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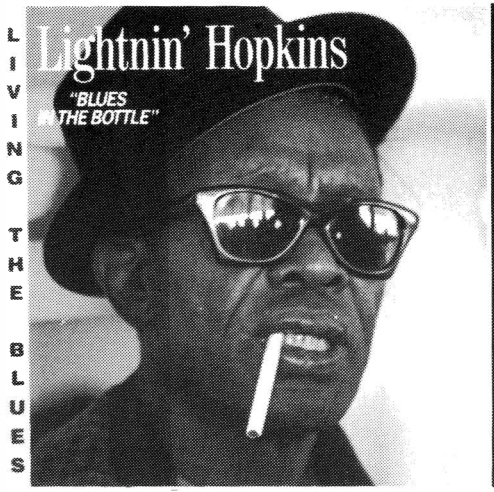

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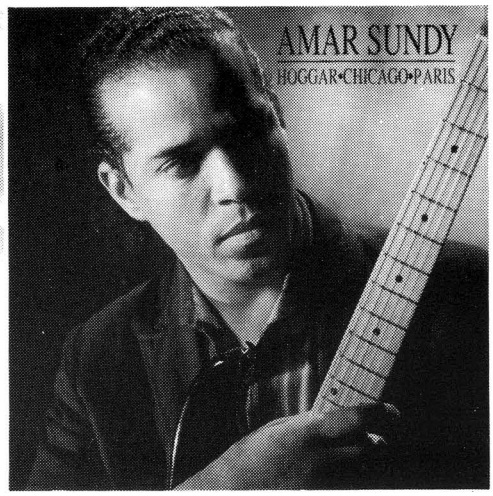

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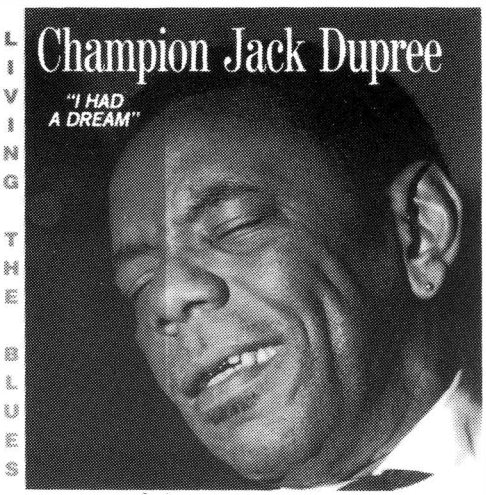

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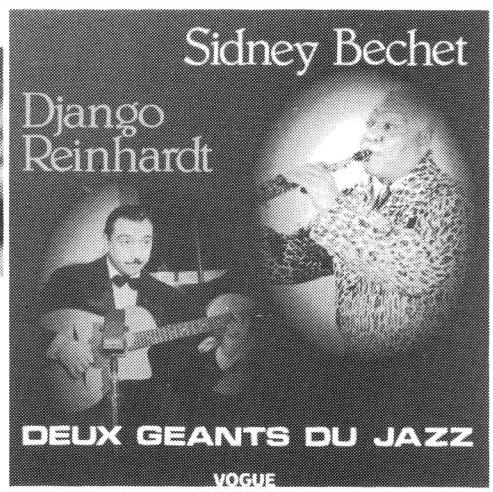

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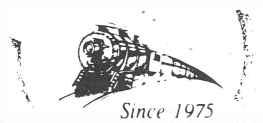

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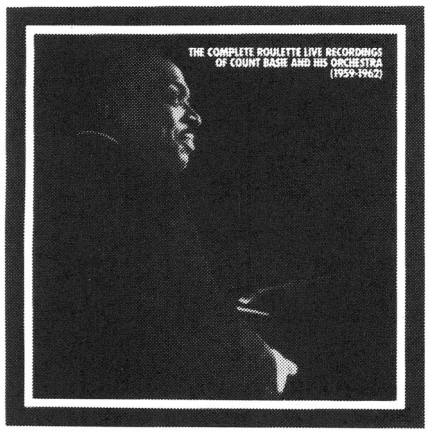

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CONTENTS

THE JAZZ CONNECTION

Many Asian Americans look toward African American music for inspiration and creativity. Jazz in particular has strong appeal for Asian American musicians who choose this music to express themselves politically, socially, and artistically. Here we will explore aspects of jazz that coalesce easily with the music of other cultures and ways in which traditional Asian music elements are integrated into jazz-based music. Specific musical examples by Asian American jazz artists are cited to point out the influence of African American music. Before identifying what the Afro-Asian connection is, a brief chronology of jazz performed by Asian Americans is useful.

BEGINNINGS OF AN ASIAN AMERICAN JAZZ SOUND

Jazz first took root among Japanese Americans on the West Coast and in Hawaii in the 1930s and 1940s. Jazz swing bands were in vogue. Many first and second-generation Japanese Americans continued to play swing jazz under oppressive circumstances, while confined to concentration camps during World War II. Swing bands played for dances held in the camps: the **Manzanar Jive Bombers**, of the Manzanar Relocation Camp in northern California, were the most renowned.

From the 1950s to the end of the 1960s, there was evidently little new jazz activity among Japanese Americans as they rebuilt their lives following the war.

In the 1970s, an Asian American jazz sound began to take shape in the hands of third-generation Japanese Americans. This generation chose a new musical direction by contributing to jazz-based improvisational music. Many of these musicians explored and incorporated musical concepts from Asian culture as a result of reaching inside themselves and being drawn to their Asian heritage as a source of inspiration.

During this period, traditional Japanese music played a great role for Japanese Americans in the development of their music. A group of San Francisco musicians, including **Russell Baba, Paul Yamazaki, Mark Izu** and **Robert Kikuchi**, studied Japanese court music, called **gagaku** , with **Mr. Suenobu Togi**, an original member of Japan's Imperial Gagaku Ensemble who lives in Los Angeles. This core of musicians has been instrumental in synthesizing traditional Japanese music elements into jazz-based music.

Sources of traditional Japanese music other than court music are **taiko** and **tsuzumi** drumming styles, folk song melodies, and the music of the **koto** (a thirteen-stringed board zither), **shamisen** (three-stringed plucked lute), and **shakuhachi** (end-blown bamboo flute).

Russell Baba, whose background includes the study of Japanese court music and **taiko** drumming, performed experimental, avant-garde music. Avant-garde jazzmen Ornette Coleman and Eric Dolphy also greatly influenced him.

Big band arrangements by the jazz artist **Toshiko Akiyoshi** include the use of Japanese **tsuzumi** drums as well as tonalities and rhythms that suggest Japanese music. a recent jazz composition by **Sumi Tonooka,** *Out of the Silence*, expresses her impressionistic sense of Japanese music. *Out of the Silence* depicts the Japanese American internment camp experience. The first movement is based on a **tanka** poem, called *Arrest*, written by an internee named **Sojin Takei**. The musical setting imitates the idiomatic musical style of the **koto** and **shakuhachi** as interpreted by Ms. Tonooka.

Gerald Oshita, a prominent musician also from San Francisco, developed a unique synthesis of traditional Japanese music, new music from European theatre, and avant-garde jazz. He inspired musicians in San Francisco, such as Baba, **Makoto Horiuchi**, and others, to reach deep inside themselves to develop their improvisational skills. These self-explorations led these musicians toward an awareness of their Japanese background and culture.

In the 1980s, traditional Chinese and Philippine music serve as important musical sources. These influences are present in the music of two contemporary jazz artists, **Fred Houn** and **Jon Jang**, whose works will be discussed later.

SOCIOPOLITICAL INTENTIONS

To understand why Afro-American music, and particularly jazz, has such strong appeal for Asian American musicians, it is important to investigate not only the musical attraction, but the sociopolitical implications of this genre.

The Asian American Movement, which began in the U.S. in the late 1960s, raised the political awareness of third-generation Asian Americans. In New York City, the pop-folk group **A Grain of Sand** was one of the first modern Asian American music groups to reflect the cultural and political views of this movement. This group also advocated solidarity among "third world" communities in the U.S.

Presently, there are attempts to create a contemporary Asian American expression that recognizes and respects the differences and integrity of various Asian cultures. The broadening scope of an Asian American expression reflects the growing diversity of the Asian population in the United States. The political overtones in this music continue to esscalate in response to what some have called the "hidden discrimination" against Asians in the U.S. today, resulting from the economic woes of this country.

Avant-garde jazz was one of the first jazz styles to incorporate non-western musical elements. An openness to world music was a musical expression of the avant-garde musician's vote of "no confidence" in ***Western Civilization And The American Dream*** (Kofsky 1970: 131). Musically, jazz players needed to transcend the source of their political and social oppression in the United States. They achieved this by looking for inspiration in the music of other cultures.

The initial Afro-Asian assimilation occurred in the music of John Coltrane and his group, as well as a few of his more devoted followers. Even before avant-garde jazz built up momentum, however, non-western endeavours included the African drumming ideas of Art Blakey, the Mideastern effects heard in Yusef Lateef's compositions, the flamenco and **cante hondo** influences heard in Miles Davis's music, and importantly, John Coltrane's "hypnotic, Indian-flavoured compositions of a free and passionate nature on soprano saxophone" (Kofsky 1970: 136).

The improvisational nature of jazz offers greater freedom of expression, both artistically and personally than other genres such as pop or folk music. The freedom of form, rhythm, and melody, especially in avant-garde jazz, make it attractive for more

experimental artists. This same freedom allows jazz to absorb musical elements from a diversity of cultures, including Asian cultures. From a political viewpoint, jazz is a musical idiom that can serve as a form of social commentary and ideology, expressing the need for ideological or social change.

Jazz presently serves as a medium for Asian American artists in expressing their social and cultural solidarity. The Pan-Asian concept of Asian American music emerged among musicians in San Francisco. Paul Yamazaki cites several musical influences that gave rise to this concept: 1) the Ali Akbar School of traditional Indian music; 2) traditional Pacific Island and Indonesian music, introduced at The Center for World Music; 3) gifted traditional Chinese musicians residing in Chinatown; 4) two electronic music centers, at Stanford University and Mills College; and 5) the strong blues scene in San Francisco's East Bay. Pan-Asian concepts of music are compatible with the basic nature of African American music, according to Yamazaki. He asserts that jazz's open structure and spirit enables it to absorb music from a diversity of cultures (Auerbach 1985: 39).

The San Francisco-based jazz artist, Fred Houn, proposes that the integration of traditional Asian music provides a bridge between one's traditional cultural heritage and contemporary experience as Asians in America. He feels that Asian American art and culture is a continuum that brings Asian Americans together in building their sense of being as a people with a positive and distinct identity. "Artists need to understand and express this whole continuum," Houn added. His interest in incorporating traditional elements comes from the need to create an Asian American musical art form that spans the continuum and pays tribute to the depth of Asian American and traditional Asian music heritages.

Another San Francisco-based jazz artist, Jon Jang, stated that his music is intended to be a general statement of life in which art and life are not separate. Much of his music concerns current issues of importance in the Asian American community, such as the protest against the racially-motivated murder of Vincent Chin in Detroit and the issue of redress and reparations for Japanese Americans incarcerated during World War II (Soe 1988:29). Jang's music reflects traditional Asian music influences that express Pan-Asian unity. His goal is to develop an Asian American sensibility that he feels is best served musically through the medium of jazz. To express this unity, he draws on not only traditional Chinese, but also Japanese and Philipino folk music.

TOSHIKO AKIYOSHI (Photograph by Gerard Futrick)

BLENDING TRADITIONAL ASIAN MUSIC WITH JAZZ

Reasons for choosing to draw on one's ethnic heritage as a source of inspiration are not always socially or politically motivated, but often personal and intangible. The creative response I had to learning to play the **koto** and being moved by the music I was playing inspired me to co-compose a jazz fusion piece for **koto**, electric piano, and electric guitar. Houn expressed a similar sentiment. He believes that to integrate traditional Asian elements into one's music, "you have to find something that deeply stirs you. Finding a music that emotionally resonates with you is the key in finding your connection to that music."

In his search for his Asian identity and his involvement in a Chinatown community, Houn heard folk music that Chinese immigratns listen to and sing. Hearing this music stirred something inside him as a Chinese American. He discovered a musical heritage that took him beyond western music and proceeded to study and use traditional Chinese music influences in his own compositions.

Artists approach the incorporation of traditional Asian music elements into jazz-based music in several ways. The use of folk melodies and pentatonic scales is widely applied. Imitation of the idiomatic playing style or timbral quality and colour of a traditional Asian instrument is another scheme. Applying parallel fourths and fifths in melodies is also a characteristic of Asian music. Other influences include the use of characteristic rhythms and accents or phrase structure.

The starting point for Houn is melody, more so than harmonies and rhythms. "Pentatonic melodies evoke a sense of primalness that resonates very, very deeply with people, even your most assimilated Asian Americans," he noted. Houn proposes that "the pristine quality of these melodies gives them a certain spiritual evocativeness and that this quality is inherent by the choice of notes and the nature of the melodic line." So he often begins by searching for such melodies, particularly ones that remind him of the blues or spirituals, because of their emotional resonance. He then composes chord changes to fit the melody. It is this linear thinking, in which chords are chosen to fit the melody rather than a melody found to fit the chords, that Houn describes as an important influence of the Afro-Asian connection in jazz composition.

Asian American musicians also employ the cross-cultural effect of imitating the timbre and colour of traditional Asian instruments on western instruments. Jon Jang states that using Western musical instruments, rather than traditional instruments that Asian Americans do not

necessarily identify with or know how to play, contributes to developing an Asian American music. An example of this approach is a piece by Jang in which he imitates the idiomatic playing style of the **yang-chin**, a Chinese hammered dulcimer, on the piano.

Musicians choose to base their melodies on pentatonic scales because of the prevalence of this tonal structure in Japanese and Chinese folk melodies. Folk melodies represent the music of the people and evoke a human quality and a rawness, most often associated with the blues. Artists choose certain Japanese pentatonic scales because they contain flatted tones or half steps between tones that link them to the blues scale. Jang, for example, uses the Japanese **kokinchohshi** scale in some of his work because it has what he calls a "bluesy feeling."

An important Afro-Asian link is the combination of music, dance, and literature, found not only in the performing traditions of Asia and Africa, but those of many non-Western cultures. Fred Houn's musical triology, ***Bamboo That Snaps Back,*** exemplifies the synthesis of poetry, dance and music. The second and third albums in this trilogy draw upon Japanese, Chinese, and Philippino folk music, presented within a jazz framework. The inspiration for this music is the result of Houn looking to traditional sources to understand the interrelationship between dancer, musician, and composer and the bond between artist and audience.

His use of poetry with music stems from the fact that in Asian theatre, the two are closely related. There is no separation between literature and the performing arts, as there is in Western cultures. Another source of the synthesis seen in Houn's work is the African tradition of combined storytelling, music, and dance in traditional societies. An adaptation of this blend is evident in the work of the Afro-American poets Langston Hughes, Amiri Baraka, and Jayne Cortez, who set their poetry to jazz. For Houn, the use of poetry with music is a Third World concept that rejects an academic view of the arts. His aim is to develop a more popular approach, in which the arts are not separated from one another and instead are combined to transcend western forms.

CONCLUSION

Empathy characterizes the Afro-Asian connection in the music of Asian Americans. To Asian American artists, jazz embodies the political, social, and artistic struggles of Afro-Americans. In this capacity, jazz serves as a musical model to Asian American musicians desiring to express their own social condition and experience. Jazz is a tool for artists in developing an Asian American music that expresses sociopolitical discontent and establishes an Asian American sensibility and aesthetic.

The receptivity of jazz to Asian music elements is encouragement for Asians in this country to adopt it as a medium through which they can explore the music of their cultural heritage and develop artistically. The openness of form in avant-garde jazz, as well as the spontaneous and improvisatory character of jazz in general, are elements that seem to suit the musical expression of Asian Americans. Asian Americans feel an affinity for the blues scale because it resonates closely to the expressive quality of Asian pentatonic melodies. In Fred Houn's work, a combined presentation of music, dance, and the spoken word links performing traditions that can be traced back to traditional societies in both Asia and Africa.

This study is a work-in-progress. The musical exploration of Asian Americans continues as they strive to reinforce their cultural identity and broaden their artistic parameters. Their music serves to both unify Asians in this country and establish an asian American esthetic. It is through the arts that Asian Americans believe they can contribute most to American society.

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SOME RECORDING MILESTONES IN ASIAN AMERICAN IMPROVISED MUSIC

Jon Jang has released three recordings under his leadership: ***Jang* (RPM 3), *Are You Chinese or Charlie Chan?* (RPM 5)** and ***The Ballad or the Bullet?* (AA 0001).** These recordings clearly chart Jang's development. The importance of the third release, ***The Ballad or the Bullet?*** is at least two-fold. First, it offers the pianist in the role of leader of a working ensemble, the 4 in One Quartet. Second, it is the first release on Asian American Improv Records, a company started by musicians, for musicians, and specifically as a venue for recordings of Asian American Improvisors. Most recently, Jang has been leading the Pan-Asian Arkestra, a big band featuring among others, **Fred Ho, Mark Izu** and **Anthony Brown**, which I have reviewed in earlier issues of **CODA**.

The Ballad or the Bullet? is a strong indication of the direction of Jang individually and to some extent the movement of Asian American musicians who often collaborate. Containing three original compositions, one by saxophonist / composer Fred Ho and an arrangement of two freedom fighter songs combined as one (*Bayan Ko / El Pueblo Unido. . .*), the recording states a unified principle that does not separate art / creativity (the act) with politics and culture (the idea). Featured with Jon Jang on *The Ballad or the Bullet* are **James Lewis**, bass; **Francis Wong**, tenor sax and flute; **Eddie Moore**, drums; with guests **Alejandra Diaz**, vocals (on *El Pueblo Unido. . .*) and **Fred Ho**, baritone and soprano sax on *Year to Slay the Paper Dragon.*

Glenn Horiuchi's sound is full of vitality. He is exploring the musical life force in a most dynamic and daring way. The compositions on his three recordings vary from songs of praise to expression of his cultural heritage (Sansei: 3rd generation Japanese-American). The three releases on **AsianImprov Records, *Next Step, Issei Spirit*** and***Manzanar Voices,*** explore the group process in that the accompanying musicians appear on all three recordings. The musicians are: **Leon Alexander**, drums, **M'Chaka Uba**, bass and **Taiji Miyagawa**, bass. On the three records, recorded between October 1987 and June 1989, the instrumental variations move from solo piano to piano / bass or piano / drum duos, to piano / bass / drums trio, quartets adding another bass.

Fred Ho is doing important work. His efforts in exploring non-western music forms, particularly those of east Asia, resemble a well spring. The maturity and vision in his creativity come from years of dedicated work. The activities in African American Creative Music (Jazz) are documented by two interesting recordings under the name of the Afro-Asian Music Ensemble (see accompanying discography). This work is about connectivity, not fusion, and is what sets Mr. Ho's work apart from the mainstream. He goes for the depth of understanding rather than the surface conditions of a given time. This vitality for understanding and absorbing different forms can also be heard in his recordings with the **Asian American Art Ensemble** (see accompanying discography).

Mr. Ho not only accepts challenges, he establishes them. When he could have easily settled into the role of a busy wind toting, multi-instrumentalist in Jazz ensembles and continued building his own, Mr. Ho took the stimulation of cultural expression back home. He discovered that the essence of tradition exists inside any musical form that has lasted. Through Jazz he found himself. It is this self-discovery that propels him into the musics of east Asia with no pretense about being Asian American. The fuel in his work is the fundamental commonalities, not the differences of detail. However, he does not ignore the detail, lest he lose special flavour. - *Brian Auerbach*

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Jon Jang, Four In One Quartet, ***The Ballad or the Bullet?*** AsianImprov 0001

Glenn Horiuchi, Next Step, AIR 0002; ***Issei Spirit,*** AIR 0005; ***Manzanar Voices,*** AIR 0006.

Fred Ho & Afro Asian Music Ensemble, ***We Refuse To Be Used and Abused,*** Soulnote 121-167; ***Tomorrow Is Now,*** SN 1117; with Asian Art Ensemble, ***Bamboo That Snaps Back,*** Finnadar 90558; ***A Song of Manong (Bamboo That Snaps Back, pt. 3)*** **with Kulintang Arts**, AIR 0003.

Mark Izu / Lewis Jordan, ***The Travels of A Zen Baptist,*** RPM 6.

FRED HOUN (Photograph by Gerard Futrick)

LARGER THAN THAT * ORCHESTRA RECORDINGS

"The big bands are coming back!"

So I was told on many occasions by my elders when I was a teenaged drummer. One may surely find many Shriners' bands still chugging through dusty arrangements of *Pennsylvania 6500* and *In the Mood* at geriatric gatherings, and many college stage bands, modelled on the Count Basie band but often failing to recapture its vigor and essence, struggle through Sammy Nestico charts.

Yet the ephemeral music of the 1930s and 1940s did not, and will not, reclaim massive popular sentiment. The big bands are not coming back. But the appeal of the large ensemble has indeed survived, as composers find themselves drawn to the large ensemble's musical possibilities and challenges. With this group of recordings (reviewed on CD), we find bright talents pushing back stylistic boundaries and transforming the large ensemble from a cut-and-dried dance unit to an entity of truly orchestral possibilities.

The New York Composers Orchestra, directed by Robin Holcomb and Wayne Horvitz, was founded in 1986 with the purpose of commissioning and performing new works for jazz orchestra. Note the appellation: not a big band, but an orchestra.

As composer, Horvitz likes to set up musical cells which are played repeatedly as foundations for improvisation. In *Prodigal Son Revisited* and *The House That Brings A Smile,* for example, Horvitz employs Philip Glass-like repetition and paints with a fairly limited harmonic palette.

Pianist Robin Holcomb's highly episodic composition, *Nightbirds: Open 24 Hours*, offers a study in contrasts. A lilting waltz melody contrasts harsh military cadences, and twittering-bird sounds offset the depth of low brass and baritone sax and an end-of-the-world bombast worthy of Berlioz's ***Symphonie fantastique.***

Marty Ehrlich uses chaos as a structural principle. During *After All,* trumpet and tenor sax trade solos over a chaotic rhythm section, culminating in a musical shouting session, all before the theme is stated. The drums/trombone duet between Bobby Previte and Ray Anderson during *Pliant Plaint* move from chaos to metrical time back to chaos.

Saxophonist Doug Wieselman provides two idiomatic yet effective pieces. His *Montana Section* retains hints of Aaron Copland and achieves a sense of hollowness as the ensemble produces a feeling of wilderness. *Interlude*, composed for jugglers of eggs, creates an atmosphere of carnival.

Composer and saxophonist **Norbert Stein** presents strikingly original music that rewards repeated listenings with **Die Wilden Pferde**. Each composition stands as an isolated unit within the structure of the whole, yet leads logically into the next and redefines the others through the course of listening.

Stein bases his "pata music" on musical cells which, although pre-conceived, leave room for spontaneous improvisation. One attractive quality of Stein's music is its muted, hushed quality. Tentative, muted brass open *Das Bankett*, for example, and *Von den Stillen Menschen* calls for a quiet clarinet to play in and around melodic trumpet and saxophone. During *Wunder, oh Wunder*, Ali Maurer's violin melody and Joachim Gellert's tenor horn accompaniment produce a pretty, minor-key theme, and for *Die Liebe eines Schmetterlings*, saxes and bones blend effectively.

Stein's sentiments obviously lie in the European-classical tradition. The brief *Ihme ja kumma* recalls medieval music as it blends Stein's soprano sax with Maurer's viol. The bittersweet *Hochseit im alten Kloster*, a mellifluous horns-only piece, invokes the spirit of Giovanni Gabrieli.

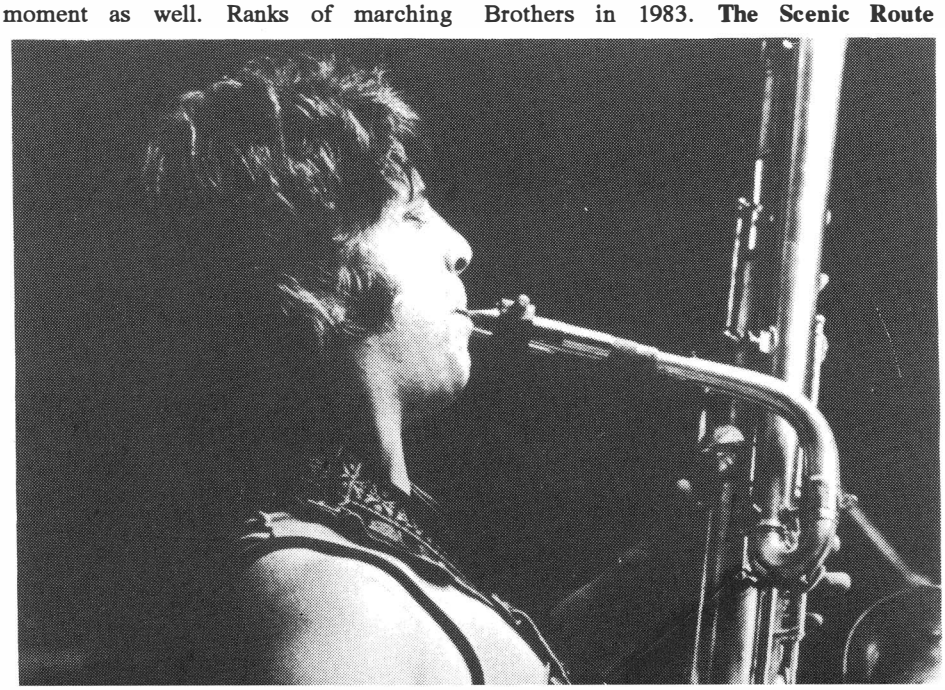
Stein enjoys the martial, "drummerly" moment as well. Ranks of marching percussion seem to accompany trumpeter Thomas Heberer during *Das Bankett* and during *Wilden Pferde*. Drummer Reinhard Kobialka's playing can recall the business and the carefully controlled rapidity of Buddy Rich as he sticks tomtoms quietly around the set.

Like Norbert Stein, **Vinny Golia** writes music favouring the abstract and the European impulse. With ***Pilgrimage to Obscurity***, Golia creates virtually limitless horizons for his truly orchestral writing.

Golia certainly has his dark moments. Despite its droll title, *Ted Williams Calls the Mick and Renders Touch Sensitivity Useless* sounds quite ominous, its martial beat urging on and dark-sounding Indian modalities. Similarly, *The Kreikan* menaces the listener with low brass and bass clarinet, and a wash of gongs and cymbals suggesting galactic forces worthy of Gustav Holst's ***The Planets***.

But Golia has a sense of humour, too, and reminds the listener of youthful outings to the circus. Carnival atmospheres prevail during *Views* and emerge during *Kreikan*, with its circus-like melody and a bump-and-grind gutbucket tenor sax solo.

Speaking of the carnival, the **Kamikaze Ground Crew** began as musical collaborators with the Flying Karamazov Brothers in 1983. **The Scenic Route**



REVIEWED BY PAUL BAKER

includes 17 sketches averaging about 3-1/2 minutes apiece and one extended composition. Although **KGC's** basic instrumentation is three woodwinds, three brass and percussion, no two arrangements sound the same. Most players double or triple on other instruments, so that they can claim to play about 40 instruments among them. The arrangements pit woodwinds against brass, with occasional input from synthesizer and electric guitar.

But chordal instruments are used sparingly. The resulting gritty sound bears some resemblance to the Dirty Dozen Brass Band, and a couple of the pieces seem to take the Dirty Dozen as a direct model. I especially enjoy *Walkabout*, with its funky synthesized drum patterns, and the James Brown-influenced *House Rockas*.

KGC's music is a study in absurdity. *March of the Floties* includes out-of-tune reeds suggesting a Shriners band, a penny whistle solo, quotations from Ravel's *Bolero*, and an unearthly hooting created by blowing across soda pop bottles. The *Mystery Song* and *Diamonds are Just Glass* poke fun at the phenomenon of "society orchestras," those upper-crust dance bands that once graced the country club scene with their strumming ukeleles, saccharine saxophone sections, and rikky-tick drumming. A driving line played by trombone and tuba underlies a screaming sax-and-trumpet theme during *Funeral Procession*. The saxophones drone on and create an urgency that's somehow laughable.

Comic moments emerge throughout **The Walter Thompson Big Band's** ***Not for Rollo***, too, particularly during *String Being*, a parody of the 1940s hit *A String of Pearls*, with anguished, twisted voicings and unorthodox percussion.

Two compositions here I find specially interesting are *Blue Battle* and the title tune. The former pits the ethereal against the dense, as a gossamer statement by strings and woodwinds weaves into and out of percussion solos, then a random tuning-up event, and eventually an Ivesian conglomerate of many tonal centres. *Not for Rollo* threatens to be yet another variation on the big band-plus-strings formula, but instead evolves into something more adventurous, with a series of striking solos and some simulated "computer music", telegraphic note-strings forming an adhesive element bonding solos and section work.

Latino rhythms inform both the *Mango Tango* and *Breakfast Head*. But, again, not what you might expect. The familiar tango rhythm links solos by a freaked tenor, a snarly electric guitar, a strangled-sounding trumpet, and a manic call-and-response game between reeds and brass.

Thompson's music enjoys exploring the boundaries between complementary and conflicting lines. In *April 86*, for example, the sax and trumpet sections engage in border wars with each other and furnish gurgles and burps as trombone and trumpet mount a squealing contest. A fitting commentary on the childish cat-and-mouse game played by the U.S. and Iraq.

Of the ensembles reviewed in this group, **The Joey Sellers Aggregation's** ***Something for Nothing*** sounds most like the traditional "big band." I enjoy the hints of Thad Jones's orchestration that surface from time to time, as well as international flavours. *American Standard*, for example, gets away momentarily from predictable big band fare with its middle-East sounding parallel fifths and reedy cacophony.

But much of the material seems rather unadventurous. *Canadian Bacon* is a re-working of the *Milestones* model, and Jay-Gale recalls the standard, *It Might As Well Be Spring*. I find that the many lengthy back-to-back solos wearing a bit thin, and as a drummer, I find the drumming somewhat rote and uninspired.

The New York Composers Orchestra, *Music by Marty Ehrlich, Robin Holcomb, Wayne Horvitz, Doug Wieselman*, New World Records / Countercurrents NW 397-2

Norbert Stein Pata Orchester, *Die Wilden Pferde Der Armen Leute*, JazzHaus Musik JHM 39 CD

The Vinny Golia Large Ensemble, *Pilgrimage to Obscurity*, Nine Winds NW CD 0130

Kamikaze Ground Crew, *The Scenic Route*, New World Records, Countercurrents NW 400 2

Walter Thompson Big Band, Not For Rollo, Ottava 070487

Joey Sellers Jazz Aggregation, *Something for Nothing*, Nine Winds NWCD 0136

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VINNY GOLIA (Photograph by Michael Kelly)

LISLE ELLIS * RAPHE MALIK * GLENN SPEARMAN

The Art Gallery of Ontario * Toronto * March 6, 1991

Bassist Lisle Ellis's scheduled solo performance became something more (and less) than that with the addition of trumpeter **Raphe Malik** and tenor saxophonist **Glenn Spearman**. The two horn players joined the bassist for the second half of the performance and provided a brief introduction to Ellis by circling, in opposite directions, the walkway surrounding the Walker Court, the gallery's central square. The "environmental" introduction enscribed the perimeter, taking possession of the space with isolated bleats, flurries and vocal interjections. It served to focus the setting of the performance and its manifold ironies.

The Walker Court is a sunken square surrounded by steps leading up to a walkway. High formal arches on the square frame paintings on the walls of the outer walkway. The paintings are uniformly large abstractions, expressionist or geometric, and include works by Kline, Rothko, Frankenthaler and Stella. A disjunction between the neo-classical architecture and the liberating potency of the paintings is supplemented by an absurd touch: around the high walls of the "court", near the ceiling, are chiseled the names of Indian tribes in Romanesque lettering. At the corners of the walls, the names are divided (ALGO/NKIN; IROQ/UOIS); with no "heritage" connection conceivable, they are present only as things to be possessed, recorded, organized, **broken**.

In another historical account, the Walker Court (the court itself always on trial) has housed some of the most liberating musical performances in the city's history: a full scale Cage performance in the sixties; a brilliant solo appearance by Terry Riley in the seventies. The Court is a perennial image of our culture, a struggle between the will to contain, to frame, to "order", and the otherness of what someone once called "vital creation". The court and the art have achieved the truce of parasites, a reluctant symbiosis; requiring one another for life, each awaits with trepidation the death of the other, the special moment when the names of tribes will erode, the arches will sag into assymetry, or the paintings will become as blank and regular, as empty and authoritative, as the arches. The space is an interval to be played, and its relations are never more dynamic than when in the presence of strong music.

The performance of Ellis and his two guests was sufficient to engage the site's problematics of form, history, and authority, even the tentative construct of the Canadian. While the composition of Ellis's group was hardly dictated by the site, or planned for it, it coexisted and compromised with it, **spoke** with it. The problematics of Ellis's music, part of jazz's ongoing discourse on the premeditated and the spontaneous, the fixed and the decentered, the historicist and the liberating (a problematics of value), are issues that are already overt in the environment. The terms of reference in this music (above all else, the early work of Cecil Taylor and Ornette Coleman) are now almost as historically fixed as the paintings of Kline and Rothko, which on this occasion blinked out from behind folding screens (sound baffles?) in an elaborate game of cultural peek-a-boo. (The historical relationship between abstract expressionism and free jazz is a necessary one. Pollock's White Light and Coleman's Free Jazz grow larger and closer, though the former shrinks on each reissue of the latter.)

The solo bass portion of the concert, occupying about the first half, was the most arresting for Ellis's ability to maintain a dense evolving flow of musical material. His solo playing achieves a quality of selflessness (how to tolerate a "solo" concert that does not?) through a persistent commitment to the formation of the musical moment. The bass is capable of being many things (drum, drone, string quartet) and it is Ellis's special quality to go beyond effects and to pull these devices together into whole music; to manage to juxtapose and overlay a series of culturally fixed echoes ("Europe", "Africa", the "Orient") until they coalesce into a decentered attentiveness for player and listener alike, a suspension between tonal and timbral expectations and their dismantlings. Ellis's command of harmonics is a crucial component of this music, as a persistent suggestion of some other musics checks fixed listening. It is a music coming from and going to numerous places at the same time, a principle of exchange, a grand de-centered unstation. If at times the material was dictated by the particular resources and limitations of the bass (the built-in cycle of fourths; the four notes below the bridge, etc.), Ellis surmounted this, using them as continuity and as an authentic account of the "material" with which he worked, fusing and confusing things found with things made.

The trio performances, literal "readings" of four compositions, were far more uneven. Musical possibilities seemed undone by the formal constraints of the environment and a curious rigidity in the choice of material and its handling. The first two pieces, fixed firmly in the conventions of head, followed by solos with "rhythm," sounded as if parts--yes, the obvious ones, drums, perhaps piano--were missing. When Ellis maintained a densely chorded ostinato (a "bass" part) throughout one piece, there were simply no mobile, interactive elements in the music, no counterpoint, elaboration, or dialogue. The maintenance of basics, of roles, prevented anyone from being "free", from moving out through the arches of the square, from rupturing that perimeter as the group had managed in the introduction (even Ellis had managed to **arrive** playing). Lacking an environment of musical dialogue, Malik and Spearman appeared to be "soloing" in a way that Ellis, alone, had not. Shifts of voice within a solo (despicable and convenient historicizing, analogizing, **patron**izing, vocabulary of jazz criticism and, worse still, jazz: Malik's rapid transitions from Clifford Brown to Don Ayler; Spearman's from Don Byas to Albert Ayler, more fortuitously resolved in his ability to sound like both simultaneously: a mellow Ayler) did not lead to breakthroughs but seemed only abrasions, failures to cohere within a desire to cohere, rather than any willed rupture of the given. The music appeared as the sum of its parts and some parts were lacking.

The one piece that seemed to work was the most complex of the "heads," a chain of barely connected bits, some boppish, some anthematic, some poignant, that eschewed the determining given of the other works. These bits led to a thoroughly collective improvisation that was the only "group" moment to reach the promise of the performance's opening sputters: three fine improvisers engaged in the high speed response and disjunct that displaces the past in each instant in which music comes into being.

At their least constrained, free of ordained "composition" and the spotlighted identities of soloists, the players were joined by a voice on the gallery's public address system, no doubt announcing time, exits, and closure: the voice was appropriately measured, official, and quite incomprehensible. - ***Stuart Broomer***

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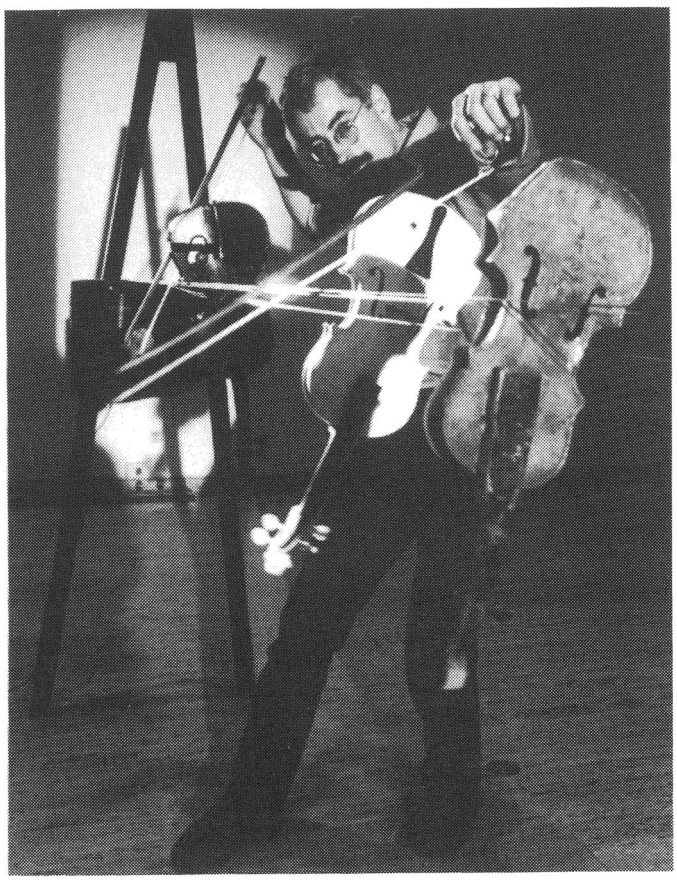
CONTEMPORARY MUSIC IN REVIEW

A mass of new releases by contemporary players have come our way in the past several months, ranging from the work of the much-publicized new traditionalists to the work of the little-publicized middle-aged progressives. Starting with one branch of the latter, we have several records from the ever-adventurous Free Music Production Label in Berlin. ***Viertans*** (FMP 1230) by the **Manred Schulze Blaser Quintett**, is a worthwhile session without a rhythm section recorded by five veteran German reed players. *Choral für Dr. Martin Luther King* strides in an organized chamber music pattern, and sounds rather like a more monolithic World Saxophone Quartet; the mournful and canonlike *B-A-C-H*, in four parts, experiments with building fragile layers of sound and then dissolving them with a gradual falling off in pitch. It's the understated process of gradually adding voices to build tension that emerges as the preeminent compositional method here, and the babbling crescendo sections which result can be effective. Although the improvised solo passages run a bit dry (i.e. emotionally or intellectually incomprehensible), the notated ensemble passages give the record great respectability. *Viertens* is the best cut, short on noodling and long on preconceived interplay. ***Cyberpunk*** FMP (1240) is the first FMP release by the electric quartet **Blauer Hirsch**, and their strong point is rhythmic drive. Most of the record can be gauged in terms of attack: *Fool In Plasma* taps like a woodpecker, and *Tappan Zee* burrows like a jackhammer. Trumpeter **Mich Gerber** is the anomaly in the guitar-driven group, with a soft, ruminative way of playing his long-held notes reminiscent of *Sketches of Spain*. Another trumpeter, **Manfred Schoof**, leads an excellent quartet through ***In A State Of Undress*** (FMP 1250). The operative reference here is the Ornette Coleman quartet, circa 1965-1970; if this isn't harmolodics, I don't know what is. Schoof, with errant hero **Peter Brötzmann** on alto saxophone, bassist **Jay Oliver** and drummer **Willi Kellers**, play at an effervescent pulse, with Schoof and Brötzmann taking off together on sweet, playful melodies independent of the rhythm. Every shot here is a great one. Jay Oliver is the kind of progressive anchor Scott LaFaro was to Ornette's group: no matter how far out the horns might wander (you can't keep Peter Brötzmann on a leash), Oliver protects the tonal centre by practically climbing on top of it, as in the ending to the brilliant, oddly titled *Urinato*.



A lot of space in this magazine has gone toward the praising of **Roscoe Mitchell**, but I'll say this about his Sound Ensemble's ***Live in Detroit*** (CECMA 1010/1011): it presents him as perfectly as anyone could hope for in two records. Included in these live 1988 recordings are his gentle raised-eyebrow R&B composition, *Snurdy McGurdy and her Dancing Shoes* (only one version, not two as the jacket professes), excerpts from Joseph Jarman's 1966 *Noncognitive Aspects of the City*, and a marvelous *Duet for Wind and String*. Each member is impressive in a tightly-reined manner. As usual, showing off is not allowed, and decidedly not the point. Valerie Wilmer's statement that the music of the Chicago AACM reflects the architecture of their city in its generous breathing space always seemed to me to apply best to Mitchell. Though he's involved with space, the concern isn't only the province of his Space Ensemble; here, in the more traditional jazz setting (though it is a very Apollonian jazz) of the Sound Ensemble, the weight of the group's silences is felt as deeply as the clutter passages (cf. Lester Bowie's *Me Bop*, side four of the album). The feeling of the music is studied and yet extremely human, both when swinging is the point and when it is not.

Of drummers that lead and write for their own groups these days, **Marvin "Smitty" Smith** and **Ralph Peterson** are leading the pack: both are recognized stylists on their own instruments, play on half a dozen of other people's record dates each year, and have one foot in jazz as a commercial proposition with the other in younger, perhaps more creative circles. As composers they vary. Smith's ***The Road Less Traveled*** (Concord CJ-325) is heavy on lukewarm, modal balladry, the kind of record that makes "straight ahead" a pejorative term. All the same, Smith surrounds himself with able players, notably former Jazz Messengers pianist **James Williams**, altoist **Steve Coleman**, and tenor saxophonist **Ralph Moore**. Smitty's drumming on the record is notably relaxed for someone given to overplaying in live performances; nevertheless, he's always a propulsive force, inclined to press rolls and increasing his volume before bridges like Chicago blues drummers. A high point is *Salsa Blue*, a latin composition with

JON ROSE (Photograph by Jane March)

particularly strong solos in the usual post-Coltrane vernacular. James Williams also makes an appearance on the first album led by the young drummer **Rich Thompson,** ***Eventually*** (Mark MJS-57629), another music school grad session verging on pedantry. I don't mean to put down Williams; his playing has a fragile, attenuated feel, shying away whenever possible from the oppressive note clusters one often hears in heavily chromatic jazz. But much of this record is a stylistic reference to music of twenty-five years ago, and strikes me as more conservative than, say, the music made by young players now discovering the New Orleans period. Williams, credited as co-leader, is one of the two standout players. The other is **Tom Christensen**, a young tenor saxophonist who gets credit for trying to insert life into sagging mush, and who contributes the vibrant *R-Tune*. Of drummer-led dates, I'd be more interested in **Ralph Peterson's** ***Triangular*** (Blue Note B1-92750) if only for the fact that it features the percussive pianist **Geri Allen**, one musician who really can play offense with drummers. Accompanied by Allen and Nigerian bassist **Essiet Okon Essiet**, Peterson simply does much more with the drummer-as-bandleader concept. He echoes themes in his drum solos not only in rhythm but, in the case of his own *Triangular*, in drum pitch. He also asserts himself as a leader, dropping odd accent bombs and continually engaging Allen in chases (hear the astonishing treatment of Denzil Best's *Move*). Finally, Peterson seems to work within a much wider stylistic range. Peterson translates Monk's *Bemsha Swing* into funky second-line rhythm, proves his ability as a quiet, thoughtful colourist in Essiet's African-sounding *Splash*, and contributes masterful brushwork to *Water Colors*.

Two records led by tenor saxophonists have come in recently. **Ralph Moore**, a 32 year old New Yorker, is in The Coltrane Line. His tone is redolent of Coltrane's pre-mysticism period, and that's by no means an insult. On ***Images*** (Landmark LLP-1520), this soulful sound is bolstered by trumpeter **Terence Blanchard**, pianist **Benny Green**, bassist **Peter Washington** and drummer **Kenny Washington**. With such an assemblage the record really can't go too far wrong, and it doesn't; the group is tight and constantly pushing ahead. Moore's burnished tone sails over the beat gracefully, and the selections are, in that mid-1960s Jazz Messenger style, excellent. Among them are Hank Mobley's *This I Dig Of You*, Joe Henderson's *Punjab*, and, deeply appreciated here, Elmo Hope's *One Second, Please*. Even those quite familiar with the work of a new and ripe talent like Moore's may never have heard of **Vincent York**: his Parkerish alto playing has been a constant force in the Detroit jazz scene since the early 1980s, and ***Blending Forces*** (NYF 72899) is his first record as bandleader. Though York is heavily disposed to stylism (his soloing in the graceful ballad *To Love and To Care* is startlingly Birdlike) he has other tricks up his sleeve; York's own *Hymn 427* is very credible jazz gospel, and his solo in Geri Allen's *Dolphy's Dance* suggests the hill-and-valley caginess of that altoist without sounding anything like an imitation. A solid debut, and York's group (pianist **Gary Schunk**, trumpeter **Marcus Belgrave**, drummer **Lawrence Williams** and bassist **Marion Hayden** are equally adept at cooking up a storm and laying back when need be.

On to two recent records from trumpeters. **Bobby Bradford's** ***One Night Stand*** (Soul Note 121 168-1/2/4) documents a visitation by one of the greatest trumpet players of the last thirty years to Gainesville, Florida, where he played an outdoor concert with the resident **Frank Sullivan Trio**. Bradford's compositions straddle the line between complicated, long written lines not based in recognizable chord structures, and insightful interpretations of more old-school ideas. Here, *Comin' On*, with its long solos and daunting lines, contrasts with more comfortable pieces like the 12-bar *Sho' Nuff Blues* and *Bones*, a reworking of *Body and Soul*. The Floridian group rises to the challenge admirably well, even if the marching band piece, *Ashes*, drags a little in the rhythm section, the general accompaniment for Bradford's broad, smooth playing in these sharp compositions is quite good.

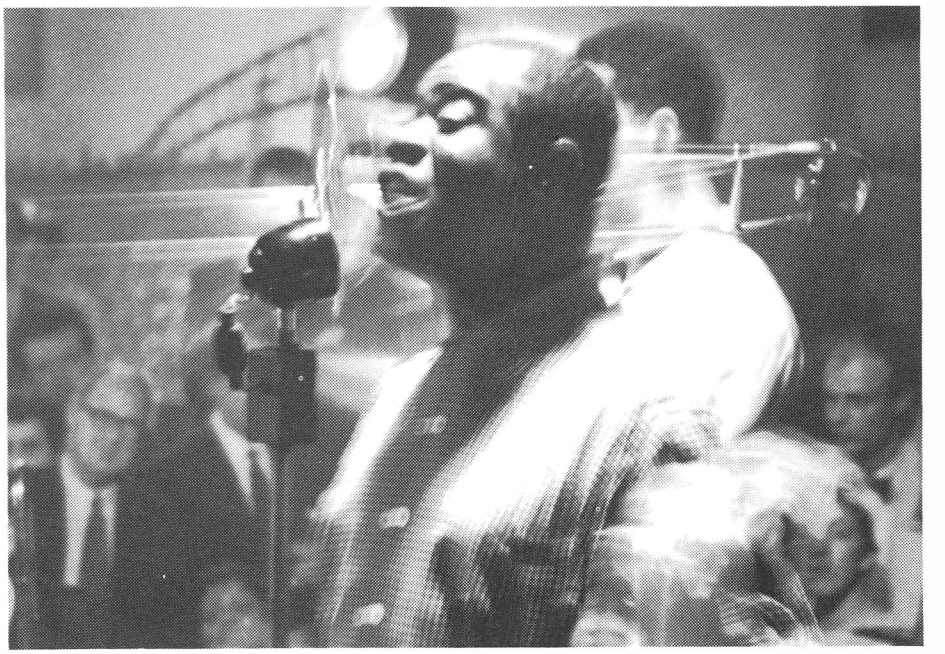
Moving from Gainesville to California's Bay Area, the **Jeff Silvertrust Quintet's** ***The Crash*** (Bulldozers from Jupiter D25Z-2) operates in a newer, more diverse fashion. Silvertrust's writing is best when it shies away from convention, the mournful theme of *The Crash* sounds vaguely eastern European, and *Cosmic Steps* alters and rearranges Coltrane's *Giant Steps*, though not in any way appreciably more interesting than lengthening the initial descension of notes. Of more interest on this album, for the "where are they now?" file, is **Harry "The Hipster" Gibson's** appearance in Silvertrust's *Get Hip to Shirley MacLaine*, a semi-satiric vocal about astral planes and reincarnation. Unfortunately, Gibson isn't up to his former peak of *Who Put the Benzedrine in Mrs. Murphy's Ovaltine?*, his voice is hardly there at all, and aside from a few humourous swoops and jabs, the playing on this and the rest of the album by Silvertrust's group lacks vitality.

We have two recent big band albums in our review pile. Although records by **George Gruntz's Concert Jazz Band** tend to represent a lot of hard work, I don't much enjoy the results, and so I heard ***First Prize*** (Enja R1 79606) with a not entirely enthusiastic ear. Though the liner notes state that each CJB line-up reads like a kind of "who's who" in jazz, there is no listing of the players, so I'm mystified as to who does what this time. Big bands these days present a challenging proposition: aside from the work of restructuralists like Cecil Taylor who occasionally dabble in writing for large groups, a sense of humour seems to be crucial these days to a big band composer / arranger. Gruntz's orchestrations sound more like ***The Individualization of Gil Evans***, moody and intellectual. I prefer the Gil Evans record for its avoidance of styles. Sour, chromatic jazz can be thrilling when one can listen to the expression of individual talents, or even small-scale arrangements; I grouse that this record's weak point is the sheer dimension of the sour musical ideas. Still, I think that Gruntz is a talented arranger, and he knows how to write for a swelling supportive section as well as to leave open pockets in his charts for his bold improvisers (sorry I can't tell you who they are; I'd guess **Ray Anderson** on trombone and no more). In any case, the sound of ***First Prize*** is never immediately appealing. The Charles Mingus compositions played on ***Big Band Charlie Mingus, Live at the Theatre Boulogne-Billancourt Paris Vol. 1*** (Soul

Note 121 192-1) on the other hand, generate a warmth and vitality that owes as much to Mingus as it does to the assembly of great soloists on the record, all one-time Mingus associates with a few exceptions (notably tenor saxophonist **David Murray**, who turns in a typically inspired, hard-edged performance), and to the group's conductor, **Jimmy Knepper**. *Jump Monk* features bouncy, hustling solos by everyone except drummer **Billy Hart**. **Jaki Byard** stars in the romantic elegy, Duke Ellington's *Sound of Love* and the tone poem, *The Shoes of the Fisherman's Wife* is given a warm, understanding performance (it's odd that Francis Davis criticized their performance of this a month before at New York's JVC jazz festival; on the record, the group appears comfortable with the ever-changing moods and time signatures).

I'll close with three records that I couldn't have disliked if I tried. ***News From the Shed*** (Acta ACTA 4) is the quietest explosion I've ever heard. Five British improvisers (saxophonist **John Butcher**, violinist **Phil Durrant**, drummer **Paul Lovens** [more precisely, Lovens is credited with playing "selected drums, cymbals and saw"], trombonist **Radu Malfatti** and acoustic guitarist **John Russell**) play a kind of shy, mousehole minimalism that seems utterly unaware of the recording studio. On the other hand, the musicians never drop into untoward experimentalism. To quote from Mark Sinker in ***Wire***, "A touch, and they're onto something new. They're control freaks, formally and physically. Endings are so spectral, so minutely signalled, that they're uncanny." I agree completely. The British violinist **Jon Rose**, whose endless tampering with violins, violas and other related (and invented) instruments gives one the impression of a musicologist gone mad, has two recent records on German labels. ***Vivisection*** (Auf Ruhr 67013) displays Rose playing the 19 String Cello, a Multi-Violin / String Frame Construction (which I think he is playing / getting tangled up in on the record's cover photograph), and dueting with radio signals, **Alvin Curran's** piano, as well as a few other stray instrumentalists. All of these performances are ceaselessly inventive. As with the few other figures in musical history who invented a language based on instruments of their own creation, much of the music's drama and tension is in the question, "what's he going to do next?" ***Les Domestiques*** (Konnex ST 5019), further enhanced by the zany presence of bassist and fellow musical conspirator **Joelle Léandre**, is even better. Her humour has usually been found in her twisted operatic singing, but here she is also credited with the co-mangling of a number of household instruments, or "domestiques": door, bed, hairdryer, telephone, typewriter, fridge, and a live, growling dog. Elsewhere are tightly composed, short percussive assaults, somewhat like the early work of John Zorn minus his distractingly arch persona.

PRE-BIRD JAZZ CLASSICS



Two events, the invention of the CD and copyright expiry on much of the classic jazz repertoire, have led to an extraordinary flurry of reissue activity.

This could hardly have been predicted ten years ago. The LP reissue field was saturated. The US companies had long ago abandoned any pretense of interest in the field and were willingly leasing their masters to companies in Australia, Europe and Canada.

Now all this has changed. The actual recorded performances are out of copyright in every country. Only the compositions are protected. This has created a situation unanticipated by the larger companies when they got back into the reissue field with CDs.

They still have the advantage, of course. Their distribution system gives them access to a much larger marketplace than the independent companies who are also offering some of the same material.

The ways in which the material is packaged is as diversified as the companies responsible for the productions. Initially, it seemed as though the purpose was to offer "best of" selections (BMG/RCA, MCA) rather than comprehensive, in depth, series such as those by CBS (Louis Armstrong, Billie Holiday) and BMG (Duke Ellington).

Usually the most famous material was repackaged and the long suffering collector has had to endure the same wildly fluctuating sound reproduction as when the LP was first introduced. At one end of the spectrum are the CBS Armstrong Hot 5 and 7 reissues sounding little different to the original LPs in the 1950s (even though it was the first time that many of these titles had been reissued at all in the US). At the other end are the souped-up BMG reissues using the Sonic Solutions "No Noise" system as well as Robert Parker who almost completely changes the texture of the sound in his various BBC reissues of classic jazz recordings.

Now that the dust has begun to settle it is apparent that the overall quality of the sound of these reissues is much better. There is also a bewildering variety of choices facing the listener. Most of the reissues are being compiled to attract the attention of the committed listener but some consideration is being given to the needs of new listeners or those who are finally discovering the truth that jazz has a heritage which predates Charlie Parker.

This column became necessary when the first ten CDs arrived from the European **Classics** label. They are busy compiling chronological reissues of the big names from the Swing Era. Their ongoing program encompasses Ella Fitzgerald, Jimmie Lunceford, Chick Webb, Count Basie, Art Tatum, Louis Armstrong, Teddy Wilson, Earl Hines, Cab Calloway, Fletcher Henderson, Benny Carter, Lionel Hampton, Red Allen, Don Redman, Duke Ellington and Bennie Moten.

They have issued more than fifty titles so far (early 1991) and their schedule calls for five new releases a month! Basically they are issuing in sequence the original 78s by the different artists. You do not get alternate takes but a number of selections recorded, but not issued originally, are included.

Louis Armstrong 1934-1936 **(Classics 509)** begins with the seven French Brunswick titles and continues with the first seventeen Decca titles. This is the period when Armstrong perfected his big band interpretations of standards and the Deccas have been poorly served by reissues (except for the Swaggie series and the Japanese LP box). This first volume is an unfortunate introduction to the series for there is excessive echo similar to the reproduction on the Japanese MCA LP set. This does not occur on later volumes in the series (512, 515, 523).

A more complete edition of the Armstrong Deccas is in production in Sweden on the Ambassador label. They include movie soundtracks, broadcasts and alternate takes. ***Volume 1*** **(Ambassador CLA 1901)** covers 1935 and ***Volume 2*** **(Ambassador CLA 1902)** covers 1936. The sound quality is excellent with transfers made directly from the original US Deccas or English Decca issues of the period.

Despite the many insignificant songs foisted upon Armstrong this period captures him at his finest. He's harnessed all the elements of both his singing and playing into a finite form. *Swing That Music* epitomizes his viewpoint from this time.

You can also find the Paris recordings of Armstrong on another French CD **(Hot 'N Sweet FDC 5101)** along with film soundtracks and early broadcasts which are primarily of historical interest.

Classics has issued all the Victor material from the early 1930s (529, 536) and is now working even further backwards with Okeh material from 1929 through 1931 (547, 557). The big band Louis Okehs are also out on two JSP CDs with John R.T. Davies transfers (excellent) while the most recent of CBS' own series is ***Louis in New York*** **(CBS CK46148)**. It is notable for the discovery of two unissued non-vocal takes of *After You've Gone*. There are also rarely heard non-vocal versions of *Some Of These Days* and *When You're Smiling*. The sound

LOUIS ARMSTRONG (Photograph by Gilbert Gaster)

on this CD is very clean (thanks to the Cedar treatment) but too dry and antiseptic compared to the more natural sounding transfers on the Classics CD.

Count Basie and his Orchestra 1936-1938 and 1938-1939 **(Classics 503 and 504)** begins with the four 1936 Jones/Smith Incorporated performances which introduced Lester Young to the world. The two CDs then trace the Decca years in chronological sequence. A third volume completes the Deccas before starting on the CBS years with the Bad Boys session which first saw the light of day on LP.

The reissue choices for this material are many. The Classics is ideal if you want to obtain all of the Decca and CBS recordings. CBS only reissued one of the Smith-Jones titles in their first volume of the *Essential Count Basie* and that series continues to be highly selective. The two Hep CDs (1025 and 1027) have the best sound transfers of the Deccas as well as including the alternates but, as of this writing, they have still not completed the project with the final CD. US MCA issued a Basie CD which was marred by extremely poor sound transfers. Canadian MCA did much better. They issued a single CD reissue of the Decca 2 LP set (***Best of Basie***) from the 1970s with quite good mono sound from the original LP tapes.

The ***Golden Years*** is a four volume series of live recordings by the Basie band from 1937 through the middle 1940s. ***Volume 4*** **(EPM FDC 5522)** contains 18 of the VDisc titles from 1944/1945. Basically the same selections are also around on the Danish Official label (now there's a name to conjure with!). Neither CD equals the sound quality of the Jazz Society LPs reissued in the 1970s. BMG/Bluebird has issued a collection from the 1947 Victor recordings. There's some good solo work from Harry Edison, Buddy Tate and Paul Gonsalves but the band was a shadow of its former self at that point in time. ***Brand New Wagon*** **(Bluebird 2292-2)** is not for everyone.

Ella Fitzgerald 1935-1937 and 1937-1938 **(Classics 500 and 506).** ***Chick Webb 1929-1934*** **(Classics 502)** separates the vocal cuts of Ella from the Webb band's instrumentals. This makes sense for the band's performances are more likely to have greater appeal today than Ella's early vocals. Like most singers she was saddled with inadequate material and her immaturity as a singer is often evident. In addition to the sides recorded with Webb are two titles with Teddy Wilson and three with Benny Goodman.

The Webb CD begins with the 1929 Brunswick recording of Dog Bottom and ends with the 1934 recording of Blue Lou. This was an exciting hot band with exceptional soloists and an excellent arranger/composer in Edgar Sampson. By 1934 the band was at its peak with mature solo statements from Bobby Stark, Taft Jordan and Sandy Williams.

Jimmie Lunceford 1930-1934 and 1934-1935 **(Classics 501 and 505)** begins with the 10 Victor titles and the two 1933 CBS selections (only issued on LP). The remainder of volume 1 and all of volume 2 comes from Decca sessions. You can hear the development of an excellent band whose musicality and togetherness made it one of the most successful organizations of its day. There's a period charm to some of the material but the excellence of the arrangements by Sy Oliver, Eddie Durham and Edwin Wilcox gave Lunceford his own sound. The best was yet to come for this band but it was already a formidable force.

Art Tatum 1932-1934 **(Classics 507)** contains his early classic solos for Brunswick/Decca as well as his debut version of *Tiger Rag* from 1932 and the four curios accompanying Adelaide Hall. All the elements of Tatum's style were set at this early date. No wonder musicians sat in awe of him in those days. The impact is just as great today. Tatum redid many of the tunes for Decca in 1940 and these are on an MCA CD ***Decca presents Art Tatum*** **(MCAD 4237).**

Teddy Wilson and his Orchestra 1934-1935 **(Classics 508)** contains 11 piano solos as well as the first three of his Brunswick small group sessions with vocals by Billie Holiday on all but one selection (*Sweet Lorraine*). All eleven Holiday sides (among her most famous) are also on CBS (where the sound is as disappointing as it was on the Japanese CD set) and Hep. The bonus here are the piano solos which, most recently, were part of a French CBS LP box set where five of the titles surfaced for the first time.

Further Teddy Wilson issues on Classics has brought his story forward to 1938 with five CDs (511, 521, 531, 548, 557) which document the continued excellence of his small group recordings. It also shows that only Billie Holiday had something special to offer in the vocal department.

Chronological surveys of **Fletcher Henderson** (519, 527, 535, 546, 555), **Benny Moten** (549, 558) and **Duke Ellington** (539, 542, 550, 559) are also continuing to edge towards completion.

Sound transfers on Classics are good, usually true to the originals with a minimum of surface noise. There is an occasional exception where a particularly rare selection is included. All in all this is an important series for the jazz collector who wishes to have the material in the CD format.

Other classic music from the 1930s is also being made available on CD in a variety of ways. Some of the most exciting (and durable) music from that period came from the small group sessions featuring sidemen from the many big bands. The sessions under **Lionel Hampton's** name are among the most famous and BMG/Bluebird has finally come out with a second volume of this material. ***The Jumpin' Jive*** **(Bluebird 2433-2)** is an excellent compilation. It includes alternates of *Shufflin At The Hollywood* and *When Lights Are Low* (the original takes are on the earlier volume Hot Mallets.) BMG promise a third volume of

material covering 1939-1940. In the meantime Classics has come out with three volumes of this same material (with equally good sound) in chronological order (524, 534, 562)! To further compound the purchaser's dilemma is the simultaneous release on Music Memories 30354 of a CD containing (in chronological order) the 1937 Hampton sessions. It is more complete than the Classics for it contains alternates of *My Last Affair* and *The Object Of My Affection.* There is little to choose between these releases on the basis of sound quality.

Lionel Hampton is also an integral part of the ***Benny Goodman Trio and Quartet Volume 2*** **(Bluebird 2273-2)**. On this occasion BMG do follow a chronological approach and this is an exemplary reissue of this material. It captures the clarinetist at his finest. Collectors will wish to know that the version of *Vieni Vieni* is previously unissued and *Dizzy Spells, S'Wonderful, I Cried For You* and *I Know That You Know* are not the takes used for the original Victor 78s.

Goodman's principal rival in the 1930s was Artie Shaw. His sophisticated musical skills were of a different order to Goodman but equally effective. Both clarinetists were lumbered with bands which often failed to swing but ***Blues In The Night*** **(Bluebird 24322 -** ***The Artie Shaw Orchestra featuring Hot Lips Page and Roy Eldridge*** is an exception. It makes a big difference having Page and Eldridge sharing the spotlight with Shaw and this reissue is an intelligent and attractive compilation. It's an important showcase for two exceptional jazz trumpet players who often missed out on the accolades.

Roy Eldridge is also well featured with Gene Krupa's Swing Band in another of those frustrating compilations which have always been a specialty of RCA and its successors. ***Swing Is Here*** **(Bluebird 2180-2)** has all four 1936 Krupa sides with Eldridge and Goodman as well as three Bunny Berigan small group titles from 1935 issued under Gene Gifford's name. The balance of the CD contains 6 Mezzrow titles (from 1936/1937) with Frankie Newton, Willie The Lion Smith and Happy Caldwell among the participants, two titles under Newton's name with Mezzrow, Pete Brown and James P. Johnson and 7 Wingy Manone titles drawn from four different sessions and featuring such well known reed players as Joe Marsala, Eddie Miller and Chu Berry. There's some wonderful stuff here but its surely time for someone to find some coherent way to issue all this material.

Time has established the credentials of the principal innovators of the early jazz years. And now they are being reissued in an amazing variety of ways. I'm sure that Jelly Roll Morton would be pleased to know that time has vindicated all of his statements about his role in the development of jazz. To celebrate the centenary of his birth BMG has issued a five CD box that is supposed to contain the master takes and all known alternates by The Red Hot Peppers, his various trios and other instrumental combinations. It's a remarkable collection even though the producers made at least two errors. They used the same take for both versions of *The Original Jelly Roll Blues* and *Freakish*. The sound is much better than BMG's previous single CD issue from this material.

The Jelly Roll Morton Centennial: His Complete Victor Recordings **(Bluebird 2361-2)** is a remarkable musical document and substantiates Stanley Dance's 1944 observations, "Just as I would recommend one specific record by Jelly Roll Morton as being representative of jazz, to the newcomer, so I would recommend Jelly Roll's work in its entirety to those who have been captivated by jazz." So much of the essence of jazz is contained in the widely varied musical gems created by Morton. This collection also allows us the opportunity to hear the evolving nature of the arrangements at some sessions through the many alternate takes.

Morton's music is being reissued in many different ways. John R. T. Davies has been remastering a series for the English JSP label. Volume 1 and 3 offer different aspects of Morton's craft but they are only using the masters from the original Victor issues. **(JSP CD 321 and 323)**. Music Memories (A French company) has issued a 2 CD set of ***The Complete Red Hot Peppers*** **(MM 30380)**. This set simply contains all the 78s originally issued under that band title. Of all the reissues this set seems to have found the most attractive sound balance. It still bothers me that *Smokehouse Blues* (one of Morton's most hauntingly beautiful recordings) has so much extraneous noise on both the Bluebird and JSP issues. Morton has also been given the Parker treatment on a BBC CD and the French EPM company has volume 1 of ***The Complete*** in circulation. The EPM/Hot 'N Sweet reissue program is under the direction of John Paul Guiter who was responsible for the French RCA Black & White reissues on LP.

Sidney Bechet is another major creator from the early years of jazz. His burning solo work on soprano sax and clarinet remains one of the most passionate sounds in jazz. He made a major contribution to a 1939 Morton date for Victor, all of which was issued in the Jelly Roll set.

Sidney Bechet 1932-1943 The Bluebird Sessions **(RCA ND90317)** and ***The Victor Sessions: The Master Takes*** **(Bluebird 2402-2)** are European and American packages of the same material. The major difference is that the European release contains a fourth CD of alternate takes (22 in all) not included in the US set. In a press release which accompanied the US package, Steve Backer is quoted as saying that "Steve Lacy gave me the idea for the packaging of his hero Sidney Bechet's box set. We were originally going to put out his alternate takes as well, but Steve said that Bechet structured his solos to the point where the alternate takes sounded redundant."

While I respect Steve Lacy's judgement I cannot agree that the Bechet alternates are devoid of interest. To begin with a number of them are performed at strikingly different tempos (*Shake It And Break It, Blue For You Johnny*) while the alternate of *Ain't Misbehavin'* (with Hines and Stewart) is particularly interesting.

To compound the problems with the US set is the unfortunate fact that both *Shake It And Break It* and *The Mooche* are not the master takes. Even though it's a minor issue *Save It Pretty Mama* was never Momma. Then, too, the four Morton titles are included again in the Bechet set.

These are among the greatest of Bechet's recordings (along with his Blue Note dates) and the sessions with Sidney de Paris, Sandy Williams, Rex Stewart / Earl Hines, Charlie Shavers / Willie The Lion Smith and Henry Goodwin / Vic Dickenson are particularly noteworthy.

The American CD set uses the same liner notes (but not the attractive cover with a

tasteful photograph of Bechet) as the European issue but neither set includes master numbers to go along with the personnel information.

Needless to say it is the European four CD issue which is the definitive collection and the one you should be looking for.

There is more Bechet to be found on the French Music Memories label. They have issued two volumes of what they call **The Essential (MM 30229 & 30230)**. These two CDs are a chronological overview of Bechet's recordings between 1923 and 1938. Included are his sides with Clarence Williams, the Red Onion Jazz Babies, Noble Sissle, Trixie Smith, his own orchestra (1938), the 1932 Feetwarmers and 1938 Ladnier date (both on the RCA sets). A third volume is called ***Summertime*** **(MM 30332)** and this continues the saga with the titles from the *Spirituals to Swing* concert, his first Blue Note date with the Port of Harlem Seven and the Victor Morton's before finally getting to less familiar material, the peculiar Willie The Lion Smith Haitian Orchestra date and location recordings made by John Reid which were used as auditions for Victor and finally issued a few years ago on LP.

Of more recent vintage are two volumes of French recordings made by ***Sidney Bechet and his American Friends*** **(Vogue 655623 and 600173)**. The material is drawn from 1950s dates with Sammy Price, Jonah Jones, Teddy Buckner, Lil Armstrong and the famous Brussels concert with Buck Clayton and Vic Dickenson. Much of the music is outstanding. It's just frustrating to listen to it in this haphazard manner. There should be complete CD packages for each of the sessions.

The early Bechet recordings with Clarence Williams are also included in ***The Complete Clarence Williams Sessions 1923-1926 Volumes 1 and 2*** **(Hot 'N Sweet FDC 5107 & 5109)**. While the title of these CDs is incorrect (there remain many more early Williams titles still to be reissued) there are 15 selections which never found their way onto LP. Nearly all the selections are slow blues based numbers featuring such singers as Sarah Martin, Margaret Johnson, Eva Taylor and Sippie Wallace. There is a sameness to much of the material and the early recording process does little to help the listener. The Clarence Williams small group sessions from the late 1920s are a more attractive aspect of his work.

Examples of early instrumental jazz from New York are contained in **Hot 'N Sweet FDC 5102 -** ***New York Horns 1924-1928.*** Bubber Miley, Rex Stewart, Thomas Morris, Louis Metcalf, June Clark and Jimmy Harrison are all featured in a variety of small recording combinations. These transitional recordings capture the evolving nature of New York's musicians coming to grips with the then newer musical ideas from New Orleans. There's a studied competence to much of this music but it does have its own flavour.

Much more impressive is ***Duke Ellington The Brunswick Era Volume 1***

and 2 **(Decca 42325 & 42348)**. 32 early Ellington recordings made between 1926 and 1932 are represented here. All are famous recordings but have never sounded as good as this before (except on the original 78s). All previous reissues had serious deficiencies: it's as if we are hearing this music for the first time! One of the most notable observations is to draw your attention to the inclusion of the correct second part of *Creole Rhapsody*. All LP reissues used an alternate to the original 78 which begins with an Ellington solo quite different to the one we can now hear. Duke's solo on this version sets up the transition much better as well as establishing a tempo which relates perfectly to the music which precedes it in the first half.

Johnny Dodds was a major clarinet voice who was well featured with Louis Armstrong's Hot 5 and 7 and was also showcased on a number of Morton's better recordings. He was also the principal clarinetist to record with King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band in 1923.

The Complete King Oliver Creole Jazz Band 1923 **(Music Memories MM30295)** is a two disc set containing all 37 Creole Jazz Band sides as well as the two Oliver/ Morton duets (*King Porter, Tom Cat*) and *Kiss Me Sweet* and *Construction Camp* with *Butterbeans* and *Susie*. These are among the earliest and most significant jazz recordings. They introduced Louis Armstrong to a wider audience (he was the second cornetist in the band and takes a number of solos) as well as capturing the intense 4/4 swing of this New Orleans aggregation. Only the pitiful quality of the original acoustic recordings has hindered appreciation of the music. A decade ago Herwin made a remarkable LP transfer of the Gennett masters. Now, with this CD release, yet another major step forward in sound quality has been achieved. There is much greater clarity between the instruments and it's possible to hear parts of the music which were hidden in past reissues. The producers obtained the cleanest possible originals and then rerecorded the music at the speed which sets the music in the original keys. This is a major and significant sound restoration document.

As good as Dodds was in an ensemble role with King Oliver and Louis Armstrong he always seemed more convincing in his own recording sessions where his deeply etched blues conception was best showcased. He also seemed rhythmically more comfortable in this setting. Certainly his Victor sessions now reissued as ***Blue Clarinet Stomp*** **(Bluebird 2293-2)** are among his finest. There's some exquisite trio sides but the heart of this CD are the sessions with Natty Dominique and Honore Dutrey. The producers could have given us everything from these dates. Missing are alternates of *Sweet Lorraine, Pencil Papa, Goober Dance* and *Too Tight* which are stylistically more suitable than the three Dixieland Jug Blowers titles. The two Morton trio titles show up once again and this time they managed to transfer *Mr Jelly*

SIDNEY BECHET (Photograph by Hank de Wild)

Lord at the wrong speed. It plays about 20 seconds faster than it should. All carping aside, this is wonderful music in truly breathtaking fidelity.

Other classic Johnny Dodds can be found on **JSP 319**. This is a John R.T. Davies compilation which brings together the Columbia sessions with the New Orleans Wanderers/Bootblacks, the Black Bottom Stompers date with George Mitchell and Natty Dominique as well as all ten titles with the Chicago Footwarmers. The New Orleans Wanderers date is an essential part of jazz history. *Perdido Street Blues, Gatemouth, Too Tight* and *Papa Dip* are among the definitive examples of great early jazz, and Dodds is in fantastic form.

There's more Dodds to be heard in MCA's **South Side Chicago Jazz (Decca 42326)**. It's a mixed bag containing selections from wide ranging sessions. The cornet of Louis Armstrong is heard with the Black Bottom Stompers and Jimmy Bertrand's Washboard Wizards, there are three solos with Lil Hardin and Bud Scott and five titles with Jimmy Blythe. *Come On And Stomp Stomp Stomp with the Black Bottom Stompers* is also on the JSP CD but like most of the other titles has an acoustic depth not present on other reissues.

Fletcher Henderson and Duke Ellington are usually credited with shaping the early contours of big band jazz. In reality there were a great many different contributors to its evolving nature in the 1920s. Elements from many different individuals went into the process which was finally defined by the formulaic presentations of the popular bands of the Swing Era.

***McKinney's Cotton Pickers (1928-1930)* (Bluebird 2275-2)** is subtitled "the band Don Redman built". Under his direction it gained national prominence but other elements went into its success. Trumpeter John Nesbitt wrote great arrangements and there was a tremendous internal drive and balance to the band. It's significant that Benny Carter was also a performer and arranger with the band. McKinney's is just one (though it may be the best) of several who recorded in the late 1920s when the big band was shaking itself down. This CD issue contains 22 selections, a representative cross section of the band's work. Unfortunately they left off the great performance of *If I Could Be With You One Hour Tonight* featuring a wonderfully expressive vocal by George Thomas. Perhaps it will be included in a second volume.

There's some extraordinary music in these reissues. Time has established their legitimacy and the persistence with which much of the material is recycled indicates its lasting appeal.

Many of these reissues are being created for the serious committed listener but there is another audience which should also be considered. Libraries and educational centres benefit more from the kind of overviews created a few years ago on LP by Time Life (still the most perceptive of such compilations) rather than being swamped by multi-disc complete collections.

Copyright expiry will make it more feasible in the future to combine material from different companies and help accelerate further the opening up of the roots of this music to a new generation of listeners. The CD has provided the impetus for all this activity and, for the most part, the various productions are of lasting value.

There is a downside to this activity. An ever increasing number of CDs are being issued by companies whose only purpose is to line their pockets with the fruits of other people's labours.

Take Bella Musica, for example. Presumably this is another Italian company following in the footsteps of Giants of Jazz et al. They have issued CDs by some of the perennial greats of jazz: Charlie Parker, Count Basie, Miles Davis, Duke Ellington, Billie Holiday, Erroll Garner, Ray Charles, Louis Armstrong and Nina Simone. Nearly all of the material comes from famous recordings by these artists, and probably 90% of the material is already on other CDs.

There is no attempt to make a coherent presentation and the information on the recordings is minimal. The artists, if they are entitled to royalties, will receive nothing while the profit from the sales will not result in any new recording by musicians currently playing jazz.

As a final irony, they have the nerve to have written into the CD label the clause, "All rights of the producer and of the owner of the work reproduced reserved. Unauthorized copying, hiring, lending, public performance and broadcasting of this record prohibited."

JAZZ IN ITALY * AN OVERVIEW

I've had the good fortune to visit Italy during the past five summers, thus partaking of the country's excellent cuisine and fertile jazz scene: a potent combination! During late June and throughout all of July and August, all of Italy is rife with the sounds of jazz. The cities of Verona, Lugano, Bolzano, Cagliari, Rome, Perugia, Atina, Siena, Pescara, Clusone, and Ravenna hold festivals spotlighting a vast array of American talent and a growing corps of homegrown musicians.

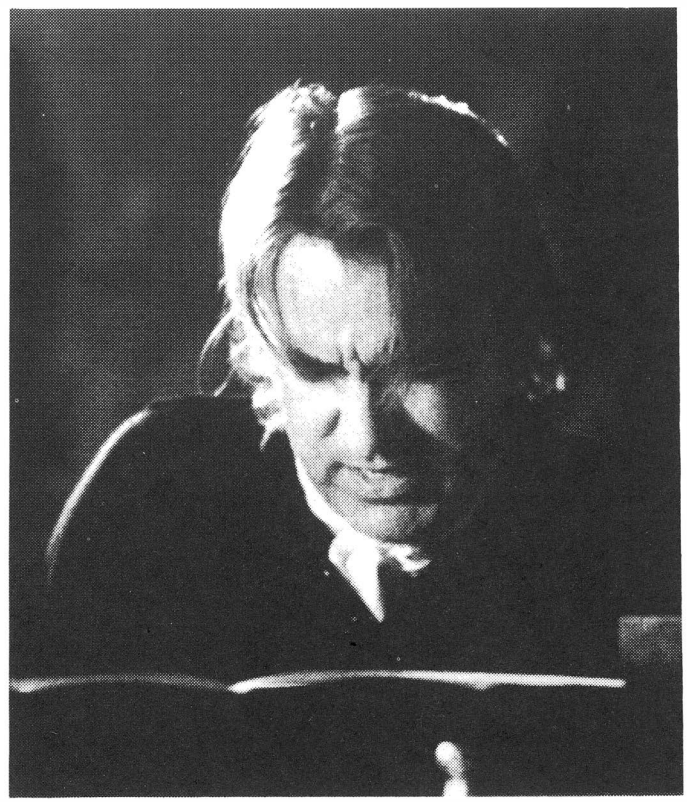
While most of the major Italian festivals (with the exception of Siena, which holds its performances in conjunction with a first-rate University workshop) focus primarily on major name American talent, I've had occasion to savor a burgeoning national scene through club performances, opening acts at festivals, and an abundance of recordings made and issued in Italy.

The summer clinic at Umbria and the bi-annual seminar at Siena draw students from all over the country and are beginning to turn out competent players. "In Italy those who devote themselves to jazz can be truly proud," writes Pino Candini, managing editor of ***Musica Jazz***. "Our main features are the steady qualitative growth of our musicians who have become well-known and appreciated even abroad, the increase among people actively practicing the music, the reliability and originality of our records, and finally the popularity and attraction guaranteed by our summer festivals. However, I think this new credibility arises from the teaching activity, a more subtle and less advertised aspect of the Italian jazz milieu."

Although the **Soul Note** and **Red Record** labels occasionally document some of the country's leading innovators, Italy's up and coming players are primarily represented on the prolific **Splasc(h)** label and also on the small but potent **Gala** label. While some of these self-produced albums miss the mark due to a lack of group cohesion or format direction, others are impressive, for the level of individual musicianship is often quite good.

I'm constantly asking Italian jazz critics whom they feel is making the most progress and impact on the national music scene. Through their input and my own subjective impressions via live performances and recordings, I'd like to introduce you to some of Italy's most established players and rising stars.

No overview of Italian jazz would be complete without mention of **Giorgio Gaslini,** a towering figure known to many as "the dean of Italian jazz." Educated first in the European tradition, Gaslini still incorporates elements of that school of music in his forward-looking compositions. "My compositions are a synthesis of three inspirational sources: Afro-American and avant-garde jazz, contemporary European music, and Italian folk music," Gaslini told me. "I'm kind of a musical chemist and I'm fascinated by my experiments."



A staunch modernist, Gaslini is also fully aware of the music's historical roots. Respected as both an educator and performer, he's toured the United States several times and more recently has performed extensively in India and China. Gaslini has developed jazz courses at Italian universities, coordinated jazz festivals, and nurtured young talent.

Gaslini, in fact, was instrumental in tutoring two of the rising voices on the contemporary jazz scene, vocalist **Tiziana Ghiglioni** and saxophonist **Massimo Urbani**. "The young jazz musicians coming up today see me both as a friend and a father figure," mused the good natured Gaslini. "I'm comfortable with both roles, because I think young, and my involvement with music keeps me young."

Gaslini has given over two thousand concerts in Italy and around the world, often working with musicians in foreign countries, thereby incorporating Eastern instrumentation into jazz. His artistic accomplishments also include composing for film soundtracks (Antonioni's ***La Notte***), writing stage music for dramatic theatre, and producing several television programs on jazz.

The 1988 ***Musica Jazz*** Critics' Poll voted Gaslini's ***Multipli*** (Soul Note 121 220-1) album of the year. Typical of most of Gaslini's work, ***Multipli*** is a potent mixture of divergent styles, all focusing in on the maelstrom of the leader's brilliant keyboard runs.

Over the years, several of Italy's top musicians have passed through Gaslini's bands, including saxophone greats **Gianluigi Trovesi** and **Gianni Bedori**. On ***Multipli***, Gaslini surrounds himself with top drawer improvisors, including **Bruno Tommaso** (bass), **Giampiero Prina** (drums), veteran **Claudio Fasoli** (tenor & soprano), and a newcomer of great promise, **Roberto Ottaviano** (alto & soprano).

GIORGIO GASLINI (Photograph by Mimmo Rossi)

Gaslini seems able to mold his soloists into personalized conveyers of his compositional focus. He remains at the nucleus of the presentation, with soloists swirling in and out of his adventurous mosaic.

Pianist **Enrico Pieranunzi** has also made a large contribution to the Italian jazz scene, both as an educator and performer. When asked by Franco Pecori to describe the "psycho-physical approach necessary in jazz interpretation," Pieranunzi responded, "It should be clear that jazz involves one's whole being. The essential moment is when you must put your hands on the piano. It is then that you must establish a deep relationship with the instrument and make it become a means of expression. Otherwise it remains an external thing; you have no contact with jazz."

Pieranunzi and his countrymen **Enzo Pietropaoli** (bass) and **Fabrizio Sferra** (drums) play with deep feeling and soulful conviction on his "Space Jazz Trio" recording, ***Meridies*** (Gala 91019). The group establishes an internal rapport early on that suggests an organic unity among its members. This band breathes as one, interpreting Pieranunzi's spacious lyrical compositions without any hint of contrived feeling or homogenized complacency. Enrico's Soul Note recording, ***Deep Down*** (SN 1121) finds him exploring more of a romantic motif à la Bill Evans. While Evans is surely an influence, musicians such as Art Farmer and Chet Baker have found Pieranunzi's uncluttered sound and soulful tonal manipulation appealing on their own merits.

Guido Manusardi is a pianist with keen rhythmic sensibilities and a warm, personal sound. On ***Bra Session*** (Splasc(h) H 125), Manusardi's straight-ahead invigorating compositions are driven by a very competent rhythm section, including bassist **Aldo Mella** and drummer **Paolo Taverna**, while trumpeter **Marco Tamburini** shines as a soloist. The interplay between Manusardi and Tamburini is noteworthy, each driving the other to swing just a little harder. Manusardi is also heard to good measure on ***Down Town*** (Soul Note 1131) in the company of bassist Isla Eckinger and drummer Ed Thigpen. Here, Guido presents a balanced mixture of sophisticated ballads and infectious lyrical material, his solos always maintaining a firm sense of direction with deep emotional colour.

Of the many young pianists whose work I auditioned on the Splasc(h) label, **Stefano Battaglia** stands head and shoulders above the pack as a major new talent deserving international recognition. On ***Auryn*** (Splasc(h) H 162), Battaglia leads bassist **Paolino Dalla Porta** and drummer **Manhu Roche** through labyrinthic compositions that alternate between sensitive passages and an intensely compelling, swinging attack. His expression is kinetic and full of life. While comparisons to Keith Jarrett will certainly be drawn, Bataglia's compositions are often more directed and less prone to the meandering found in some of Jarrett's extended work.

I'd be remiss in abandoning this section on Italian pianists without mention of **Franco D'Andrea**. A guiding light for many years on the contemporary jazz scene in Italy, Franco is both an authoritative improvisor and brilliant technician. His many recordings for the **Red Record** label confirm his open-minded conception and technical wizardry.

Enrico Rava is perhaps the most recognizable and visible of the Italian jazz artists. The 50-year-old trumpeter has recorded widely for both ECM and Soul Note records. Rava is one of the few jazz musicians in Italy who had the chance to live in New York for an extended period of time (in the late 60's and early 70's). He feels the competitive, fast-paced environment in the Big Apple helped shape him into the eclectic musician he's become today. "New York taught me a lot about playing with energy! Every musician there gave 100%. Even a minor band playing in a club to four or five people played like there was no tomorrow. That was a good lesson for me."

Rava feels he was able to immerse himself in the world's jazz mecca at an auspicious time. "New York has changed a lot since then. In '67, I heard Miles at the Village Gate, Lee Morgan, Jackie McLean, Cecil Taylor, Shepp with a beautiful band including Roswell Rudd and Grachan Moncur. . . there were so many clubs going. It was unbelievable! At that time, jazz was really the sound of the town. Now, I don't identify New York with just jazz anymore. The sound you hear now when walking on the street reflects an amalgamation of diverse cultural influences. A lot of Latin: Puerto Rican, Cuban, Haitian, Mexican, also Central American music. The sound of the town is different. Very interesting, but different."

Rava now divides his time between Torino, Buenos Aires, and New York. "My home base is Italy, but I love Argentina and Brazil. I'm there at least three months out of the year, playing at clubs and festivals and absorbing the sound of great musicians like Astor Piazzola."

As a clinician at the Siena seminar, Rava has formulated some outspoken opinions on jazz education. "When I was coming up, all the trumpet players (Lee Morgan, K.D., Chet, Miles, Dizzy) everyone had their own style and a voice that you could immediately recognize. They also had their own technique. Blue Mitchell's technique was not at all like Lee Morgan's; Miles' was totally different than Clifford Brown's. So, as soon as they played a few notes, you could identify them with assurance.

"Today, that's not the case. To me, a lot of the younger players sound alike. They play the same phrases because they've learned them from the same pattern books. A lot of potentially marvelous improvisors are all speaking a kind of standard language. Once you become a prisoner of those phrases, it becomes increasingly difficult to expand your knowledge and technique." At Siena, Rava champions learning by induction, teaching by example, the importance of group interplay and developing a personal approach.

One of Rava's former students, **Paolo Fresu** (now also on the faculty at Siena), has made quite a name for himself via his recordings for Splasc(h); ***Inner Voices*** featuring David Liebman (H 110) and ***Mamut*** (H 127). Fresu is a confident, imaginative soloist, totally absorbed in making each note count and each phrase sing with meaning. Paolo and his young collaborators paint a rich tapestry on ***Mamut***, with Fresu displaying an authoritative, uncluttered vocal quality as a soloist. His solos also sound fresh and buoyant.

Bassist **Bruno Tommaso** is among Italy's most respected educators. Since graduating with a degree in double bass from the Santa Cecilia Conservatory in Rome in 1946, Tomasso has shared the stage

and recorded with some of Italy's finest musicians, including Gaslini, **Enrico Intra,** and **Gianni Basso**. Tommaso has continually taught since 1975 and has conducted orchestras of students attending his many seminars in Florence, Siena, and Ancona.

Giovanni Tommaso, Bruno's cousin, is unquestionably Italy's preeminent bass player. Having served as first call bassist for countless American jazzmen during their European tours in his formative years, Giovanni has now distinguished himself as a composer of considerable merit and an adept arranger. (He did all the string charts on Enrico Rava's celebrated ***String Band*** album (Soul Note 1114).)

Giovanni has recently issued two outstanding albums on the Red Record label, ***Via G.T.*** (VPA 196) and ***To Chet*** (RR 220). (Baker was one of the soloists Tommaso backed frequently.) On these dates, Tommaso writes with the perspective of a seasoned professional and with a rich awareness of the music's historical continuity. Giovanni's compositions have a stylistic vitality that distinguish these collections as some of the freshest neo-bop on the scene.

Via G.T. impresses me as a thoroughly modern update of the swinging sound and spirit captured on several Blue Note sessions during their dynasty in the 60s. Tommaso surrounds himself with all-stars of his calibre and sensitivity. He's joined in the rhythm section by **Roberto Gatto** on drums and a marvelously adept pianist, **Danilo Rea**. The front line is shared by trumpeter Fresu and alto man **Massimo Urbani** (who pops up on a lot of dates). Tommaso demonstrates an intuitive sense of compositional balance here, with Gatto's freely spaced rhythmic underpinnings per-fectly suited to the music's ever-changing dimensions. On ***To Chet,*** Urbani is replaced by trumpeter **Flavio Boltro**. Like Fresu, Boltro's ability to project as a soloist (with or sans mute) is impressive.

Furio Di Castri is another sensitive bassist who has worked quite steadily with Enrico Rava and others since 1981. In the past, he's recorded with Rava, Dave Samuels, and Massimo Urbani. Di Castri has devoted himself exclusively to the acoustic bass since 1976 and has recently issued a solo effort on Splasc(h) (HP 04) which is a refreshing, ethereal excursion. Di Castri is joined by **E. Ruffinenzo** for some keyboard coloration on two compositions, but the album is primarily a display of Di Castri's adept bowed prowess and engaging compositional manner.

Saxophonist **Claudio Fasoli** hails from Venice. A former member of the jazz/rock group Perigeo, Fasoli has more recently been concentrating his energies in the pure jazz realm, performing, teaching, and recording. His Soul Note debut, ***Lido*** (SN 1071), is noteworthy for Fasoli's lyrical compositions which display his full tone on soprano to good effect. Surrounded by a top drawer rhythm section of Kenny Drew (piano), Niels-Henning Orstead Pedersen (bass), and Barry Altschul (drums), Fasoli's lines on tenor and soprano are well thought out and sufficiently probing.

I found Fasoli's ***Egotrip*** (Splasc(h) H 161) far less interesting. On what seemed like a series of experimental exercises, Fasoli makes liberal use of overdubbing, playing soprano, tenor, and a bit of piano. His excursions left me cold and yearning for the warm lyrical approach he evidenced on Soul Note.

I first became aware of **Massimo Urbani** through his 1980 release, ***360° Aeutopia*** (Red VPA 146), where the young altoist was backed by Ron Burton (piano), Cameron Brown (bass), and Beaver Harris (drums). Urbani's recording debut impressed Italian critics and captured him "Best Album of the Year." From the opening bars of *Cherokee*, Urbani played with a searing energy and all the urgency of someone shot out of a cannon. Other compositions displayed a less intense approach, but throughout his work a beautiful tone and phrasing signaled his awareness of and respect for Charlie Parker and Phil Woods. It came as no surprise to me, therefore, to learn that Urbani and pianist **Mike Melillo** had recorded a series of duets, tackling standards that Bird had helped popularize. On ***Duets For Yardbird*** (Philology W 2144), Urbani continues to impress me as a sincere disciple of Bird and a keeper of the traditional flame.

Tiziana Ghiglioni is a vocalist who is careful to maintain an even balance between respect for lyrics and the love for the musicality of a song. Fluent in English, but not devoid of Italian inflections, her voice is very much an instrument. On her Splasc(h) recording ***Onde*** (H 133), she forgoes the use of lyrics in favour of exploring uncharted vocal frontiers as, essentially, the group's fifth instrument. Here, Tiziana heeds her own intuitive instincts as to when to step forward, making for a penetrating musical dialogue with other members of the group.

A more conventional approach is used on ***Streams*** (H 104), another Splasc(h) recording on which an entire side is devoted to interpreting Thelonious Monk compositions. Tiziana's nimble technique and voice colouring seem perfectly suited to Monk's challenging angular compositions. Pianist Luca Flores' arrangements are perfectly suited to Tiziana's approach and she carries off her Monk tribute with finesse and sincerity.

Evaluating Italy's top established and most promising young jazz artists proved challenging, since the number of fine players is forever growing. Any such overview will unfortunately overlook some extremely competent players who richly deserve recognition. Among the talented musicians I haven't reviewed here who are receiving praise in their homeland are Augusto Mancinelli (g.), Antonello Salis (p.), Giampiero Prina (d.), Gianni Gebbia (sop.), Gianni Cazzola (d.), Larry Nocella (ten.), Gianluigi Trovesi (sop., alt., b. clar.), Dino Betti van der Noot (ar.), Maurizio Giammarco (ten., sop.), Roberto Ottaviano (sop.), Pietro Tonolo (ten.), Beppe Castellani (ten.), Attilio Zanchi (b.), Piero Bassini (p.), Pino Minafra (trmpt), Nicola Stilo (flute), Luca Flores (p.), Luca Bovini (trom.), Rita Marcotulli (p.), Gianni Basso (ten.), Marco Viaggi (b.), Sandro Gibellini (g.), Cristina Mazza (alt.), Bruno Marini (bar.), Marcello Tono (p.), Diego Rividotti (trmpt.), and Piero Leveratto (b.). Let us not forget the Italian Swiss, including Franco Ambrosetti (trmpt.), Flavio Ambrosetti (alt.), and Guido Parini (d.). Finally, my apologies to those of whom I'm not yet aware.

In Canada, these recordings may be available from

Distribution III
5455 rue Paré, Suite 101
Montreal, P.Q. H4P 1P7
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Groupe Essor
219 rue Demers
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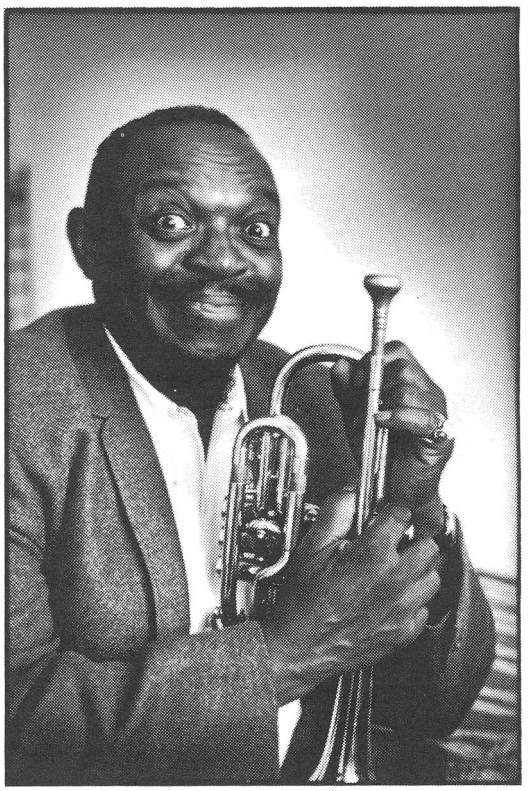
H2T 1K6

FATSTUFF AFTERHOURS

Trumpeter Rex Stewart, known to friends only as ***Fatstuff****, was a formative influence in the early writing of British author and photographer Val Wilmer. In her recent autobiography,* **Mama Said There'd Be Days Like This,***she writes of their memorable meetings. An edited extract from* **Mama Said** *precedes an interview with the author conducted in 1966.*



THE EXTRACT

One of the most significant of my musical friendships had an inauspicious beginning. Rex Stewart was a trumpeter best known for his work with Duke Ellington. A superb soloist who developed the "half-valve" style which provides a dramatic, choked effect on the horn, he had made several extended visits to Europe. He was renowned as a cook--he was a Cordon Bleu graduate--but had a reputation among the white jazz fraternity for being somewhat spikey. As he would explain later, he was not about to be anyone's "nigger". I was a bit apprehensive, though, when I turned up late for an interview. I knocked and he refused to open the door of his hotel room. "Our appointment was for 2 o'clock," he said firmly through the panelling. "You're twenty minutes late and I'm not prepared to see you." Chastened, I explained that the interview was scheduled and I'd be in trouble if I didn't produce it. He relented, and our talk was brief and courteous.

Some days later I saw Rex backstage at the Royal Festival Hall. He was sitting in the bar surrounded by veteran critics who were prodding him with queries about old records and the whereabouts of other aged horn players. Some of them were becoming a little worse for wear in the process, and Rex was bored. In the middle of it all, he leaned across to me and his eyes twinkled. Did I know any good French restaurants? Fortunately, I did. "Good," he said, "let's go." To the chagrin of the assembled company, he left with me in tow.

This was the first of several entertaining evenings of good food, fine wine and intelligent conversation. Rex was a sophisticate, who had worked as a journalist and disc-jockey as well as musician. He had an informative, easy writing style, and wrote a series of reminiscences about other musicians that were full of important insights. After his death these were turned into a book, ***Jazz Masters of the Thirties***. His descriptions of people he had known from the heyday of Swing music had a ring of authenticity missing from the work of other writers from outside the musicians' community. In a piece on Tricky Sam Nanton, a key figure in the Ellington Orchestra, he revealed that the trombonist was "a scholar, a fierce nationalist and devoted follower of Marcus Garvey in the 1930s". He also described musicians by colour—Nanton was "gingerbread"—something no white writer would have done.

During his stay in England, the trumpeter did several articles for ***Melody Maker***, writing laboriously in "music copyists' caps" on foolscap-sized American legal pads rather than borrowing a typewriter. We exchanged many views on the writing process, Rex paying careful attention to my ideas and offering observations of his own based on years of experience. He was fascinated with what made other people tick, he said. Rather than buttonhole an individual and draw them into conversation, though, he found it more productive to sit back and observe. It was this habit that gave such insight to his writing. It hit a chord with me because I was learning something new every day just through sitting back and listening.

Rex gave me any number of insights into the music business and explained how racism had affected every Black artist, no matter how famous. There are those who considered him bitter and cynical, and like many artists of his generation he had been hurt by the injustice accorded the music's creators. To me, he was nothing but generous, and when he went back to the States, he dropped me encouraging notes. I had expressed my doubts about having anything worthwhile to offer and he wrote to congratulate me on something of mine he had read: "How quite un-English you seem to be . . . I trust that this note proves to be a **lagniappe** for your shrinking little ego! All the best, you sparkling specimen of Youth English Womanhood on the move, from your erstwhile acquaintance." I treasured his remarks, and felt more encouraged by him than I had by just about anyone to date.

Looking through my files while working on ***Mama Said***, I came across an unpublished interview with Rex. I remember doing it, on an old reel-to-reel tape-recorder, back at the hotel after one of our memorable French dinners. I had planned to include it in my first book, ***Jazz People***, but never worked it into a profile. The text contains some interesting observations as well as useful historical facts, although contemporary readers should note that the terminology of the day has been retained. Reading through it again, some 25 years later, I realize why Rex's views had such an impact on me and how they helped shape my musical philosophy.

THE INTERVIEW

Who was the first person you ever heard using trick effects on the trumpet?

Johnny Dunn, in Washington, my hometown, when I was still at school. He used a variety of mutes. It's been so long now that I can't remember exactly, but if I'm not mistaken, he was the first one to use the waa-waa effect. Later I heard Bubber Miley, but I think he (Miley) was (more) inventive. I think he evolved it himself--at least he was doing it when I came to New York. He was a **big** trumpet player among

the younger guys. I came up to New York in 1921 and Ellington came there one or two years later. Miley probably joined him about 1924 at the Kentucky Club, which was a small club down on Broadway.

Did you try to imitate Miley?

Sure. I liked it very much because it was an extension of what the other trumpet players were doing. And at the time, most of the others in New York could not make those effects like Bubber. Bobby Starks and I grew up in the same milieu as Bubber, and all three of us used to hang out together. Bubber had more work than he could handle, so the way that we worked it, some of the jobs he'd send me on, some of them he'd send Bobby Starks.

Charlie Irvis could play those effects, too, on the trombone, and there was another trombonist fellow around town, Jack Green, who did the same type of thing, but not as well as Irvis. It wasn't Duke's creation. Duke employed it after these fellows had been playing it around the joint for several years. Most people do think that those effects were Ellington's creation, but they were not. When you've demonstrated such a particular aptitude for picking out people and molding them into a particular motif, it isn't luck. It comes under the heading of knowing what you want or making the best use of what you have.

Did other bands apart from Ellington employ these brass effects, the growls and so on?

Yeah, I mean virtually all the bands employed the waa-waa bit, but I don't recall them employing the growl so much in the thirties. That developed into widespread use during the early forties. It just didn't seem to intrigue the musicians earlier, although there were a lot of guys outside of the big bands that were doing it. There was one guy in particular, name of Horace Holmes, who was a very good trumpet player who growled very well. I started thinking about him because I remember him doing an act on the floor with a lighted lamp and that was quite a sight. He played trumpet lying on the floor with a lighted lamp on his head.

Did you hit on the half-valve effect by accident?

No, I worked it out. I was doing it when I was with Henderson although I hadn't really developed it then. Other people are of the opinion that I started the thing with Ellington, but I believe that if you listen to a Henderson record called *Underneath the Harlem Moon* (which has a pretty trite vocal!), there's a little cornet sequence, maybe 8 bars, in which I use a couple of half-valve notes.

When did Cootie start developing his style?

I'm sure that he listened to Bubber and to Bobby Starks, but I don't think he got any of it from me because at that time (when we played together with Duke), I was on a Louis kick. I had stopped the growl. There's another trumpet player I want to mention in this context, although he didn't growl as much as he could, and that's Henry Goodwin. I remember him very well because we came from the same neighbourhood in the same hometown, the Georgetown section of Washington (which, incidentally, is very fashionable now; when I lived there it was a ghetto). Henry and I both started trumpet about the same time, and I'd known him for practically all my life. He could flutter-tongue: now that's another effect, it's done with the tongue instead of the throat. I shall never forget the first time I heard it. I was sitting on my stoop blowing my horn about 7 o'clock in the evening, just foolin' around. And Henry came down the street and said, "Stewart-ie! Betcha I can do something you can't do!" Me, I said, "You must be kidding. I mean I can play gooder horn than you can!" So he picked up my horn and he flutter-tongued and I flipped! And I couldn't do it. I couldn't do it for years and years--I **couldn't** do it! I used to beg him to show me, but he just laughed. Henry should have been famous, I don't know what happened. I do know he's living in Long Island now, but he had a lot on the ball for a trumpet player. He played with Earl Hines up in San Francisco, but that was, I guess, his last big job.

How long had Cootie been with Duke before you joined the band?

Probably about four years. I joined in about 1934 but I do know that Cootie left Henderson and went to Chick Webb's band first. I think Ellington got him from there.

Duke had quite a brass section, what with you and Cootie and Tricky Sam on board. How did he have this particular talent for picking people?

Because he has a particular talent for picking people! I can remember very well that when I finally joined the band, much against my will, most of the people who were writing about music at the time said, "My God! He must have lost his mind--why'd he hire **him?"** But Ellington had had me in mind for, I should imagine, three or four years before I finally went with him. He used to ask me every time we'd meet on the road or wherever, "Are you ready to join the band?" And I always used to tell him "No". I didn't like his music, I liked Fletcher's music. I was a Henderson man. I didn't like the growling, I didn't like the weird chord sequences that he employed. I didn't like his rhythm section as compared to Henderson's.

So when my big band was broken up for me, I went with Luis Russell. I went downtown to collect a record cheque from Irving Mills and while I was there, Duke came in and said, "Just the man I've been looking for! Where've you been all day?" (That's part of his line, you know.) I passed it off and talked a little bit, then he said, "Well, you might as well join me now that you're not with Henderson." I said no thanks, I don't want to travel. I made all kind of excuses but I didn't tell him the real reason.

I jumped in the subway and came uptown, and as I reached the bottom of my steps, Jonesy, Duke's valet, was standing in the middle of the stairs and there was Paul Barbarin who was Luis Russell's drummer, standing in the doorway, talking to my wife. Jonesy was yelling to my wife to "Tell Rex to come on downtown to be fitted for a uniform!" That very night I went to work at Brooklyn Roseland and Luis Russell leans in the door and says, "What're you doing here?" I said, "We're working here, aren't we?" He said **"You're** not." And I spotted it immediately that Barbarin had reported to Russell what he'd heard! Get the picture? So I'm with no job. It was the Depression, so I went and joined Ellington.

I grew to love the band, finally, but it took about a year for me to get used to it, to understand what he was doing and why. To me it was grotesque. It didn't swing, and when I say that, I mean in comparison to the way Henderson's band swung. There was a vast difference. But then I began to get the picture and I started liking it, and I've been, well, more or less an Ellington man ever since.

Were there that many critics in those

days to bother with?

No. I don't quite remember how many jazz magazines there were, but this was before **downbeat**. I remember there was the **HRS** which was devoted to jazz--the Hot Record Society--and I think there were a couple more around, but to a large degree most of us fellows were quite disdainful of the critics and their opinions. Even if I look back now where I can see that the function of critics has validity, I think we were perfectly correct in being disdainful of this particular group of critics because actually, they didn't know anything about the music. They'd buy a few records and pick out people whose playing they liked, based on nothing except their personal taste, and they would guide the taste of the record buyers. And the musicians resented this.

What do you think of critics today?

I think they've evolved right along with the music. I'm positive that the critics are much more discerning than they were formerly. They've studied the music to a much greater degree and they're more valid as to the whys and wherefores and so on. But on the other hand, I still have a small personal fight with the critics because as far as I can tell, it seems to me that they ape each other's writing and opinions. I think it's regrettable that this should come out this way, and it's always refreshing to me when a critic goes out on a limb. For example, a critic can say, "I like John Coltrane" and that's fine with me, even though personally, I may not like Coltrane, but when they all take a certain line and start getting unanimous, I don't think that's quite ethical, even if **I'm** the subject that's being discussed. It kind of annoys me when the critics, to a man, say, "Well, Stewart made an OK record" because I don't think you can satisfy all the people. I do regret this apparent tendency to follow a line.

What are your views on the "New Thing"?

Here I have to hedge. I can't discuss Coltrane and the New Thing because I don't know anything about it. You may think I'm jesting but I'm not. When I'm at home I don't switch on the radio, I don't play records. I don't turn on TV to watch any special show, so actually I have no frame of reference for what these people are doing. I do read from time to time what the critics are saying about the avant garde, but you could put me in a room with records of Shepp, Coltrane, Coleman, etc., and so on down the line, including Sonny Rollins, and I couldn't tell you one from the other. I don't know their work.

Do you think that the social status of jazzmen has improved over the years?

Oh yes, there's no question about it. The realization that jazz is a real contribution to the art forms has led to a very slow, almost imperceptible movement towards recognizing jazz musicians as **people**. But on the other hand, there has also been a contrary movement in which the addictions, the playing with dope, the marijuana, the heroin, etc., has been pounced upon by the newspapers because they realize that a caption associating musicians with dope will sell newspapers. This follows the line that is apparent in Anglo-Saxon thinking about jazz music. So, although certain individuals have gained greatly in stature within the social structure of society, at the same time there's been another, contrary force that has virtually lumped together most musicians into the category of being dope addicts. This is regrettable and I blame the Press for this. I also blame the Musicians' Union for not demanding a more respectful attitude from the Press. If a banker is caught in an apartment with marijuana, the headline doesn't read "Banker caught in marijuana pad!"--they say "A joint was raided and here was so-and-so". When musicians are concerned, they always have to tie them in with something denigrating. And that's unfair because I don't think are any more addicts among musicians than there are in any other strata of society.

How does the Negro public feel about this?

Well, you have to realize--I mean, **I** have to realize--that the Negro public as such is certainly under the influence of brainwashing just like any other part of the public. They read the same papers and their thoughts are slanted in the same way and there isn't very much difference. I would say that I think that the Negro public is more inclined to understand the ramifications and the implications contained by the captions, and as such, I don't think that it is as much of a stigma within the Negro people as it is among the people at large. But, I know also, and this seems like a paradox, that most responsible Negro people are horrified by the association and the usage of dope. There's a very strong social thing among Negroes about dope, in particular. Drinking's not nearly regarded as something of such low value. In fact, I think you would find more Negro mothers and fathers who would advise their daughters not to marry or go out with a musician than you would among the white population.

What kind of family did you grow up in?

My family all played either classical music or went to church, so no-one was allowed to play ragtime in the house. It came from that old stigma about the origins of the music. But playing classical music certainly didn't offer as much future as playing jazz, because the people who played in the string ensembles and the concert orchestras, they didn't make much money. I mean, when I was thirteen years old I could go out and earn a dollar-and-a-half a night, which was good money in those days.

You seem to be very interested in things outside music, more so than many others I've met.

In the old Ellington band, Harry Carney was a good conversationalist, but Cootie never had much to say, neither did Tizol. Lawrence, Sonny Greer, Otto Hardwicke, Tricky Sam, they were the most listenable people. Ben? Yes, I think that we must admit that Ben is and was a strange character! Artie Whetsol was very well-informed, but by and large, I think that the rest of the guys would only be interested in the current things, you know, the sports, and things like that.

But you know, I get more of a kick out of sitting in a corner and watching and listening to people talk than in asking them questions. Sneaky! But my reasoning is this: if you accost someone and draw them into conversation, talk to them with no valid purpose, then they tend to clam up and withdraw. Whereas, if you just stand in a bar and listen to 'em talking, well, that's when you'll really get to know what makes them tick.

I was always interested in people and trying to formulate in my own mind what made them tick: their motivations, their fears, their hopes, their dreams.

Interview conducted in London, England. May, 1966

JAZZ VIDEO UPDATE

The three most famous jazz films are ***The Sound of Jazz***, ***Jazz On A Summer's Day*** and ***Jammin' The Blues***. The latter is included in ***Song of the Spirit***, a Lester Young documentary already reviewed previously in this column. Happily, the first two are now at last out on video.

The Sound of Jazz (available from Stash Records, 611 Broadway, Suite 411, New York, NY 10012) is arguably the greatest jazz film of all time. Filmed Dec. 8, 1957, this special 60-minute show (included as part of a continuing series called ***The Seven Lively Arts***) was only broadcast on CBS once, never again to be shown in its entirety on national television. Nat Hentoff and Whitney Balliett picked the musicians (which included most of the best then-active pre-bop masters), Nat Pierce wrote the arrangements and Robert Herridge served as producer.

What makes ***The Sound of Jazz*** far superior to most other music films is its mixture of planning and spontaneity. The musicians had rehearsed the music earlier, yet everything was filmed in one take. The camerawork was very ad-lib and alert, often catching player's reactions to each other's solos. Even the brief verbal interludes given by host John Crosby have their own charm as he occasionally stumbles over names and succeeds in staying out of the music's way.

The show begins with a Count Basie-led all-star band swinging on a medium up-tempo blues. Coleman Hawkins roars, trombonist Dickie Wells hits a few humorous high notes, Gerry Mulligan fits in easily with the veterans, Count Basie strides while Jo Jones smiles, and Jimmy Rushing, who sits quietly, looks like he is bursting with pride just to be associated with this crowd.

One of the most remarkable performances during this film is a rather dramatic rendition of *Wild Man Blues* by Red Allen's All Stars. After Allen, Hawkins and trombonist Vic Dickenson make their solo statements, clarinetist Pee Wee Russell takes a chorus filled with ridiculous chances, talking, grunting and growling through his horn; even an unintentional squeak becomes part of his improvisation. Cornetist Rex Stewart literally cracks himself up by at first imitating Russell, then builds up his solo with wide interval jumps that lead to a screaming high note; one sees Red Allen's reaction to all of this. Red wraps up the song with his own high note, driving the ensemble to the close. To start their encore of *Rosetta*, Red says "Nice. Watch it, don't slow the tempo this time. Whomp! Whomp!" Allen sings a chorus, Hawkins and Dickenson are in good form, a muted Stewart misses his high note this time and then, after Pee Wee and Jo Jones have their spots. Allen riffs into an exciting final ensemble which ends with Rex & Pee Wee flying above the group. Even after repeated viewings, these two performances never lose their punch.

Although I hesitate to give a complete play - by - play recitation of this entire film, there are other moments that I cannot leave out. Basie's dream band plays a driving *Dickie's Dream* with solo space for Ben Webster, Benny Morton, Joe Wilder, Gerry Mulligan, Vic Dickenson, Roy Eldridge (looking devilish and screaming completely out of control), Emmett Berry, Coleman Hawkins, Dickie Wells and Joe Newman! Billie Holiday strolls into the room nonchalantly while the music is raging and whispers something to Basie; it is all so informal and natural.

Thelonious Monk (wearing a cap and sunglasses) plays *Blue Monk* with bassist Ahmed Abdul Malik and drummer Osie Johnson. One not only gets to watch Monk's fingers (and expressive footwork) closely but also the reactions of some of the other players. Coleman Hawkins and Count Basie obviously love the music but a stern-looking Jimmy Rushing is caught at its conclusion briefly glancing up to heaven as if to ask, "Is he crazy?" Rushing gets to sing *I Left My Baby* with the Basie All-Stars but is overshadowed by the most famous performance of the day, Billie Holiday's *Fine and Mellow*. Webster, Hawkins, Dickenson, a light - hearted Mulligan and a dramatic Eldridge are all in top form, but a visibly ill Lester Young cuts everyone with his single chorus of pure honest soul; Billie's eyes seem a little misty as she watches him.

Filling out the film is the one miss, the Jimmy Giuffre Three's *Swamp Jazz*. Their *The Train and the River* sounds like an ancestor of New Age and is tiring; Sonny Rollins should have been booked instead. Giuffre and Pee Wee Russell finish the magical hour with a double clarinet blues over the closing credits.

Watching ***The Sound of Jazz*** makes one silently curse the television programmers of the past 40 years. This should have been a weekly series! On the other hand, it is a miracle that this session was filmed at all

HENRY RED ALLEN (Photograph by Bill Smith)

and that it still exists.

Jazz On A Summer's Day (84 minutes) does not date quite as well as ***The Sound Of Jazz*** but it has its valuable moments. Shot in colour at the 1958 Newport Jazz Festival, there are times when the generally excellent musical performances only serve as a soundtrack for closeups of the audience. A critical moment during Anita O'Day's set is missed in favour of watching a girl eating an ice cream cone! But at least there is no narration and this film does capture a time period that will never be repeated.

The Jimmy Giuffre Three fares better here than on ***The Sound Of Jazz***, thanks to the presence of trombonist Bob Brookmeyer as a competing voice to Giuffre's tenor, they play a much more heated version of *The Train and the River* over the opening titles. Thelonious Monk again performs ***Blue Monk*** but much of his spot is taken up by shots of a boat race. Sonny Stitt and guitarist Sal Salvador collaborate on a medium-tempo blues, the Chico Hamilton Quintet (with Eric Dolphy on flute) is seen rehearsing and Eli's Chosen Six makes several appearances playing dixieland in staged but colourful settings.

The musical highpoint of this film is provided by Anita O'Day (wearing a black hat, a long black dress and white globes) who takes a sensual *Sweet Georgia Brown* through three separate tempos and scats up a storm on *Tea For Two.* One never gets a chance to see her backup musicians and the shots of the crowd are a bit intrusive, but the music is wonderful.

As day turns into night, the music continues with George Shearing's quintet starring Armando Perazzo on congas, Dinah Washington singing a spirited *All Of Me* ("Since you took the best, why not come back and support the rest?") with Terry Gibbs, Urbie Green and Max Roach, Gerry Mulligan's quartet (co-starring Art Farmer) jamming on *Catch As, Catch Can.* Big Maybelle belting out a blues (Buck Clayton gets a solo), the out-of-place Chuck Berry causing Jack Teagarden to grin in amazement on *Sweet Sixteen* (during which Rudy Rutherford tries to "battle" Berry with his clarinet) and Chico Hamilton's Quintet performing the exotic ***Blue Sands***. Louis Armstrong has an extended spot during which he scats *Up A Lazy River* (with Trummy Young, Peanuts Hucko and Danny Barcelona in evidence), plays a very fast *Tiger Rag*, sings a timeless version of *Rockin' Chair* with Jack Teagarden and says goodnight over *The Saints*. The last 11 minutes of this film are taken up by Mahalia Jackson who, after a rousing *Everybody's Talking About Heaven* and *Didn't It Rain*, ends ***Jazz On A Summer's Day*** on a very somber note with *The Lord's Prayer.*

Clearly ***Jazz On A Summer's Day*** is flawed (why so much Mahalia?) but still quite essential. George Wein should have hired a crew to film every Newport Jazz Festival! (Available from New Yorker Video, 16 West 61st St., New York, NY 10023)

In addition to these two classics, many other jazz films and documentaries have been made available in recent times. Rosetta Reitz, founder of Rosetta Records, has put together nine clips on ***Jazz Women 1932-52*** (28 minutes), featuring six singers and three all-female bands which vary in quality and prior availability. Three of these (Helen Humes' *I*

Cried For You, Sister Rosetta Tharpe's *Lonesome Road* and the only film that exists of Ida Cox) are also on ***The Ladies Sing The Blues*** (View Video) but in this case there is no aimless narration; pity that *I Cried For You* is started halfway through Wardell Gray's tenor solo. The early black actress Nina Mae McKinney sings *Everything I've Got Belongs To You* (from the short ***Pie Pie Blackbird***) with Eubie Blake's orchestra and Maxine Sullivan is fine on a 1940s soundie, *Some of These Days*, but best of all is a very valuable clip of Billie Holiday in 1950 with Count Basie's septet singing *God Bless The Child* and the medium-tempo *Now Baby Or Never*. The three band numbers are rare with Rita Rae's Mistresses of Rhythm doing a novelty version of *La Cucaracha*. Ada Leonard conducting her orchestra on *Indiana* a la Ina Ray Hutton (never standing still) and the legendary International Sweethearts of Rhythm allocating most of *Jump Children* to Anna Mae Winburn's vocal. ***Jazz Women 1932-52*** is well worth acquiring for Lady Day. (Rosetta Records, 115 W. 16th St., Suite 267, New York, NY 10011)

Jazz films, as with the best jazz recordings, only grow in value as time passes. Rhapsody (P.O. Box 179, New York, NY 10014) has the largest jazz film catalog of them all and, over time, I will try to cover most of their old and new releases. In the former category is ***Bill Evans: On the Creative Process and Self-Teaching*** (20 minutes, 1966), a generally fascinating and somewhat melancholy film. After a brief introduction by Steve Allen, Bill and his older brother/educator Harry Evans appear on screen. Harry persuades Bill to play *Star Eyes*, first just the straight melody and then, after demonstrating the harmonies, three improvised choruses as Harry looks on. The siblings move to chairs and discuss the value of jazz education for a bit. In their debate, Harry recalls how during a weeklong visit, Bill refused to show him the chord changes and voicings he uses, saying that he would not want to deprive Harry of the pleasure of figuring them out himself! The elder Evans tries to rationalize this approach, but one can easily feel his resentment. Considering that Harry committed suicide in 1979, partly because of his frustration at not being the pianist his brother was, this exchange is quite eerie. The brief film concludes with Bill (at Harry's request) just playing the straight melody of three of his compositions: *Very Early, Time Remembered and My Bells*.

Born to Swing (50 minutes, 1973), a film produced, directed and edited by John Jeremy, is a documentary that focuses on five of the Basie alumni (Dickie Wells, Buddy Tate, Buck Clayton, Jo Jones and Earle Warren) and their then current situations. One gets to see excerpts from a jam session featuring those five (with Joe Newman in Clayton's place) along with trombonist Snub Mosley, guitarist Eddie Durham, pianist Tommy Flanagan and bassist Gene Ramey, but the best music is unfortunately only featured in excerpts, the main flaw to this otherwise superior film. The Dickie Wells and Buck Clayton segments are the saddest since the trombonist was working as a lowly messenger for a Wall Street firm while Buck was no longer healthy enough to play trumpet. In contrast, Buddy Tate was fairly prosperous, Jo Jones (who is spoken of lovingly by

Gene Krupa) is shown happily teaching others in his drum shop, and Earle Warren, who chose to take some commercial jobs (playing polkas!) rather than starve, was also in good shape. Andy Kirk, John Hammond and Albert McCarthy add a few comments to this bittersweet movie while Humphrey Lyttelton does the narration. A well-conceived and now-historical film, ***Born to Swing*** has many interesting moments if not enough music.

Archie Shepp's ***I am Jazz . . . It's My Life*** (52 minutes, 1984), also from Rhapsody, is a misfire. Frank Cassenti, a French film maker, had planned to document Sun Ra and then, at the last minute, decided also to capture the saxophonist. The key word for this pseudo-documentary is "rambling" for, whether in his verbal political statements or in his tenor and soprano solos, Shepp wanders somewhat aimlessly. Shifting between English and French (with subtitles provided for both), Shepp gives his versions of jazz history and then (with faulty intonation) struggles on tunes such as *In A Sentimental Mood*, some blues, an unidentified ballad and *Moose the Mooche* (backed by pianist Siegfried Kessler, bassist Wilbur Little and drummer Clifford Jarvis), often playing very sloppily and out-of-tune. Shepp's strong point was always his powerful tone, so it is rather sad to hear how much he has declined, seemingly without knowing it. He also talks / sings his poem, *Mama Rose*, and is seen in rehearsal and playing unaccompanied at a park; the editing is erratic and not always logical.

Much better is Steve Lacy's ***Lift the Bandstand*** (Rhapsody, 50 minutes, 1985), a definitive study of the great soprano-saxophonist by Peter Bull. Lacy is very articulate during the interview segments, talking about his beginnings on piano (an instrument he quit after hearing Art Tatum), Sidney Bechet, Cecil Taylor, Gil Evans, Monk, his co-op group with Roswell Rudd ("We kept this group going through thin, there was no thick, for three years"), and of moving to Europe and freeing up his style. In addition to brief film excerpts of Monk, Evans and Coltrane, there are four glorious choruses of Sidney Bechet playing *Royal Garden Blues*; a documentary on **that** master is long overdue! In addition, Lacy is seen performing *Gay Paree Bop* and *Prospectus* with his sextet (Steve Potts, as; Irene Aebi, vcl, vln; Bobby Few, p; John Jacques Avenel, b; Oliver Johnson, d.) at a Oct. 29, 1983 concert. One comes away from this superlative film with a deeper understanding of both Steve Lacy the man and his music.

View Video (34 East 23 Street, NY, NY 10010 800-843-9843) in their jazz series has released several performance films of interest, three of which are covered in this column. ***Cobham Meets Bellson*** (36 minutes, 1984) is essentially a long drum "battle". Assisted by Louie Bellson's 17-piece band, Bellson and Billy Cobham have a "conversation", trade phrases, solo individually and interact explosively. The orchestra enters on four different occasions (Randy Brecker even has a short trumpet solo), but it mostly acts as an occasional accompanist for the two drummers. After a very strong start, a quiet section is overlong and temporarily kills the film's momentum before the dual heats up again. There are no "winners" to this collaboration, for both drummers are consistently inventive and their individual styles overlap a bit. It makes for an impressive film.

Louie Bellson's Big Band (55 minutes, 1984) is taken from the same Italian concert and features the all-star orchestra on six selections. Bellson dominates *The Drum Squad*, altoist Herb Geller sounds beautiful on the ballad *Samantha* and *Blues for Freddy* has strong moments from a Tranish Michael Brecker, Howard Johnson (on tin whistle!), Jiggs Whigham's wa-wa trombone and a boppish Lew Soloff trumpet solo. *Niles Ahead* puts the spotlight on Randy Brecker while *We've Come A Long Way Together* showcases the warm trumpet of Benny Bailey. The closer, *Explosion*, has a hot tradeoff between Geller and Mike Brecker and a long colourful solo by Louie Bellson, who at one point uses two drum sticks in each hand. Overall, this is a well-balanced and easily enjoyable film.

Mel Lewis and his Big Band (38 minutes), 1985) is not quite as rewarding although it too has its moments. It starts with a nice swinging version of *I'm Getting Sentimental Over You*, which includes a disguised melody, some thoughtful flugelhorn by Jim Powell and good camerawork. The somewhat mysterious *Ding Dong Ding* features the two sopranos of Billy Drewes and Dick Oatts with a bit of unaccompanied piano from Phil Markowitz. Unfortunately valuable space is wasted by Lynn Roberts' showbizzy vocals on *I Get A Kick Out Of You* and *I Want To Be Happy*, reducing the band to background work. Thad Jones' *Pixie* gives solo space to Markowitz, all five of the saxophones and Mel Lewis himself before the film prematurely ends. The three instrumentals are excellent, but at least 20 more minutes of music should have been included.

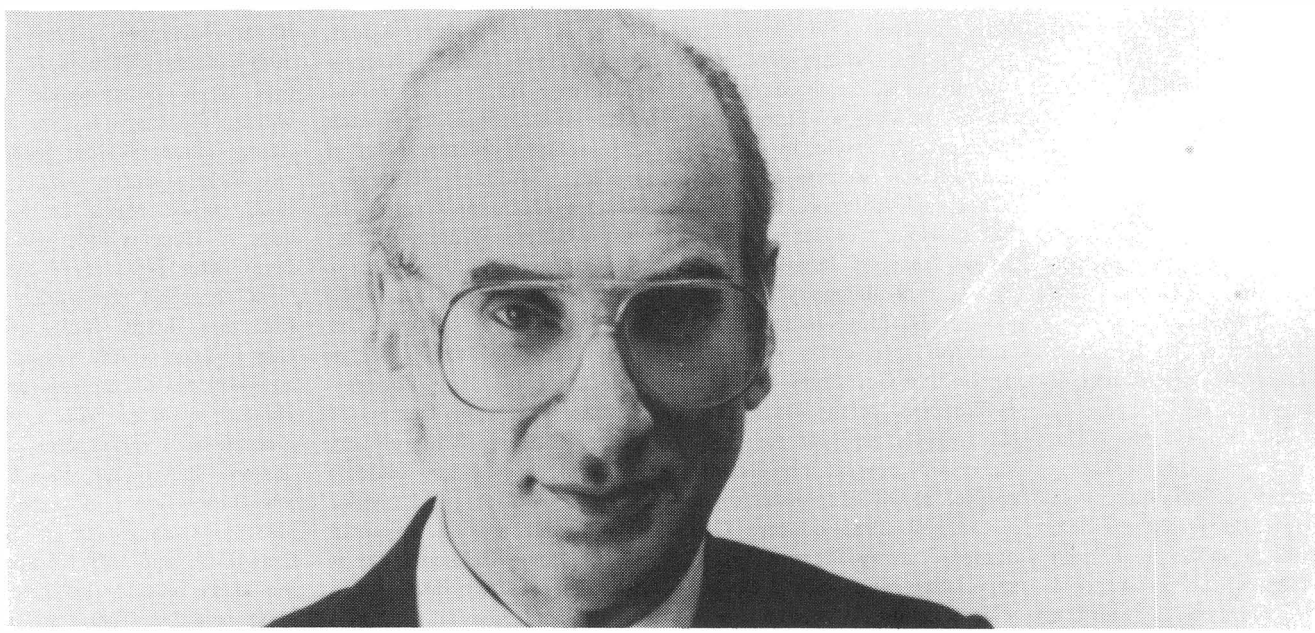
Warner Reprise Video recently came out with ***Miles In Paris*** (60 minutes, 1990), filmed November 3, 1989 at the 10th Paris Jazz Festival. Most of this is a performance film which, other than a few too many freeze frames, lets the generally worthwhile music speak for itself. Since Miles no longer uses a Hendrix-style guitarist (employing Foley as a second "lead" bassist), even purists will find this lightly funky music easy to take. Kenny Garrett has an emotional r&bish solo on *On Human Nature*, Miles plays *Amandla* as a muted ballad, *Tutu* is somewhat routine, *New Blues* lets Garrett loose to preach on his alto (reminiscent of Hank Crawford) and *Mr. Pastorius* includes a bit of Miles' heartfelt open trumpet. There are brief interview segments with Davis between songs. He says of his 1981 comeback: "It took me three years to get the sound again. . . Some days I felt lousy but it came back." Although this film leaves one desiring more, ***Miles In Paris*** is most highly recommended to those jazz listeners who think that Davis' music has not changed much since *Bitches Brew*.

In my last two ***Video Update*** columns, I bemoaned the fact that ***The Sound of Jazz*** and ***Jazz On A Summer's Day*** were completely unavailable. In an attempt to continue the trend, I ask: When will ***Theatre For A Story*** (a 30 minute 1959 special featuring Miles Davis and Gil Evans) and the Louis Armstrong-Billie Holiday movie ***New Orleans*** be available on video? Keep your fingers crossed!

FROM SOME TIME BEFORE

Dick Hyman Plays Fats Waller
Dick Hyman, piano solos
Encoded in New York, NY, December 1988
Recorded in Santa Ana, California, August 13, 1989

Bach Up To Me, Ain't Misbehavin', Keepin' Out of Mischief Now, African Ripples, Honeysuckle Rose, Viper's Drag, Willow Tree, I'm Goin' To See My Pa, Stealin' Apples, I've Got A Feeling I'm Falling, Handful Of Keys, My Fate Is In Your Hands, Jitterbug Waltz, Sweet Savannah Sue, Squeeze Me (59:38)



Dick Hyman was **not** present when this, **the world's first Direct-To-CD recording** was made!

Hyman had played the wonderful Fats Waller music eight months earlier on a giant 225SE Boesendorfer in a New York City piano showroom. The complicated instrument carefully scanned each key and pedal action eight hundred times a second and stored the data on a digital disc.

Eight months later, that same encoded information was used to produce an exact duplication of Hyman's efforts, three thousand miles away, on a Boesendorfer Computerized Reproducing Piano (290SE). *Dick Hyman was performing in San Francisco while his music was being recorded four hundred miles away in Santa Ana, California.* This, admittedly, is an overly simplified description of the highly sophisticated procedure that created the innovative recording.

A record reviewer, with a new Dick Hyman CD, faces the task of harnessing a reporter's hazard: *the use of excessive superlatives.*

Fats Waller could never have envisioned his compositions being performed with direct-to-CD technology, or the digital mastering, or the tiny silvery disc that holds an hour of his music. Nevertheless, he is a co-star. His presence is felt throughout the recording as Dick Hyman emphasizes the enduring qualities of Waller's well-known work and examines a few of his obscurities.

Quite appropriately, this monumental material was recorded on the world's largest piano. While it's extra notes extend Hyman's keyboard range, the world class performer never allows his facile technique to eclipse Fats' melodic conceptions.

Waller's insinuating composition, *Squeeze Me*, is given a six minute introspective exploration that views the standard with pensive adoration. In Hyman's hands, it becomes a tender love ballad. Surprisingly, Fats never recorded *Stealin' Apples*. It is heard at a lightning tempo that would have dazzled Johnny Guarnieri, who placed a strong personal stamp on the tune.

Contrastingly, the Hyman reading of *I've Got A Feeling I'm Falling* is redolent with a plaintive limplicity. He bares the tune's deeply romantic impulses that most performers, including the composer, have overlooked. My Fate Is In Your Hands is accorded a similar reverence as Hyman wanders through further explorations of Waller's artistry.

Of the fifteen products from Fats Waller's prolific pen, none is done in a stereotypical manner. Hyman approaches the lovely *Willow Tree* with warm sentimentality. Despite the curious title, the obscure *I'm Gonna See My Ma* is a striding, joyous romp. Superficially, *Sweet Savannah Sue* appears to be dressed in a flippant, casual attire. Hyman apparently is recalling Waller's 1929 recording that was cadenced in a player piano motif, reflecting the precursor of the technological breakthrough that produced this compact disc.

A lusty performance of *Jitter Bug Waltz* applauds the prodigious 1942 composition that extricated jazzmen from previously imposed time signature restraints. There is a whimsical introductory Ommp- pa- pa

Oomp-pa-pa that establishes the 3/4 beat. Then Hyman unleashes a torrent of rhythmic concepts that fully demonstrate his ability to add tone and shading that enhances without overshadowing.

Will we ever tire of that timeless melody, *Honeysuckle Rose*? For seven exhilarating minutes, Hyman carefully polishes every brilliant facet of the Waller gem. This one requires several replays to fully appreciate the pianist's ability. He scatters sounds that appear to flutter casually like snowflakes, yet they land in a seemingly ordained pattern. *Watch those superlatives, Floyd!*

Mention should be made of the expert mike placement during the "aberrational" recording session. There is a crisp clarity on the higher tones and the bass end of the giant Boesendorfer is warmly resonant. The pianist's vigorous left hand, a vital tool of his trade, is beautifully showcased. A full spectrum of sound fills the room. It's thrilling, almost like having Dick Hyman as a house guest!

We Hyman watchers have been well aware of his rising stature since he won a New York radio station's amateur pianist contest while still a teenager. (First prize was a series of lessons with Teddy Wilson.)

Hyman peerlessly reveals a sincere reverence to the stride masters of the past: James P. Johnson, Fats Waller, Willie "The Lion" Smith, et al. This CD makes it abundantly clear, however, that all future appraisals of piano art will be measured by guidelines Dick Hyman has restructured.

The compact disc is issued in a deluxe, numbered, limited edition. The fabric-covered, gold-stamped, package includes extensive liner notes and is protected by an illustrated slip cover. It will also be released soon as a standard compact disc, a Pure Analogue LP, and a DAAD cassette.

Available from: Reference Recordings, Box 77225X, San Francisco, California 94107. - *Floyd Levin*

Don Ewell with Barbara Dare: ***Denver Concert***
Pumpkin 120
Jack Teagarden Sextet Featuring Don Ewell
Pumpkin 121

Don Ewell was **the** pioneer piano jazz revivalist, coming into the fold a full decade ahead of Dick Wellstood and quite a few years before Ralph Sutton, the two latter-day revivalists of equal stylistic stature. Influenced in his early years by Fats Waller and Earl Hines, the conservatory-trained Ewell was active in the Baltimore area as far back as the mid-1930s. In the 1940s, after a stint with the band of Bunk Johnson (kingpin of the New Orleans Jazz Revival), in which he came as close to Morton as he would get. From then on Ewell became identified with the New Orleans / dixieland scene, playing with the likes of Sidney Bechet, Kid Ory, Doc Evans, George Brunis, Muggsy Spanier, Willie The Lion Smith (as a duo) as well as blues singer Mama Yancey (widow of barrelhouse pianist Jimmy Yancey, a close friend of Ewell's). Some of Ewell's best piano playing, increasingly more sophisticated though rooted in traditional styles, was to be heard (by those fortunate enough to do so) in the band led by **Jack Teagarden**, in the final years of this jazz giant's life, from 1957 to 1964. All of which brings us to these two recordings from Pumpkin Records, the Miami-based label that continues to provide pleasant surprises and exciting rareties such as these.

Listening to ***The Denver Concert***, one wonders why we haven't heard more of Ewell, why we never pursued him with as much passion as, say, Earl Hines (to whom he bears comparison) why no one bothered to record him more often. According to Hayden Carruth (in an essy on Ewell in ***Sitting In***, 1986), the shy and unassuming Ewell's "personality was not suited to playing in public, or even worse into a microphone." And, the LPs liner notes state, Don used to say that "Listening to my own tapes is like sitting in a dentist's chair." Nevertheless he was very pleased with his work on this Denver tape and, years after it was made, wished someone would put it on a record. Well, Pumpkin did and the results are, to say the least, a revelation. For here undoubtedly is the "real" Don Ewell, the Ewell that Eubie Blake called "the greatest piano player I ever heard."

At the 1966 Denver concert, sponsored by the Denver Jazz Club, Ewell plays tribute to the musicians who inspired him most, without copying their styles note-for-note but giving them a fresh outlook entirely Ewell's. Accompanied only by bassist **Charles Burrell,** Ewell strides into a Jelly Roll Morton medley, then polishes Jelly's *The Pearls* to a new free-wheeling up-tempo brilliance, before taking *Kansas City Stomps* in his stride. The effect, if one needed comparisons, is that of Earl Hines playing Jelly Roll Morton and the analogy is not that far-fetched, for Earl was an even earlier inspiration for Ewell than Jelly and in his later years Ewell sounded more like Hines than Morton. Ewell quickly removes any doubts on the matter by going into an Earl Hines medley, *Blues In Thirds, A Monday Date, Rosetta*, sounding at times very much like the Fatha, but with his own creative flair. Even in his medley accolade to another of his heroes, Fats Waller, Ewell comes out sounding more like Hines playing Waller, but the final product is essentially Ewell. It's magnificent piano-playing, boosted no end by bassist Burrell.

In four numbers at the concert, Ewell is joined by **Barbara Dare**, a singer with a deep, rich Bessie Smith voice, in such classics as *See See Rider* and *Cake Walkin' Babies*, giving Ewell a chance to demonstrate his blues playing, picked largely from the Yanceys. In all, this album is a splendid tribute to a too much neglected pianist who died under somewhat tragic circumstances a quarter century later.

But back in 1957, the paths of **Don Ewell** and **Jack Teagarden** crossed, with happier results. Leaving Louis Armstrong's All Stars in 1951, Teagarden took to leading his own bands, including in 1957 a sextet that featured Ewell as pianist. This was the sextet, with minor personnel changes, with which Big T enjoyed his final days of glory, including a State Department tour of the Far East (with Max Kaminsky, trumpet) and concerts across the American continent.

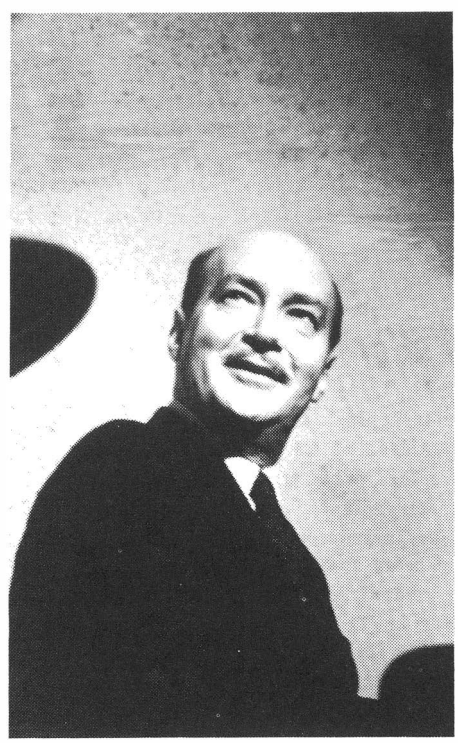
Canadian fans no doubt heard this band on its trips to Edmonton, Vancouver, Hamilton and Toronto. During a June 1958 visit to Toronto (a few weeks after the Cleveland concert), they appeared on CBC-TV as guests on bandleader Jack Kane's **Musicmakers** series. In Vancouver one month later, the Teagarden band was playing the First Vancouver International Festival, attended by a jazz-appreciative Princess Margaret. The CBC recorded and broadcast two of the band's concerts during the festival, but none of this material has surfaced in any form. The two commercial recordings of this band, one live (Sounds) and the other studio (Capitol) are now long

out of circulation, all of which makes this Pumpkin issue of a live broadcast concert from the Modern Jazz Room in Cleveland, Ohio on Saturday, May 3, 1958, a collector's gem and a fan's listening pleasure.

The Cleveland broadcast, one of two aired by local station WERE-FM, finds the Tearden sextet, all competent players, in top form, with Ewell besides the leader, outstanding. Although the band went through a dixieland routine that didn't allow for much spontaneity, Big T was far from tired; he plays every solo, whether its'his theme, *I Gotta Right To Sing The Blues*, or *Basin Street Blues*, or a dozen other titles, as though he was about to create a fresh masterpiece. Ewell comes through sparklingly, particularly in his blues solos and trumpeter **Don Goldie** ('The greatest I've heard,' according to Big T) adds to the excitement, sounding at times very much like Bobby Hackett, another Teagarden favourite. The added attraction here is Teagarden's announcements and friendly chit-chat between numbers, in the cozy atmosphere of the club, which makes this live performance all the more appealing, all captured in hi-fidelity stereo.

Indeed this sextet recording bears comparison with one of Pumpkin's earlier releases, ***Midnight at V-Disc*** (Pumpkin 103), the legendary midnight session recorded during World War II for the US Armed Forces (on 12" V-Discs) which brought together Jack Teagarden and **Louis Armstrong** unexpectedly (Louis droped in on his night off) in a rare, at the time, small band setting to record the spontaneous masterpiece, *Play Me The Blues* (later recreated commercially for Victor as *Jack-Armstrong Blues. I'm Confessin'* (two takes) as well as jam sessions with Hot Lips Page, Bobby Hackett, Don Byas, Charlie Shavers and others. . . one of the alltime great jazz lps of any era. Meanwhile Pumpkin Records (according to producer Robert Hilbert) will be going CD and many of these items will soon be available in the new format.

The end of the road for Jack Teagarden came in a New Orleans motel on January 15, 1964, when his heart gave out; years of heavy drinking and stress had taken its toll. "I guess they didn't want anyone to see his face," recalled Barney Bigard, "it was so grotesque from all that drink. So the casket was closed." After Teagarden's death, Don Ewell moved back to New Orleans to play in hotels and bands as well as making regular European tours; one of the last was undertaken to pay for costly cancer treatments for his daughter. She died and Ewell, brokenhearted and disillusioned, worked in a daze. Soon after, on August 9, 1983, he suffered several strokes and died, too. These two albums serve as living memorials to two great jazzmen, one a legend in his time, the other now surely a legend. - *Al Van Starrex*



DON EWELL (Photograph by Bill Smith)

Don Nelson
The Wind

It's You Or No One; Gone With The Wind (*) (**); Nobody's Heart; It Happened Once Before; Spring Can Really Hang You Up The Most; There'll Never Be Another You (18:00)*Taking A Chance On Love (*); If You Ever Change Your Mind; The Wind; As Long As I Live; That's All; This Is Always* (19:00)

Don Nelson (vo/recorder*); Jimmy Rowles (p/celeste**); Leroy Vinnegar (b); Stan Levey (d) Hollywood, July 1957

VAP Inc. CD85223, LP 35223

Back in the '50s, when a heady musical mash slowly leavened into a viable modern jazz form, the pace was accelerated by the efforts of Mode Records, an independent Hollywood label. Their beautifully packaged albums introduced innovative engineering techniques that brought fresh new fidelity to the record field. The expanding Mode catalog boasted titles by such soon-to-be giants as: Richie Kamuca, Conte Candoli, Pepper Adams, Buddy Collette, etc. These albums are now eagerly sought collectors' items bringing lofty prices whenever they appear on auction lists.

The Mode producers recognized a developing talent in the promising jazz vocalist, **Don Nelson**, the younger brother of band leader Ozzie Nelson. He was given an autonomous opportunity to select his own sidemen and pick the tunes for his first album, a freedom enjoyed by very few newcomers to the record industry. The quality of the music in this album attests to the accuracy of young Nelson's taste.

Recently, when V.S.O.P. acquired the rights to the Mode catalog, an ambitious reissue program was launched. They wisely opted to use the original cover art and text. The Japanese licensee, VAP, has released this album prior to its imminent appearance on V.S.O.P. in the US.

Don Nelson sings and plays soprano sax with pianist **Johnny Barro** on his current, highly acclaimed album, ***Sittin' In*** (TooCool TC1085). He is also featured on saxophone and vocals with Bob Ringwald's Great Pacific Jazz Band, a favourite with traditional jazz fans in Southern California. Nelson can also be heard on their top rated album, ***The Music of Louis Armstrong*** (Sacramento Jazz SJS-31).

It is Nelson's appealing voice (and his few choruses on the recorder) that graces this reissue of the 1957 recordings. Despite the passage of years, the transfer is flawless. A crisp clarity creates an intimacy that exudes from each groove. Don Nelson's effortless legato phrasing adds to the full emotional depth of each tune. He approaches every number with a poetic sensitivity, almost a seething passion, as he gently caresses the lyrics that tell the story.

You know a jazzman is at work by Nelson's melodic bends that subtly alter the melodies to amplify the mood. The veteran, Nat King Cole, was a master at this. It would appear that this young vocalist, while he

displayed a warm individuality, often spiced his ballads "á la King".

Spring Can Really Hang You Up The Most, a difficult tune to navigate gracefully, has tossed many lesser singers against the rugged shores of ostentation. Nelson's wide vocal range and tasteful articulation easily harness the cerebral ballad. It's amazing what can be achieved with a tender sigh (and the warm instrospection of **Jimmy Rowles'** supportive piano!).

Leroy Vinnegar's compelling bass line, and **Stan Levey's** sensitive wire brush work create a velvety rhythmic cushion for Nelson's gently swinging version of *There Will Never Be Another You*. This is a perfect demonstration, vocally and instrumentally, of the curious truism, **less is more**.

In *Gone With The Wind*, Don plays a few bars on the recorder, a sound that has been neglected in jazz. It's melodious quality injects a hauntingly romantic surge to this ballad and adds a jaunty swing to *Takin' A Chance On Love*.

If You Ever Change Your Mind spotlights Jimmy Rowles' piano in a lovely buttress to Nelson's vocal. Then in sixteen instrumental bars, he and Vinnegar convert the unfamiliar melody into a thing of restrained joy. When Rowles switches to celeste on *It Happened Once Before*, the delicate backing is woven deeply into the basic elements of the song. It merges with Nelson's voice to assist with the singer's emotional narration of a familiar lover's theme.

In Russ Freeman's engrossing title song, the mood plummets. The abyss is as doleful as the image envisioned in the lyrics of *Gloomy Sunday*, the European import of the '30s. As though reconciled to the finality of a shattered romance, Don's final notes are swept away amid a cluster of delicate chimes, seemingly by The Wind.

The Bobby Troup composition, *It Happened Once Before*, was, inadvertently, a very prophetic addition to the tunes Don Nelson chose for his initial album. When this material was originally released by Mode Records thirty three years ago, the rate of distaff heart beats must have accelerated alarmingly. With this reissue, those early fires surely will rage again and similar flames will be kindled in the bosoms of their daughters - and/or granddaughters!

- *Floyd Levin*

EVERY TUB ON ITS OWN BOTTOM

Every year, as jazz content shrinks in music stores, there is more in print. Acknowledged figures like Armstrong, Morton, Holiday, Ellington, Oliver, Beiderbecke, Goodman and Parker get the essays, and lesser figures get the footnotes. Occasionally, a jazz critic will do a piece on an unsung player, but the class distinction is pretty rigid and, as jazz falls back in time, it is easier to play it safe with old masters. T'was ever thus and a player who didn't get much exposure in the 1920s, 1930s or 1940s didn't get much more after that.

Evaluation of some players is complicated by racial factors. Segregation in the '20s compelled scribes to deal with players on that basis, and the preponderance of black jazz musicians from New Orleans gave Negroes a first leg up in Chicago. Jim Crow unions and audience segregation worked to give black New Orleansians a head start, despite the half-dozen white and Creole jazz bands that flourished in Chicago at the same time. When white Chicago and New York apprentices became heard in the mid-1920s, they were handicapped by having come from the "second line", following black kings who were still enthroned. Bix Beiderbecke overcame that disadvantage by being highly skilled and unique in style. No one could say that he played like Keppard or Joe Oliver or Louis Armstrong, or, indeed, like anybody but himself. Other whites were less fortunate.

In these times of thrashing over equal rights (and equal prejudices), it should be pointed out that the 1920s in Chicago were dichotomous. White bands and black bands were segregated, and there were separate black and white locals for the musicians' union. Some stage shows had alternating black and white orchestras. The "white" clubs, theatres and restaurants were not accommodating to blacks, and segregation was maintained there as a matter of rigid fact. White musicians occasionally sat in with black bands late at night, when common interest in music transcended colour barriers. Despite private mixing (and playing), white musicians were not inclined to join black bands, and blacks could not have joined white orchestras without adverse audience reaction. Some "black" clubs were actually contrived to serve the white "slumming" spenders. White patrons to the South Side (black) clubs changed them to "black and tans". The best white musicians could sit in briefly, but that's as far as it went.

Except for Bix, every white cornet player was tagged with "influenced by Bix, or Louis", or "copied so-and-so". Despite large bodies of recorded work, literature hasn't illuminated lesser figures, and has filed them away in stratified layers of lower status. It took years in the "swing era" for Bunny Berigan, Harry James, Ziggy Elman and other white trumpeters to get on equal footing with Rex Stewart, Roy Elridge, Charlie Shavers and whoever else was on the black side of the colour barrier. The white kids of the '20s got a bum rap, partly because they didn't play quite like the popular black heroes, and partly because they had learned from them and acknowledged it openly. Everybody learns from somebody in their formative stages: that's the way it is. It isn't cause to withhold respect and appreciation. Those who did diligent research have finally got it through their heads that New Orleans wasn't the only jazz volcano, but the tendency to repeat nonsense persists. Jazz rhythms came from all over the world, and New Orleans, like Chicago twenty years later, was lucky enough to have sufficient work for musicians to gain a big name for itself and its players. History should be kinder to the Northern-based generation of players who were more than pale imitations of the delta emigrants, but who hadn't had time before the Depression to earn much acclaim. The prolific recording players got much more attention than those with smaller output. Commercial ballyhoo for recording artists weighted historians' scales with heavy thumbs.

One case in point is that of James D. (Jimmy) McPartland, a Chicago kid at Austin High School, who is said to have discovered jazz in 1922 at the **Spoon and Straw** soda parlour in some records of the New Orleans Rhythm Kings (Friar's Orchestra), a white dixieland band from New Orleans since 1920. Jimmy and his pals seized the moment and committed to life in the jazz business. They first learned by copying the records. They then discovered the black cornetists on Chicago's South Side: Oliver, Armstrong, Joe Smith, Keppard. Bix Beiderbecke in the mid-West's Wolverine Orchestra also gave Jimmy a lot to think about. He openly admired all the great horn players and made no bones about it. McPartland, Teschemacher, Freeman and a dozen peers

Photograph by Mary Benzer

developed quickly to a recognizable style of small band play that caught the attention of other musicians. In 1924, Beiderbecke knew enough about Jimmy to get him installed in the Wolverine line up as his replacement, a daunting challenge. Jimmy left no complaints. At his first audition at rehearsal, Bix told Jimmy that he liked his playing because he sounded like Bix, but didn't copy him. Jimmy recorded some sides with the Wolverines, and even fronted the band in 1926, but the public was focused on Louis Armstrong and an energetic white cornetist in New York: Ernest Loring (Red) Nichols.

Nichols was a cornetist of precise execution, with brilliance of tone and good technical ability. He was also a fair arranger and hustler of recording dates in a seller's market. He assembled small groups of good players, known and respected by other musicians, and allotted them generous solo time on many records. He was considered as a replacement for Bix, but his temperament was deemed unsuitable for a nightly bandstand grind, so McPartland got the nod. Jimmy was young, strong, brash and capable, and he always suspected that he had been hired because he had enough youthful brass to follow the best white cornet act in the country.

Red, a Utah boy, went into the New York melting pot early in his career and his music showed it. He didn't have the advantage of Chicago South Side jazz training, and came to jazz from a military academy band, dance bands and white society orchestras. He heard records of the ODJB, the NORK and the Wolverines, but that wasn't the same as hearing Oliver's Creole Orchestra live, with King Joe and Louis side by side, night after night. Red's cornet work couldn't be faulted, but he was heard to reflect skills of others, and musicians gave him the "imitator" label. Professional jealousy made matters worse, because he had more studio work (and money) than less fortunate peers. Red's massive output (with Miff Mole, Benny Goodman, Jack Teagarden and other white musicians), his sprightly brilliance in his lead cornet role and his arranging artfulness attracted the public. When jazz historians took up pen and ink in the 1930s and 1940s, Bix got most of the acclaim, but it became so silly that Red has recovered some ground in later re-evaluation. Gunther Schuller by-passed him in his comprehensive treatise ***Early Jazz***, but later relented in the face of complaints to give Red (and the Chicagoans) belated reviews in his next volume, ***The Swing Era***. Red Nichols was an opportunist, styling his work to fit the market as he (and the producers) saw it, but criticism that he copied Bix and failed was only partly true. He was quite democratic and didn't restrict imitation to Beiderbecke. It is now common to read that "Nichols was the most prominent white cornetist of the era", but that doesn't mean that he was better than the others. It means that Jimmy McPartland, Max Kaminsky, Muggsy Spanier, Wingy Manone and others were less prominent in print and wax. It is time to strike a blow for McPartland's liberty.

Jim McPartland didn't receive much recognition until late 1927, and then only with the help of Eddie Condon. The story goes that Condon was challenged by Red McKenzie, a jazz promoter and musician of sorts, to field a band for two record sides that could stand up to the quality of Red Nichols' work. Condon's tart tongue had often flayed Nichols' work and, when McKenzie's gauntlet was thrown down, Eddie rounded up the Chicagoans, mostly Austin High School alumni, adding pianist Joe Sullivan, Gene Krupa and himself in the rhythm section. On December 9, 1927, they recorded *Sugar* and *China Boy*. Condon picked the tunes and reed man Frank Teschemacher did most of the arranging. It was the first recording for all except McPartland, but they carried it off with enough verve to be called back a week later for a second session, recording *Nobody's Sweetheart* and *Liza*. Present was one Milton (Mezz) Mezzrow, a delinquent of record, pot smoker and dealer, jail-practised reed player and admirer of New Orleans musicians, with a zealot's fervency for everything "Negroid". Twenty years later he published his autobiography, ***Really The Blues***, in which he articulated the elements of the Chicagoans style, with polemics about their breach of faith with the black New Orleans masters. He patronized the Austin High Gang as mild heretics, and muttered about some band members being racially biased. As Mezz eventually learned, once white, never to be black and vice versa; but neurotic bias coloured much of the book. His opinion of the Chicagoans' music was that it was good, but diluted the Delta's jambalaya. He acknowledged that the music created an admiring stir, but not enough to stir him. He was critical of the absence of a trombone. He saw the tenor sax as a thin substitute, and harped on the divergence of the boys from the tonality and phrasing of their Negro antecedents. Somebody should have toned him down or tuned him up long ago, but he poisoned the well for decades.

Good jazz might be described as jazz that **satisfies** the listener, after the players have served up their good sounds. *Sugar* and *Nobody's Sweetheart* served notice that the Austin High Gang had come of age, and McPartland led the parade to satisfaction. He wasn't alone in the marching society.

Jimmy's pal, Frank Teschemacher, was the most exciting white clarinetist around. He was musically trained and totally committed to self-expression by aggressive jazz performance with a wildly imaginative style. He couldn't be denied in any milieu, and McPartland was a good front-line partner. McPartland's lead cornet was able to play the traditional role without cramping Teschemacher, and Bud Freeman's tenor sax provided enough lower harmony line to give Teschemacher's arrangements some body to compensate for the absence of a trombone. The tunes are introduced by three-part harmonies for the frontline horns. The rhythm section's chords quickly catch and hold the ear's attention. It was a happy combination: Condon's lute, Lannigan's string bass, Sullivan's piano chords and young Gene Krupa's strong beat pushing in the "shuffle rhythm" that the Chicagoans had mastered from the South Side drummers. The rhythm was superb, and inspired the front line horns to give their best, which they did.

I've read critiques of Jimmy's cornet work on *Sugar* which describe his ensemble work as "adequate", his solo as "tentative" and his final ensemble work as "showing new confidence". That's not the way I heard it. The three-part harmony of the *Sugar* chorus really had two lead instruments. Teschemacher's biting clarinet was irrepressibly strong, could carry a lead all by itself and often did. If McPartland had tried to dominate the thrust of Teschemacher, a fine balance would have deteriorated to a noisy competition. These 21 year old boys had been playing together

for more than five years, and McPartland knew how to sustain a laid back lead without receding out of earshot. He sounded like a melded version of Paul Mares and Bix, and his confidence was evident. His solo, the first of the piece, was delivered with relaxed swing, control and clean tone.

A cornet player can play a melodic line in an interesting way if he has full control of his instrument. As he plays a chorus through, he can finger all the notes of the melodic line, but he may not **play** each and every one. The careful use of well chosen "ghost notes" leaves a listener believing that he actually heard those notes, when the flow of tones only implied them. They become part of the melodic line by inference. It is not an easy feat. Soft, relaxed playing might make a cornet sound tentative, but "ghosting" is a skill, and "tentative" isn't the word for McPartland. He does the ghosting so well that *Sugar* needs a few replays to convince the ear that he didn't actually play some notes. If he did play them, one can't hear them, and if they were played very softly, the control was remarkable. Teschemacher's solo was his usual spirited display, and the ensemble work and Freeman's tenor solo put the house back in order. McPartland's strong lead provided a good buildup of tension in the final ensemble choruses. It was the rhythm that first distinguished the opening bars of the piece, but McPartland's accompaniment to Teschemacher's wild ride, and his solo work, made the most of it.

China Boy (selected as a tip of the hat to Bix with one of his favorite numbers) is played at a fast pace and arouses no complaints, except for some muddling by the front-line before Jim's final flare and the gallop back to the barn.

Nobody's Sweetheart earned the attention of other musicians, and the public accepted it readily. Comparison of a later Nichols version with the Chicagoans' work makes Bix's praise quite justified. Teschemacher is credited with the arrangement of the piece' three-part horn harmony, solos, ensemble with flares, "shuffle rhythm", with the beat pushed to drive the band along. Teschemacher's solo covers a wide range of harmonic inspiration, biting, swooping and emphatic. McPartland came in for his twenty-four bar solo without a ripple of interference, taking over command with ease. He swung along, clear and relaxed, with a couple of blue, flatted notes (lipped or half-valved). He even got away with four tasteful "razz-a-ma-tazz" phrases which would have been corny if he had played them less nicely. The performance was masterful. Some critics called his work "Bixian", but McPartland's tone, phrasing and fingering are unmistakably his own. A clean piece of work, done with complete assurance; the seventh recorded side of his life was his early masterpiece. He could always look back on it with pride. "They are fine, the best I ever heard", was Bix's comment on all four sides.

Teschemacher's arrangement was a three minute marvel and it really swung. The harmony moved with such engaging pulsation that a two-beat break by Krupa on his tuned tom-tom exacts an involuntary grin, a few bars before Freeman's solo. Bud left no wreckage, and McPartland's flare bugled the cavalry to the charge. The whole piece is a little gem, and may be the best example of white "Chicago Style" jazz ever produced. This was young Chicago's version of 4/4 jazz, and even New Orleans veterans were impressed. Teschemacher received credit as arranger and soloist, but each man had a good day on that December 16th. McPartland went on to New York and Ben Pollack's band, and thence to a long career with groups of many sizes, styles and configurations. Most of the rest went on to similar destinies. Teschemacher died a few years later in a car accident, and the others played through the Depression of the '30s as best they could. Krupa became the best known drummer in the country, and Sullivan played with many groups, as did Freeman and Condon. Lannigan left the Austin High Gang early, but played in various bands and orchestras for decades.

One peculiar opinion expressed by jazz fans, and by critics who should know better, is that the Chicagoans' jazz was "commercial", implying that it was of lower quality than non-commercial jazz, whatever that is. This subjective bias included most white "Chicago Style" jazz, and almost all dance orchestra music of the era. A musician's perception is different. He tends to see all his work as commercial (he being a professional, paid to play). The recording of music for public distribution is a commercial enterprise from concept through to sale of product. Some music arrangements for live or recording performances might be directed to different markets, with conscious effort to target consumer interests, but no paid musical performance is devoid of commerciality. A judgement call on what is "commercial" or not, can only be made by the buyer. Paul Whiteman's music was directed to one audience, Eddie Condon's to another, and a spasm jug band of 1910 to yet another. Red Nichols, Eddie Condon, Red McKenzie, Miff Mole et al produced over one thousand sides between 1926 and 1930. To denigrate them on the basis of "commerciality" is illogical and a non-starter. Even Duke Ellington directed his musicians to attain effects which he hoped would bring commercial rewards. The hopes were shared by his manager, booking agent, recording employer, the bandsmen and their wives. For Duke to have had total artistic freedom would have meant putting his own money up front without any backing every time he played, and this he did not do. There may be varying degrees of commercial influence, but the hard bottom line is always: who will buy it, how much of it and at what price?

Speculation about the "commercial" factor of the Chicagoans' music, brings on some notions. The Chicagoans, especially Teschemacher, wanted badly to be employed to play music, and played for those who would pay them. Most band leaders played for dancing. The December 1927 sides have melodic and rhythmic lines which encourage dancing. The Chicagoans had always played dance music, starting with the afternoon tea dances of their Austin High School days. The "danceability" quotient of professional music was high even in Storyville bagnios, taxi-dance halls, dance marathon arenas, pit bands for stage shows and moving pictures, and the cabarets and dinner dance restaurants. To describe the music of Chicagoans, or New Yorkers, more "commercial" than that of Earl Hines, Joe Oliver or Jimmy Noone is a spurious judgement. When a player is professional, his work is commercial, full stop.

Nichols recorded *Nobody's Sweetheart* in early 1928, Elmer Schoebel in 1929, Paul Whiteman in 1930, and who knows who else? The Chicagoans' production of 1927 stands up to every one of them, and earns

extra kudos for being one of the first and best. Their followers had the benefits of the 1927 effort without the risks of innovation. The Chicagoans all went on to acceptance as career musicians, but McPartland deserves special notice.

There is an old Southern song with an expression by which musicians credit their peers with individuality, implying in the same breath that each player should be judged by his own playing without competitive hair-splitting: "Every tub on its own bottom". This expression became part of the musicians' vernacular as one way of warding off critical comments. The nice phrase was later contracted to: "Every tub", the message being obvious. Each one of the Chicagoans was a tub on his very own bottom and, in their first four records, they stand firmly in place after six decades of tub thumping and failed attempts at displacement. In the spirit of each man's competence, we might like each of their tubs to be identical, but some tubs are more identical than others. It is time to listen to them all again, to redefine a perception of these fine musicians.

In Memoriam:

ames Dugald "Jimmy" McPartland 15 March 1907 - 13 March 1991

After writing ***Every Tub****, the author was invited to visit James D. McPartland at the McPartland home on Long Island, N.Y. The rewarding visit was made between March 6th and March 13th, 1991. Despite a debilitating illness, Jimmy held brief interview sessions with remarkable recall of events as distant as seventy years ago. He was a courtly gentleman, with a sense of humour maintained until his departure from a peaceful sleep, at 6:15 a.m., March 13th, 1991.*

A memorial service will be held in early summer in New York. His wife, Marian, and a host of McPartland clan members survive this marvelous musician. He last appeared in public at an award fete at Chicago in late October 1990, where he sang a number of jazz standards to great applause, with 40 clan members present amongst the full concert hall of appreciative fans. He was fully aware of his true prominence in the history book of jazz performance and development, respecting his early inspirations to the last, knowing that he had earned a place from which he can never be dislodged.

REEDISTS REFOUND

For all the precocity and vitality of recordings by today's young-turk saxophonists, the steady stream of reissues, unissued material and new recordings from the grand masters of the reeds still offers delights and discoveries.

The material from the vaults is particularly rewarding. Something is uplifting about the fact that, years after the death of Art Pepper, the archives can still cough up a session as good as ***In Japan***. This is prime Pepper, the altoist and his touring quartet of the day at the end of a 1978 Japanese excursion consisting of 19 dates in 21 days. The intensity of that experience, hours of playing compressed into mere days on the road, gleams from every seamless transition between Pepper, Milcho Leviev (piano), Bob Magnusson (bass) and Carl Burnett (drums). Pepper's evident self-assurance reveals itself in purposeful, thoughtful soloing and in a program that leans to original compositions. Pepper pieces are the standout tracks in this 83-minute, 2-CD set, from the bluesy loping of *The Trip* to the loose, near-funk feel of *Red Car*.

The common thread that runs through the two volumes of ***Saxophone*** is Bob Thiele. The veteran producer, later to join Coral Records and to become the artistic force behind the Impulse! label, made these recordings for Signature during the forties, and some from the literally dark days of 1941-43, when recordings were made surreptitiously to escape a wartime ban. Among the recordings made then and released only later were the classic December 1943 Coleman Hawkins sessions. ***Saxophone Volume I*** includes the superlative December 12 septet recording of *How Deep Is The Ocean*, a stunning ballad performance that, for the breathtaking power and cohesion of Hawkins' playing, ranks only a hair behind *Body and Soul* in his discography. The sidemen's performances at these sessions are, of course, as celebrated as those of the Hawk himself, particularly on the smaller-group numbers. Oscar Pettiford and a youthful Max Roach propel the quintet sessions along furiously while Pettiford, a similarly youthful Shelley Manne and Eddie Heywood Jr on piano (The Coleman Hawkins Swing Four) team up for the now classic introduction to *The Man I Love*.

Art Pepper
Live In Japan Vol. 1: Ophelia **(38:26)**
Storyville STCD 4128
Live in Japan Vol. 2: The Summer Knows **(46:36)**
Storyville STCD 4129

Coleman Hawkins / Ben Webster / Julian Dash
Saxophone Vol. 1 **(72;51)**
Doctor Jazz FDC 5008

Lester Young / Johnny Hodges / Don Byas / Eddie Lockjaw Davis / Flip Phillips
Saxophone Vol. 2 **(72:26)**
Doctor Jazz FDC 5009

Harold Ashby
The Viking **(49:16)**
Gemini

JR Monterose
In Action **(33:26)**
Bainbridge BCD 503

Al Cohn and Barry Harris
The Complete Al Cohn / Barry Harris Quartets
Volume 1: Play It Now **(63:32)**
Xanadu FDC 5171
Volume 2: No Problem **(64:58)**
Xanadu FDC 5172

Chico Freeman / Von Freeman
Freeman and Freeman **(71:32)**
India Navigation IN 2070

Benny Carter
Cookin' at Carlos I **(60:58)**
Musicmasters 6058

Stan Getz Quartet
The Stockholm Concert **(44:46)**
Gazell GJCD 1013

Pharoah Sanders
A Prayer Towards Dawn **(56:06)**
Theresa TR 127

The Ben Webster sessions that round out most of ***Volume I*** have the usual Webster ballads and blues, breathy and beautiful as ever. Their greatest delights, though, are numbers such as Ellington's *The Jeep Is Jumpin'* that remind us that, for all his balladeering prowess, Webster was also a wonderfully swashbuckling, gutbucket player when the tempo quickened. Completing out the 70-plus minute disc are four pieces from Julian Dash that are of little more than historical interest. Dash was a competent if unexciting tenorist who here is hampered by a stiff and unadventurous quartet.

The second volume again offers welcome exposure to the underappreciated Eddie Heywood Jr. He backs Johnny Hodges in three exquisite trio sides that see Hodges treat standards (*On The Sunny Side of the Street, Night and Day*) in anything but standards fashion. Heywood also stretches out on four cuts with an Orchestra including Ray Nance on trumpet and violin and, in particularly strong form, Don Byas on tenor sax.

Trombonist Dickie Wells' first sessions as a leader in six years were packed with such stars as Jo Jones and Freddie Greene. Amid such company, Lester Young is languid, unassuming, seductively swinging; his solos are the highlight of all three Wells orchestra numbers here.

In his 1944-45 ninetet and quintet numbers here, Flip Phillips' displays a rhythmic intensity that makes it easy to understand how, by the late 1940s, he would become one of the Jazz At The Philharmonic's main attractions. More exciting still, though, is that tough tenoring of Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis in the three 1946 numbers that close the collection. Not even less than riveting playing from Davis' sidemen can diminish the vigor of these sides.

Harold Ashby is an example of how acclaimed, high-profile live appearances don't necessarily lead to recording opportunities, at least as a leader. Despite Ashby's working association with Ben Webster and six-year stint as Ellington's tenor soloist (1968-74), ***The Viking*** is just his third recording as a leader in a career that spans almost fifty years. It was virtually by accident, too; Gemini Records owner Bjorn Petersen suggested the recording to Ashby only after his arrival in Norway to play the

AND NEWLY RECORDED

1988 Oslo Jazz Festival.

Rather than yielding a tentative, uneasy feel, the hurried nature of the session (eight tunes were recorded in five hours) has lent ***The Viking*** a bristling and immediate air. Ashby's playing is as rich and **honest** as one has come to expect from his occasional live appearances, including a standout appearance at June's Ellington '90 Conference in Ottawa, Canada. As ever, Ashby's breathy sensuousness evokes Webster, particularly in the obvious Ellingtonia here, *I Got It Bad* and *Solitude*. But compared to the tired local trios Webster favoured for too many of **his** Scandinavian recordings, the Norman Simmons Trio (in Oslo to back Joe Williams) provide superb and spirited backing, never allowing Ashby to flag, not that he sounds inclined to do so. The only surprise of the session, perhaps because it is a relatively unknown quantity, is the high standard of Ashby's composition skills. Half the tracks here are originals and all offer memorable heads and interesting changes upon which this underappreciated veteran roams confidently. May it be less than a decade between future Harold Ashby recordings.

Any list of woefully underrecorded tenorists should, together with Ashby, include JR Monterose. His handful of recordings, and particularly his rare live appearances, reveal this Detroit-born reedman to be a muscular and inventive player. His relative obscurity is partly the result of choosing to work outside major jazz centres: a 62-week residency at an Albany, New York club in the fifties, for example. **In Action** is a welcome CD re-release of an album resulting from Monterose's tendency to "seek out smaller places where I could play my kind of jazz." The album was recorded ten months into a residency at the Tender Trap Night Club in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, backed by the house trio.

Monterose circa 1962 was heavily influenced by Sonny Rollins, evident here in the driving muscularity of his sound and the undulating, rhythmic figures that mark his improvisations. Not that this is rote Rollins; Monterose manages to inject his own twists, particularly in original compositions such as the sly *Waltz For Claire* and the quick-witted *Red Devil*. Indeed, it's just as well that Monterose's compositions, and his own evident high standards, challenge him. The Joe Abodeely Trio seldom do so, offering support that's competent but singularly unexciting. That **In Action** succeeds so well in spite of them is as good a testimonial as any to JR Monterose's unsung charms.

Even Al Cohn, one of the finest Lester Young-influenced white tenor players, recorded surprisingly little as a leader, particularly in the 1970s, when he did a lot of non-jazz work. That makes all the more welcome the reissue on two CDs of his three 1970s quartet recordings with pianist Barry Harris, widely regarded to be Cohn's best small-group work.

The full historical sweep of Cohn's work is evident in the choice of material here. His playing was shaped, as Ira Gitler's liner notes put it, by "everything from Louis Armstrong to Igor Stravinsky". The Cohn / Harris selections range from the Lester Young legacy (*It's Sand, Man*) the golden era of swing (*Comin' Home*), Hoagy Carmichael, classic bop (Dizzy Gillespie's *Woody N'You*), Ellingtonia (*Mood Indigo*), showtunes (*Night And Day*), even traditional Americana (perhaps the most swinging version ever of *America The Beautiful*) and salty Cohn originals, including *Zoot Case* from the Sims - Cohn ventures.

Cohn's playing is similarly adaptable, moving beyond his swing roots while retaining its peppery vigor. On the Arlen-Mercer chestnut, *My Shining Hour*, Cohn's lazy legato is pure Prez while on *Woody N'You* his staccato, rhythmic inflections suggest Sonny Rollins.

Never quite able to articulate his own identity as a leader, Barry Harris is nonetheless a sideman nonpareil. Here he is up to every stylistic nuance Cohn can toss out, strident and forward when needed and almost transparent at other times. The same competent obeisance marks the work of the bassists and drummers here, Larry Ridley and Alan Dawson for 1975's **No Problem**, Sam Jones and Leroy Williams for 1976's **America** and Steve Gilmore and Walter Bolden on 1979's **Play It Now**. It all adds up to over two hours (each of the volumes, which retain the original analog mixes, top an hour in length) of magnificent mainstream quartet jazz.

So rare are joint recordings by Chico Freeman and his father Von that any date that brings them together is noteworthy. **Freeman and Freeman**, their first full

CHICO FREEMAN (Photograph by Gerard Futrick)

album together, is a freewheeling live session that reveals the two generations of tenorists closer stylistically than one might suppose. In part, that's because of Von's unconventionality. In features such as *Lover Man*, Von's playing is gruff, imposing and often surprisingly modern in its slippery phrasing and intonation.

Chico, presumably due to his father's underrecognition, gives dad slightly more than half the date to himself. His one feature, the rolling, modal *Undercurrents*, finally exposes the Freemans' generation gap by entering Coltrane country that Von (57 when **Freeman and Freeman** was recorded in 1981) never explores.

The stylistic balance of this family affair is given a extra, fascinating tilt by the substitution of Muhal Richard Abrams for Kenny Barron during the 20-minute *Paying New York Dues*, one of two tracks that feature the two tenorists together. As with *Jug Ain't Gone*, a tribute to that other great Chicago tenorist Gene Ammons, father and son Freeman toss off a succession of fiery choruses. The set's loose-limbed feel (more like a jam session than a concert) is an attraction not a drawback. There's bristling spontaneity to it all, and with players the calibre of Barron, Cecil McBee (bass) and Jack deJohnette (drums) the looseness is only relative.

As it is with the impeccable Benny Carter. Carter brings his innate perfectionism with him to the bandstand but then often gambles it on fierier playing that, compared to his studio work, is less vulnerable to charges of button-down, cerebral coolness. His concert recordings, notably the knockout 1977 Montreux set on Pablo, have been among his finest releases in recent years. **Cooking at Carlos I** is up to the same standard and adds the interesting twist of an intimate setting: New York's Carlos I, where a week's performances were recorded.

Carter's first club recording allows us close insight into the gentleman and his art, right down to his cheerleading exclamations to the quarter ("yeah!! Oh, that's **pretty**," he exclaims during pianist Richard Wyands' brief and gorgeous introduction to *My Romance*.) The recording is a superlative remote, sounding remarkably close to how jazz sounds in a good room. The producer recorded the quartet's playing not only from the stage mikes but reflected off the club's various surfaces too; in the best possible sense, you hear the room as well as the music. The audience is exuberant, even affectionate, but only at the right times: no annoying chat is audible, even during ballads.

In a program mostly comprised of standards, Carter predictably carves a flawless path through a range of styles and tempos, from a blistering *You'd Be So Nice* to the Latin-tinged *Key Largo*. As if his alto mastery weren't enough, he concludes with a rare live trumpet excursion, the romping *Time of the Blues*. Carter's strength here confirms his perfectionism; he usually insists he cannot play trumpet to a public-performance standard.

Perfectionism is a term applied equally often to the playing of Stan Getz, of course, and ***The Stockholm Concert*** further suggests why. Though illness took its toll on Getz's playing later in the 1980s, this 1983 set offers not even a foreshadowing of that. He never puts a foot wrong during its 45-minute duration, excepting perhaps a squeak in the third chorus of *I'll Remember April* which, as Mike Hennessey's liner notes point out, is in typical Getz fashion an **in-tune** squeak.

The session marks the remainder of a concert that featured Chet Baker as Getz's guest; the Baker sessions were released as ***Line for Lyons*** (Sonet SNTF 899). The quartet members here are every match for Getz's fluid perfection. Getz's longtime pianist Jim McNeely plays with characteristic imagination and bassist and drummer George Mraz and Victor Lewis are remarkably cohesive, with cannonading exchanges that bring to mind other great contemporary bassist / drummer teams such as Ben Riley and Buster Williams. Together, the three push Getz to outdo himself.

The same unfortunately isn't the case with Pharoah Sanders' collaborators on ***A Prayer for Dawn***. Many who appreciated Sanders' intense adventurousness during the sixties and seventies have lamented his moves of late towards the jazz mainstream. This album is likely to disappoint them further, revealing the tenorist again out of the mainstream but here drifting toward New-Age noodling. Basically a duet album with Bay-area keyboardist William Henderson, ***A Prayer*** features material that is less than arresting (Whitney Houston's *The Greatest Love of All* is included, for instance, as is a flaccid version of Mel Torme's *Christmas Song*.) Sanders plays with all the command you'd expect, but is defeated by the material and by the bland pastel tones of Henderson's synthesizer and piano.

The album has but one gem. Sanders and pianist John Hicks play a moving and lovely live recording of John Coltrane's *After the Rain* that makes one long for a full-length Hicks/Sanders duet project. Apart from its intrinsic worth, it would dispel sad fears that Pharoah Sanders, after decades of worthwhile musical exploration, is about to find a final artistic resting place in the etherizing sterility of New Age music. Such a move, if artistically inspired, seems unnecessary. You **can** play on within the tradition without fossilizing, as this brace of fine recordings from some old sax hands demonstrates only too well.

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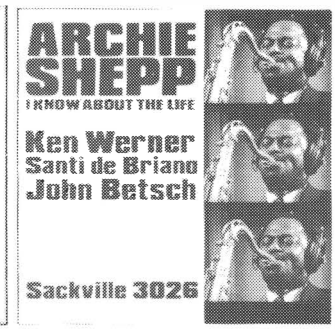

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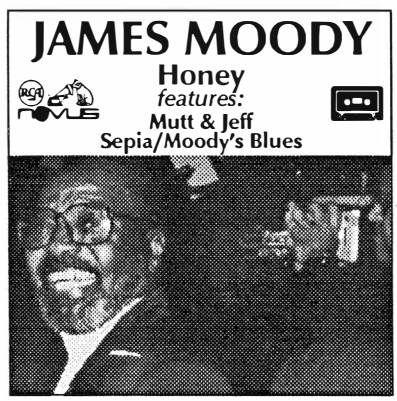

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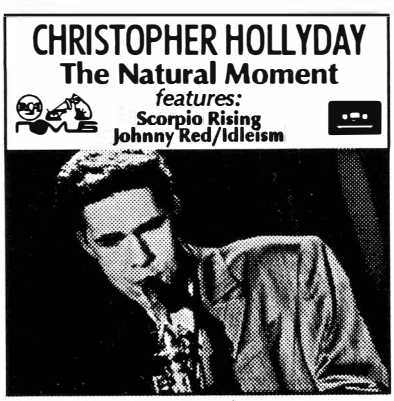

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