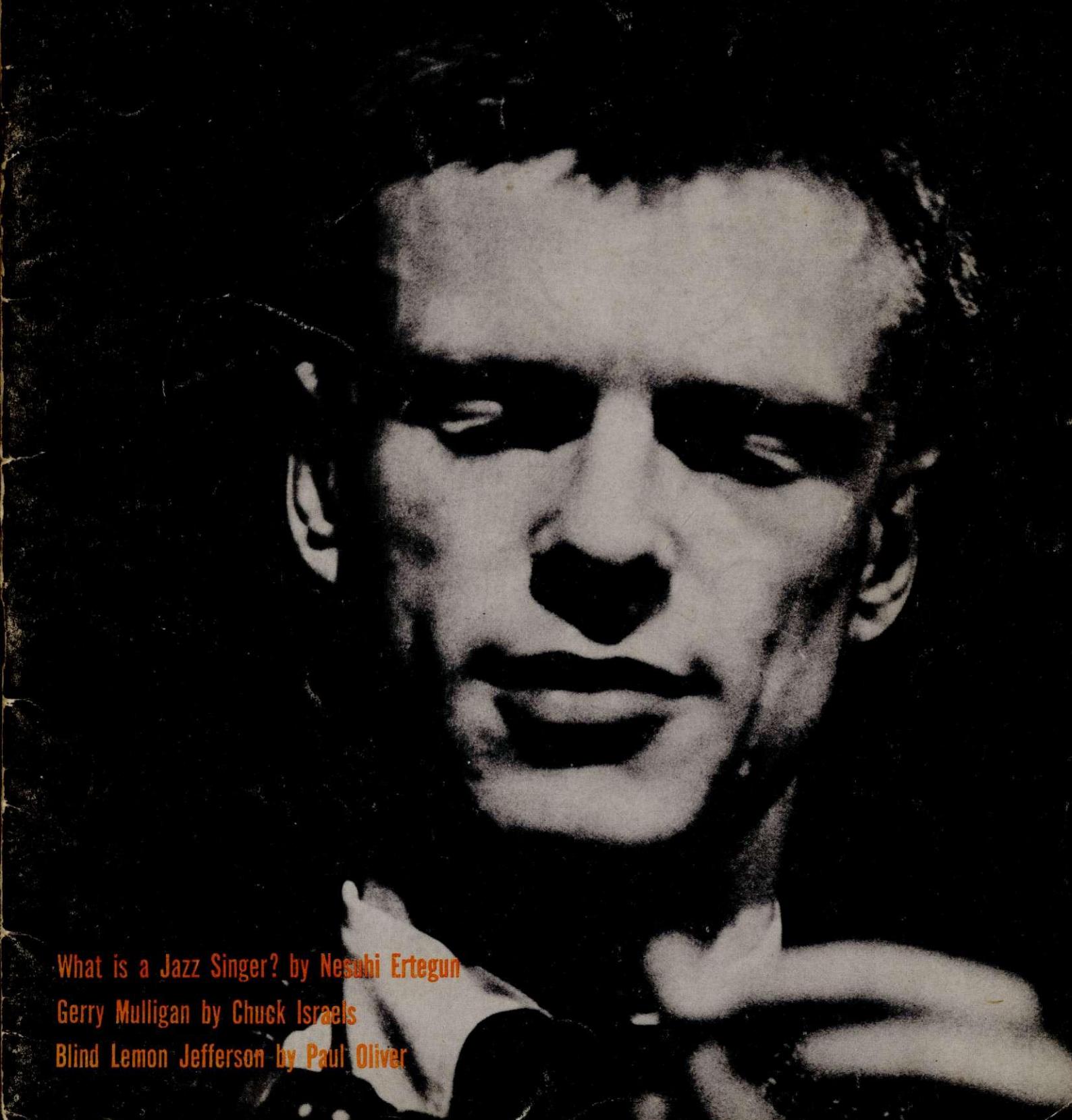


THE JAZZ REVIEW

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 7, AUGUST, 1959

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What is a Jazz Singer? by Nesuhi Ertegun

Gerry Mulligan by Chuck Israels

Blind Lemon Jefferson by Paul Oliver



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LETTERS

In Defense of Scott

I was very surprised and hurt when I read Bill Crow's review of Tony Scott's *52nd Street Scene* recording in the June issue of *The Jazz Review*. Here, in the magazine I have considered the finest in the jazz field, I found in the guise of a musical review a personal, perhaps vicious, attack directed at Tony Scott.

I could defend Tony by mentioning the many artists, myself included, who would not be where they are today if it were not for his enthusiastic faith and help; or his firm stand on racial tolerance which has cost him much he could ill afford; or his, I believe, unsurpassed hospitality to jazz lovers and musicians visiting New York. But we all know that one can paint the picture of any person according to one's own leanings. Bill Crow's deep understanding of Pee Wee Russell's introverted style might have been as easily applied to Tony's outgoing style, but for a personal preference.

After reading further, I find that Bill's review of *The Metronome Yearbook* in the same issue contained some extremely negative viewpoints. Perhaps this is his style.

The careless handling of journalistic responsibility, however, can do much to affect the lives of those exposed thereby. I could not let this incident pass without representing my reaction.

Bill Evans
New York City

Sell That Thing

I'm your man if you need lp ideas, but you seem to be missing the point. It's not just the idea for the content of the record but rather how it matches the cover art . . . and I'm certain we're running out of our supply of naked girls. (Which gives rise to a rather unpleasant thought: Has jazz come its full cycle? In its New Orleans beginnings the art form was used to peddle scantily clad young ladies; today scantily clad young ladies are used to peddle jazz.)

But I think you were asking for some lp ideas. How about "An Experimental Symposium of Radical Departures in Modern Jazz" (none of the performers is allowed to play a single phrase which cannot be immediately identified on a Charlie Parker record, and all tunes should be based on chord structures of the works of Porter and Gershwin); "The Bucolic Stan Getz" (he's astride a John Deere 730 diesel tractor in the middle of a field of oats in central Nebraska). We all know that covers of lp's featuring West Coast musicians must depict these men within a few feet of the pounding surf—or even in it. So what would be better than using West Coasters on this lp and on the cover have them storming ashore from an LCI in full marine raider rig, carrying their instruments instead of rifles?

Bill Fogarty
Prairie Village, Kansas

What Does the Sideman Know?

In the past few issues several swipes have been taken at Marshall Brown. The International Band, which he formed and directed, and his own musical abilities have been dragged over and over the coals.

The band was a good band. Whatever problems it had were connected with the nature of the project and particularly with the limitations of the players themselves, who had difficulty in ensemble playing (no European band player gets our jazz band background) and in their improvising.

Marshall took the talents of these men and got remarkable results. He is a splendid musician; he has better ears than most jazz soloists; he has training in getting things out of people; his experience is wide and covers a considerable period of time; he knows music. Whatever criticism can be made of the International Band, I don't feel that criticism of Brown is accurate or fair.

And to ask the men in the orchestra how they feel about their leader is the height of absurdity. (Much of the criticism

of Brown and of the band and of the music played was based on the sideman's view of things.)

William Russo
New York, New York

What Does the Arranger Know?

Bill Russo's review of the Lunceford records in the January *Jazz Review* was honest and motivated by sympathy, but it still missed the point of the Lunceford band. It is an arranger's view, valid to a degree, but touching only the fringe of the subject.

I heard the Lunceford band a few times in person. I realize that we tend to look back and think things were better than they were, but I also heard Ellington, Teddy Hill, and Edgar Hayes in person, and they did not leave the same impression, so I don't think my attitude is pure romanticism. I am not claiming that the Lunceford band was better than Ellington's, but I expected a certain degree of brilliance from Ellington. Lunceford was a shock. There are lessons to be learned from Lunceford, and it is a pity that only the superficial aspects of the band have been used in the numerous "re-creations."

To begin with, the Lunceford band, almost more than any other, found the secret of pleasing several audiences at once without, except in a few instances, lowering musical standards. To the dancers it was a fine dance band; to the people who went to see a show it was a good theatrical spectacle; to the jazz fan it was a good jazz group. I don't think any other band succeeded so well in engaging diverse audiences. I am concerned with it as a big band from a jazz viewpoint and, leaving out Ellington and Henderson, I don't think it was equalled.

The Lunceford style was really the Sy Oliver style, I suppose—a story goes that Sy Oliver used the same sort of scores with Zack Whyte, but that band never recorded

(Continued on page 42)



in September...

Lester Young's Last Interview

A week before his death Lester Young was interviewed by Francois Postif in Paris; the interview will appear in English for the first time in the September issue of The Jazz Review with a Lester Young discography by Erik Wiedmann.

Anthropologist Ernest Borneman re-examines the origins of jazz and the relation of jazz to the musical traditions of Europe and Africa. He introduces new material on the influence of the Arabic musical tradition on the Spanish tinge in jazz and on the importance of the Spanish tinge in New Orleans jazz. His findings suggest radical rethinking on jazz history.

Quincy Jones tells why big bands can find work again, and describes his new seventeen piece band which has recorded for Mercury and will go on the road in the fall.

Soprano saxophonist Steve Lacey begins the INTRODUCTIONS series, writing about playing with Cecil Taylor's group and with the Gil Evans big band, about his musical ideas, and his future plans. Sidney Finkelstein analyses the relation of musical elements based on speech inflections to elements based on rhythmic patterns in jazz. Gunther Schuller reports on jazz in Indiana, and on the big band at the University of Indiana. Irwin Hersey surveys the long recording career of the Fletcher Henderson band.

Record reviews include Dick Katz on three Tatum lps, Martin Williams on a King Oliver re-issue and the Rex Stewart - Cootie Williams - Lawrence Brown *Porgy and Bess*. Max Harrison on the Claude Thornhill band, H. A. Woodfin on three Feldsted "Mainstream" recordings, J. S. Shipman on Champion Jack Dupree, and Mimi Clar on gospel singers.

Paul Oliver reviews Sam Charters' *Jazz New Orleans 1885-1957*, and Bill Crow reviews the *Downbeat* record review collection.

And the monthly features: The Blues, Reconsiderations, Jazz in Print, and the first monthly news report.

JAZZ

THE JAZZ REVIEW

New Contributors

Nesuhi Ertegun is head of the jazz division of Atlantic records, and has lectured on jazz at the University of Southern California.

Gabriel Gersh, a free-lance writer, has appeared in Commonweal, Christian Science Monitor, New Leader, and Christian Century, among other publications.

Chuck Israels is a bassist who has recorded with Cecil Taylor. He recently graduated from Brandeis University, and is now in Paris, where he is rumored to be playing with Bud Powell.

Sheldon Meyer, as an editor at the Oxford University Press, has been responsible for the publication of Marshall Stearns' *The Story of Jazz*, and several forthcoming books on Jazz.

Israel Young and **Leonard Feldman** were among the founders of the *Jazz Review*.

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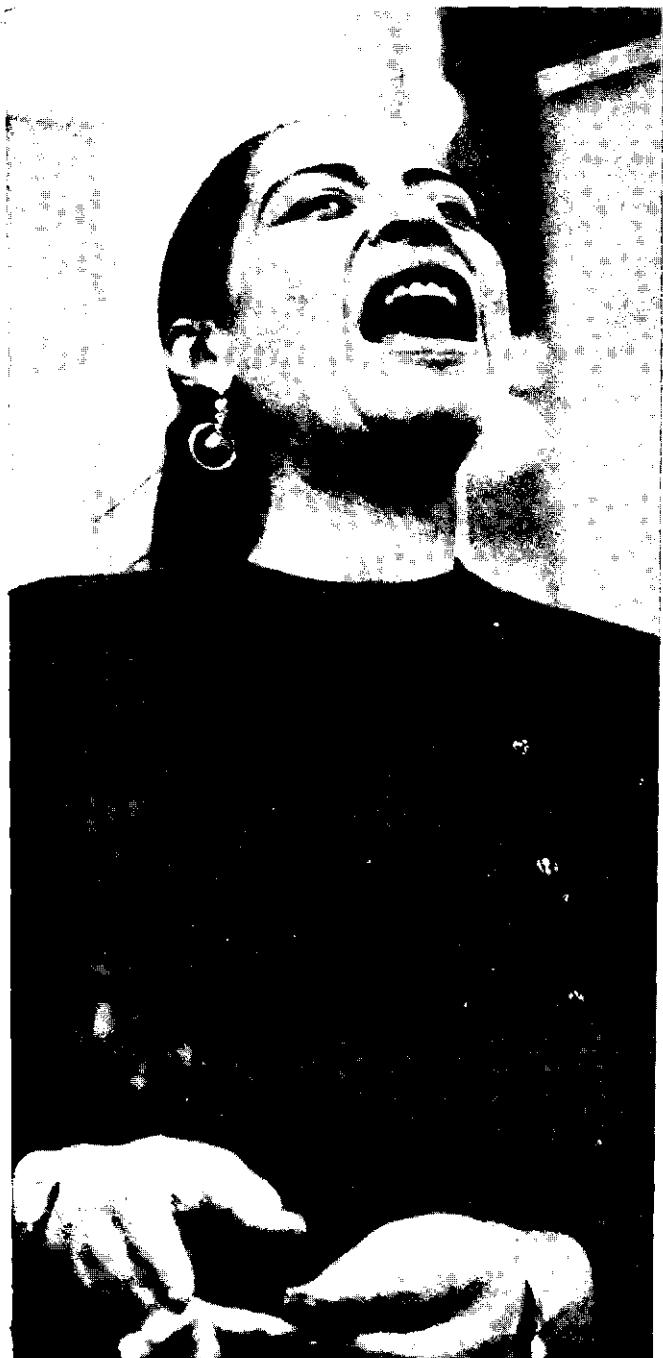


photo by Don Hunstein, courtesy Columbia Records.

by Nesuhi Ertegun

On a gently raining Saturday afternoon last November, Nesuhi Ertegun arrived at the chaos of the Bard College Jazz Festival to take part in a panel discussion. No one had remembered to tell him in advance that the subject of the discussion was to be "What is a Jazz Singer?" But a few minutes later he extemporized the most lucid and meaningful analysis I have yet heard of the elusive creature, that has eluded the traps of two generations of jazz critics. The text of his remarks, transcribed from a tape of the panel discussion, is printed in full below.

—H.W.S.

THE JAZZ SINGER

If there is such a thing as a jazz singer, the jazz singer should have certain typical characteristics and I think we should find out first what these are. What is necessary? What kind of equipment, technique, background is necessary for a singer to be a jazz singer?

I think a very brief historical summary would be in order at this stage. Gary Kramer just touched on, and I think made, a very important point; that is the very close connection between instrumental and vocal forms in jazz. The earliest tradition of folk music in America, as we all know, is a vocal tradition, which goes to the 18th century and perhaps before. We don't have very much factual information because nothing was written, nothing was observed and, of course, nothing was recorded, unfortunately, so we're guessing. It's all guesswork. But we know that spirituals, work songs, blues, various Creole forms of music, various play songs and so on preceded the beginnings of instrumental jazz. We know also, that (again, this is more or less arbitrary, and I'm just bringing these points up as starting points) the earliest instrumentalists began to play in the South, specifically in New Orleans.

There is a theory currently in vogue, which is especially defended by my friend Leonard Feather, who is not here today, that jazz did not begin in the South and New Orleans but happened all over America somehow at the same time, which from the little I know on the subject is quite wrong. Jazz did begin in the South, and specifically instrumental jazz began in the city of New Orleans, no other place. The time was in the 1880's, 1885, around there, when the first Negro brass band appeared on the street of New Orleans.

Now, this is important for us, because what came immediately before those people was a century-long vocal tradition. So that when the trumpet player in New Orleans, say in 1890, approaches his instrument, he brings all his knowledge into it and all his knowledge is vocal. Therefore, you can say that he sings into his instrument. And that's why the sounds, the sonorities of jazz are very close to the sounds of the human voice. I'm sorry we don't have any records to play. I know of a record, rather obscure, with Leo Watson and Vic Dickenson, called *The Snake Pit*. An extraordinary record. It's extraordinary, among other things, for one thing: you don't know at times when Leo Watson stops to sing and when Vic Dickenson starts to play. The sound of the trombone and the singer are so close, not only the sound but the phrasing, the sense of time are so close that they kind of become one almost. Therefore, the earliest instrumentalists, if we can put it into simplified terms, actually sang into their instrument and that's why the sounds are so close. They did not have the kind of Western European training or at first technical mastery of the instrument, or in any sense perfect pitch, perfect intonation and so on. All that comes later. And is not really as important in my opinion as a lot of people think. So here we have this tremendous connection between jazz and vocal music. Therefore he who is a jazz instrumentalist, if he has any voice at all, is *ipso facto* a jazz singer. And that's why there are many people, for instance Jack Teagarden who sing and play the same way. Louis Armstrong sings and plays the same way. This is our first clue.

I'm trying to bring out what differentiates the jazz singer from people who have another kind of background. Now what is the vocal equipment that is necessary to be a jazz singer? Do you have to have a voice that is three octaves in range? Obviously not. Some of the very great jazz singers had a very small range. There was a very famous blues singer, Chippie Hill, who had one of the narrowest ranges not only among singers but also among non-singers. And yet within these very narrow confines she was able to express tremendous amounts of emotion and communicate them. So you see that this again sets apart the jazz singer from someone who has to sing opera. If you can't make those notes in opera you can't sing that opera. While in jazz singing you find your own notes and you make your own notes. That kind of freedom is basic. Next point, do you have to have an especially pleasing voice; a pleasing sound? Again in the European sense, does it have to be a pretty voice? Well there is no voice probably (don't misunderstand me because I admire these people at least as much as you if not more) on first hearing there is no voice as ugly as Louis Armstrong's voice when it hits you. It's a strange thing. That this voice can become a beautiful musical instrument is a kind of miracle at first. And yet, once you fall under the charm of that kind of singing, you don't think of those things any more. For instance, among all the jazz singers that I'm familiar with, the only exception I know is Sarah Vaughan who has a beautiful voice . . . a beautiful controlled voice. And that, again, is not the most important aspect of her talent, because she has a tremendous sense of

harmony, a tremendous ear, and a tremendous sense of time. I come back to the sense of time; very important. Unless you have very strong and a very personal sense of rhythm, you cannot be a jazz singer. And the voice, you must understand, the voice of the jazz singer is completely the same, the same terms are relevant as applied to the tone of a trumpet player or a trombone player. It has to be just that personal, that stylized and that much an expression of a completely individual kind of emotion. So range is not important; pleasing voice is not important. What is important is to be, this is kind of mysterious, but to be within the *feeling* of jazz. Whereas some people do it with the clarinet, or piano or trumpet or something, you can do it with your voice . . . very difficult and that's why there are few, actually *very* few, great jazz singers. Now, in my opinion, the great body of great singing, of great jazz singing occurs within the limits, if there are such limits, of blues singing. Blues and church, gospel singing and blues singing. If you were to ask me who the greatest jazz singer today is, depending on my mood I might answer Mahalia Jackson, for instance. She's certainly one of the great singers. Now she'd be horrified if you would tell her that she was a jazz singer because she thinks that that's sinful and bad and so on. But the techniques she uses are identical with those of Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey, etc. So we have a tremendously vast body of what starts as folk singing and later becomes urban blues singing, which is very much with us today. And in this category there are many, many people who are ignored by all of us jazz lovers (and I presume most of us are jazz lovers) because we think, "Well, he sings rock and roll," whatever that means. It is in that "horrible category" that many of the great singers of our time are singing. To mention just a few names, Ray Charles, Muddy Waters. Now I don't know how many of you know Muddy Waters, But Muddy Waters is, believe me, one of the greatest singers of our time. A very funny thing happened. There was an English impresario, who came to visit America this summer, who came to my house. I was playing some records and I played him some records of Muddy Waters, and he was so impressed that he engaged Waters to make a concert tour of England. So, if these people are exposed properly there is a tremendous audience possible for them. But that's not our subject.

Now outside of this tradition of church and blues singing, there are very few jazz singers and there our lines of separation become very vague. I am just going to present the questions to you and we can discuss the answers later. Someone like Frank Sinatra; now many jazz musicians tell me he's a great jazz singer. Others don't think so. So where is the line? We know that Billie Holiday is a jazz singer. But is Peggy Lee a jazz singer? Certainly she's a terribly good singer. "Well that's your opinion; she was but she isn't any more," somebody will say. And, I'm not really interested in that. That's not the point.

If from these disconnected things I've said to you, you have some idea that the jazz singer has to have a different kind of equipment, that's about all we can accomplish before the discussion.

BLIND LEMON JEFFERSON

by Paul Oliver

A thickset, bulletheaded man weighing around 180 pounds, his head held alertly on his broad shoulders so that his ears could detect the gathering of a crowd that his sightless eyes could not see: Blind Lemon Jefferson. Short in build yet stocky and compact, in Sam Price's words "a chunky little fellow," he was a familiar figure in the streets of Dallas, Texas, for more than a score of years, his tapping stick, his big guitar, his broad-brimmed black hat making him a memorable character. But he is remembered today less for his appearance than for his importance as one of the greatest of the folk blues singers.

Po' Joe Williams, who used the pseudonym King Solomon Hill on the Paramount label and called himself "Blind Lemon's Buddy" remembered that the singer's real name was Jefferson Lamoore, but in the course of usage his surname was forgotten and the Christian name alone perpetuated. "Bright" of skin color and sightless, he was known in the Texas towns as "Blind Lemon" Jefferson and so his name appeared on the record labels. Of his origins, little that is definite is known. Aaron "T-Bow" (later "T-Bone") Walker believed that he came from the Texas port of Galveston, born there perhaps in 1883; Samuel B. Charters has elicited the information that he was born nearer Dallas, raised "outside Corsicana" in the neighboring county of Navarro. Wherever he was born, Blind Lemon made his name and his home in Dallas.

In 1900 Dallas had a Negro population of less than ten thousand; the figure doubled in a score of years, and it was during these years of considerable expansion that the blind blues singer was to be heard on the street corners and in the saloons, hollering his folk songs and rattling his begging cup. "Blind Lemon an' me was runnin' together for 'bout eighteen years roun' Dallas, Texas . . ." said Huddie Ledbetter—Leadbelly—on one occasion Leadbelly settled in Rockwall County, east of Dallas when he married his first wife, Lethe, at the age of eighteen. May, 1918, saw Leadbelly charged with the murder of Will Stafford, and that December he was sent to jail with a thirty-year sentence. The "bout eighteen years" was perhaps a slight exaggeration, but he must have shared his life with Lemon from early in the century. This he confirmed at his famous last session recorded by Frederick Ramsey, when he discussed the provenance of *Careless Love*. "White people's version is *Love, Oh Love, Oh Careless Love*, but down in Louisiana we sing it, *See What Careless Love Have Done*. Now to my ideas, what I think is true, Blind Lemon was the first man to put out that record of *Careless Love* . . . since then . . . he was the first man that did it. Because him and me was singing it in 'round Dallas, Texas. That was in 1904, you know. Him and me was in the same field about the same age. Yeah, that was a old field song—old when you was young."

Blind Lemon's stay in Dallas must have been close to twenty-five years in duration, broken at intervals by his tours to other states. In age he was probably only a little older than Leadbelly: "Him and me was buddies," said Leadbelly on more than one occasion, implying a relationship of close friendship rather than that of blind singer and "lead boy," though he guided the blind man. ". . . he was a blind man an' I used to lead him aroun'. When

him an' me was gwine to the depot, we'd sit aroun' and used to talk to one another. . . ."

While they waited for the incoming trains and fresh visitors to Dallas to whom they would sing, Leadbelly learned and profited from their association. Often Leadbelly would play mandolin or "windjammer"—accordion—while Lemon would play his Hawaiian guitar and sing. Much of their time was spent on the "barrelhouse circuit"—wandering from saloon to gin mill, singing for food and drink and for the coins of the patrons. But at other times they would beat their way southwards to the wide-open town of Groesbeck, or to the equally rough haunt of the tougher Negro elements, Silver City on the route to Fort Worth.

As the Texas and Pacific train came through, Leadbelly would help his blind companion onto the steps and into the coach. "I'd get Blind Lemon right on," he said. "We get out two guitars; we just ride . . . anything. We wouldn't have to pay no money in them times. We get on the train, the driver take us anywhere we want to go. Well we jes' get on and the conductor say: 'Boys, sit down. You goin' to play music?' We tell him 'Yes.' We jes' out collecting money; that's what we wanted—hitch some money. So we set down and turn the seats over you know. He sit in front of me, and I'd sit down there and we'd start."

By their playing and singing they hitched free rides to the townships, not only on the trains but in the buses also. "We go to Silver City out there too. We allus go to Silver City. When we got on the bus we Silver City bound first. There's a lot of pretty girls out there, and that's what we lookin' for. We like for women to be aroun' cause when women's aroun' that bring mens and that bring money. Cause when you get out there, the women get to drinkin' . . . that thing fall over them, and that make us feel good and we tear those guitars all to pieces."

Blind Lemon lived a full life in spite of his handicap and he was as popular as the tough and handsome Leadbelly with the women of Silver City. "That was me and Blind Lemon's hangout. We had twenty-five—thirty girls apiece out there . . . have a good time! They be around . . . it was a killer I'm telling you!"

In the familiar districts Blind Lemon's sense of direction was uncanny to those who watched him. He could find his way without a lead boy to act as his "eyes" but when he was traveling he welcomed assistance. Sang Leadbelly:

Me and Blind Lemon, goin' to ride on down,
Catch me by the hand—oh baby,

Blind Lemon was a blind man.

He'd holler—"Catch me by the hand"—oh baby,
"And lead me all through the land."

When Leadbelly's fracas caused him to be sent to jail, Blind Lemon employed young boys to lead him around as was customary among the blind blues and gospel singers. Aaron Walker, not even in his 'teens—he was only sixteen when he made his first record for the Columbia "race" series—acted for some time as Lemon's "eyes" and learned much of his guitar playing from the blind man. So, too, did Josh White, whose childhood from the age of seven was spent in the bitter schooling of traveling with many of the blind beggars. Jefferson, he remembered, would get up late in the day, and around noon, when the crowds in the streets were thickest, would take up his stand on a particularly busy intersection and commence to holler from the street corner. While he sang and played his guitar, Josh White would accompany him on his tambourine, tapping it in rhythm against his knee until a good and appreciative crowd had collected.

Then he would turn the tambourine over, and crying, "Help the blind, help the blind" in his shrill boy's voice, would beg coins from the assembled gathering. So popular was his playing that it was possible for him to make as much has \$150 over a week end. Where Lemon was to be heard, there was always a crowd. When Jimmy Rushing was an itinerant pianist and singer playing the townships of the Midwest and South, he listened to Jefferson whenever he could. Short in stature himself, he could not see the stocky, blind singer, but the clear, shrill voice that could be heard for a couple of blocks guided him to the spot, and the crowd that gathered around him was large enough to halt the traffic.

In spite of his blindness, Blind Lemon was an inveterate gambler, relying on the witnesses that stood about him to ensure that he was not swindled by a crooked dealer. He drank heavily and was a strong man, capable of defending himself better than most persons similarly afflicted. His blues were fierce and violent, and Josh White recalls that he would drink heavily for several hours and returning to his Dallas home would lie on the bed with his guitar and shout his blues into the night air. Blindness had given him acutely developed senses in other respects, and Sam Price avers that he was able to tell if any drinks had been taken from his whiskey bottle when he was absent, by shaking the bottle. If there was any missing, he said, Jefferson would thrash his wife. This appears to be the only reference to a wife, and it would be of considerable interest to know if in fact the singer was married, and what became of the woman.

Whether Jefferson Lamoore had been blind all his life is a matter of conjecture. "I ain't seen my sugar in three long weeks today . . ." he will sing; or "Want to talk to my baby in South Carolina who looks like an Indian squaw"—his blues have many visual references. A photograph of Lemon once seen by the writer used to hang on the wall of a Memphis barbershop and written across it in a firm hand was the legend, "Sincerely yours, Blind Lemon Jefferson." Sam Price, who knew him well, argued that he needed no leading. It was Price who was largely responsible for the blind singer's appearance on record. As a young man, the pianist from Honey Grove, Texas, was a record salesman in R. T. Ashford's Dallas store, and he recommended Blind Lemon to the Paramount company representative. It has been often rumored that his first records were cut in the rug department of a Dallas store—perhaps Ashford's—but whether these were test recordings made for the consideration of the Paramount company, or whether they were his initial sides, it is difficult to say. The first coupling made, though not the first released, was *Old Rounder's Blues* and *Begging Back*, which was cut in May, 1925, some eight months and some 450-odd matrices away from the next title, *Got the Blues*, made in February, 1926. It is possible, therefore, that these two tracks were cut in Dallas, and winning the approval of the Paramount directors, caused Blind Lemon to be brought to Chicago.

Got the Blues is exemplary of Blind Lemon's art, and the brilliant accompaniment, with its rapid arpeggios and rippling phrases produced by dexterous "hammering on," marks it as one of his finest recordings as well as among his first. Here are to be found, fresh and hitherto unrecorded, the folk verses that have been the stock-in-trade of many a lesser singer.

You can never tell what a woman's got on her mind,
[twice]

You think she's crazy about you and she's leaving all
the time.

Ain't so good-lookin', teeth don't shine like pearls,
Ain't so good-lookin', teeth don't shine like pearls,
But that lyin' disposition'll carry her through this
world.

So commenced a remarkable series of recordings which preserve the blues in its folk form at the point of transition from the field holler to the street corner and the barroom floor. There are many echoes of the past tradition in these blues, as in the comparatively early *Shucking Sugar*, where the phrase is interpolated inconsequentially within the verses:

I've got your picture an' I'm goin' to put it in a frame
I've got your picture, I'll put it in a frame- shuckin'
sugar

Then if you leave town I can find you just the same.

The voice crying "shucking sugar" seems to die away as the memories of the plantation shucking parties were even then disappearing. Among his recordings are songs which have a long folk ancestry, such as *See That My Grave Is Kept Clean*, which is the old white folk song *Two White Horses in a Line* sung to a tune closely related to *Careless Love*. But the majority of his recordings are his own blues, relating his experiences without malice or bitterness; blues that tell of the life of a blind beggar in hard times:

I stood on the corner and almost bust my head
I stood on the corner and almost bust my head
I couldn't earn enough to buy me a loaf of bread.
My girl's a housemaid and she earns a dollar a week,
My girl's a housemaid and she earns a dollar a week,
I'm so hungry on payday, I cain't hardly speak.
Now gather round me, people, let me tell you true facts.
Now gather round me, people, let me tell you true facts.
That tough luck has struck me and the rats is sleepin'
in my hat.

And there are blues that tell of the miseries of others of his race:

Water in Arkansas, people screamin' in Tennessee,
Oh—people screamin' in Tennessee;
If I don't leave Memphis, backwater be all over po' me.
Children standin', screamin' "Mama, we ain't got no
home!"
Oh—we ain't got no home!"

Papa says to the children, "Backwater left us all alone."

Paramount surfaces obscure many of the qualities of Blind Lemon's work, and it is only the single coupling issued by Okeh: *Black Snake Moan/Match Box Blues* that does justice to his singing and playing, as comparison with the Paramount recordings of the same titles bears eloquent witness. Repeated performances of his blues are rare in his work, and the two sets of masters for *Lock Step Blues* and *Hangman's Blues* are therefore of considerable interest, both issued as Paramount 12679. The earlier version of *Hangman's Blues* (20751-2) is the more dramatic, the guitar accompaniment with its rapid pulsations like the racing circulation of a frightened man, being intensely affecting. The later version (20816), though better recorded, does not quite measure up to the former, and the added spoken phrase adds relatively little. though this, and the slight differences in the words, give a valuable indication of the extent to which the singer improvised his blues for recording purposes. In either version it is a grim and stark blues:

The mean ole hangman is waitin' to tighten up that
noose, [twice]
Lord, I'm so scared, I'm tremblin' in ma shoes.
Jurymen heard my case and said my hands was red
Jurymen heard my case and said my hands was red

Judge he sentenced me to be hanging till I'm dead.
The crowd round the courthouse, an' the time is goin'
fast [twice]
Soon a good for nothin' killer is goin' to breathe
his last.

It would seem that Blind Lemon made casual trips to Chicago to make his recordings, and it is possible that he returned at intervals to Dallas. A significant gap appears in his recording career in 1927, which was followed by such recordings as *Hangman's Blues* together with a considerable number of items, among them *Lockstep Blues*, *'Lectric Chair Blues*, *Blind Lemon's Penitentiary Blues*, *Prison Cell Blues* and others which are related to prison themes. Such morbid material would appear to have a somewhat limited market, but Blind Lemon sings with the conviction born of personal experience, and one cannot help but speculate whether the blind man had spent a period in jail prior to these recordings. During the years of his recordings, Blind Lemon's fame spread. He was soon a well-known figure in Chicago as well as in his native Texas, and the proceeds from his records made him, for a brief period, relatively wealthy. According to Aletha Robinson, however, he remained a rough and untamed character, who, she maintains, tore his food apart with his bare hands and never used a knife and fork. But it would seem unlikely that the fingers that played the Spanish and Hawaiian guitar with such dexterity would be incapable of such manipulation; unlikelier still if the signature on his photograph was genuine. On the label of *Lemon's Cannon Ball Moan* appeared a scroll with the words "Blind Lemon Jeffersons' [sic] Birthday Record" and a portrait taken from the previously mentioned photograph, which in the original was three-quarter length. The sightless eyes still look proud, the dull features are strong but not arrogant, and the bearing of the thick-set man is erect —far removed from the emaciated figure that appeared on the sleeve of a Riverside long-playing record—the blues-singing beggar of popular fancy.

Lemon Jefferson's fame spread throughout the colored world, and a visit by the singer was long remembered: remembered by Horace Sprott a quarter of a century after the singer, with Richard Shaw to guide him, had traveled through Alabama; remembered with pride by "Red" Willie Smith when he told Harold Courlander how he had played in Blind Lemon's traveling folk band in Alabama; remembered by Adam Booker in Texas in conversation with Sam Charters: "He was about the best we had."

Frequently Blind Lemon Jefferson's blues are termed "primitive," and in the anthropological sense of being unlettered and untutored, they are. Aesthetically, too, they may be considered the "primitive germ," in Parry's phrase, that fertilizes the seed of music. But though there is not a trace of sophistication in Blind Lemon's singing or playing, there are subtle qualities of rich individuality that fortify the development of jazz music, as a young sherry is fortified by the blends that precede it. Blind Lemon's blues have a primitiveness that is in no way synonymous with crudity, but his blues were undoubtedly strong meat: full-flavored and rare without garnishings or fussy trimmings; the savor of the barbecue rather than of the chef's cuisine, making the gorge rise in sensitive stomachs, but relished by those who delight in chitterlings and hog's maws and pigfeet. . . .

On his best recordings, and those best recorded, Blind Lemon's voice is clear, and the notes of his guitar have a pristine quality. Deceptively simple though some of his discs may appear on first hearing, he had a remarkable

gift of phrasing and the technical accomplishment to give the fullest expression to his ideas. Though he was a street singer, he did not have to shout: he had a way of pitching his voice high, of calling out his words so that they could be heard at a considerable distance. At times he would declaim his blues with an emphasis that brooked no denial, but at other times his voice had sad, tragic tones that nonetheless never descended to self-pity. Even when the words of his blues told of trivial things, of irresponsible parties and reckless drinking, there was always an underlying pathos that betokened not only the plight of one blind man, but that of all members of his people. For his hearers his records had a deeper significance than that indicated by their literal meaning alone. Jefferson had the unassumed ability of the natural artist to be able to give the greatest range of expression to his chosen media: his voice had considerable light and shade which he used to advantage, at times striking the note that he required with unerring accuracy and at other times soaring up to it through the course of his syllables. He would permit his natural vibrato to swell and fade, cause his words to gain in effect through every nuance of inflection, introducing the subtlest rhythms by fractional suspensions in the timing of his phrases.

Throughout, his guitar amplified his mood without a note of inessential decoration. Behind his voice he generally played a simple rhythm, occasionally in a different time to that in which he was singing but miraculously meeting at the close of the sung phrase which would be carried on instrumentally without a break. He picked his strings in rapid arpeggios of beguiling facility, the wordless utterances of his guitar eloquently amplifying the lines that he sang. In his work there is no rancor, but there is no diminution of brutal facts, no sentimentality, either. Starkly dramatic, stripped of all superfluities, cruelly beautiful as the Texas landscape, Blind Lemon's recordings burn their way to the hearts of his bearers. They spring from the oil wells, they are rooted with the cane, grown with the cotton, and they lie with the dust of the Dallas sidewalks.

Blind Lemon Jefferson died on the streets of Chicago in 1930 from a heart attack, leaving behind him a legacy of personal blues that peeled the onion of his soul as Peer Gynt was incapable of doing. His uncompromising blues were the irrepressible outpourings of a true folk artist, and he was sadly mourned.

"I take my text from First Book of Corinthians, fifteenth chapter, forty-fourth and forty-fifth verse, which reads as follows: 'It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body; and so it is written that the first man, Adam was made a living soul and the last man Adam was made a quickening spirit.'"

It was the Reverend Emmett Dickenson who was preaching. His voice was not that of the "straining preacher," hoarse and gasping; he spoke simply and warmly, in softly enunciated words that carried the conviction of utterance that was sincere. He continued:

"My friends, Blind Lemon Jefferson is dead, and the world today is in mourning over this loss. So we feel that our loss is Heaven's gain. Big men, educated men and great men, when they pass on to their eternal home in the sky—they command our respects. But when a man that we truly love for the kindness and inspiration they [sic] have given us in our uppermost hearts pass on to their rewards, we feel that there is a vacancy in our hearts that will never be replaced."

Blind Lemon Jefferson, a blues singer and a singer of "devil songs" was dead. As the devil's advocate singing

the blues, he would seem to be a strange subject for a sermon, except for the purpose of pointing a moral. But the Reverend Dickenson knew his congregation and he spoke in terms that they could understand. "The world . . . is in mourning over this loss," he said, but the world as a whole had never heard of Blind Lemon Jefferson, nor heard his voice. It was the Negro world, compact and largely separate in those years when the clouds of the depression were breaking over the United States, to which the preacher referred, though as a sincere member of the Church he knew that the loss extended far beyond the boundaries of race. To the world, Blind Lemon was not a big man, an educated man or a great man, but within the Negro world, as Reverend Dickenson knew, the blues singer was valued and loved, for he spoke to them who were members of his race.

"Is there harm in singing the blues?" asked Reverend Dickenson in one sermon; and he made the earthy standard of the blues singer, *Tight Like That*, the subject of another address to his congregation. He once recorded what he called *The Preacher's Blues* but now he was speaking of one who had "preached the blues."

"Let us pause for a moment and think of the life of our beloved Blind Lemon Jefferson who was born blind. It is in many respects like that of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Like Him, unto the age of thirty he was unknown, and also like Him in the space of a little over three years this man and his works were known in every home." In making a comparison that might seem even somewhat blasphemous on first hearing, the preacher was in fact dwelling on coincidental details. He was in no way suggesting that the blind blues singer was of similar stature to Christ, nor that he was in any way a spiritual being. But at the same time while recognizing Blind Lemon's vices as well as his virtues, he could pass no word of censure, for:

"Again I refer to our text: I believe that the Lord in Blind Lemon Jefferson has sown a natural body and will raise it a spiritual body. When I was informed of Lemon's death, I thought of our Lord Jesus Christ as He walked down the Jericho road and saw a man who was born blind. And His disciple said: 'Master, who did sin? Did this man sin or his parents, that he is a man born blind?' And Jesus Christ answered, 'Neither did this man sin nor his parents sin but that I may be manifested in him.'

So Emmett Dickenson came to the concluding paragraph of his sermon as he drew from the life of Blind Lemon Jefferson the lesson that he believed lay within it:

"Lemon Jefferson was born blind and was cut off from the good things of this life that you and I enjoy; he truly had a cross to bear. How many of us today are crying about the crosses we are to bear: 'Oh Lord, this is too hard for me; Oh Lord, I have a pain here and an ache there, and Oh Lord, my life is miserable to lead. Blind Lemon is blind. As Lemon died with the Lord, so did he live."

The whole man still eludes us, but the Reverend Dickenson's sermon gives more than a little indication of the importance of Blind Lemon Jefferson to the Negro world of the twenties, whose members bought his records and listened to his blues; revealing a character, proud, devoid of self-pity in spite of considerable handicaps; loved and esteemed in spite of his personal foibles and defects of behavior—a man in whom was "sown a natural body" with human weaknesses and appetites, but a man whose sins did not put him past redemption and whose example in his honesty, his self-examination, his forthrightness of purpose, blues singer or no, could be raised in death "a spiritual body."



photo by Duncan P. Scheldt

Conversations with James P. Johnson by Tom Davin

Q. What was Willie Smith like in his young days?

A. Willie Smith was one of the sharpest ticklers I ever met—and I met most of them. When we first met in Newark, he wasn't called Willie The Lion—he got that nickname after his terrific fighting record overseas during World War I. He was a fine dresser, very careful about the cut of his clothes and a fine dancer, too, in addition to his great playing. All of us used to be proud of our dancing—Louis Armstrong, for instance, was considered the finest dancer among the musicians. It made for attitude and stance when you walked into a place, and made you strong with the gals. When Willie Smith walked into a place, his every move was a picture.



photo by Mike Youngman

Q. You mean he would make a studied entrance, like a theatrical star?

A. Yes, every move we made was studied, practiced, and developed just like it was a complicated piano piece.

Q. What would such an entrance be like?

A. When a real smart tickler would enter a place, say in winter, he'd leave his overcoat on and keep his hat on, too. We used to wear military overcoats or what was called a Peddock Coat, like a coachman's: a blue double-breasted, fitted to the waist and with long skirts. We'd wear a light pearl-gray Fulton or Homburg hat with three buttons or eyelets on the side, set at a rakish angle over on the side of the head. Then a white silk muffler and a white silk handkerchief in the overcoat's breast pocket. Some carried a gold-headed cane, or if they were wearing a cutaway, a silver-headed cane. A couple of fellows used to wear Inverness capes, which were in style in white society then.

Many fellows had their overcoats lined with the same material as the outside—they even had their suits made that way. Pawnbrokers, special ones, would give you twenty or twenty-five dollars on such a suit or overcoat. They knew what it was made of. A fellow belittling another would be able to say: "G'wan, the inside of my coat would make you a suit."

But to go back . . . when you came into a place you had a three-way play. You never took your overcoat or hat off until you were at the piano. First you laid your cane on the music rack. Then you took off your overcoat, folded it and put it on the piano, with the lining showing.

You then took off your hat before the audience. Each tickler had his own gesture for removing his hat with a little flourish; that was part of his attitude, too. You took out your silk handkerchief, shook it out and dusted off the piano stool.

Now, with your coat off, the audience could admire your full-back, or box-back, suit, cut with very square shoulders. The pants had about fourteen-inch cuffs and broidered clocks.

Full-back coats were always single-breasted, to show your gold watch fob and chain. Some ticklers wore a horseshoe tiepin in a strong single colored tie and a gray shirt with black pencil stripes.

We all wore French, Shriner & Umer or Hanan straight or French last shoes with very pointed toes, or patent-leather turnup toes, in very narrow sizes. For instance, if you had a size 7 foot, you'd wear an 8½ shoe on a very narrow last. They cost from twelve to eighteen dollars a pair.

If you had an expensive suit made, you'd have the tailor take a piece of cloth and give it to you, so that you could have either spats or button cloth-tops for your shoes to match the suit.

Some sharp men would have a suit and overcoat made of the same bolt of cloth. Then they'd take another piece of the same goods and have a three-button Homburg made out of it. This was only done with solid-color cloth—tweeds or plaids were not in good taste for formal hats.

There was a tailor named Bromberger down on Carmine Street, near Sheridan Square in the old 15th Ward, who made all the hustlers' clothes. That was a Negro section around 1912. He charged twenty-five to forty dollars a suit.

Another tailoring firm, Clemens & Ostreicher, at 40th Street, and 6th Avenue, would make you a sharp custom



Eubie Blake

courtesy Record Research.

suit for \$11.75—with broadlap seams (¾ in.), a fingertip coat, Shirred in at the waist with flared skirts, patch pockets, five-button cuffs and broad lapels.

Up on 153rd Street there was a former barber named Hart who had invented a hair preparation named Kink-No-More, called "Conk" for short. His preparation was used by all musicians—the whole Clef Club used him. You'd get your hair washed, dyed and straightened; then trimmed. It would last about a month.

Of course each tickler had his own style of appearance. I used to study them carefully and copy those attitudes that appealed to me.

There was a fellow name Fred Tunstall, whom I mentioned before. He was a real dandy. I remember he had a Norfolk coat with eighty-two pleats in the back. When he sat down to the piano, he'd slump a little in a half hunch, and those pleats would fan out real pretty. That coat was long and flared at the waist. It had a very short belt sewn on the back. His pants were very tight.

He had a long neck, so he wore a high, stiff collar that came up under his chin with a purple tie. A silk handkerchief was always draped very carefully in his breast pocket. His side view was very striking.

Tunstall was very careful about his hair, which was ordinary, but he used lots of pomade. His favorite shoes were patent-leather turnups.

His playing was fair, but he had the reputation of being one of our most elegant dressers. He had thirty-five suits of clothes—blacks, grays, brown pin stripes, oxfords, pepper and salts.

Some men would wear a big diamond ring on their pinky, the right-hand one, which would flash in the treble passages. Gold teeth were in style, and a real sharp effect was to have a diamond set on one tooth. One fellow went further and had diamonds set in the teeth of his toy Boston bulldog. There was a gal named Diamond Floss, a big sporting-house woman, a hot clipper and a high-powered broad, who had diamonds in all her front teeth. She had a place in Chelsea, the west thirties, in the Tenderloin days.

Q. Where did these styles come from, the South?

A. No, we saw them right here in New York City. They were all copied from the styles of the rich whites. Most of the society folks had colored valets and some of them would give their old clothes to their valets and household help.

Then we'd see rich people at society gigs in the big hotels where they had Clef Club bands for their dances. So we wanted to dress good, copied them and made improvements.

Q. Please tell me more about the great ticklers' styles.

A. As I was saying, when I was a young fellow, I was very much impressed with such manners. I didn't know much about style, but I wanted to learn. I didn't want to be a punk all my life.

In the sporting world of gamblers, hustlers and ticklers, the lowest rank is called a punk. He's nothing. He doesn't have any sense; he doesn't know anything about life or the school of the smart world. He doesn't even know how to act in public. You had to have an attitude, a style of behaving that was your personal, professional trade-mark.

The older Clef Club musicians were artists at this kind of acting. The club was a place to go to study these glamorous characters. I got a lot of my style from ticklers like Floyd Keppard, who I know in Jersey City, Dan Avery, Bob Hawkins, Lester Wilson, Freddie Tunstall, Kid Sneeze, Abba Labba, Willie Smith and many others.

I've seen Jelly Roll Morton, who had a great attitude, approach a piano. He would take his overcoat off. It had a special lining that would catch everybody's eye. So he would turn it inside out and, instead of folding it, he would lay it lengthwise along the top of the upright piano. He would do this very slowly, very carefully and very solemnly as if that coat was worth a fortune and had to be handled very tenderly.

Then he'd take a big silk handkerchief, shake it out to show it off properly, and dust off the stool. He'd sit down then, hit his special chord (every tickler had his special trade-mark chord, like a signal) and he'd be gone! The first rag he'd play was always a spirited one to astound the audience.

Other players would start off by sitting down, wait for the audience to quiet down and then strike their chord, holding it with the pedal to make it ring.

Then they'd do a run up and down the piano—a scale or arpeggios—or if they were real good they might play

a set of modulations, very offhand, as if there was nothing to it. They'd look around idly to see if they knew any chicks near the piano. If they saw somebody, they'd start a light conversation about the theater, the races or social doings—light chat. At this time, they'd drift into a rag, any kind of pretty stuff, but without tempo, particularly without tempo. Some ticklers would sit sideways to the piano, cross their legs and go on chatting with friends near by. It took a lot of practice to play this way, while talking and with your head and body turned.

Then, without stopping the smart talk or turning back to the piano, he'd *attack* without any warning, smashing right into the regular beat of the piece. That would knock them dead.

A big-timer would, of course, have a diamond ring he would want to show off to some gal near by that he wanted to make. So he would adjust his hand so that the diamond would catch her eye and blind her. She'd know he was a big shot right off.

A lot of this was taught to me by old-timers, when they would be sitting around when I was a kid and only playing social dance music. I wasn't a very good-looking fellow, but I dressed nice and natty. I learned all their stuff and practiced it carefully.

In the old days, these effects were studied to attract the young gals who hung around such places. Ed Avery, whose style I copied, was a great actor and a hell of a ladies' man. He used to run big harems of all kinds of women.

After your opening piece to astound the audience, it would depend on the gal you were playing for or the mood of the place for what you would play next. It might be sentimental, moody, stompy or funky. The good player had to know just what the mood of the audience was.

At the end of his set, he'd always finish up with a hot rag and then stand up quickly, so that everybody in the place would be able to see who knocked it out.

Every tickler kept these attitudes even when he was socializing at parties or just visiting. They were his professional personality and prepared the audience for the artistic performance to come. I've watched high-powered actors today, and they all have that professional approach. In the old days they really worked at it. It was designed to show a personality that women would admire. With the music he played, the tickler's manners would put the question in the ladies' minds: "Can he do it like he can play it?"

Q. The high-style clothes you described seem to have disappeared in recent years. How did it happen?

A. Well, full-back clothes became almost a trade-mark for pimps and sharps. Church socials and dancing classes discriminated against all who wore full-back clothes. They would have a man at the door to keep them out. So, in self-defense, the hustlers had to change to English drape styles, which were rumored to be worn only by pansies and punks.

Q. Don't tell me that those sharp hustlers frequented church socials?

A. Oh, yes. Some of the toughest guys would even attend Sunday school classes regularly, just to get next to the younger and better-class gals there. They wore the square style of pinch-back coats and peg-top pants and would even learn hymns to impress a chick they had their eye on. They were very versatile cats.

Britain's Skiffle Intelligensia

by Gabriel Gersh

Down a dusty curve of bare board stairs in the eastern, cheaper part of Soho, past a homely canteen selling cakes and cokes to teenagers, the visitor pauses to give his name, address, and 3s.6d. (\$.50) to a bored boy in jeans.

Beyond the rows of big-eyed girls and bespectacled young men in thick grey sweaters stands a little stage from which in the semi-darkness emanates the heavy, bumpy beat of skiffle.

The men on the stage have open shirts and sometimes beards of an archducal splendor; the girls wear their hair long. In the seats close by sit intimates, the wives and mistresses, the enthusiasts with suburban skiffle groups of their own and a public schoolboy in corduroy pants, long legs propped in an attitude of afternoon repose, calmly reading a book.

The rub-a-dub noise and the bawling fade, to applause.

"This really sends them, I guess?" a middle-aged man in the audience asks, nervously jocular.

"No, that's a jazz term," he is reproved.

As if to show the difference, the group breaks into the folksong-style *Kisses Sweeter than Wine*.

A skiffle group, in its British meaning, is a band to accompany the single singing guitarist, or more rarely banjoist; they give him exaggerated rhythmic support on a variety of instruments—other guitars, a bass to thump and a washboard to strum, rattles, drums, whistles, anything you like so long as it looks as if it had been assembled from a rubbish-dump. Also the skifflers support the soloist by singing in harmony, if they can.

Four or five skiffle clubs, with about eight or ten independent blues or folksong singers, form the intelligentsia of skiffle. Far from being elated by the success of their art, they are disturbed because "commercialism," their accepted foe, has triumphed; and they themselves are making money out of it. Artistic integrity is ruffled.

From outside they are attacked, too; hardly a week passes without some denigration of skiffle in the musical magazines—"Teddy-boy jazz" they call it. Those other intellectuals who clambered on the jazz revival wagon a little while ago have been the first to throw stones at the next popular music that came along. This next popular movement was skiffle, and soon it will be dead, they proclaim.

This opinion is shared by the musical world in general, for craft as well as cash reasons. The musicianship of most skifflers is limited; few can read music, their repertory is small and unimaginative. How can they hope forever to live off the musical output of Leadbelly, whose

Louisiana mumble has been imported whole into British skiffle?

But skiffle refuses to die. A year ago there were only about twenty groups around London. Now there are nearer 400, with one to ten groups in every English-speaking center from Glasgow to Cape Town. Sales of guitars have broken all records; shops in Surbiton display them hanging in rows like so many turkeys for Christmas. You can buy washboards, lagerphones and all the paraphernalia of a down-and-outs' band. Skiffle has taken by storm the youth clubs and the public schools, and the Army has carried it to Germany. Last summer two skiffle groups offered a no-passport excursion, ten groups on board and two hours in France, for 40s (\$.60). "Rock across the Channel," said the advertisements. Another group meets at weekends in Chislehurst Caves, advising its audience to bring their own candles.

The remarkable thing is that in an age of high-fidelity sound, long-players and tape-recorders, the young should decide to make their own music. It is indeed fantastic. What are they to do with all those guitars when the craze goes?

It takes a worried man
To sing a worried song.

The skiffle intelligentsia have some ideas about this. They want to extend the range of skiffle lyrics to the whole field of folksong and ballad, using British as well as American material. "Folksong has been dead in English cities for many years," says Dr. John Hasted, of London University, who runs one of the most enterprising clubs. "We want to rebuild a living, urban, folk-music. It will take a long time." Skifflers with any pretensions go out and "collect" surviving folksongs in the field. Best-known sources are the Irish gypsy songs of Margaret Barry, who sings in a pub in Camden Town, and the amorous ballads of eighty-three-year-old Charlie Wills, of Dorset. There are others in unexpected places. "We collected *The Bold Irish Navy* from a pub in South Norwood," says Russell Quaye, leader of another group.

Skiffle clubs also sing contemporary ballads. Few are good. One of the most prolific ballad-writers, young Fred Dallas, has started a new club at a pub in Walton-on-Thames. He did so by advertising in a local newspaper for amateur musicians. Accordionists, pianists, guitarists, singers, and people with no experience at all—eighteen turned up. His biggest difficulty was to get them to sing without an American accent.

Parodies like *Piccadilly Line* and *Stanley and Dora Were Lovers*—the tragedy of a movie usher and a Teddy-boy—are popular:

AUGUST

Dora was quickly promoted
To the Circle she rose in a dream
But who should she see but her Stanley
With the girl who sold ice cream.
He cracked her up
For a Wall's cup.

Scotland still has real ballads being written, and they are charmingly sung in London by Nancy Whisky, the only girl leader of a skiffle group.

Dr. Hasted's periodical, *Sing*, republishes for the groups lyrics and music from sources as varied as *Foweles in the Frith*, which originated in the thirteenth century, to *Nkosi Sikelele Afrika*, though the richest material is still American. Hasted himself, a tall, gentle don with a somewhat ambiguous personality—he lectures in atomic physics and is a strong supporter of Moscow Youth Festivals—stands in a unique avuncular relationship to the skiffle movement, rather like Humphrey Lyttleton's to British jazz. Hasted's leadership is not so much musical as philosophical; he is the defender of the faith. It is therefore with some shock that the skiffle world has heard the latest news, that Hasted has bought a piano and is turning to jazz.

Already, therefore, skiffle is developing as many separate streams and rivulets as British jazz. First there are those who seek to wed it to the wide folksinging tradition, especially to a revived British folksong. Next come the skiffle purists, who like to play nothing but genuine Leadbelly and early Lonnie Donegan, with a comparatively relaxed beat. But in most public places, the newly opened Skiffle Cellar in Greek Street, Soho, for instance, cheerful catholics open their arms to everything that comes. Here, down the usual dusty stairs in a disused night clubs with plaster stalactites hanging from the ceiling, a platform is provided for the hundreds of little suburban and provincial groups, making the journey to London to seek fame. These groups mix it all in—folksong, blues, fiddle and jug music, "pops," sentimental ballads and calypsos. Here, too, the usual chastened audience is joined by a new element or ornate Teddies and their girls, who cannot sing or play, but can dance wonderfully. So dance they do, on sagging boards and concrete at the back of the club, to skiffle and everything else that comes.

The newer skiffle groups do not distinguish between skiffle and rock 'n' roll, submerging them all in the same breathless din: if a folksong or a calypso achieves commercial popularity, it is included in the repertory too. The going may be a bit rough, but as Louis Armstrong said some time ago, "They're all folksongs. I ain't never heard a horse sing."

17

SHINE ON MOON

Shine on, shine on, sweet harvest moon shine on,
And th' way you' shinin', you won't be shinin' long.

Now tell me, pretty mommo, which-a-way do that red, Red River run?
And she reaches from the Atlantic Ocean, clean down to the risin' sun.
Now the big boat, she's up the river, settin' way out on a bank of sand,
If she don't soon strike the water, I do swear the boat will never land.

[Ah, let's play one now, Peetie]

Now the river, she's gone to risin', and spreadin' all over the land,
And she reaches from Memphis, clean down into the lock [?] and dam [?]
Now my woman, she's got a mouth, just like a lighthouse on the sea.
Every time she smiles, she th'ows her bright light on po' me.

Now my woman, she's up the river; Lord, and she won't come down,
Said I b'lieve to my soul, that my good gal is water bound,
She's water bound.

(Sung by Kokomo Arnold on Decca 7390A. Transcribed by J. S. Shipman.)

NOBODY IN MIND

Ain't nobody in mind,
No one woman ever worried me,
Cause love ain't nothin'
But a lot of misery.

Give a chick a dollar,
Next time you gotta give her five.
Well, the chicks ain't out for nothin',
Boys, but a line of jive.

Ain't nothin' inside,
And the worst is to come they say.
Boys, it's tough enough already
Without bein' worried this way.

Give a chick a dollar,
Next time you gotta give her five.
Well, the chicks ain't out for nothin',
Boys, but a line of jive.

Ain't nobody in mind,
I'm carefree sleepin' by myself,
Cause the woman I was lovin'
She's sleepin' with somebody else —
Sleepin' with somebody else.

(Traditional. As sung by Joe Turner on Emarcy MG 36014.
Transcribed by Bill Crow.)

the Blues

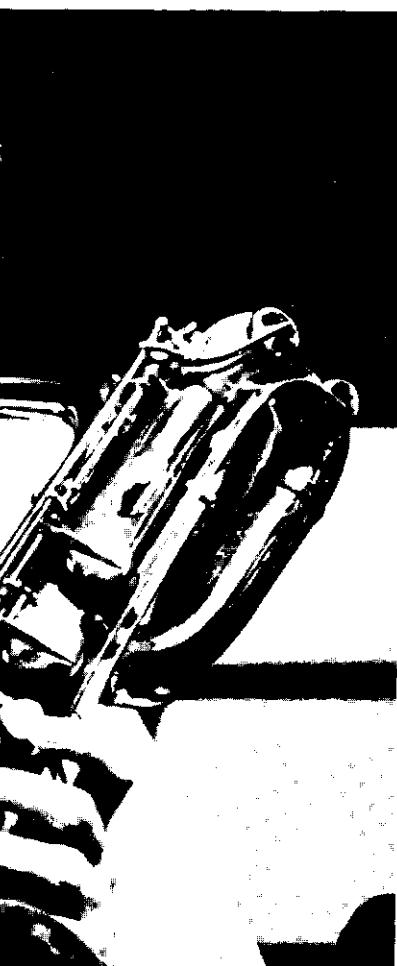


photo by Bill Spilka

RECORDINGS

GERRY MULLIGAN: *What is There to Say?* Columbia CL1307.

Mulligan, baritone sax; Art Farmer, trumpet; Bill Crow, bass; Dave Bailey, drums.

What Is there to Say; Just in Time; News from Blueport; Festive Minor; As Catch Can; My Funny Valentine; Blueport; Utter Chaos.

Art Farmer is the strongest soloist in the group. His playing throughout the record is graceful, swinging, and full of variety. Art is a real improviser. He gives the impression of constant spontaneity, so that his solos have a sense of unity that doesn't exist in the work of many jazz players.

Art has a talent for doing the unexpected without sounding forced or unmusical. His rhythmic conception is relaxed and flexible, so much so that the others in the group often sound a little corny in comparison. Occasionally, Art's phrases sound incomplete, as if he had dropped one train of musical thought in favor of a new one, lending a moving, *parlando*, conversation-like quality to his playing.

Mulligan's playing doesn't quite match Farmer's for consistent interest and swing. He achieves a nice symmetry by frequent use of parallel phrases and sequences but this is sometimes at the expense of inventiveness. His occasional really convincing phrases are sometimes marred by a sluggish articulation that prevents the rhythmic accuracy that is necessary for really swinging playing. His conception is sometimes a little "Modern Corny." In spite of these problems, some of which are aggravated by the inherent problems of the baritone sax, Gerry does perform well here—especially when he plays fill-ins and counter melodies.

Many jazz musicians play by involuntary and instinctive reactions to the musical situation. They play solos built from a vocabulary of predetermined figures, many of which could

be substituted for any other without disturbing the construction of the solo. Their music is like wallpaper; it may have unity of style but not of form, for it has no beginning, middle, or end. This kind of playing never produces outstanding jazz, because purposiveness is necessary for real artistic expression. Neither Gerry nor Art sound like this kind of mechanical player. They are both expressive, but the range of expression of the quartet as a whole is limited by a few problems.

The biggest fault in these performances is their lack of dynamic variety. In bringing the dynamic level of the group down to that of the bass, Gerry has excluded the possibility of taking full advantage of the other instruments in the louder part of their dynamic range, with the result that the group seldom manages to generate much excitement. Gerry says in his excellent and brief liner notes that he and his group had fun making this record and that he expects his audience to have fun listening to it. Mainly as a result of the limited dynamic range, I didn't find the kind of fun here that Gerry's comments led me to expect. The fun Gerry is best able to direct into his music is a reserved, sophisticated kind of fun in which cleverness plays a bigger part than free swinging excitement.

Another stylistic element of Gerry's group that limits its range of expression is the inflexibility of the rhythm section, especially the drummer. Dave Bailey is very steady throughout the

album but hardly ever adds much to the over-all sound of the group. He seldom improvises fill-ins or background figures and seems content to keep time. In listening to this record, I often caught myself trying to imagine what a drummer with the freedom and imagination of Philly Joe Jones could do to fill out the texture of the group and add another improvising instrument to it. Perhaps this is Gerry's choice—it is certainly a limitation.

Bill Crow, too, is overly steady. His beat is unvarying in time or volume, which to some musicians is a great recommendation. But this is a group with an open sound and room for everyone to exercise a great deal of freedom harmonically and rhythmically. Isn't that why Gerry eliminated the piano in the first place? Ostensibly the piano was dropped in order to extend the range of expression of the other players—so that they wouldn't be tied down to one harmonic conception. Unless however, full advantage is taken of the fact that the piano is absent, Gerry would do well to put it back for more variety in the sound of the group. The point is that there's a need for an intricate and highly interesting accompaniment in this group—to match the improvising of the horns and to sustain the interest of the listener. Bill and Dave do not really provide this, either as a result of their own taste, or at Gerry's request. Lest this seem too harsh a criticism, let me add that Bill's playing is accurate and

clean under the close scrutiny of an unusually good recording job.

The tunes on the album are varied enough with two good blues heads by Mulligan, one in $\frac{3}{4}$ time in which the rhythm section gets stuck in 1, improves when it goes into $\frac{3}{4}$ but still sounds stiff and uncomfortable. Gerry sounds waltzy and a little ricky-tick; Art, a little better in spite of the rhythm section, and Bill plays a good solo. The ballads are good and *Just in Time* is nicely done with the rhythm section almost getting off the ground. *As Catch Can* is too fast for everyone's comfort. *Utter Chaos* has excellent first-half choruses by both Gerry and Art, though they each bog down a little when they come to the bridge of the tune and neither finishes as well as he started. There are some effective exchanges here between the two horns—an example of Mulligan's clever fun.

One last impression. Most jazz players seem to be either relaxed (Art Farmer) or intense (Mulligan and Bill Crow) by nature, and this seems to affect their time conceptions. Bill and Gerry are almost always on top of the beat, and Gerry sometimes nervously clammers just a little ahead of it. Art, on the other hand, slips off the back end of the beat in a consistently relaxed manner. Seldom does one player develop a flexible approach to this problem so that he may play either way, according to the situation and the particular mood of the music.

—Chuck Israels

PEPPER ADAMS: *10 to 4 at the 5-Spot*. Riverside RLP 12-265.

Adams, baritone sax; Donald Byrd, trumpet; Bobby Timmons, piano; Doug Watkins, bass; Elvin Jones, drums.

'Tis, You're My Thrill, The Long Two/Four, Hastings Street Bounce, Yourna.

This is the first chance I've had to listen to Pepper Adams at any length. He plays with good time, good control of his fingers, and a vigorous approach. I like his choice of notes in general, but I don't find his tone lovely, particularly not on sustained notes.

The group playing with him here is uniformly good. A number of mediocrities are present here that surely would have been edited out of a studio date, but such imperfections do not detract from the fundamental excellence of individual and group performance.

I like Donald Byrd's playing. His tone is appealing, his ear and imagination work well together, and his general expression is one of vitality

and warmth. Timmons, though handicapped by a dreadfully out of tune night-club piano, plays with energetic ease, achieving his broadest expression on bluesy numbers. In fact every one on the album plays the hell out of the blues.

Doug Watkins always sounds good. I like his lines, his sound, his solos, time, intonation. He provides an excellent anchor for Elvin's drumming which is a percussive tapestry that implies the basic pulse instead of spelling it out. When Elvin has it working for him, the effect is exciting, but when he loses control of it, there can be a lot of confusion about where "one" is. On his solos the basic pulse is often so well disguised that I find it necessary to count carefully to keep track of him. Some times he does hang himself and commits metric errors, but such slips are perfectly understandable. He's developed a complex rhythmic conception that he doesn't have completely under control

yet. What he lacks in accuracy of execution is certainly offset by the powerful feeling he generates. I hope that as he becomes more at ease with his conception that he will begin to exercise a little more taste in his choice of counter rhythms as accompaniments. On Doug's bridge on *Yourna* especially Elvin steps all over the soloist, weakening rather than strengthening the rhythmic character of the solo.

The tunes are all enjoyable, and the musicians sound interested in playing them. I liked *Hastings Street Bounce* best because of the way everyone feels the thing together and sustains the feeling. The only disappointment was *You're My Thrill*, a beautiful tune made even more beautiful for me by the memory of Billie Holiday's version of it. Pepper understands the melodic and harmonic possibilities, but his bleak, mooing tone makes his sustained notes unbearable.

—Bill Crow

GENE AMMONS: *Blue Gene*, Prestige 7146.

Ammons, tenor sax; Idrees Suliman, trumpet; Pepper Adams, baritone sax; Mal Waldron, piano; Arthur Taylor, drums; Doug Watkins, bass; Ray Barretto, conga. *Blue Gene; Scumperin'; Blue Greens 'N Beans; Hip Tin.*

When I hear the blues played this well I wonder how rock and roll got so popular. Practically the same elements are present in both conceptions except for the all-important difference that the feeling here is loose, free, and human; in the popular conception of rock and roll it is tight, hard, mean, and mechanical. The popularity of the violent form hasn't affected the approach of the musician who loves the warmer, more expansive blues, but it has certainly encroached on his income.

Gene and Idrees sound beautiful. Both have a strong, sure feeling for the blues. They produce big sounds and love to swing right in the middle of the time. Idrees is one of those players who either does everything right or everything wrong, and this date was one of his right days. Every

CHESTER BAKER: *It Could Happen to You: Chet Baker Sings*, Riverside RLP 1120.

Baker, trumpet & vocals; Kenny Drew, piano; George Morrow or Sam Jones, bass; Philly Joe Jones or Danny Richmond, drums.

Do It The Hard Way; I'm Old Fashioned; You're Driving Me Crazy; It Could Happen To You; My Heart Stood Still; The More I See You; Everything Happens To Me; Dancing On The Ceiling; How Long Has This Been Going On; Old Devil Moon.

Apropos of Chet Baker's dual role as trumpeter-singer, the liner quotes an "old axiom" that says "Every jazzman who's worth his salt, no matter what horn he plays, is a singer." I might counter this saying with a few other "old axioms" like "You can't carry an egg in two baskets;" "Little boats should keep near shore;" "Never spit into the wind;" "You can't drive a railroad spike with a tack hammer;" and, especially, "The steam that blows the whistle will never turn a wheel."

Criticizing Baker's "singing" is as unfair a game as commenting on a four-month-old baby's lack of coordination because he can't walk. How can one speak critically of an anemic voice which sounds like a boiled owl trying for out-of-reach high notes or which wanders in a key totally different from that in which his accompanist plays (*You're Driving Me Crazy* is the worst track

phrase he tries comes off beautifully; his own personality is sharply etched in his playing.

Pepper plays good choruses on all four tunes, displaying a somewhat fuller tone than he had on the last album of his that I reviewed. His blues conception stands up well with Ammons and Suliman, though he presses a little too much at times. The various combinations of the three horns in ensembles and riffs are rich in tonal color and rhythmically powerful.

Mal Waldron plays his best choruses on the medium grooves. He plays the up-tempo blues well enough, but lets his enthusiasm run away with his time just enough to unsettle it.

Doug, A. T., and Ray Barretto swing together simply and effectively. The feeling that the conga adds is no improvement on what Philly Joe generally does all by himself, but it is tastefully present. It doesn't detract from the unity of the section, and it agrees with the feeling of the rest of the group. Doug's choruses are well played and well recorded.

--Bill Crow

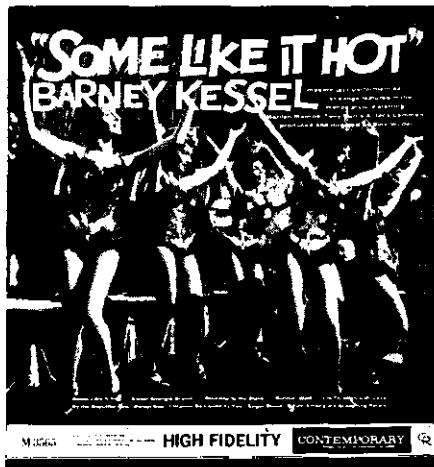
in this respect), and which doesn't come within an ice-age mastodon's tusk of most of the notes aimed for? Why were the songs taken in such high keys; at least lower pitches might cover up a few of Baker's abysmal vocal deficiencies.

About the only positive statement to be dredged up for Chet is that he phrases well, because he is (and should remain) a musician. Songs like *Do It The Hard Way* contain softly scattered interludes, in which Chet reproduces many of his instrumental stylistic devices; however, his lack of vocal equipment makes one wish he'd played those choruses rather than sung them. The few excursions taken in brass by Baker are O.K. as "romantic jazz."

Backing by Kenny Drew, George Morrow, Sam Jones, Philly Joe Jones, Danny Richmond is excellent. Drew accompanies very well and plays some pretty and easy-swinging choruses. Their work clearly exemplifies how a good jazz group can push anyone into a presentable performing context, and how more often than not it is the musicians, not the singer, who make a vocal number what it is.

Any musician giving a performance on an instrument equivalent to Baker's vocal daubs would not remain two minutes on the stand, let alone be allowed to record.

--Mimi Clar



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LIL ARMSTRONG: *Satchmo and Me*, Riverside RLP 12-120.

Lil Armstrong's first-hand accounts of the "fabulous Chicago jazz era" and of Louis Armstrong are by now common knowledge: the well-known episode of Jelly Roll Morton's teaching Lil a lesson in the music store; Lil's bewilderment at the New Orleans Creole Jazz Band's idea of "key"— "You hear two knocks, start playing;" Louis' appearance when he first hit Chicago — his New-Orleans-style clothes and hairdo (he wore bangs); Lil's management of Armstrong — sharpening his appearance, getting him to quit Oliver and, later, Henderson.

She also mentions a few items not so frequently pointed out: how Honore Dutrey was always buying property; how Freddy Keppard tried to cut Louis one night and how Louis "got him" ("If you want to hear Louis play, just hear him play when he's angry."); how Lil assuaged Armstrong's fears of missing high F's at the nightly Vendome shows by advising him to hit G's at home; how Lil wasn't too enthusiastic about jazz itself but liked the atmosphere surrounding the music and the money

BUSTER BAILEY: *All About Memphis*. Felsted FAJ 7003.

Tracks 1, 3, 6: Bailey, clarinet; Herman Autrey, trumpet; Vic Dickenson, trombone; Hilton Jefferson, alto; Red Richards, piano; Gene Ramey, bass; Jimmy Crawford, drums. Tracks 2, 4, 5, 7: Bailey; Richards; Ramey; Crawford.

Bear Wallow; Halton Avenue and Gayoso Street; Sunday Parade; Beale Street Blues; Memphis Blues; Chicksaw Bluff; Hot Water Bayou.

Since this is another of the Felsted jazz series, perhaps a pause for some explanation is in order. There is a new species of moldy fig in this world who says that jazz was corrupted, not when it left Storyville in 1915, but when it fell by Minton's in 1940. The more militant proclamations of this position come, of course, from Panassie in France, Stanley Dance and Albert J. McCarthy in England, and I would say it has an American champion in Tom Scanlon. Mr. Dance says "swing" won't do as a term for the style he stands for, and coined a term which has an irony he could hardly have intended, "mainstream." A little over a year ago, Mr. Dance was sent to New York by British Decca to record more "mainstream jazz." This series is the result.

No doubt these musicians "of the thirties" (as the phrase goes) are neglected, and many of them have much art to offer and many lessons

earned from jazz with which to buy "ice cream and clothes."

Lil's own background follows the familiar pattern. She played piano and organ in church as a child. Her family disapproved of jazz, but her mother finally allowed her to buy sheet music of popular tunes. After working in the music store awhile, she got a job with the New Orleans Creole Jazz Band in a "nasty, filthy, dirty, vulgar, no-good cabaret" as her mother termed it; and, since she was still a minor, had to sneak to work. Within three weeks her mother discovered the deception, which at first was successfully explained away as a "school exhibition."

Of course a great part of the story revolves around Louis, and from Lil we get a picture of him as a highly talented individual who perhaps was not fully aware of the extent of his ability and how best to exhibit and promote that ability. Louis, at the point he met Lil, was in need of direction and management, and Lil was the "little ole girl" who took it upon herself to provide such guidance. "I hope he [Louis] doesn't hear this record," Lil laughs as she reveals her strategy, "—hear all my tricks!"

to teach. The more gigs and records they get, the better, but if the earlier "New Orleans revival" showed anything, it showed that to commit one's self to a school or style is not to commit one's self to art or to good music.

I wasn't there, of course, but what I think I know tells me that these titles may be about Memphis but the style of this music has more to do with Harlem circa 1936. And Red Richards is later than that.

Buster Bailey feels very deeply that he is a *musician* who was forced by conditions and prejudice to play jazz. Probably "feels" is the wrong word; *knows* is better. One thing is certain: his presence in jazz groups has had a deep and wide effect since the twenties. He was one of the earliest musicians in jazz to come to wide attention who had a firm legitimate training on his instrument and he played in jazz groups as if he had it. If he had done nothing else, he did show countless jazzmen how much they needed to know about their instruments and about one of the musical traditions they were adopting and remolding into this new music.

There are some tracks here which, I think, show what Buster Bailey can do best in jazz. *Bear Wallow* is a slow blues on which he plays a solo which has a continuity built on musi-

Lil recreates the feeling of the whole era with vivid historical anecdotes and humor. The extraordinary clarity of the record plus minimum interruption of Lil's talking gives the listener the feeling of being in on or conducting the interview himself.

The brief narrative portions either bridge gaps between subjects by filling in historical data or ask leading questions. The writer found the questions that were phrased in the third person a bit awkward and approaching travelogue style, but others for whom the record was played disagreed. The interrogation is so fleeting that to belabor such a point is needless. Robert S. Green edited the material and wrote the continuity.

Lil's recording makes a good addition to the as yet not too extensive collection of jazz lore such as the records Jelly made with Alan Lomax, and the letters of Bunk Johnson and King Oliver. Why doesn't someone make a documentary with Louis himself, à la the Morton records, with music interspersed between narration and comments? Why not, for that matter, more such documentations of other "jazz greats" while they are still available?

—Mimi Clar

cal ideas and with good swing. He plays about two-thirds of *Memphis Blues* with an expressive use of its melodies and with a feeling of warm and pensive nostalgia that is very compelling. And some of the things he does on *Memphis* show that sense of capricious light comedy which he can usually call on.

On the other hand, on tracks like *Hilton Avenue* and *Bluff* he does not seem to be using melodic ideas but simply toying and doodling around with notes and, although his time is good, playing with little swing. The compositional approach of Vic Dickenson, especially on his very good solos on *Bear Wallow* and *Parade* is the starker kind of contrast, as is the quickness of Red Richards' mind in introducing real ideas on the up-tempo *Hot Water*.

Fast tempo also does in almost everyone else on *Parade*, and since I happen to admire the underrated Hilton Jefferson so much, I am particularly sorry that his fingers sound a bit out of practice here.

If anyone wants to know what I meant by "Harlem circa 1936" above, Herman Autrey's riff-style "jive" trumpet might be the best answer.

My admiration for the accompaniments of Ramey and Crawford runs high indeed.

—M. W.

BUDD JOHNSON: Blues A La Mode.
Felsted FAJ 7007.

Charlie Shavers, trumpet; Vic Dickenson, trombone; Budd Johnson, tenor sax-arranger; Al Sears, baritone sax; Bert Keyes, piano-organ (or Ray Bryant, piano); Joe Benjamin, bass; Jo Jones, drums.

Foggy Nights; *Leave Room in Your Heart For Me*; *Destination Blues*; *A La Mode*; *Used Blues*; *Blues by Five*.

Budd Johnson has been an important figure on the jazz scene for over thirty years but especially since he took charge of Earl Hines's bands as director and principal arranger beginning in 1939, and following through in a similar capacity with Billy Eckstine's great bop band in 1945 and on the 52nd Street scene as well. Budd fits in everywhere, in any band and in any record session. This lp should help a lot in putting him back where he belongs, both as a writer and prodigious soloist.

Those used to the thick tone he had in the Hines days will be somewhat surprised to hear how light his tone is here. This lp really captures his sound beautifully, and the others rise to the occasion with equal inspiration. Charlie Shavers hasn't played as well on record in quite some time, casting off the clown role and playing some well-constructed and thoughtful solos on all the tracks.

All the titles are by Budd, and the lp kicks things off with a rocking medium blues set against harbor sounds and is quite effective. Charlie has a nice muted solo here, as does Vic Dickenson.

You might call the second title, a lovely ballad, a memorial to Prez.

BUDD JOHNSON: Blues A La Mode.
Felsted FAJ7007.

Tracks 1, 3, 5: Johnson, tenor; Charlie Shavers, trumpet; Vic Dickenson, trombone; Al Sears, baritone; Bert Keyes, piano and organ (track 5); Joe Benjamin, bass; Jo Jones, drums. Tracks 2, 4, 6: Johnson; Shavers; Ray Bryant, piano; Benjamin; Jones.

Foggy Nights; *Leave Room In Your Heart For Me*; *Destination Blues*; *A La Mode*; *Used Blues*; *Blues By Five*.

If you don't know about Budd Johnson, you should; the respect he commands is large, widespread, and certainly deserved. He has been, among other things, behind-the-scene organizer-musical-director for many an important band, and his career has covered every scene from Kansas City in 1927 through Armstrong (and Teddy Wilson joined together) through early bop. He directed Earl Hines' wartime band and later Billy Eckstine's.

His chief functions have been as composer-arranger and musical director. Here, although he contributed

because Budd, perhaps consciously, plays and sounds quite like him, although retaining his own ideas and lines. The feeling catches Charlie, too.

Destination Blues has something for those oriented to modern jazz. Budd's solo flows and displays his feeling and intimacy with current trends. Charlie and Vic each have good moments, and the rhythm is even and strong.

A La Mode is another piece with modern touches and has some good Ray Bryant piano, modern and interesting. Budd's second solo has touches of both Bird and Prez, while Charlie has excellent control, and Joe Benjamin's full bass tone keeps the rhythm moving.

Used Blues actually could be split into a 45 rpm single, because it builds two successive climaxes, the first leading up to Bert Keyes's organ solo, with Budd displaying a very deep tone on his solos. Both Charlie and Vic have good solos, and Keyes's organ work is effective particularly on his fill-ins toward the close of this track.

Blues by Five has, as the notes point out, some very interesting solos by Ray Bryant wherein he recalls the spirit of Earl Hines, and some awfully good fours by Charlie and Budd, and Jo mixes it up at the end and keeps his good time, better here than on many of the recent records he's made. The writing here is modern and interesting, as it is on all the tracks.

This lp is definitely recommended.
—Frank Driggs

melodies and slight heads, his chief function is as soloist.

One would have to be frigid indeed not to find his solo on *Nights* compelling, but most of Johnson's playing here reflects a deep love of Lester Young. He has caught aspects of it that few others have, and his harder tone remains his own, but, except perhaps on *Used Blues*, he does not show the flow that several others have, nor the over-all cohesion.

Charlie Shavers swings on *Nights* but hardly at all elsewhere; he just ably throws out those flashy phrases. Again, Dickenson is the best soloist, and some of the personal witty things he does against that trite uptown-barroom electric organ on *Used Blues* are delightful. I think maybe Vic Dickenson, like Buck Clayton, plays today better than he ever has—and I'd rather hear him than . . . well, a lot of trombonists.

Ray Bryant and Joe Benjamin—those *ringers*—certainly play well.

—M. W.

blue note

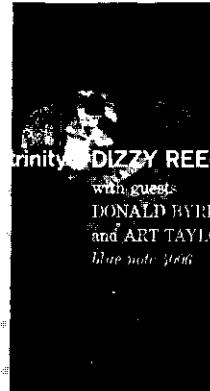
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BLUE MITCHELL: *Big Six*. Riverside RLP 12-273.

Mitchell, trumpet; Curtis Fuller, trombone; Johnny Griffin, tenor; Wynton Kelly, piano; Wilbur Ware, bass; Philly Joe Jones, drums.

Blues March; Big Six; There Will Never Be Another You; Brother 'Ball; Jamph; Sir John; Promenade.

Blue Mitchell plays beautifully throughout this album. His conception is full-bodied and energetic and he maintains an inner calm that permits strong feeling to flow into his playing without any overtones of hysteria or violence. He makes a clear, ringing sound that sometimes becomes wonderfully mellow. Occasionally it changes abruptly, as if the bell had suddenly been removed from his horn, and becomes shallow and pipy. This may be the horn, or he may have gotten off-mike in these instances, it's hard to tell. But his affection for rich tonal quality is obvious.

Griffin is also an energetic player, but the forcefulness with which he plays seems to be somewhat inhibited by the pinched quality of his tone. His basic sound is more that of an alto than a tenor sax. He creates the illusion of a bigger sound with hardness, giving the impression that he's driving a column of air through a small opening with such violence that it shatters. I like his imagination,

JELLY ROLL MORTON: *The King of New Orleans Jazz*. RCA Victor, LPM-1649.

Grandpa's Spells; Original Jelly Roll Blues; Jungle Blues; The Pearls; Beagle Street Blues; Kansas City Stomp; Shoe Shiners' Drag; Black Bottom Stomp; Steamboat Stomp; Doctor Jazz; Cannonball Blues; Sidewalk Blues; The Chant; Dead Man's Blues; Smokehouse Blues; Georgia Swing.

These are the classic Red Hot Pepper numbers. Since personnel in the Red Hot Pepper group changed from top to bottom in different recording sessions, it is fortunate that more than half of these numbers involve the most productive grouping: the Ory-Mitchell-Simeon front line and the St-Cyr-Lindsay-Hilaire rhythm section.

Kid Ory is in his idiom here, more so than in front of his own bands, since his New Orleans ensemble trombone is not called on for solo work too often. What trombone solos remain, with a few delightful exceptions, are weak points in these numbers. Ory in the ensemble work is splendid. Dig especially the final choruses in *Black Bottom Stomp*, the first chorus in *Doctor Jazz*, or all the

courage, and his feeling for keeping the time swinging.

Fuller's tone is fat when he has his slide centered on the pitch he's playing, but he often makes fine tuning adjustments with his lip rather than his slide, robbing his tone of some of its resonance. He's a very good soloist. Both he and Griffin are less effective in ensemble. Many of the tunes begin and end with the band sounding like a small tired group in a strip joint and only begin to express the musical interest of the musicians on the blowing choruses. The short *Promenade* is written out entirely and the result resembles an effort by the Salvation Army rather than a jazz band.

The rhythm section is marvelous. Wynton has a magnificent touch and rhythmic feel that is always present. His solos are strong personal statements and he is able to genuinely

photo by Larry Shustak, courtesy Riverside Records



ensemble in *Steamboat Stomp*. Of course there is also the magnificent backing he provides for the second riff chorus of *Dead Man's Blues*.

George Mitchell never recorded as well as he did on these sides. Here he is an incomparable lead trumpet for the idiom—forceful, economical, driving. He solos well on *Steamboat Stomp*, *Cannonball Blues*, and the stop-time opening chorus of *Sidewalk Blues*.

Omer Simeon, the only man in the whole group who ever moved beyond New Orleans jazz successfully, is equally at home here, with the right tone and spirit. He shines particularly on *The Chant* and *Doctor Jazz*.

Jelly Roll is in all his many-sided glory—as leader, arranger, composer, part of the powerful rhythm section, soloist, and (what is the most luminous facet of his creativity) his piano as an ensemble or supporting melody instrument. Jelly in this last-named capacity is at his height in smaller units, particularly clarinet trios, since he there occupies this role almost exclusively. But in these Red Hot Pepper numbers, there are magnificent

accompany other soloists without any insistence on co-composing their solos. Philly takes care of much business all the way. He has a wonderful instinct for keeping the swing alive on everyone's choruses.

Wilbur is very strong in the section, but his choruses here, though an accurate sample of his approach to solo playing, give little indication of the tremendous choruses he is capable of playing. I've heard him give similar ideas so much more potent feeling; this must have been an off day for him.

I like Blue's gentle ballad treatment of *There Will Never Be Another You*, a tune that is usually raced through by jazz players for blowing the changes. He has written a couple of the tunes himself, good straight-ahead originals. Benny Golson's *March* is interesting, and Fuller's *Jamph* (I guess that title had to show up sooner or later) is a pleasant minor vehicle. *Big Six* is such a thinly disguised *Limehouse Blues* that it would have been more sporting to have credited William Boone, Jr. with the arrangement rather than the composition. His *Promenade*, is actually a rather nice little hymn, and, as I say, would be done more justice by horn men who have a better feeling for ensemble playing.

—Bill Crow

illustrations of Jelly playing behind others: behind Ory on *Smokehouses Blues*, behind the ensemble on *Steamboat Stomp*, behind the three clarinets on *Sidewalk Blues*, behind the banjo and later behind the front line on *Cannonball Blues*, and behind Simeon on *Doctor Jazz*. Note on *Smokehouse Blues* how he begins to break in on Simeon unobtrusively about halfway through the clarinet solo, then builds up more and more so that the beginning of the piano solo is accomplished without a ripple.

The six numbers with other personnel are not nearly as successful, save for some good moments. (I have always been fascinated by Jelly's solo on *Georgia Swing*, the phrasing in bars 7-11.) It is interesting that Johnny Dodds and Jelly, both great jazz individualists and both good at working within the framework of this size band, never could create well together—or, to be more exact, always clashed badly when playing together. Nothing on this record is quite as disastrous as their trio *Wolverine* effort, however.

—Guy Waterman

SONNY ROLLINS: *Newk's Time*. Blue Note 4001.

Sonny Rollins, tenor sax; Wynton Kelly, piano; Doug Watkins, bass; Philly Joe Jones, drums.

Tune up; Asiatic Raes; Wonderful! Wonderful!; The Surrey with the Fringe on Top; Blues for Philly Joe; Namely You.

As Gunther Schuller has pointed out, Sonny Rollins is one of the few modern jazz soloists who uses melodic development in his improvisations. He often takes fragments of the melody of the tune he is playing and builds a whole solo using these fragments as the thematic material. At its best this style results in a solo that has a certain recognizable melodic relationship to the original tune. Sonny, like the later Lester Young, Ahmad Jamal and others, approaches each tune as a unique musical challenge. Not only are the harmonic changes retained, but certain other important elements of the song permeate his best improvisation. Unlike Prez, however, it is not the mood of the original tune that Sonny recreates, rather it is a development of some musical nuggets suggested by the original melody which Sonny repeats and develops, creating a formalistic design of great intricacy.

Of the tunes recorded here, those which supply him with the most interesting melodic material result in the best improvisations, *Blues for Philly Joe* being the best example. Sonny chooses to ignore the good melodic material in *Wonderful! Wonderful!* in favor of some arpeggiated figures which chase up and down delightfully all over the range of the tenor. Only in the fours with Philly Joe does he begin to take advantage of the interesting melody.

Characteristically, in *Surrey* Sonny takes one element of the song, the monotonous droning on the dominant note, and toys with this throughout the improvisation which is done without bass or piano. He retains the motive of repetition of the dominant note without the character and mood that this repetition had in the original, where it was used as an imitation of horses' hooves. Only at the tag end of the last chorus does Sonny suggest this extramusical element that makes the original version so charming.

If *Blues for Philly Joe* is not Sonny's best improvisation, then it surely reaches a level of achievement of which he can well be proud. His solo is, without stretching the imagination, very nearly a true rondo. He states the theme twice, the second

time with more intricate embellishments, then improvises freely for a while. He then returns to the theme for a moment, continues with new material, and again returns with a longer statement of the original theme. There is one more short free section and a brief return of a fragment of the theme. Roughly, it looks like this: A A B A C A D A. All this happens with a quality of spontaneity not suggested by this formal analysis. This kind of well-formulated solo is a natural development in the work of any skilled improviser. The rondo is not the most sophisticated of musical forms, and it is certainly one of the easiest to improvise, but this is not the reason it turns up here in Sonny's playing. It is a form that is part of our musical environment, and anyone who grows up in the Western world cannot help but be influenced by what he hears. Under ideal circumstances his improvising will naturally fall into some familiar form.

Doug Watkins and Wynton Kelly perform superbly here in their supporting roles. They are both craftsmen of the highest caliber. Philly Joe Jones matches Sonny in musicality, drive, and inventiveness throughout the record, but in *Blues for Philly Joe* everyone outdoes himself. Doug seems to be the kind of bass player who can get together with almost anybody, and Wynton is a strong pianist with an approach similar to Kenny Drew's.

Namely You is humorous and also shows Wynton off to good advantage. *Tune up* is less successful because it is a monotonous sequence of cadences in descending keys without any thematic material for Sonny to develop.

There is one serious drawback to the complete enjoyment of this record. The indiscriminate mixing of microphones (with and without electronic echo) is a negation of the concept of "fidelity." This particular recording technique sets up a situation in which the rhythm section seems to be playing up close in a dead room, and the horn player sounds as though he were playing in an empty gymnasium. Not only is this unfaithful reproduction, it's unmusical.

Sonny's sound is warm, masculine, and vital; sometimes raucous and squeaky, but never as harsh as he sounds here. The echo chamber accentuates the dissonances produced by the upper harmonics in each tone of the sax. This results in an unpleasant effect seldom heard in a live performance or in a clean recording.

—Chuck Israels

JAZZ/HI-FI NOTES

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On Good Time Jazz, The Famous Castle Jazz Band of Portland, Oregon, comes up with 12 happy and hi-fi Dixieland performances of tunes featured in the new Danny Kaye picture, *The Five Pennies*. Four new tunes and eight old favorites: *My Blue Heaven, Indiana, Ja-da, That's A Plenty*, etc. (Good Time Jazz M12037 & Stereo S10037).

Sonny Rollins, the "colossus" of the tenor sax, is back for his second Contemporary album, this time with the top stars who record for CR: Shelly Manne, Barney Kessel, Hampton Hawes, Leroy Vinnegar, and Victor Feldman (on one tune). Naturally the album is called *Sonny Rollins & The Contemporary Leaders*. Sonny picked eight tunes, all standards. It's a must for Rollins fans.

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SONNY STITT: *The Saxophones of Sonny Stitt*. Roost LP2230.

Stitt, alto (tracks 2, 4, 9, 11) and tenor (other tracks) with unidentified piano, bass, drums.

Happy Faces; Am I Blue; I'll Be See You; When You're Smiling; In A Little Spanish Town; Them There Eyes; Back In Your Own Backyard; Foot Tapper; Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child; Shadow Waltz; Wind Up.

Since one of the talents that Stitt has is one that keeps ideas coming so constantly and in such variety, maybe the programming of so many tracks (even for a quartet date) wasn't such a good thing. There may be an lp that catches him in that devastating tour de force of length without monotony (and without resorting to tricks) that can cut almost anyone down, but I haven't heard it, and I have often heard him do it before an audience.

Stitt can play, we know, but the news here is particularly on *Am I Blue* and *Backyard*, where his more original tenor style shows that it is absorbing and really assimilating

more and more of his less original Parker alto style. The result may be one style and a more personal one for Sonny Stitt. Good.

The theme of *Motherless Child* is stated with passion and some beauty, but Stitt seems to throw it away otherwise, with little variation. *Shadow Waltz* (played with a rhythm I'd better call "Latinized $\frac{3}{4}$ " for lack of a better description) is likewise briefly tossed off with little more than a statement of melodic line.

There are some good things, I think. The very wonderful way that Stitt reorganizes the melody of *Backyard* against a rhythm in "two" with such apparent casualness and ease is something to hear. And it takes quite a player to weave his way in and out of complexities with such sureness as Stitt does on his *Wind Up*.

And what's the big secret about who those other guys are? They sure kept a tough pace, rhythmically and emotionally.

—M. W.

BASIE REUNION. Prestige 7147.

Paul Quinichette, tenor; Buck Clayton and Shad Collins, trumpets; Jack Washington, baritone sax; Nat Pierce, piano; Freddie Greene, guitar; Eddie Jones, bass; Jo Jones, drums.

Blues I Like to Hear; Love Jumped Out; John's Idea; Baby Don't Tell On Me; Roseland Shuffle.

Shad Collins plays the most interesting solos on this album. Buck sounds good, but this is certainly not an example of his most inspired work. Both trumpeters have rich tones and good time.

Paul Quinichette plays some very nice notes and generates a good time feeling, but I don't like his tone, a rough imitation of Lester's that is predominantly a kazoo-like buzz. Jack Washington's sound is heavily reedy, but this seems to be caused by rustiness (the liner notes indicate that he plays mostly alto nowadays) rather than by intent. He plays some strong choruses, despite occasional spots where his impulses seem momentarily interrupted by his awkwardness with the instrument.

The rhythm section gets into a good groove most of the way, Greene and Ed Jones having the most relaxed control. Jo Jones still plays with a remarkably good feeling, most of the time but gets a little loud and wild behind some of the ensembles. The way he plays sticks on his hi-hats is tremendous, but his control of the heavy ride cymbal leaves much to be desired.

Nat Pierce knows the Basie tradition well, and generally does a thorough job. It is his bolting ahead that often unsettles the time, however. His best control is of relaxed time and consequently his best choruses appear on the up-tempo *John's Idea*.

The simple friendly tunes are all 1937-1940 Basie. Some of them sound thin because of the missing parts, and this problem was certainly not solved by pouring on the echo. The ensembles, especially the faster ones, get so muggy because of such mechanics that the effect of the simple swinging figures is all but lost. Compare this recording formula (I include recent records of the Basie band) with Count's Columbia recordings of the forties. Though the fidelity was not "high" in those days, I find I can clearly hear the bass, the guitar, and the inside parts in all the sections. And the beauty of cleanly played attacks and releases is not impaired by exaggerated echo, though there is a nice live ring to the sound of the instruments because the records were made in a large, acoustically favorable hall.

I continue to resent having to listen to music through an artificial wall of false echo. It's like trying to look at a painting through sunglasses. If "fidelity" in sound is the goal, the recording industry gets farther away every year in their monaural jazz releases.

—Bill Crow

THE GOSPEL CLEFS: Savoy MG 14023.

Leon Lumpkins, Rev. Huston, Enoch Franklin, Louis Johnson, Joe De Loach, Robert Byrd, Raymond Andrews.

Steal Away; Wings of a Dove; The Lord Saved Me; Rise Up and Walk; Go Down Go Down; Why; Open Our Eyes; Big Wheel; How Long Has It Been Since You Prayed; His Truth Is Marching On; Roll Billows Roll; Book of Revelations.

The liner describes the Gospel Clefs as "seven Christ-minded men . . . recognized as champions in the highly competitive gospel singing world." Elsewhere such expressions as "hit the coveted stardom mark overnight," "the hottest gospel group on records," "great from the day they first sang together in a rehearsal" are used to laud the efforts of the Gospel Clefs. All this may be very true, but the press-agency jargon employed here, while fine for promoting rock and roll groups or for Ozzie telling Harriet about Ricky, strikes me as a little out of character for a gospel organization. The notes sound as if they were written by Laura Reed, a worldly-minded preacher in Langston Hughes's book *Tambourines to Glory*, to rope in all sinners as quickly and profitably as possible.

The Gospel Clefs are essentially a funky group, most at home and most convincing in numbers with a businesslike waddle. An Art Blakey bass drum pattern (like that used on *Bye-Ya* with Monk) helps lift the best track, *His Truth Is Marching On*, out of the Salvation Army musical catalogue into a soul-stirring shout. The Clefs have reworked several numbers rhythmically, converting *Steal Away* and *Go Down Go*

THE ROBERTA MARTIN SINGERS: Grace, Savoy MG 14022.

Certainly Lord; Grace; I Can Make It; Ride On King Jesus; Talk About a Child; He'll Make You Happy; I Found Him; Rock My Soul; God Specializes; He's All Ready Done What He Said He Would Do; Back to the Fold.

The Roberta Martin Singers of Chicago form a closely knit group of gospel singers. The four female voices blend cohesively with the single male voice, as the Singers present forthright renditions of various gospel songs.

Though a dignified and self-contained organization, the Roberta Martin Singers are not lacking in vitality. And they know how to swing, as its very evident on *Rock My Soul*, *Talk About a Child*, *Ride On King Jesus*, *He's All (sic) Ready Done What He Said He Would Do*. Rock

Down from their characteristic slow contexts into speeded-up romps. *Steel Away* "jazzes" successfully, but *Go Down*, with a chugging accompaniment, loses its character as well as the meaning of its text as a result of the acceleration.

In waltzes like *Wings of a Dove* and *Why*, the Gospel Clefs tend to get static and overly repetitious, due in part to their hitting climaxes near the beginning of the tracks, which affords no contrast of suspense for the listener. Also wearying is the heavy accompaniment which pounds out all beats with the heavy force of children playing tom-toms Indian style (*The Lord Saved Me*) or which accents beat one too persistently throughout.

Wings of a Dove, beginning "If I had the wings of a dove, Wings that could take me where I want to go, I would fly through the ozone and way, way, way out into space. But no, no, no, no, I couldn't find a hidin' place," is reminiscent of a blues verse that goes:

If I had wings, like Nora's
[Noah's] faithful dove—
Had strong wings, like Nora's
faithful dove,
I would fly away, to de man I
I would fly away, to de man I
love.

Leon Lumpkins, Rev. Huston, Enoch Franklin, Louis Johnson, Joe De Loach, Robert Byrd, and Raymond Andrews make up the Gospel Clefs. Andrews' (?) voice is a surprise—it's a high soprano, like a woman, not falsetto. Hear him on *Roll Billows Roll*.

—Mimi Clar

My Soul, in which verse is like a small sermon in itself building each time to an exultant "Rock me!", and *He's All Ready Done What He Said He Would Do* are further enhanced by skipping brush patterns on the snare drums. The male soloist and female chorus engage in an antiphonal ping-pong in *Talk About a Child*, as they trade phrases rapidly back and forth. The swing created is easy and effortless, as though the process were second nature to them.

The waltzes—*He'll Make You Happy*, *I Can Make It*, *Grace*, *Back to the Fold*—and the slower pieces retain some of the vitality of the rhythm numbers; they never lack in interest. The snare drum brushes add to *Back to the Fold*. Individually, the Singers' voices are of a fine quality and may be heard to full advantage on the slow tracks.

—Mimi Clar

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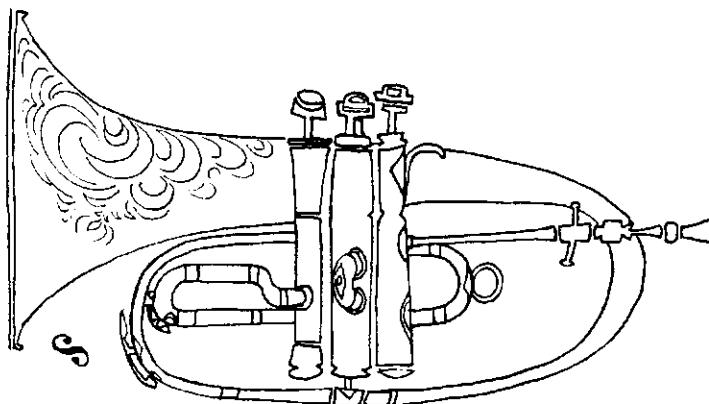
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Reconsiderations



YOUNG LOUIS ARMSTRONG.
Riverside RLP 12-101.

Alligator Hop; Krooked Blues; I'm Going Away to Wear You Off My Mind (with King Oliver's Creole Band); *Mandy, Make Up Your Mind* (with Fletcher Henderson Orchestra); *Jelly Bean Blues; Countin' the Blues* (with Ma Rainey); *Terrible Blues; Santa Claus Blues; Of All the Wrong You've Done to Me; Nobody Knows the Way I Feel This Morning; Cake Walking Babies From Home* (with Red Onion Jazz Babies); *The Railroad Blues* (with Trixie Smith).

These old sides are of some importance historically, as repetition of a couple of familiar truisms will make clear. First truism: Few men in any art make a contribution important enough to affect the entire future of that art. Jazz has had its few: Louis, Prez, Bird, Dizzy, and not many others. Louis is the first in line, chronologically at least. Second truism: Just about everybody, including the great innovators, begins by playing like an admired predecessor, or several of them.

When you compare a man's later playing with that of his elders, you find out what, if anything, he has added. Louis's prime elder was Joe Oliver, Louis' early development out of (or on) Oliver's style is what this album gives us. Riverside has included three tracks by the Oliver band in this set. Whatever their reasons were for doing so, it ends up a wise decision, as we can compare the two trumpeters side by side, hear how much Louis owes to Oliver and just how much he added himself.

Listening to records of very early musicians can be more of a chore than a pleasure, and I don't mean the low fidelity. An inept sense of time, unintentionally wavering pitch, and embarrassingly bad ideas mar the majority of early records to some degree or other. There are those that

are free from these faults; in the others, you listen for the isolated moments which have remained good: a note, a phrase, sometimes a whole chorus. Because of its age, this set inevitably has its share of these failings which may unfortunately close the ears of somebody who hasn't built up the necessary tolerance, or at least patience. I say unfortunately, because this album has moments which rank with the best jazz of any period, though none of it was recorded later than early 1925. Predictably, most of the moments are Louis', a few Oliver's.

The album includes three tunes by Oliver's Creole Jazz Band, one by Fletcher Henderson, two by Ma Rainey, one by Trixie Smith, and five by the Red Onion Jazz Babies.

In spite of the fact that Louis plays a subordinate role, two of the Oliver tracks, *Alligator Hop* and *Krooked Blues*, are more consistently satisfying than any other performances on the album. This is partly because there is less bad playing, partly because the group has such a superior ensemble technique. In addition, Johnny Dodds is far preferable to Buster Bailey, who is the clarinet on most of the other tracks. Oliver, of course, is the dominant figure on his own records. He is in good shape here and plays very well. On *Alligator Hop*, taken moderately fast, Louis is barely audible; Oliver plays a straight, simple lead until the final two choruses (after an unremarkable Dodds solo) when he begins to shout magnificently. On the final chorus he reaches up and plays a couple of very impressive ideas. You can hear Louis' beginning in these phrases of Oliver's.

Krooked Blues is not a blues, but a pleasant 16-bar tune, moderately

slow, with breaks between each chorus (by Oliver, Dutrey, Dodds, and Evans). Except for the breaks, it is all relaxed ensemble work. Oliver plays a series of strong, simple variations with the power and feeling that set him above his contemporaries. He is muted on the last two choruses. Louis is clearly audible, easy to follow, playing a fine second part with little runs and fill-ins.

The third Oliver track, *I'm Going Away to Wear You Off My Mind* is one of those early recordings where low fidelity is a really serious handicap, and where grouping the musicians around the recording horn seemed to be a pretty hit-or-miss operation. What is salvageable of the music is mostly Johnny Dodds, who is not as good here as elsewhere, and brother Baby on wood blocks. There is a terrible piano solo by Lil Hardin. Oliver can be heard fairly steadily, though dimly, and he is hard to follow. Only a note here and there of Louis. The tune itself is a pleasant one, as it should be with its poignant title, but there is no reason for including it in a set under Louis' name.

The Henderson track is *Mandy, Make Up Your Mind*. Louis and Henderson each have a chorus; Coleman Hawkins has three breaks; otherwise it's all ensemble. Not the blowing ensemble of the Oliver band, but written section work, and the writing is unspeakably bad throughout. Louis is audible in the trumpet section, though not playing lead; his chorus is in a clipped, abbreviated style less effective, for me, than most of his work on the rest of the album. Maybe the tune held him down.

The Red Onion Jazz Babies are two quintets, having Louis, Lil, and Buddy Christian (banjo) in common. On *Terrible Blues, Santa Claus Blues,*

and *Of All The Wrong You've Done to Me*, they are joined by Buster Bailey and Aaron Thompson (trombone). *Nobody Knows the Way I Feel This Morning* and *Cake Walking Babies from Home*, Sidney Bechet (soprano only) and Charlie Irvis (trombone) complete the group. Buster Bailey is often inadequate, subject from time to time to all the ills mentioned above. Thompson is competent but dated. *Terrible Blues* is a good performance in spite of mediocre sidemen because Louis is so fine. Oliver is his model in the ensemble, but to Oliver's style he has added a subtler sense of time, a more imaginative structure to his lines, and the expert use of hesitations and grace notes completely foreign to Oliver's playing.

Louis' time and tone might derive from Bunk Johnson to some degree. Though denying him as a teacher, Louis did express an early admiration for Bunk, and the recorded evidence shows elements in Louis' playing (chiefly time and tone) which were like Bunk rather than Oliver. Bunk's status, both as an influence and as a player, has been made hard to express fairly because of the quantities of undeserved praise and equally undeserved scorn that have been heaped on him, and also because he recorded only during the forties, making judgments about his earlier work open to legitimate question. His good records (unfortunately a small minority of the ones I have heard) like *Down By the Riverside*, show a trumpet with much in common with the early Louis, and his contemporaries.

To continue this digression, the point has been forcefully and correctly made, by Leonard Feather and others, that jazz was not born in New Orleans alone, that the music was the product of the entire (though predominantly southern) American Negro scene. To say this is one thing; it is not to say (as has been maintained as a corollary) that the New Orleans players and the New Orleans contribution were no more remarkable than those of other cities. Questions of taste creep in here, as well as questions of historical accident (i.e., who just happened to be recorded), but the recorded remains seem to indicate that of all the very early trumpeters, say those recorded before 1925, the best New Orleans men like, say, Oliver, Ladnier, and Louis were more advanced and have worn better over the years than those from Louisville, New York, and other

towns who tended to be more raggy, ricky-ticky, and less "soulful."

As a group, of course, the New Orleans men lost this superiority by the middle of the twenties, but only in the sense that they were joined by a host of others who were beginning to reach their level. And even during the early thirties nobody was cutting Louis and Red Allen. These two, though in some ways far removed from the styles of Bunk and Oliver, retained much contributed by the older men and built on the original styles rather than diverged from them (compare them with Joe Smith, Beiderbecke, Jabbo Smith, Bubber Miley, and other fine players outside this tradition). And strangely enough, listening to the Louis and Allen of this later period, Bunk, with his delayed attack and relatively subtle time, comes to mind as supplying roots as strong as, or stronger than, Oliver's.

The point of this digression is that Louis was not just a genius who sprung newborn from the brow of King Oliver, but the peak of an established and varied tradition of which Oliver was only a part, though a major part.

Terrible Blues also includes a chorus by Louis which is one of his earliest totally successful solos. It is in this solo that he is conceptually farthest from Oliver in this album. Oliver's solos (and Louis' with the Oliver band) had been in the ensemble lead style; they hadn't varied their phrasing just because they happened to be taking a solo. Like most pre-Louis New Orleans trumpeters, Oliver sounds more comfortable in the ensemble and is most effective there. In this solo, Louis' organization and climaxing are, as far as I know, something completely new and the beginnings of his great contributions as a soloist. His two breaks later in the record revert to the Oliver style, which is no real loss, as Oliver was excellent at short, simple breaks.

The same remarks apply to Louis' ensemble work on *Santa Claus Blues* and *Of All the Wrong*. On the latter, Louis has a muted solo over stop chords which doesn't quite come off.

Nobody Knows is entirely a vocal by Alberta Hunter under the pseudonym Josephine Beatty. Louis and Bechet function as unobtrusive accompanists; neither has much to do, and Bechet is a little repetitious. Alberta Hunter's singing does not impress me. *Cake Walking Babies* is an excellent driving performance hideously marred by a duet vocal

by Beatty and Todd in a style recalling burlesque and barbershops. Louis is first-rate throughout. Charlie Irvis is an effective trombonist, slippery but gutty. He preceded Nanton with Ellington and is one of the first sources of Ellington's fondness for muted brass. Listen to Louis on the first half of the chorus following the vocal, then turn back and listen to Oliver on the last chorus of *Alligator Hop*.

The remaining three tracks are vocals, two by Ma Rainey: *Jelly Bean Blues* and *Countin' the Blues*; one by Trixie Smith: *Railroad Blues*. The accompanying players are out of the Henderson band; the horns are Louis, Bailey, and trombonist Charlie Green who is solid and has a sense of humor. Ma Rainey's singing is somber with only slight vibrato. She sounds as though she could command a lot of volume; the old recording techniques probably didn't do her justice. Her phrasing is a little repetitious and dull rhythmically, especially next to Louis whose time is always so fine. Trixie Smith has a lighter, higher voice with a somewhat wobbly vibrato. She has Ma Rainey's faults without Ma's depth.

Louis is least effective on *Countin' the Blues* where he talks with a mute in Oliver fashion. His horn is open on *Jelly Bean* and *Railroad Blues*, both of which have beautiful openings. Of all the tracks in the album, it is *Railroad Blues* on which Louis sounds most like Oliver. Except for the unmistakable vibrato, it could be Oliver on the eight-bar introduction. Louis even closes up his tone a little and gets a bit of Oliver's acid sound. On his choruses he is more characteristic of himself, but it is not an example of his best work.

These records are typical of Louis as he was the year or so after he left Oliver. They are valuable both for their moments of beauty and for the information they supply about the development of the first great soloist. It seems to me that Louis' greatest contribution was rhythmic. Oliver had swung before him, but not consistently; Louis swung almost every note he played. In a way, the presence of lesser musicians in this album is a blessing; we are so used to hearing Louis' rhythmic contribution in all the players that followed him that we take them for granted. When we hear them here alongside men who didn't have the advantage of having absorbed Louis' example, we can be more properly impressed.

—Maitland Edey

REVIEWS: BOOKS

Jazzmen, edited by Frederic Ramsey, Jr., and Charles Edward Smith. (Harcourt, Brace, 1939.) Harvest Books, 1959.

The first important book written about jazz is now back in print in paperback and everyone who does not own a copy is urged to buy one. On the twentieth anniversary of its publication, the book's historical importance remains undimmed, even though parts of it have dated and other parts now appear of questionable interest.

Jazzmen was the first book to take jazz criticism out of the hands of the impressionists and enthusiasts like Hughes Panassié and Otis Ferguson and place it in the hands of writers who were scholars and researchers. Sooner or later someone would have used historical investigation to put jazz in perspective—indeed people such as William Russell had made a start before *Jazzmen* appeared—but it is to Ramey and Smith's credit that they convinced Harcourt, Brace to put this conception between book covers, and that they secured competent people to write the chapters. The result vindicated their judgment, not only in the popularity of the book (which has gone through several printings) but also in the fact that virtually all serious jazz books since their time have used their methods and drawn on their research.

In their introduction the editors make clear that they are attempting to do something which has not been done before. In the late thirties it was a new tack.

In preparing *Jazzmen* we have had a very definite purpose in mind: to relate the story of jazz as it has unfolded about the men who created it, the musicians themselves. . . . For it is the musicians, the creators of jazz, who have actually been most neglected while critical battles have been fought. We feel their story, heretofore untold, is of major value.

Ramsey and Smith searched out the musicians themselves, interviewed them, checked the results against sources, followed with a second interview to clear up doubtful points, and made the results available to their contributors. One major coup resulted from this method: the discovery of Bunk Johnson in a Louisiana rice field, and his remarkable comeback. Much of the chapter on New Orleans music seems to have been based on Bunk's recollection. This fact points up one of the meth-

od's limitations, a limitation in jazz scholarship as a whole: personal reminiscences form one of the few primary sources we have in reconstructing jazz history, yet by their very nature they cannot be very accurate and hardly can be taken as a reliable basis for substantiating facts. Again, in the New Orleans music chapter of *Jazzmen*, the events of Buddy Bolden's legendary career are largely put forward as fact, although many details have never been verified. Such stories are colorful and have a place in reconstructing jazz's past, but they cannot be treated as fact.

It is interesting that much as the editors emphasize how they are applying historical methods to their study, *Jazzmen* is not so much an epoch-making book as it is a transitional one—with one foot back in the intensely personal, rhapsodic world of Panassié and Robert Goffin and the other placed adventurously ahead in the relatively objective, factual world of *Hear Me Talkin' to Ya* and *They All Played Ragtime*. Partly this was due to the choice of contributors, for Otis Ferguson and Wilder Hobson were squarely in the Panassié line. But it was also partly due, I feel, to a confusion or indecision of purpose on the part of the editors. For instance, each of the four sections of the book—New Orleans, Chicago, New York and "Jazz Today"—is prefaced by several pages in italics, which are supposed to set the time and place for the articles to follow, and these essays are impressionist criticism with a vengeance, almost embarrassingly so. (Indeed they may not have seen their equal until the mid-fifties when several unrestrained critics got off their chests what Charlie Parker's death meant to them.) Since co-editor Smith wrote these they must be there by design, yet it is difficult to reconcile them with the editors' avowed purpose in their general introduction.

Nor does the book's main thesis stand up so well twenty years after, although it has unquestionably had a major impact on determining what Americans think about jazz. Ramsey and Smith were evangelists in a way: they were trying to tell the unknowing and the unbelieving about the true faith. By telling the story of jazz's development through the lives of the musicians who were really im-

portant—not those who had become popular, by and large—they hoped to channel the interest in jazz engendered by the swing craze and to counteract the misconceptions which had come with it.

The basic theme of *Jazzmen* is the old familiar "jazz myth" of how it all began in New Orleans, came up the river when Storyville was closed, flourished in gangland Chicago of the early twenties, and then moved to the Tin Pan Alley world of New York, where it was corrupted and from where it also extended, in diluted form, to the world at large. It is impossible to guess how much the dissemination of the "jazz myth" was accomplished by this book—certainly a good part of it. The myth still has some validity, but we now know that the story of jazz is not so wonderfully simple. Jazz was being played in other places in these periods, and it is too bad that the interviewers who so zealously covered New Orleans and Chicago did not wander off the trail and hunt for evidences elsewhere. The material was certainly there for the taking, and every once in a while there are allusions in the book which indicate an awareness that it existed.

The book's theme predetermined the material it would include. For example, there is coverage of New Orleans in the Storyville period, of New Orleans white jazz, of King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band, of the blues, and of such individuals as Louis Armstrong and Bix Beiderbecke. In many other ways the book is indisputably a product of its time. Attitudes and events of the late thirties dominate the selections and the omissions in the text. Boogie-woogie is given too much attention, probably because the boogie craze had been set off just before by the 1938 Carnegie Hall concert of Albert Ammons, Meade Lux Lewis, and Pete Johnson. On the other hand, there is no chapter on a more important piano movement—the Harlem stride school. We may be more aware of the stride school's significance than people were in 1939, but certainly Fats Waller and James P. Johnson were well known, and both of them, and many lesser figures, were very much available to the interviewers.

The book also seems to have a bias against the musicians most prominent in its own day. Almost every musi-

cian who is highly praised, or is given much space, made his reputation before 1930, while those who became well known afterwards are virtually ignored. As an example, the Austin High Gang and Red Nichols' Five Pennies each have a chapter in the book—a prodigal waste of space in terms of the climate today. However, to explain this bias does not excuse it—not that we would expect people writing in 1938 to be aware of the revolutionary importance of Lester Young or Roy Eldridge, but they certainly reveal their prejudices by failing to give proper due to Coleman Hawkins and, to take an earlier "transitional" figure, Earl Hines.

The late thirties were, of course, the era of the big bands and also one of the few times when jazz really had some impact on the nation's consciousness. The editors of *Jazzmen* seem to go out of their way to ignore the swing tradition, probably because they were trying to counteract it. One major result is that big bands are all but ignored in the book. This places an impossible limitation on the book's effort to cover jazz history, because it means an undeniable great figure—Duke Ellington—is not given his proper place (he gets a page and a half). The other great bands and leaders receive the same treatment (Fletcher Henderson does slightly better than Duke in the book).

Leaving aside these omissions, which may be explained by the editors' purposes and prejudices, we still come face to face with one which can be explained on neither ground and which seems all the more amazing when we consider their approach. The figure of Jelly Roll Morton moves in and out of the narrative in tantalizing fashion, but at no point are his contributions discussed. It is possible (although unlikely) that none of the contributors to *Jazzmen* had heard of the Library of Congress recordings, but there were still ample proofs of Jelly Roll's stature available. Certainly many of the musicians who were interviewed must have attested to it, and there were recordings. Jelly Roll surely deserved a chapter, and so does the ragtime movement behind Jelly Roll, although the editors may have left it out on the assumption that ragtime should not be judged part of the jazz tradition (I might add it also avoided the problem of explaining how Sedalia, Missouri, and Charleston, South Carolina, fitted into the New Orleans legend).

So much for what *Jazzmen* failed

to cover. What did it cover, and how relevant is what it did for us today? In its defense is Frederic Ramsey's chapter on King Oliver and the Creole Jazz Band, really a portrait of Oliver's career, and as such is probably as fine a biographical study as any jazz critic has written. It is a model of how the traditional methods of the biographer—research, understanding of the subject, and a lucid writing style—can be used in jazz criticism. Ramsey was greatly aided by three things: a warm, attractive subject in Oliver; a dramatic, colorful story which ends unhappily; and a remarkable series of letters which Oliver wrote to friends and relatives. Ramsey lets these letters tell much of the story of Oliver's decline and final illness, and they are moving documents, especially the poignant final one to his sister, which tears at one's heart, even at third or fourth reading. Ramsey paints an unforgettable picture of the Creole Jazz Band and through it makes us know and love Oliver as a man. Altogether, a remarkable essay.

Only slightly less excellent are several other chapters. William Russell and Stephen W. Smith contribute a solid essay on New Orleans music. Its discussion of the Storyville days has been a major basis for subsequent writing about this period. Charles Edward Smith writes a good chapter on white New Orleans—maybe a little too long but it gives fascinating glimpses of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band and that strange figure, Leon Rappolo. William Russell on Louis Armstrong still ranks as the best single piece on the subject, even though it largely ignores Louis' days with Earl Hines. Russell gives a perceptive analysis of Louis' trumpet style, though. Somewhat less satisfactory, but still quite good, are a number of other chapters.

E. Simms Campbell's coverage of the blues consists almost in entirety of a long interview with Clarence Williams, which roams in somewhat slapdash fashion, over a great deal of ground. It is hardly a serious challenge to the earlier essay by Abbe Niles. Edward J. Nichols does a more than adequate job on Bix Beiderbecke's career, although George Avakian's more thorough study has since supplanted his work. William Russell's discussion of boogie woogie suffers by comparison with Russell's pieces on Jimmy Yancey, Meade Lux Lewis, and Cripple Clarence Lofton—much more concentrated and analytical studies. Rus-

sell treats almost every boogie woogie pianist in sight, probably on the theory that, while the Ammons-Johnson-Lewis combine made the news at Carnegie Hall, there were many other fine boogie woogie players equally worth attention. Charles Edward Smith also contributes a sympathetic, well-constructed piece on the Austin High Gang.

These essays are the sum total of the first two sections in the book—New Orleans and Chicago. The level is high. One is left with the conclusion that the editors' hearts were in this part of the book but not in the remaining two sections. Certainly the quality falls off badly, and the post-Chicago period of jazz is quite inadequately represented. The New York section is given over in its entirety to Wilder Hobson and Otis Ferguson, with every uneven results. Hobson devotes his attention to the impression that Fletcher Henderson's band made on him when it played at a Yale party. He summons up a vivid picture of this incident, but to call it adequate coverage of Harlem jazz and the big-band tradition would be ludicrous.

Otis Ferguson's essay on the Five Pennies is couched in the hardboiled, John O'Hara idiom which was *de rigueur* for magazine pieces about the popular arts in the thirties—and is still exploited today by such people as George Frazier. Once you have recovered from the shock of the chapter title itself and you have determined to swallow the "hep" writing style, you find some worth-while things, for Ferguson was about the best of the impressionist jazz writers. There is an accurate appraisal of the styles of Red Nichols, Miff Mole, and Jack Teagarden, and a just assessment of their limitations. And even better, a genuinely effective evocation of the uneasy world of New York musicians in the twenties, with the frantic chasing after big money and the artistic frustration.

The final section, "Jazz Today" (1939), is a bouillabaisse which never mixes. Wilder Hobson again begins it, with another fragmentary account, this time of 52nd Street in the late thirties—a piece which contains bits and pieces of impressions of musicians in the jazz club—the whole thing highly inconsequential. Then follow two essays—one by Ramsey on Chicago, the other by Smith on New Orleans—which take the writers back to the scenes of jazz's earlier triumphs. Ramsey's ac-

count is really a period piece now—full of information about who is playing where in Chicago in 1938, probably only valuable because it pinpoints what was happening in a specific jazz area at a specific time. Smith's essay stands up better, for it is dipped in nostalgia (the title is "Land of Dreams"), and Smith is good at conjuring up memories. The best pages in the chapter are the brief profile of Chick Webb (inserted to show that, although jazz is virtually dead in New Orleans, it is still alive in other places). When one sees how brilliantly Smith captures Webb, one is doubly sorry that he and Ramsey did not give the same treatment to such people as Basie, Lunceford, Hawkins, and others.

The last two chapters seem aimed at opposite audiences. Stephen W. Smith's "Hot Collecting" could have come straight out of *Esquire*, a popular treatment of a phenomenon of the thirties. On the other hand, Roger Pryor Dodge's "Consider the Critics"

Music '59 Published by Maher Publications (*Down Beat*).

Down Beat has turned out a pretty good yearbook. The events of 1958 are well covered in two sections: a diary of musical news arranged monthly, and a summary of jazz activity during the year arranged regionally. The sections covering the East and Midwest contain good factual reporting with a moderate amount of editorial comment. The Los Angeles area section is written in a breezier style that reads pleasantly but sometimes borders on ambiguity: ". . . Paul Horn flirted awhile with cellist Fred Katz in a quasi-jazz group. . . . the new Mel Lewis-Bill Holman quintet fought for breath."

An article by Bob Rolontz gives a concise survey of the artists and repertoire of the popular field. David Sachs's review of the year's music on Broadway includes perceptive critical remarks. His statement that "the score by Leroy Anderson (*Goldilocks*) was considered pleasant but unexciting" would have been clearer if he had identified the source of opinion. In the remainder of his article Mr. Sachs takes full responsibility for his own views.

The classical field has been reviewed rather inadequately by Don Henahan. He poses a number of questions from several possible points of view but takes none as his own. His main subject is the dilemma of the critic rather than the character of the

is an erudite bibliographical essay on jazz criticism since its beginnings, still interesting reading for anyone curious about the misconceptions which arose about jazz. Perhaps these two essays were included to "round out the picture" about jazz, but I can see no excuse for either of them in a book with this title and purpose.

This paperback is identical to the original. Apparently the editors and publisher have been content to let the book stand as an historic document, rather than to attempt the difficult job of bringing the book up to date in terms of the knowledge of this day. The first two parts can stand on their own in this way, but the final two are largely filled with what we would charitably consider period pieces. It is most unfortunate that the editors did not throw out most, if not all, of these and substitute new articles which could carry the story down to 1940. It would certainly not be either practical or desirable

music. His comments do not make his point of view clear, but indicate that he is leery of defining his own tastes. In his news-tidbits section I find the remark that "Pablo Casals, at 81, performed once again in public after suffering a heart attack and a marriage, in that order," impudent, frivolous, and lacking good taste. His reference to the New York Philharmonic's tour of South America contains an accidental pun that will amuse the devotees of the hip idiom: "Bernstein and Dimitri Mitropoulos . . . were able to report on returning that no U.S. musician was stoned, as Vice President Richard M. Nixon had been earlier."

Leonard Feather avoids making critical comment in his article "Jazz Literature: 1958," on the grounds that he refuses to involve himself in the current rash of "criticism of jazz criticism," claiming that "no reputable critic would stoop to such depths." I wonder if he ever read the searing remarks that George Bernard Shaw and George Jean Nathan aimed at their colleagues while they were writing regular columns of criticism. Personally, I'm glad to see a few writers commenting on criticism as well as music, and I intend to continue to do so myself. The standards of criticism and writing could bear being elevated a little.

If Leonard dislikes critics commenting on each other's work because he feels his position as an authority on jazz is in jeopardy, he may have some grounds for uneasiness. But if

for the book to be brought down through the bop and cool periods, but, as I have indicated, it would be more useful if it included pieces on Morton, the Harlem pianist, Ellington, and other big bands. Also, in the light of what we have learned since, a chapter on the Southwest—Kansas City tradition culminating in Count Basie—would be most welcome. The book's value as a *definite* work on jazz before 1940 diminishes as one ticks off each one of these omissions.

However, I suppose it is ungrateful to ask for more instead of being satisfied with what we have. For *Jazzmen* can still stand on its own, both as a book which has had an impact on our thinking about jazz, on the direction jazz writing has taken, and as a book with important articles on the New Orleans and Chicago periods. It is one of the very few books which has contributed substantially to our understanding of jazz as an art. As such, it deserves to be read.

—Sheldon Meyer

he is interested in good music and good writing about it, he should have taken this opportunity as a reviewer to analyze the quality of the material he was given to review. He attempts to rescue his article from the dryness of a straight list of authors, publishers, titles, and contents by borrowing the opinions of other critics (Orrin Keepnews, Philip Elwood, Ralph Gleason, *The New York Times*).

Martin Williams has selected a basic library of LPs for the beginning jazz listener. The monumental task of selecting some eighty-odd records out of the fantastic catalogue of available material has been done with taste and understanding. Individual preferences will certainly insist on additions to this listing, but none of the records listed should be omitted. Martin's commentary presents the logic of his selections and points out related works, unavailable 78's and the existence of unreleased masters that would more fully round out the list.

Martin's presentation of the role of the small group in jazz (a separate article) is clear and interesting. His writing style approaches professorial stodginess at times, but his information, observational accuracy, and strong point of view ring truly through it all.

John S. Wilson's report on the jazz compositions of 1958 is nicely done. He takes an interesting look at what Duke Ellington has been producing lately, as well as at the extended works of George Russell, Manny Alabam, Dick Cary, John Lewis, John

Mandel, and some others.

"The Hollywood Vine" by John Tynan covers the use of jazz in the music industry.

In "The Trouble With Big Band Jazz" Marshall Brown does a lot of generalized complaining about the cliché-ridden conservatism in current big-band writing, without mentioning whose writing in particular he means. Let's see . . . some of the big-band writers who were active last year were Manny Albam, Quincy Jones, Ernie Wilkins, Al Cohn, Bob Brookmeyer, Gil Evans, George Russell, Neal Hefti, John Mandel, Nelson Riddle, Charles Mingus, Jimmy Giuffre, Teddy Charles, Michel LeGrand, Ellington-Strayhorn, Pete Rugolo, Med Flory, Bill Holman, Lennie Niehaus, Benny Golson, John Graas, Dick Cary, Bill Russo, John LaPorta, John Benson Brooks, Ralph Burns, Harry Arnold, Bill Potts, and others I can't think of or don't know. Now, Brown writes, "Today's top arrangers and composers are not arranging or composing. They are merely manipulating clichés." And farther on, "We are living in the era of the interchangeable arranger." I find these statements difficult to reconcile with the work of the men listed above.

Much of what Marshall Brown says about the current overworking of the Basie idiom is valid as far as it goes. There is a demand for that sort of writing now, and several writers are making a living filling that demand. It is a workable, aesthetically satisfying musical form, and certainly the most jazz-oriented one that has become popular. His complaints about Basie clichés are naïve. Whether the form is taken from Basie, Bird, Monk, Alban Berg, or Montana Slim, a figure becomes a cliché by virtue of its mechanical, unmeaningful use. It is true that the three one-measure examples that Brown submits are often played with banality, but these are such elementary rhythmic figurations that it would be pointless to eliminate them from use in jazz. It would be more valuable for musicians to concentrate on eliminating the attitude that causes the cliché, rather than the figure that has become one.

Brown's article does not point out the real trouble with big-band jazz, which has more to do with money than lack of talent or creative drive. Financial impasses prevent many excellent writers from doing their best work. Others who have found a successful formula for earning a living with their skill hesitate to experiment

recklessly with their only source of income. At the same time, Brown minimizes the quantity and quality of really excellent writing being done at a time when there is so little demand for it.

In the fiction section of this book there are four short stories about jazz musicians, the best of which is Robert Eskew's *Time of the Blue Guitar*. The characters are fairly believable, and he has a pretty good idea for a story. His strongest point is his ability to handle the argot of the musician without duplicating the lack of definitive expression inherent in the genuine idiom, where vocal inflection is substituted for choice of meaningful words. Through the first-person narrative of a jazz drummer, the author creates sharp imagery, action, and good development of his story. His conclusion is weak. The clarity with which he has exposed his central character, the fast-talking band leader with dreams of glory who destroys a creative group feeling with his greediness, is diminished with the author's mystic-romantic conception of his gifted guitarist and the drummer-narrator. He makes an effort for poignancy that is unsuccessful principally because he has concerned himself more with this result than with being true to the lives of his characters.

Dogs Don't Always Eat Dogs, by Ed Sachs, is a pleasant little college farce about some vaudeville types who happen to be musicians. *You Gotta Get Lucky*, by Leonard Feather, is a rather clumsily contrived story about a traveling musician who ghosts trumpet solos for the band leader and tries to run off with his girl. A dull, pointless tale with a "surprise" ending that might take a seven-year-old unawares.

Frank London Brown's *A Way Of Life* is ugly, sticky, and false. I resent being hauled through a detailed account of the hawking and blood-spitting of a dying, music-hating, tubercular wreck, in order to view the blessings of a deathbed conversion to an appreciation of Sonny Stitt's playing. This sort of tripe is bad enough in its original form (the dying sinner repentant, the dying drunkard signing the pledge) without dragging jazz into it. The maudlin melodrama disguises the basic lie, which is that life and beauty can revive a dead man. Dead is dead. If you're worried about saving life, protect it in children and lovers, where there's enough of it to make the effort worth while.

The two humorous pieces, *Ferris Wheels Again* and *I Saw Cookie*

Spout Them Blues, are pleasantly entertaining satire, though not a patch on the masters of this style (Benchley, Perelman, Cuppy). I wish the author or authors had identified themselves. Hiding behind pseudonyms and throwing bad jokes! Shame on them.

The article on high fidelity gives a comprehensive rundown on stereo rigs, stereo broadcasting, tape cartridges, new types of enclosures, and other electronic goodies. The setups used by Louis Armstrong, John Hammond, Leonard Feather, and Roy Eldridge are described, and there is a glossary of a few hi-fi terms.

The honorary title "Jazz Spokesman of the Year" and an editorial round of applause is given Father Norman O'Connor for his speaking and writing on jazz topics. "Best Jazz LPs of 1958" lists five albums that were selected by the *Down Beat* reviewing staff; they are all good choices.

The transcript of a panel discussion on KLAC, Los Angeles (Shelley Manne, Pete Rugolo, Ben Pollack, Gene Norman, Leonard Feather), is entertaining, and there is some indication of the various points of view, but the subject, "Which Way is Jazz Going—Forward, Backward, or Sideways?" doesn't stimulate much meaningful comment because of its essential meaninglessness. Feather expresses himself clearly when speaking. Pollack and Manne are an interesting pair: two generations of strong opinion. Rugolo's complaining that jazz is going nowhere and crying for the good old days gives me a pain.

The photography throughout the book is very good. In my copy the reproduction could have been better. Most of the plates are sprinkled with white specks, and in places you can see where dirt has built upon the printing surface, causing little whiteringed black spots. The pictures I like best are Charles Stewart's shots of Gerry Mulligan and Anita O'Day, Tony Scott's Count Basie, Don Hunstein's shots of Brubeck, Garner, Leonard Bernstein, and Duke, and uncredited shots of John Mandel, Igor Stravinsky, and Annie Ross. The use of prints from the Art Institute of Chicago as facing plates for the short stories in the fiction department was a lovely idea. Unfortunately, the prints suffered terribly in the process of reproduction, so that familiarity with the originals is in this case a disadvantage. Possibly the choice of drawings or paintings done in black and white would have been wiser.

—Bill Crow



Photo by Bill Spilka

JAZZ IN PRINT

by Nat Hentoff

Bernard P. Gallagher, who publishes a newsletter in the magazine field, had this to say about criticism, as quoted in the February 4 *Variety*: ". . . Watering down of editorial product is a blight of magazine publishing today. The middle position too often means no position. Lack of editorial vigor is especially evident among trade magazines. Fear of criticism is stifling. One publishing company has a clear cut policy of 'no negative reporting.' A strong industry has strong critics. It is self-defeating to silence critics. It is also death for any publication to back away from hard-hitting issues."

Steve Roper, one of the worst drawn and plotted of all the comics, went on a "jazz" kick recently with a tabloid approach to jazz-and-narcotics and a use of jazz argot that makes Robert Ruark look hip. My favorite line was: "Hey man! Take a two-bar rest and fill me in! Like I got eyes that say you're from Uncle Candy-Pants." Sounds like Pee Wee Marquette.

An article on Blind John Davis by David Mangurian in the January 1959 *Jazz Report*. It says Davis recently taped two and a half hours with Studs Terkel for the Library of Congress. Whom else has Studs taped? Will the records be made available? And what happened to the long taping session Bill Randle had with Big Bill?

Stanley Dance, now writing from

America for *Jazz Journal*, quotes Kenneth Tynan on New York drama critics in *The Observer*: ". . . they reveal an alarming critical tendency to care only about whether a show is good or bad of its kind, while making no distinctions of value between kinds." Like some jazz writers

Worth subscribing to is *Drum*, Private Mail Bag 2128, Lagos, Nigeria or Box 1197, Accra, Ghana or 15 Troy St. Johannesburg. The February 1959 issue has an article on Guy Warren, the Ghana drummer who spent some time in America and who is much interested and involved in jazz.

The March issue of Sam Ulano's *Drum Files* contains a rhythm dictionary, among other features. . . . Writes Bjorn Fremer of the Scandinavian Record Co.: "Sonny Rollins . . . played at the Club Nalen here in Stockholm for three days and he was a big hit. No jazz musician so far has received ovations like Sonny and his trio. . . ." Charles Delaunay is expanding his book on Django Reinhardt and has collected much new material. . . . With reference to a previous point, Mimi Clar writes that from 1926-42 there were only four articles on Negro folk music in the *Journal of American Folklore* . . . and about the same number from 1888-1925. . . .

Lead music section story in the March 4 *Variety* is that not enough

reviewing space in magazines and newspapers is devoted to pop albums. "Milt Gabler, Decca artist & repertoire chief, pointed out that the great majority of dailies and the mags are passing over the disc interest of the average consumer for the more esoteric stuff in the classical, folk, spoken word, children and jazz field."

What nonsense. What does one say about the fifth Bill Haley, the tenth Jonie James, the eighth Four Aces album? The product is shallow, so why waste space on it? Would Gabler have the book reviewers balance their space so that best-selling historical romances get the bulk of their attention?

An interesting quarterly newsletter, *The World of Music*, is published by the International Music Council, Unesco House, Place de Fontenoy, Paris VII, France. It's one dollar a year. . . . A valuable classical magazine is the quarterly *Music & Letters*, edited by the late Eric Blom, 44 Conduit Street, London W. 1. . . . If you read Polish, there's a monthly, *Jazz*, edited by Joseph Balcerak, Gdansk. Waly Jagiellonskie 1, Poland. . . .

Dr. Earle Davis of Pittsburgh sends an article on New Orleans surgeon-jazzman-historian Edmond Souchon from the February 5 *New England Journal of Medicine*. It gives Souchon's history as a doctor and jazz follower.

March, 1959, *Jazz Journal* re-prints two BBC interviews with Duke Ellington. Duke was talking about writing for specific men in the band: ". . . I was amazed at the way this thing turned out anyway in the beginning, because I think that if I had never met these people my writing would have been altogether different. And I am sure that if I had never met The Lion certain influences wouldn't have been absorbed, and James P. Johnson . . . A lot of arranging is done over the telephone [with Strayhorn] . . ." Humphrey Lytellton asked him his secret of keeping a band together for so long. "Well, you've got to have a gimmick, Humphrey. The one I use is to give them money." He later said: "I don't think I ever wrote myself into anything, anyway. I'm an observer, I think. I've seen a lot of people and witnessed them in many different things, you know, both perpetrating some of these good deeds and also enjoying some of the . . . suffering." Same issue has some reflections on Clifford Brown by Benny Green, and a Clifford Brown discography by Jorgen Grunnet Jepsen. There's also a good account by Jerome Shipman of "Reverend Gary Davis in Boston." Too bad Shipman didn't interview him.

It's amazing that so little about jazz appears in the American folk music journals. Tristam P. Coffin noted in *Midwest Folklore*, 8 (1957): ". . . one is amazed that most folklorists go on largely ignorant of jazz—Merriam, Hoffman [Dan], Ball [John] and a few others to the contrary."

Signs of the Times: An article on Dizzy Gillespie by Don Nelsen in the Sunday magazine section of the *New York Daily News* . . . Three articles in *The Sunday Times* (London) starting February 15 devoted to Fifty Basic Jazz Records selected and with commentary by Foreign Editor Iain Lang.

The *January Jazz Notes* (now available at \$1.20 a year and ten cents a copy at P.O. Box 55, Indianapolis 6, Indiana) has an interview with James P. Johnson by Alan Lomax from a 1938 Library of Congress recording. It's the first in a "Sources for Jazz Study" series that the magazine is planning.

From *Punch*: R. G. G. Price on Kingsley Amis: "Mr. Amis, Beau Amis, spends his time among the delicate discriminations of literary criticism and the even more delicate discriminations of jazz criticism."

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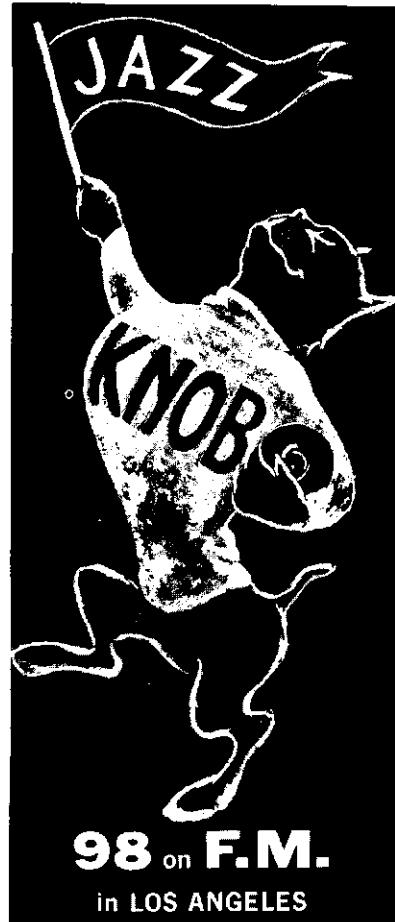
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JAZZ



In the June *Nugget*, there's a lightly written sketch of Bud Freeman, "Gentleman of Jazz," by Eli Waldron and Seymour Krim. While not a "depth" piece, it comes closer to catching Bud than any article I've yet seen: "There are four basic precepts you must observe if you wish to score with the world. One, use Wall St. Cologne—in this way you will score with women. Two, use Yardley's Shaving Cream—in this way, clean-shaven, you will score with the general public. Three, change your socks daily—here you score with earthworms and all the good people who work underground. Four, always walk into the sun—now you score with the Sun People."

James Baldwin, reviewing *Selected Poems of Langston Hughes*, in the March 29 *New York Times Book Review*: "Hughes, in his sermons, blues and prayers, has working for him the power and the beat of Negro speech and Negro music. Negro speech is vivid largely because it is private. It is a kind of emotional shorthand—or sleight-of-hand—by means of which Negroes express, not only their relationship to each other, but their judgment of the white world. And, as the white world takes over this vocabulary—without the faintest notion of what it really means—the vocabulary is forced to change. The same thing is true of Negro music, which has had to become more and more complex in order to express any of the private or collective experience. . . ."

Coda, a monthly at \$1.20 a year continues to improve. Editor is John Norris, P.O. Box 87, Station 'J', Toronto 6, Ontario. In the March issue, there's an interesting Norris account of New Orleans today. The news section reveals that Sam Charters has recorded Lightning Hopkins for Folkways Records. Mack McCormick meanwhile has recorded Lightning in Texas for Tradition Records. An account of Lightning by Charters will be published soon in *The Jazz Review*. There's also a good article on King Records and the gospel albums available on that label as well as a blues set with Champion Jack Dupree and Jimmy Rushing. For a catalogue, it's King, 1540 Brewster, Cincinnati, Ohio.

The Second Line is still being published by The New Orleans Jazz Club. For information, write Jo Schmidt, 2417 Octavia Street, New Orleans 15, Louisiana.

Walt Allen has discographical addenda on the Label "X" series in the

January *Matrix*. (Is Victor ever going to make those available again?)

The most repellent headline I've ever seen on a jazz magazine was on the cover of the April 2 *Down Beat*: "Bechet Plays Like A Pig," Says Michel Legrand. Is this to attract readers? For whatever reason, whoever was responsible for putting the line on the cover was singularly tasteless. As for Legrand, a man who writes like an electronic computer obviously cannot understand—let alone feel—what Becht was doing.

The April *HiFi Review* has a special insert by John Wilson, "The Jazz Panorama." It's a conventional history of jazz that is very weak on origins, goes through the up-the-river-from-New-Orleans changes, ignores the eastern seaboard and southwestern traditions, and otherwise is a very capable summary of what is rapidly becoming outdated jazz historiography.

According to a pamphlet from Sabena (Belgian World Airlines) Rex Stewart is heading an International Jazz Junket to Europe from July 11 to August 8 . . . A *New York Post* roundup story by Sally Hammond on the "significance" of the popularity of Peter Gunn's "jazz" score: Explained theorist George Simon "Jazz is a masculine art. It has robustness. It has guts. And Peter Gunn is a he-man."

Jazz for Tarzan?

Added Marshall Stearns: "A private-eye crime drama is a typically American idiom. So is jazz. Here we have the fusing together of two idioms that are indigenous to our American culture. There was bound to be an impact."

Mike Hammer, won't you please come home.

Pianist Fran Thorne, one of the organizers of the late Great South Bay Festival, is in Italy to study and compose for two years. He played a concert in Massa sponsored by the Fulbright Association of Tuscany in co-operation with U.S.I.S. The program consisted of his own *Variations on a Duke Ellington Theme*, Aaron Copland's *Four Piano Blues*, Thorne's suite for two pianos, etc.

Enough money has been raised in advance orders so that the Labor Education Division of Roosevelt University can publish *Songs of Work and Freedom* by Joe Glazer and Edith Fowkes by June. For information, write Frank McCallister, Roosevelt University 430 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago 5, Illinois.

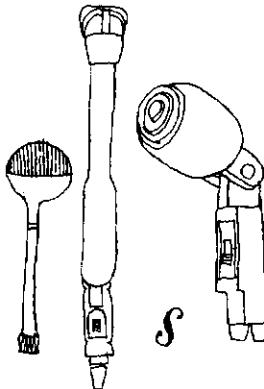
February 14-20 issue of the *CBC Times*, Pacific Regional Schedule, has a cover feature on Bob Smith, the invaluable jazz force in Vancouver. He has a regular series on the CBC.

CBC-TV had a Timex-sponsored all-star Canadian jazz show February 20 with Oscar Peterson, Georgie Auld (originally Toronto), Peter Appleyard, Mike White's Imperial Jazz Band, etc. Reports Bob Fulford, literary editor and art critic of the *Toronto Star* and a perceptive jazz observer: "The musicians were handled in much better taste than on any of the hour-long shows in the United States; except . . . *The Sound of Jazz* . . . The musicians decided their own seating arrangements, vetoed mikes that would get in their way, were allowed to suggest camera shots. But the show was finally hampered by the lack of really serious musicians. In Toronto it sometimes seems to me that jazz is mainly played by studio men who have a very settled (maybe bourgeois is the word) approach to both life and art—for them jazz is mainly an exciting hobby."

The first Washington Jazz Jubilee, reviewed in the July issue of *Jazz Review*, was covered by Winzola McLendon and Tony Gieske for the *Washington Post*. Heads on the McLendon story were: *Too Little Toe-Tapping: Jazz Hits Sour Note With the Uninitiated*. Over Gieske's story: *It Took 'The Lion' To Quiet Them*. "I don't care where we go," said one woman to her party, "as long as I can hear a melody" Andrew Tully in the *New York World Telegram*: "Defense Secretary Neil McElroy and Mrs. McElroy are under some suspicion. They had tickets but they didn't show up. Afterward, their daughter, Bitsy, explained that her folks wanted to stay upstairs in their suite and listen to President's Eisenhower's speech on the Berlin crisis. 'THIS was easier to understand?' cracked a Democrat."

Worth getting is the April *Holiday*, an all-Africa issue.

Slashing review of the Steve-Allen—Leonard-Feather *The Jazz Story* by Ralph Gleason in the March 15 *San Francisco Chronicle*. Head is *How Can Allen Do a Thing Like This?*: ". . . It's one of the most horrendous efforts to grab a buck that an industry where profit is the main motive has ever produced." Gleason then points out and corrects some of the historical misinformation.



News and Views

by Mimi Clar

KNOB: Twenty-four Hours of Jazz a Day

You name it, and KNOB, Los Angeles' all-jazz FM station, broadcasts it. Briefly, the program schedule of KNOB maintains a policy of one hour of Dixie in the morning; "Jazz for Housewives" from eleven to four; another hour of afternoon Dixie; an hour or so of Latin jazz; and then, to quote station owner Sleepy Stein, "at night we wail."

Special programs on Saturday and Sunday are Bob Kirstein's "Jazz Archives," a sort of musical history lesson in jazz (one Saturday various sides from the entire Riverside "History of Classic Jazz" package filled the morning's show); "Swing Street"—big bands and music of the Swing Era; and Howard Lucraft's coverage of foreign jazz sides. On Sunday, Buddy's brother, Pat Collette's "Jazz Goes to Church" starts the schedule with gospel music; and (until he became head of his own all-jazz FM station in San Francisco) Pat Henry presided over a most rewarding Sunday show that included an hour or so of taped "Jazz Conversations" with three visiting jazzmen.

Since "Jazz Conversations" are one of the highlights of the KNOB week for me, as well as for many of the musicians around town, I will elaborate on some of the subjects covered in several representative sessions. A discussion among Sonny Rollins, Jimmy Giuffre, and Bob Brookmeyer regarding the urgency of spirit needed to play jazz and the amount of musical education necessary to the contemporary jazzman, led Sonny to remark that "The older

musicians were very well schooled and knew what they were doing. The musician of twenty-five years ago was a little more deep into the jazz feeling than the average musician of today. I think that years ago the guys were a little bit more sincere about their jazz."

Another afternoon, Buddy De Franco, Red Mitchell, and André Previn got together. They discussed why jazz clubs are no longer successful (they charge too much for what Previn calls "water on the rocks"); jazz on TV ("Stars of Jazz is a good program"); pianoless rhythm sections (André, Buddy, and Red still like the old sound of piano, bass and drums; they feel the lack of a complete rhythm section overburdens one instrument); arrangers (it was agreed that Neal Hefti can do any style, that his arrangements come off as good musically as the style in which they are written will allow; Neal was quoted as maintaining that an arranger has good orchestration technique when he can finish two arrangements on the bus); intellectual jazz (De Franco: "I think jazz should never be too mental; it should be balanced by psyche and soma." Previn: "I agree with Buddy; the first and foremost thing is time and swinging; the rest will take care of itself").

According to Wes Bowen, former program director for the station, there isn't enough really good jazz—the kind that sounds good ten years later—to fill sixteen or seventeen hours of air time per day. Therefore, KNOB must make some sort of

compromise between a steady diet of "after midnight" jazz or jazz for musicians and critics, and variety. After all, KNOB is a commercial enterprise and like any commercial enterprise strives to succeed financially (Bowen feels as the station gains funds, it can do more to live up to the personal ideals of the station directors).

In order to attract as many listeners as possible, both Bowen and Stein insist that the "variety approach"—jazz for housewives, Latin jazz, dinner jazz—is paramount, that they cannot have sixteen straight hours of funk. The programming is planned to conform to the tastes of the listening majority at various times of the day: housewives listen at certain hours; students at others; some people listen while they work (mechanics, merchants, a studio animator friend of Bowen's); others tune in after work from about six to eleven p.m. After midnight, anything goes, and the funky and far-out material may be aired.

Stein believes that the average jazz listener listens to jazz because it sounds better to him than any other kind of music, without actually realizing it's jazz. Musicians and critical jazz listeners, he contends, are in the minority. Sleepy named his own dentist, who pipes KNOB music into his offices, as a representative of the average jazz listener: the dentist didn't know Sleepy owned the station and was surprised to discover the music he liked so well was called jazz.

However, KNOB personnel try to maintain good taste in whatever they do, since Sleepy believes above all else in honesty or "not playing something bad and saying it's good." "Jazz for Housewives," for instance, gives listeners the best in that class of prettier, milder jazz. The "Housewives" show repeatedly builds to musical peaks and then descends: Sinatra and Ray Bryant might start a portion of the program and would gradually work up to Herbie Mann, Modern Jazz Quartet, and finally, Sonny Rollins. Theoretically, the housewives will sit through Rollins because they know they can expect more Sinatra later on; conversely, jazz fans will wait through Billy May for Monk. However, if listeners tune in KNOB to hear Sinatra followed by Doris Day followed by Dick Maltby, Stein doesn't want them; they should be listening to AM radio, as far as he's concerned.

The KNOB audience is a satisfied one; listeners rarely send in requests for special numbers for they are confident of eventually hearing their favorites. That the audience is also loyal was demonstrated last year, when scores of KNOB's records were stolen. Over one hundred people phoned to offer the loan of records from their collections.

Sleepy Stein, a fugitive from AM radio ("I quit because I was forced to play junk"), originally did a show on KNOB when Ray Torian, also a jazz partisan, owned the station. Sleepy originally intended to work for Ray in turning KNOB into an all-jazz station. Torian, instead, cut Stein in as part-owner. Eventually Sleepy became the sole owner, though Torian is still associated with KNOB, as president of the company and chief engineer.

KNOB went on the air in August, 1957, with an all-jazz policy. A nationwide search for a transmitter was just one of the hassles that occurred before the initial all-jazz KNOB broadcast. After canvassing the United States for the right transmitter, they finally tracked one down to Roanoke, Virginia, with only a few days remaining until air time. A huge van lugged the apparatus to Los Angeles; on its arrival, engineers had to overhaul it completely. The transmitter was made ready for broadcasting duties with very little time to spare.

The station opened with Sleepy doing the shows, announcing, and writing copy, himself. Then free-lance djs pitched in, doing shows for nothing at the outset. In the beginning when there was no Latin disc jockey at KNOB, Sleepy, the only one around who spoke Spanish, dubbed himself "El Dormido" ("The Sleeper" or "The Sleeping One") and proceeded with a Latin program.

Nowadays, commercials for record stores, car dealers, stereo equipment, magazines, markets and even plumbing, dart unobtrusively in, and out of the day's music, in

photo by Bill Spilke



Sleepy Stein

contrast to the time early in KNOB's jazz career when one night-club owner insisted Sleepy should pay him for allowing his club to be advertised. (This club owner now runs a burlesque place.) Oddly enough, Stein says he has a harder time selling FM than the idea of an all-jazz station. Sponsors fear that the audience for FM is not yet large enough to warrant buying FM time; the possible lack of reception worries them more than the range of appeal of jazz.

At present in Los Angeles 48.7 per cent of the 3,000,000 homes with radios (or about 1,500,000 homes) have an FM set—one of the highest percentages of FM listeners in the nation. Though New York has the largest FM audience, Los Angeles has the most stations. Twenty-four FM stations operate in the Los Angeles area; of these stations, KNOB has, as of this writing, the third largest Los Angeles FM audience.

The all-jazz policy is the only thing "new" about the station, for KNOB has been on the air for ten years and is Los Angeles' oldest independent FM station.

Originally an A channel (a local station covering one city or town only with a power limit of 1000 watts maximum depending on the height of the transmitter), KNOB's present frequency comes over a B channel, which is unlimited in the West; that is, it serves an entire area rather than a specific city. KNOB obtained the last available B channel in Los Angeles.

The station's application for 79,000 watts has come through. It had been operating on 3,400 watts. Other future plans include the purchase of multiplexer oscillator for stereo; the possibility of a record label; and the search for more serious programs about jazz—shows in which the music can be discussed by people qualified to talk about music (Stein feels there is a scarcity of such people).

Stein also hopes to find six or seven more stations in any big jazz market in the country. Sleepy defines a good jazz market as a cosmopolitan city and a city supporting a large Negro population (Stein asserts Negroes to be the most faithful listeners to jazz programs). Of prospective cities, the number-one jazz market is New York; number two, Chicago; number three, San Francisco; four, Detroit; and others are Boston, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. The problem hampering Sleepy's development of new stations is now that KNOB has money to buy new channels, not enough channels remain available in the country to buy. If and when the new stations materialize, Sleepy would like to stage concerts in the towns where the stations would be located and start a magazine of his own or tie in with one.

In voicing my personal opinion as a critical KNOB listener, I classify myself as a member of the minority audience that Stein spoke of earlier in the article. Although I am aware of my minority status, and although I sympathize with KNOB's programming problems, its variety approach and quest for an ever-widening audience, I cannot help becoming a trifle impatient with some of the music catering to the housewives that is frankly commercial.

I prefer "after midnight" jazz which, generally speaking, is ignored during the day, even at KNOB. This approach doesn't deviate too much from the prevailing AM attitudes toward jazz. I should like to know what happens to people who supposedly listen to jazz after midnight—do they hibernate during the day? Surely there must be some who, like myself, cannot always stay up late enough to catch the shows in the wee hours and would therefore like their after-midnight jazz the following morning. (Is after-midnight jazz "indecent" during sunlit hours?)

Despite my reservations, what a joy it is to turn on the radio any hour of the day and hear jazz, even near-jazz.

There is surely no need at this date for me, or anyone, to defend the phonograph. Without it, 99 per cent of the jazz we know would most likely never have been created at all, and most of the rest would have been irretrievably lost. It could never have been disseminated through the world as it has, nor indeed through the United States; in fact, it is hard to picture its development as it might have been (or not been) without the instrumentality of the recording. But the fact remains that watching musicians create music is a total experience of which the highest fi in the world can never capture more than a fraction.

Some penetrating thinker, probably myself, once observed that growing up is, among other things, a matter of coming to appreciate certain platitudes. The ones I have just voiced were brought sharply home to me all over again the other night when I heard Al Cohn and Zoot Sims at the Half Note, a little jazz club at the corner of Hudson and Spring Streets in New York City.

The Half Note has a right to be called a jazz club if any joint ever had, and deserves a review all to itself in any publication devoted to the interests of jazz.

The joint itself could hardly be less pretentious. A modest bar & grill establishment on one of downtown Manhattan's bleaker intersections, surrounded by vast loft buildings and forgotten tenements on the approaches to the Holland Tunnel, it was for many years "Frank and Jean's," one of those neighborhood Italian restaurants run by the whole family, where Papa or Mama (or both) do the cooking, the boys and girls wait on you, and the eldest sons throw out the drunks. New Yorkers who know their New York have for a generation treasured these landmarks of the older city for their low prices, modest repertory of Neapolitan dishes and wines, and the relaxed, unmechanized, what's-your-hurry atmosphere.

The first thing my eye lighted on when I walked into the room was the name "Bechstein" on the piano. That was a trustworthy augury of respect for music and musicians, a deep respect without ostentation on the part of the guys who run the place, a couple of otherwise very ordi-

The Half Note

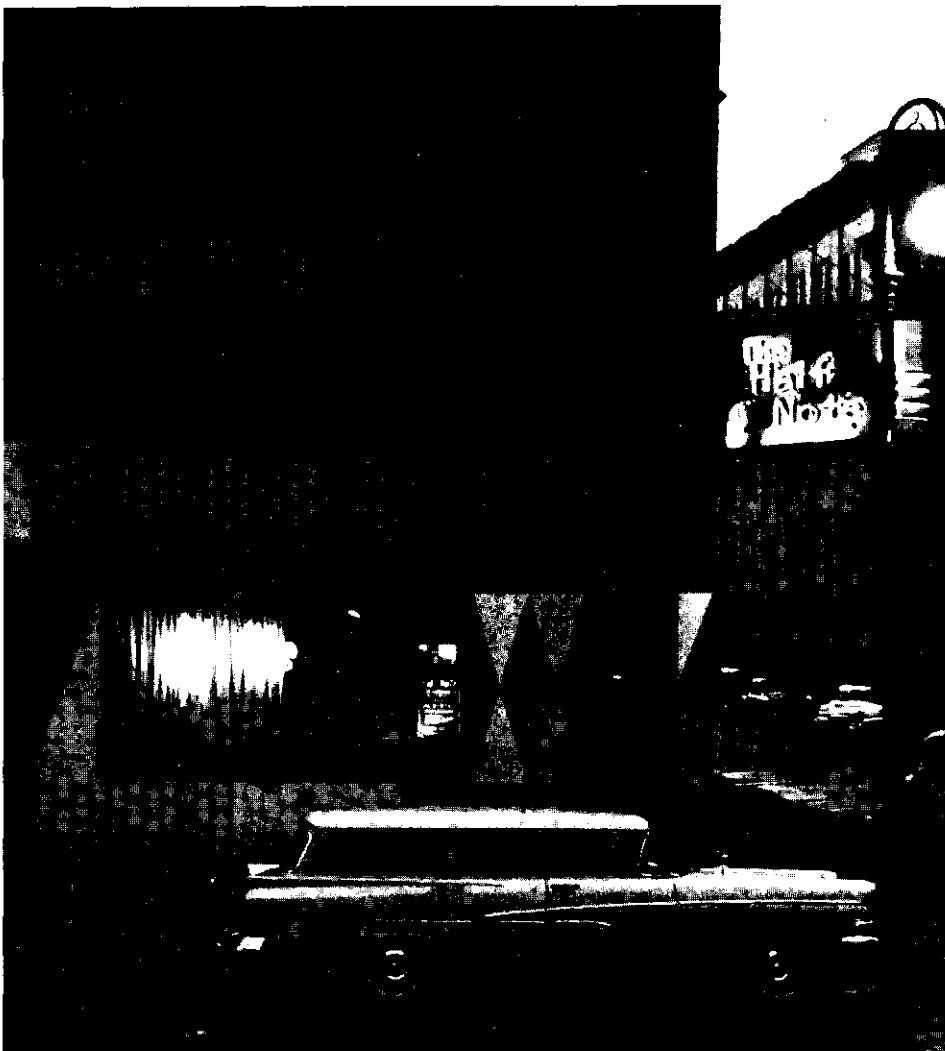


photo by Bob Adelman

by Ralph Berton



photo by B.

THE JAZZ REVIEW

nary Italian-American boys who are neither intellectuals nor musicians, just two fellows named Mike and Sonny Canterino who have always dug jazz and were in their own way quietly determined to work it into the fabric of their lives.

It was only when Mike came back from the navy-- incidentally with some unexpected bar and restaurant experience--that he and Sonny felt old enough, at last, to persuade their old man to let them annex a long-coveted empty store next door and convert the whole place into a jazz spot. No one had any spare money, so the Canterinos had to do every bit of the labor with their own hands--designed the new layout so that the bandstand, back of the bar, would cut through between the bar-room and the clubroom proper, broke down the intervening wall, did all the construction, wiring, plastering, and painting, and meanwhile personally blanketed various sections of New York City with leaflets and posters announcing the new arrival; lumber and materials were bought with borrowed money.

On opening night, of course, they were still feverishly trying to finish the work; Sonny was still plastering part of the room when Randy Weston climbed onto the stand for the first set. That was in September of 1957.

The Half Note was not an instantaneous success. "Plenty of Saturday nights," Mike told me, "we hadda run out at two A.M. and borrow enough bread to pay off the musicians, that first year. We're still payin' back." But they persisted, kept a finger on the pulse of jazz record sales, and did their best to get the right names in the right mouth, and managed to cling tenaciously to their taut shoestring. Things are "wonderful" now; week ends bring in more business than the place will hold, and even week nights are "pretty good"; the place is substantially solvent, and trade increases week by week. That they still have to present only "names" is, be it said, looked upon by both Canterinos with regret. "There's so many great guys who could use the gig," says Mike. "You think I haven't got good friends who I'd like to put in for a week at a time? But we can't afford it yet."

In their need to go for the names, though the Canterinos have soberly elected to avoid certain names--either because they knew they couldn't afford them without raising their tariff, which they have consistently refused to do, or because the names happened to belong to musicians notorious for goofing off. "In our book, nobody's big enough to disappoint people who come to listen to him," Sonny said to me. "We don't want no sick people in here, who might maybe play one set and then you don't see 'em for two nights. And from the time we opened we never had no trouble with a musician. We hadda

pass up some great ones, but you can't have everything." Ninety-nine per cent of their customers, they have found by cautious experiment, are modern-jazz listeners exclusively so, although the Canterinos themselves have no period prejudices, modern jazz is all you'll get at the Half Note. They always hire a musician directly, never through an agent. "To us, it's like a musician is important enough so we feel like we oughta go to him personally and talk it over with him. You call up a bookin' agent, it's like a cold thing. We could be just anybody. We like to get to know him." How they feel about musicians is sufficiently indicated by their relations with Lennie Tristano.

Lennie had been in what seemed a rather embittered retirement since 1954. Talking with Lee Konitz and Warne Marsh, who both played at the Half Note, the brothers Canterino were struck with the idea of talking Tristano into playing in public again. At first the two sax men were their casual and unofficial ambassadors. In the summer of 1958, after several months of cautious soundings of their mentor, they ventured to bring the Canterino boys out to Lennie's home in Jamaica, Long Island. They came bearing gifts: "I'd cook up a big mess of ravioli, and the sauce--you know, I wouldn't, like, put the sauce on, so I'd put it separate like, and give the kids instructions how to heat it up before they're ready to eat it." Frank Canterino, the boys' father, explained. "They kep' takin' things like that out to Lennie's house, and, you know, got to know him that way."

"At first," Sonny said, "Lennie wouldn't even talk about playin' anywhere. He didn't appreciate the way he'd been pushed around by night-club owners. I don't wanna mention no names. But he really felt the whole thing of playin' in clubs was no good for the musician."

With Marsh and Konitz egging on from the rear and the Canterinos coaxing from the front Lennie was induced to come and have dinner at the Half Note, just to sit and listen. He never would sit, even with his boys. But he did remark it was the sign of thaw--that the atmosphere was unusually cozy and homelike, not like a club at all. And the first real crack in the ice appeared when Tristano decided one afternoon (there was no one in the place but the owners) to try "a few songs" on the piano. They helped him up onto the stand. Lennie played a little, then complained that the action was very stiff. He suggested they get a different piano (this was only a \$1,300 Steinway grand). They suggested he come with them and help pick one.

Together they went to the showroom. Tristano tried one piano after another and, according to Sonny, "he knew what every single piano was—he'd name it right off

even though he had no sight, you know--like he'd play a few chords on one and tell you, 'That's a Knabe,' or a Mason or whatever." Finally the Bechstein was discovered. "The price was two grand—but he was really satisfied." On August 8, 1958, the long courtship reached a happy ending: Tristano opened at the Half Note for what was to be the longest holdover engagement in its career so far, thirteen solid weeks--and their biggest draw as well. Lennie had no contract with them beyond the initial four-day gig, and was free to walk out any time; but he stayed, and everyone was happy all around. The Canterinos think he's the most. All during his engagement there they called for and delivered him in a car, every night. Tristano's re-engagement at the Half Note on February 10 of this year, along with Konitz and Marsh, fulfilled a long-nursed project of the Canterinos—to reunite these three in a combo for the first time in ten years.

The juke box at the Half Note looks like any other juke box, but it doesn't sound like most others. The first night I was there the nearest thing on it to a commercial item was a Sinatra record. The others featured people like Ahmad Jamal, Lee Konitz, Miles Davis, Thelonious, Stan Getz, Count Basie, Mose Allison, Cannonball Adderley, the MJQ, Sonny Rollins, John Coltrane, etc., etc.

There is no cover, and the minima are, so far as I know, the lowest in town: \$1.50 at the bar, \$2.00 at tables on week nights; on week ends (Friday and Saturday) the minimum at tables is \$2.50 and is good for both food and liquor. Food includes an assortment of Italian dishes including hero sandwiches, all varieties of pasta with various sauces, veal Parmigiana, meat balls, etc. Sandwiches are a dollar; veal Parmigiana is the costliest item, \$2.50. Drinks go from \$.75 for domestic wine to \$1.40 for a brandy Alexander; rye and gin are \$.85, Scotch and CC \$1.00. And the waiters don't push you.

While I was standing at the bar with Al Cohn one night, Sonny Canterino leaned over and said, "Hey, Al—wasn't that one of Warne Marsh's lines you were just playing?" Al looked blank. "Not that I know of," he replied. Mike, his brother joined us. "Yeah, Al—the thing Warne calls *Background Music*. Sonny and me both jumped when you began playing it." Al had never heard the Marsh thing, and said he'd have to dig it sometime.

"How long have you fellows been digging jazz?" I asked. "We always dug it," Mike said. "Like, I mean, when we were growin' up—it was just music, to us. We always thought about music in terms of jazz, you know?" He thought a moment, and added, "I guess that's prob'lly why we stood with it in this place. There was times we thought we'd have to give up. But now—well, I'm glad we stood with it."

(Continued from page 3)

them. The swing of the band was always there, but whereas Basie featured a style that elevated the swing to the point where one could never miss it unless one were deaf, Lunceford utilized it as a necessity but did not feel it necessary to drive it home in the same fashion.

Humor was never far from the surface—even on the dreariest pop complete with a Dan Grissom vocal—and it is instructive to note the contradictory band passages once the vocal was over on so many records—contradictory in the sense that while the vocal was in the accepted sentimental pattern of the day, the band passages were often quite the opposite in mood. Also, on such a pop number as *Linger Awhile*, some of the most interesting scoring (in this case a fine use of three trumpets) can be found.

Paul Desmond is quoted as saying that Lunceford would have loved to have taken musicians like Conrad Gozzo and Pete Candoli on the road, while Mr. Russo says that man for man the musicians in the May band are superior to those Lunceford used. This shows a lack of appreciation of the subject. Gozzo and Candoli may be all around better *technicians* to the Lunceford men (one wonders if this is so why Candoli needed a four-bar help-out to take the solo that Paul Webster managed quite ably on his own on the original version of *For Dancers Only*), but as *personalities* they fall well below their opposite numbers in the Lunceford band—Paul Webster and Eddie Tompkins. The strength of the Lunceford band was based on the individual members of the band as personalities, and, as is so often the case in jazz, the sum total was greater than the score one would get by considering each man on his own. Gozzo and Candoli may be fine musicians, but I have yet to hear any strength of personality in anything they play. They, of course, live in an era of conformity in jazz, and their playing reflects that fact. Such men, excellent in a Hollywood studio group as they might be, represent the antithesis of what Lunceford needed in his band. One might as well say that Maynard Ferguson would have been better than Paul Webster by virtue of his ability to play higher high notes, but the point is that as a personality it is ludicrous to think of him in the Lunceford band. Too many musicians today, technically flawless though they may be, sound like musical machines, and their music comes out that way. There were only two major soloists in the Lunceford band—Willie Smith and Trummy Young—and yet compared to so many of today's soloists people like Joe Thomas, Sy Oliver, Ted Buckner, etc. sound outstanding. They were not, of course, but by virtue of a certain individuality they almost convince one to the contrary.

The lp Russo was reviewing was a poor

selection of titles on the whole—Lunceford has been served badly by his reissues—including some of the most ephemeral numbers made at a time when the band was past its best. (But despite the lack of major soloists that I have mentioned, it is interesting to note how individual the band sounded as against Basie today, when a similar position prevails.) I doubt if any technically equipped studio men could take a piece of rubbish like *Organ Grinder's Swing* and do with it what Sy Oliver and the Lunceford band did. The technique may be there, but the spirit is a different one.

It is this that caused the Lunceford band itself to collapse in the end, for it is not often realized that Lunceford himself was re-creating in the last few years of the band. The effects, high-note exhibitionism, etc. that originally were used with humor and were never taken seriously began to be used with deadpan gravity. It is no accident that the first Kenton band sounded like the latter-day Lunceford, for Lunceford himself lost his own individuality when he began to copy the worst aspects of the "progressives" of his day.

If he had lived, he might even have ended up like a rather poor Kenton.

Albert J. McCarthy
St. Ives, England

More on Missing Moderns

My belated thanks to you for continuing with the extremely interesting "Missing Moderns" feature (*Jazz Review*, No. 1) and I trust that we may look forward to more of the same from time to time.

Checking casually through my records I have come up with two items which may be of interest and one which bears a little further investigation.

1) There is a bop-influenced trumpet solo on Earl Bostic's 1945 recording of *The Major and the Minor* (Majestic 1056). I suspect it may be "Little Benny" Harris. Dick Vance also made this session and could be responsible for the solo on the reverse, *All On*. If this is indeed Harris, Bill Martin missed this item in his discussion of early Harris solos in a *Record Changer* article, Vol. 14, No. 9, 1956.

2) Charlie Mingus plays a brief introduction on Bob Moseley and His All Stars record of *Baggin' the Boggie* (Bel-Tone 751), recorded in 1945, and is also heard prominently on the flip, *Voot Rhythm*. Incidentally, dig also the last few notes on the second title. Lucky Thompson is featured on both sides, if one regards this sadly underrated tenorist as a modern or transitional figure. Feather's *Encyclopedia of Jazz* is, of course, in error when it states that Mingus "made record debut with Hampton in 1947 Bebop album on Decca."

3) This may be a bit far afield but there is a brief, conventional swing guitar solo on Jerry Wald's (of all people!) *Strictly Instrumental* (Decca 4340). I don't know the recording date and this item interests me only because Billy Bauer was a member of Wald's band at least as late as 1941. Could this be an early example of Bauer's work?

Has anyone checked Lionel Hampton's 1953 recordings for Clifford Brown? I have nothing by Hampton for that year and have never heard whether or not Brownie soloed with the band.

John W. Miner
Oshkosh, Wisconsin

In the April issue, Max Harrison mentions some of the 1944 Cootie Williams recordings with Bud Powell. I would like to add that on *Blue* (i.e., *Royal*) *Garden Blues*, Powell plays an excellent solo (two twelve-bar choruses) that show traces of Billy Kyle as well as pointing strongly to Powell's later style.

In the same issue, Ira Gitler points out that on Miles Davis' "Milestones" there are two new themes with old titles. However, there is also an old theme with a new title: *Sid's Ahead* was originally recorded in 1954 by the Davis Quartet for Blue Note (BLP 1502) under the title *Weirdo*. This is a very close paraphrase on *Walkin'*, by the way.

Finally, in a review of Red Garland's "All Mornin' Long" lp, Mimi Clar mentions the effect of the rhythm section stressing the first three beats of the measure and leaving the fourth silent. But there is nothing new under the sun: this (rather problematic) device goes all the way back to King Oliver's 1923 *Dippermouth Blues* (accompaniment to clarinet solo) and is used in many later versions of this theme.

Erik Wiedemann
Copenhagen, Denmark

A Note for Miles

In the April *Jazz Review*, I ran across a letter from Ira Gitler in which he expressed some surprise about Miles Davis' Columbia album, "Milestones," saying that the title tune . . . didn't sound the same as the song by that name that Miles recorded with Charlie Parker in the forties. It seems to me that quite a few jazz reviewers have expressed puzzlement about this record, and if I may, I would like to clear up the whole mystery.

The situation is this: someone at Columbia goofed with the label and the liner notes. The group never plays *Milestones* here! The tune that is called *Milestones* on this record is a line called *Sid's Ahead*. On Side 1, the track that is called *Sid's Ahead* on the record is not that at all, but *Weirdo*. In addition, *Dr. Jackle* was misspelled.

I just hope Miles reads this, because it seems to me he himself was unaware of this mix-up!

Zita Carno
Bronx, New York

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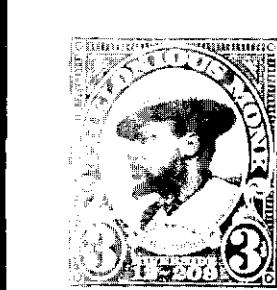


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