Cables are to be issued on Contemporary.... The latest in Fantasy's Original Jazz Classics series is a 10 lp collection with press runs of only 3000. These digitally remastered lps have a slightly higher price and include "Hope Meets Foster," "A" by Jimmy Raney, "Earthy" by the Prestige All Stars, lps by Ada Moore and Hazel Scott and three collections from the HRS label (ex Riverside) by Jack Teagarden / Pee Wee Russell, Buck Clayton and Rex Stewart. Write Fantasy Records, Tenth and Parker, Berkeley, CA 94710 for their complete 1985 catalog of OJC material.... Buddy Rich's newest lp will be on Mobile Fidelity's Cafe Records.... Multijazz Productions has issued an lp featuring the music of Scott Robinson — he performs on over 30 instruments on this recording.... Polygram Classics has imported from Japan a marvelous 10 lp set of Billie Holiday recordings — the complete material from Verve and MGM. Also released are the Jerome Kern Songbook by Ella Fitzgerald, The Rodgers and Hart Songbook by Sarah Vaughan, Erroll Garner plays Gershwin and Kern, the complete Ben Webster on Emarcy (a U.S. version of the Japanese set), and "Everything I Have Is Yours" by Billy Eckstine.... Stomp Off has issued 10 more recordings of traditional jazz from around the world.... "Partners in Crime" is the title of a Ralph Sutton/Bob Barnard record issued in Australia on Dialogue Records, P.O. Box 295, Riverwood, N.S.W., Australia 2210. Milt Hinton and Len Barnard complete the quartet.... Ralph Kappel is in charge at Fantasy Records and was one of the valued speakers at the Jazz Times Convention. Tower Records' September issue of Pulse! carried an interview with him where he stated he had no plans for the reissue of any of the Good Time Jazz catalog.... Chick Corea, Carla Bley, Dave Holland and Lester Bowie all have new lps on ECM.... England's Leo Records departs from its usual East European focus with the release of lps by Marilyn Crispell and Maggie Nichols.... JMT Productions (Stefan Winter, Baldestr. 15, D-8000 Munchen 5, West Germany) is a new company focusing on today's upcoming jazz talents. Their first two releases feature Steve Coleman and Herb Robertson with a duet session by Jane Ira Bloom and Fred Hersch the third release.... Sonet Records is busy again. Following the 12 volume Masters of Jazz set they are issuing an lp by The Paris Reunion Band under the title "French Cooking" and a solo piano lp by Mike Gerber.... JSP Records continue to issue valuable blues lps. Jimmy Dawkins, Phil Guy and the Louisiana Playboys all have new lps available. Also issued is an lp of previously unissued material by J.B. Hutto.

News continues to come in of the deaths of many musicians and entrepreneurs associated with the music. **Joe Darensbourg** died May 24 in Los Angeles. He was 78. Bassist **George Duvivier** died July 11 in New York. Drummers **Philly Joe Jones** (62) and **Jo Jones** (73) died August 30 and September 3 respectively. Alto saxophonist **Chris Woods** died July 4 and veteran trumpeter **Cootie Williams** died September 15 in Queens, N.Y. Bandleader **Sam Wooding** was 90 years old when he died this August. Blues singer/guitarist **Pee Wee Crayton** was 70 when he died of a heart attack June 25 in Los Angeles. Blues pianist **Robert Shaw** died in Austin, Texas. **Don Brown**, long the proprietor of The Jazz Man Record Shop in Los Angeles died May 30 of a heart attack. Historian **Rudi Blesh** died August 25 in Gilmanton, N.H. of a stroke. He was 86.... **Little Brother Montgomery** died in Chicago September 6 at the age of 78. **William Perryman "Piano Red"** died July 25 in Atlanta at the age of 73. **John Hunt**, catalyst in the jazz revival in Buffalo over the past decade and a key figure at WBFO-FM Radio died September 21 at the age of 33 after a lengthy struggle with cancer. Drummer **Nick Ceroli** died August 12 in Los Angeles.... **Laurent Goddet**, for many years editor of the outstanding French magazine "Jazz Hot," died June 17 in Paris.... **Nelson Riddle** died October 6 in Los Angeles. He was 64. Bassist **Nelson Boyd** died recently in Camden, N.J. — *compiled by John Norris*

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3020 ANTHONY DAVIS * "OF BLUES AND DREAMS" * with Leroy Jenkins (violin), Abdul Wadud (cello), Pheeroan Ak Laff (drums)
3021 JAY McSHANN * "KANSAS CITY HUSTLE" * Jay McShann (piano)
3022 RUBY BRAFF WITH THE ED BICKERT TRIO * Ruby Braff (cornet), Ed Bickert (guitar), Don Thompson (bass), Terry Clarke (drums)
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3028 SACKVILLE ALL STARS * "SATURDAY NIGHT FUNCTION" * Buddy Tate, Jim Galloway (saxophones & clarinet), Jay McShann (piano), Don Thompson (bass), Terry Clarke (drums)
3029 DOC CHEATHAM/SAMMY PRICE * "BLACK BEAUTY" * Doc Cheatham (trumpet), Sammy Price (piano)
3030 LEO SMITH * "RASTAFARI" * with Bill Smith (reeds), David Prentice (violin), Larry Potter (vibes), David Lee (bass, cello)
3031 JUNIOR MANCE/MARTIN RIVERA * "FOR DANCERS ONLY" * Junior Mance (piano), Martin Rivera (bass)
3032 ART HODES * "SOUTH SIDE MEMORIES" * Art Hodes (piano)
3033 HUMPHREY LYTTELTON * "IN CANADA" * with Jim Galloway (reeds), Ed Bickert (guitar), Neil Swainson (bass), Terry Clarke (drums)
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4008 BILL SMITH ENSEMBLE * "THE SUBTLE DECEIT OF THE QUICK GLOVED HAND" * with David Prentice (violin), David Lee (bass, cello)
4009 FRASER MACPHERSON / OLIVER GANNON * "I DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT YOU" * Fraser MacPherson (tenor sax), Oliver Gannon (guitar)
4010 ED BICKERT/DON THOMPSON * "DANCE TO THE LADY" * Ed Bickert (guitar), Don Thompson (piano)
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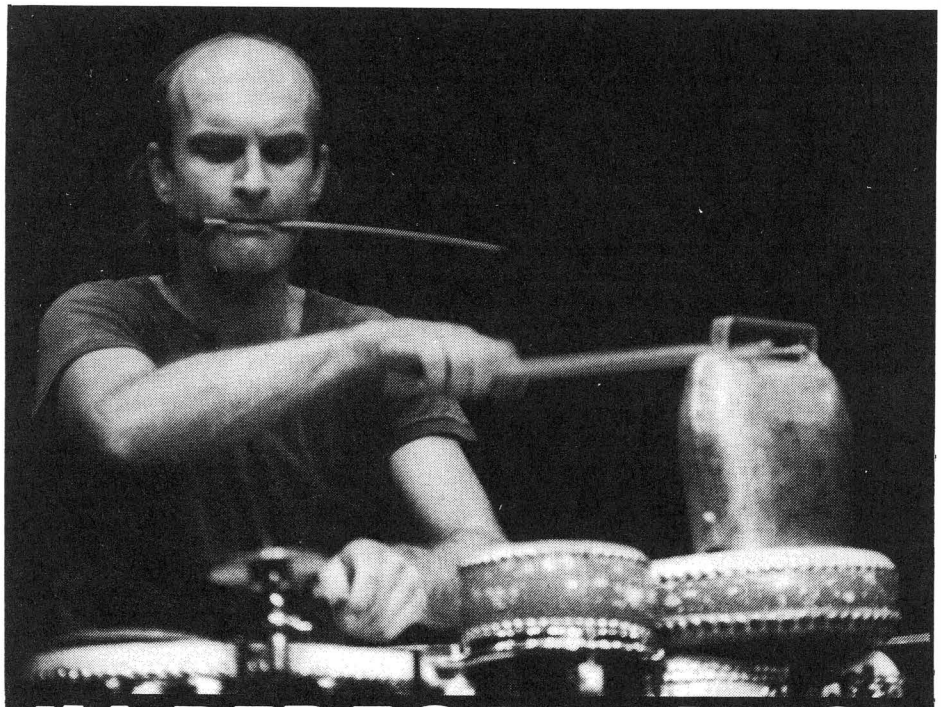


IN PERFORMANCE

SECOND ANNUAL EAST COAST FREE MUSIC FESTIVAL
Community Education Center, Philadelphia
Saturday and Sunday, October 26 & 27, 1985

Free Music is no longer the New Music. The company of improvisers brought together by **Jack Wright** for this Fest played free *jazz*, by now an established genre but unlike bop. Like bop, it's still played with gusto, even if the instrumental vocabulary has become somewhat fixed. Like bop, it's got dogmatic partisans and musicians' cliques. More and more, like other jazz genres, the music strikes a seesaw balance between the expressive needs of soloists and yearnings toward overall forms. If the players assembled in Philly were representative, free improvisers are increasingly prepared to be spontaneous orchestrators, section players and editors of their own statements. If so-called non-idiomatic improvising is becoming more obviously idiomatic, as playing strategies become more familiar, the interplay is tighter and more structurally sophisticated.

Yet most of the formal devices employed had been used by the New York avant-garders of the mid-60s, and have recognizable jazz roots: long undulating reed chords, mirror-image playing, spontaneous riffing, turbulent sax squabbling, solos erupting out of the soup, prudent laying out, and loose recapitulation of passages that may have been played a half-hour beforehand in a long set. Given the geographical distribution of the players — France's **Raymond Boni**, England's **Roger Turner**, West Germany's **Andreas Stehle**, Canada's (ex-England's) **Bill Smith**, Chicago's **Steve Hunt** and the northeast U.S.' **William Parker, Joe McPhee, Todd Whitman** and Wright — and given their divergent stylistic tendencies (guitarist Boni's haunting mescaline—Django romanticism is a far cry from Stehle's ascetic alto abstractions, even if their lands of origin border), it was remarkable how many tactics and instrumental gestures they shared. Saxophonists Wright, Whitman, Stehle and Smith had distinctive approaches, yet all or most favored reed pops, jagged outbursts, singing tones, sliding pitches and exaggerated dynamics: they played off ideas disseminated by Oliver Lake, Evan Parker and Lol Coxhill more than the innovations of Albert Ayler. (Especially as McPhee like Smith brought only his soprano). Even Joe, often one of the most emotionally direct and deep of modern saxophonists, played at friend Boni's instigation through a band of effects pedals. His saving grace was that his amplified sound was never as loud as his sax itself. Even using an echo machine, he managed to avoid the endless-canon cliches of Klemmer et al.

Ayler's hot, wide-vibrato sound appears out of favor (as does extreme pointillism). The saxophonists, for all their attention to varied textures — Whitman's split-tone waveforms are a perfect example — preferred lean vibrato's and sounds. For all the healthy roaring that took place, much of the ad hoc music had a curiously cool demeanor, directly related to the musicians' familiarity with and control over spontaneous forms.

The improvisers jammed in two quintets and a septet, and all nine played in a continuous set of overlapping duets and trios. Bassist William Parker played in all these combinations and his free walking, arco keening, sturdy attack and indefatigable rhythm gave the music much of its jazz orientation. His stamina and his ease with unpredictably unfolding forms should come as no surprise, given his six years with Cecil Taylor, yet the effortless way he blended with players who don't have jazz affiliations was remarkable. Steve Hunt works with Hal Russell's jazz-oriented NRG Ensemble, yet the drummer got into jazz only after being turned on to free music by Ayler's ESP classics. He too brought jazz rudiments and style to his playing, without neglecting the ametric freedom instant composing allows. Less driving but more radical was the "junk" percussion work of Turner, who plays drums, cymbals and assorted found objects, spread around him in a circle on the floor — he kneels to play — and who employs a wide variety of sticks, mallets, toy hammers, etc. for differing attacks. He also bowed, struck and scraped long sheets of brass, folded and bent into odd shapes and mounted on cymbal stands. The snap and crackle of his (and Hunt's) small metal objects gave the music its strongest European flavor.

Only one set went on way too long and some of the music was downright inspired (even if you could say, as at least one scoffer did, 'it's been done'). One player rightly chided Wright for neglecting to invite any of Philly's black jazz musicians — mallet keyboardist Bill Lewis attended one concert, but hadn't been asked to play — a regrettable omission, yet otherwise this was an ambitious and highly successful mix of players.

Of the established groups on hand, most interesting was Philadelphian Jimmy Stewart's **Kuntu**: the altoist plus 20-year associates Clarence Bradley (trumpet) and Lamar Prince drums), plus five young players (synth and violin, saxes, flute, cello and bass) with Stewart for up to six years. Conductor/cheerleader Stewart believes in skipping the heads to get to the solos, letting forms reveal themselves in that context, and Kuntu's music had a dense fabric, condensed energy and a pithy, elliptical nature — a complex weave of under- and overlapping textures — at times suggesting links with Bill Dixon's and Sun Ra's musics. Sets by Washington noisemakers **Cool and the Clones** and North Carolina's **F.A.R.T. (Eff-Art) Ensemble** were marred by the spotlight-hogging and tyrannical direction of head clone Eric Ziarco, and the windy, self-consciously arty posturing of the Carolinans: Jerry Lewis comedy at a "Lawrence of Arabia" pace.

The noise trio **Borbetomagus** expanded their lineup to include an electric bassist and a rapper/turntable spinner, who added little to the two sax/feedback guitar din produced by the principals. Wright's Saxophone Soup — a spirited, unbrakable colloquy of about 15 saxists wandering around a large room — was rather like a cocktail party at which peripatetic spectators could eavesdrop on numerous musical conversations, and which threatened never to end. Here, Borbeto saxophonists Jim Sauter and Don Dietrich demonstrated not only how clearly their baritones could cut through the wall of sound, but how versatile their playing can be outside of Borbetomagus' disturbingly intense, sometimes forced onslaught.

— Kevin Whitehead

JAZZ PARTY
Minneapolis, Minnesota
September 14 to 16, 1985

Reed Mackenzie, an attorney, and John Stevens, a businessman, wanted to hold a party in Minneapolis — a jazz party. The party was held last September 14-16 and it was a helluva party.

ROGER TURNER (Photograph by Dennis Austin)

Twenty-four of the greatest names in jazz came to the party and played up a storm at four concerts. Persons who bought a ticket to attend all concerts paid $125, and the tickets sold out. The final concert, at the Carlton Celebrity Room, almost sold out and was a benefit for the Twin Cities Jazz Society.

"It was the greatest jazz event I've ever attended," said one ticket holder. And that comment was typical of the reaction to this first-ever party in the Twin Cities. (The party was something akin to Dick Gibson's bashes in Colorado, but the number of jazz musicians was not as great).

From the first notes of ***I Want To Be Happy*** played at the Holiday Inn Downtown, where the Saturday and Sunday concerts were held, until the final notes of ***The Saints*** with all 24 of the jazzmen joining in, the jazz party featured some of the best jazz you could hear anywhere... a Kool jazz festival, Montreaux, or anywhere.

The first set, featuring Billy Butterfield, trumpet; Peanuts Hucko, clarinet; Bob Wilber, soprano sax; George Masso, trombone; Ralph Sutton, piano; Jake Hanna, drums; and Milt Hinton, bass, turned out to be one of the best of the day. Besides ***I Want To Be Happy***, the group played ***Keepin' Outta Mishief Now*** and ***My Honey's Lovin' Arms***.

All sets lasted a half-hour, and each set consistently featured just three tunes. Only one went over, and that was a fine session featuring Red Norvo. The extra tune that set was Duke Ellington's ***Dancer's In Love***, which featured Red, who must be nearing 80 but still plays like he was in his prime.

There were some highlights during the three-day Jazz Party, but not many because the music was so consistently great. Some of the best moments during the Saturday afternoon session were the duo piano work of Ralph Sutton and Dick Hyman on ***You Took Advantage Of Me*** and ***Sweet Georgia Brown***. They were so good, the entire crowd stood up.... a standing ovation... and cheered.

Also, Bob Wilber's solo on Irving Berlin's ***Soft Lights And Sweet Music*** was especially memorable as was Marshall Royal's sax solo on ***Broadway***. The sixth set Saturday afternoon featuring Clark Terry, trumpet; Marshall Royal, alto sax; Al Grey, trombone; Al Cohn, tenor sax; Dick Hyman, piano; Mel Lewis, drums and Jack Lesberg, bass, was a bit more modern than the other sets which were more mainstream and traditional. In fact, many of the 24 invited jazz guests were of the traditional jazz to mainstream mould. Mostly, they were the senior citizens of jazz, with just one youngster, bassist Brian Torff, who was magnificent in all of his appearances.

The modern set was especially good with ***I Thought About You*** and ***Lester Leaps In*** going well with the ***Broadway*** featuring Marshall Royal. Only two tunes were repeated during the Jazz Party — ***I Want To Be Happy***, which kicked off the party and was played on the final night at the Carlton. And ***Hindustan*** was played twice, with the one played by Billy Butterfield, Flip Phillips, Peanuts Hucko, Carl Fontano (solo by Carl), Ralph Sutton, Gus Johnson Jr., and Milt Hinton being an exceptional barn-burner with everyone taking turns and doing well, followed by a fantastic ensemble ending.

At the finale Monday night, a tribute to Cootie Williams, who had just died, was especially moving and tight. It was exceptionally well-played... in the groove. The tune was ***Don't Get Around Much Anymore***.

One of the enjoyments of the Jazz Party was the great variety of tunes heard... everything from ***Monday Date*** to ***Rainy Day*** (with a great solo by guitarist Herb Ellis), to ***Sheik Of Araby, Take The A Train*** and ***Makin' Whoopee.*** Bassist Milt Hinton said the Jazz Party was wonderful, because "it was like a big reunion. And everybody had a great time, the musicians, the audiences, even the hosts" who figured they would lose money on the party, but didn't lose that much because of the sellout. What made the party so great was the quality of jazz, and the chance to hear so many fine combinations of the top jazz musicians in the world. The whole program, put together by bassist Jack Lesberg, was unrehearsed. But listeners would never have known that. Instead, the jazz music came off like a well-rehearsed symphony orchestra. The rhythm sections deserve a special kudo for their driving rhythm throughout the program.

Because of its success, and because Reed Mackenzie and John Stevens like doing such things, the chances are excellent that another Jazz Party will be held in Minneapolis next year. Probably bigger and better. Let's hope so.

— Ron D. Johnson

SPECIAL EDITION / DIRTY DOZEN BRASS BAND
Le Spectrum, Montreal
October 8, 1985

WOODY SHAW QUARTET
Le Grand Cafe, Montreal
September 19, 1985

After the early summer's splurge with our own festival, the whole scene usually subsides into its quiet routine with our own local groups and an occasional headliner brought in for a one night stand. But things just might be different for this year. As reported at the end of my article on the last Montreal Jazz Festival, the organizers were ready to reinvest their financial surplus by booking name bands to our city throughout the year.

Despite the small note of pessimism on which I concluded by review, I am happy to report that they managed to set up an interesting double bill, with Jack de Johnette's **Special Edition** as the main attraction. Basically, the band has not changed, except for the replacement of David Murray by Greg Osby, and their repertoire is more or less the same as on their last release "Album Album" on ECM. The one new piece was the opener, Duke Ellington's ***Take The Coltrane***.

Even though the format was almost the same as their previous appearance here (back in July 1984 at the Festival), the overall effect of their concert was not as strong. In the first place, the music seemed a little tired, as though they had been playing it for too long; when you play the same material for close to a year and a half this is bound to happen, even to the most inspired of musicians. Mind you, all of the players are very adept and did very well, but the performance just lacked a bit of gutsiness, which was the case of their last show here. On that occasion, the explosive David Murray really stirred the group up with his powerful playing and that made a big difference. One should also bear in mind that the material was brand new at the time, so it had a freshness and vitality that a repeat performance cannot replicate.

The first part of the show seemed a little pedestrian, but the latter half became a little more inspired, in particular Howard Johnson's sublime arrangement of ***Monk's Mood***. As for the newcomer Greg Osby, he occupies the chair John Purcell had in the previous edition, playing clarinet, alto and soprano saxes. Though he sounded a bit hesitant at the beginning, he hit his stride with a rather long but imaginative solo on the leader's ***Third World Theme***. John Purcell, for his part, has taken up Murray's place, mainly on tenor but with one solo on bass clarinet. As a multi-instrumentalist (he plays nine different horns), he is one of today's most fluent players, and his contributions were effective though not as expansive or energetic as on previous occasions. Howard Johnson is a masterful baritonist, highly underrated to use the old cliche, and no slouch on tuba either, despite the fact that his sound got lost at times in the loudness of the band. Rufus Reid and Jack de Johnette are one of the most solid teams in the business, no question about it. Be he on acoustic — or even on electric — bass, the former always gives the necessary support to keep things moving, which is also the case of the leader who is always in complete command of his band, both at the drums and at the piano. Despite his muscular drumming, he never comes across as overtly showy or wanting to be in the spotlight all the time, as is the case of many drummer-led groups.

On the whole, the music was well-executed, but it did not quite have the urgency that would have made it a ***special*** performance. By the way, this was the band's last concert before an extended break until next spring, at which time they are supposed to record a live album for a new label. Yes folks, you heard it here first!

As for the opening set of the night, the **Dirty Dozen Brass Band** from New Orleans came across as a highly professional group whose ensemble work is very slick and remarkably tight. In the tradition of the old style marching band, there is a tuba player puffing away as well as a bass drum and snare drum

player instead of the traditional string bass and floor drum set. But don't think for a moment that this outfit is a dixieland band: in fact, it is more of an updated version of the style based on very modern sounding arrangements, but with the energy and infectious enthusiasm of a Mardi Gras parade.

Their repertoire is unusual, in that they have a penchant for combining unexpected tunes with humorous results, such as a rendering of the theme from the old "Flintstones" cartoon show with an insert of the ***Star Spangled Banner*** at the bridge. Moreover, they played Michael Jackson's ***Billie Jean*** as a joyful romp and ***Blue Monk*** in a delightfully swinging tempo. In their own style, they give a very convincing show with a good measure of solo space given to each of the three saxophonists, two trumpeters and one trombonist.

Even though the evening was one of the rare special events of the fall, it was not the only bright spot. During September, Montreal's Le Grand Cafe lined up a series of performers to perk up the otherwise calm jazz scene. Starting off with **Pat LaBarbera**'s post-Coltrane tenor, ex-Gary Burton sideman **Tiger Okoshi** came in for the second week, followed then by one of the top trumpetists, **Woody Shaw**, for a five day engagement. All of these performers were accompanied by some of our best mainstream Canadian talents, **Gerry Fuller** (drums), **Neil Swainson** (bass) and local pianist **Fred Henke** being the backup trio during the latter's gig.

For Woody Shaw, it seemed quite strange to have him backed up by a "local" group, given the fact that he has had his own bands touring with him up until recently. Moreover, it was intriguing for me to see him just in a quartet without the benefit of another horn. In any event, I have always been leery about quartets with just a trumpet on the front line since the brassier and ringing sound of the instrument does not convey the variety of textures that a saxophone does, for instance. However, it is this very challenge that Woody Shaw is willing to take on and, judging by the results of his recent performance, he has helped me to overcome many of my own reservations about this particular setting.

In both of the sets I heard, he more than aptly demonstrated how much of a stylist he is on his horn and how inspired a musician he is. Like many others, I have long admired Woody Shaw, not only for his technical abilities, but, more importantly, for his overall musicality. When you think of it, the most important component in music is personality and Woody Shaw has that ingredient: be it in his solos or in his compositions (like the very original dedication to the classical composer Zoltan Kodaly simply called ***Zoltan***), he never fails to be his own man by always making a statement. Even when it comes to ballads, the hardest thing to do well on trumpet, he shows great panache by effectively spreading his phrases into rhythmic vignettes. In fact, I know of very few musicians who use silences as well as he does; they do not come across as simple pauses for breath, but they seem to be part and parcel of his musical discourse.

In essence then, his craft shows plenty of maturity, and it was well supported by each of his three accompanists who also chipped in with good solos. Though Shaw was the leader, in all senses of the word, he still gave a lot of room to his cohorts, thus making it a well-rounded group, as though they had been playing together for quite a while. Combining intelligence, energy and an individual sound are the trademarks of Woody Shaw and he never fails to make the most of them. After all, when you receive endorsements by legends like Dizzy Gillespie and Miles Davis, you have the right to believe in your own talents, right?.

— Marc Chenard

OLIVER JONES

Winnipeg Art Gallery
October 18 & 19, 1985

The Jazz Riddell series, sponsored by the University of Winnipeg Students's Association, has in its four years of operation, brought to Winnipeg such jazz greats as Michel Petrucciani, McCoy Tyner and Dizzy Gillespie.

This sunny October weekend was a continuation of that tradition, as the series' fifth season opened with a concert featuring the John Stowell Quartet, the new Alberta-based Jim Pinchin Quintet, and Montreal's treasured pianist, Oliver Jones.

John Stowell's group, consisting of Stowell on guitar, Jay Thomas on trumpet and saxophones, Bruce Phares on acoustic bass and Jeff Cumpston on drums, opened the evening with the classic ***My Funny Valentine***. Stowell made his electric guitar sing beautifully, displaying all the virtuosity that has brought him to the jazz world's attention in recent years. The band played six songs, including one bebop tune, and ended their set with Cannonball Adderley's bluesy ***Scotch And Water***.

The Jim Pinchin Quintet put in a solid performance, with Pinchin's alto and tenor saxophones dominating their experimental sound. With Bob Tildesley on trumpet, Bill Emes at the piano, Larry Mollerup on standup bass and the self-taught and talented Kjell Gjertsen on drums, the band played a short, but interesting set consisting of some originals as well as a couple of Thelonious Monk covers. Pinchin has been playing professionally for ten years, but this is his first major tour as a bandleader, and he evidently enjoys the freedom this allows him.

Following a twenty-minute intermission, it was **Oliver Jones'** turn. He sat down at the piano and without saying a word, proceeded to impress the approximately 280 jazz aficionados present that Saturday evening with a thoughtful, majestic rendition of ***Emily***, interjected with less formal phrases. Jones' hands moved from nimble-fingered lightness to forceful keyboard pounding with little apparent effort, and always with a clearly defined sound.

He introduced the next composition as a medley of "one of my very favorite composers — Mr. Gershwin." Pulling phrases and passages from such old favorites as ***I Got Plenty O' Nuthin', Rhapsody In Blue*** and ***I Got Rhythm***, these embellishments and variations on Gershwin's themes were smooth and enjoyable, and provided an indication of Jones' strong swing and boogie-woogie roots.

Something For Chuck, an original Jones composition from his recent "Lights of Burgundy" album, was his next selection. This was written for the late Chuck Peterson, a man Jones fondly recalls as his chaperone in his early days of touring. It is very definitely a swing piece, drawing on traditional chord progressions and rhythms, but with some unusual and delightful trills and arpeggios melded beautifully into the structure. This was followed by ***Misty***, a beautiful piano poem.

Jones's mastery at the keyboards includes the ability to manipulate the audience's moods without ever jarring them. While ***Misty*** was romantic, soothing and peaceful, the next choice was a rollicking, swinging melody punctuated by sharp staccato exclamations and shrill questioning trills layered over a firm

baritone chord base. It was real old-time, toe-tapping, finger-snapping, swinging fun guaranteed to make you smile.

Fulfour Street Romp was introduced as a piece that contained "a little boogie-woogie, a little swing," and it did, combining strong bass chords with a joyous soprano melody. This sweet, playful composition brought to mind images of that street where both Jones and Oscar Peterson grew up, and had both Jones' and the audiences' feet tapping the whole way through.

The two final selections of the evening were equally swing-oriented. Although these involved very complex and quick fingering, Jones' talented hands never once hesitated or struck a wrong note. He moves from fast tempos to slow, from major to minor, scattered staccatos to melodic fluidity with professional precision and touching dedication.

The heavier, quicker motif of Jones' final offering was marked by a swing base that integrated various tempo changes and surprise flourishes thrown in amongst more sombre notations. Then with a final triumphant sweep of the keyboard, Oliver Jones concluded his solo performance.

Jones says that he prefers to play in his usual trio format, because although he has "a lot of independence playing solo, I love to have the swinging background behind me.... But I enjoy playing solo, and up until two years ago, solo was something I never did."

In fact, up until five years ago, playing jazz was something he never did, but in that time, his progression and output has been prolific. He has put out three records, the most recent being his solo effort, "Lights of Burgundy," on the Justin Time label, and has been performing steadily in his native Montreal and elsewhere.

Before his switch to jazz, Jones played pop-schlock music with Ken Hamilton and a small revue in posh Puerto Rican nightclubs. But after sixteen years of doing this, he decided it was time to move on. "I was getting close to 50 and I thought I wouldn't make a very good rock 'n' roll star," he recalls, adding that "Playing-wise, something was lacking... my first love was always jazz — it was a normal progression although it took many years."

Jones plays four nights a week at the venerable Biddles club in Montreal, a place he considers to be his "home base." On his off nights he works with "different bands, big bands" in the city. He finds that his jazz roots are embedded in the 'forties — he "started in the swing era, boogie woogie, that was the jazz of the day. I always had a feel for jazz, but I never had the opportunity to perform it" until his return to Montreal in 1980.

There are always the inevitable comparisons to Jones' childhood neighbour, Oscar Peterson, and Jones lists him, along with Bill Evans and Errol Garner as his main influences, and Miles Davis as one of his favorite musicians to listen to in what little spare time he has.

The Jones agenda for the next six months is quite full, beginning with the recording of a live album in Halifax at the end of his present cross-country tour. Following that is "one of my favorite things to do — working as organist for the Jubilation Gospel Choir" on an album scheduled for release in early December. Also in the works is a trip to the exotic locales of India, Singapore and Bangkok and then on to New Zealand and Australia. By the time next August rolls around, he hopes to be in Switzerland for the Montreaux Festival.

In the relatively short time that Jones has been playing jazz, he has won the hearts of both critics and audiences across the continent and beyond. Certainly a part of this must be attributed to the fact that, as he says, "This is a second career for me, but jazz was always my first love." — *Michelle Beauchamp*

FESTIVAL DE MUSIQUE ACTUELLE
Victoriaville, Quebec
October 2-6, 1985

It is interesting to note how prevalent the festival phenomenon has become in all of the performing arts. Over the last ten years, all kinds of events have literally mushroomed into full-fledged artistic (and commercial) successes. A lot of today's jazz festivals have come of age in a way that they are recognized as institutions. But every institution also has its downside: by definition, an institution is a highly structured organization that perpetuates itself ***within its own parameters***, rarely if ever challenging its own existence. All this to say that once the institution has proven its own viability (especially in economic terms), it has to replicate its successes, or at least a certain format, in order for it to survive.

But there is a paradox here: as festivals try to attain a degree of stability by developing a specific formula, they owe their very existence to something that is intrinsically unstable and unpredictable by nature. More than ever, music, as a cultural product, is expanding its horizons beyond mere conventions or traditional imperatives. As an indicator of the rapidly changing state of the art, one can observe a growing number of "alternative festivals" whose goal it is to present not only a diversity of musical genres, but, more importantly, the challenges inherent to a new aesthetic.

Curiously enough, these festivals take place in smaller localities, untarnished by the urban mentality that "bigger is better." And that might just explain why places like Willisau, Moers or Chateauvallon are chosen: because the event becomes a community happening and not just a cultural manifestation that gets swallowed up by the urban surroundings of a big metropolis. As a case in point, you can go around a big city without ever knowing that a festival is going on, but in a small town it's much easier to notice its presence, if the organizers are smart enough to put up banners on the main street or in the stores.

This small example illustrates very well the community spirit that a festival can stir up. Moreover, it helps me to introduce a new arrival on the festival scene, Victoriaville's Festival de Musique Actuelle. Before you go looking into your atlases, suffice to say that this town is situated some 175 km north of Montreal, on the way to Quebec City, and that its main claim to fame is that of being a major producer of hockey sticks! By all accounts, it might not have the makings of a major cultural centre, but it is still a worthy accomplishment to have this community turn into an unlikely testing ground for an eclectic, if not daring, artistic venture, which brought some highly unusual acts to an area largely unfamiliar with most of them.

Amongst the headliners, there was **Roscoe Mitchell's Sound Ensemble, Fred Frith** (both solo and with **Skeleton Crew**), **Arto Linday's Ambitious Lovers, Ernst Reyseger & Gerry Hemingway, Ned Rothenberg & Robert Dick** and no less than **Willem Breuker's Kollektief**, a major coup for the organizers, since this was the only Canadian stop on an extended U.S. tour. Moreover, many Quebecois groups were featured as well as Canadian ones, the **Bill Smith Ensemble** and the **Bendsza-Wherry Duo** from the Newfoundland Sound Symposium with guest **Bill Rickert** on guitar. Incidentally, every festival seems to adopt a particular musician as a resident artist and Victoriaville's choice was the Brazilian percussionist **Nana Vasconcelos**, who gave both a solo performance and workshops.

What is striking about this festival is the diversity of the programme. For instance, classical ensembles like **I Musici** of Montreal and contemporary flautist **Lise Daoust** were included as well as the opening night concert which was an "evening at the opera" so to speak. Though these concerts are extraneous to our own particular interests in creative music, it is still worth mentioning as it gives credence to the organizers' intentions of presenting the widest possible assortment of musical genres. Michel Levasseur, as president and founder of the festival, must be congratulated for his unrelenting perseverance in bringing this festival from a shoe-string budget operation at its inception to an important event supported by government and corporate funding in this, its third year of operation. All praise is due to the whole team who brought it together, especially when they do not enjoy all of the resources available in a big city.

During my stay, I was struck by the intermingling between the performers and the audiences. In contrast to the big festivals which are interlocked in a circuit that allows many of the "big names" to tour on a very tight schedule, no such pressure can be felt here. As a matter of fact, many of the artists are invited to stay over after their performances so they too can become part of the festivities. To that effect, a large "parade for peace" was planned to wind through the town, involving both young and old, townspeople, visitors and participants alike, but the unfriendly October rains did not dampen the mood of the day since the organizers relocated the whole event in a school gymnasium, where no less than the Kollektief warmed up the audience just after their arrival from a gig the night before at the Village Gate. This is indeed a very positive sign which helps to abolish the all too stringent line between the performers and the audience. A most welcome departure then from the formal concert setting.

Beyond the generalities of the festival, it is also essential to consider the specifics of the performance. Apart from the auditoriums in the local high school and college, which were mainly set aside for local musicians, the main attractions were held in a gymnasium type hall called Le Grand Cafe while a series of more intimate concerts took place in a small chapel at the rear of the town's main church. At the Cafe, there was an early show at 5:00 and an evening double bill starting around 9:30, all of which were very well attended (in the latter

OLIVER JONES (Photograph by Nick Procaylo)

case at least). This was quite amazing considering the twelve dollar cover charge, which is not exactly affordable in a region of high unemployment.

Leading off in the main attractions was Roscoe Mitchell's Sound Ensemble. Sharing the front line with trumpeter Mike Mossman, Mitchell was by far the dominant personality of the evening, playing exhaustive solos which demonstrated the depth and breadth of his creative abilities. On alto, his sound is both very warm and full, yet energetic and edgy in some instances, which is the case of his soprano, and his flute playing shows a lot of brilliance and bird-like sounds. The trumpeter was not overpowering, though effective in offering more condensed solos, always to the point but never spectacular. The rhythm section, consisting of A. Spencer Barefield on guitars, Jaribu Shahid (basses) and Tani Tabbal (drums), were well attuned to the proceedings, each of them having their interesting moments, particularly the guitarist. Overall, the music had much more of an inside feel (less exploratory or conceptual but straight ahead swing tempos for the most part). In one piece, they even broke into an outright heavy funk piece.

The following evening was a double bill between Fred Frith with Skeleton Crew (more on his solo performance later) and Arto Lindsay's Ambititious Lovers. The former group is quite reminiscent of the progressive rock genre coming out of Britain during the 70s, which is no surprise since Fred Frith was a long-standing member of the band Henry Cow until its demise in the late 70s. Most of what this new band does is rooted in the song form (with vocals), heavily influenced by folkloric materials and a strong rhythmic pulse, but spiced up with unexpected sound clusters and effects. Tom Cora (cello, guitar, drums) and Zeena Parkins (synthesizer, harp, accordion) combine varied textures with Frith's guitar and other miscellaneous contraptions to create a basically familiar sound with a few unexpected twists thrown in for good measure.

In somewhat of a similar vein, Arto Lindsay is drawing a lot of attention for a very aggressive sound influenced by the hard rock style. However, this reviewer does not really feel comfortable in having his ears assaulted by harsh amplified sounds and loud hollers. In all fairness, after having seen five concerts that day, my ears were ready for a break by the time the sixth one came.

Last, but certainly not least, was the highlight of the festival and one could certainly qualify the anxiously awaited appearance of Willem Breuker's musical circus as a complete success for the festival. Before that, we got a different kind of musical zaniness, dished out by the American percussionist Gerry Hemingway and the Dutch cellist Ernst Reyseger in the first half. All through their set, they developed a very good empathy, the former being very subtle, so much so that you could hardly hear him rubbing the skins of his drums at times, the latter being very humourous such as playing his cello on his knee like a guitar. The music itself covered a lot of ground, from the blues to latin-like melodies right out to spontaneous sound production.

After the intermission, the Kollektief came out swinging with a two hour action-packed set chucked full of driving music, theatrical routines, loads of humour and plenty of surprises for an unsuspecting audience. For those unacquainted with the band, it's a dazzling experience, both aurally and visually, but the initiated might not get quite the same amazement due to a certain predictability in their routines. There is still plenty of good music to be heard, expertly performed by a well-oiled machine held together by the leader's charisma and outstanding compositional talents.

To compliment these bigger events, there were plenty of opportunities to enjoy other kinds of music with the benefit of a more intimate setting. The solo and duet concert given by flautist Robert Dick and reedman Ned Rothenberg was a wonderful example of a purely acoustical concert, devoid of any amplification systems. Set in the chapel, no more than 75 people were present, listening very intently to the fascinating sounds of these two superlative improviser/composers. Robert Dick's mastery of circular breathing and multiphonics is astounding: quite remarkably, he can sing an octave below the lowest C on bass flute and hold it as a pedal tone while he plays! As for Ned Rothenberg, I have already reviewed one of his performances (see ***Coda*** # 200), so I will only reiterate my appreciation of his very original style and say that he has achieved a very unique synthesis which is both complex yet very clear at the same time.

Elsewhere, there were some equally interesting concerts that were intimate more by fate than by design. Such was the case of the late afternoon show of **Bill Smith's Ensemble** with their new member Arthur Bull on guitar and guest drummer John Heward from Montreal. At that hour, it was expected that the audience would be small, nevertheless the "crowd" appreciated the contemporary chamber style of this quintet, further enhanced by the drummer's very empathetic support. Though cerebral in nature, their music is effective because of the concise solo statements of each member. In their own way, they have achieved a group discipline within a context of greater freedom.

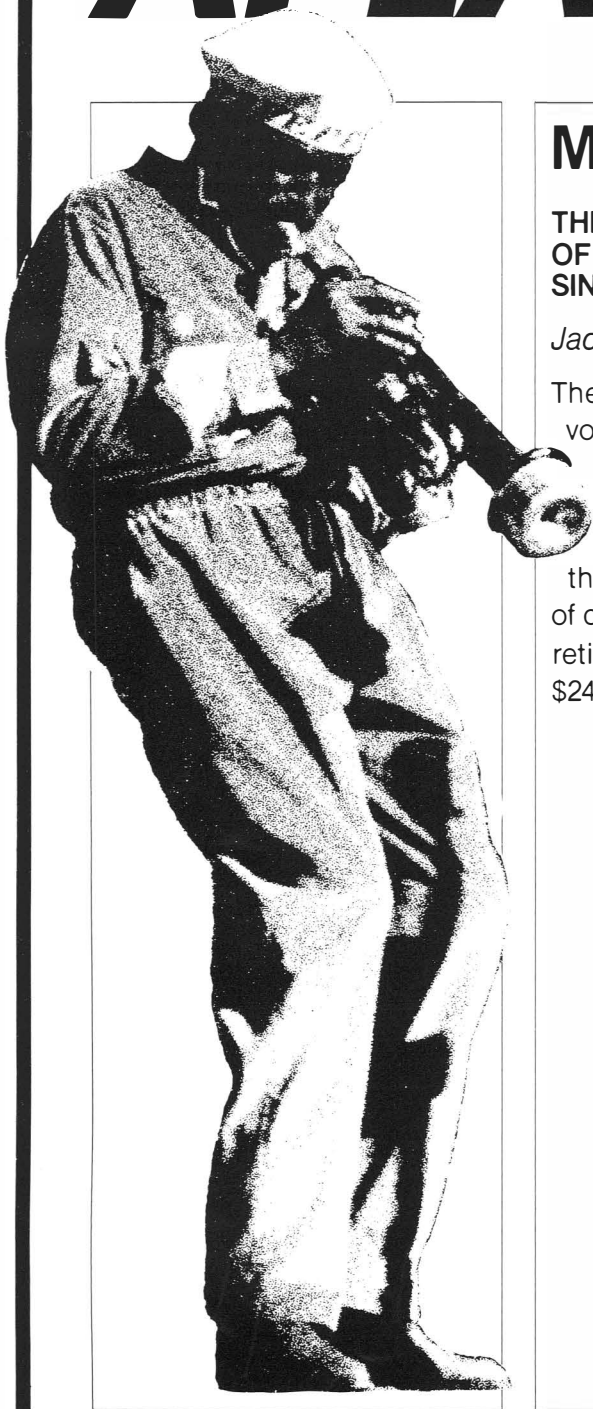
Achieving a greater freedom in musical expression is a chief concern of today's performers and the festival gave us many insights into the many avenues being explored. In similar circumstances to the Bill Smith Ensemble, **Paul Bendsza** (clarinet, flute, miscellaneous), **Don Wherry** (percussion) and **Bill Rickert** (guitar, harmonica, various) formed their efforts on the production of "micro sound-climates", for lack of a better term. Each piece was very atmospheric in nature, building up to a level of inner tension through the percussionist's use of cyclical rhythmic patterns. They also combined their efforts with a visual presentation of different series of slides blending into one another on a single screen. A very personal, albeit ethereal, exploration of sound textures.

Equally personal, but much more visceral, was Fred Frith's solo exploration, an exercise in sound production which did not fail to intrigue and bemuse a predominantly young audience at the local high school. Frith proves to be the iconclast par excellence for he uses everything he can put his hands on in order to create an "action-type" music, not unlike the "action-painting" concept which gave precedence to the process of creating rather than the goal of producing a design. Be it nails, twine, cloth, metal strings, bows, pingpong balls, nothing is discounted, as long as it can make a sound. Apart from this pure abstraction, he also alludes to more familiar tonal materials when he uses his guitar or violin. What is important to consider here is the challenge which forces the listener to redefine what a creative act is. It might not be great music (which isn't the point anyway), but it still is a whole mess of fun if you are ready to relate to a (healthy) dose of irrationality in our all too logical and structured lives.

Finally, mention must be given to our own local talents, though there was nothing particularly original or thought-provoking. From Quebec City, a quartet called **Ogane Sound** played in a neo-Coltranian contemplative mood that became redundant after a while, an all too pervasive trend in our provincial capital's jazz scene. A little earthier was **N'Dadje** (meaning meeting or encounter in the Wolof tongue), an African/Quebecois group whose main emphasis was more rhythmic than melodic, as expected in any case. Nice to dance to, which is what happened when the youthful crowd got up and boogied at the end, but it too was aimed at sustaining a mood with the heavy percussive sound rather than offering more dynamic or textural variety.

In light of the shows presented during this five day event, no two shows were really alike and that is surely indicative of the ever-widening scope of music as a whole, devoid of any labels or a priori categorizations. If one thing is to be gained from this festival, it is precisely this breaking down of barriers that have perpetuated long standing divisions which are either used to elevate or denigrate certain styles of music over others. Now don't get me wrong by thinking this is to be a miracle solution, but it certainly is a satisfactory venue for bringing some of the musics of the world a little closer to us. To describe this festival in a nutshell, I would use the French word "eclatement", which would translate as an "explosion" or "breaking up of", and this is what a "Festival de Musique Actuelle" should be about. — ***Marc Chenard***

AT LAST...



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