

CODA MAGAZINE

THE JOURNAL OF JAZZ AND IMPROVISED MUSIC * ISSUE 217 * DEC/JAN 1987/88 * THREE DOLLARS

SAXOPHONE VARIATIONS * CHARLIE PARKER * BUSTER SMITH * MARK WHITECAGE
JAPANESE JAZZ * PAUL CRAM * CEE DEES * DISCOGRAPHIES * LEE KONITZ * AROUND
THE WORLD * NICK BRIGNOLA * TORONTO AVANT GARDE * FESTIVAL SCENES * IN PERFORMANCE



COVER PHOTOGRAPH
CHARLIE PARKER
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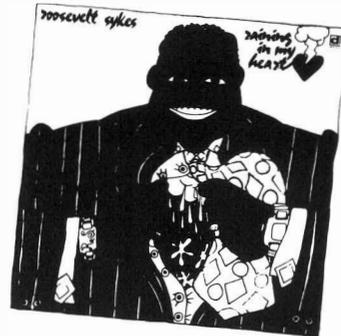
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BIG JOE WILLIAMS



BIG JOE WILLIAMS Piney Woods Blues DL-602

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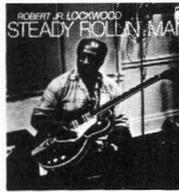
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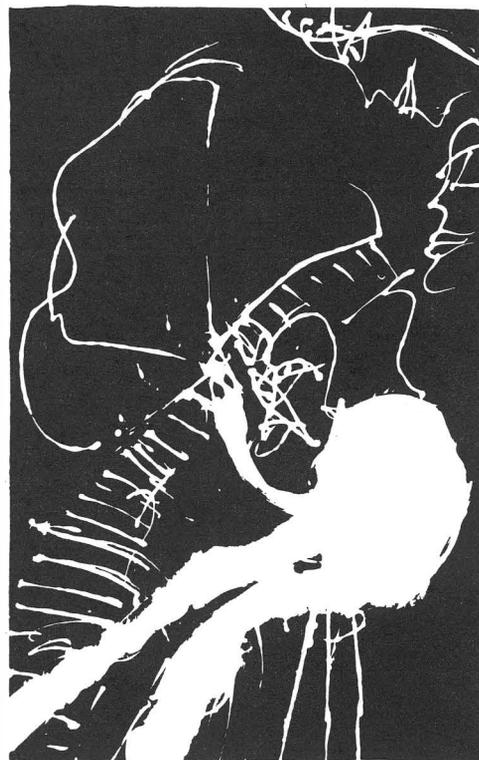
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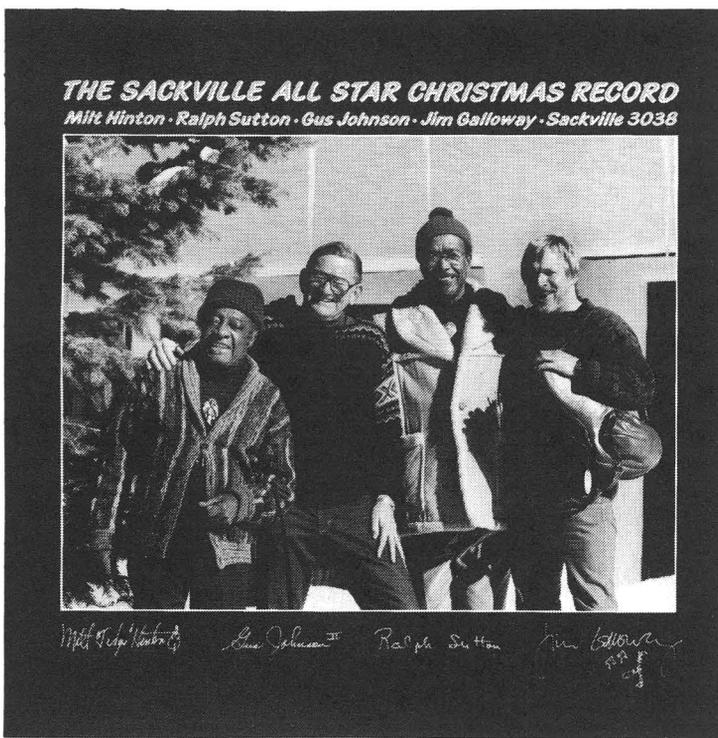
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THE BUSTER SMITH STORY

Musicians tend not to hang out in the respectable parts of town. New Orleans had Storyville, New York had Harlem – Dallas had Deep Ellum. It was just east of downtown. During the 1920s, Deep Ellum was a carnival of thugs and whores, who cruised the speakeasies and dance halls fueled on a bootleg potable called “chock”. Medicine show men, with their dancers and ragtag bands, brayed out their sales pitches on street corners, adding to the carnal atmosphere of the place.

It cost a whopping fifty cents to get into a second floor dance hall called the Tip Top, where one could hear the bandleader Don Albert, who featured a clarinetist named Henry “Buster” Smith. Born on a cotton holding south of Dallas, Smith would remain obscure throughout his career. As a writer and arranger, however, he benefited many a swing band, and additionally served as mentor to musicians who became renowned throughout the land.

Today, Smith lives quietly in South Dallas. He likes to wear ball caps, putter with cars, and go fishing. He’s still an active musician, and plays electric bass with a combo of oldsters called the Legendary Revelations. To the unsung but significant Dallas jazz community, he is a guru, and usually referred to as “Prof”.

“Man, Deep Ellum was wide open,” says Smith of the old days. “Friday, Saturday, and Sunday was the most crowded. There’d be medicine show men, right out in the broad open, sellin’ that medicine. That’s how T-Bone Walker got started, he was dancin’ for them medicine shows in Deep Ellum. You could see everybody you knew in Deep Ellum, they’d hang out by the railroad tracks and listen at the medicine shows and then go to the Tip Top. It was the most popular place there, about two doors down from the Ella B. Moore Theatre. There were other places but the Tip Top was the most popular ’cause they used bigger bands. I played with Don Albert there, then the Blue Devils came here and got stranded. They were down from eight or ten pieces to about six pieces, and they were trying to build the band back up so they got me in there.”

The Blue Devils were one of the toughest bands in the whole Southwest and regularly lambasted outfits of greater polish in the battle of the band contests that were popular at the time. Blue Devils who achieved fame included Count Basie (then plain Bill), Dallas-born trumpeter Hot Lips Page, Jimmy Rushing, drummer Mouse Burroughs, and Lester Young. When they left Dallas circa 1925, Buster left with them.

“We got to doin’ pretty good,” remembers Smith. “Got to playin’ South Texas, and all over the South, into Arkansas and Oklahoma. Even got up into New Mexico and Colorado a couple times. I’d told ‘, ‘man, I can’t read [music]’ but they said, ‘that’s all right, we’ll

just play the intro and you come in, and the way you play, you’ll make it!’”

The band’s home base was Oklahoma City and there, Buster got an instruction book and taught himself how to read music. Soon, he was adept enough to take an assertive role as arranger and writer for the band.

On a rare Blue Devils 78 from 1929 (*Squabblin’/Blue Devil Blues* on Vocalion), Buster performs solos that presaged the playing style his pupil-to-be, Charlie Parker, would revolutionize jazz with years later. He’s heard on both clarinet and alto, and the alto work was years ahead of any other reedman recording in the Southwest. A year before it was recorded, the Blue Devils reputedly tromped Benny Moten’s band in a battle of the bands fray in Kansas City. Moten responded with the time-honored musician’s ploy of usurping the competition. He could pay more than the Blue Devils’ leader (bassist Walter Page), and soon convinced Basie, Hot Lips Page, and Jimmy Rushing to defect to the Moten camp. Not long after, even Walter Page himself joined Moten. Buster took over as the Blue Devils’ co-leader with Rushing’s replacement, Ernie Fields. They took to the road, on a trip so fraught with bad dates and ill luck that they threw in the towel and disbanded in West Virginia. Buster, with band members Lester Young, Abe Bolar, and Jap Jones, hopped a freight and rode the rails west, once sheltering at a hobo camp in Cincinnati before reaching St. Louis. There, Smith accepted a position with, yes, Benny Moten. The bad luck continued, however, even as Smith looked forward to playing with Benny at “one of them big, fine hotels in Denver”. The year was 1935, and Moten, during a botched tonsillectomy, bled to death on an operating table.

“Benny’s brother Buster Moten took over the band,” says Smith. “He was kind of hot-headed and the boys couldn’t get along with him. So, that’s what broke the band up. Basie never could stand Buster so he left and went to the Reno Club in Kansas City. Carried seven men off with him, too. Left me with Buster Moten – an accordion player!”

In late ’35, Smith split for Kansas City and joined Basie in the Barons of Rhythm. In those days, Kansas City was where legendary cutting contests took place between the likes of Ben Webster, Lester Young, Herschel Evans, Pete Wilson, and Chu Berry. (Chu Berry was the roughest of the bunch, says Buster. “That was one sax player who’d make one cat go out one window and the other go out t’other window”, he asserts. “Chu Berry threw ’em *all* out of town!”) An entrepreneur started sniffing around the Barons of Rhythm, suggesting he could take them to the top. Well, Buster had heard such talk before. He left Basie and joined Claude Hopkins. Scant weeks later, the entrepreneur, who turned out to be music impresario John Hammond, bought Basie and

company new uniforms and paved their way to New York and subsequent stardom. Buster had missed the boat again.

“I was playing first (alto) with Basie at the Reno Club,” says Smith. “I was the only arranger in the band and wasn’t gettin’ but \$21 a week. Worked from eight in the evenin’ to five in the mornin’. Claude Hopkins came through there and offered me \$75 a week so I run off with Claude Hopkins. Found out they were one of those New York bands that’d play for two weeks, then the bandleader disappear and all the band boys disappear.”

Smith made it to New York with Claude, but caught on quick that the New Yorkers tended to take care of their own. The musician’s union there kept the week-end dates for the home boys and gave the less lucrative week-night gigs to musicians with less seniority in the New York musician’s union – in other words, the out of towners. Annoyed, Buster caught a bus to Omaha, worked there a bit, and then trekked to nearby Sioux City, Iowa, where his wife was living. No sooner did he unpack than word arrived from singer/pianist Julia Lee in Kansas City; she had work for him in her band. So, it was back to Kansas City to work with Julia Lee, but the gig played out in no time flat.

“There were no more big bands around,” laments Buster, “so I decided to make *me* a band. That’s when I got Charlie Parker with me.”

“Parker was a slow reader and the boys wouldn’t fool with him,” declares Smith. “But I knew he had something. So I said, ‘Charlie, we can pull it off’. He played third reed in my band. We played hotels and [in a smaller band] played a little place on 18th Street called Lucille’s Paradise. Charlie and I were the saxes, the rest of ’em was rhythm – piano, drums, and guitar. We worked there to a packed house five, six nights a week. Got so they began broadcastin’ out of there. But eventually business went bad and she went under. So I went to workin’ Andy’s Club down by the packin’ houses. Used eight pieces and wasn’t gettin’ much money. So I said, ‘boys, I’m gonna try and do a little better’. Told Charlie to stay there and I’d go to New York ’cause several cats wanted me to do some arrangements for them. Out of all them great arrangers, they thought I had somethin’ special – that western swing.”

Thus did Smith split for the Apple. Not only Bird but another Kansas City great, pianist Jay McShann, had been influenced by Smith, and both would acknowledge this to interviewers when they got famous. But Smith, who both referred to as “Prof”, would remain obscure.

In New York he wrote and arranged for a slew of luminaries. Count Basie (he was no longer “Bill”), Benny Goodman, Red Norvo, Don Redman, Benny Carter, and others gave

him work, but he found the deadline pressure to be nerve-wracking and the pay less than grand. And he sure didn't like New York! Even on the road, *somebody* invites you home for dinner, but Prof says that never happens in New York. He'd visit musicians in their dressing rooms, he recollects, and they'd shut their dinners up in their dresser drawers rather than share them. They weren't stingy, Prof says, just poor! Even a trek to a high-dollar seaside dance hall in Connecticut with fellow Texan Eddie Durham didn't work out right. The scenery was swell but the pay was scant, and the isolation drove them nuts. This was in 1940-41, about the time Smith began having misgivings about his profession.

"I stayed in New York for six years, in and out," states Smith. "Saved me a gang of change. Then my people started dying out. My mother was going to work 'fore day in the morning, cooking and cleaning in a rich neighbourhood 'til ten o'clock at night. My brother (pianist Boston Smith) was telling me about it, that she was having such a hard time. So I figured, music is music, no matter where you play it. I seen what it was! I seen in New York, where many of the cats that I'd idolized in my younger days – well, they was goin' 'round raggeder than a willow tree."

The last straw came when Buster's dad died while Buster was on the road with trombonist/slide saxophonist Snub Moseley during the war. They were playing USO shows at army camps and Buster was unable to leave the road to attend the funeral. The Moseley tour lasted three months and thirteen days, after which Buster spent one more year in New York. Then, he returned to Texas.

Accounts of him usually end right about there. But Buster didn't deactivate, he merely tightened his focus. He became a force in the Dallas jazz community and remained active with name acts as well. At the behest of sundry booking agents (usually Harold Oxley of Los Angeles), he formed pick-up bands that backed Big Joe Turner, Peewee Crayton, T-Bone Walker, Al Hibbler, Lowell Fulson, the wild but obscure Texas rocker Zuzu Bollin, and others, not only on their Dallas appearances but on tours of Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Arkansas. Claude Hopkins and others laughed at Buster for coming back to Dallas – "the sticks" Claude called it – but Buster was content.

"It was fine to be back where you knew you were gonna sleep in the same bed every night," says the Prof. "When you're on the road, you don't know *where* you gonna sleep! Or *when*! Or when the bus gonna break down. I spent many, many nights in Kansas, or Nebraska, *somewhere*, ol' car broke down, or threw a rod, or had a flat and you didn't have no spare. Might be broke down between *any* town, man, nothin' out there, not even no farms! Only way to keep warm, since you didn't want to run out of gas, was to pile on out of there and make a fire. Spent many, many nights like that."

Incidentally, Hopkins was being harsh when



he called Dallas "the sticks". It was a good jazz town in the forties. In the summer of, say, '43 alone, Eddie Durham was engaged to open the Riviera Ballroom on Commerce and Industrial, and in weeks to follow, Cootie Williams, Eddie Vinson, and Erskine Hawkins would take the same stage. Jay McShann, Fletcher Henderson, and Walter Brown played Claudia's Club, and King Kolax and Red Calhoun were popular at the Rose Room. The film "Stormy Weather" (with Lena Horne, Cab Calloway, and Dooley Wilson) was packing 'em in at the Majestic Theatre downtown, and Fats Waller's beaming face was in the local papers, endorsing R.C. Cola.

When Buster got to town, he opened up a little restaurant, installing his mom as head cook and himself as barbecue boss. When the restaurant folded, Buster headed up an eight piece band that played a night spot called the Band Box. He expanded this to thirteen pieces and played the Log Cabin, and in September he opened at the Regal Ballroom with singer Charles Morgan.

Back in March of '42, one T.H. Smith opened the Rose Room at 1710 Ross Avenue. The place looms so large in Dallas music lore that it's something of a story of its own. Suffice it to say, a passel of jazz, blues, and comedy acts of both regional and national repute played there. (Much of the reputation of Dallas' other big band man, Red Calhoun, derives from his Rose Room tenure. But in late '44, Buster began stealing his thunder.) Buster surprised locals by taking players of no particular seniority and melding them into a satisfying band, a testimony to his undiminished skills as an arranger.

Just before Christmas, 1944, Buster and his "ork" (period slang for "orchestra") took over the Rose Room. They accompanied a "Harlem's

a Popping" revue that starred blues singer Bobbie Ruth Abner, comics Alabama Blossoms and Lasses Brown, and the dancer, High Stepping Willie.

Also on the scene at that time was Doug Finnell, a pianist and trumpeter who also sang a mean blues (he still does). Like Prof, he'd spent swaddling years in Deep Ellum, and had a fling at the Apple. Circa 1947, he hired a young reedman, David Newman, nicknamed "Fathead". Newman played various reeds but was best on alto, and like many altoists then and now, was hard off into imitating Bird. Finnell assured him he should develop his own style. Prof Smith agreed.

Prof plucked Newman from the Finnell aggregate and installed him in his house band at the Rose Room. Not long after that, Newman met Ray Charles, who was then pianist for Lowell Fulson. (Ray, in his bio *Brother Ray*, remembers that Prof "played some of the filthiest alto you'd ever care to hear".) Post-Fulson, Ray lit out on his own and got famous. The band he did it with included Prof's acolyte, Newman.

"Ray stole Fathead from me," says Smith without bitterness. Newman and Ray became friends and Newman was a showcased player in Ray's bands for nearly two decades. Fathead describes Prof as a strong influence musically and otherwise, a meditative man, in fact, "a guru".

In 1959, Prof made the only LP of his career, *The Legendary Buster Smith* on Atlantic. Sadly, it's out of print.

About 1963, Prof "lost his chops", and can't (or won't, some say) play sax anymore. But a majority of weekends in Dallas, Prof has played somewhere, on electric bass or piano. He no longer plays the hard-hitting music he did with the big bands, or the bluesmen, or the protorockers like Zuzu Bollin. In the decade or so that I've known Prof, he's played an extended date at a snazzy restaurant, he's played hotel lounges, he even played at a fashion show.

But I must tell you, because of the irony, of a gig Buster does these days at a strange place called the Prophet Bar. The Prophet is usually new wave turf, but Buster draws a fair crowd there when he appears with his *Legendary Revelations*. The irony lies in the fact that the Prophet is east of downtown in an area that once had a name, but lost it, and became known simply as a warehouse district. The area has its name back now, now that the warehouses are festooned with arty bars and new wavish galleries, stuff so neoteric it'll make you sick. But if you follow Prof Smith out into the night after a gig, you might manage an effective hallucination of the area the way it used to be, replete with medicine show barkers, thugs and whores, bootleg booze and speak-easies, and a big band soundtrack with Prof himself on clarinet or alto. Because the Prophet is in the part of the town they call Deep Ellum, where Buster Smith started building a place for jazz to stand, a half century ago. – *Tim Schuller*

DISCOGRAPHIES - Reviewed by John Norris

LIKE A HUMAN VOICE: The Eric Dolphy Discography. by Uwe Reichardt. US\$7.50 postpaid. 80 pages.
Published by Norbert Ruecker, Postfach 14, D-6384 Schmittent 1, West Germany.

LONG TALL DEXTER: The Discography of Dexter Gordon. by Thorbjorn Sjogren. 140 Danish Kroner postpaid. 206 pages.
Published by the author, Noestvedgade 26, DK2100 Copenhagen, Denmark.

HAMPTON HAWES: A Discography. by Roger Hunter and Mike Davis. £9.50 postpaid. 127 pages.
Available from Roger Hunter, 2 Greendale Court, Haling Park Road, S. Croydon CR2 6NJ, England.

EDDIE CONDON ON RECORD 1927-1971. by Giorgio Lombardi. No price given. 80 pages. Distributed by The Black Saint,
via Vincenzo Monti 41, 20123 Milano, Italy.

WOMEN IN JAZZ: A discography of instrumentalists 1913-1968. Compiled by Jan Leder. \$35.00 hardcover. 305 pages.

THE CLEF/VERVE LABELS: A Discography. Compiled by Michel Ruppli. Complete in 2 volumes \$95.00. 876 pages.

COUNT BASIE: A Bio-Discography. Compiled by Chris Sheridan. \$75.00. 1350 pages.

The last three books are published by Greenwood Press Inc, 88 Post Road West, Box 5007, Westport, CT 06881 USA.

Recommended specialty book dealers:

Oak Lawn Books, Box 2663, Providence, R.I. 02907.

The Golden Age Records, Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 51-53, NL-1012 RD Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Collecting Jazz, 29 Birchdale, Dukes Wood, Gerrards Cross, Bucks SL9 7JB, England.

The Dolphy, Gordon and Hawes discographies are important additions to the growing body of detailed listings of the recording activities of major musicians.

Despite the finite nature of **Eric Dolphy's** career there are still additions to be made to his listings. This booklet updates and rearranges material originally published in the Tepperman/Simosko book on Dolphy as well as listing in detailed fashion the material which has appeared in the past decade. Even so, since this book was compiled, at least two more Dolphy lps have appeared. There's material on one lp from a quartet performance at Carnegie Hall and a collaboration with Gunther Schuller which surfaced in late 1968. Since then a Blue Note lp drawn from private tapes is also available. Where known, this discography lists unissued tapes known to be held by private individuals or institutions.

The **Dexter Gordon** discography includes many radio/TV recordings which are unissued. Most of these were made after the saxophonist took up European residence in the early 1960s and it is possible that more of them will be commercially issued in the future. The book is as much a testimony to the fulfillment of his career in Europe as it is a statement of his struggles for recognition before that time in the U.S. The paucity of his

1950s recordings is in sharp contrast to his continuous activity in the 1960s/1970s.

The first 55 pages of the **Hampton Hawes** discography contains biographical material, appraisals of Hawes' musical contributions, remembrances by friends and musical associates as well as an article by Don Asher on his collaboration with Hawes in the book "Raise Up Off Me" — one of the best biographical portraits of a jazz musician. The discographical section is clearly laid out and allows the reader to trace the evolution of Hawes' recordings with ease. All known issues are given and the book is further enhanced by a generous selection of photographs of the pianist and associates placed throughout the book.

The **Eddie Condon** listing covers the entire recording career of the guitarist/bandleader. It lists all issued material whether they are from studio sessions or broadcast/concert sources. However, the usefulness of the discography is lessened by the incomplete documentation of all the various releases of the material. The author seems to have decided to list, where possible, only recent lp issues. 78 numbers are only given if the material hasn't been reissued on lp. The Commodore listings are quite confusing. Some show the current German series while

others have both these and the U.S. CBS issues. There's no consistency in deciding which earlier Commodore numbers to list when they haven't been reissued in the newer series. Despite these shortcomings, this is a valuable source for the personnels, recording dates and material recorded by Eddie Condon during his lengthy career. It is a good foundation upon which someone else could do a more complete listing.

"Women in Jazz" reassembles basic information from Rust and Jepson in alphabetical order by some 250 women active in the broad spectrum of jazz and blues between 1913 and 1968. Its principal value is to be able to see, quickly, the recorded activity of a particular artist assembled in one place. But a close look at the listings shows almost no original research has been conducted. No attempt has been made to include lp reissues of 78s (because they are not listed in Rust) or more recent lps of material recorded since 1942 (Jepson). There is no logic for such a book terminating its listings in 1968 and within its body there are omissions. The **Rosetta Tharpe** section doesn't include her Mercury sessions and the **Mary Lou Williams** section (and one of the few major performers in the book) is a mess. At the first Andy Kirk session

three titles were recorded. *Cloudy* is listed in date sequence but *Mesa-A-Stomp* and *Blue Clarinet Stomp* are listed at the end along with *Corky Stomp* and *Froggy Bottom* as being from unknown recording sessions. Surely, too, it is obvious that the Jazztone dates were made in the 1950s and someone (George Simon?) must have some idea when they took place. It is inconceivable that this manuscript was ever published. It is only a first draft for a project requiring much work.

The Clef/Verve discography is immensely valuable for anyone who has acquired any of Norman Granz' recordings. Factual recording data is noticeably absent on his recordings and even the supporting musicians are sometimes only acknowledged in passing. The work is divided into four basic sections: the early years (1944-1961) when Granz produced sessions which appeared on a variety of labels, the Clef/Norgran years, the Granz-produced Verve period and finally the sessions recorded following the label's acquisition by MGM.

Finding your way through this listing is a little confusing. All sessions are listed in master number sequence rather than by chronological recording dates. Many sessions are listed more than once because they were reassigned master numbers for a later reissue and some recordings are scattered over several pages. The most notable example of this is the London House sessions of **Oscar Peterson** which were issued as "The Trio" and "The Sound of the Trio."

Only sessions assigned master numbers seem to be listed – including a number of unissued dates. There are at least four **Johnny Hodges** sessions, two by **Benny Carter** and **Stan Getz**, as well as single dates by **Lee Konitz**, **Sonny Stitt** and **Kid Ory**. But there is much more in the archives which is undocumented. Some of this additional material is being found and, if suitable, being prepared for release by Polygram in their CD program.

Ruppli also chooses to omit material which is obviously from Granz' sources but not issued by him such as the JATP Hall of Fame material. The only one of these listed is "The Titans" (630) because at one time it was scheduled for release on Verve. He chooses, too, not to list the DRG release of the **Fred Astaire** material with **Oscar Peterson**.

Extensive indices are invaluable tools



when using the book. They list all of the releases (singles, 45s, 10 and 12 inch lps) in numerical order and cover both U.S. and international issues. There is also an artist index in case you are unsure of which lp contains the music you are looking for.

If this book only contained the recording dates of Granz' sessions it would be sufficient reason to obtain access to it but there is much more than this. It is a major contribution to the available data on so many important recordings by major musicians.

Chris Sheridan's Bio-Discography of **Count Basie** takes research into another dimension. It gives us a day to day account of the band's activity over more than forty years. It tells us where the band worked, who moved in and out of the organization (often with the reasons for the changes) and discusses in detail the repertoire, the performances and the recordings (both commercially released and unissued private tapes). Rewriting the data in the discography is the result of decades of work by various individuals who have assisted in this project. Chris Sheridan has collated, analysed and compared their information with his own

files to come up with the final draft. It renders obsolete all previously published listings and will serve as the basis for the fine tuning which is inevitable once such a book has been published. For instance, even though the right information isn't in the book Chris Sheridan now has the correct tune and title data for Epic eps 7152/7153/7154.

There are ten sections devoted to the band's career. Each one has an introduction before the chronology commences. The recordings are interspersed with observations on the sessions and information about the band members and its work schedule. This occupies the first 950 pages of the book. Following this is the alphabetical listing of record labels and album titles which covers more than 100 pages. The day-by-day band itinerary takes up another 150 pages. There is a bibliography, a listing of Basie items on film and video and indices of musicians, arrangers, tune titles as well as a general index.

This book, a model of its kind, takes its place alongside Walter Allen's "Hendersonia" and Connor and Hicks' "B.G. On The Record" as an ultimate reference work for a major artist.

THE MARK WHITECAGE INTERVIEW

The problem with some "new jazz" players has become one of separation with the jazz tradition. For them, jazz was merely an evolutionary step, a door they closed behind them in their quest for individual expression. For Mark Whitecage, however, there is no break with the past, at least not permanently. He began with jazz, evolved with it and went beyond it. But he continues to involve himself in projects both exploratory and traditional. For him, "new jazz" is not a branch that is doomed to break free from tradition, but rather it's a giant limb, already bearing exciting fruit.

The following interview was recorded at New York's cultural reserve, "Artpark", in Lewiston, near the end of a week of workshops and performances. That afternoon Mark mixed explosive hard bop, quotes from Ellington and Rollins, standard ballads, "sheets of sound," percussive gong and vibe impressions, and original compositions like *Hi-Tech #9* and *I'm My Own Bass Man*. He performed solo on alto sax, flute and sound sculpture.

This interview was previously broadcast on "Cosmopolijazz" via WBFO-FM88, Buffalo.

BILL BESECKER: *Mark, you're well known as a jazz musician well versed in diverse areas of music. You began with the soprano saxophone at the age of six. How did you come to start on an instrument as difficult as the soprano sax?*

MARK WHITECAGE: Well, I was too small for the alto or the tenor. I had a curved soprano. It fit me like a tenor at six. So I played that for about two years until I got big enough to get an alto.

Did you run into the typical problems that the soprano is noted for?

I started out so young... you see, I had my union card when I was twelve... so I was out working and still trying these silly things. I remember I heard Sidney Bechet when I was about twelve years old. I was playing in my brother's band, which was like a wedding band, we played dances and things. I heard Bechet and I immediately tried that big vibrato... and my brother fired me! That was the only band I got fired out of. But I was trying all sorts of things. I started very early.

When did you move on to the other saxes?

At twelve I had to get my union card to play in this band. It was a big band. They played mostly Ray Anthony charts and Harry James and stuff. So nobody could solo in the band. Well, I'd been listening to Count Basie and all the records, so when I came into the band, I was the only soloist. When the trumpeter saw those funny little marks that he didn't know how to read, he'd poke me in the back and I'd play the trumpet solo, then the trombone solo and then the tenor solo. I had to switch to tenor to get the job because the alto chair was full. That's when I started playing tenor.

Did you get double scale?

[Laughing] We made about \$7.00 per gig.

Did your musical career before "new jazz" cover the entire gamut of mainstream jazz?

Oh yeah, I was very devoted to Sonny Rollins, Harold Land, all the 60s Miles music. I started really coming together while I was in the army, down in El Paso. We played in a coffee shop. All the time the Army didn't require us to be on base, we were at this coffee shop playing. There were about six or seven of us, you know, pretty good musicians from Philadelphia and New York. We were all stuck out there. We thought New York was really passing us by while we were stuck out in the middle of the desert. So we worked very hard, studying and practicing. We were in the band, some of us, just playing night after night.

I met Eric Dolphy out there. And he just

completely blew me away. I was playing like everybody else. I could play like Lee Konitz. One of my early teachers would come to clubs where I was working and call out "Lester Young" and then I'd sound like Lester Young. Then he'd call out "Coleman Hawkins" ... so I copied everybody. Up until the point I met Eric. I was doing it very well, I was playing very good hard bop.

So I spent three days with Eric. I'd never heard anything like it. I hadn't heard of him, so it wasn't that I already knew he was great, and I wanted to see it. I never heard of him and his sound just grabbed me. And so I carried his clarinet case around. When we were working at the coffee shop, I took him down, got him tea and stuff. And he taught me things. He taught me about Zen. He got me steered into some things. That was '59. He was with Chico Hamilton's band. We put on a jazz festival down there and brought down Chico Hamilton and Annie Ross with her group, "Lambert, Hendricks and...", what was hot then. You know, we thought we were so isolated, we organized with the radio station, and we managed to get the people down. That was in 1959.

This isolation you felt obviously led you to work harder at your craft. Did you feel, when you finally got back to New York, that you really hadn't been passed by at all?

When I got back to New York... I found that I had been working so hard, that I was in another place already, compared to what was happening. It was Coltrane and Eric Dolphy. I met a lot of these people. Frankie Dunlop was there. We sat in with Sam Jones. Just had all these fine musicians there. It was like a three day seminar for me, and it gave me all these things. And I was in the Army Band, so they gave me a clarinet. After Eric came, I checked out a bass clarinet and tried that, but I couldn't play it. It was just too heavy. I got to clarinet early, but just played classical things on it. I didn't get to (jazz) clarinet until '72. Now I play the alto clarinet, but the bass clarinet was incredible.

So was it Dolphy who led you into the "new music"?

Yeah! I thought he was mad at me. You know, I was spending three days with him. We were in the back room, and I'm fixing him tea and carrying his horns around and getting him food and whatever he needed.

Then he insisted I come and play. We'd been sessioning for three days. Every night they'd do the festival then come down to the coffee shop and we'd party all night. So Eric, he hadn't

played at all. Chico Hamilton was there, and everybody was playing. It was beautiful. I stayed in the back room with Eric. Then he insisted I come out and play. When he started playing, I thought he was mad at me. He was like a Cecil Taylor going... [making swirling motions with his hands]... what was happening behind me. I thought, "God, what'd I do?" So, I stuck in for about three choruses, then I sat back and listened. But it made me think. And I started changing everything. I stopped copying people. It took another ten years to work on it, but I worked through all that and now I'm coming out the other end with all my own sound. For better or worse, whatever it is, it's mine.

The people that you've recorded with have, for the most part, been interrelated: Perry Robinson, Jeanne Lee, Gunter Hampel. Of those, your first association was with...?

Perry. I first met Perry when I came to New York in 1967, I came for Coltrane's funeral. I found an apartment and I just stayed because it shocked me. I was sitting up in Waterbury, I was working in a factory and basically just listening to John Coltrane records. I hadn't been practicing. When he died, I was so shocked, I came down and found an apartment and just started practicing. I started remaking myself in a new way.

So I met all the new musicians and stopped playing bop. I wouldn't play bop at all for a long time. I do now. In fact, I play some gigs up in Hartford and around with straight-ahead musicians. I could play any kind of music now. But, then I couldn't. I had to play just free music.

If you had to pinpoint, in the jazz circle, the tangent point where the new music originates, would it center on John Coltrane?

Oh, there's a lot of people. It was that time! John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman and Eric Dolphy were very important. Of course, Mingus started it for me. He was playing free music long before they even coined the term. He was just marvelous, all his records, they still are. They just keep getting stronger. He had a rough time of it, but he was basically the first... But, I don't know... I can't say *first*.

Music is a psychic thing. The land starts moving in a certain way and the music goes. There are strong leaders, Eric and Coleman Hawkins and all these people. It's a tradition.

I witnessed your performance utilizing a sound sculpture, here in Artpark. How long have you been involved in these sound sculptures? Is this something new to your musical

career?

Yes, it's about seven years that I've been doing this. I met the Baschet's, Francois and Bernard of Paris, who made these beautiful steel sculptures, and had a chance to record with them. I liked them so much I started building my own and I've been doing it ever since. It takes a long time. I'm just like a student at it, but it's coming along beautifully.

Are the sculptures all metal?

They're stainless steel for the most part... and copper... and aluminum. They're played by stroking them. There's one piece that's drums and vibes, all built into a small two foot area where I can reach it easily with mallets. You can get very facile on it, you can play very fast and intricate things. There's another you can play with glass rods that I'm just trying to perfect. I have a few good notes in.

Were the Baschets the first to create sound sculptures?

I don't know if they're the first, but they were very impressive. I have fourteen (sculptures) and... the **sound!** I have one man playing them, Robert Mahaffey, and it's gorgeous, like seventeen French Horns... and this I recorded with my sax and flutes and clarinets. I really enjoyed it. Robert was using one of their sculptures for one of his dance pieces. He composes music for a dance company. I've known him for years. We would play drums together and we've been playing a lot of jobs together for the last ten or twelve years. So when the opportunity came, he had these sculptures and we used them.

Would you consider yourself a self-taught musician?

Yeah, something like that. My brother was a trumpet player. He was four years older than me. My sister was a vocalist. I played the alto sax. We all had early teachers. My father was in a hurry to get a band together. So we had an eight, a ten, and a twelve-year old when my father got it together. He liked Count Basie and the big band stuff. So we played **One O'Clock Jump** with my brother being the whole trumpet section, I'd be the whole sax section. [Sings a few bars] We used to go out and play that stuff. My teacher taught me on those compositions, instead of giving me scales.

Later, I took up clarinet when I was twelve. I basically studied Mozart's **Clarinet Concerto**. I spent two or three years just working on that piece, and then I got into books by myself.

I like to read something new every day in my practice session. I like to practice everyday and I like to read something different, something I haven't played. So I've got a whole roomful of music that I've collected. I don't even care what it is, I just want it to be something different, otherwise if you just play free music, your hands just fall into these habits. That's the thing that happens with... well, I don't want to talk about that, but some people fall into habits. Basically, I'm just trying to remain alive and remain creative and somehow earn a living at this. It's been working out.

Looking back now, you don't think any of your teachers steered you in the wrong direction...?

Well, they can try. The direction you end up in is the direction you took. You can never blame someone else for that. It's our choice. So where I'm at right now, I can't say anyone held me back or pushed me. I don't look at neurosis

or any of these things. I just try to keep busy and play music.

You do a lot of workshops. How do you teach the saxophone?

I show the sax, and I play it, along with flutes and other conventional instruments. But I make flutes as well, and show the kids they don't need to have \$1200. for the Selmer Co. to make music.

I find pots and pans with them sometimes and put them together with nuts and bolts. I show them how they can go in their father's garage and maybe build themselves a little percussion instrument, just to show how simple it can be. And then, if they get interested, if you make something pleasing for them and they get results fast enough, then they learn to make their own. Then they might go out and get that Selmer, but they'll already have an appreciation for the sounds that they hear.

Can you tell among your students who will "get interested?"

I had one kid the other day. He was ten years old. He came over to look at my sculptures. So I let him play them. He was good. He had played drums, and he also played trumpet and flute, and he was really interested. He was

learning the glass rods on the sculpture, getting sounds with them. And he pointed out there was a puddle of water on it. I use water on it and it spills on the instrument. And when he pulled the glass rod you could see the sine wave in the water. So that was proof that it was vibrating, and he was excited about that. So, some of these kids are, really, I mean, you **can** tell a "musician." They hear the sound. In every class, there's one or two you really reach.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Duets – (cassette) w/ Perry Robinson & Robert Mahaffey, ROMARK (406 Washington St., Hoboken, N.J. 07030).

Licorice Factory – (Jazzmania 41206) w/ Perry Robinson, Mike Morgenstern, Gunter Hampel.

All The Things You Could Be If Charles Mingus Was Your Daddy – (Birth 031) w/ Jeanne Lee.

Conspiracy – (Earthforms Records) w/ Saheb Sarbib.

Seasons – (Black Saint/Soul Note SN1048).

UFO! Saheb Sarbib Quartet On Tour – (Cadence/CJR 1008).



THE LAND OF THE RISING SUN

GARY VERCELLI REVIEWS TOKYO'S COFFEE HOUSES AND THE MOUNT FUJI FESTIVAL



The popularity of jazz in Japan is well documented. Ever since Art Blakey and The Jazz Messengers and other prominent musicians began appearing in Tokyo in 1961 (Blakey has now toured Japan more than 50 times) the Japanese have rolled out the red carpet for visiting American jazz artists.

I recently spent 3 weeks in Tokyo, dodging its 11 million inhabitants on crowded subways, seeking out both live jazz clubs and the jazz coffeehouses I had heard so much about from American musicians who had returned from tours there. So far as I know, the jazz coffeehouse is a phenomenon unique to Japan. Open all day and most of the night, these clubs enable jazz lovers to gather and enjoy recorded music over first-class sound systems. There are over 150 such establishments in Tokyo alone and about 400 throughout the country.

Japan offers very little jazz on its radio stations. The many jazz coffeehouses are, therefore, like so many miniature radio stations; all with different formats – from swing to bebop to fusion, even some featuring avant-garde. The first jazz tea rooms opened in August of 1961. Most of the establishments today also offer spirits and light meals along with vast record libraries.

There are two types of jazz coffeehouses in Japan: One that fosters conversation and fraternization and another with a church-like ambience that caters only to the serious contemplative listener (of which there are many). Those who want to hear recorded jazz in an undisturbed atmosphere should check out **A&F** and **Meg** in Kichijoji (only a 20 minute subway ride from central Tokyo), **The Intro** in Takatanababa, and **Genius** in Shibuya. All of these establishments feature

first class sound systems. Don't be surprised, however, if the proprietor comes over and hands you a note requesting that you not talk while the music is being played (always).

Dug is one of Tokyo's oldest jazz coffeehouses and now features two locations in the Shinjuku district (a much frequented area for night life in Tokyo). I preferred the understated elegance of new Dug to the stoic ambience of the original Dug – a triple-story brick building located just a few blocks from its modern sister's location. Both Dug listening rooms feature large libraries of bebop and mainstream titles and a staff and clientele who seem cognizant of the music's importance.

Rockin' Chair, by way of contrast, caters to a crowd who is as much into conversation as the music. Jazz and antiques abound at **Rockin' Chair**, also located in Shinjuku. Vintage wine labels decorate the rustic redwood walls along with clocks of every age and country. As you enter, you're presented with two menus; one detailing food and drink prices (good salads), the other outlining an abundance of auditory offerings. You can order a whole bottle of Jack Daniels for 15,000 yen (\$107 U.S.) or a shot of Suntory white whisky for 650 yen (\$4.50). There's also a 600 yen cover charge which enables you to hang out until 5 a.m. As you sip and chat at **Rockin' Chair**, you can request to hear vintage albums by Wynton Kelly or Jackie McLean or the latest commercial offering by David Sanborn.

Mary Jane is a cozy, well decorated coffeehouse located near the Shibuya train station (Tokyo's subway hub and a convenient meeting place). Both the pizza and sound equipment are top-notch at **Mary Jane**. A local jazz historian

hangs out at the bar there, ready to discuss (in fluent English) the merits of any new release. **Mary Jane** was one of the few clubs that offered mineral water in addition to coffee, tea, and spirits.

Birdland gets my vote for Tokyo's most soulful jazz coffeehouse. Located in Shinjuku (and not to be confused with a club of the same name featuring live jazz in the Roppongi district), **Birdland** is a remembrance of the Bohemian era. I kept expecting Rexroth or Ferlingetti to walk through the door reading poetry. The owner had to prod the house kitty off the turntable cover to change Coltrane records. To get to **Birdland**, I followed a local musician I had befriended down a dark alley and stepped down into a cellar. Records lined the back wall – plenty of mainstream and bebop spoken here. I stayed until the early morning hours, scanning copies of *Swing Journal* and the *Village Voice* as Coltrane and Bird blew on the box.

I soon realized the futility of trying to sample all of Tokyo's jazz coffeehouses within the course of my three week visit, but was assured by those who I met along the way that I had, indeed, experienced a valid representative sampling of the capitol city's finest listening rooms. I was now ready for some live music.

The Shinjuku district houses much of Tokyo's night life and, up until the late 70's, had been the focal point of the city's live jazz scene. These days, the Roppongi district leads the way with **Body & Soul**, **Birdland**, **Alfies**, **Ballentines**, and the **Pit Inn** as must stops, but Shinjuku still offers the original **Pit Inn** (a large and well kept room). A word of caution: Don't be surprised by a cover charge of \$15 to \$30 (U.S.), depending on what band is featured

(both Pit Inn locations spotlight a different group every night – the Shinjuku location specializing in mainstream, the Roppongi room devoted to fusion).

A small club in Shinjuku goes by the initials **J&BL** (the Jazz & Being Laboratory featuring JBL speakers!). J&BL's intimate ambience seemed like the perfect setting for the **Mike Ellis Quartet**. Ellis is an American who has been living in Tokyo for the past two years. Like Steve Lacy (with whom he apprenticed while in Europe), Ellis has devoted his full attention to the study of the soprano sax. His music is a mixture of moody sensitive elements with avant-garde leanings. He was very capably supported by a young Japanese rhythm section including Hashimoto Keichi on piano, Sato Shinobu on bass, and Yamahita Nobuo on drums.

Body & Soul, now celebrating its 10th anniversary, has developed a solid reputation as *the* place to hang out in Tokyo. Many American musicians make it by after their concerts to sit in at Body & Soul until its 2 a.m. closing time.

On the night of my visit, Body & Soul featured **Takako Ueno**, a fine vocalist with articulate phrasing and a deep, resonant voice working her way through a Billie Holiday repertoire. Several of the Japanese jazz critics I met complained that there's a great proliferation of female vocalists in Japanese clubs whose vocal abilities are not commensurate with their physical attraction or wardrobe. Ueno is, however, a definite exception – she breathes new life into jazz standards in a highly original manner. The house rhythm section was headed by the quality piano work of Mikio Masuda and anchored by special guest Ralph Peterson (O.T.B.'s drummer).

As the evening progressed, Terumasa Hino and visiting Americans Kenny Barron, Charles Eubanks, Ralph Bowen, and Bennie Green all sat in as Woody Shaw, Sonny Fortune, Frank Tusa, and Sherman Ferguson looked on with approval from the audience. On a 25 minute reading of *Softly, As In A Morning Sunrise*, Hino's upper register work on cornet elicited shouts of approval from all present.

Although some establishments in Shinjuku and Roppongi remain open until the early morning hours, most of Tokyo's jazz clubs and coffeehouses close relatively early. Tokyo's subways are among the world's most efficient and clean, but stop running around midnight, so plan on returning from your favorite late-night jazz spot by cab.

You can safely walk the streets of Tokyo at any hour without fear of being hassled, robbed or molested. The subways are color coded and are the best (and least expensive) way of getting around.

After leaving Tokyo, I headed for Mt. Fuji, about two hours away by bus or train, to attend the Mt. Fuji Jazz Festival.

Japan offers several jazz festivals during the summer months, the largest and most prestigious of which are **Live Under The Sky** (this year

featuring Miles Davis, Wayne Shorter, and Jack DeJohnette), George Wein's **Budweiser Festival In Madarao** (Dizzy Gillespie Big Band, Branford Marsalis, Ernestine Anderson, etc.), and Blue Note's **Mt. Fuji Jazz Festival**.

Mt. Fuji's producer and master of ceremonies, Michael, Cuscuna, told me that the festival is dedicated to upholding the tradition set years ago by the late Alfred Lion (to whom this year's festival was dedicated) by combining the label's new stars with their predecessors.

Mt. Fuji is far more than a nostalgic walk down Memory Lane or remembrance of Blue Note's great years. Several classic compositions were imbued with new life by some of the masters of the idiom, including **Tony Williams, Woody Shaw, James Spaulding, and Joe Chambers**. New material was presented by Blue Note's rising stars. The flexible prowess of **Bennie Wallace**, the confessional cries of **George Adams**, and the three octave range of **Dianne Reeves** brought throngs of cheers from an attentive audience.

Now in its second year, Mt. Fuji is an ambitious event that attracts over 20,000 fans during its three day run in late August. Tickets were priced at 5,000 yen per day (about 35 American dollars), but everything about the festival is first cabin. The site, on the tranquil shores of Lake Yamanaka, was spiritual and inspiring; the pairing of musicians in various contexts was catalytic (where else have you seen **Art Blakey** in the same band with **Stanley Jordan** or **Herbie Hancock**?); even the set changes were a study in precise execution.

Mt. Fuji '87 opened under cloudy skies. After the typhoon at last year's event, wary eyes watched the cloud cover, hoping for a fair shake from Mother Nature. The consummate trio of **Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter, and Tony Williams** first offered *Limehouse Blues* and *Speak Like A Child*, then reworked Hancock's *Maiden Voyage* and *One Finger Snap* with former Blue Note colleague **Bobby Hutcherson** shining as a featured guest. Hutcherson has never sounded better. His soulful tonal manipulation lent immediate cohesion to the group's sound. Hancock probed the changes gently; his soft touch was interspersed with bright flashes of melodic runs. As Hutcherson departed, vocalist **Dianne Reeves** appeared, spotlighting material from her new Blue Note album. Reeves' voice personifies passion, grace, strength, and beauty.

McCoy Tyner closed Fuji's opening day with consummate solo piano on *You Taught My Heart To Sing*. **Ron Carter** and **Joe Chambers** then provided strong and fertile yet sensitive support to Tyner's percussive attack at the keyboard. I preferred this assemblage of personnel to Tyner's regular working trio. On *Blues On The Corner* and *Passion Dance*, **George Adams'** pleading tenor and **Woody Shaw's** densely lyrical trumpet offered unguarded jaunts into uncharted territory. Shaw's all-around musicality signals his awareness of the whole history of his instrument.

The **Don Pullen-George Adams** quartet

appeared to be the emotional powerhouse of the festival. Adams' sweet-and-sour sax solos were uplifting – his evangelical style brought the crowd to its feet. Aside from the obvious telepathic chemistry among Adams, Pullen, Cameron Brown, and Dannie Richmond, there was also a fraternal spirit and a sense of total, relaxed spontaneity.

Evenings found musicians meeting in the garden of the Mt. Fuji Hotel for structured jams. **Michele Hendricks** was a standout here – scatting effortlessly in a manner that would make her father proud.

The festival culminated with an unprecedented 90 minute set by **Art Blakey's** 19-piece big band. Charts for this dream band were assembled by **Don Sickler** and **Bobby Watson** (Blakey's former music director). Bobby's personable character was reflected in every note summoned from his horn. His plaintive cry on alto signaled the arrival of an emotionally mature, cultured, and evocative voice. Watson deserves the recognition being given players of far less emotional and technical substance.

There were several high moments at this year's festival, but Blakey's Big Band proved to be the summit of Mt. Fuji '87. **Freddie Hubbard** sounded especially strong as one of Blakey's featured soloists. His infectious wit and humor left the audience in good spirits.

While the Japanese could savor every nuance of this classic artistic collaboration a few weeks later on television, the rest of the world will have to hope for the eventual release of video tape and/or records from Mt. Fuji '87.

No overview of Japanese jazz would be complete without mention of *Swing Journal*, Japan's monthly jazz magazine devoted to jazz criticism, information, and audio fidelity reviews. American publications pale by comparison. *Swing Journal's* monthly issues look more like yearbooks. U.S. correspondents Leonard Feather, Ira Gitler, and Michael Bloom file regular reports and *Swing Journal's* chief editor, Yasuki Nakayama, regularly sends Japanese writers to New York to cover jazz happenings there. Nakayama, a very active editor, also contributes monthly articles and reviews.

Not being able to read Japanese, it's difficult for me to evaluate *S.J.*'s editorial content. I could only marvel at the top-rate color photography and beautiful graphic design. Photographer K. Abe (whose photo of Duke Ellington was used on the U.S. postage stamp) contributes quite regularly to this comprehensive magazine, first published in 1946.

Another quality Japanese jazz magazine is *Jazz Life*, but *Swing Journal* remains the benchmark by which other publications are judged. With a circulation approaching 200,000, *Swing Journal* has to be viewed as nothing less than a jazz success story. As Jimmy Cobb mentioned late one night at **Body & Soul**, "These people are makin' money doin' what they love to do – promoting jazz". And to that I say, "Amen!" *Gary C. Vercelli is jazz music director at KXPR FM in Sacramento, California.*

BIRD LIVES IN AMERICAN FICTION

Everybody reading this magazine knows that Bird lives! We all have his records – those classic Dials and Savoy's and Verve's. And we live in anticipation of the appearance of those “previously-unreleased” sessions that were done in someone's garage or basement and just recently found in a closet somewhere. We have so many Parker discs that we can't keep track of them all, and because of the profusion of reissues, we often accumulate duplicates. We're insatiable Parker addicts; we can never get enough.

Most of us who feel that Parker is incomparable also probably have read Bob Reisner's **Bird: The Legend of Charlie Parker** (1962) and Ross Russell's **Bird Lives! The High Life and Hard Times of Charlie (Yardbird) Parker** (1973). But how many Parker aficionados know that Bird has also found a place in an area of American literature that could be termed a sub-genre: jazz literature. His talent and his legendary life-style have led to his becoming an example of the struggling artist – often at odds with the public because of his insistence on being innovative in his art as well as being uninhibited in his enjoyment of worldly pleasures. Not all of this fiction is top notch, but it is worthy of a place on any true jazz buff's book shelves (if you can find it! Some of these books are as legendary as Bird is).

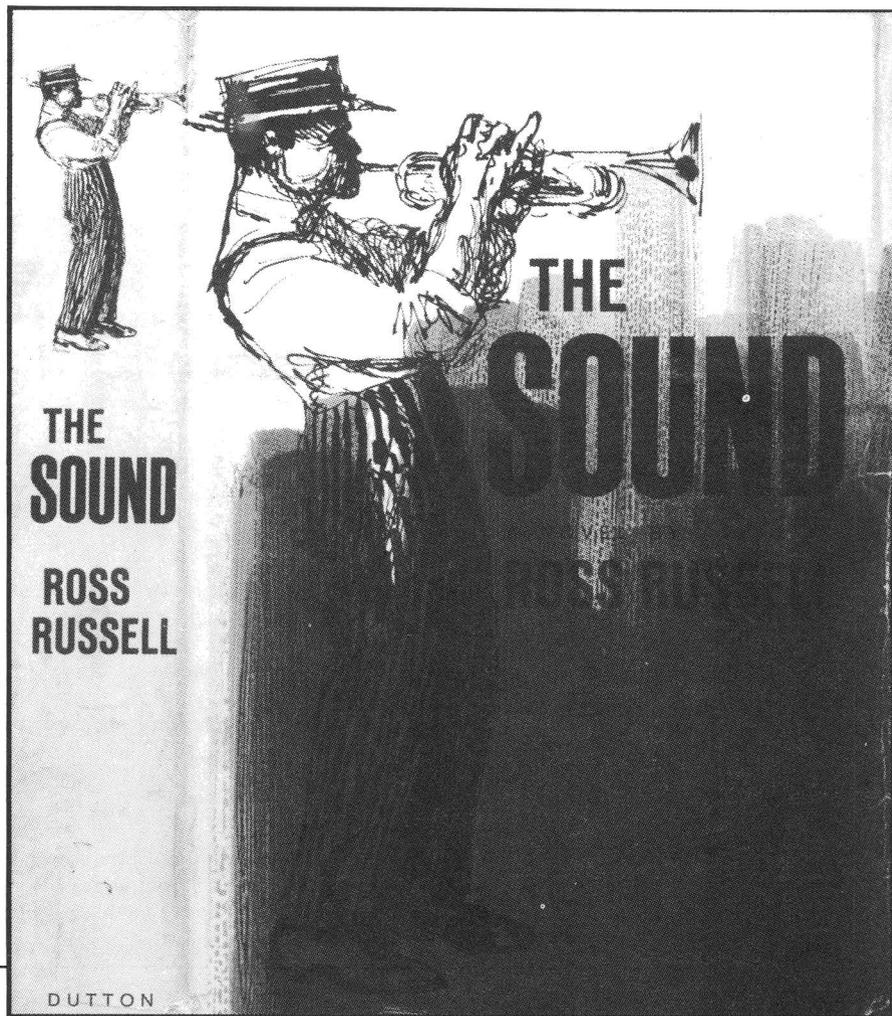
In 1958, with the publication of John Clellon Holmes' **The Horn**, the legend of Bird began to be perpetuated in fiction. Holmes, member and chronicler of the Beat Movement, produced a novel that he populated with thinly-disguised jazz musicians that were favorites of the Beats (Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, et al). Jazz was a strong element in the Beat lifestyle and in their writings. Kerouac's **On the Road** (1957) and Holmes' first novel, **Go!** (1952) both have many references to jazz.

Bird was an idol of the Beats because his individualism in both his lifestyle and in his music reflected the Beat love of freedom seen in their lives and their writings. Beat writers were rejected and alienated in much the same way that Parker was because they lived (and described in their works) a sensual way of life that was in conflict with the more conventional attitudes of the literary establishment and the general public after World War II.

In **The Horn**, Holmes' Edgar “The Horn” Pool is both Bird-like and Prez-like. Edgar's career is detailed from his early years as a seminal bopster to his tragic end, the victim of excessive alcohol, drugs, and women – a career much like Parker's. The story revolves around Edgar's trying to deal with his having been “defeated” in an after-hours jam session. He is driven to despair and becomes an embarrassment to many of those who formerly loved him and tried to emulate him. At the story's end, Edgar is still trying to recapture his earlier success and even surpass it. Holmes emphasizes the artist's continual quest for truth, represented in this case by Edgar's desire to play that one solo, even that one note that will be “something no one can stand it it's so true...” But he never does, and when he dies, his friend, Cleo, begins the legend by writing on the subway wall, “The Horn still blows”.

The next novel with a Parker-inspired character is Ross Russell's **The Sound** (1961), a rare book that deserves to be

reprinted. Russell's personal experiences with Parker are seen in his characterization of Red Travers, a trumpet player in this case, who is called “The Sound”. He is described as insatiable when it comes to food, alcohol, drugs, and women. For instance, early in the story Red is shown devouring, animal-like, double portions of steak, French fries, and other food; finished eating, he then insists on making love to his white girlfriend, Zaida, while his audience waits impatiently for him to perform. But, as with Bird, Red's musical genius shines through: “They played Seein' Red for almost fifteen minutes. During that time no one else took a solo. It was all trumpet, one chorus piled on to the next, variation upon variation, surprise topped by surprise”. Red's drug addiction is also emphasized, perhaps to too great a degree, but probably because Russell had seen Parker's addiction alienate him from both his friends and from a public that in the 1940s was even shocked by the Gene Krupa marijuana scandal.



John A. Williams **Night Song** (1961) presents Parker as Richie "Eagle" Stokes, a talented, innovative bop saxophonist whose ultimate downfall is also over-indulgence, especially with drugs. Eagle becomes old before his time and when he dies, the newspaper headline proclaims, "BOP KING DIES OF ADDICTION", and he leaves behind "three or four wives, each of them with the proper credentials, each extremely attractive, ... and each of them wanting the body for burial". Signs begin to appear: "Eagle Lives" and "The Eagle Still Soars". In fairness to Williams, however, **Night Song's** primary purpose is not to promote the Parker legend, but rather to focus on the alienation of whites and blacks.

A fourth novel, Herbert Simmons' **Man Walking on Eggshells** (1962), presents Raymond "Splib" Douglas, a trumpet player who becomes famous, gets involved with drugs and women, but who via his music becomes a symbol of hope for blacks. But it's also possible that Simmons had Miles Davis in mind when he created Splib. Both play trumpet and come from the St. Louis area; also, the novel is divided into three parts, each of which bears the title of a famous jazz tune associated with Miles: "Walking", "So What?" and "Round Midnight". However, near the end of the story Splib becomes very unlike Davis when he backs down because he fears controversy. In any case, the book will be of interest to fans of both Parker and Davis.

A final novel with a character reminiscent of Bird is William Melvin Kelley's **A Drop of Patience** (1965), a novel with some interesting peculiarities. Ludlow Washington is a blind-from-birth black man who most readers assume plays saxophone because his role is that of an innovator of a new style of jazz in the 1940s (evidently bebop), but Kelley's references to Ludlow's instrument are almost blatantly ambiguous. Nowhere in the story is his instrument directly referred to as a saxophone; at all times, whether he is playing it or simply carrying it, it is simply his "instrument". On the other hand, Kelley leaves no doubt what instrument other players play (a piano player has his instrument named at least nineteen times). Readers might find it a challenge to figure out the author's purpose in this.

Parker has also appeared in two short stories that must be mentioned. Probably the better known is Elliott Grennard's

classic, "Sparrow's Last Jump" (1947), which evolved from the author's having been present at Ross Russell's Dial recording session (the famed "Lover Man" session) with Parker. In this story Bird is Sparrow Jones and at the end of the wasted session, the narrator says, "Yeah, Sparrow's last recording would sure make a collector's item. One buck, plus tax, is cheap enough for a record of a guy going nuts". This was Grennard's first story and probably what he is most remembered for. A musician himself, he describes the atmosphere, the music, and the musicians beautifully. The story was an O. Henry Award prize-winner.

Less well-known is a very short story by jazz clarinetist Tony Scott, "Destination K.C." Scott has had a long and fruitful career going back to the early forties and has acknowledged that one of his favorite jazzmen was Parker (in 1957 he appeared on a TV presentation titled **The Mythical Bird**). "Destination K.C." is a story that emphasizes how Bird inspired his public, but also how the public misunderstands the life of a jazz musician and glamorizes it. The story first appeared (and *last* appeared, as far as I can tell) in Cerulli, Korall, and Nasatir's **The Jazz Word** (1960).

There are perhaps stories I have missed, but I believe those mentioned are the majority. As I've indicated, searching them out can be a challenge. Following is a listing of printings that I'm aware of.

— Richard N. Albert

John Clellon Holmes. **The Horn**. New York: RandomHouse, 1958. Reprinted: Berkley: Creative Arts, 1980.

Ross Russell. **The Sound**. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1961.

John A. Williams. **Night Song**. New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudlahy, 1961.

Herbert Simmons. **Man Walking On Eggshells**. London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1962.

William Melvin Kelley. **A Drop of Patience**. New York: Doubleday, 1965. Reprint: Chatham: Chatham Booksellers, 1973.

Elliott Grennard. "Sparrow's Last Jump". **Harper's Magazine**, May 1947. Also in **Best American Short Stories, 1948** and Ralph Gleason, ed. **Jam Session: An Anthology of Jazz**. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1958.

Tony Scott. "Destination K.C." in **The Jazz Word**, ed. Dom Cerulli, Burt Korall, and Mort Nasatir. New York: Ballantine Books, 1960.

— Readers letters are invited. —

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PAUL CRAM . BEYOND BENGHAZI

As each year goes by, both novice and veteran jazz musicians around the world find themselves up against a wall. The shortage of recording opportunities and places to play has made it difficult to develop and disseminate their art.

What can be done, you ask? Well, musicians have dealt with these problems in various ways: some have taken refuge in other musical genres; some have fled to the studio; and others like Vancouver-born saxophonist Paul Cram have gone out on a limb and opted to do their own music, their own way.

Thus it is with October 1987 that we see the release of **Beyond Benghazi**, his latest and possibly most cohesive musical project to date, not to mention a real labour of love. Yet, it is not without hard work and determination that Cram has gotten to this point.

For one, Cram's early years in Vancouver helped lay the foundation for his emergence as one of Canada's most significant composers and improvisers. His work there with groups like the New Orchestra Workshop was marked by efforts which have been partially captured on "Blue Tales in Time", his 1981 release on Onari records (featuring such prominent Vancouver musicians as Paul Plimley, Lyle Ellis, Gregg Simpson).

With "Beyond Benghazi," though, Paul Cram moves out of the Canadian corner and into the international arena. For this project, Cram has enlisted the aid of internationally renowned alto saxophonist, Julius Hemphill to fill out the ranks of his nonet, which reads like a virtual who's who of new jazz in Toronto. In Cram's words, "The band came about as a result of a request for us to play at the Toronto Jazz Festival in 1986. We originally started with the idea of having a sixteen to eighteen-piece band, and then pared it down to nine pieces – and that's perfect. It's like your mid-sized compact car: a station wagon as opposed to a Ram van!"

"The *music* for the nonet," Paul continues, "is material that I've done with other groups in the past, and rearranged here for nine pieces."

Paul understates the greatness of the music. His compositions (as well as those by other members of the band) are both inspiring and challenging, not a culmination but a continuum that reaches back into Vancouver past, and



extends into the great tradition of jazz innovation.

In this tradition, it is the *rhythmic* aspect of the music that comes first in Paul Cram's mind. "It has to cook—that's the thing," Paul maintains. We used to think it didn't, but it does. You've got to get people moving their heads and bodies in time with you: that's jazz. If you can stir up the crowd with that rhythmic momentum, then you can throw all kinds of stuff in! But the bottom line is, the music has to groove... music's got to move."

Though the odds are against him, Cram insists on remaining in Canada, using this country as a base from which to launch his musical campaign.

"I wanted to do it without leaving Canada, without having to go through the lineup at Sweet Basil with twenty other tenor players to sit in with Archie Shepp. Because that's what is happening now, and I'm not really interested in

that. I'd rather write my own music and have my own band, and do it that way. If I hadn't started doing that at a certain point in my career, I would have gone and done something else. I enjoy the music of the moment, doing the music of my friends, people I know.

"I have played the music of the tradition," Paul continues, "but to keep reworking that tradition doesn't seem to me to be especially valid at this point. The people who formulated that tradition were doing precisely what we're doing now—they were playing each other's music—and that's what made it a music. But for us to constantly bring back these old chestnuts is not what they intended anyway.

"At a certain point, once you've studied the jazz tradition, you have to take some time out and find what your *own* tradition is and how to combine that with your personal experiences (which are much different than those of John Col-

trane and Charlie Parker). As an artist, you've got to make the personal universal."

In order to accomplish this task, Cram stresses the primary importance of finding a personal voice on one's instrument. It is a search that is both internal and external, one that is directed towards an essential, yet tangible process. "Basically you want your sound to soar, and it's opening up to that possibility that you're always reaching toward, just getting over the fear of flying.

"You have to sing," he adds. "The horn is very close to being one of the most vocal instruments, and it is the combination of both the physical and metaphorical sides of music that make up finding your own sound.

"For example, we live in a very top ten culture, where we're just aware of what's going on in the top 10% of our brain, that is, the visual side of perception. So, I think what's really important in music is to get down into the bottom 90% — that's where the music really has to come from. One has to suspend the top ten of one's consciousness to get it coming from the bottom ninety — the stew of the unconscious."

ness."

During his productive career, Cram has absorbed many influences. Most significant, however, is the example of local reedman/composer, Bill Smith.

"I met Bill ten years ago, and he was always a very great inspiration for me. When I saw Bill, I thought to myself, 'Gee, here's this guy from Toronto who's touring abroad. Maybe it is possible after all.' Well, Bill's still doing it, and that's a great thing. In fact, it's a necessary thing. In your home town there's only a limited number of opportunities to play. So, you've got to tour, you've got to make records, or else it just ain't gonna happen.

"This all builds up to the fact that we've got to realize there is a music in this country, and that there are personal musics coming from all over the world. It's not all just coming out of the American monolith."

Given the size of the record industry, though, and the size of the "American monolith," can these personal musics and other independent musical projects make a dent?

"I think they can; I think they are," he asserts. "Especially in the last five

years, the fact that a lot of the campus stations (CIUT, CKLN) are actually broadcasting off campus has been a tremendously good thing, a tremendous help. What we need now, though, is more agencies in place, more possibilities in terms of record companies— that's what really needs to happen."

Although Cram continues to be concerned about these business considerations, he refuses to be held back by disparaging circumstances. His commitment to keeping independently produced improvised music alive in Canada has rarely been stronger. Between having three bands on the go (the quintet, the nonet, Solar System Saxophone Quartet), promoting the new album, and possibly organizing a tour with the nonet, he is a primary force in initiating new musical activity.

Nevertheless, the socioeconomic climate for making this music continues to be a difficult one. "It's an uphill battle," Paul observes, "... the odds are against you. It's hardly a living . . . but it's a life. It's a lifestyle. I enjoy what's happening, the people I work with . . . I couldn't imagine doing anything else."

— Barry Livingston

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YOU CAN'T JUDGE A CD BY ITS COVER

The introduction of the compact disc has transformed the North American recording industry. The CD's high profitability has made it feasible for the major corporations – who are the only ones with the capital resources to adequately exploit it – to embark upon extensive reissue programs of classic jazz recordings. Atlantic, EMI (Blue Note), CBS, RCA and MCA are flooding a market already well served by Polygram's well entrenched catalog.

Nesuhi Ertegun in the August issue of *Jazz Times* stated that by the end of 1988 the reissue bonanza will be over because all the worthwhile material will have been released. By then it could also mean that so many CDs will be available that many of them will sell poorly. Manufacturers and distributors already face difficulties sustaining catalog sales in a market where retailers can maintain good sales curves simply by stocking the new releases. If past performance is any guide this could lead to widespread catalog deletions before consumers can effectively support the programs being initiated. It is also inevitable that if market trends push CD prices downward to any extent classical and jazz CDs will lose their allure to corporations who measure all actions through profitability charts.

New recordings sustain the careers of most musicians. Much of this activity continues to be the forte of small independent companies and their financial situation makes it difficult for them to manufacture CDs. But this situation is changing as manufacturing prices drop and facilities expand.

Black Saint/Soulnote, Fantasy and Concord, the three largest independent companies, record a lot of jazz. Their CDs duplicate the material contained on their LP releases. The return of Blue Note (as a division of a major company) has been marked by several recordings which are a creditable extension to the label's esthetic standards.

Blue Note has also shown leadership in recognising the expanded playing time of the CD. In effect the CD versions of their recordings are abridged on LP. **Joe Henderson's The State Of The Tenor** (Blue Note CDP 7 46296-2 and CDP 7 46426-2) was recorded live at the Village Vanguard in November 1985. Ron Carter and Al Foster combine with the tenor saxophonist to produce outstanding performances (showing poise, control, great imagination and passion) of originals by the saxophonist and superior compositions by other jazz

composers. Rounding out the perspective shown in this music are the extended versions of well known standards *Stella By Starlight* and *All The Things You Are* – found only on the two CDs.

Longtime collectors of jazz music may be motivated to purchase a CD player after consideration of the following repackages which offer additional (or different) music while using the graphics from the original LPs.

It should be mentioned that the sound quality of the transfers has been well done and, in general, the CD process has enhanced the original sound. The music is of the highest quality and fully representative of the artists involved and the period it comes from.

The Blue Note archives are rich with additional material. **Dexter Gordon's Our Man In Paris** (Blue Note CDP 7 46394-2) includes *Our Love Is Here To Stay* and the rhythm section (Bud Powell, Pierre Michelot, Kenny Clarke) version of *Like Someone In Love*. These were previously available in a collection of Bud Powell alternates (BST 84430). **Gettin' Around** (Blue Note CDP 7 46681-2) is another worthwhile, but not essential, Dexter Gordon date which also features Bobby Hutcherson and Barry Harris. The CD includes *Very Saxily Yours* and *Flick Of A Trick* – (an extended blues workout) – neither of which has been issued before.

Stanley Turrentine's very rare debut LP **Look Out** (Blue Note CDP 7 46543-2) has been reissued with an alternate take of *Little Sheri* which only appeared on 45 and newly issued versions of *Tin Tin Deo* and *Yesterdays*. Horace Parlan, George Tucker and Al Harewood help make this a solid effort.

Something Else (Blue Note CDP 7 46338-2) is the classic collaboration between **Cannonball Adderley** and **Miles Davis** in 1958. This, its second CD issue, includes Allison's *Uncle* only issued before in the Japanese Blue Note Box of 1500 Series Rarities. There are additional titles on **Cannonball's Sharpshooters** (Mercury 826.986-2) – a reissue of a rare LP by Adderley's exceptional early band with his brother Nat, Junior Mance,

Sam Jones and Jimmy Cobb. *I'll Remember April* was originally on "Cannonball Enroute" but comes from these March 1958 sessions. The long version of *Fuller Brush Man* was only issued before in Mercury's 40th Anniversary box set.

We Free Kings (Mercury 826.455-2) and **Domino** (Mercury 826.988-2) established **Roland Kirk** as an exciting, innovative stylist whose earthy bluesiness was blended with superb instrumental virtuosity. An alternate version of *Blues For Alice* (the Charlie Parker tune) is included on the CD of *We Free Kings*. It was issued in Japan on the Mercury Box. A different version of *Domino* (with Wynton Kelly) was also in the Mercury box and is included in the CD as well as *Where Monk and Mingus Live/Let's Call This* (only issued before on *Limelight* EMS 2-411), *I Didn't Know What Time It Was* and *Someone To Watch Over Me* (from the very rare Japanese bonus set VSOP 11). The sequencing of the CD is in the order the material was recorded by the two quartets (with Wynton Kelly and Andrew Hill).

Additional Dizzy Gillespie performances from **The 10th Charlie Parker Memorial Concert Live at Carnegie Hall** (*Limelight* 826.985-2) are to be found on the CD (*Blues* - from Gillespiana, *Night In Tunisia*). These two performances as well as *My Funny Valentine* (not on the CD) were included in the Mercury box. Dave Lambert's vocal on *Cherokee* has not been issued before. These three additions give the listener nearly 74 minutes of music. Dizzy's classic **On The Riviera** (Philips 822.897-2) includes a previously unissued *Mount Olive*. This 1962 version of the band featured Leo Wright, Lalo Schifrin, Chris White and Rudy Collins.

Motion (Verve 821.553-2) is **Lee Konitz's** most unfettered recording. Sonny Dallas and Elvin Jones lay down a carpet of sound for the altoist's improvisations. This CD gives us previously unissued versions of *You Don't Know What Love Is*, *Out Of Nowhere* and *It's You Or No One*.

Max Roach's Jazz in 3/4 Time (Mercury 826.456-2) anticipated Dave Brubeck's "Time Out" by only a short time but Max was not the first to record jazz waltzes. His treatment, however, was totally convincing. This CD issue is based on the stereo version of the original LP but adds a second version of Lover which was only on the mono LP and is quite different. Blues Waltz and The Most Beautiful Girl In The World also come from the mono LP.

Kenny Burrell's For Charlie Christian and Benny Goodman (Verve 831.087-2) is a repackage of the LP called "A Generation Ago Today" with a new cover and the addition of Seven Come Eleven, Moonglow (featuring Phil Woods on clarinet) and Flying Home. Ron Carter, Mike Manieri and Grady Tate complete the group in this often overlooked session from 1967.

Coleman Hawkins in full flight was an awesome experience. **Alive at the Village Gate** (Verve 829.260-2) is a reminder of the immensity of his take charge personality. He surges, in this 1962 date, over the backgrounds laid down by Tommy Flanagan, Major Holley and Eddie Locke. Issued here for the first time is Bean And

The Boys and If I Had You.

Stan Getz and J.J. Johnson at the Opera House (Verve 831.272-2) combines the mono and stereo LPs of concerts recorded a week apart in 1957. The performance edge goes to the second date (mono) which includes the sole performance of Yesterdays. There is 73 minutes of music in this CD which was enthusiastically endorsed recently in these pages by Scott Yanow. It is a classic recording.

Pres and Teddy (Verve 831.270-2) includes Pres Returns which was not on the original U.S. issue of this marvelous 1956 date by **Lester Young and Teddy Wilson** (with Gene Ramey and Jo Jones). It's wonderful to realise that so much important music from this period is readily available again – because of the CD.

Johnny Griffin's Blues For Harvey (SteepleChase SCCD 31004) is the definitive performance of the many the saxophonist has recorded in Europe. He and the rhythm section (Kenny Drew, Mads Vinding, Ed Thigpen) are completely relaxed as they rework different approaches to the blues. The CD includes a previously unissued Sound Track Blues.

Triple Play (RCA 5903-2 RB), one of

Johnny Hodges' later recordings involved three dates and three bands. Lack of rehearsal time reduced the effectiveness of the music but it is uncompromisingly styled in accordance with the saxophonist's wishes. **Monkey On A Limb** (Ray Nance, Buster Cooper, Paul Gonsalves), **Figarino** (Cat Anderson, Lawrence Brown, Jimmy Hamilton) and **Big Boy Blues** (Roy Eldridge, Benny Powell, Harry Carney) were never issued before.

Erroll Garner's Mercury recordings have been among his more elusive. **Afternoon Of An Elf** (826.457-2) and **Compact Jazz** (830.695-2) have done much to rectify this. Trio and solo performances from 1954 and 1955 are included in these collections. The five extra titles on **Afternoon Of An Elf** (Yesterdays, Who, Sleep, When A Gypsy Makes His Violin Cry, Salud Segovia) boost the playing time to 68 minutes. All My Loves Are You and Sleep are duplicated in the Compact Jazz package. **Garner plays Gershwin and Kern** (Emarcy 826.224-2) was recorded in the 1960s and was first licensed by Garner's estate to Bulldog Records in England. Why Do I Love You was only on the recent U.S. LP release while his informal vocal



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version of Nice Work If You Can Get It is newly released on the CD.

Bill Evans' Town Hall Concert (Verve 831.271-2) has always been one of his best. Beautiful Love and My Foolish Heart were only on the Best of Bill Evans (V-8747) and Masters of Modern Jazz (2-2514). Now they are on the CD with the previously unissued One For Helen to complete the performances from the concert.

Billie Holiday's Verve sessions are reappearing with some consistency on CD. The LP called **The Billie Holiday Songbook** was an ad hoc assemblage of tunes most associated with the singer. The CD (Verve 823.246-2) adds three tunes — What A Little Moonlight Can Do, I Cried For You and I Cover The Waterfront).

Charlie Parker: Master Takes (Savoy ZD 70737) contains more than 70 minutes of music but omits five of Bird's Savoy performances (I'll Always Love You Just The Same, Romance Without Finance, Meandering, Buzzy, Sippin' At Bells). A more recent edition, manufactured in Austria, is designated as volume one and has still fewer titles.

Columbia's Jazz Masterpieces show no overall continuity of planning. **Duke Ellington's Jazz Party** (40712-2) includes Satin Doll and Frillie Trillie — both of which were in the French CBS LP collection of Ducal oddities from the 1950s/1960s. And yet the CD of **First Time** (40586-2) by the Basie and Ellington bands doesn't include No More Once and Blues in Hoss' Flat. Ellington's memorable **At Newport** (40587-2) duplicates the original LP. It would have been appropriate to have added the version of Black and Tan Fantasy which is included in the French CBS set. There is also another half LP's worth of material from the same concert which was originally on CL933.

Even more bizarre is what has happened to **Louis Armstrong plays W.C. Handy** (40242-2) and **Satch plays Fats** (40378-2). These were two of the best LPs made in the 1950s but these new CDs (and LPs) are *not* the original masterpieces. At both sessions some of the tunes were recorded again — either in part or complete — and then George Avakian edited together the best parts to produce the final versions. These CDs allow us to hear what happened. On the Handy LP Yellow Dog Blues, Aunt Hagar's Blues, Memphis Blues, Beale Street Blues and Hesitatin' Blues are identical to the original but the remaining

titles are all versions where only parts of the performance appeared on the original LP. In all cases it is quite clear that the remade and edited sections improved the final performances.

In the Waller set only All That Meat And No Potatoes, Black and Blue and I've Got A Feeling I'm Falling (with Louis' overdubbed vocal missing) are the originals. All other tunes required improvements before final issue. It is fascinating to hear what happened at these sessions but anyone expecting to hear the original records will be sorely disappointed. At some point CBS will have to issue the *real* classics rather than these works in progress. It would also have been considerate of them to have clearly informed consumers that these are *not* the original recordings.

CD reissues of 78s have been slow in coming. Transferring the originals to digital tape is time consuming and expensive. Robert Parker, Jack Towers and John R.T. Davies have shown that it can be done. Only Parker's methods are a radical departure from accepted standards and the results are still controversial. RCA's initial efforts with the Duke Ellington 1940-1942 Victors was a disappointment. Jack Towers' transfers of the same material for the Smithsonian are sonically more satisfying.

Two recent CD transfers offer a fascinating cross section of jazz recordings from the mid 1930s. **Ridin' in Rhythm** (DRG Swing CDSW 8453/8454) and **Jazz in the Thirties** (DRG Swing CDSW 8457/8458) collate sessions produced originally by Irving Mills and John Hammond for the British market. They were issued originally by Parlophone and are among the few worthwhile recordings from that time. They vividly portray jazz in a time of transition as it moved forward towards the brilliance of the Swing Era. All the music featured on these CDs has been issued many times but its freshness never diminishes. Coleman Hawkins and Benny Carter dominate the Ridin' in Rhythm collection in both large orchestra and small group performances. Jazz in the Thirties focuses on the work of Joe Venuti and Eddie Lang, the emerging soloists who would ignite the Swing Era (Benny Goodman, Jack Teagarden, Bud Freeman, Gene Krupa) and the important solo piano work of Joe Sullivan and Jess Stacy. These CD sets duplicate the two LP sets previously issued by DRG.

— John Norris

SAXOPHONE VARIATIONS

STEVE MILLER TRIO / LOL COXHILL / *Miller's Tale* / *Matchless MR9* (2 records):
Nigh-and-Sly / *Nether Eye* / *A Largeish Quart* / *Nowell's Flood* (recorded: 1985)

ANTHONY BRAXTON / *Five Compositions (Quartet)* 1986 / *Black Saint 0106*:
Composition No. 131 / *Composition No. 88 (+108C)* / *Composition No. 124 (+108D + 96)* / *Composition No. 122 (+108 +96)* /
Composition No. 101 (+31+86+30) (recorded: 1986)

STEVE LACY / *The Kiss* / *Lunatic 002*:
Monk's Dream / *Misterioso* / *The Crust* / *Coastline* / *Morning Joy* / *Blues for Aida* / *The Kiss* (recorded: 1986)

STEVE LACY / *The Complete Jaguar Sessions* / *Fresco Jazz 1* (2 records):
(recorded 1954)

DAVID MURRAY OCTET / *New Life* / *Black Saint 0100*:
Train Whistle / *Morning Song* / *New Life* / *Blues in the Pocket* (recorded: 1985)

WAYNE SHORTER / *Speak No Evil* / *Blue Note 84194*:
Witch Hunt / *Fee-Fi-Fo-Fum* / *Dance Cadaverous* / *Speak No Evil* / *Infant Eyes* / *Wild Flower* (recorded: 1964)

KAROLY BINDER (with JOHN TCHICAI) / *Binder Quintet* / *Krem 17759*:
Vasvirág / *Sirató* / *Dirge* (recorded: 1981)

DAVID NEWMAN / *Heads Up* / *Atlantic 81725*:
Ain't Misbehavin' / *Makin' Whoopee* / *Heads Up* / *Delilah* / *Lover Man* / *For Buster* (recorded: 1986)

CANNONBALL ADDERLEY / *Cannonball Takes Charge (Vol. 6)* / *Landmark 1306*:
If This Isn't Love / *I Guess I'll Hang My Tears Out To Dry* / *Serenata* / *I've Told Every Little Star* / *Barefoot Sunday Blues* (takes
1 and 3) / *Poor Butterfly* / *I Remember You* (takes 11 and 12) (recorded: 1959)

When Belgian-born musician and inventor, Adolphe Sax, patented his new creation in the mid-1840's, a reed instrument designed almost exclusively for use in the military bands of the time, he would have had little idea of the transformations which his saxophone was to undergo in the century to follow. He was an irascible man with high (though warranted) opinions of his technical skills, traits which brought him many enemies during his lifetime. Had he been miraculously able to transcend the barriers of time, he undoubtedly would have had something to say about the development of music itself as well as the attention given his own handiwork in that evolution. One can only conjecture what that "something" might have been; certainly, the recordings under consideration here alone would afford ample scope for his critical scrutiny, reflecting, as they do, a wide and varied deployment of that instrument in some of its many manifestations.

Surely, for example, he would have found Lol Coxhill's portrayal of the burly and bawdy Chaucerian miller and his racy tale in which lool conquers all inescapably delightful. In this 4-part work, Coxhill's soprano sax not only elicits a highly entertaining and animated response from pianist Steve Miller, bassist Tony Moore and percussionist Eddie Prevost (the miller's three cronies who obviously enjoy a good story), but also faithfully captures the unfolding details of the yarn's development: his



liquid, syrupy characterization of Nicholas, the ingenious young scholar-clerk who found it so easy to beguile the simple carpenter and woo the wife (*Night-and-Sly*); his depiction of the evasive, hesitant Alison who is nevertheless ultimately willing to participate in the tricks played both on her husband and the amorous suitor, Absalom (*Nether Eye*); his soaring soprano gyrations – rambling and wild – as Nicholas plies the unsuspecting carpenter with drink and a trumped-up tale of the world's imminent end (*A Largeish Quart*); the climactic crescendo of the joke of which all but the husband are aware (*Nowell's Flood*). Such interpretations, of course, are always open-ended; however, there is little doubt that Coxhill's miller "a baggepipe wel coude he blowe and sowne". This is programme music which, while affording the players much opportunity for creative freedom to explore their instruments, gives the listener accessibility to a musical format that, out of such a context, might otherwise prove too demanding.

Had Adolphe survived the first aural shock, he might have been hard-pressed to meet the demands of the second in the form of Anthony Braxton's continuing experiments on alto, tenor soprano, and C melody saxophones, though ostensibly the two presentations bear many similarities. The main difficulty for poor old Adolphe, who would have well over a hundred years musically of catching up to struggle with, is that Braxton doesn't really

offer the listener much to go on. Oh, there are composition numbers, diagrammatic puzzles, even mention (liner notes) of “extended notes on the compositions” themselves, and “on the perspective that the music seeks to affirm”; yet, the accompanying back cover blurb (“...the use of extended interpretation (as solidified through transeuropean vibrational dynamics)”, or (“...any given instrumental part from any of the 230 structures of my expanding music system (or group of musics) can now be separated from its original identity imprint territory...”) indicates little to comfort the layman (or Adolphe, whose time is stretched to the limit as it is) in his further quest for understanding. There is even a tinge of smugness in such abstruseness (“...at this point in time we have advanced to ten copies of each book... Capitalism is alive and well.”), as though we might all readily grasp these concepts if we’d only make the effort to do so. The music itself is not unapproachable, with its Joycean flow of ideas, its bumptious rhythms and elastic tensions; in fact, only the final cut (*Composition 101*) offers passing moments of gentler accord from the players who seem to know quite well what their respective roles are. However, there is certainly no programmatic anchor here. Perhaps, after all, the medium should be the message, and one is meant to judge the music for itself rather than for what it is about; or, since Braxton seems to work through a very intricate system (shades of K.S. Sorabji’s “Opus Clavicembalisticum”!), we are hearing merely facets of a much vaster enterprise which will shape itself in time. Alas, poor Adolphe, I can help you not, except to draw your attention to the fact that your invention has never been more diversely tested.

Steve Lacy’s solo concert, sponsored by the Hiroshima Real Jazz Crowd (a group devoted to giving jazz a wider audience by way of recorded documentation) is a real joy. And, yes, Anthony Braxton, it *swings!* (Don’t ask, Adolphe!) Lacy is a master of his instrument, and the clarity of tone and purpose is abundantly evident throughout. The Japanese know the value of first-class packaging, and the accompanying notes by music critic Toshihiko Shimizu are a worthy text. All but the opening two numbers are Lacy originals; on the Monk cuts, Lacy improvises freely with basic structures, but pursuing his own unique visions of them. Shimizu had referred to Lacy’s technique as “a chisel which could shape jewels”, and here it does.

The Crust, dedicated to Rex Stewart, is his own homage to his “musical godfather”, the sound coarse and flattened at times, emulating Rex’s horn; *Coastline* is a musical sound-and-sight visit to a small Mediterranean town, culminating in a prolonged single note nuance – a sheer sigh of satisfaction; *Morning Joy*, inspired by friend and poet, Bob Kaufman, is based on a riff overlaying a simple melodic line – a “boogie woogie” piece, as Lacy calls it; *The Kiss* is a memorable balance of Lacyian humour (the Lester Bowie of the soprano!) and lush Ravel-inspired impressionism; *Blues for Aida*

(my favourite) is a mournfully beautiful tribute to a young entrepreneur who, before his untimely death, did much to promote the coming of age of jazz in Japan – a lovely piano echo effect suggestive of the ancient poem from which its inspiration derived. Accompaniment would be superfluous on such an album. It should make many best ten lists this year.

Lacy made the Jaguar sessions when he was barely out of his teens, and they have remained much sought after by collectors for years. Though the music (originally labelled “Progressive Dixieland”) seems caught in a time warp between traditions, reminiscent at times of Condon-led groups that frequented Nick’s in Greenwich village during the 40’s, and, at other moments, of the youthful, boppish Mulligan/Baker sounds of the mid-50’s, the whole set survives well. Even Adolphe’s foot would tap a lively tempo, I’ll wager. Issued under trumpeter Dick Sutton’s name (a good soloist/arranger, combining the sweetness of Hackett with the polish of Braff), the session gives all performers generous solo time. It is Lacy, of course, who has gone on to carve his niche in the jazz world, who demands our attention during this formative period of his playing. On numbers such as *Love me... / Footnote / As Long As I Live / Let’s Get Away From It All*, his later style is already in evidence, despite the occasional Bechet-like drift; “I was just 20, already somewhat in possession of my sound, and I was *trying* to swing”, adds Lacy retrospectively. Devotees will not be disappointed, despite the mono recordings.

David Murray’s “New Life” is a recording that swings from start to finish, but with a rhythm that grows non-metronomically out of the dynamics of the group (I’m beginning to sound like Braxton!) rather than relying on the percussionist as time-keeper; moreover, it is a free-spirited playing that works from within an obviously structured framework – always lyrical, often rooted in the traditional gospel and blues idiom. *Blues* captures a full, big band sound, with lots of heat generating soaring flights of brass from Craig Harris and Baikida Carroll; Murray’s Ayley-ties are strongest here. *Train Whistle* is perhaps best summarized as Ellington’s “A-Train” accelerating gradually into a rolling journey to one of Mingus’ “Wednesday Night Prayer Meetings”, while *Morning Song* depicts the beginning of what most assuredly must be a promising day – full of enthusiastic vitality and good humour. The latter is, metaphorically, about as close to a march-along as Adolphe is likely to get. This is, indeed, music to lift the spirits. First class entertainment!

Wayne Shorter’s 1964 album “Speak No Evil” stands up exceptionally well to the scrutiny of the 80’s, better than many of his more recent ventures into the area of jazz-rock. His compositional creativity is evident throughout. Influenced initially by Coltrane and Rollins, shaped by a 5-year stint with Blakey (as all are), and already reflecting a new freedom and challenge as part of the Miles Davis aggregation,

Shorter felt the time was right for “a widening of his own artistic vision”; certainly here the music pulses with an excitement that extends well beyond the stock phrasing of so much jazz of the 60’s. “I was thinking of misty landscapes with wild flowers and strange, dimly-seen shapes – the kind of places where folklore and legends are born”, stated Shorter; the results lie in the subtleties and colourations particularly evident on such numbers as *Dance Cadaverous*, *Speak No Evil* and *Infant Eyes*. Shorter reveals a technique that is controlled, muscular – yet imaginative and meticulous, and warrants greater critical acclaim for this period of his playing than he has been hitherto granted. Cohorts Hubbard / Hancock / Carter and Jones marvelously balance and embellish Shorter’s free-wheeling improvisational sorties. This is an album worth searching out if you missed it the first time.

We move from tenor to alto, Adolphe; but note that the keys have been modified on the modern horn to afford the player greater dexterity. And dexterity is one of the qualities needed by altoist John Tchicai as he tests the scope of his instrument in styles ranging from a Lee Konitz to an Ornette Coleman. On *Vasvirag/Iron Flower*, from the opening whine of the harmonica to the final release from the immense density of sounds established, we are treated to an intriguing collage of musical experiences: hypnotic eastern rhythms, coarse guttural exchanges, spasmodic instrumental lurchings, dramatic rolls of bass and drum, strident blasts of trombone and tenor – while Tchicai weaves a complex but unifying pattern both within and beyond the propulsion of the group. In contrast, *Sirato* is a lyrical piece of great strength and beauty, swelling at times only to burst like waves dispersing on some craggy shoreline. *Dirge* evolves along simple melodic lines, incorporating a series of interrelated moods by way of a forceful piano solo (Binder Karoly), the ringing pulsations of reeds and brass like primeval screams or gospel shouts, a delightful dialogue of bass and trombone, a final collective ritualistic chant. This is music fashioned with great sincerity and conviction, echoing, at its best, Abdullah Ibrahim’s *Ekaya*, or Mingus in his most powerful statements. Tchicai is still another of those unheralded jazz figures who must wait for the kind of recognition he deserves.

In the context of so many freshly imaginative performances, David Newman’s *Heads Up* album pales somewhat by comparison – though a relief, no doubt, for some, including our hypothetical listener, Adolphe. Newman has spent such a great deal of his time in supportive roles to Ray Charles over the years that it becomes difficult not to catch a distinctive Charles’ bounce on *Heads Up*, or one of his gutsy blues’ wails on *For Buster*. On *Delilah*, his flute lacks the fire of character portrayal (say, in the manner of a Roland Kirk, for example); but, with *Lover Man*, a ballad which readily lends itself to breathy, earthy interpretation, Newman is at his best. Bassist

Williams and drummer Gladden lay down a beat to satisfy the needs of the session, and vibraphonist Steve Nelson sparkles briefly on *Delilah* and *Lover Man*, but I find myself most intrigued by pianist Kirk Lightsey in this setting, especially in light of his previous work with Harold Land, Ricky Ford and "The Leaders". He seems able to rise above the mundane (eg. *Delilah*), and turns out a "mean" piano on the two Newman originals. The overall impression is favourable enough, though this is hardly music for the adventurous listener.

Take Charge, labelled Volume 6 in Landmark's 7-volume reissue series of J.C. Adderley's Riverside albums, is actually the earliest of the dates (April, 1959). I refer you to Coda (#214 - June/July, 1987) for an assessment of the first 5 recordings in the set. This differs in that it is a quartet outing, giving us more of J.C., and featuring Wynton Kelley, a fine keyboard artist and "a remarkably warm, witty and empathetic man", characteristics which are notably transferred to his wizardry at the piano, especially on the rousing *If This Isn't Love* and a rollicking good-humoured blues, *Barefoot Sunday*, a performance that would surely please the likes of Ray Charles or David Newman. Further comments are, perhaps, unnecessary here beyond a final few observations: the consistent high level of quality jazz and dedication which Adderley put forth on his Riverside dates (note the references to takes 11 and 12 of *I Remember You*); the maintenance of a timeless, relaxed feeling to the music whether more upbeat (*Every Little Star*) or designed more reflectively to draw out the mood (*I Guess...to Dry*); a commitment to surround his efforts only with players of proven calibre (Kelly / Paul Chambers / Jimmy Cobb / Tootie Heath / Percy Heath).

All the above recordings offer a startling array of talent and, more importantly for the listener, a diversity of approach to an instrument which has become such an essential contributor to a music that so often speaks of life as we live it and that, paradoxically, must survive by change if it is to continue to do so. Poet Carl Sandburg caught some of that fervour when he wrote:

Drum on your drums, batter on your banjos,
sob on the long cool winding saxophones.
Go to it, O jazzmen.

Sling your knuckles on the bottoms of the
happy tin pans, let your trombones ooze,
and go husha-husha-hush with the slippery
sandpaper.

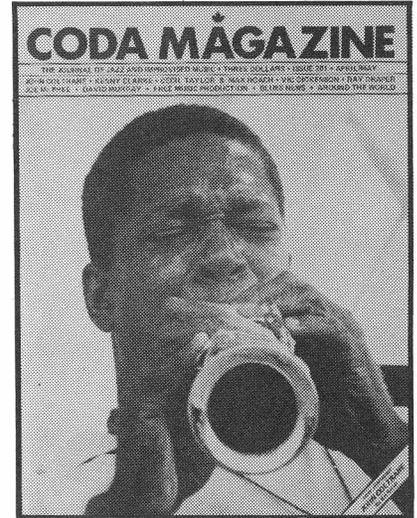
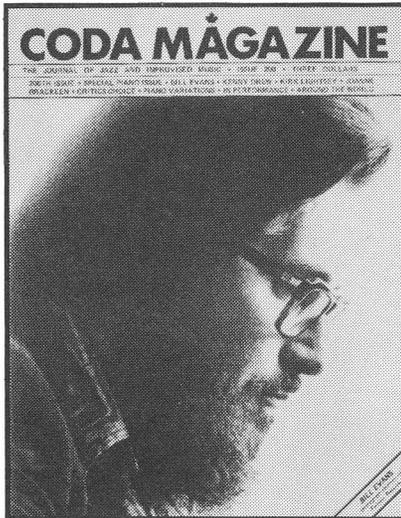
Moan like an autumn wind in the lonesome
treetops, moan soft like you wanted some-
body terrible, cry like a racing-car slipping
away from a motorcycle cop, bang-bang!,
you jazzmen...

And what conclusions might our time-
traveller, Adolphe, draw from all this? None,
it seems, - except a parting shot at what passes
for poetry these days.

- John Sutherland

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PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST AS SAXOPHONIST



LEE KONITZ: Portrait of an artist as saxophonist
Produced and directed by Robert Daudelin ©1987

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Two years ago, the organizers of the Montreal Jazz Festival asked me to go to the airport and meet Lee Konitz because it so happened that many musicians were coming in at the same time. While driving back into town during a typical rush hour, we had plenty of time to talk and it was then that this film was first conceived. — Robert Daudelin

The previous name may not be too well known to jazz fans, or even to cinephiles, yet as the director of the Cinémathèque québécoise in Montreal, Robert Daudelin is both a dedicated promoter of the Seventh Art and a devoted jazz aficionado. In this, his first jazz documentary, he has presented a musician whose long standing career and reputation deserves a cinematographic tribute. At 60, Lee Konitz embodies, more than any other living musician, the so called “cool jazz” aesthetic, a once admired, then reviled and, more recently, reappraised chapter of the music’s history. Beyond any such value judgements, the fact that he has

survived through thick and (a lot of) thin is evidence enough of his contribution.

As for the film, it focuses on the musician today and, most importantly, the performer. Sequences were shot at both a public and private concert as well as a workshop given at one of our universities. At 81 minutes, the movie gives ample opportunity to hear a good cross-section of his repertoire, past and present. From the early classics like *Subconscious Lee* or *Kary’s Trance* to the standard *Stella By Starlight* (featured on his newest release “Ideal Scene” on Soul Note), one hears each performance unabridged, a fact that will surely please the music fan.

Equally satisfying is the director’s clear intention to give precedence to the subject and his art over purely visual considerations. Without a doubt, this is a film produced from the jazz fan’s perspective rather than that of the cinematographer. Case in point is the deliberate choice of putting the biographical information and most of the conversation in the latter part of the film. While the non-initiated would prefer hearing more of this earlier on, one fact remains essential, namely, that the music must do the talking.

To accompany the saxophonist in his endeavours, pianist Harold Danko (of Thad Jones/Mel Lewis fame) is indeed a perfect choice as an accompanist. Having

played together for close to twelve years now, they can really communicate with each other and make the music interesting. Furthermore, the viewer will gain some insight on Konitz as the pianist himself adds some very well articulated comments of his own during the film.

Konitz himself also reveals much of his persona, but not simply in terms of his development as a musician. More than any of his interviews, he gives us a sense of “coolness”, not in the sense of his being uncommunicative, but rather in terms of his sense of humour, which one could qualify as wry or, at times, self-deprecating. On the topic of all of the album titles that have used his first name as a play on words (*Motion-Lee*, *Lone-Lee*, *Tenor-Lee*), he comments: “I now feel like a living adverb.”

Beyond specific considerations, it is always of interest to insert this film into a larger context, namely, that of music documentaries. Essentially, there are two main dimensions to follow in producing such a film: one, being the subject; two, being the object. Up to now, we have considered the subject, i.e., the musician and his work. But the object itself (the film) is of equal importance for it is the product per se. On this account, one must also focus on the cinematic content which this film may, or may not, evoke.

Cinema buffs might object at the overtly static presentation of the musical segments. Most frequently, performances are shot from one angle or, in one case, in a pendulum-like travelling motion. On the other hand, though, both musicians do a vocal recreation of Lester Young’s *Lady Be Good* solo and this is pieced together from scenes shot at the public and private performances. Without missing a note, the performance is complete, yet visually varied.

On the whole, this film may have some shortcomings — then again what doesn’t? — but none of these are the result of a lack of artistic fortitude; instead, it only gives more credence to the producer’s conscious choice of raising the music above (but not to the detriment of) the image.

A third, and most vital aspect is the sound. Since music and the cinema both share this common trait, one may assume it to be the bridge, or the mediating factor between both art forms. This film does its share in that sense, though a film

fan would see the balance tipping more towards the music than to the visuals. But as jazz fans, we certainly would have no qualms with that. In fact, judicious editing and sound mixing result in a faithful sound track and one hears on the film the music as it sounded live – having been at both performances, I can vouch for that.

In recent years, the number of film documentaries on jazzmen have increased, even if our current marketplace is not really that conducive to propagating the art of jazz. But for those who are persistent enough to scrape and scratch away for funds, scarce as they are, we must be grateful. This film indeed belongs to this category and it is for that reason that it rates as an honest work. In a way, it reflects the jazz idiom, for it too has flaws, but it neither hides nor attempts to make excuses for them. Simply put: it has a sense of conviction which the producer purposefully invests in the music and two of its practitioners.

To close, I would hasten to add one further consideration of a more general nature. When one talks about movies and music, one may say that there are films WITH music and there are those ON music. In the latter category, the one that ultimately interests us, most productions fall somewhere between two extremes: on the one hand, there are performance films while, on the other, there are biographical essays. From the soundies of the forties to the TV shows of the sixties to the videos of today, one sees an attempt to document the music but not necessarily its performers, hence the emphasis on the performative nature. In opposition to that, there are movies which bring together many different sources into a narrative structure pertaining to a specific individual. Such is the case of all documentaries done on musicians who are now deceased. Very often, we are given a subjective view that neither feeds or puts into question the mythical value of the musician under consideration.

Between each of those poles lies a very wide spectrum of possibilities. By the same token, two challenges confront the film maker: firstly, which of the two categories mentioned above should take precedence; secondly, should the image or the sound be the main thrust of the production. But on these queries, there is yet a wide field to be explored.

– Marc-A. Chénard

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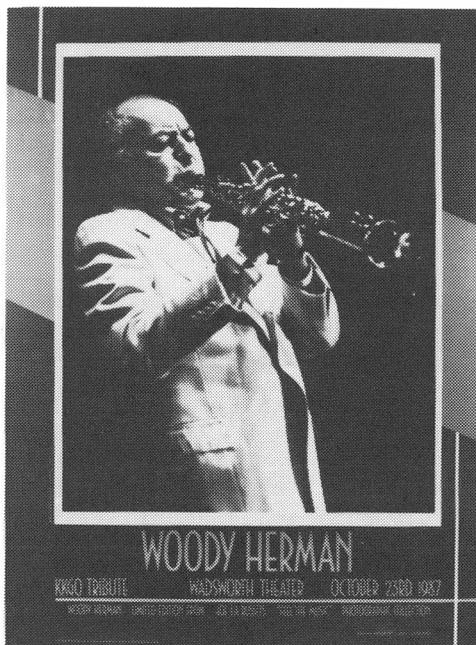
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AROUND THE WORLD

CANADA – Paul Cram's Orchestra celebrated the release of its exceptional recording "Beyond Benghazi" at the Clinton September 28 and 29. A month later the orchestra was at the Music Gallery for two nights. (October 23 and 24). **Julius Hemphill** is guest soloist with the band in its recording debut. **Michael White, Tom Walsh, Nic Gotham** and **Richard Underhill** are among the band's soloists.

Guitarist **Peter Leitch** returned to Toronto for a week at George's Spaghetti House November 9-14. Neil Swainson and Jerry Fuller completed the trio. Other recent headliners at George's have included **Herbie Spanier, Mike Murley, Alex Dean** and **Reg Schwager**. **Dougie Richardson, Moe Koffman** and **D.T. Thompson** will all be heard in December.

The Music Gallery presented a month of music related to jazz under the banner of "Within Limits". **Paul Plimley** gave a solo piano recital, **Claude Ranger's** band was presented and the **Jean Beaudet Quartet** came in from Montreal to help give the series a cross-Canada feeling.

The BamBoo's mini festival in September was cancelled but the club still features the occasional jazz group on Monday nights. **Eugene Amaro** was there October 19 and **Herbie Spanier** came in on November 23.... The Horseshoe presented **Lowell Fulson** October 9/10.... **The Ogilvie Brothers** have been featured Sunday nights at **Rosie O'Brien's** in the Warden/Steeles extremity of Scarborough. The band's initial cassette is available from them at 50 Helena Ave., Toronto, Ontario M6G 2H2.... Harbourfront's winter series of Deep South ethnic musics began November 7 with **Terrance Simien**. The series includes a February 20 appearance by **Sam McClain** and **Katie Webster** and ends with a **Clarence Gatemouth Brown** concert on April 23.... A surprise visitor to Toronto was bebop poet **Ted Joans**. In his short stay he performed a new poem dedicated to the legendary **Jack Kerouac** on CIUT's weekly, Tuesday night live performance radio program. He was joined for the evening by **Bill Smith** (sopranino saxophone), **David Lee** (cello) and **Richard Bannard** (drums).

Author **James Lincoln Collier** was also in Toronto to promote his new book on **Duke Ellington**. He was interviewed by **Ted O'Reilly** for CJRT's The Jazz Scene and visited the Coda offices.

Montreal's Concordia University offers students and the public an extensive winter series of concerts and lectures. **Marc Chenard** offers these observations on the October 23 concert:

"**Andrew Homzy** presented his 17 piece band in yet another programme of orchestral works past and present. Unlike most repertory outfits that confine themselves to a specific

era, this band's scope is much wider than the norm: from recreations of early **Armstrong** solos to **George Russell's Stratusphunk** and *All About Rosie* gives one a good sense of their musical spectrum. Of course, **Ellington's** music is always present (and not just the old chestnuts either) as well as **Francy Boland** (a Homzy favourite, whose band, incidentally, is an exact replicate of the CBBB). **Charles Ellison's** solo trumpet work was a highlight, particularly in the last part of the **Russell** suite and on a lesser known work by **Francy Boland (Sabbath Message)**. Equally interesting was **Jean Frechette's** tenor on **Ellington's Copout** in that it echoed some of the **Gonsalves** original. Now if this band could only get a regular gig together, the soloists would really give an added punch to their already impeccable ensemble work."

Jazz Calgary's new mailing address is P.O. Box 2735, Station M, Calgary, Alta. T2P 3C2.... **George Cables** and **Sheila Jordan** were showcased at **Edmonton's Yardbird Suite** in November.

CBC Radio carried a three part tribute to **Woody Herman** by **Jerry Goodis** between October 23 and November 6. Planned as a salute to the veteran bandleader it became, like other events, a memorial to **Herman's** talents.

New releases from Montreal's **Justin Time Records** include a quartet date by **Pat LaBarbara** with **George McPetridge, Neil Swainson** and **Greg Pilo**.... **WEA Canada** has imported the Atlantic "Jazzlore" series. The 34 lps include many definitive recordings.

Haywood Henry was guest of the **Duke Ellington Society's** New York Chapter on September 17. Information on the society's activities is available from Box 31, Church Street Station, New York, N.Y. 10008-0031.

... **Carlos Ward** showcased his musical talents September 19 at First on First. Trumpeter **Charles Sullivan**, bassist **Alex Blake** and drummer **Ronnie Burrage** completed the quartet....

The Coltrane Legacy was celebrated at Cathedral of St. John the Divine September 26. **Alice Coltrane's String Ensemble** was featured.

...**Armen Donelian** gave a solo piano recital September 27 at St. Peter's Church.... **The Walter Thompson Ensemble** was at the Knitting Factory on October 4.... **Craig Harris** and **Tailgater's Tails** gave a concert October 16 at City University's Graduate Center. Trumpeter **Rasul Sadik**, clarinetist **Don Byron**,

bassist **Anthony Cox** and drummer **Pheeroan Ak Laff** completed the personnel.... **Steve and Iqua Colson's Quintet** was at **Visiones** the same night.... **Abbey Lincoln** was at **The Jazz Center** November 6 and 7 with **Harold Vick, James Weidman, Tarik Shah** and **Mark Johnson** in support.... **Matsuri**, a Japanese Quintet, was at

The Jazz Center November 13 and 14.... **The Tommy Flanagan Trio** was at **Sweet Basil** November 3-8 and were followed by the **Henry Butler Quartet**. **David Murray's Octet** and **Abdullah Ibrahim's Ekaya** will be at the club in December. **Gil Evans** continues to conduct the Monday night big band sessions and **Doc Cheatham** and **Eddie Chamblee** are on hand for the weekend brunches.

Two separate concert series have been organised by the International Art of Jazz. **George Shearing** and **Marian McPartland** shared the bill at the opening concert November 18 at the SUNY at Stony Brook Fine Arts Center. The Sunday afternoon concerts at the Ethical Humanist Society got under way October 11 with the duo of **Jane Jarvis** and **Milt Hinton**. **Vince Giordano's Nighthawks** will be there January 17 while **Buddy Tate** presents **Paul Tate** on February 21. **Hilton Ruiz' Quartet** completes the series on March 13.

Studio Red Top organised a "Jazz Women in Concert" series this fall at **Boston's Cafe Tropicale** in the **Villa Victoria Cultural Center**.... **Mark Harvey** and the **Aardvark Jazz Orchestra** were heard in concert November 7 at **Emmanuel Church**.... **Anthony Davis** appeared at **MIT** November 14. There was an afternoon lecture and an evening solo piano recital.

Sun Ra was at **Detroit's New World State** October 17.... **Gerri Allen's Sextet** (October 10), **Keith Jarrett's Trio** (October 31) and the **Kevin Eubanks Quartet** (November 20) were all presented by **Ann Arbor's Eclipse Jazz**.... **Gene Bertoncini** and **Michael Moore** were heard in concert October 17 at the **Meadville (Pa) Arts Council Theatre**.... The **Northeast Ohio Jazz Society** presented four concerts on "The State of the Tenor". The series opened October 16 with the **ROVA Saxophone Quartet**. They were followed by the **Joe Henderson Quartet** (November 7), the **Scott Hamilton Quartet** (November 21) and **Cleveland's Joe Lovano** (December 12).... The **University of Pittsburgh's Seminar on Jazz** was held November 4-6. **Hubert Laws, Grover Washington** and **Patrice Rushen** were among the musicians invited to take part by seminar coordinator **Nathan Davis**.... **The Madison Music Collective** (P.O. Box 2096, Madison, WI 53701) publishes an informative and well-produced newsletter as well as being active in the presentation of music in its area.

"Jazz in the Palm Court" is a winter concert series held the first and third Sunday of the month between November and March at the **Smithsonian Institution**. The concert feature contemporary musicians playing music from **Black America's cultural heritage**.... December 7 is the date of a **Washington** concert organised by the **International Jazz Coalition** in support for **Czechoslovakia's beleaguered jazz section**.... November 15 marked the occasion of the

eighth annual blues Awards Show in Memphis.... The eighth annual Clearwater Jazz Holiday took place October 15 to 17 with Nick Brignola, Phil Woods, Nancy Wilson, Roy Meriwether, Horace Silver, Joanne Brackeen and the Dirty Dozen Brass Band among the participants.... New Orleans has undergone a remarkable musical transformation in the past decade. Many musicians now prominent participants in the jazz world have come from the Crescent City. Ben Chant reports on **The Rebirth Jazz Band**, yet another musical organization from that city:

"You can think about Jazz and then play it, or you can just play it. Marching out of New Orleans come the Rebirth Jazz Band, just playing and playing. Instead of consciously tacking parts of the New Orleans sound onto their repertoire, like Henry Threadgill and the Art Ensemble of Chicago are wont to, the Rebirth Jazz Band begins with the sound and, if anything else decides to drift in, well that's just fine. Their songs range from *Billie Jean* to *Blue Monk* through *St. James Infirmary* and the effect recalls the World Saxophone Quartet as much as the Dirty Dozen Brass Band.

"There is still a big jazz scene on Bourbon Street according to Kermit Ruffins, their lead trumpet and spokesman. I asked him whether people still rated the Dirty Dozen. 'Oh yes,' he said with awe in his voice, 'They're real good.' He acknowledges them as the band's major influence but points out that there are other bands doing great things like, 'The All Stars Marching Band and The Junior Olympics, guys younger than us.' And that's saying something: none of the Rebirth band are over twenty four.

"What struck me was his relaxed attitude towards other bands and playing in general. It was as though he could afford to be generous and that jazz wasn't a dog eat dog business. The whole band had a give-a-damn confidence that wasn't just a defence: the more I talked to Ruffins the clearer it became that in New Orleans jazz was actually a way of making a living, rather than the ticket to poverty it is in New York. As Barbara Frazier, mother of Phillip and Keith (tuba and bass drum, respectively) says, 'I'm glad they want to play music and be in a brass band. People will always want to hear New Orleans music when they come to this city.'

"The other band members are Derrick Wiley on trumpet, Reginald Stewart and Keith Anderson on trombone with Eric Sellers on snare drum and George Gilbert (no relation) on tenor. They started playing four years ago when a teacher from their high school band asked them to put a band together for a gig in a hotel. As Ruffins tells it,

'Right after we finished playing there we walked down to Bourbon Street and played for a few tips, and ever since then we've been going there every day.'

"Not quite every day: last year they had a



great time in Japan. This year they went on a short tour of Europe and played at the North Sea Jazz Festival ('Holland's real nice') where Wynton Marsalis checked them out. There may be a record of them live at Montreux coming out. At the moment there is an album called 'Here to Stay' (Arhoolie 1092) that hints at their live spirit.

"I saw them perform in front of two different audiences. One was a family show in a park, the other was an older crowd at the Bessie Schoenberg Theatre. Both audiences overcame their self-consciousness and danced and clapped along with the band. At the park I sat next to a six year old girl who jumped round and round in little circles she was so excited by the band. At the theatre an old man behind me kept shouting 'Say what y'all'. Gilbert's languid tenor contrasted effectively with the explosive style of the two trumpet players. Flanked by the trombones and underpinned by the walking bass lines of the tuba, the octet always knew where it was going. Aurally and visually the drums were the strongest link to the marching band tradition. Keith Frazier and Eric Sellers carry their drums around their necks and keep a measured beat, occasionally letting rip a galvanising burst of rhythm. Sellers stands with a smile on his face looking at the audience as though he can't believe they actually paid to see him and his friends play.

"This is no novelty group. They aren't revivalists or preservationists or keepers of a sacred flame, they're just eight young men playing jazz and having a lot of fun."

*

The Foundation for New American Music (10208 Culver Blvd., Culver City, Ca 90232) is the brainchild of composer/arranger Jack Elliott. It's an updated attempt to bring together in a meaningful way the scope of the jazz and the classical worlds. Its inaugural concert from 1979 is still available on record and more recent concert performances have been heard on NPR's "Jazz Alive". The foundation commissions original music for performance by the orchestra and has used the talents of many of Hollywood's outstanding writers. It has scheduled three free concerts this winter at Los Angeles' Wadsworth Theater

(November 1, March 6, May 1) and will also be heard January 17 in a program of film music at the Ambassador Auditorium in Pasadena. This concert is sponsored by BMI. They will also be heard April 9 at the Orange County Center for the Performing Arts with guest artist **Dianne Schuur**.... **Tommy Vig's Quartet** was at Catalina on October 6.... **The Cecil Taylor Unit** was at the Los Angeles Variety Arts Center on October 10.... **Vinny Golia's Large Ensemble** played My Place October 13 and the **Bud Shank Quartet** was at the Loa Club October 22-25.

Buddy Collette was at San Francisco's Jazz Workshop September 24-26.... Pianist **Jon Jang** was at Pier 23 Saturday nights in September.... That city's "Jazz in the City" festival was held October 9-17 in various locations.... KJAZ Radio is carrying Sunday night recordings made in the Bay Area exclusively for the station. Heard so far have been **George Cables**, **Mary Stallings**, **Freddie Hubbard**, **Buddy De Franco**, **Steve Turre**, **Art Lande**, the **Harvey Wainapel Quartet** and a two part "Tribute to **Turk Murphy**" from the summer Concord Jazz Festival.... Seattle's Jazz Alley has showcased recently the talents of Ernestine Anderson, the Tony Williams Quintet and Kevin Eubanks. That city's "Earshot Jazz" (P.O. Box 85851, Seattle, Wa 98145) carried an interesting article in its September issue relating to proposed amendments to US law which would "change the legal status of performing artists from independent contractors to employees so that they would be protected by federal labour law. Currently they are not." Reaction to the proposed amendments in Seattle is sharply divided but the statistical information offered by the article shows that a jazz performer leads a most shaky existence at present in that city:

"In Seattle, these conditions translate into a familiar composite pattern for the 'average' working jazz musician: 75-100 jobs per year, a gross of about \$5,000 and extreme vulnerability in negotiating fees or conditions. Jazz musicians most often take what is offered, or refuse the job. Despite these conditions, union membership and the union profile in general here are low. Only 10 percent (roughly) of Seattle jazz musicians belong, paying monthly dues of about \$5 per month and working dues of 2½ percent of union scale (about \$22 per hour). Only 11 percent of Seattle live music clubs have come kind of contract with at least some of their employees. Not a single club has a contract with the musician's union."

*

Pianist **Steve Kuhn** toured Japan October 15 to 31.... **Ray Bryant** also spent five weeks on tour in Japan playing concerts in support of his recently released recording of Basie and Ellington material.... **Joe La Russo's** "Feel the Music" photographic collection has been on display in the Los Angeles area. The photographer plans on taking it to other cities in the future. Additional information is available

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from 1223 Flores Street, Suite 6, Los Angeles, Ca 90069.... **Clint Eastwood** is directing the long awaited feature film about the life of **Charlie Parker**. Eastwood, a long time jazz fan who heard Bird several times, should be able to put together a sensitive portrait. **Forest Whitaker** will play the saxophonist and **Lennie Niehaus** is handling the musical score.... **Elaine Cohen** makes a correction to her article on **Grachan Moncur**. When the trombonist was on tour with the Jackie Wilson Show it was **Willis Jackson**, not Reggie Willis, who was one of the young musicians who befriended him.

1988 **Jazz Parties and Festivals** already confirmed include the **Paradise Valley Jazz Party** on March 12-13 with **Jay McShann** and **Ralph Sutton** the honored guests. Those two performers are among those playing at the **7th Mid America Jazz Festival** the following weekend (March 18-20). **Kenny Davern**, **Ruby Braff**, **Jim Galloway**, **Buddy Tate**, **Conrad Janis**, **Milt Hinton** and **Gus Johnson** are others who will be in attendance.... November 4-6 are the dates of the **Kansas City Jazz Party** to be held at the **Hyatt Regency Crown Center**.

Mundell Lowe, **Art Hodes**, **Joe Newman** and **Jay McShann** are among recent visitors to Australia.... A large scale **Tribute to Doug Dobell** was held October 14 at London's 100 Club. **Charlie Rouse**, **Stephane Grappelli**, **Urbie Green**, **Jimmy Witherspoon** and **Charles McPherson** have all appeared recently at the club. **Ellington '88** is set for May 26-30 at Oldham. Further details are available from 92 Hadfield St, Oldham, OL8 3EE, England. ... **FMP's Total Music Meeting** took place November 5-7. **Radu Malfatti**, **Curtis Clark**, **Butch Morris**, **Fred Van Hove**, **Maarten Altena**, **Guus Janssen** and guitarists **Erhard Hirt**, **John Russell**, **Lothar Fiedler** and **Greg Kingston** were featured.... **Ornette Coleman's** art was the subject of the first international meeting of jazz studies at Trento, Italy November 14-15.... **The Jazz Club of Nigeria** is sponsoring an annual "Roots" Award to be given to three leading jazz musicians from the entire world. The awards will be presented during a three day festival of jazz music. More information can be obtained from the club (2/8 Calcutta Crescent, c/o Come-Chop, P.O. Box 610, Apapa, Lagos, Nigeria).... **John Tchicai** toured Switzerland in November with the **Giancarlo Nicolai Trio**.... **Harry Edison** with the **Monty Alexander Trio**, **Sphere**, **Herb Ellis**, **Judy Carmichael**, **Ralph Sutton** and the **Paris Reunion Band** have all been recent residents at Zurich's **Widder Bar**.... **George Coppens** has released a CD in Holland of **Your Neighbourhood Saxophone Quartet**. The group will be back in Europe in December and Coppens will record them again.... Also on tour in Europe is the **Malachi Thompson Freebop Band**.

WKCR Radio has been publishing in its monthly program guide a serialised version of its lengthy interview with **Teddy Wilson**.... **Warner Music** has published a set of transcriptions (by **Artis Wodehouse**) of **George Gersh-**

win's 1926 and 1928 disc recordings.

Aisha Records has released **John Shaw's** newest recording "Water Gypsies"... Look for recordings on **Alligator** by **A.C. Reed**, **Albert Collins** and **John Zorn** together and **Lonnie Brooks**.... **Bainbridge** has revived in CD format **Ron Eschete's** "Christmas Impressions". It is one of a growing number of Christmas jazz recordings being added to the catalog. Other newly issued lps in this style include **Art Hodes** (Parkwood) and **Sammy Rington** (GHB).... **Biograph** has issued three piano roll collections on CD.... **Bassist Charnett Moffett** and trumpeter **Jack Walrath** are two newcomers to the **Blue Note** label.... **Capri Records** has issued a recording of tenor saxophonists **Spike Robinson** and **Al Cohn** with **Richard Wyands**, **Steve LaSpina** and **Akira Tana**.... Saxophonist **Jane Ira Bloom** recorded "Modern Drama" for **CBS Records**.... **Holland's Criss Cross Records** continues to issue quality recordings in the bebop tradition. The two most recent are trumpeter **Brian Lynch's** "Peer Pressure" and **Kirk Lightsey's** "Kirk 'n' Marcus" which is a collaboration between the pianist and trumpeter **Marcus Belgrave**. Other recent **Criss Cross** lps feature **Ralph Moore**, **Chet Baker**, **Peter Leitch** and **Clifford Jordan**.... **New Enja** releases feature **Abdullah Ibrahim** (Banyana), **Franco Ambrosetti** (Movies), **Mark Helias** (The Current Set), **Eric Dolphy** (Vintage Dolphy) and **Gary Thomas** (Seventh Quadrant).

"I'm Glad There is You", a 1985 session by **Jimmy Rowles** and "The Sermon", a previously unreleased 1958 session of spirituals and blues by **Hampton Hawes**, **Leroy Vinnegar** and **Stan Levey** are set for release by **Contemporary**.... A previously unissued 1969 **Bill Evans** session is being released on **Milestone** as "Jazzhouse"... "Wingspan" is the title of **Mulgrew Miller's** newest landmark release. **Kenny Garrett**, vibist **Steve Nelson**, **Charnett Moffett** and **Tony Reedus** complete the group.... **Donald Byrd** has signed with **Landmark**.... Collaborations between **Terry Gibbs/Buddy De Franco**, **Frank Morgan/George Cables** and **Bud Shank/Bill Perkins** were all set to appear on **Contemporary** in November.... **Pablo** has two **Oscar Peterson** dates ready: with **Benny Carter** and with **Harry Edison/Cleanhead Vinson**.... Fifteen new **Original Blues Classics** and 30 new **Original Jazz Classics** are in production and the **Miles Davis Chronicle** set will now be issued as eight CDs.

Anthony Davis' latest on **Grammavision** is titled "Undine"... pianist **Henry Butler's** second recording for **MCA** is a two disc set called "The Village"... **Mobile Fidelity** has rescued from obscurity **Muggsy Spanier's** **Ava** session with a big band and **Sarah Vaughan's** **Mainstream** concert from Japan.... **Mosaic Records** brochure number 5 is now out. It lists a mouth-watering panorama of essential jazz recordings as well as fascinating insights into the music.... "Dances and Ballads" is the title of the **World Saxophone Quartet's** second

Nonesuch recording.

The Clarinet Summit, Shannon Gibbons, Mal Waldron, Muhal Richard Abrams, Ran Blake, Art Farmer/Fritz Pauer, Roscoe Mitchell and Karl Berger make up the impressive fall releases from Black Saint/Soul Note.... Ten further titles from Stomp Off Records brings their catalog to at least 130 titles of traditional jazz. Featured this time are Jimmie Noone Jr, The Swedish Jazz Kings, Chrysanthemum Ragtime Band, Ray Skjelbred, The Classic Jazz Quartet, John Gill's Original Sunset Five, Butch Thompson and his Berkeley Gang, Red Rose Ragtime Band, Feni Jazz Band and Black Bottom Stompers... The Jazzmasters Trio has released a cassette of their music on Trialog Records (P.O. Box 15582, Santa Fe, NM 87506). Bert Dalton (piano), John Belzaguy (bass) and Neville Turner (drums) make up the trio's personnel.... Crown Records is to release in Japan the Xanadu catalog on CD.

Bassist Jaco Pastorius died September 21 in Fort Lauderdale from injuries sustained in a brawl.... Bandleader and clarinetist/saxophonist Woody Herman finally succumbed October 29 to the illness he had been fighting for several months. It also meant he had finally got the IRS off his case. Their actions undoubtedly played a major role in the difficulties of Herman's final months.... Caroline Leslie, owner of Spinnster Records and a dedicated supporter of jazz died August 23 in Florida from cancer. — compiled by John Norris

NEW FACETS OF AN OLD SOUND NEC Class Studies Kenton Music

A few weeks ago, a dozen adults huddled together around a stereo set at the center of a cavernous music hall in the New England Conservatory for five three-hour, hard-chair sessions studying the music of the Stan Kenton orchestra.

Why? Weren't they old enough to know better, to have more productive things to do with their time off in the summer, like waxing the car or cleaning the store room? First, these were students, congenitally not given to cleaning things. Second, that school, specifically one Department Head, believes the music of this particular Big Band is relevant in a new way; a re-recognition already broad enough to have a guest lecturer available. Anthony Agostinelli of Roger Williams College, a jazz historian and nationally recognized authority on the Kenton orchestras, conducted one session of the course.

If you're much under 40, you may not even know the name Kenton, to say nothing of his music, unless you heard it by accident because your parents played his records. Most of the students in this class were hearing these fiery, complex, jazz-oriented arrangements for the first time. And musically, they were impressed; much as a group of student writers might feel when first exposed to, for example, Faulkner.

They might feel that he was, in his own way, better than much of what's being done today. Re-listening to Kenton can say the same thing to some of us.

Objectively, it becomes clear that he was performing orchestrations in a form that no one has done since, a fact that could be interpreted to mean Kenton is out of style. Perhaps, but then why would grown men and women from around the country take time out of their lives to gather in Boston to spend 15 class hours hearing, studying, transcribing and performing this music?

Because a few music educators are beginning to realize the lasting value of the great body of music — perhaps over 1,500 arrangements — this band had in its book over the almost forty years it performed. People like Gunther Schuller and Ran Blake, the aforementioned department head at the New England Conservatory, respectfully use the Kenton music as an example of Third Stream composition. Third Stream is that body of music, in one definition, not wholly in either the classical or jazz tradition, but combining the disciplines of both. Mr. Blake heads the department at NEC that educates and confers degrees in Third Stream music. The summer school class on Kenton was a design of his abundant mentoring imagination.

The only requirement for admission to the course was an interest in the music. If you happen to feel cheated because you didn't know about it, all is not lost. You can have your own private familiarization with Kenton and you can take heart in knowing that Mr. Blake is currently ruminating about conducting a similar course next summer on some other equally important contributor to modern music such as Stevie Wonder, Ray Charles or Thelonious Monk.

Meanwhile, you can do your own Stan Kenton revival. Buy a record or two, or borrow from the library or write Creative World, 8400 Sunset Boulevard, Hollywood, CA 90069, for a free catalog of Stan Kenton records.

According to Mr. Blake, a few good samplers of his important music (he also did simpler music for dancing) are:

New Concepts of Artistry in Rhythm (ST 1002)

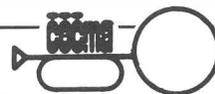
Innovations in Modern Music (ST 1009)

Kenton Showcase (ST 1026)

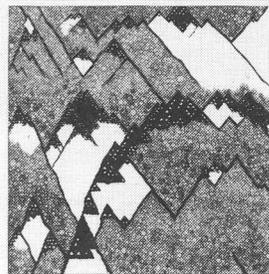
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— Al Sandvik



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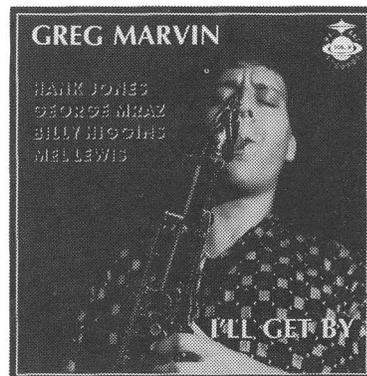
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THE AVANT GARDE IN TORONTO

A CRITICAL LOOK AT MUSIC PERFORMED BY THE SOLAR SYSTEM SAXOPHONE QUARTET
MAL WALDRON * STEVE LACY * ALEXANDER VON SCHLIPPENBACH * EVAN PARKER
PAUL LOVENS * THE FREEUNION COLLECTIV

**SOLAR SYSTEM SAXOPHONE QUARTET/
MAL WALDRON & STEVE LACY**
The Rivoli, Toronto

ALEXANDER VON SCHLIPPENBACH TRIO
The Music Gallery, Toronto

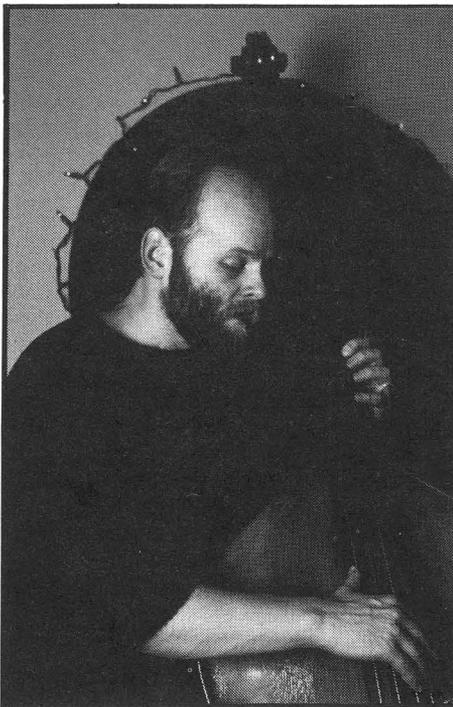
Jazz aficionados in Toronto were heartened in early September by the staging of two concerts which featured some of the finest avant-garde players currently working on the international music scene. Musicians of the calibre of Mal Waldron, Evan Parker, Steve Lacy, Paul Lovens and Alexander von Schlippenbach rarely appear in Toronto any more. With the local club circuit withering away and few concert promoters willing to take risks on "far out" jazz, prospects for Toronto audiences to hear truly experimental music are quite poor. The fact that both of these events drew good crowds indicates that interest in uncompromising progressive jazz has not evaporated. One can only hope that new impresarios and organizations will spring up to provide Toronto audiences with such intriguing sounds on a more regular basis.

The first concert took place at the Rivoli, a multi-purpose theatre/club that often serves as a venue for unique events. The impresario who arranged for Mal Waldron and Steve Lacy's appearance was Serge Sloimovitz, one of the rare forward thinking promoters working in Toronto at the present time.

Toronto's **Solar System Saxophone Quartet** proved to be a brilliant opener for the occasion. This group, which consists of four fine local players (Paul Cram, Johnny Bakan, Ernie Toller and Nik Gotham) performed disciplined high energy music. Their work was arranged for opening and concluding ensemble passages but a great amount of scope was allowed for each saxophonist to improvise freely during the middle segments of each composition. The quartet rarely gigs in town and they seized on this opportunity to *really* blow their horns. They delighted the partisan crowd, forcing Waldron and Lacy to match an auspicious opening act.

Mal Waldron and Steve Lacy have played together, off and on, for well over a decade. Their understanding of each other's musical intentions is nearly telepathic. The music they create is remarkable for its clarity, depth, colour and texture. As collaborative improvisors, they play together with an assuredness and spareness that only comes when one feels that one has the other's total engagement and respect. What they produce is exceptional: mature work, produced by contemporary masters.

Waldron and Lacy are complementary musical figures. They incorporate a sense of history into their analysis of the compositions they perform. As a pianist, Waldron looks weighty and professorial; he appears to be the anchor of the duo. One can sense his involvement in the collaboration by the incisiveness of the pianistic interrogations he poses for Lacy during the latter's free-flowing improvisations. Lacy, the saxophonist, cuts a more romantic figure, recalling the image of the cool Jack Nicholson persona in *Prizzi's Honor*. His solos indicate an awareness of such sixties rivals as Dexter Gordon, Wayne Shorter and John Coltrane. He retains his own image through his persuasive, modernist tone.



The formal devices employed in the duo's performances can be charted by describing one of their pieces. In their opening number for the evening, they began with Waldron comping chords, lightly and elegantly, while Lacy wove a series of dazzling melodic explorations. Lacy appeared to be toying with the idea of creating one dominant melody line but (in this sequence) he refused to do so. Shifting from an elongated progression to a series of short bitter bursts of sound, Lacy managed to imply the modernist frustration with conventional patterns and tunes. Waldron followed with a solo which contrived to captivate the audience with the feeling of the blues from his right hand while simultaneously evoking Debussy and late

Impressionism on his left hand. Lacy returned to interject a wryly dissonant tone with his cool, modern sax stylings. His humourous tone became questioning and then impassioned as Waldron's piano "interviewed" him, providing perfectly empathetic accompaniment to his cerebral soarings.

After two other similarly dense numbers – each lasting twenty minutes – Lacy and Waldron concluded with a beautifully realized Monk piece. They are clearly in complete sympathy with the quirky melodies and oblique attitudes of the late Thelonious. Their solos were brief, pointillistic exercises by two artists, paying mutual homage to an inspirational figure.

Little more than a week later the **Alexander von Schlippenbach Trio** came to the Music Gallery, an institution that has always been supportive of avant-garde music. Pianist von Schlippenbach's group consists of himself, percussionist **Paul Lovens** and the extraordinary saxophonist **Evan Parker**. This unique opportunity to hear one of Europe's leading free jazz groups came about due to the sponsorship of the evening's event by the Goethe Institute. Groups that actively promote contemporary culture like the Goethe Institute are rare indeed and one can only praise that organization for its commitment to presenting the finest in modern German work whether it be in film, music, literature, video or the visual arts.

The von Schlippenbach trio is visually quite arresting. As befits the leader, von Schlippenbach is tall, has a formal bearing and dresses with dignity and simplicity. Lovens is shorter, darker and appears to be less formal (and formidable) than is his pianistic partner. Their English colleague, Parker is a shambling, bearded figure who has an air of anticipation about him. Aurally, the trio has meshed well for nearly two decades. Von Schlippenbach's classical training has stood him in good stead, giving him an excellent background for his far-flung improvisations. His work incorporates elements from modern classical composers, ragtime, the blues, bop and post-bop jazz in a post-modern "free" context.

Lovens is a highly imaginative percussionist who uses bells-and-gongs, tom-toms and singing saws as well as drums in order to create his highly coloured style. Parker is, of course, one of the giants of the contemporary saxophone playing scene. He is a virtuoso musician, noted for his command of multiphonics. All three musicians play their music in an energetic manner but Parker is in a league by himself when it comes to the creation of waves and waves of intense sonic configurations.

The trio played two sets of approximately forty-five minutes' duration. One piece was played per set. An indication of the types of strategies they employ in any piece can be obtained by analysing their opening set. They started - as a trio - to play with great intensity. Out of a near cacophony of sound Parker emerged as the prime voice, creating an emotional climate by alternating between turbulent and lyrical solos. Lovens laid out for a time as Parker responded more and more intently to Schlippenbach's pianist instructions. The percussionist returned, propelling Parker to heights of exuberance as he "tom-tommed" the trio forward. Schlippenbach manifested his comprehension of Cecil Taylor, playing dense clusters of chords to inspire his associates. Parker dropped out while a "percussion discussion" ensued. Lovens launched into an intense solo in which he explored the multifaceted nature of his various instruments (saw, tom-tom, etc. al). Parker and von Schlippenbach returned to aid the percussionist in this exciting sojourn. In his intensity, Lovens knocked over his tom-toms while Parker created sheets of sound in a "Trane-ish manner. Matters subsided and a contemplative von Schlippenbach was left to invent a new melody - which he did, at first tentatively, and then more confidently in a boppish Bud Powell manner. Lovens returned to play a "Klook" to this new "Bud." Parker reentered with an incisive hard-blowing intervention. The group reunited to create a highly propulsive conclusion.

The trio's second set functioned in much the same manner as the first had done. After thunderous applause, they departed. Five minutes later von Schlippenbach returned to create a bluesy, after-hours rendition of *Round Midnight*. Two nights of brilliant progressive jazz had ended in a similar vein, paying tribute to Thelonious Monk. Can one form a theory for this? Are the roots of the avant-garde to be found in the compositions of Monk?

- Marc Glassman

FREEUNION COLLECTIV
Under the direction of George Koller
Clinton Hotel, Toronto
August 30, 1987

When I walked into the Clinton near the end of the Freeunion Collectiv's first set, three saxophonists standing near the entrance poured notes over me like a fountain gushing in a lobby. I squeezed around them, edged past a pair of saxophonists standing near a column in the back of the room, made my way past the gaggle of trumpets, trombones and saxophones at the bar, then scratched my way through the crowded tables to an empty chair on the opposite side of the room. Bill Smith had told me the assemblage of Fred Stone Big Band alumni and special guests would be a Who's Who of Toronto's improvised music scene. I only knew

two of them: Bill Smith, by record, reputation, and his role as my editor at *Coda*; and Perry White, by a subdued club gig at the Ciao. I was eager to hear the promised evening of spontaneous composition, but wondered whether twenty musicians, give or take a few, could improvise simultaneously without stumbling over each other.

The musicians swept away my doubts quickly. An intense soprano meditation opened the Collectiv's second set and started the saxophonists parading through the narrow aisles like the Sun Ra Solar Arkestra sans costumes, glitter and cosmology. After the brass joined the reeds to create a dark Ellingtonian texture, a vocalist scatted over the ensemble, which shifted to a slow, swinging rhythm. A Tranelike tenor solo supplanted her voice, then sequed to a brief trio interlude. The vocalist returned, articulating phrases as frenzied as the horns around her. The band burst into a racing tempo. then settled into a shuffle with the accents reversed. In the back of the room, the soprano and soprano standing near the column improvised exuberant contrapuntal lines over the shuffle, then pranced to the stage, where they wailed over the tribal pulse that stirred apocalyptic screeches in the ensemble and led to a wacky carnival closing.

Throughout the piece, order established itself in ever-shifting forms. The musicians were sensitive to the collective effort; they laid out as often as they joined in. I noticed the arrangement of musicians spread throughout the room conveyed a clearer sound than the conventional stage arrangement would have offered.

Saxophonists Ernie Toller and Johnny Bakan started the next spontaneous composition with flurries, long lines, a threat of a polka and a tease of a snake dance. The ensemble entered over a slow pulse that shifted into a throbbing vamp. Bill Smith's soprano sputtered, shook and howled brilliantly on top of the ostinato.

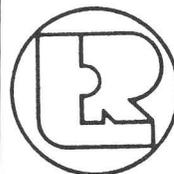
A third piece began with drums and percussion working gradually into a loose 3/4 pulse. Evelyn Datl's electric keyboard rumbled deep marimba textures. Perry White's saxello unleashed the inspired energy the young saxophonist had held in check on his club date.

The mood of the Collectiv became more subdued during its third set, when vocalist Pandit Chandra joined them to sing raga improvisations and time cycles. The instrumentalists juxtaposed attractive dissonances to the raga scales, but sounded rhythmically inhibited as they played over the time cycles.

Bob Stevenson's bass clarinet called the ensemble to a finale as vigorous as the music in its second set.

While taking extreme risks, the Freeunion Collectiv rarely faltered and never failed in its attempt to create a coherent improvised music without preconceived structures. I recommend this ensemble to anyone who wants to hear fresh adventurous music.

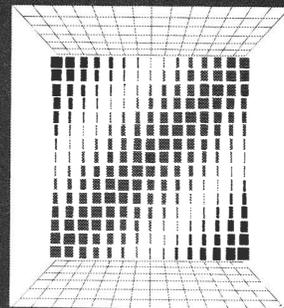
- Vernon Frazer



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NICK BRIGNOLA - SILENT "G"



Nick Brignola lived in New York City in the '60s in a situation where there were fewer jobs than musicians, clubs were closing and the music was in the process of changing.

He found himself working in situations that were non-jazz in content and not too musically appealing. Thus with a family to support and the cost of living too high, he decided "who needs this" and moved back to the Troy/Albany area where he was a little better known and immediately got into teaching and back into jazz.

Being one of the first to perform Jazz Clinics without much in the way of material aids – ie: no books, no records...

The visits to schools became quite an experience especially as this was also an untapped resource area where a musician could make a living.

It was about this time that Jamey Aebersold came on the scene and Nick met him and began to assimilate his techniques into this own programme. Nick at first wanted to make every student a jazz musician, but realized this was not possible, and continued to teach the art of being a musician, which he has done for just over twenty four years, the last seventeen of which he has represented Yamaha. Recently he helped the Japanese company to design a new baritone saxophone.

He states that "my life as a musician now has changed. Probably it started to change in the late '60s when Ted Curson called me and

said he liked my playing, and he was off to Europe and would I like to join him for a tour which was initially for a three week period. Well I stayed in Europe for six months, and that's when I realized I could get back into this thing. My kids were still small then, so I was able to jump out occasionally and that's the way it went through the late '70s. I never really had recorded anything of substance up to that point, but my first album was for Beehive Records with Pepper Adams: "Baritone Madness." Initially this was to have been under my name, but it ended up as an allstar album. Pepper had just left the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Big Band and I felt that this album certainly helped him as he began his solo career. It certainly did a lot of good for me."

Nick feels that amongst his many albums the one most representative of his work is "L.A. Bound" on the Seabreeze label with Bill Watrous. This album was nominated for a Grammy in 1981.

On the subject of what is happening in jazz today and in particular the club scene and the lack of opportunities for musicians to play in front of an audience Nick is inclined to speak volumes. "We are living in a situation now, where we have at our disposal a musical smorgasbord. Music is available to everybody in many different types. When I was growing up if you played jazz, you either played dixieland, swing or bebop or a few variations of those, but now when you say you're a jazz musician, you

could be playing Australian folk songs on a coke bottle and you're in. I think the term 'jazz' has become somewhat ridiculous because to label any kind of music as they do in record stores today has helped to destroy our tradition, due to the fact that many younger people are exposed to these categories and they believe that this is jazz. In many of the classes I teach, the students do not know what jazz really is.

"Radio stations are just as much to blame, in their programming of jazz shows, or what the station programme director considers is jazz; a typical example of this is the material found on the Windham Hill label.

"The jazz tradition is also being lost in the Black communities where younger people have no idea what jazz is, this due in part to parents advising their children that they do not want them to play music that is long associated with poor paying clubs and the many problems that exist with long stretches of no work at all. Also, again radio stations and record producers of pop music forcing this diet on their listeners in a brainwashing format. Ask these kids who Duke Ellington was, and they don't know what you're talking about. Yet this is so much a part of the great black tradition, but is getting lost. When we play in front of a jazz audience, it is now predominantly white. We really have to expose children to jazz at a very early age, in school if possible, let them have fun with it, and at the same time make it a part of their history lessons to make them truly aware. Yet

I suppose jazz will never be a mass audience art form – true art has always been a minority form.”

Many of us who have followed Nick’s career have always considered his main instrument to be the baritone saxophone. It is something of a revelation to discover that the big sax came last.

Basically self taught, except for two or three months of clarinet lessons at the age of twelve, which was the extent of his formal training. The clarinet however enabled him to go to all the other related instruments because once you’ve spent considerable time with the clarinet the other instruments are a lot easier.

Ignorance was bliss for Nick, because he did not know what was hard and he just, as he says, “sort of did my own thing.” Even today he is accused of wrong fingering techniques, but they work. The person who attracted Nick Brignola to the saxophone was the late Paul Desmond, who became his main influence, his playing being so lyrical, melodic and simple: “He gives you the theme and variations, develops the motif, and it’s so beautiful.”

Paul was a hero to Nick who proceeded to go out and buy an alto saxophone, and then went to hear the Dave Brubeck Quartet and talked to Desmond, who became a good friend for many years.

Someone then advised him to listen to Charlie Parker: “The only thing I didn’t like about Bird, if you can imagine, is he had a real bad sound. Paul Desmond had this pure sound, but I used to love what he played. But then I got to thinking, I don’t really want to play like Paul Desmond, that’s not me, and I don’t know if I can play like Bird... but I stayed on alto anyway.”

The next instrument for Brignola was the flute, an instrument he was able to adapt to quite easily. His move to baritone came about when his alto sax was in for some repairs. With

those repairs not completed, he needed it for a job. The store owner said he didn’t have an alto to lend to Nick, but he did have a baritone. He convinced Nick that it was the same as an alto, in E flat, but just a little bigger. Nick took it to the gig that night and began to think of it as an alto. During the evening the leader suggested he should stay with it, as he liked what he heard.

The challenge was set, and another horn was added to the list for Nick Brignola. His influences at that time were trumpet players Clifford Brown, Kenny Dorham and Miles Davis, although he had certainly heard about the baritone kings Serge Chaloff, Harry Carney and Gerry Mulligan.

In 1957/58 he worked with a group at the Cafe Bohemia which played opposite Thelonious Monk, Randy Weston, Miles Davis, Cannonball Adderley and others. One night while playing baritone he looked down into the audience and spotted Gerry Mulligan snapping his fingers, smiling and watching Brignola. Later Mulligan introduced himself, expressed his pleasure in Brignola’s playing, and to add to the thrill of the evening took Nick over to the bar to introduce him to Harry Carney, who also complimented him, saying that he could be a great baritone player. To cap the evening Nick was then introduced to Duke Ellington.

After that whenever the Ellington band appeared in Brignola’s area Carney would call him and Nick would spend some time with some pretty impressive company.

Nick Brignola has become known as a baritone player, although he still plays alto and all the other horns including flute and clarinet.

Why all the instruments? With his own band, he likes to play a lot of different music. “I’m primarily a bebopper with sort of swing-dixie roots,” says Nick. “I’ve played dixieland with Vic Dickenson and swing with Doc Cheatham. At the other end of the spectrum

I’ve played with Dewey Redman, Jack DeJohnette and Dave Holland where we took things out to the moon. I’ve done some work with Pat Metheny and some of my best friends are in the group Oregon. Glen Moore played in my band at one time. The baritone doesn’t fit into a lot of my music, therefore I find myself like an artist using different colours. I have to have different instruments, I’m convinced. Why have one instrument – after all, no one told me it would be difficult.”

The preceding was taken from an interview conducted by Hal Hill at the 1986 Clearwater Jazz Festival, Florida and first heard on CKLN radio in Toronto in its entirety during November 1986.

Nick Brignola (correct pronunciation - “silent G” - Brinola / Born Troy, New York, July 17/36.

Selected discography

As leader:

“Baritone Madness”	
Beehive 7000	December 1977
“New York Bound”	
Interplay 7719	Oct/Nov 1978
“Burn Brigade”	
Beehive 7010	June 1979
“L.A. Bound”	
Seabreeze 2003	October 1979
“Signals”	
Discovery 893	June 1983
“Northern Lights”	
Discovery 917	July 1984
With Ted Curson:	
“Jubilant Power”	
Inner City 1017	October 1976
With Sal Salvador:	
“Starfingers”	
Beehive 7002	March 1978
“In Your Own Sweet Way”	
Stash 224	November 1982

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FESTIVAL SCENES

REVIEWS FROM * CHICAGO * VICTORIAVILLE * MONTEREY * LAKE GEORGE & THE CARIBBEAN

As the reality of being an improvising musician becomes more abstracted, the requirement of bopping all over the planet to perform finds one being placed in a variety of musical situations. For example, I write these festival reviews in the house of a friend in the village of Boxmoor, some thirty miles north of London on one of my rest days in a two week multi-media escapade in England.

And so the same situation begins to occur with the possibility of "listening" to creative music, as the festival circuit presents considerably more interesting music, in one fell swoop, than the club venue.

Given that the general understanding of a festival would be a celebration, periodic merry making, or a series of musical performances, then these two festivals under consideration, extreme in their differences, still fit into that general description.

CHICAGO

September 2nd to September 6th

This festival, quite like the city itself, is a grand affair, presented at the lakeshore location of Grant Park. The planning and programming is in the capable hands of the Jazz Institute of Chicago, the folks also responsible for suggesting to the City of Chicago, that I be invited as a guest.

From the moment I arrived at the airport (also huge), my adventure began. There were two Bill Smiths. The other being the clarinet player with the Dave Brubeck quartet. The ensuing confusion, most of which I would rather you imagined, is concerned with the festival limousine service. Both Bill and I arrived within twenty minutes of each other, and the driver is of course unaware that there are two of us. Imagine his surprise, after picking up Bill Smith, then proceeding to the hotel, to be asked why he has not picked up Bill Smith, who is waiting at the airport. And then in the hotel lobby. And then back stage. And then.....

The first night starts quietly enough with the music of **Dave Brubeck**, featuring some wonderful clarinet from the afore mentioned, a neat trumpet player in the style of Art Farmer, one Brad Goode, whose band very much benefited from tenorist Lin Haliday, **New Music Songbook** with old friend Hamid Drake's percussion, and a crowd pleasing finale from the Cuban band **Irakere**, parading from stage into audience like some kind of Latin pied pipers.

As always at festivals there is the natural collecting place, and it all fits nicely together when Joe Segal's legendary Jazz Showcase is located off the lobby of the Blackstone Hotel, the temporary residence of players and

press alike. It's truly amazing who you can meet in a bar!

biggest - Biggest - BIGGEST - is a word that seemed to be the announcer's catch phrase throughout the festival, and although numerically the audience could be boasted about in this way, it seemed to me that the truly important BIGGEST was that most of the music was broadcast live over the National Public Radio network, giving access not to tens of thousands, but hundreds of thousands of jazz fans.

One of the problems that seems to be evolving with this style of "city" festival, is that it consumes and satisfies all of the casual jazz fans in a few days, and in its aftermath leaves not an aroused interest to continue it for the rest of the year, searching out local music in the clubs, but rather a void. And although it brings together players socially, in a concentrated kind of way (this being a real pleasure), the real strength of jazz music, the neighbourhood bar, in which the music originally developed, seems in America to be fast disappearing. So in many ways, although the festival is a success, the attitude of a large percentage of the huge audience is involved in a weekend picnic/holiday in their home town. The HUGE park was by the weekend filled to the very edge with picnic tables, some even with tent awnings, barbecue pits repleant with American steaks, families, and periodic merry makers. I emphasise these points because it not only illustrates the difference between a paying audience and one with free admission, but also the kinds of reactions to the different styles of music. I assume that when an audience pays, there is an advance knowledge of what one will experience.

There were many highlights throughout the festival, the most controversial being the **Globe Unity Orchestra** under the direction of Alexander von Schlippenbach, the music of which made one local jazz dee-jay self destruct. Fine modern music from the **John Carter** quartet with Bobby Bradford, which gave me the rare opportunity to hear bassist Richard Davis. A set of **Joanne Brackeen's** very strong and personal piano playing in a quartet format, and the treat of hearing **Sheila Jordan** in the unusual situation of performing with a nine piece band under the direction/arrangements of saxophonist **Bill Kirchner**. It would not be possible to have a Chicago festival without the blues, and in perfect Chicago bar style this was provided by **Magic Slim & The Teardrops**. For the mainstream fans - **A Tribute to the J.A.T.P.** was what was needed, with particularly fine solos from **Illinois Jacquet**. Bebop was abundant, and by chance the saxophonist with **Wynton Marsalis** was **Charlie Rouse**, adding a jazz edge to the usually slick presentation of

this young man's music. **Dexter Gordon's 'Round Midnight** band with Bobby Hutcherson, Cedar Walton, Ron Carter, and Billy Higgins gave us a display of fond memories.

To end I would have to focus on the tribute to **Art Blakey**, one of the musicians of my youth that directed my interest in jazz music. The presentation was in two sections, with the tribute coming from Bill Hardman, Woody Shaw, Julian Priester, Benny Golson, Walter Davis Junior and Reggie Workman, and Arthur's band featuring (you should check him out) **Wallace Roney** on trumpet. Art Blakey had apparently flown some distance for this gig, but up behind those drums the grand master seemed not to be tired and aging, but ageless.

As always I thank the wonderful people who took care of me, but in particular Art Lange, Chuck Nessa, Terry Martin, Jim DeJong and Penny Tyler-Kreinburg for their friendship.

On the way out of the city the driver, a middle aged black man, reminisced about the old South Side Chicago jazz clubs. "Yeah the festival's great" he said, "but when I was a young man we used to hang out in the neighbourhood clubs and listen to Lee Morgan, Sonny Stitt, Lou Donaldson... those were the days."

VICTORIAVILLE

International Festival Musique-Actuel
September 30th to October 4th

It's not possible to say that something is the opposite of, as there are too many subtleties and detailed implications involved for such a statement. However, as the **Globe Unity Orchestra** was the most extreme music in Chicago, then I would have to say that the most conventional jazz at the Victoriaville festival was the **Sun Ra Orchestra**.

After attending this festival for three years, as a performer and observer, it becomes very clear that its uniqueness is much to do with the fact that it is not, in the strictest sense, a "jazz" festival. This being so, allows one to experience a great variety of music, although for my own pleasure I find, as in the past, that the most interesting music is ultimately improvised, jazz, or at least jazz based. So from the five exciting days I present comments on only eight performances.

Solo piano is a quite naked art form as it relies entirely on the ability of the performer to persuade us that what one plays is indeed more than just mere technique. The three pianists of great quality in this instance being the Canadian **Gordon Monahan**, **Cecil Taylor** and **Marilyn Crispell**. Monahan is the player that is most removed from the jazz base, and



although a great deal of his music is improvised, the result has more to do with sonic soundscapes than melody. The drama he creates has a lot to do with his knowledge of the piano in an orchestra sense, and he utilises the long pedal to create huge blocks of overtones, objects inside the piano to introduce extra sound, and percussion applied to the inner workings of the instrument. The result is fascinating. Layers and layers of sound, once hidden inside the piano, gradually accumulate into a wonderful orchestra of vibration. In the past he has utilised the piano in so many ways, such as outdoor installations singing in a park, whirling speakers on wires to make circular sound in a room etc., that to hear him just sit at a piano and perform was a great treat. As Cecil Taylor continues to develop his art, there seems to me a new situation beginning to arise. For many years, as a solo performer, he really just played the piano, and through his amazing technique and imagination presented a music so powerful that it historically defined what the concept of solo piano meant. So much so that a whole group of pianists were to be overpowered by this form, that they became almost shadows of his strength. In this period his expansion as an artist is not entirely to do with his ability to "play" the piano, and more and more theatre has entered into his art. Dance, which was always part of his whole, and song, now have become an integral part of his presentation. Perhaps the new world version of a song and dance man. Ah - the tradition continues. As I have mentioned his influence over fellow performers, then it would be quite natural to assume that Marilyn Crispell is one who has been captured by him. I know this is not a secret as she herself has often spoken of her adoration for him. But in fact if one assum-

ed that was her art then it would be a superficial observation. This year I have heard her music on a number of occasions, and the most alarming experience that I have observed is her rapid development into an individual voice. As much as Cecil Taylor extracts himself from the piano situation, I find Marilyn Crispell to be probing farther into it. She has in just the short period, by historical standards, that I have listened to her, begun to produce a rhythmic and melodic music of such depth, that there is no doubt that she is not to be considered someone for the future, but an artist that has already arrived. The variety of compositions is one of the impressive parts of her playing, and her ability, is not to just play tunes and extemporise on them, but rather to understand the content of the pieces, and produce an organic music from their structures of great beauty and strength. On this night her performance and tribute to John Coltrane literally left us, the audience, breathless.

Improvisation is an important part of the Victoriaville event, and this year four of the groups presented such a variety of ideas, that one realises that the power of that particular element of the music has not deteriorated at all, in spite of the popular idea that the music has returned to the past. **Derek Bailey** must be considered one of the masters of improvisation, and for many years, on a yearly basis, he has been putting forward this concept, with a potpourri of players, at the Company festival in London, England. That he was invited to bring this idea to this event, shows the kind of awareness that the organiser, Michel Levasseur, has for the music. The quartet consisted of, apart from Derek, **Steve Beresford** on piano, **Tom Cora** on cello, and **Gerry Hemingway** drums. This was one of the more interesting

groups to perform, in that improvisation can, when not complete, be boring and self-indulgent. It also illustrated that the most successful combination, when the artists are not completely aware of each other, is the duet. And such was the case in this instance. In the past I have often considered Bailey to be a domineering player, sometimes dictating the total direction of the music. In this performance he seemed more content to be the accompanist, giving more space to the other players. For me the brilliance came from Tom Cora's amazing cello work, and Steve Beresford's sense of theatre. Perhaps because I like the idea of improvised music being in the form of duets, the two duets of **Richard Teitelbaum** and **Carlos Zingaro**, and the lunatic fringe music of **Eugene Chadbourne** and **Jon Rose**, were the high points of this festival. Both duets once again were so different in content, with Teitelbaum and Zingaro being almost formal, due to the preparation of the synthesiser (Teitelbaum), and the strident improvisations of the violin (Zingaro). By comparison the duet of Chadbourne playing guitar, voice, saw, and anything else he could get his hands on, and Rose's electric violin and cello, presented, as someone in the audience observed, an avant garde impression of the Marx Brothers. The humour of this duet completely enraptured the audience, and was one of the few occasions that laughter was considered acceptable. I had bought the record of **Last Exit**, and was most disappointed. You have to hear them live I was informed. That indeed turned out to be the truth, for in performance Peter Brotzmann (saxophones), Sonny Sharrock (guitar), Bill Laswell (bass), and Ronald Shannon Jackson (drums), produced a screaming high energy music, much to the delight of all, that seemed

rather akin to a fusion band based on the music of Albert Ayler and Jimi Hendrix. Powerful stuff.

And so I end as I began, with **Sun Ra**. What to say about such a legend. Is he the current reincarnation of Jimmie Lunceford? Is this still to be considered far out? I think not, for after all these years he may be the grand daddy of this music called *avant garde*, but judging from his presentation at this festival, I would have to think that he had become somewhat of a show-band. As always resplendent in costumes, June Tyson's dancing, Marshall Allen and John Gilmore still up there, premier saxophonists, and in the end just really a great time being had by all. The next day, due to a cancellation, Sun Ra and the Orchestra performed the Sunday concert in the beautiful church of the town. A fitting venue for such a godly man.

What I have written about is not all that occurred, just simply all that pleased me. Perhaps for you there is even more, certainly enough for you to make a visit to Victoriaville in 1988. What a lovely idea for a vacation....

— *Bill Smith*

JAZZ AT SEA

The Norway

October 24-30, 1987

Taking an ocean cruise was once the domain of the affluent and elderly. Snoozing the day away on a deck chair in the fresh sea air was a therapeutic way to ease aches and pains.

Today's cruise ships are reaching out for everyone. The Norway, once the jewel of the French Line (S/S France), is an immense floating hotel which offers its customers an unending flow of activities to fill the time between Caribbean ports of call. The pressures surrounding modern urban life dissipate quickly in this mixture of sun, sea and a never ending flow of gourmet foods.

For two weeks in October the Norway housed close to fifty outstanding jazz musicians whose performances were a bonus to the regular programs. But with forty percent of those on board (800) taking the cruise for the music, it was jazz which dominated daily life.

The day started early when the ship was at sea. Afternoon concerts and recitals began at 2 p.m. Nearly all the assembled pianists (Mel Powell, Dick Hyman, Tommy Flanagan, Bob Greene, Roland Hanna, Norman Simmons, Ed Higgins, Jay McShann) demonstrated their solo capacities in a crowded Club Internationale. It was also the venue the following afternoon for Dick Hyman's solo recital — a fascinating journey through many styles and concepts of music. The ship's spacious theatre was well filled for afternoon concerts by Louis Bellson and Friends and the Flip Phillips/Kenny Davern Quintet. On hand for the Bellson afternoon were Don Menza, Al Grey, Roland Hanna and Milt Hinton, who were all well featured. The Phillips/Davern combination concentrated on the material recorded a decade ago for Chiaro-

scuro and also performed earlier in the week at the Club Internationale. Both performances were inspired occasions with guitarist Howard Alden adding a distinctive flavour to the music with his light rhythmic strumming and punchy accents in the riffed ensemble lines.

The Saga Theatre was the venue for four evening concerts. Sarah Vaughan and Joe Williams gave one hour concerts to coincide with the early and late dinner sittings on successive nights. Mel Powell celebrated his birthday with many of his musical friends. He played piano while Joe Williams sang, Dick Hyman and Howard Alden offered solo pieces and then nearly everyone aboard (Sweets Edison, Doc Cheatham, Clark Terry, Bob Wilber, Flip Phillips, Kenny Davern - who was an amusing narrator - Milt Hinton, Louis Bellson) worked their way through some familiar routines which climaxed with *It Don't Mean A Thing*. Benny Carter hosted the final night concert Jam Session at the theatre.

Nightly music was offered in Club Internationale and Checkers — the ship's two lounge/bars which were both equipped with a dance floor. Space was often at a premium at these sessions which involved a rotating schedule of the musicians in relatively fixed groupings. Both bands were supposed to play twice each night but that didn't always happen. There were also substitutions and changes in the lineups — especially at Club Internationale where most of the major soloists were working.

Benny Carter's two appearances were the highlights of the week. He and Bob Wilber romped through *Swingin' Till The Girls Come Home* and other standards. Tommy Flanagan, George Mraz and Oliver Jackson gave the band all the support it needed and Carter delighted everyone by playing nearly a complete set on trumpet. His economical, legato style is understated but always right. The altoist was heard again with Clark Terry. The repertoire was different, the pianists kept changing but the interaction between the two horns was particularly sensitive.

Other outstanding moments were an explosive version of *Let Me See* by Edison, Tate and Grey; the trio performances of Mel Powell, Bob Wilber and Louis Bellson; the enduring strength of Doc Cheatham; the rolling blues piano of Sammy Price (there's really no one else who can still play in that manner) and the remarkably different but still equally impressive bass work of George Mraz and Milt Hinton. You could feel the rhythmic pickup when they were on stage. The same was true for drummers Oliver Jackson and Gerry King. Howard Alden, heard in many different settings, was always delightful. Attending a graduate school of this order can only enrich his musical vision.

Checkers was primarily "home" for the New Orleans bands on board - The All Star Brass Band (a group of youngsters offering New Orleans parade music in a very rudimentary fashion), Danny Barker's Jazz Hounds and

Wallace Davenport's Quartet. All three groups worked hard to entertain their audiences.

There were three formal chances to "Meet the Stars". The afternoon gatherings were conducted by Mel Powell, Joe Williams and Clark Terry. Both Powell and Terry were astute hosts who steered the discussion towards interesting musical viewpoints pertaining to the pianists and trumpeters who were on hand. You could also catch the musicians when they came up for air on deck.

Other bonuses included an endless run of jazz videos on closed circuit TV, the special Chinese/New Orleans cuisine offered by the Wong brothers of the Trey Yuen restaurant, and nightly jam sessions in the Windjammer piano bar and at Checkers. It was at the Windjammer (late at night) that you had the best chance to appreciate the flexible variety of piano interpretations from Eddie Higgins. It was also there that musicians on board as passengers got a chance to show their stuff. Alma Smith proved to be a pianist of substance whose bebop conceptions were in keeping with Detroit's joint traditions of music and late night partying.

Taking a cruise is very much a personal decision but the S/S Norway's jazz program is a wonderful way to hear some of the major stylists — men who gave jazz much of its language. Co-producers Hank O'Neal and Shelly Shier opted for several performances by similar groupings of the musicians rather than continually rotating the bands in the manner favored at some of the jazz parties. This gave audiences several chances to hear the same bands. It also offered the musicians the opportunity to vary their programs. With the notable exceptions of Doc Cheatham and Dick Hyman few chose to do this. They were content to rework such old favorites as *In A Mellowtone*, *Cottontail*, *Tangerine* and *Take The A Train*. Most of those aboard were unconcerned with such matters. They appreciated the relaxed, worry-free environment and loved the music.

Finally some footnotes. Many of the musicians on board attended Norman Simmons' well orchestrated wedding at New Mount Zion Church on St Thomas. Both bride and groom were radiant!

Eastern Airlines failed to honour their contract to fly Dizzy Gillespie between San Juan and St Thomas. Even though they had cancelled that leg of the flight (a shortage of passengers) from New York they preferred to call it a delay until it was too late to make other arrangements. The airline was even unwilling to make the extra effort to find space on smaller local lines early enough for Dizzy to make his connection with the Norway. In the end the ship had to sail without him. It was the only major disappointment of the week.

The two weeks of jazz cruises on the Norway were followed by two further, scaled-down, weeks on the Skyward, Sunward II and Starward. Their popularity seems to be in-



creasing rapidly. The dominant topic of conversation before debarkation was "see you next year". Information about Norwegian Caribbean Lines' cruises can be obtained by writing them at One Biscayne Tower, Miami, Florida 33131 USA.
 — John Norris

THE 1987 MONTEREY JAZZ FESTIVAL

The 30th annual Monterey Jazz Festival, despite some slow moments, was an event well worth attending. Held at the city's fairgrounds, music was performed at three separate locations all within walking distance: The main stage, a smaller garden arena and (after sunset) at an improvised "nightclub". As usual the overly conservative musical programming (reflecting the taste of founder Jimmy Lyons) ignored both the avant-garde and fusion, concentrating mostly on straightahead jazz. By doing a bit of walking I managed to catch most of the highlights from the 30 hours of music played that weekend.

The festivities began Friday at 6 p.m. with sets by the Paul Contos quartet, the Smith Dobson trio and the High School All-Stars under the direction of trumpeter **Bill Berry**. The growing audience applauded heartily for all three groups although the latter band found famous charts suffering in the hands of teenagers.

A local Army band, **Triple Threat**, practically blew the roof off of the nightclub, tearing apart

7 Steps to Heaven and even swinging *Alfie*. This 20-piece unit deserves to be recorded as do the **Band of Rogues**, a Japanese big band that opened the main show. After backing guest trumpeter Bobby Shew on *Centerpiece*, the Rogues utilized some hilarious choreography on a burning salsa, dancing on stage while swinging their horns back and forth in time to the music. Although this particular set ended quite prematurely, the Rogues would be at the other venues throughout the weekend. Composed of amateur musicians (of professional calibre) who earn their livings in other fields, this exuberant band was one of the hits of the festival. Their humor, inventive swing and colorful repertoire resulted in enthusiastic jazz. Their *Tribute to Louis Armstrong* was the only nod to New Orleans jazz heard all weekend, vocal versions of *New York, New York* (first sung as *Monterey, Monterey*) and *Mack the Knife* (introduced as *Mack Tonight*) avoided cliches while the other songs (including *Flying Home*, *How High the Moon* and *Road Time Shuffle*) swung hard.

Friday night's main concert continued with a brief performance by Toshiako Akiyoshi and Lew Tabackin (in a quartet) before Toshiako led the Rogues through a few of her compositions. The highpoint of the evening was **Stephane Grappelli's** inspired set. Backed by just guitarist Marc Fosset and bassist John Burr, the 79-year old violinist played swing standards (including *Fascinating Rhythm*, *Shine*, *Them There Eyes* and *I Got Rhythm*) with such enthusiasm and creativity that it's hard to

believe that he's been performing most of these tunes for 50 years. The ageless Grappelli, who seems to play faster the older he gets, really brought down the house with a long cadenza on *Don't Get Around Much Anymore* and a brilliant imitation of a train on *Chattanooga Choo Choo*.

The rest of Friday night's show consisted of performers who do not belong at jazz festivals. **Batucaje**, 11 percussionists and dancers, were most notable for their colorful costumes and monotonous vamps. **Flora Purim and Airtó's** Latin electric funk from the early 70's sounded more dated than the swing groups; they have lacked a clear musical direction for quite a few years now. Finally **Ray Charles**, who has not altered his set list much during the past 25 years, performed his usual hits. Why is he constantly invited to jazz festivals when so little improvisation takes place in his music?

Saturday afternoon at Monterey is traditionally given over to the blues. Unfortunately 1987's 6-hour marathon was mostly run-of-the-mill due to a sameness of approach, an excess of Hendrix-style guitarists and overly long sets. Why were there no acoustic guitarists, very few harmonica players and so many anonymous sounding groups? It was fascinating watching **Buddy Guy** try desperately to capture the audience's attention. He shouted, screamed, overacted, played humorous licks on guitar, attempted singalongs and even cranked up the volume but the crowd mostly ignored his dull material. He seemed relieved when **Junior Wells** joined him; at least now the blame could be shared. The brighter moments of the afternoon were contributed by **Etta Jones** (with Red Holloway and Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson) and **B.B. King**, who has such control over his music that he never has trouble exciting a crowd.

Still, at the end of the long afternoon many people had a blues hangover and it was refreshing to hear the house band play bop tunes that contained more than 3 chords. Guitarist **Bruce Forman**, vibraphonist **Bosco Petrovich** and pianist **Al Plank** cooked into the night at the garden stage while **Pancho Sanchez's** Latin jazz ensemble (the current pacesetter in this style) were in fine form at the main show. Saturday night offered quite a bit of excellent music, often at several sites simultaneously. While **Ernestine Anderson** (with the Cedar Walton trio) reminisced about performing at the first Monterey festival and did songs from her recent Concord album, the **Clark Terry/Red Mitchell** duo sang the humorous *Hey Mr. Mumbles, What Did You Say?* and pleased a standing room only crowd at the nightclub with such tunes as *Blue 'N' Boogie*, *Take the 'A' Train* and *Black Orpheus*. The **MJQ**, although now in their 35th year, seemed unusually inspired performing both new and old tunes. John Lewis' blues solos sounded so simple (a la Count Basie) but paradoxically could not be copied with the same spirit by

a pianist with double his technique.

Saturday night concluded with the Woody Herman orchestra (under the direction of Frank Tiberi) sans its very ill leader. Writer-educator Herb Wong insisted to me that this band will continue playing after Herman's eventual passing but, considering the lack of any viable "ghost" bands in jazz history, I have my doubts. The orchestra as if to prove me wrong was quite exciting. Fueled by their new first trumpeter Eric Nishamara the orchestra romped through *Battle Royal*, a slightly altered *Four Brothers*, *Watermelon Man* (with guest Pancho Sanchez) and a revival of *Woodchoppers Ball* among others. Clark Terry, Red Mitchell, clarinetist Eija Kitamura and Bosco Petrovich joined the band for a rapid *Apple Honey* and a closing blues.

In contrast to Saturday night's overflow of musical treasures, Sunday afternoon offered little viable music. Other than another fine set from Clark Terry and Red Mitchell (highlighted by Terry answering a request to play some blues by improvising some hilarious lyrics), the day was dominated by high school bands. The High School "All-Stars" played for nearly 3 hours, turning such classic tunes as *Shiny Stockings*, *Harlem Nocturne* and *Blood Count* into mediocrity through flubbed notes and rambling solos. One should not expect professionalism from a pick-up group whose median age is around 15, but for a major festival to allot this group more stage time than Toshiko Akiyoshi and the Woody Herman orchestra combined is quite absurd.

Most members of the small disgruntled audience waited around primarily to see the 6-year old singer Emily Haddad. The first grader, coached closely by her father-guitarist, first sang the ABC's and then dived right into *Joy Spring*. Her scatting was impressive (nice range) although she was not always right in tune. Among the tunes she tackled were *Lullaby of Birdland*, *Fly Me To The Moon* and *Night In Tunisia*. When on *I'm A Lucky So And So* she sang the line "If you should ask me the amount in my bank account, I'd have to admit it's slipping", the place erupted. I waited in vain for her to sing *Lover Man*. Although she lacks the maturity of Ella Fitzgerald, Emily Haddad sounded quite impressive for someone born in 1981!

Sunday night concluded the festival with some particularly interesting music. Eiji Kitamura led a pickup group through some hot swing standards. Plas Johnson, Jack Nimitz, Bruce Forman and George Bohanon jammed at several locales. Frank Morgan justified all of his recent acclaim with explorative solos in the bop tradition that reminded me of the passion and pain of Art Pepper's final period, and the Cedar Walton trio was quite sensitive in backing the veteran altoist.

For many the highpoint of the weekend was a quintet with the unique instrumentation of voice (Bobby McFerrin), whistler (Ron McCroby), harmonica (Toots Thielemans),

Ray Pizzi's soprano, flute and bassoon and Eddie Marshall's drums. McFerrin sang the bass parts for the full group but really starred on his 2 astounding solo performances, singing both the trumpet and bass parts on *Round Midnight*. Someday McFerrin and guitarist Stanley Jordan should record a duet album for Blue Note and call it the McFerrin/Jordan Orchestra! Equally impressive were Ron McCroby's virtuosic solo whistling on *Body and Soul* and Ray Pizzi's percussive unaccompanied flute on *The Girl from Ipanema* (reminding one of Roland Kirk). When McCroby and McFerrin switched roles on *Blue Rondo A La Turk* (with McFerrin whistling), the applause was deafening.

The closing group, Gerald Wilson's big band (filled with L.A. legends including Jerome Richardson, Oscar Brashear and Harold Land) did their best to hold on to the departing audience by rendering intense versions of *Milestones*, *Viva Tirado* and *Carlos*.

At 30, the Monterey Jazz Festival is in good but not great musical health. Suggestions for year 31: Search out more diverse blues talent for the Saturday afternoon show, confine the high school bands to the smaller stages and open up Sunday afternoon to the avant-garde. The Monterey fairgrounds would be a perfect setting for the David Murray octet!

— Scott Yanow

1987 LAKE GEORGE JAZZ WEEKEND September 12-13, 1987

The jazz festival is the most significant growth industry to hit the jazz world in the 1980s. Most operate on the premise that bigger is better. The head count satisfies the corporate/government sponsors who make all these events possible. The intimacy, the exchange between the stage and audience is lost and the music is often performed with perfunctory professionalism rather than with creative relish.

The Lake George Weekend has a different philosophy. The restful beauty of this Adirondack resort is a healthy alternative to urban concrete and, with the sun shining, the musicians would have performed on an open air stage beside the lake in a mini-park on the town's single street.

Persistent rain forced the afternoon concerts to move into the cramped quarters of the town's cabaret theatre which at one time must have been the local movie theatre. The electricity of the event was felt by the jammed audience who responded enthusiastically to the intensity of the performances.

All of the artists at Lake George have established their credentials without the reputation which ensures their employment at large scale events. Each band offered a different viewpoint of the jazz experience but all were linked together through that pulsating rhythmic strength and the creativity and imagination of their improvised solos.

Tenor saxophonist Sam Rivers brought a distinctive touch to Hilton Ruiz' Quartet. This

was high energy music which sat on the edge — held together by the harmonic structure used by the band as departure points for the solos. Momentary clashes pointed to the pick-up nature of the group but it was an explosive beginning to the afternoon. Bassist Jimmy Rowser and drummer Steve Berrios completed the group.

Carmen Lundy picked up the energy level in her set. She writes much of her material but, like many contemporary songs, their construction offers little scope for the improvising musician. Carmen Lundy, in fact, was the complete show. It would have been nice to have heard more from Onaje Gumbs, Rodney Jones, Alex Blake and Victor Lewis.

Lew Tabackin's Quartet refocused the music's direction in a superb set of improvisations on jazz standards. Trumpeter Brian Lynch, bassist Jay Anderson and drummer Danny Richmond completed a quartet who played together with the elasticity and cohesion which marked both Monk and Mingus in their great years. Richmond's drumming, in particular, helped shape the contours of this performance — he plays in accord with the rhythmic conception of the tune rather than simply playing time.

James Newton's Quartet featured pianist Gerri Allen, bassist Rick Rosie and drummer Pheeroan Ak Laff in a program drawn from the leader's Blue Note albums. There was delicacy here but more often there was passion and imagination in Newton's solos.

Concluding the program was the powerhouse big band of Charli Persip. All the arrangements come from within the band and the playing is superb. But more than that is the indefinable inspiration emanating from the drummer/leader. He has assembled a group of musicians who play with great intensity, considerable imagination and whose work together has created the most exciting big band currently in action. Notable soloists included tenor saxophonist Orpheus Gaitanopoulos, alto saxophonist Sue Terry, trumpeter Frank Gordon and pianist Richard Clements. It would be appropriate to mention as well, the exciting bass work of Melissa Slocum. She continually drove the rhythm section to new heights.

Charli Persip's band lifted the two day event to a suitable climax and it was appropriate that a drummer should have been the leader for, above all else, it was the widely varied but equally explosive work of the drummers in all five ensembles who ultimately left the most vivid impression. So much jazz music comes from the drums — especially its rhythmic energy and sense of swing.

Jazz at Lake George was a breath of fresh air and even without the sun it was an exceptional occasion. Already set for next September are Jaki Byard, The World Saxophone Quartet, Leon Thomas, James Moody and the samba band PE DE BOI. Make your motel reservations now. There is no charge for the music.

— John Norris

IN PERFORMANCE

"The Gypsy siguriya begins with a terrible scream that divides the landscape into two ideal hemispheres. It is the scream of dead generations, a poignant elegy for lost centuries, the pathetic evocation of love under other moons and other winds."

— Federico Garcia Lorca, from the essay "Deep Song".

MAL WALDRON/STEVE LACY DUO

Yoshi's Club, Oakland, California

September 15, 1987 - Second set

In Walked Bud opened the set. Mal Waldron sparse, percussive, pacing Lacy's round toned attack. Steve Lacy holds the band in his hand, moving from melody to bass to voice - seamless line of the tune. Mal Waldron has the most important left hand on piano, in the music. With it he plays the dark side of Monk's tribute, his right hand churchified. When the two hands begin moving together the drummer inside calls time home and the orchestra returns to a single line for the final chorus. *Utah* is a Lacy composition I haven't heard in years and that was on the duo recording with Michael Smith. Now over a decade of "mulling," this piece becomes suited for the old friends, both masters of spacing and harmonic overtones. *Utah* is based on a poem by Italian poet Julia Nicoli, from a series of geographical poems using names of places of countries and states. (Irene Aebi sings it on the new Lacy sextet rerecording "Momentum" on Novus Records).

"Let's Call This" says Monk and Waldron strips it bare, playing the edges. Lacy takes the fabric and weaves intricate designs on the broad cloth. What is most compelling about this duo is the time-space unity they achieve. These players will at times play completely different elements of the tune while staying perfectly attuned to one another in space. Steve Lacy calls that "conversational." Waldron takes a conga drum style solo, suddenly coaxing out *Autumn in New York* to end it.

It is more than conversational to finish each other's sentences; more like "tel-empath-ersational." Listening to *Lonely Nights*, a low pitched, lush Waldron blues ballad was evidence of this. Hear Lacy singing! His bal-ladeer phrasing calls out a love song until the final two dew drops suspended on a rose.

Snake-Out by Waldron is concentrated rhythm. The soprano swirls out a choir of nature, then slithering shouts, springing, twisting amongst leaves and dust. Give Mal Waldron a hand drum for all that repetition, making the snake dance, coil, daring the rhythm... tight melody explodes and Mal speeds it up... Rather than fire light - heat of glowing embers and a swift stroke of oxygen; bottom-less wells of invention. The inner intensity of his solos, those complementary overtones by Lacy. Where do the notes come from that are not on these instruments here tonight? Patiently guiding the spirit to its appointed destination, Waldron is the master of implication, slipping in a madrigal, sliding out a



cake walk, leaping past a soul kitchen revue at 5am, all the while pestering malevolent spirits to disperse. How he comps HIMSELF during solo. Directing a return to the head of the tune he builds an orchestral atmosphere of note and pitch.

They closed with *Epistrophe*. I liked the way the two old friends smiled to themselves, each other and all of us when it was through.

—Brian Auerbach

STEVE LACY/MAL WALDRON DUO and GEORGE GRUNTZ JAZZ BAND Academy Theatre, Atlanta, Georgia

Quantum Productions continues to present music rarely heard in the Atlanta area (or anywhere else within 500 miles). Two recent concerts offered contrasting visions of today's "jazz", but each group affirmed the primacy of improvisation in the art.

In contrast to recent records, the first Lacy/Waldron set featured original works. On the second, some familiar ground was trod with

Monk's *In Walked Bud* and a familiar-sounding (Ellington?) ballad. This could be seen as a programming mistake - or a tribute to the Atlanta audience, who have supported two previous Lacy concerts.

Lacy is one of the music's most uncompromising performers. Whether bouncing isolated notes off the piano strings or fashioning liquid melodic lines, his thought process seems not to include notions like "conventional" or "outside". Some of his soprano solos were as lyrical as a Lester Young line, others fragmented and vocalized a la Dolphy, but all were seamless and displayed a logic and control I find lacking in most "free" players.

While Lacy's peculiar career has hopped generations from Dixie to free jazz, Waldron's roots are in swing and bop. His playing evoked two of Lacy's employers. His dissonance and angularity reminded of Monk, while occasional massive, crushing chords suggested Cecil Taylor. Like both he has a fondness for building solos by reworking a simple phrase, but his raw materials are those Horace Silver might choose. Emotionally, his music seems to make constant

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reference to the tragedy of the African peoples. Even on Monk's tune, Waldron's solo seemed to probe the darker corners of Bud's mind, rather than Monk's brilliant corners.

Waldron seems to have a unique concept of "movement" in this not-quite-Western music. Where bop and earlier styles grafted a Western concept of melodic and harmonic movement to an African rhythm concept, and later styles, looking East again, often achieve intensity at the cost of a certain static quality, Waldron seems to be trying something akin to the work of "minimalist" classical composers. He will start a phrase in one hand, permute it, then pass it to the other hand while introducing a new idea, and so on. When it works, this produces a simultaneous feeling of movement and trance.

Lacy/Waldron did little "ensemble" playing, and there were a couple of moments of "Have you finished or did you stop?", yet their interaction often had the quality of telepathy which characterizes the best improvising groups. Neither can be accused of "showmanship"; they spoke not a word, yet achieved a theatrical quality (reminiscent of another quiet man, Bill Evans) through intense concentration. When Lacy ended the concert by spearing a high note which might have been hit by Cat Anderson, the audience response was electric.

If Lacy and Waldron are laconic, Gruntz and Co. are downright chatty — even excessively busy. This criticism must be tempered by the realization that much of Gruntz's career has been spent in theatre. So, while I found it a letdown that Joe Henderson's sinewy *Inner Urge* was followed by a campy piece dedicated to Marlene Dietrich, other ears may have relished the diversity.

For both sets the band played the same six Gruntz charts, but it was the soloists who made the music happen. Each member (Franco Ambrosetti, Kenny Wheeler, Marvin Stamm, Manfred Schoof, Enrico Rava, trumpets; Dave Taylor, Art Barron, Ray Anderson, trombones; Howard Johnson, baritone and tuba; Joe Henderson, Ernst Ludwig Petrowsky, Lee Konitz, Larry Schneider, reeds; Mike Richmond, bass; Bobby Moses, drums and Gruntz on electric piano) soloed once, and Sheila Jordan added her vocal talents on two numbers. One can scarcely review 19 solos, but here are a few highlights.

Section honors go to the trombones, as wildly diverse as the sections Ellington used to assemble. Taylor was mocking and sarcastic (even drowning out Gruntz's spoken introduction to the Dietrich piece). Anderson spoke of menace and foreboding. Barron portrayed robust basic jazz values — though his good-time approach seemed out of place on the apocalyptic *Happening Now* (the libretto from a Gruntz — Alan Ginsberg opera).

The most surprising soloist was Petrowsky. "You'd better be good", thought I, "to sit in

the section between Joe Henderson and Lee Konitz", and Petrowsky earned his chair with a fiery, Dolphyish upper register soprano solo, which went a long way toward redeeming the Dietrich piece. Richmond drew applause from his colleagues when he found some new ideas during the second performance of Gruntz's *Emergency Call*. Ambrosetti confirmed that he is a major cornet stylist with two extended ballad improvisations on his own *Morning Song of a Spring Flower*.

The outstanding performance was Konitz's on his own *It's You* (based on the changes of *It's You or No One*). Ms. Jordan opened with the original melody and lyrics, evolving to a Jordan/Konitz duet, then a Konitz soprano solo. A Stamm solo brought Konitz back, this time on alto, for a contrapuntal duet, then another solo. All the while the band played what sounded like transcriptions of someone else's solo(s) on the same changes (Konitz?, Pres?), which Konitz adroitly fed off. Technically and visually the least flashy member of the band, Konitz made a tremendous impression with sheer sustained musical quality.

Paradoxically, the essential point was best made by Schneider, perhaps the weakest improviser and cast in the unfortunate role of penultimate soloist. (The finale, stereotypically, went to Moses.) His first effort on *Emergency Call* amounted to running scales on soprano. Next time he elected the tenor. On one level, it seemed a shame to give the spot to Schneider, with Joe Henderson sitting in the section, but the event was fascinating to watch. Schneider's sound is gorgeous, his technique excellent, but his vocabulary consists of "tough tenor" clichés. He knew what he was up against, and dug in to construct a swaggering, exhilarating statement from basic materials. Trial by fire; Schneider, like all the soloists, proved his individual worth in the context of cooperative effort. Which is what it's all about.

— Bill McLarney

AZIMUTH
JOHN ABERCROMBIE TRIO
Ethel's Place, Baltimore
September 10, 1987

While no logos was visibly displayed, the aegis of Manfred Eicher's ECM Records was a key element of the metaphysical decor in Baltimore's nicest jazz venue, the sort of place too spacious and comfortable to be believed in New York. Family nights of this sort are all the rarer in the U.S. since ECM parted ways with the Warner/Elektra/ whoever conglomerate and Pat Metheny didn't. Azimuth performing on the North American continent is even rarer. This mini-tour — a week at Fat Tuesday's in New York and three nights here — was their first U.S. foray, and their sole collective return to these shores since the premiere of Edmonton's Jazz City in 1980.

Abercrombie gets around in these parts a bit

more often, so Baltimore's serious guitar junkies were there in force, along with other faithful from as far afield as Detroit. The players sounded comfortable in opening among friends.

Azimuth is a multiple anomalous ensemble, a cooperative in the truest sense of the word, these melodists constantly postulating new formulae in the chemistry of nuance. Vocalist **Norma Winstone** introduced pianist **John Taylor** as 'leader' in the first set and as 'instigator' in the second, but once the music began, who was actually in charge became irrelevant.

Taylor usually set the rhythm, but, like both others, *listened*, and didn't shy away from exploring new ground whether it was his own idea or not. Duets between all possible permutations abounded, but the full trio was most striking, an upward spiral of endless potential.

Kenny Wheeler, famed for letting notes hang just a little longer than seems possible — and equally able to run through a jillion notes in the same amount of time — is the great stone face in this group. He spent a lot of time waiting, looking vaguely uncomfortable and quietly intense, but when he gave forth he left no doubt that his being is a mass of contained energy. At one point during a Wheeler solo, Winstone accidentally (and quite audibly) tipped over one of the piano mikes, but, truly the seasoned professional, Wheeler smoked on unspashed, never missing a detail in his spontaneously-evolving plan.

Norma Winstone is England's answer to **Sheila Jordan**, **Flora Purim**, and any other rationally adventurous lady singer you could name. Her stage presence is both intimate and dignified at once, whether she's singing in a club or a church. Her lyrics can come across as being simplistic, but the vocal subtleties she gives to her own words and those of others lend a dimension of authenticity leaving no doubt that she is describing experiences which have been lived rather than simply imagined.

Taylor looks for all the world like a younger **Kurt Vonnegut** at the piano. It's hard to not think of **Satie**, **Debussy** and **Bill Evans** as he plays, and not in a derivative/pejorative sense. This man has a healthy respect for and comprehensive knowledge of his antecedents, but has been at it long enough to have developed a uniquely personal style. Implied overtones ring into heaven itself. I'd last heard him backing **Joe Henderson** at **Ronnie Scott's**, most capably, and while the fact that he spans such a wide stylistic range is amazing enough in itself, *Azimuth's* music is his most highly-developed personal work. It is glorious, something to be proud of, more so because it can sound so humble and searching.

For those of us who know them primarily via their recordings, this was an especially rich time to hear *Azimuth*, with two recent albums to draw from: *Azimuth 85* and *Winstone's Somewhere Called Home*, her first since 1972

(also a trio outing, with Taylor and reedman **Tony Coe**). To hear their latest versions of recorded material was to receive a glowing progress report. They delved into older repertoire of Taylor's, and played some new stuff too. The yet-unrecorded *Coffeetime* by Taylor closed out the first set, an Iberian-tinged tune looney enough that when he got up to pluck some piano strings, I fully expected him to fling roses at a wildly scating Winstone. It was a suitably upbeat way to take things out, also in terms of boosting the dynamics, which prepared our ears for **John Abercrombie's** trio.

The guitarist's bandmates are a **Bill Evans** alumnus on bass and a **Weather Report** survivor on drums, making pretty clear just what and how much ground Abercrombie intended to cover. To call **Marc Johnson** and **Peter Erskine** a rhythm section is an understated oversimplification, and since they also comprise half of Johnson's group *Bass Desires* (with **John Scofield** and **Bill Frisell**), there is a strong case for saying they've cornered the market on a certain breed of New York's guitarists.

They romped through some of Abercrombie's older works and rendered several numbers from their sole collective album to date, *Current Events*. Abercrombie spiced up the explanatory interludes with quips from **Lord Buckley**, delivered in the voice of the late master, and threw in a few after the style of Atlanta's **Bruce Hampton**, a fellow guitarist, sometime collaborator and surrealist poet laureate. Johnson and Erskine laid a solid foundation suitably ornamented to each changing moment, not an easy task when Abercrombie takes off. They all took the sort of solos one hopes for and seldom hears, for too many too often take too long to say too little.

To hear a guitar synthesizer played rather than played with was a joy. On both this axe and the old dependable, Abercrombie grimaced a lot in playing, as if it were a struggle to wrench each note from the strings, but he recurringly passed through a visage of beatific calm, eyebrows lifted, which is more fitting to his sound.

The guitar/bass/drums format is traditionally known as the "power trio", and this is an amalgamation worthy of the name. The volume/intensity relationship felt more like being in a big, loving hand than in an elevator run amok. Amen, some can still distinguish between high energy high and noise level.

Hearing these groups provoked a couple of thoughts. One is that music like this isn't really at home in a nightclub, nor would it be in a recital hall. It belongs in a place that doesn't exist yet, for it is truly music of a new age, though I use those words reservedly. What is currently marketed under the category of new age has little to do with the real stuff for the most part. These people were not droning, doodling or drooling for egotistical yuppies or other forms of vegetative life. This

was honest, skillful and imaginative exploration by intelligent beings, with a goal of sharing their knowledge and hopes as well as simply making a living.

Another thought was that a regrettable vacuum exists in this country between the realms of commerce and art. Here were these virtuosi in Baltimore, playing in a basement (albeit a nice, new one with tasteful neon) across Cathedral Street from the symphony hall, and only a few blocks away from Peabody, one of the nation's leading conservatories. And no one hooked them up to give master classes, visiting lectures or whatever. They were mentioned on public radio only because **Ethel's** happens to employ one of the latest casualties in Reagan's war of attrition against **National Public Radio** as their part-time promoter, and he still has connections.

Abercrombie did teach a lesson while he was in town; one of his regular students saved himself a trip to New York, but this was entirely an individual initiative. There's a link missing here, in this land of infinite human resources, but that's another story and more political than musical, alas.

In the meanwhile, we'll just have to make do, and be thankful for evenings like this, which allow our minds to briefly visit places where we could better spend longer. This music was like cognac: simply guzzled down, it would do the job, but if one chooses to savor each drop, there is much to appreciate in the process.

— *W. Patrick Hinley*

GEORGE GRUNTZ CONCERT JAZZ BAND
Greenwich House, New York City
October 8 & 9, 1987

Saxophones: **Joe Henderson**, **Ernst-Ludwig Petrowsky**, **Lee Konitz**, **Larry Schneider** and **Howard Johnson** (who doubled on tuba, as **Petrowsky** and **Schneider** doubled on flutes); Trumpets: **Kenny Wheeler**, **Marvin Stamm**, **Manfred Schoof**, **Enrico Rava** and **Franco Ambrosetti**; Trombones: **David Taylor**, **Ray Anderson** and **Art Baron**; French horns: **Sharon Freeman** and **Tom Varner**. **Sheila Jordan** sang. **Mike Richmond** played bass, and **Bob Moses** drums. In charge of all this, at the piano, was **George Gruntz**.

It was at least appropriate and possibly essential that someone from neutral Switzerland would assemble a group so musically and internationally diverse, and do so in a way not constantly coming apart at the seams. This band is organized to the Nth degree; had Gruntz been charting **Columbus' first voyage**, there would be no doubt about where the first landfall took place.

You might think this would lead to predictable results in the music. That could be the case with lesser talents, but the combination of the players' abilities and proclivities with Gruntz's admittedly **Ellingtonian** practice of writing and also arranging with specific musicians in mind makes a **GG-CJB** concert more of

an adventure for the listener than you would expect from such an occasional grouping. They average two 2-week tours per year. This was their first in the U.S.A.

All the music came from within the band, save for Parker's *Quasimodo*, but it too had a direct link in Sheila Jordan's original Bird-approved lyrics. Gruntz's arrangements for pieces by Konitz (*It's You*), Henderson (*Inner Urge*) and Ambrosetti highlighted the composers' solos and also gave the rest of the band plenty of important work to do. Gruntz's own music ran the gamut with easily as much breadth as pre-guitar Carl Bley, if not quite as broad as Gil Evans. *Novellette* was Weill on cognac and nitrous oxide until Petrowsky gave forth with a beautifully frenetic soprano solo. *Happening Now* featured Jordan singing Allen Ginsberg verses. She will sing this as an aria in Gruntz's full-blown opera, to be performed by the Hamburg Opera in 1988.

Closing each show was Gruntz's *Emergency Call*, which he subtitles as an ecology song. Hearing his spoken intro for this piece at the by-invitation-only early show for the tour's sponsor, Swiss Bank Corporation, was a rather surreal experience (SBC is also underwriting a hatHut double-LP from the tour dates at Ft. Worth's Caravan of Dreams). Gruntz lives in Basel, site of the chemical spill which may well prove more devastating in the long run than Chernobyl, and the guilty parties certainly included some substantial SBC depositors. Gruntz was gentle and smiling, yet very firm in saying that now is the time for all of us who must share this same planet to be nicer to our collective home. He pulled it off with a healthy balance of tact, chutzpah, timing, and most of all, courage.

The band then proceeded to play the piece, as Gruntz said at breakfast the next morning, "for about two days," including a Ray Anderson solo which set nearby furniture ablaze. As the juggernaut finally began to wind down, Gruntz took his only solo of the entire concert. By choice and design, he is the closest thing there is to a sideman in this group.

May they pass this way again.

— W. Patrick Hinely

FRED FRITH / HANS REICHEL

Nightstage, Cambridge, Ma.

October 25, 1987

Improvisors Fred Frith and Hans Reichel combined their contrasting styles in a somewhat rambling set spiced with extraordinarily beautiful passages and genuine rapport at Nightstage in Cambridge. Frith stuck to conventional guitars and violin (although he did some very unusual things to them with string and other assorted items) while Reichel played an unconventional looking guitar and a home made instrument he calls a dachsophon, over the course of the hour long set I heard.

Their differing styles prevented the formation of a satisfying overall architecture for the

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improvisations. In general I think Frith works well in long, continuously improvised sets, while Reichel sounds best in shorter pieces. I haven't heard Reichel's recorded duets, but the tracks on his solo records are intense five to seven minutes explorations of a single melodic or rhythmic theme or area of sound, and are very effective. Transitional sections and segues are not his greatest strength. So there were stretches where the music was not under control and they threw out ideas in the hope they would catch or lead somewhere. Frequently they did not and some degree of aimlessness characterized portions of the set. The process of making and shaping music is what performances like these are all about. The best pure improvisation, through spontaneous interaction, evolves an overall form with an innate sense of rightness or inevitability. This night lacked the overall shape, but had many fine moments. A friend compared it to dim sum: many memorable, small dishes with a wait in between.

But Reichel and Frith share a curiosity about the sonic potential of their instruments, a musical sense of "noise" and "effects," and a willingness to listen and interact. Frith is the more mercurial player, quick to pick up and discard ideas, with more forward momentum. Reichel's music has an oriental stillness at the heart of it and evolves at a more leisurely pace. So there was ample common ground and creative contrast and many moments of unforced beauty. The first minutes of the set, crowded with notes and noise as the musicians scrambled over their instruments opened out into Frith's spacious guitar drones and Reichel's airy, flute-like tones on the dachsophon. Later Frith moaned and rapped on the body of his guitar like a Delta bluesman while Reichel plucked koto-like sounds.

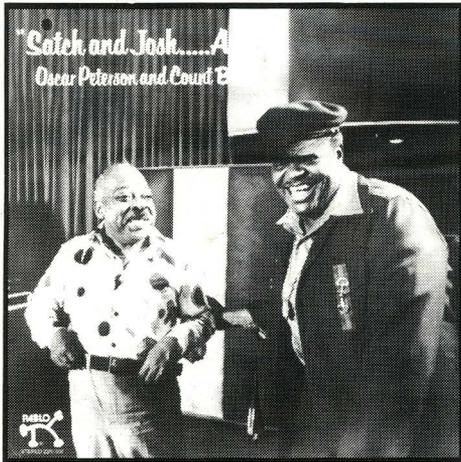
The second, forty minute improvisation as highlighted by a Reichel solo, again recalling stringed instruments of the Far East, with sharp edged notes hanging in silence. This was followed by a duet with Reichel continuing in the same vein while a sweet toned Frith spun melodies in the manner of his early Henry Cow days.

In both pieces, some of the best moments featured the dachsophon. It is made of irregularly curved slivers of wood clamped with a wood vice to a base housing a microphone. Reichel bows the wood slats and applies pressure with an oval shaped block with guitar frets on it, to vary the pitch of the vibrating wood. Unlike some home made instruments, the dachsophon is quite versatile and musical. Reichel produced vocal sounds, sounds like a wooden flute, a trumpet choir, or plain wooden thumps, as well as precise, but nontempered melodies. His newest FMP album, "Dawn of Dachsman," contains several good examples of his virtuosity on the instrument.

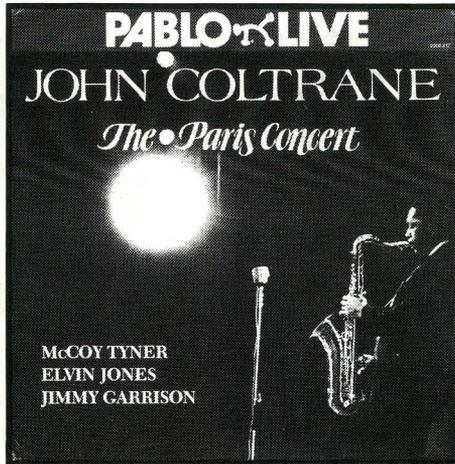
Entirely improvised music being such a rarity in Boston these days, this was a welcome concert, all in all. There are satisfactions only this kind of music can provide.

— Ed Hazell

YOU'VE WAITED SO LONG.



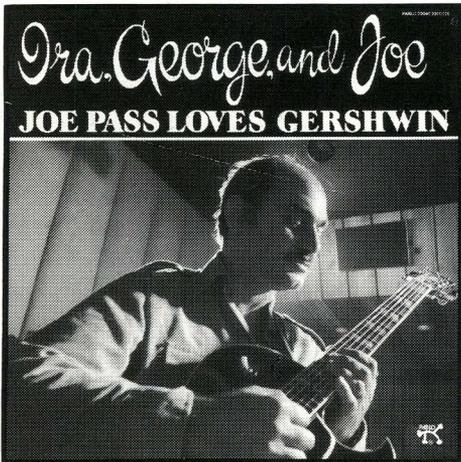
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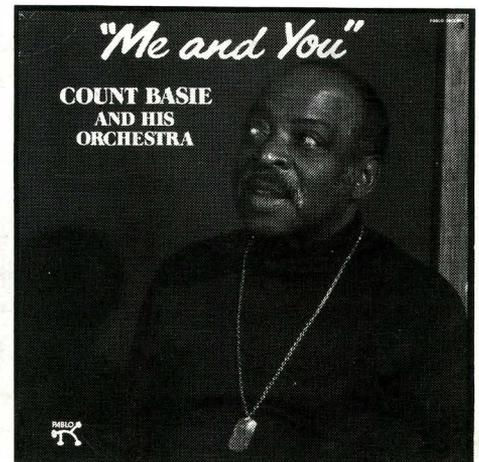
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