

cal enthusiasm and hard work that marked last year's festival. It's different when the musicians are working with one of their own rather than under a promoter or booker out to make a fast dollar."

That Lewis would be reappointed music consultant for Monterey was inevitable, and an announcement from Lyons to that effect was almost anticlimatic.

Lewis, from the success of his jazz ballet, *The Comedy*, in Paris, is already at work with Lyons in selecting the works to be premiered at Monterey in September.

## THE MAN WHO PLAYS THREE HORNS

Like John Coltrane, tenor saxophonist Roland Kirk had learned the trick of getting two simultaneous notes from his horn. But that didn't satisfy him.

One night in his native Columbus, Ohio, he dreamed that he was playing three saxophones—at once. When he awoke, he was determined to find horns that would give him the sound he heard in the dream.

Kirk haunted music stores, examined all kinds of antique instruments, many of them remnants of the 19th century, during which a weird variety of instruments was tried and abandoned before musicians settled on the standard horns of today.

When he found what he was looking for, the horns turned out to be literally something else: they weren't saxophones at all, though they could be called kissing cousins of the saxophone family. One was a strich, the other a manzello. Kirk didn't know much about their origin, and still doesn't. But when he thrust them into his mouth, along with his tenor, he got a chord, and decided this was his groove.

The horns looked weird to others (the manzello resembles a beat-up blunderbuss after a battle) and Kirk, playing them, looked like a kid trying to eat three bananas at once. But he didn't care; he is blind.

Kirk set out to master the horns, and soon found that he could not only play chords but moving lines as well. He would finger the tenor with his left hand, the strich and manzello with a stretched right hand. Musicians who heard him soon concluded that the three horns were not just a gimmick: they liked what he played, particularly when he laid aside the strich and manzello to cut loose on wild, yet flowing, tenor solos.

One of the musicians who heard him was pianist Ramsey Lewis. Lewis caught Kirk's group in Indianapolis and phoned Jack Tracy, artists and repertoire direc-

tor for Argo Records, for whom Lewis records. Tracy extended an invitation to Kirk to audition for him.

Kirk's reputation, meanwhile, was growing throughout the midwest. He played for a while in Louisville, where musicians were knocked out. As some of them migrated to Chicago, they brought word of the three-horn wonder. Eventually, Kirk began popping in and out of Chicago, playing sessions for impresario Joe Segal. He even went to New York for a couple of days—and



Roland Kirk

left behind him a wave of bemused conversation out of all proportion to the time spent there.

At last Kirk did his audition for a&R man Tracy.

"He was something else," Tracy said later. "Ramsey was right, and I decided to record him."

For the date, Tracy elected to couple Kirk with another triple threat man—Ira Sullivan, who causes arguments in Chicago over whether he plays tenor better than trumpet (his main instrument) or alto better than either. Sullivan, of course, plays *his* horns one at a time. Sullivan, who'd heard Kirk at sessions, very much dug the idea.

Last month, Tracy got Sullivan, Kirk, and a rhythm section together in Argo's small but well-equipped studio in the 2100 block of Chicago's S. Michigan Ave.

It turned out to be one of the wildest dates engineers and bystanders could remember. In ensemble passages, two lone horn men were creating an astonishing variety of voicings. Sometimes Kirk would be pushing out chords on his three horns with Sullivan's trumpet or his tenor to add a fourth. Sometimes Kirk would do it the conservative way: he'd play only two horns in ensembles.

Then came the real kicker: as Sullivan took off on a stomping tenor solo ("I consider myself closer to mainstream than anything"), Kirk would take the siren whistle hung around his neck on a string and let out a wild blast.

At other times, Kirk would lay aside his strich and manzello and play ballad tenor—lovely, liquid, and warm, rather in the manner of Benny Golson.

There was one hitch in the proceedings. Kirk's two odd-ball horns are held together—literally—with adhesive tape and elastic bands. One of the bands broke. Recording stopped while Tracy rummaged through a desk to find a new elastic with which Kirk could make repairs. Then the session went on, with Sullivan solicitously lining Kirk up before the mikes he could not see.

One observer in the control room gave an apt description of Kirk: "He has all the wild, untutored quality of a street musician coupled with the subtlety of a modern jazz man."

During one of Kirk's wilder passages, Tracy slapped his thigh, laughed, and said, "I can just hear the critics! They're going to say, 'My God, first Ornette Coleman and now this!'"

Kirk had a somewhat different anticipation of critical reaction. During a half-hour break in the date, the 24-year-old musician seemed full of trepidation. Drinking coffee in a nearby restaurant, he said:

"I quit using my whistle because cats put me down for it at sessions. They think it's a gimmick. But it's not. I hear sirens and things in my head when I play. I met a cat said he could make me a great big one . . ."

"You blow it when you want to," Sullivan said gently.

"I'd sure appreciate it if I could get a little line in *Down Beat*," Kirk said. "Maybe a little mention in the *Ad Lib* . . . My wife would like that. She reads it to me every issue.

"But I'm afraid of what the critics are going to say. I know what they'll say. They'll say I play out of tune."

"That's a drag," said a musician sitting nearby. "If Ornette Coleman plays out of tune, they say it's freedom . . ."

"Let them say you're out of tune," Sullivan said. "Let them say anything, so long as they talk about you."

Kirk, Sullivan, and others went back to the record date, and wound it up about 8 p.m. When the session was over, Tracy gave his view of Roland Kirk.

"I didn't record him because he's got a gimmick," Tracy said. "I like the way he plays. He's got something to say. But let's face it, a guy who plays three horns at once isn't exactly *bad* commercially." 