

# THE JAZZ REVIEW

Volume 3 / Number 2 / February 1960 / Fifty Cents



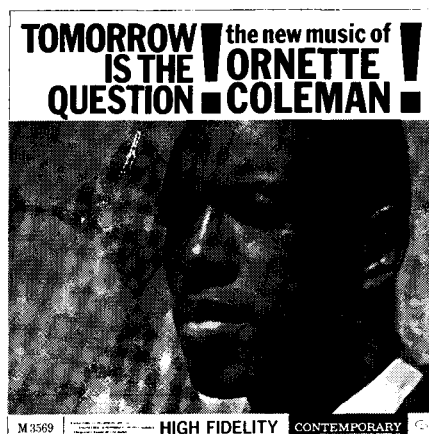
Jimmy Guiffre

Duke Ellington

George Russell

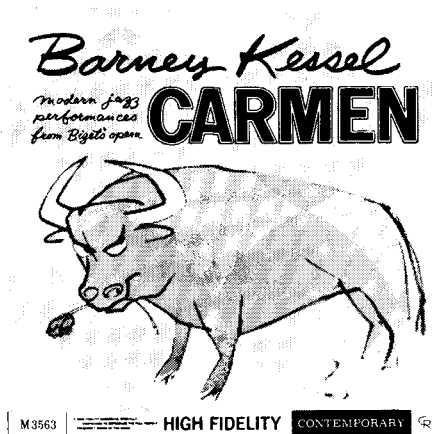


# '59 CONTEMPORARY'S year!



## ORNETTE COLEMAN

amazed many critics and musicians who believe he may "change the direction of jazz!" For his second CR album Ornette and trumpeter Don Cherry are joined by Shelly Manne, drums; and bassists Percy Heath (Side 1) and Red Mitchell (Side 2). M3569, stereo S7569.



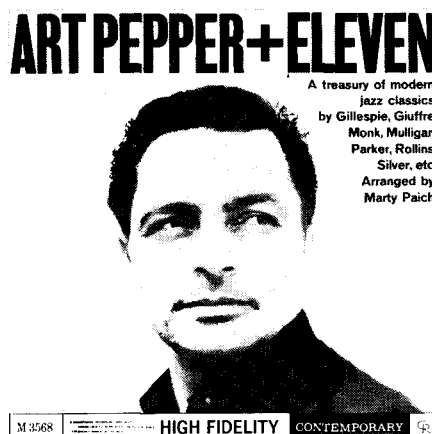
## BARNEY KESSEL

scored with a brilliant adaptation of Bizet's "Carmen," the first modern jazz version of an opera. The poll-winning Kessel guitar is featured in an orchestral setting with André Previn, Shelly Manne, Buddy Collette, Victor Feldman, Joe Mondragon, etc. M3563, stereo S7563.



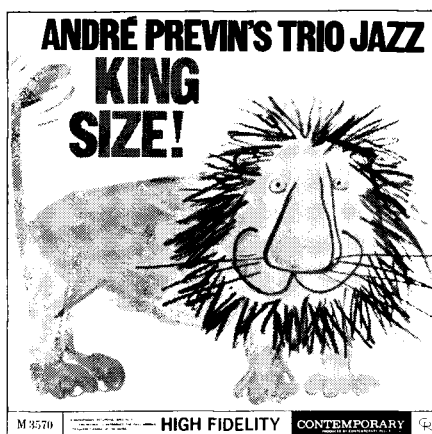
## SHELLY MANNE

followed his first hit "Gunn" (M3560 & stereo S7025) album with "Son of the Gunn." The TV material gets a free-blowing treatment from Men: Joe Gordon, trumpet; Richie Kamuca, tenor; Russ Freeman, piano; Monty Budwig, bass; & Victor Feldman, vibes & marimba. M3566, stereo S7566.



## ART PEPPER

the alto star also plays tenor and clarinet on this album of a dozen best-known modern jazz classics arranged by Marty Paich. In this uniquely integrated album Pepper & Co. play 12 compositions by Gillespie, Parker, Monk, Mulligan, Giuffre, Rollins, etc. M3568, stereo S7568.



## ANDRÉ PREVIN

made five albums for Contemporary including the first jazz "blowing" album with his regular trio—Red Mitchell, bass; and Frankie Capp, drums, after their tour of U.S. Extra-length performances of four standards and two original Previn blues. M3570, stereo S7570.



## SONNY ROLLINS

the "boss of the tenor" followed his successful first CR album ("Way Out West," C3530, stereo S7017) with "The Leaders." It features him with Contemporary's top stars Shelly Manne, Hampton Hawes, Barney Kessel, Leroy Vinnegar and Victor Feldman. M3564, stereo S7564.

... and for '60 upcoming albums by Shelly Manne, André Previn, Barney Kessel, Art Pepper, Victor Feldman, Curtis Counce, Hampton Hawes, Helen Humes, Bill Smith and many other top jazz stars! By returning the postpaid card enclosed in any of our albums, you'll receive a free subscription to GTJ & CR News, plus catalogues to keep you posted on new releases.

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# LETTERS

## GRAPESHOT

I should like to point out some of the things in Max Harrison's bad-tempered review of my book, *The Sound of Surprise*, in your November issue, which make the review, it seems to me, a notably slipshod and even dishonest piece. One of the fundamentals of any kind of reviewing is to tell the reader what it is the reviewer is reviewing. Instead, Mr. Harrison merely opines. Indeed, he attempts to dismantle the book by flattening my opinions with his, in such a way that my opinions are often made to appear as factual errors. Thus, I say that Rex Stewart is a "diminishment" of Cootie Williams, and give the reasons. Mr. Harrison says he isn't, and gives no reason, which leaves us where we started. I criticize, in considerable detail, some of the aspects of Max Roach's drumming. Mr. Harrison simply says my "views on Roach are quite unacceptable"—a flatulent tone that might have been telling in a Victorian household between an employer and her upstairs maid. And, unacceptable to whom? Mr. Harrison? Max Roach? Princess Margaret?

Then, passing from fancy to fact, Mr. Harrison goes after my supposed factual slips. He is right in catching me up for saying that it was only "a few years ago" that Monk, John Lewis, Mingus, et al, began their various compositional experiments. I don't think he's right anywhere else. Sonny Stitt does seem a hard bopper—in his tone, attack, and uncompromising fluidity—and one of the first at that. Roy Hanes, along with Louis Hayes and Elvin Jones, is under the spell of Max Roach. I never said that polytonality and atonality are the "exclusive property of straight musicians." I never wrote that Monk's "compositions" (Mr. Harrison's word)

are "somewhat calculated" (see page 92), nor did I say that Monk had never demonstrated a talent as an arranger before the *Monk's Music* LP. Louis Armstrong does miss a lot of notes on his early records, and it is quite clear from its context that my phrase "tea-dance background" does not refer to the accompaniment Armstrong received from Hines and Singleton on the Hot Sevens, but to that in the version of *Basin Street* made five years later for Victor. It seems to me that elsewhere Mr. Harrison is simply playing dumb, and not very convincingly. He states that the "picturesqueness" of my style, which uses a good deal of metaphor and in which, God forbid, there are even some attempts at humor, is a result of having to sugar-coat my materials because I am writing for a non-jazz audience—a non-jazz audience, I guess, that includes such self-revealed readers as Mingus, Dizzy Gillespie, Pee Wee Russell, John Lewis, Marian McPartland, Rex Stewart, Tony Scott, and more. Beyond that, my style, I like to think, is—rather than being merely confectionary—a serious attempt to describe the music, to make the reader hear what jazz is, an essential that has fallen largely into disuse in music criticism. Mr. Harrison then quotes illustrations from the book, and, all agape, asks what relevance they have to the music. If Mr. Harrison does not hear the "port and velvet" in Gil Evans' orchestrations, I can't help him. If he can't see the difference between a "crablike" run and a "grapeshot" run, then he doesn't know the difference between a crab and a grapeshot, which must be a handicap. As to the "curious" verbs I have "devised"—"blat," "whump," and "thunk." "Blat" is, of course, in Webster's "whump" is an old American colloquialism, and

"thunk" is an onomatopoeitic invention meant to describe a sound otherwise indescribable—a linguistic process that, if outlawed, would soon reduce the English language to the level of Mr. Harrison's prose.

Finally, Mr. Harrison accuses me of being "quite censorious of the moderns." There are, nonetheless, sympathetic, if searching, passages in the book on John Lewis, Mingus, Cecil Taylor, Sonny Rollins, Miles Davis, Art Farmer, Philly Joe Jones, Art Blakey, and more. The only out-and-out lumps are handed to the West Coast boys and some of the hard boppers. And, anyway, total approval has nothing to do with good criticism.

Mr. Harrison closes his review by blankly saying that my "values seem very uncertain," which is not the kind of gratuitous statement that a man certain of his own values is apt to make.

Whitney Balliett  
New York City

## JUST THE FACTS

I am not one of those who maintain that a reviewer must always be 'objective,' or that his criticism must be 'constructive.' Criticism without at least some subjectivity is worthless. So I cannot dispute Paul Oliver's right to review *Jazz: New Orleans, 1885-1957* by Sam Charters (*Jazz Review*, Sept.) as he sees fit. Certainly the repetition of anecdotes which he finds irritating has been commented upon by other reviewers. This perhaps could have been rectified in my capacity as publisher, but I feel that an author's work is his own and should be interfered with as little as possible. At the risk of 'sour grapes,' however, I would like to point out the references to T-Bone Walker in

Paul Oliver's 'Blind Lemon Jefferson' article (*Jazz Review*, Aug. 1959), and wonder whether these will show up again when and if he dissects Walker in a similar article.

My primary concern is that Oliver patently misinterprets the premise of the book. He devotes a major portion of the review to discussing his interpretation of this premise, and the impression given the reader, whether so intended or not, is generally unfavorable to the book . . .

Paul apparently reads the title and subtitle as: **Jazz: New Orleans Style, 1885-1957; An Index to the Negro Musicians Playing New Orleans Style.** The author's intention, by contrast, was: **Jazz: as developed in New Orleans, 1885-1957; an Index to the Negro Musicians who played in New Orleans and surrounding region.** Viewed in this light, Sam's opening statement in his preface: "The music of New Orleans was so distinctly the product of the musicians whose entire life was spent playing in that city that no effort has been made to follow the career of a musician after he left the city permanently. He was no longer a New Orleans musician and his activities in another musical environment are beyond the scope of this work." becomes self-evident, and snide references to red beans and bouillabaise are uncalled for. Certainly, without the preconceived connotation of 'style' that naturally attaches to the words 'New Orleans,' a statement such as: "The music of the city of Boston (or Detroit, or San Francisco, etc.) was the product of the musicians who played there, etc." would be so self-evident as to be ridiculous.

These limits imposed by Sam's subtitle are entirely proper, and provide a logical and workable basis for research. In a historical field as large as this, a breakdown becomes necessary, and a regional classification is logical. And yes, a book on the carnival, medicine show, minstrel troupe, and other 'foot-loose' musicians is definitely needed.

As implied above, this book is about the musical history, relating to jazz, of the whole Mississippi delta region, not just the city of New Orleans. This leads naturally to the inclusion of men from "other towns in Louisiana from 30 to 150 miles from New Orleans" as well as those who were born and raised in the city proper. It also follows that men from outside the area, such as the ones Paul cited in the review, who moved into it and assumed an active part in the region's musical life, should be included. It also follows that, once a man moves away from the region, he no longer contributes to the musical life of the region. If a similar history of Chicago jazz (the region, not the style) is ever written, it will of necessity cover at least the area extending to Gary, Indiana 31 miles to the south and east,

and to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 85 miles to the north, along the Lake Michigan shore, as well as Chicago proper and its myriad suburbs. It will also include biographies of men like Reuben Reeves (from Evansville, Ind.), Junie Cobb (from Hot Springs, Ark.), Harry Dial (from Birmingham), Earl Hines (from Duquesne, Pa.), Doc Cooke (from Louisville), and Louis Armstrong, Joe Oliver, Johnny Dodds, Natty Dominique, Omer Simeon, and others (all from New Orleans). And these biographies will have to concentrate on their playing activities in the greater Chicago area.

While one may dispute Sam's implied contention that New Orleans musicians who migrated to another area were no longer playing New Orleans style jazz, this is certainly an original thought, and not bound to the "straight-jacket of the N.O.-K.C.-Chicago-N.Y.C. theory" that Paul rightly objects to. One cannot dispute that those who were actively playing in New Orleans, whether born there or in Mexico or Missouri, were the contributors to the music of the New Orleans region. Therefore the question Paul raises as to the virtual exclusion of several of the musicians he considers important, who were born in New Orleans but never actually played much there, is irrelevant. For examples, Ed Garland and Natty Dominique moved to Chicago as young men after only a few local engagements but no permanent affiliations with any established musical group. Preston Jackson and Omer Simeon likewise moved to Chicago, and did not learn to play until after they had settled there. Charlie Elgar moved early to Chicago, where he had his own band as early as 1912. And so on. As mentioned in my foreword, Sam has read all the previous literature on New Orleans musicians, but found much of it to be unverifiable or even false. Therefore he chose to confine his text to new material, and to old material that could be verified, so that many things that Paul and I "know" to be "facts" about other musicians who are hardly mentioned (Willie Hightower, Eddy Vinson, Buddy Christian, and the like) are not discussed. The information on others is fragmentary, and includes what Paul considers non-essentials, simply because so little could be learned about these

## Sorry

Our caption on the photograph on pages 6 and 7 of the December issue incorrectly identified the group as the Duke Ellington Orchestra, and the banjo player as Freddy Guy. The group was The Washingtonians, and the banjoist was Elmer Snowden. Our thanks to several alert readers for the correction, and our apologies to Mr. Snowden.

men. I am sure that if more information was available on, for example, Sidney Vigne, Sam would have included it all.

This book is certainly the original work of its author and his sources, and not a synthesis of all the previous literature supplemented by original work. Whether this failure to believe or to "interpret" the previous literature is good or bad, depends on one's point of view, but a charge of "ever narrowing lines of research" is hardly fair to the author.

Paul also condemns "the sad failure to draw conclusions from the facts obtained." What type of conclusions are to be drawn pray tell? The trouble with the literature of jazz now is that there are too many articles and books "interpreting" or re-interpreting what were dubious facts to begin with. Paul correctly mentions the "N.O.-K.C.-Chicago-N.Y.C. theory" as a case in point, yet he is silent on the value of this book on the wealth of new material on post-Storyville New Orleans. If he had written nothing else, Sam's biographies of Chris Kelly, Buddy Petit, the Morgan brothers, Kid Rena, Punch Miller, Herb Morand, etc., would have earned him our gratitude. I do not subscribe to the dictum that "relationships are more important than facts." Facts do stand by themselves, and without them there can be no accurate determination of relationships! The discographical works of Delaunay, Blackstone, and McCarthy, for example, will endure and be consulted long after Winthrop Sargent, Sidney Finkelstein, and Andre Hodeir are forgotten.

In conclusion: **Jazz: New Orleans** contains 235 main biographical entries. Of these, 48 names (20%) were entirely new to me, and 161 others (69%) contained basic biographical data such as birth and death dates, that were new to me. Every entry contains other new information; his entry on Joe Oliver, for example, put to shame the opening pages of the Allen-Rust **King Joe Oliver**. Of 124 orchestra names in that index, 68 were new to me. A total of 690 musicians' names, not counting nicknames and other not within the scope, are listed in the general index, and therefore are at least mentioned in the text; I am sure that I, too, could have added more names, but what is the point? Are we to judge this book by what it could or should have been, or by what it is? Sure, it could have been better; but I submit that any research that turns up as much new information as this is worthy of publication on that count alone. I submit also that this material is of the quantity and quality that Paul Oliver finds useful in his own researches, and that therefore, by his own standards, it deserved a better review than the one he wrote.

Walter C. Allen  
Belleville, N. J.



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NEW CONTRIBUTORS

John Benson Brooks is the well-known  
composer-arranger whose Alabama Con-  
certo has been recorded by Riverside  
Records.

Lorin Stephens is a surgeon practicing  
in Los Angeles and a long time friend  
of many jazz musicians.

**An Interview with Jimmy Guiffre by Lorin Stephens**

## **The Passionate Conviction**

**This interview is intended as a beginning in exploring the impact of hipness on jazz.**

**Jimmy Guiffre is regarded by many as one of the major composers in modern jazz, but his position has been controversial. His admirers feel that his music has great validity. Even his strongest detractors, who consider his work of peripheral concern, are struck with his deep sincerity. It is fitting to explore this question with him, particularly because of his recent marked interest (along with hip legions) in the music of Thelonious Monk and Sonny Rollins.**

**The interview was graciously granted in November 1959. I believe that a**





reader cannot help but be moved by Jimmy Guiffre's willingness to expose himself honestly in the interest of furthering understanding of jazz and the jazz artist.

## Lorin Stephens

**Why do jazz players change styles in an almost wholesale fashion with the arrival of a Parker, a Monk or a Rollins?** The thing that's hard for a non-performer to understand is how things keep changing inside. A listener often analyzes changes as being arbitrary, but they're not. In other words he thinks that when you play a certain phrase, you've planned it out and played it, when actually a big percentage of the music comes out almost like a stone rolling down a hill, especially in improvisation. And it depends on the rhythm section, the acoustics, your frame of mind, your reed (if you play a reed instrument), and your lip. Also on your maturity at the time, and your experience—all these things. And if one little thing is out of line, you're distracted from being most natural, perhaps. For instance, a stiff reed if you're playing a reed instrument (you're always torn between reeds; you never have a perfect one).

You must go through different stages. I've been playing the clarinet since I was nine and I'm thirty-eight now—so that's twenty-nine years of playing the clarinet! I started on the E flat clarinet, and it took a lot of blowing; a little bitty thing—but it took a lot of blowing. And I don't know if the mouthpiece was right or not. I was just a baby. But you have to start with something, so you just start blowing in this tube and years later you might start to think about whether you have the right mouthpiece, and then years after that you find out the choice you made when you were fifteen was wrong, and so you just keep going with these **mechanical** things.

You have certain ideas in your mind that shadow your choice of reed, your choice of instrument, your choice of mouthpiece—and the choice of musicians you play with.

In high school we got a dance band together and played dances. And I started into an area of **sound**; I was interested in getting a beautiful sound from the saxophone, and I was complimented on my sound. In college I went further with this. We played a lot. We had this eight room house in college, and I lived with Gene Roland, the arranger and trumpet and valve trombone player, Herb Ellis the guitarist, Harry Babison the bass player, and Tommy Reeves the trumpet player and arranger. We had big bands, we had a small band and we jammed a lot. We learned a lot—we listened to a lot of records then. I liked Sam Donahue; he got a beautiful mellow sound when he was with Gene Krupa. And we got a sax section that used no vibrato; we got a perfect blend. And the **sound** thing was very dominant in my thinking, and it continued on that way—sound superseding anything else.

Then I went into the Army and played with a quintet, xylophone, snare drum, electric guitar, bass, and I played tenor. (I didn't start improvising on the clarinet actually, until about six years ago or so.) This little group played for the different mess halls at lunch hour and it was a groovy little group—light and straight, but still

the **sound** predominated.

After jobs with Boyd Raeburn and Jimmy Dorsey, I came back to Los Angeles and I started studying. (I don't mean to make this a history—I'm trying to work it into the thinking inside about the instrument.) I went to U.S.C. to get a master's degree, having changed my major from teaching music in public schools to composition. Well, there were so many prerequisites at U.S.C. that it threw me back quite a bit. After a semester of that, I decided it wasn't the answer. I had heard about Dr. Wesley La Violette and his approach. Before this, my concept had been totally vertical. I had in my mind a chart of voicings, for instance if I used five saxes and there was C-7th and G was in the lead, I could spell you out immediately, the ideal voicing vertically, right down the saxes; I knew just how to space them. This was a crazy sound if you could just play it by itself. You didn't consider where it came from or where it was going, you just thought vertically each note, and this was pretty standardized for dance band writing, and a lot of writing is still done that way. There's nothing actually wrong with it; there probably is no right or wrong. I will say this about it, it can be done by anyone; it is mathematical, and difficult to do creatively. I had no awareness of counterpoint. In my work it didn't occur to me for a very good reason. At college I had only one semester of counterpoint because the degree plan which I followed was to prepare a man to stand up in front of high school or junior high students, and you had to know a little bit about everything—how to play a trumpet, bass fiddle and all those things. They didn't have time to go into the depth of counterpoint. So that's all I got. I had studied harmony with my clarinet teacher when I was about fifteen and in college I got harmony, but my thinking was all derived from listening to records; Basie and Benny Goodman.

In college we had a pretty radical attitude, I'll admit that. We wore long hair, zoot suits and we pretty much thought we knew what things should be. A pianist friend, Bill Campbell, said to me, "Well, it doesn't matter what the voicing is, how many parts, its how each one of them leads." It didn't strike me; I didn't understand what he was talking about. Years later Scott Seeley, who was studying with Dr. La Violette, gave me a similar answer when I asked him a question about his writing—his writing sounded strange. I asked him, "How do you voice your brass?" He replied that he did not voice, he just wrote each part separately. I just sort of shook my head; I didn't understand. At that time, believe it or not, I had a college education and I'd been writing music for ten years and playing for fifteen years, and I just didn't know the counterpoint approach to music.

Then later on when I went to Los Angeles, I met Frank Patchen. We played together down at the Lighthouse and he'd been studying with Dr. La Violette. They both told me **this** was the answer. So I started studying with him, and it turned out to be one of the most important things I've ever done in my life. His influence personally and musically has been profound on me. Studying with him began to shadow my jazz thinking. For instance, when you write counterpoint, you write a duet for a clarinet and trumpet. That's all there is to it, there's no rhythm section, a complete composition for these two instruments. If you happen to use a drum with them, you write a complete composition for clarinet, a trumpet and drum. If you happen to write for a piano too, you do the same thing. There isn't a function for any one of the



instruments as there is in conventional jazz; in jazz there's a fairly set part for drums. They more or less have been called upon to keep time. Now I've come through several different outlooks on this thing. I started studying in '46 when I first came out here. At that time I didn't conceive the possibility of using counterpoint in jazz. I was studying it to become a 'composer', but found out that a 'composer' includes jazz composing. Anything that can be used any place can be used in jazz. I remember one time Barney Kessel talking to me about that. I told him I was writing fugues and canons and counterpoint inventions, and he said, "Why do you want to study writing fugues?" He wasn't negative, he just didn't understand it, didn't see the point of it.

It took me about five years studying with La Violette to shake off all the prisons I had locked myself in—the vertical prisons. This is my own opinion; there are many harmonists in the world who will take exception to what I'm saying. I felt as though I were in a prison, whether it was vertical or not I don't know, but I have that conviction in my own mind.

After about five years of studying with La Violette I began to be able to write counterpoint in jazz—with the jazz feeling. Before, all the study was what you might call straight music; it didn't have too much syncopation, and it didn't have too much of me in it. I was writing lines of music, straight, learning how to write lines together, and to be able to put myself into each one of those lines is another thing that came later, but it took me five years to start it.

After I got to writing jazz, I began to think of each man's role in the music and it just began to be inconceivable that a certain man had to sit back and play time all the while, and that another guy had to play quarter notes all night. I just didn't understand the point of it. A man is in music all these years, then why should he just have to play one portion? Why couldn't he just express himself along with the other musicians? Right away, I put this to work in the music and began writing things where the rhythm section didn't play in a conventional manner. The first one I can remember was the fugue I wrote for Shelley Manne. And also, I went overboard and wrote in the so-called atonal approach. But we got it across, and I wrote another piece for his second album. Then I did my first album for Capitol. I incorporated the rhythm section in different ways. I remember I took out the top cymbal in the drums and had him just play the sock cymbals, the two and the four, and the bass walked. Then there were other compositions where I used no rhythm whatsoever. Then, I made a point in the next album, in *Tangents of Jazz*, of not having a pulsating rhythm section, I mean no definite beating out of time, any place in this album. The idea was valid and is valid. The point I'm trying to make is that I began thinking, as a result of studying composition, of the individual in the music—of each one of the musicians rather than in toto. And I began thinking of what you might call 'interesting ideas', counterpoint, and using the rhythm section in different ways, different forms and different kinds of tone—all these things that weren't conventional in jazz. And so, these things became the object of my attention. But all this time my mind in playing had still required this sound, this subtle, soft, mellow, deep sound.

#### **Why was sound so important to you??**

Perhaps it comes from my childhood. It was sort of like not wanting to go out unless I was dressed properly. I couldn't release this music inside of me unless it sound-

ed perfect—that was the first consideration—to have a beautiful sound quality. I've run into hundreds of people who felt exactly the same way, Bill Perkins was one of them. He had the same kind of thing gnawing at him. The sound had to be beautiful and smooth. And I've known so many people like this. Lester Young, he had this smoothness. He said he idolized Frankie Trumbauer who had this kind of sound too. In other words, it dominated me—that had to be fixed up before anything else could happen. It went to such a point with me that when I got the clarinet going, this was number one. There was nothing else considered about it at all—sound was it. The ideas in the whole thing were secondary to sound.

#### **But why so important?**

Well, it goes with my personality, I'm sure. I won't accept the thing that I am an introverted personality, which some have tried to make me out. I have gone through periods, and I won't say I have shaken that off completely, but I have gone through periods where I was quiet; I like the pastoral—the country; I like Debussy and Delius—I like peaceful moods. This all came into the trio sound as I've discovered now. I don't know why I wanted it to be pretty. I can't figure it out except that I just didn't want to look ugly, didn't want to offend anybody. I've always been afraid of offending someone, and I don't argue with people for that reason—I mean I'm not a vehement person, nor forceful—and I'm not too frank for that reason; maybe I should be, but I avoid those things because I don't like them.

#### **If this is natural for you, doesn't current hipness force you and others like you into unnatural strictures?**

All I can say is for myself . . . it traces like a snail what began to happen to me. Well, I don't know what effect comments have had. I'm sure they must have had some. For instance, one time I played a performance that seemed to be very successful and a critic said it was successful, but that my playing clarinet was like mowing a lawn with an electric razor. When it was announced that I was going to be a clarinet teacher at the School of Jazz another critic passed the remark, "Who will teach the upper register?" Then another time a critic said he liked the way I played, but that he wouldn't vote for me because I didn't play the whole instrument. I don't know if these things had some effect on me. Then, another area—I couldn't go out and play with sticks and drums. The only way I could play the clarinet was the way I was playing it—very quietly. They had to play with brushes and practically no piano. That's one of the ways we got to playing some of the unaccompanied stuff, and counterpoint with two horns and all those things we played with Shorty's group. I found that to be the only way I could hear the sound of my instrument; my ears got so sensitive that I went through a period where I just wanted to play the instrument by itself and hear the sound. To have a drummer playing a cymbal next to me was grating. I couldn't hear myself, and I began to wonder what was going on. I wanted to hear clearly—something in me just demanded this clarity. So I brought the drums down or took them out a lot of times, and I worked for a blend of the instruments so that I could hear hear everything that went on in the group. This is one concept of the thing. But we sometimes change our concept—if we're not afraid to. I've changed my concept, and that doesn't make a lot of things that I did invalid. This business of the rhythm section using the drums and the bass constantly—I finally realized why this is and why it has to be perhaps. The improviser, as he is

improvising, if he is too naked as I was with my group, he's out there and he has to think of too many things. It's thrown right in front of his face so quickly. Getting a sound on his instrument and thinking of ideas, that's just taken for granted in all situations. But not just being free to think up ideas: I had to cover certain functions. I had to make something happen, to provide form, composition, and this was a very good thing, but not as a constant diet.

**What then has made you change your concepts?**

I went down to hear Thelonious Monk. I heard an element in his music that I didn't seem to have in my music. I don't mean ideas, style or anything like that, but it was a certain way of stating things with conviction so that he spoke clearly and surely, and he played this idea without any restraint—he played it immediately, right in front of you. I didn't know exactly what it was that was hitting me, there were many things in his music that aren't in my music, but there was one that was hitting me and that was it. Then I also noticed it in Sonny Rollins' music. I had not liked Sonny Rollins too much because of his sound. I couldn't bring myself to listen to the music because I didn't like the sound on his earlier records, but now I heard this same kind of statement. It was definite, with conviction behind it. It sounded as though he was sure of himself, and there was not any holding back, and he was ready to go ahead and say this right now. He didn't have to qualify it; he could stand behind it. I got interested in this point. And it wasn't a new idea at all—it is something inspired musicians have been doing for years, but I was gradually becoming aware of it. I heard some folk songs by Cisco Houston who accompanies himself on the guitar. He sang with this same thing, and as I look back on it, I see that he did that too.

There was another event which was very important. I was riding along in the car listening to the radio one day and I heard a violin playing Bach—all by itself—and I stopped and I listened. It was Nathan Milstein, but I came in on the middle of it, unbiased, I didn't know who it was or anything. I knew though, that he played it with this same conviction, this definite sureness. There's another thing that enters in there besides this. This conviction originates with this person. It comes out "This is my way of saying this." Milstein didn't improvise, and it didn't have anything to do with improvisation. It was like the way Marlon Brando says something in his acting. He takes a written line, and says it his way, puts his stamp on it. He doesn't change the words, and Milstein didn't change that Bach, he played it just like the thing was marked but he put his kind of vitality underneath, his kind of spark. And this is what Monk and Rollins do. But I saw there is a level of playing music, whether its jazz or classical, where it all comes together. It's just music, and it's spontaneous sounding—it sounds like the player—it's his personality with such a stamp that it reaches the listener immediately . . . "this man knows exactly what he is talking about—he's not afraid to say it, and he said it." That's the way Art Tatum was. It is something, that, whether you like what he said or not, you know he says these things, and that's what he believes.

And this began to be interesting. I was tired of being soft, as valid as softness is. (And a funny thing is that you can have this definiteness and still be soft—it isn't a matter of volume). So I got interested in this thing and started to work on it.

Back to the reed, then. I found that I couldn't get these ideas out immediately with the set-up I had. It just wouldn't come out. I was hung up with sound. I wanted it to sound right, and in order for it to sound right it had to come out slower, not quite so quickly. Well, I knew that if I got a soft reed it would come right out. But then I also knew that I would get a thin, weak sound. But, I forced myself to try it. I had tried it before, actually, down through the years every once in a while I'd try getting a softer reed because I knew I could play faster with it, but I could never bring myself to stick with it because of the sound. Well this time something happened, either in my experience, my success, my maturity or something, I reached the point where I'm not afraid to sound ugly for a little bit. And that is what had to happen, I had to soften that reed up so that the music would come out **right now**. But it sounded sort of thin and I lost some of the quality of the sound, but it didn't bother me this time. All these things had been inside of me, but I didn't let them come out because of the sound. Once I started doing this, then I discovered a lot of things. I discovered how full of fear I was before—I was holding back a lot of things because I was afraid of sounding ugly—so I was cringing and tightening up my brow and pinching my eyes and hunching my shoulders. I was afraid of hitting certain notes because they would be too brassy. That didn't keep what I was playing from being valid, but I held some things in me back. But I got the thing going, and once I got it going, I noticed these fears, this cringing, leaving. Then I put a stopper on it, I made myself practice in front of the mirror and watching carefully to remain calm, unafraid, while I played, and I made myself play anything that would come in my mind. I worked on this thing, and threw out all that other stuff; and finally got up enough nerve to throw the rock off the cliff and just play anything I wanted to play when I wanted to play it. It was a revelation. I began thawing a year ago, and recently I finally got up enough nerve to where I felt I could really handle a blowing album by myself as a soloist. It may seem funny, with so many years of experience behind me, I hadn't made one. But the other albums were well-planned in composition and all the different elements for a planned listening experience. In a blowing album, one man is up front there and has to have something to say and he's got to be sure of what he's going to say. And I wanted to make sure before that happened that I felt that I could do it. I went into the studio last July with Red Mitchell, Lawrence Marable and Jimmy Rowles and there was no planning. The only thing planned was that I wrote three tunes, just the melodies and I thought of three standards to play. (I didn't even write any music, I taught the originals to the men by ear, which is not a new idea. First time I know of it, Monk came to a record date with Art Blakey and he had all the arrangements locked up in a brief case, and he wouldn't show them to anyone. He made them learn them which has a good point to it.) But, having to do this blowing album was necessity mothering invention. A lot happened to me as a result of that—just doing that album at this particular time with the frame of mind I had of shaking off these sound prisons, and having to do it on record. It worked to shoot me out over the cliff.

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He was doing the same thing that I was after, in his own way. The wonderful thing about this point is that it has nothing to do with the ideas or the musical content, it has to do with the statement—and when somebody gets to this point where he can be this free and this sure in his statement, then it's just a matter of his speaking. It's not competition with anyone else. You could take two men who played this way, and they could be playing completely different ideas, but they would both be projecting the maximum in immediacy and quality. So, I found that this was what Ornette was doing. He was doing a lot of other things too, but this appealed to me more than anything. Even if he said hardly anything at all, the way he said it would have come across, because he speaks directly. He has thrown out the bugaboos about being afraid of what he's going to sound like. That's what it is, it's a matter of being unafraid to stand up and be yourself—right there in public—and it's very difficult to do, but I've got on the trail of it now. Ornette's gone further with it, because he's thrown out the preoccupation with trying to fit in musically with any given situation. That's what I'd like to do. It means like almost playing flow of consciousness, playing without any regard to channeling what you're doing into a given tradition of any kind. And that means in sound, in tone, key, and all the different ways. In other words, you're so free that you're out in space, and you do what occurs to you at that instant without thinking it over. I'm not saying this is the answer to everybody's problems, but I can see a wonderful release in it for me. Ornette and I had a jam session with George Russell on the piano and some students. and Connie Kay and Percy Heath. We just cut the strings, jumped out of the airplane, and a lot of wild things happened. We didn't know what it would sound like, but it was a release anyway. But the point I'm trying to get at is that it's a matter of really not being afraid to do anything—I don't care how different from whatever else has been done. It's not just doing something because it's different, it's doing something because it occurs to you right now.

**Does scale orientation (as opposed to chromatic harmonization) free the improviser?**

The first time I heard about that kind of thing was with George Russell. He's got a complete system, an analysis of music that places everything in scales. In all of his music, he can break it down as to what scale it is. As for myself, I don't know if I can really say, that clearly, what I'm doing when I improvise. I'm not sure I've ever been able to think about anything when I play. (Of course, playing *I Got Rhythm* when I come to the bridge I know it's E 7th. If anybody can avoid thinking about that, they'd be pretty, miraculous. It's E 7th—and it's like written on the wall.) But there are different things. For instance, the first eight bars of *I Got Rhythm* can be thought about as just being in B flat. There are all kinds of changes in there, perhaps, according to who you play with. But you can just think in B flat for the whole thing. I think more in keys than in scale—it might be the same thing the others, Miles and Bill Evans, are thinking about. **But does scale orientation further free or is it just a different set of rules?**

I think it is another kind of limitation perhaps. But actually it doesn't matter if it's a limitation or not, all that matters is that something comes out that somebody can enjoy. They say that certain people analyze themselves way past where they are. I've heard this about Hindemith, that he's very analytical, but his music comes out.

There's the musical experience; what does it matter how much he or anybody else talks about it? If it's there, it's there, and if you get something from it, you get something from it. As I say, I don't have a way of thinking about playing, I just play. And when I start trying to follow a route—harmonically or scales or anything like that—it limits me, as you say. Of course, I'm just one person, and I work in a way that's most natural for me. **Is freedom what the scale-orientation improvisors are after?**

Yes. But I'll tell you what they're concerned with more than that. This scale approach requires a certain kind of composition that can be approached in a certain way and they're more interested in playing that kind of a piece, and that's the way I am too. The piece must have longer harmony—pedal-point harmony. You stretch out on the same chord for a while instead of changing every two beats or every four beats.

**Then pedal-point orientation does free the improviser?**

Yes. This kind of a piece lends itself much better to freedom than a musical comedy type of piece. Because of having to adjust to the vertical requirements, it's distracting—it's abrupt. That's why I suppose I've written counterpointally, I can't see adjusting vertically all the time. There's going to be harmony there. This is the technique Dr. La Violette taught me a long time ago. I remember the words. 'Stretch the harmonies out, and the music will flow more smoothly.' How do you stretch the harmonies out? Well, the way you do when you write counterpoint, you don't think of the harmony vertically, but in the back you put the harmony of pedals. To explain; a pedal-point is having a certain note in tenure for several bars. A figure pedal is when you have the same figure over and over. Actually there are many kinds of pedals: it denotes a sameness over several bars. It can be one note, one chord or one figure. A sound that becomes permanent in the background—as in a painting where you would have a white background. If you stretch this pattern out over a period of time then the improviser can just let himself go free, he can play so many things against a pedal point. He can play any note of the scale against a pedal note and it's correct and it moves on and on. This is one of the basic things in counterpoint. This is what they are discovering frees them in improvisation. Ornette, from the way I understand it, is attempting to circumvent the whole thing. In fact he and I did it this night we had this session. The rhythm section played the blues—we weren't even playing the same tempo they were. We were playing any tempo—we weren't playing any chords, any tunes, any key. We were playing anything that came in our minds. And you can plainly ask, "Well, what bearing does that have on the rhythm section playing the blues?" All I can say is that if we did it by ourselves, we wouldn't have had the way to do it. They provide a background; just like a background for a painted rose. You see that rose, and the background becomes a color. The blues is a pedal type tune you can stretch out; there are so few changes and the changes are not abrupt.

**But do most musicians who pattern their ways of playing after, say Sonny Rollins do so to achieve freedom or to serve the hip ritual?**

I'm fortunate to have waited until this time to look in on this thing—because if I didn't have my experience behind me, I might have done this same kind of thing—I might have done this superficially. But superficially you can't emulate you only imitate.



# BUSTER AND BIRD

## CONVERSATIONS WITH BUSTER SMITH

DON GAZZAWAY

Leroy McClucas



Talking about Moten again, how long were you with him? I was with him till he died in 1935. During the time I was with Bennie was when a lot of this stuff we've been talking about happened. We travelled all around through the mid-west.

**Was there any sort of a contract in those days between sideman and leader?**

No, a guy could be hired today, and tomorrow would be gone and it was still O.K. There were so many musicians, you wouldn't miss him. Everything was free and easy and anything you wanted to do was O.K.

I'll tell you one thing that changed though, and that was the 'commonwealth' band. After I joined Moten we band either. We just decided that somebody had to be got rid of that. Of course we didn't have it in the Basie the one boss. That was the only way to get anywhere. In Basie's band all the sideman were paid the same and Basie and I got a little more. Of course we paid the arrangers in the band for their arrangements.

**When did Basie leave Moten and start his own band?**

Well, it was after Bennie died. Basie pulled out and went down to the Reno Club. He and Bus Moten couldn't get along. Buster took the band over after Bennie's death, I told you how hot-headed he was. Anyway Basie left and went to the Reno. Joe Keyes went down there before Basie left, and then Basie took off and opened with about eight pieces in '35.

I stayed on with Bus till all the boys started cutting out, so I saw they were going to leave me by myself with Bus, so I took off too and went down to the Reno and carried my repertory with me. Basie told me, 'Prof, I'll tell you what I'll do. We'll organize the band and have a partnership. It'll be your and my band and we'll call it the Buster Smith and Count Basie Band of Rhythm.' I said O.K., be fine. So we started the band and split our money. I got about \$21 a week and Basie got \$21. The boys in the band didn't get that much. We started working there at the Reno from 9:00 at night to about 4 or 5 in the morning. Jo Jones was with us then, till somebody stole him, and then I went back later and stole him back. A little after that John Hammond came down and got the band, about three weeks after I'd left.

**I haven't heard it this way before. Was it generally known that the band at the Reno was Basie's and yours?**

Well, it was known then, and I don't know about later. Basie had the band first and he had me come on down and be a partner. So when I left Bus Moten's band—Bennie's old band—I joined Basie as a partner and we had eight pieces. We called it the **Count Basie-Buster Smith Band of Rhythm**.

**Did you stay in Kansas City during your time with Basie?**

Mostly right there at the Reno Club. We broadcasted there at night. About 11:15 to midnight I think it was. That was when Benny Goodman heard us, on one of our broadcasts. Benny heard us and sent Basie a telegram and said he was going to send a representative down there. Benny thought that was a fine eight piece band. You know, Fats Waller had tried to get us before but nothing ever came of it.

Well, John Hammond came down as Benny's representative and got the band some uniforms and booked them into the Grand Terrace in Chicago.

**Were you with them then?**

No, I was gone. I had already left and joined Claude Top-

kins. I was there when the telegram came, but when John Hammond came down I had just left. We'd heard so much about how somebody was going to come and get the band and make it big. I just didn't think anything about it—figured it was just more talk—so I left. Lips left too, before I did. We hadn't been gone long before I heard Basie broadcasting from the Grand Terrace in Chicago, and I was pretty surprised—and a little sorry I hadn't stayed with him. He sent back for me, yeah, he sent back for me. I was in Iowa with Hopkins and then I went back to Kansas City and started playing with George Lee's sister, Julia Lee. Basie wanted me to come back but some of the boys in the band said, 'Aw, don't take Buster back, he went off and left us.' So Basie said, 'Bus, some of the boys are a little hot, so just stick around a while till they cool off and then come on back.' But I never did go back as a member of the band. So I went back to Kansas City and organized my own band in 1937. We had twelve pieces. Jay McShann was in the band, Odel West, tenor, Hadnott, bass, Willie McWashington on drums, and a guy named Crooke on guitar. Then there was Fred Beckett trombone, Andy Anderson on second trumpet and I don't remember the third trumpet's name. The first trumpeter was Tiny Davis' husband, but I can't remember his name either. And then we had another tenor player that I can't remember. I played alto and of course Charlie Parker played the other alto.

Charlie had been in Kansas City for a long time. I'd seen him running around in 1932 or 1933 when he was just a kid. He came up with Tommy Douglas' brothers: Bill played alto and Buck played tenor. They were pretty good boys themselves, and Tommy too. I used to listen to Tommy on alto myself. And then there was Jack Washington. Bennie Moten played a lot of alto, but you could hardly make him play unless you got right behind him. But he played a lot of alto. Eddie Barefield too.

Anyway, Charlie came up with Tommy Douglas' brothers, Bill and Buck. Charlie would come in where we were playing and hang around the stand, with his alto under his arm. He had his horn in a paper sack—always carried it in that paper sack. That's when the boys named him 'Yardbird.' He'd stay around till we got off and when he'd get ready to go home he'd say, 'I'm going home and cook me one of those yardbirds when I get up.' The boys would say, 'What are you talking about, yardbirds?' And Charlie would say, 'One of them chickens in my yard.' He called them yardbirds. He got to saying that so much that the boys started calling him 'Yardbird.' And that's how he got the name.

He used to carry his horn home and put it under his pillow and sleep on it.

**You were the one he listened to most?**

Well, he used to tell me he wanted to play like me. He'd say, 'Buster, you're the king,' and I'd say 'no, you're the king,' and he'd say, 'No man, you're the king.'

Charlie would run by himself. He wouldn't stay with anyone for over a night or two and then tomorrow he would be with somebody else. I tried to get him to join Bennie Moten about 1934, but he wouldn't do it. He wanted to play in the small groups where he could solo like he wanted to, when he wanted to. There was a trumpet player there, a white boy named Neal that Charlie ran around with. [Neal played with Charlie Barnett later on.] The two of them used to go out and play all night around



**BUSTER SMITH**

the joints.

Charlie was headstrong, but he wasn't a smart-alec kid. He was a good boy, he'd listen to you.

**Was Charlie in Kansas City when you came back and organized your band?**

He was still there. He had been there ever since '32 or '33 just running around taking gigs where he found them. When he heard about my band, he was the first in line to get in it. He'd improved a good bit since I'd seen him before and of course I wanted him. The only trouble he had was with his mouthpiece. He had trouble getting the tone he wanted to get. But as for knowing his horn, he knew that. He always knew that, since I first saw him.

**You know he often called you his musical 'dad'. How much of your style did he absorb?**

He used to call me his dad, and I called him my boy. I couldn't get rid of him. He was always up under me. In my band we'd split the solos. If I took two, he'd take two, if I took three, he'd take three, and so forth. He always wanted me to take the first solo. I guess he thought he'd learn something that way. He did play like me quite a bit I guess. But after a while, anything I could make on my horn he could make too—and make something better out of it.

We used to do that double time stuff all the time. Only we called it double tongue sometimes in those days. I used to do a lot of that on clarinet. Then I started doing it on alto and Charlie heard me doing it and he started playing it. Tab Smith did a lot too.

**How long was he with you??**

I had that band about two years and Charlie was with me all that time. He was the youngest cat in the band. I'd use the 12 piece band for dances and tours and things like that and try to keep 6 pieces, or maybe 7 or 8 pieces, working steady there in Kansas City the rest of the time. Jay McShann was gone and we had Emil Williams on piano in the little group. And then Parker. Hadnott, McWashington, Crooke, and me. We worked at a place called Lucille's Band Box on 18th Street. We used to broadcast from there sometime. When I left for New York the band was working at a white place—the Antler Club.

**Was yours the first organized band Charlie played with?** Yeah, the first organized band. He was a little hot-headed sometimes and he wouldn't stay with nobody but me. He stayed with me longer than anybody till he got with McShann.

In 1938 I went to New York to look for work for the band. I thought we might get a break up there. I left Charlie and Odel West in charge and told him I'd send for them when I found something. Well I stayed seven months and

didn't send for them. Charlie got downhearted when it looked like I wasn't gonna send for them, so he just caught a train and hoboed up there, came up there where I was. He sure did look awful when he got in. He'd worn his shoes so long that his legs were all swollen up. He stayed up there with me for a good while at my apartment. During the day my wife worked and I was always out looking around, and I let him stay at my place and sleep in my bed. He'd go out and blow all night somewhere and then come in and go to sleep in my bed. I'd make him leave in the afternoon before my wife came home. She didn't like him sleeping in our bed because he wouldn't pull his clothes off before he went to bed. (Laughs) He was always like that. He would go down to Monroe's and play all night. The boys were beginning to listen to him then.

He stayed around doing that for a while and then went down to Baltimore for about three weeks, and that's when McShann sent for him. McShann had started his own band and he put Charlie on tenor at first.

I didn't see Charlie much after he joined McShann. I was in New York and he was in the Midwest and Southwest with McShann's band.

When I first came to New York I was trying to get a steady job for the band, but I didn't know how tough things were up there. You had to wait three months to get in the union.

Basie was there and wanted me to arrange for him, so I wrote some arrangements for him and some for a few white bands downtown. Well, later I got a little low on cash so I hocked my horn. Pete Johnson and Joe Turner came up and wanted me to make a record with them so they got my horn out of hock and we made a record of **Cherry Red**.

During this time in New York, I arranged a good deal, but didn't do much playing, although I did play with Don Redman's band. I was going to arrange for Don, but he did all his own arrangements and didn't want any others. Besides, it took all my time just learning to play his stuff.

I ran into a lot of great musicians there in New York.

**Now, when was this?**

This was in 1939 and 1940. Don Byas was there, he was in Redman's band for a while. Sidney Bechet had his own little group then. He played in the village, all down the East Side, and over in Brooklyn. Lips Page had a band too and I was in that for a while playing and arranging too. In fact, that's when I first saw Nat Cole. Bechet's group was playing down at Kelly's Stables. Lips' seven piece group that I was in was there too. We'd trade sets and Cole would play the intermission. He had a fine little trio.

John Kirby's group was there playing all the "high collar" places. They got nothing but the cream of the bookings because they could play anything. They could all read was one thing—even the drummer.

Artie Shaw came up to my apartment one time too. He wanted me to arrange for his big band. I didn't take the job though. Artie wanted me to write three arrangements a week for him, and I didn't want to be under pressure to do that much in just a week. Too, the band was so big and Artie wanted not only good, solid arrangements, but something different all the time. I always liked to take my time on arrangements, and I couldn't do it on that kind of deal. Sy Oliver took the job later, but he got a better deal. He only had to write one arrangement a



week, but he did have to rehearse the band.

**Did you listen to Shaw's clarinet?**

Yeah, he was one of the greatest. He and Benny. I was crazy about them both. Well, I don't know, I believe I liked Artie a little better. He had better control of his high notes—I admired that high register. His tone was so true and Artie seemed to have a little more feeling in his playing.

**Who else did you work for in New York?**

A lot of people off and on. Snub Mosely for a while, and Eddie Durham. While I was with Durham I ran into Ben Smith again. I had first met him here about 1928. He was an arranger and a fine alto man. He was the fastest arranger I ever saw. He could write three arrangements a day—and they were usually good ones too! He was with Durham in '39 and '40.

**Of course "modern" jazz was beginning to "happen" in 1939 and 1940. How much of it did you hear?**

Well, there weren't too many, but several guys were playing something a little different then, but the first ones I heard playing it were trumpet players.

**Dizzy?**

No, Dizzy wasn't on that yet. Freddy Webster and Dud Bascombe were the two. Dud and his brother Paul were in Erskine Hawkin's band. Paul was playing tenor, but he wasn't playing that modern stuff. Dud Bascombe and Freddy Webster were the ones I heard on it, around the last of 1939. Harry Edison was playing a little too, but not as much as those boys were.

**Did you go to Minton's or Monroe's?**

I never went to Minton's though a lot of the fellows I knew did. I was at Monroe's quite a bit though. It was a small place in a basement and mostly a musician's hangout. Sometimes they'd have two or three bands there at one time.

I ran into Charlie Christian again about this time too. In fact, I was one of the first ones he looked up when he got to New York. I'd first known Charlie when he was just a little boy down in Oklahoma City. He was born in Dallas, but I think he was raised in Oklahoma City. His brother Ed was a musician and I knew him first. I didn't even know Charlie was interested in music until I ran into the Nat Towles band in Omaha. Somebody said they had a great guitar player named Charlie Christian. So I went around to hear him and there was little old Charlie playing all that guitar.

And then when I saw him in New York, I told him, "Son, you're in New York now, so take it easy. Don't stay up all night, watch yourself, and be careful." I used to tell a lot of those cats that. I was a little older than they were and they'd say, "Yeah, you're right. Pop." and all that, but the next thing I knew, they had Charlie out in the hospital and he died.

**How long did you stay in New York City?**

I stayed about two years. I first left there in 1940 and came back to Dallas. When I got here I saw the boys were playing for peanuts and didn't have much work either. I stayed about four months and finally went back to New York the first part of 1941. I played with Snub Mosely and played a lot of the army camps for the USO after the war started. But I finally got ready to come home again in the Fall of 1942, so I came on back and stopped on the way in Kansas City to see Ernest Williams. He wasn't playing much then, working at a dry cleaners in the daytime. He was a pretty good tailor and knew a little about dry cleaning, and all that. Last I heard he was out

on the coast. I don't know what he's doing, but he's probably tailoring or something like that. I sure would like to see Ernest again. We were just like brothers.

**What was the musical situation at Kansas City at that time?**

The town had cooled off quite a bit by that time. All the big organized bands had left before then and gone north. Basie was gone, Andy Kirk had left, and everybody else too, by about 1938.

I stayed there a few days with Ernest and came on home and started a little chicken farm in my mother's yard. All my brothers were going in the army and I was the only one around to take care of my mother. A little while after I got here I organized my own little band. We played at the Shangri-La out by Love Field, and at the Rose Room which is the Empire Room now up on Hall Street. We played at a little place called the Log Cabin. That was a jumping little spot. We had eight pieces on that band. We did pretty well.

**Have you ever regretted leaving New York and the "big-time"?**

No, I never seriously regretted it. I missed some of the boys of course, but I liked to hunt and fish and relax once in a while. Some of the boys razzed me about it when I decided to leave New York. They used to say, "Old Buster's going back to the sticks," and I'd say, "Yeah, that's where I'm going. Right back to the sticks, where a dollar in your pocket counts for something."

**Have you been earning your living primarily as a musician since you came back?**

Yeah, I've had my own groups just about all that time, usually about eight pieces. When I first came back and organized the band we played all kinds of engagements—roadhouses, cafes, joints, dances, everything. The last several years, we've cut out the joints. We don't play anything now but the nicer places. We usually tour all the army camps around in Texas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas. In town here, we play a lot of school dances and private social affairs. We've got a good reputation around here, mainly because we don't play the joints, and our boys know how to handle themselves. I've got some good musicians, and I don't allow a lot of drinking or that stuff.

**Have you followed the jazz scene to any extent since you came back?**

I guess I haven't kept up too well. I followed Charlie Parker's work fairly well, but not like I would have liked to.

**At this point I played excerpts from two Atlantic albums to get Buster's reaction to jazz that has been played and accepted in the last year or two. The records were, "The Modern Jazz Quartet at Music Inn." Atlantic 1247, and "The Jimmy Guiffre Three." Atlantic 1254. Buster's response was immediate and positive:**

That's really something. I would call that "uptown" jazz. Yeah, that's strictly educational music. Only educated musicians can play that. That goes for both groups. I don't think there's much left after that's played. You can't add anything to it, and I wouldn't advise anybody to take anything away from it. That's great music. Just sitting down, listening to music, I'd rather hear that than the old stuff. You can learn something from this. One thing about this jazz—you don't have to worry about anybody sitting in. (Laughing) You have to know what you're doing and what you're fixing to do. I'd never want to hear anything any better than that.

**Buster, do you ever see any of the musicians you used to work with?**

Yeah, they come around to see me. I've seen most of them I guess right here, at one time or another. Basie always comes to see me when he's in town. Joe Turner is here fairly often, in fact I think he's coming in pretty soon for a few dates. Lips was here, this was his home too, you know. Walter Page was here. Eddie Barefield is about the only one I haven't seen.

Charlie came down too one time, but I missed him. He was here for a couple of days with Stan Kenton. Kenton was coming in from the coast and wired Charlie to meet him here as a sort of added surprise to Stan's concert here. It was just a little while before Charlie died. I didn't even hear about them being here till they were already gone. They told me Charlie was looking for me up on Hall Street. I went on up there, but he was already gone. **If you could do it over again, what would you change?**

I don't know much that I would change except for being a little more careful with the songs I wrote, and all that. I lost a lot of good arrangements, and never saw any money for a lot of things. Music was all we cared about in those days; we wanted to play just to be playing. We studied our instruments and our arrangements and worked hard at them. The music was the thing.

One reason we never made much money out of it was that we had the bands on a commonwealth basis for so long. We never could do anything with it. We fooled away a lot of good opportunities and most of us never got much out of it.

**This is the third of a series of three interviews with Buster Smith.**

**BUSTER SMITH ON RECORDS by Frank Driggs**

**Walter Page**

**and His Blue Devils** Kansas City: November 10, 1929

Hot Lips Page, James Simpson, James LuGrand, trumpets; Drucie Bess, trombone; Buster Smith, Theodore Manning, Reuben Roddy, saxes; Charlie Washington, piano; Reuben Lynch, guitar; Walter Page, baritone-sax, tuba, bass; Alvin Burroughs, drums. Jimmy Rushing, vocal.

KC 612 Blue Devil Blues, vJR Vocalion 1463

KC 613 Squabblin' — —

**Pete Johnson's**

**Boogie Woogie Boys** New York City: June 30, 1939

Hot Lips Page, trumpet; Buster Smith, alto; Pete Johnson, piano; Lawrence Lucie, guitar; Abe Bolar, bass; Eddie Dougherty, drums. Joe Turner, vocals.

25023 Cherry Red, vJT  
Vocalion 4997, Okeh 4997, 6819, PaE R2717

25024 Baby, Look at You, vJT  
Vocalion 4997, Okeh 4997, 6819, PaE R2717

25025 Lovin' Mama Blues, vJT  
Vocalion 5186, Okeh 5186, PaE R2947

**Hot Lips Page**

**and His Orchestra** New York: January 23, 1940

Hot Lips Page, trumpet, vocals; Buster Smith, clarinet, alto; Jimmy Powell, alto; Sam Davis, tenor; Jimmie Reynolds, piano; Abe Bolar, bass; Ed Connery, drums.

67091 I Would Do Anything for You Decca 7699

67092 I Ain't Got Nobody — 7714  
67093 A Porter's Love Song to a Chambermaid — 7757  
67094 Gone With the Gin — 7714  
67095-98 (unissued and untitled masters from same session)  
67099 Walk it to Me Decca 7757  
67100 I Wont be Here Long — 7699

**Eddie Durham**

**and His Band** New York: November 11, 1940

Joe Keys, trumpet; Buster Smith, Willard Brown, Lem Johnson, saxes; Conrad Frederick, piano; Eddie Durham, guitar-arranger; Averill Pollard, bass; Arthur Herbert, drums.

68336 I Want a Little Girl Decca 18126, DL 8044

68337 Moten Swing — —

68338 Fare Thee Honey, Fare Thee Well, vLJ Decca 8529

68339 Magic Carpet — —

**Bon Bon and His Buddies**

New York: July 23, 1941

Joe Thomas, trumpet; Eddie Durham, trombone-guitar-arranger; Buster Smith, clarinet; Jackie Fields, alto; James Phipps, piano; Al Hall, bass; Jack Parker, drums. George "Bon Bon" Tunnell, vocals.

69557 I Don't Want to Set the World on Fire  
Decca 3980, BrE 03258

69558 Blow, Gabriel, Blow Decca 8567

69559 Sweet Mama, Papa's Gone

Decca 3980, BrE 03258

69560 All That Meat and No Potatoes Decca 8567

**Snub Mosely and His Band** New York: February 11, 1942

Courtney Williams, trumpet; Snub Mosely, trombone-vocals; Buster Smith, alto-arranger; Hank Duncan, piano; John Brown, bass; Joe Smith, drums; Hazel Diaz, vocals.

70306 'Deed I Do, vHD Decca 8626

70307 Case of the Blues — —

70308 Blues at High Noon Decca 8614, BrE 03462

70309 Between You and the Devil, vSM Decca 8614

The following Don Redman items are included tentatively, since Redman does not recall Buster's presence in the band for recordings, although Buster remembers otherwise.

**Don Redman's Orchestra**

New York: March 23, 1939

Sidney DeParis, Robert Williams, Tommy Stevenson, trumpets; Quentin Jackson, Gene Simon, trombones; Don Redman, Eddie Williams, Ed Inge, Buster Smith, altos; Carl Frye, Gene Sedric, tenors; Nicholas Rodriguez, piano; Bob Lessey, guitar; Bob Ysaguirre, bass; Bill Beason, drums; Redman, vocals.

35079 Three Little Maids Bluebird 10305

35080 The Flowers that Bloom in the Spring — —

35081 Jump Session Victor 26206, ElecG 6933

35082 Class Will Tell, vDR — —

**Don Redman Orchestra**

New York: May 18, 1939

Al Killian, replaces DeParis; Quentin Jackson, vocal; Henry Smith, replaces Ed Inge; Tapley Lewis, replaces Carl Frye; Slick Jones, replaces Beason. Laurel Watson, vocals.

36962 Chew, Chew, Chew, vLW J DR and chorus  
Victor 26258, GrF K8390

36963 Igloo, vLW — —

36964 Baby, Wont You Please Come Home, vQJ  
Victor 26266

36965 Gee Baby, Ain't I Good to You, vDR — —

**Buster Smith's Band**

Fort Worth, Texas: June 7, 1959

Charles Gillum, trumpet; Clinton Smith, trombone; Buster Smith, alto; Leroy Cooper, baritone; Herman Flowers or Boston Smith, piano; Josea Smith, bass; Robert Cobbs, Jr., drums.

Untitled Atlantic LP

Buster definitely did not record with Bennie Moten in 1932, nor with Ivy Anderson in California in 1947.

# **THE BLUES**

## **I DON'T KNOW**

I'm gettin' sick and tired of the way you do.  
Good kind papa kinda botherin' you.  
Sprinkle goofer dust all around yo' bed.  
Wake up one of these morn's, find your own self dead.

She said, "You shouldn't say that."  
I say, "What should I say this time, baby?"  
She says: "Mmmm, I don't know!"  
My oh my oh my!  
I don't know what my baby puttin' down."

The woman I love, she got dimples in her jaw,  
The clothes she's wearin' is made out of the best of cloth.  
She can take and wash and she kin hang 'em upside the wall.  
She can throw 'em out the window and run out and catch 'em a little bit befo' the fall.

Sometimes I think you has your hairpins on.  
She said, "You shouldn't say that."  
I say, "What should I say to make you mad this time, baby?"  
She says: "Mmmm, I don't know!"  
My oh my oh my!  
I don't know what my baby puttin' down."

My papa told me, my mother sat down and cried.  
She say, "You're too young a man, son, to have that many many women you got."  
I looked at my mother dear and I didn't even crack a smile.  
I said, "The women kill me, I don' mind dying."

The woman I love, I warned her week before last.  
The woman I love, I got out of class.  
I thought I warned you, baby, long time ago:  
If you don't watch your step, I'm gonna have to let you go.

She said, "You shouldn't say that."  
I say, "What should I say this time, baby?"  
She said, "Mmmm  
I don't know!  
I don't know!  
I don't know what my baby puttin' down, puttin' down!"

(By Willie Mabon. Chess U-4314 [1531]. Transcribed by Mimi Clar.)

## **CONJURATION**

I put ashes in my sweet papa's bed  
So that he can't slip out.  
Hoodoo in his bread,  
Goofer dust all about—  
I'll fix him!  
Conjuration is in his socks and shoes  
Tomorrow he'll have those mean sundown blues.

(Traditional. Used by W. C. Handy in **Sundown Blues**. Submitted by Mimi Clar.)

## **STRUT THAT THING**

Woke up this morning feeling bad  
Thinkin' 'bout times I've had:  
You went out and stayed all night.  
Do you think that's treatin' me right?

Aw you shouldn' not do it at all  
Shouldn't do it all.  
Shouldn't do it all.

I'm tellin' you lover  
How do you strut that thing  
Night and day?

Gettin' sick and tired of the way you do  
Gawd, mama, gonna pizen you,  
Sprinkle goofer dust 'roun' yo' bed  
Wake up s'mornin', find yo' own self dead.

(By Cripple Clarence Lofton. Vocalion 02591.  
Submitted by Mimi Clar.)

## **CRIPPLE CLARENCE LOFTON**



Courtesy Phil Featheringill



# Part III

## EARLY DUKE

GUNTHER SCHULLER

In the production or show-music category, Ellington produced some two dozen numbers, ranging from such bits of dated exotica as **Arabian Lover** or its companion piece, **Japanese Dream** (pentatonic melodies, ominous "Charlie Chan" gongs and all)<sup>34</sup> to more original pieces, such as **Jungle Jamboree** or **Rocky Mountain Blues**. As a category, it was perhaps the least fruitful in this period (except, of course, for the outright pop tunes); but, as I have indicated, it led to experimentation with different programmatic ideas that Ellington might otherwise never have chanced upon. It produced, among other things, a whole line of heavily stomping four-beat pieces—a genre for which Duke had a special predilection, especially after the success of the prototypical **Black and Tan Fantasy** and **The Mooche**. In **Harlem Flat Blues**, **Rent Party Blues** and parts of **Saratoga Swing**, **Mississippi**, **Haunted Nights**, **Jazz Lips**, **Lazy Duke**, and **Jolly Wog**, Ellington tried to recapture the success of the two earlier medium-tempo stomps. Some of these were also attempts at conscious jungle evocations—pieces like **Jungle Jamboree**, **Jungle Blues**, or **Jungle Nights in Harlem**, the latter one of the most patently dated pieces in the band's repertoire. It is easy to imagine how such a number complemented the pseudo-jungleistic, "primitive" murals on the walls of the Cotton Club.

But as we have noted, in almost every piece—whether bad or good—Ellington and his men tried to work out some new sound, some new musical idea. **Saratoga Swing**, for instance, was an early, successful attempt to employ a combo within the big band. Played by a septet consisting of Hodges, Bigard and Cootie Williams, plus the four rhythm, **Saratoga Swing** became the forerunner of many similar small-band recordings, notably the series made in the late 1930's under the leadership of various Ellington sidemen. Two other early septet recordings—among the finest of this period, though unfortunately not as well known as many lesser sides—were **Big House Blues** and **Rocky Mountain Blues**.

This is the third of a series of three articles on the early work of Duke Ellington. The entire series is Copyright 1959 by Rinehart & Company, and is reprinted with their permission.

DUKE and JOHNNY HODGES

Courtesy  
Columbia Records





**Rocky Mountain Blues** is an especially good example of the inability of the Ellington musical mind to be satisfied for long with the tried and true. Basically founded on the twelve-bar blues progression, Ellington finds a very imaginative alternative for the fourth bar, which by rights should have been a B-flat seventh chord. As can be seen in Example 17, a subtle shift of two notes (the expected B flat and a half tone higher D to C flat and E flat respectively) results in a wondrously new sound. The three "horns" thus end up in the key of A flat minor, while Braud's double-time walking bass holds on to the basic B-flat chord, thus creating a delightful bitonal combination—this in 1930!



Example 17

Primarily, the jungle pieces offered Duke a more or less legitimate excuse to experiment with "weird" chords and sounds—as, for instance, in **Jungle Blues**. Similarly, **Harlem Flat Blues** gave Nanton his first opportunity to produce a lengthy "talking" solo. He was to return to this idea hundreds of times in his career, but this early fantasy, evoking a not-quite-human language, stands out as one of his best. During this period Ellington also learned to use Nanton (mostly cup-muted) with two low-register clarinets, a very unusual sound; and when he made the practically unheard-of move of adding a second trombone in the person of valve trombonist Juan Tizol, Duke had at his disposal not only another color, but a highly chromatic instrument that could be used interchangeably with the trumpets or reeds, as the occasion demanded. An early example of Ellington's use of the chromatic-trombone line can be heard in the final eight-part ensemble of **Jazz Lips** (Ex. 18).



Example 18

On some of these sides, guitarist Teddy Bunn appeared as guest soloist. His simple, lean melodic style stood out in contrast to the now-enriched, more and more vertically conceived tonal quality of the band. In **Haunted Nights** this contrast is most apparent. In this piece, an obvious attempt to effect another **Black and Tan Fantasy**, only Bunn's guitar is able to recreate the expressive simplicity of Miley's playing.

By and large, the most successful pieces in terms of jazz came out of the category of music written for dancing. Among these, the best were a whole series of up-tempo stomps, headed by **Old Man Blues** (especially in its first recorded version). Others, almost as good, were **Double Check Stomp**, **Cotton Club Stomp**, **Stevedore Stomp**, **Wall Street Wail**, **Duke Steps Out**, **Hot Feet**, **Ring Dem Bells**—all of them direct descendants of earlier "flag wavers"

like **The Creeper**, **Birmingham Breakdown** and **Jubilee Stomp**. All were very similar in intent and content, and some—like **Double Check Stomp** and **Wall Street Wail**—were even based on the same chord progression. They were mostly head arrangements, thematically rather non-committal. But they inspired the major soloists, most notably Carney and Nanton, to create a profusion of fine improvised solos. Interestingly, time and time again in these pieces, Nanton teams up with Braud. The great trombonist seemed to thrive on the near-slap-bass punch of his colleague, and together they produced some of the hottest and most swinging moments on these sides of the late 1920's and early 1930's. Bigard, during this time, seemed to be coming gradually into his own, although he had not yet quite found the liquid quality of later years, and more often than not he relied on old New Orleans clichés that he remembered from numbers like **Tiger Rag**. Also, his time was still rather shaky during this period. Cootie Williams was developing with rapid strides, especially in the use of the growl and plunger, a heritage left him by the departure of Miley. His best solos—**Saratoga Swing**, **Ring Dem Bells**, **Echoes of the Jungle**, to name but a few—already show a considerable mastery of this difficult style, at times even glimpses of a more imaginative use of it than Miley's. Hodges was used mainly in flashy, bubbling solos, not yet having discovered the subtly wailing style that was to make him famous in later years. As lead alto he added a tremendous solidity to the reed section; and his solo work, generated by an endless flow of melodic inspiration, was never less than reliable. His playing already had an inevitability about it—not to be confused with predictability—that seemed always to guarantee the right note in the right place. Hodges' solo, for example, on **Syncopated Shuffle**—otherwise a minor record—has this quality, and his solo break at the end is far ahead of its time in its freedom and perfect timing.

The solo capacities of these players were naturally considerably constrained by most of the show material and/or arrangements. A series of pieces based on the old standard, **Tiger Rag**, was probably intended to give the musicians a chance at some uninhibited free-wheeling improvisation. The most cohesive of these was the two-part **Tiger Rag** itself. The early **Creeper** and **Jubilee Stomp** had been based—in part, at least—on these same time-honored chords, and now **Hot and Bothered** and **High Life** were added to the repertoire. All of them were fast, hard-driving numbers, underscored by Braud's indefatigable though occasionally erratic bass. **Tiger Rag**, of course, as a staple of the jazz repertoire, had through the years been done to death by innumerable bands. "Inspired by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, this poor vehicle was customarily overloaded with a wide assortment of corny or humorous instrumental effects. The Ellington band's version suddenly changed all that by presenting a staggering array of non-gimmicky, highly individual solos. Even Bigard's brilliant chromatic run—under other circumstances a fairly tawdry idea—has in this context a propulsive drive that turns it into a high point of the record.<sup>35</sup> The two players who seemed to feel most at home in these **Tiger Rag** pieces were Bigard, who suddenly found himself returned to a thrice-familiar mold, and Freddy "Posey" Jenkins, whose bent for the flashy, high-stepping solo happily coincided with the obviously ostentatious nature of the pieces: Jenkins' solo



became a regular fixture of the **Tiger Rag** numbers. Not only did he virtually repeat it in **High Life**, but in a later version of **Hot and Bothered**, for the obscure Velvetone label, we find Cootie Williams (according to Aaslands' discography, at any rate) playing the same solo. Still later it was arranged for trumpet ensemble.

It was the original **Hot and Bothered** recording, incidentally, made in October, 1928, and issued later on English Parlophone, that so excited the British conductor-composer and Ellington enthusiast, Constant Lambert. He likened it to the best in Ravel and Stravinsky, which not only seems somewhat exaggerated, but ignores several other Ellington sides that surpass **Hot and Bothered** in terms of both conception and performance. Indeed, the performance leaves something to be desired, a fact which Lambert in his enthusiasm failed to notice. Admittedly, it is emotionally rousing, again due largely to Braud's excitable bass. But the wrong entrances of Miley, vocalist Baby Cox and Braud, as well as the ragged saxophone ensemble work in the final chorus—which Lambert incidentally found so "ingenious"—indicate that the piece was not quite ready to be recorded. Also, Bigard had troubles with his timing, and even Hodges seems less assured than usual. The point is, of course, that a flashy virtuoso piece is very little without flashy virtuoso playing. It was Lambert, too, I believe, who first compared Ellington to Frederick Delius, which in turn led to a kind of tacitly accepted notion that Ellington had indeed been influenced by the English impressionist. Aside from my point earlier about the indirect influence on Duke of certain European composers (footnote 29), I cannot see how the use of lush ninth and eleventh chords or the tendency towards an "impressionist" approach constitute sufficient justification for such a claim. It smacks of over-simplification and the kind of snobbism that implies a piece of jazz music is not very good until it can be equated with some accepted European compositions.

The fact is that Ellington's harmonic language is quite original, and as different from Delius' as Debussy's *Jeux* is from Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloe*—perhaps more so. To cite just two obvious differences, Delius' harmonic writing in his best works constantly features first, second and even third inversions of chords. The somewhat suspended feeling thus engendered allows him to drift in endless chains of unresolved modulations. Obviously this is not the case with Ellington, who rarely uses such inversions and whose phrase endings are quite clearly defined by resolutions of whatever has passed before. Furthermore, I do not find Ellington to be entirely the "impressionist" the comparison to Delius implies. True, there are dreamy landscapes like **Dusk and Misty Mornin'**, and atmospheric abstractions like **Mood Indigo** and **Moon Mist**. But what about the hundreds of vigorous, earthy, directly expressed pieces that make up the bulk of the Ellington repertoire?

It is the link to Delius, I believe, that has also fathered the notion that Ellington is a "rhapsodist" and most at ease in the looser form of the rhapsody. This again is only partially true. Ellington may be a rhapsodist in terms of musical expression (even this is debatable); but he certainly is no rhapsodist when it comes to form. In this respect he is a strict **classicist**, perhaps only surpassed by Jelly Roll Morton. And certainly Ellington's forms are more concise and symmetrical than those of any number

of nineteenth-century romantic composers. In fact, when compared to the great formal achievements of a Beethoven—or even a Chopin—Ellington's form, in the majority of cases, seems almost hackneyed and naive in its restraint. This was, of course, already inherent in the principle of linking twelve- or thirty-two-bar small forms into one single larger form. The fact that Ellington was able to infuse these stereotyped forms with such life and—by the late 1930's—such seamless continuity, is one of the measures of his genius as a composer. It is precisely because he is **not** a rhapsodist in the formal sense that Ellington has been largely unsuccessful in the big, extended forms. He is basically a miniaturist and lacks the control and discipline a good "rhapsodist" has—and **must** have—in order to contain his inspiration within a logical form. But the problem of Ellington's large works of the past fifteen years really requires a degree of discussion quite beyond the intended scope of this article.

Two oddities from this prolonged "workshop" period are **Oklahoma Stomp** and **Goin' Nuts**. In them the rhythm instruments outnumber the "horns" (Hodges, Cootie, Jenkins and Nanton). Teddy Bunn on guitar, and a washboard player by the name of Bruce Johnson, were added to the normal four-man rhythm section. **Oklahoma Stomp** is very aptly named, because, with its modern-sounding hard drive, emphasizing the second and fourth beats, it sounds very much like the kind of strong, rocking rhythmic music characteristic of the Southwest. In this respect the record is unique in the Ellington discography. The unusual rhythmic feeling is especially noticeable during Bunn's solos. Here the group sounds like some imaginary, superior multi-guitar hillbilly band from the Ozarks or some such place. Unfortunately the side also contains what must be Ellington's worst and most unintelligible piano solo on records.

**Hot Feet** is another fine record from 1929. After a very "jazzy" syncopated opening, designated to get the dancers on the floor, Cootie scat-vocals a la Armstrong, answered by Freddy Jenkins in a sort of chase chorus. A two-bar bridge, used later in **Reminisce in Tempo**, leads to a Hodges solo, followed by a chorus of some of the above-mentioned blistering Nanton-Braud teamwork. Brass riffs, embellished by some superb three-part sax ensembles, lead to one of the most startling endings Ellington ever created: a sudden brass pyramid followed by a major seventh chord on the already often-encountered lowered sixth step of the scale (Ex. 19).



Example 19

**Ring Dem Bells** is a somewhat similar piece, slightly slower and again with a responsorial chorus, this time Cootie's vocal answering Hodges. Cootie then solos, with some wonderful "rolling" sax figures as accompaniment.<sup>36</sup> Fluent yet bursting with a kind of controlled excitement, these figures are the perfect contrast and com-

plement to Cootie's jabbing solo. As in **Hot Feet**, the final chorus features five-part brass chords, through which one can hear the running sax ensembles. These brass figures are an expansion of the riff figures played earlier on the chimes (incidentally, by Charlie Barnet). Perhaps the best record of this period (1928 to mid-1931), outside of **Mood Indigo**, is **Old Man Blues**, especially in its first version (Victor), recorded on the same session as **Ring Dem Bells**. This date took place in Hollywood, where the band had gone to make a movie called **Check and Double Check** (from which came **Double Check Stomp**). Listening to the results of that session, one gets the impression that the visit to movieland had an invigorating effect on the band. Certainly **Old Man Blues** was played with a verve and excitement that many of the previous sides had lacked. Musically, the record is most important because it crystallized for Ellington, to an unprecedented degree, the effectiveness with which a composition—be it head arrangement or an actually written-out piece—could form a framework, a point of departure, for the talents of his particular group of soloists. Earlier pieces, like **Black and Tan Fantasy**, bore the stamp of one particular musician—Miley, in that case—and we have seen how Bubber's personal solo talents were to some extent at odds with the prearranged musical framework fashioned by Ellington. One senses the lack of a uniform concept. Through the dominance of one soloist, the collective equilibrium that was such an integral part of jazz was temporarily disturbed; and with this discrepancy, the seams of the structure began to show. But here, in **Old Man Blues**, the collective excitement and the feeling that the performance was truly the sum total of all its parts were re-established, and the perfect balance between composition and improvisation was achieved. And this achievement is, of course, above and beyond everything else, Ellington's greatest contribution to the development of jazz. As Francis Newton summarized it so brilliantly in a recent issue of the **New Statesman**,<sup>37</sup> Ellington "solved the unbelievably difficult problem of turning a living, shifting and improvised folk-music into composition without losing its spontaneity."

Introductory vamp 8	A 16 + 8 + 6 (Nanton, with Bigard obbligato)	B (march) (4 + 8 + 8) (rhythm-saxes-tp't's)
A <sup>1</sup> (16 + 8 + 8) (tp't's-Nanton-tp't's)	A <sup>2</sup> 32 (Carney, with piano obbligato)	A <sup>3</sup> (16 + 14) (Hodges-Jenkins)
B 6 (saxes)	break 4 (brass)	A <sup>1</sup> (16 + 8 + 8) (brass-Nanton-full ensemble with Bigard obbligato)

#### Example 20

The form of **Old Man Blues** (see outline in Ex. 20), though hardly revolutionary, was a perfect example of its kind, representing the high point of a long line of pieces attempting to solve the relationship between form and musical content. That is to say, a way was found to pre-

serve for the musician the freedom inherent in jazz, while the piece in its totality satisfied the demands of organized or pre-determined form. To quote again from the Francis Newton article, Ellington produced a music which was "both created by the players and fully shaped by the composer."

Listening to the solos on **Old Man Blues**, it becomes clear that the musicians did not feel restricted by such seemingly conflicting demands. As a matter of fact, they were probably unaware of the large form, and therefore not inhibited by it. To them it was just another chorus, which would be good, bad or indifferent. As it turned out, the solos are of a high caliber, with Bigard—relying too much on his **Tiger Rag** routines—perhaps the least inspired. Certainly Carney and Nanton are at their very best: Carney in a rare rambunctious mood and Nanton in three separate, contrasting solo spots. **Old Man Blues** is also blessed with moments of fortuitous recording balance, as, for example, in the bridge of the first chorus where Nanton's trombone somehow blends with Bigard's low-register clarinet embellishments in such a way as to make the two instruments jell perfectly into one sound—almost as if both parts were played by one man. Ellington's excellent background piano behind Carney, and Braud's walking four-to-the-bar bass, are also worthy of mention. Harmonically, too **Old Man Blues** has its touch of originality. In a four-bar break before the final chorus, three trumpets and one trombone play a chord (Ex. 21), repeated in syncopation, which is similar to the chord at the end of **Hot Feet**, and once more placed on the lowered sixth step of the scale(!).<sup>38</sup>



#### Example 21

I have mentioned earlier a fifth category, namely that of more or less pure, abstract "musical composition." It was during the period of intensive experiment under discussion that Ellington began to create, with some consistency, pieces that were not strictly functional—pieces that, although perhaps originally geared to some specific function (as background music for a Cotton Club tableau), had a life of their own, independent of that functional purpose. The great 1927 masterpieces, like **Black and Tan Fantasy** and some of Morton's better creations, had already shown that jazz was capable of this. From 1928 to 1931 a number of these compositions make their appearance. They were not merely arrangements or arbitrarily thrown-together chains of choruses, but disciplined musical creations which could be judged by standards of musical appreciation and analysis established for centuries in classical music, and which by their character as much as by their quality distinguished themselves from the other jazz-*Gebrauchsmusik*.

As a matter of fact, often it is only the character of a piece which establishes it in this compositional category. For numbers like **Take It Easy**, **Dicty Glide**, **Drop Me Off in Harlem** and even **Creole Rhapsody** are at times of ques-





tionable **quality**. On the other hand, high quality and purely compositional characteristics do go hand in hand in **Old Man Blues**, **Rocky Mountain Blues** and the incomparable **Mood Indigo**, for instance.

At any rate, as Ellington's control over his unique medium sharpened, he was able to create more and more works that assumed an independence aside from their original impetus. And it is this quality which has made them live beyond their time. As Ellington matured, his growing concern for the compositional element led him to write the later masterpieces, **Concerto for Cootie**, **Ko-Ko** and **Sepia Panorama**; and, still later, the orchestral suites and stage works, **Beggar's Holiday** and **Jump for Joy**.

Having perfected form on the level of the three-minute, ten-inch record in **Old Man Blues** and **Mood Indigo**, Ellington's restless and by now fully stimulated musical mind next tackled the problem of a larger form. By January, 1931, he had created **Creole Rhapsody**. This was recorded in two versions, half a year apart. Comparison is again very revealing as regards Ellington's methods, and I find it difficult to agree with the prevailing opinion that the second (expanded) version is inferior to the first. I have already said that the piece in general represents a step forward formally. In it Ellington also experimented with, among other things, asymmetrical phrase lengths<sup>39</sup> and a trombone duet (perhaps the first in jazz). But it must be stated that most of the **playing** on the original **Creole Rhapsody** is second-rate. Unlike **Old Man Blues**, the form was rather haphazardly strung together. This, plus the fact that **Creole Rhapsody** was more of an Ellington composition than a collectively created head arrangement, made the players uncomfortably rigid. And Ellington's own dated piano interludes (happily changed and cut to a minimum in the second version) disjoint the piece even more. Furthermore, the disparate compositional material of the original really was not suited to being played at the same tempo throughout. In the half year that elapsed between the two versions, Ellington must have realized this. For in the Victor performance each section is played in different tempos. This is not to say that the composition is thereby improved, but the performance of it certainly is. As a matter of fact, it is obvious that the band had, in the meantime, learned to play the piece. The ensemble work is immeasurably improved, and the tempo changes—then as well as now a rarity in jazz—come off surprisingly well. The solos, too, are better, though not yet remarkable.

Furthermore, almost the whole second side of the first version has been scrapped in the second and replaced by added material in the dreamy, lyrical vein of **Mood Indigo**, incidentally making this the first ternary-form piece by Ellington. This new section is treated in loosely variational form, and Arthur Whetsol first states it in his inimitable fashion. It then returns in an incredibly creamy blend of saxophones and muted valve trombone (Tizol), and lastly in a free-tempo version by Bigard and Duke. It is startling to realize that the three saxophones accompanying Whetsol, in terms of both tone quality and voice leading, achieve a sound that Ellington may have equalled again but never surpassed—not even in the 1940 color masterpieces, **Warm Valley**, **Moon Mist** and **Dusk**.

It is also true that, unfortunately, in the second version the expansion of what was already an extended form

proves too much for Ellington; and despite (or more likely **because** of) some subtle "borrowing" from Gershwin's **Rhapsody in Blue**, the last minute or so does not hang together too well. Despite this error in judgment, the greater part of the Victor performance (now available on lp) must be considered an improvement, and it is certain that in his quiet, noncommittal way Ellington benefited from the experience of **Creole Rhapsody**.

With this innovational experiment out of the way, Ellington returned to more conventional areas. After **Creole Rhapsody**, the Ellington orchestra recorded only four other sides in 1931, in striking contrast to the fifty-odd sides per year in the preceding period. These were **Limehouse Blues**, **Echoes of the Jungle**, **It's Glory** and **The Mystery Song**. All four not only rank among the finest of recorded Ellingtonia, but represent the full fruition of the aforementioned "workshop" period, and at the same time the starting point for a long period of consolidation and refinement. In these four 1931 sides the basic sound and approach of the great Ellington of 1940-42 is no longer embryonic. His style had achieved full individuality, needing only the further maturing with which youth mellows into full maturity.

The 1931 sides under discussion also belong to the "compositional" category. Perhaps the most limited of the four is **It's Glory**. The dated dance rhythm and slap bass detract from its value as pure composition. But this is counteracted by the quality of the writing for the brass and reeds—rich eight-part blended sounds that almost make us forget that we are listening to what is basically another *arranged* chorus. Moreover, the record contains two inspired moments. The first occurs in the bridge of the second chorus. Ellington has scored this for Nanton in the lead part—with a subtle touch of wah-wah—accompanied by a trio of two low-register clarinets and muted valve trombone,<sup>40</sup> creating a "blue" sound which must have amazed musicians in 1931. It is a sound which is not only pure Ellington, but still completely fresh and fascinating twenty-eight years later. The other fine moment comes in the next chorus, where Ellington once more employs the soft "rolling" sax figures behind Cootie Williams' solo.

Ellington's compositional talent had matured so fully by 1931 that he could even transform someone else's composition—a hackneyed standard at that—into a purely Ellingtonian opus. This was the case in the second of these four sides, **Limehouse Blues**. Again we hear sounds that could never be confused with those of any other band of the time. The brass shine with a rich yellow, and the blue combination we just encountered in **It's Glory** is offered once more as contrast. Ellington wisely refrained from any obvious Orientalisms (tinkly pentatonic patterns of the piano, which all other bands used on this tune and which the Duke himself had succumbed to earlier in **Japanese Dream**). Again only the dated, vertical two-beat rhythm limits the experience of this record, but I feel this is more than counterbalanced by the flowing horizontal of the ensemble passages.

**Echoes of the Jungle**, credited to Cootie Williams, undoubtedly came into being as a production number for the Cotton Club, designed to give the customers their glimpse of darkest Africa. But as the English writer, Charles Fox,<sup>41</sup> has pointed out, it is "paradoxically an extremely sophisticated" piece of music. In its haunting

originality, aided by a superb performance, it is the least dated of these sides. It is, indeed, as fresh and timeless today as it was in 1931. Again we marvel at the incredibly rich blend of the brass, this time muted and embellished by Hodges' full-toned alto. Cootie solos twice—first open, with a sensuous urgency; then with the plunger mute, in what is still one of his most imaginative improvisations. And once more we hear the chromatic, rolling sax figures behind him—an instrumental combination Ellington seemingly never tired of. The succeeding connecting passage, featuring Bigard in low register, answered by Fred Guy's rustling banjo glissandos, is like the ominous lull before a storm. And in the final three measures Ellington creates a big-band sound and harmony which predict certain passages in *Ko-Ko!*

Without having been present at the Cotton Club in June, 1931, it is difficult to visualize what tableau or act inspired the sheer magic of the opening of *The Mystery Song*. A perfectly conventional piano introduction suddenly gives way to one of the most inspired sounds not only in Ellington, but surely in all music. It is one of those moments, resulting from a flash of inspiration, that is so unique that it can in no way be duplicated or imitated without remaining pure imitation. The mixture of sustained harmonies; the distant, muted tone color; and Guy's restless, subtly urgent banjo conjure up a sound that must be heard to be believed. Unfortunately Ellington was unable to sustain this level of inspiration beyond the exposition. (This may have had functional reasons related to the particular dance routine.) At any rate, everything that follows this glorious opening is anticlimatic and routine. It is a pity that Ellington never returned to this bit of inspiration to give it the framework it deserved. As we have seen, in basic concept as well as in many details, the five 1931 records I have discussed predict quite comprehensively the development of the succeeding ten years and its peak in the earliest 1940's. In record after record, Ellington polished and refined his technique. Through the many "blue" pieces of 1932-34, through programmatic works like *Daybreak Express*; ballads like *Sophisticated Lady*; large forms like *Reminiscent in Tempo* and *Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue*; solo pieces like *Echoes of Harlem* (Cootie), *Clarinet Lament* (Bigard) and *Trumpet in Spades* (Rex Stewart); Ellington purified but never changed the basic concept he had evolved by 1931. In those succeeding years the orchestra's scope was to be widened by important additions to the personnel: first the incomparable Lawrence Brown, then the singer Ivie Anderson, later Rex Stewart, and finally the two crucial additions of Ben Webster and Jimmy Blanton. The last two, especially, expanded the range and scope of the orchestra, and Ellington's unique harmonic, coloristic and formal gifts were elevated to another level by the swinging rhythmic impulse generated by these two men.<sup>42</sup>

From the high point attained in the early forties, the creative level of Ellington and his marvelous "instrument" almost had to drop. It certainly could not be surpassed. And, as fate would have it, the personal, social and musical revolutions that beset jazz during the war years took their toll on the Ellington band. The long, ascending line of development, which I have tried to trace in part, was broken off. With an entirely different "instrument" at his command, Ellington had difficulties in

re-attaining his earlier creativity. Committed to a life of one-nighters—partially because it is now in his blood, and partially out of loyalty to his men—the tragedy of Ellington's life is that the American public has never accorded him and his musicians the recognition that they, as the collective creators of a distinctly American form of art music, deserve. But then, jazz itself—except in its more pallid derivatives—has been largely ignored by the American public.

But perhaps the greatest disappointment to Ellington has been the fact that his insatiable desire to write the American musical or opera has gone unsatisfied all these years. The dilemma in this case has been that, on the one hand, the American public has not been able to accept jazz—one of its few wholly indigenous artistic expressions—in its native musical theater (again, except in strongly diluted forms), while on the other hand Ellington's own band of sophisticated jazz has antagonized that segment of the jazz public that thinks of jazz as something rather more naive and rough-hewn. In a sense these ambitious attempts on the part of Ellington have been caught between two fires, being neither the expected fish nor fowl. I would not think it unreasonable to assume, however, that Ellington's music—be it for the night club, for concert or for the stage—has indicated the possibilities for future developments in these directions, at least as basic concepts which, perhaps soon, another genius may develop successfully into the kind of vision Ellington has dreamed of all these years.

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<sup>34</sup> Undaunted, the Victor labels continued to read "Hot Dance Orchestra"!

<sup>35</sup> Hearing this record, one also tends to suspect that Juan Tizol was already a member (or perhaps just a guest that day) of the trombone section. I find it fairly hard to otherwise explain the low B-flat trombone trill (!) just before Freddy Jenkins' famous chorus.

<sup>36</sup> As I've indicated, a musical idea such as this was subjected to repeated experimentation. First used in *Stevedore Stomp* in early 1929, it was heard again in *Duke Steps Out*, and in 1931 in *It's Glory* and *Echoes of the Jungle*.

<sup>37</sup> October 11, 1958, p. 488.

<sup>38</sup> This chord, a commonplace today, was still daring in jazz at the time of the recording. The other early instance of its use, to my knowledge, occurs in the final chorus of Alphonse Trent's 1930 *I Found A New Baby*. Incidentally, the advanced writing and highly skillful playing of this great Southwestern band raises the intriguing question of whether Trent's and Ellington's paths ever crossed, and whether any influencing occurred. This would seem to be a fascinating subject for research.

<sup>39</sup> See an article by this writer on "The Future of Form in Jazz," originally printed in *The Saturday Review Of Literature*, and reprinted in *The Saturday Review Treasury*, p. 561, Simon and Schuster, 1957.

<sup>40</sup> Ellington had tried this instrumental combination previously in *Lazy Duke* and *Creole Rhapsody*—further evidence that Ellington tested his ideas many times in different contexts, until his curiosity as to their potential was completely satisfied.

<sup>41</sup> In *Duke Ellington*, edited by Peter Gammond, p. 83.

<sup>42</sup> It is significant, I think, that neither Webster nor Blanton were Eastern jazz musicians. Webster was long a mainstay of a dozen Southwestern and Kansas City-based bands, while Blanton was St. Louis-born and learned to play on the riverboats, notably with Fate Marable.

# RECORD REVIEWS

## PEPPER ADAMS-JIMMY KNEPPER: "The Pepper-Knepper Quintet".

Metrojazz E 100.

Jimmy Knepper, trombone; Pepper Adams, baritone; Wynton Kelly piano; Doug Watkins, bass; Elvin Jones, drums.

Minor Catastrophe; All Too Soon; Beaubien; Adams in the Apple; Riverside Drive; I Didn't Know about You; Primrose path.

Knepper must be about the first trombonist of the past fifteen years who does not lean heavily on J. J. Johnson. He has naturally profited from the way Johnson has made the instrument more flexible, but his style is original and quite definitely his own. One could say that while Johnson's method derives almost entirely from the purely musical considerations of melody, harmony and rhythm—almost an abstract rather than instrumental style—Knepper's music draws certain qualities from the trombone itself. In this respect, while his approach is essentially modern, he is simply returning to the path of Wells, Higginbotham, Teagarden and the rest of Johnson's predecessors. Perhaps Johnson's "abstract" approach to the trombone will remain an isolated one. But the way Knepper handles his instrument is incidental; his originality is in musical ideas and, while these cannot be described in words without risking the marshy dangers of impressionistic writing, it is enough to hear a few of his solos to believe his could become an important voice. While admitting Knepper's originality it is unlikely that his style is fully mature because of its occasional inconsistencies. Beaubien illustrates how dull ideas will sometimes occur along with good ones. His melodic construction—the way he presents his ideas—is not yet as disciplined as it will probably become. This reappears on *Minor Catastrophe* and in some over-elaborate moments in *I Didn't Know About You*. Sometimes, too, his phrases have an odd heaviness, as on *Adams in the Apple* and *Beaubien*. Another aspect of Knepper's originality is the character of his exceptionally full tone in all but the most rapid passages. When playing exceptionally fast his articulation understandably gets blurred. One of the few instances of this is in *Primrose Path*. His most successful solo here is *Riverside Drive*. Kelly is at his best on the ballads. His *All Too Soon* solo has real lyrical feeling and continuity of line. On *Beaubien*, *Riverside Drive* and *Primrose Path* his contributions are enjoyable but not so distinctive melodically.

He has a touch that is firm, but never produces a hard sound. But his organ playing in *I Didn't Know About You* is lamentable.

Adams has mobility and good time but nearly all his ideas are commonplace and his tone is brusque. For a few moments in *I Didn't Know About You* he blows less hard than usual and gets a better tone. He articulates the *All Too Soon* theme well but his sound almost completely destroys its beauty. The combination of baritone and organ in *I Didn't Know About You* is not easy to forget, I'm afraid. I wish more could be heard of Elvin Jones here; he does fine things in the exchanges with the horns in *Minor Catastrophe* and *Beaubien* but is insufficiently audible in the ensembles. Few drummers listen so intently to the horns as Jones and this is the more remarkable in view of the complexity of what he is doing. Incidentally, two items have unusual construction: *Adams in the Apple* is 12/8/12/8/8, and *Primrose Path* is 12/12/16/12. It is surprising unconventional constructions of this kind are not attempted more often. What's so good about 8/8/8/8?

Max Harrison

## HAROLD "SHORTY" BAKER: "The Broadway Beat". King 608.

Shorty Baker, trumpet; Jimmy Jones, piano; Kenny Burrell, guitar; Carl Pruitt, bass; Ed Thigpen, drums.

*Them There Eyes*; In a Little Spanish Town; 'S Wonderful; If I Had You; *Rosetta*; After You've Gone; *Marie*; Close Your Eyes; *The World Is Waiting For the Sunrise*; Love Me Or Leave Me; *Cherry*. During many sidewalk conversations in New York last summer, I was surprised to discover that the success of Jonah Jones was far from being a source of pleasure to the cognoscenti, some of whom, I suspect, would not have cared greatly if Jonah had left the music business, as he nearly did. Jonah was not at one time called "Louis Armstrong the Second" for nothing. He had—and has—a remarkable mastery of the trumpet, tremendous drive, and a spirited range of directly communicative expression. His jazz was swinging, spontaneous, and hot. That was the trouble. In a period when the disdainfully cool was fashionable, his great qualities were not. So he made it back, still swinging, on a simpler melodic level, the flame somewhat subdued. After all these years of gripes about rock 'n' roll, it should be gratifying that a large part of the public has taken to Jonah's muted jazz. I am not arguing in favor of commercialism, and I do not dispute that Jonah is capable of greater music than we hear on the Capitol albums, but the musician who is ignored by audience and critics has a right to live, even to find a new audience. Jonah has

found one, but in doing so, and in earning more money than their idols, has been guilty of a kind of prostitution my sidewalk friends think. "You don't don't call what he's playing jazz, do you?" they ask.

Complexity is not the omega of music. Nor is a magic puzzle of improvisation on the chords the heart of jazz. Improvisation is a part of it, not the whole. The kind of freedom Duke Ellington insists upon as peculiar to jazz involves far more than that. It ought not to be necessary to return to Jelly Roll Morton to learn that a jazz musician can transmute many kinds of music into jazz, by means of phrasing and sound, without losing the melody. You may have developed a keen taste for the intricate, for puzzles, but when Johnny Hodges, or Coleman Hawkins, or Louis Armstrong plays the melody in the first chorus and subsequently improvises, jazz doesn't begin at the second chorus. Their kind of feeling for line, rhythm and attack, is much more rare and valuable than is generally admitted, and because it gives their melodic statements an air of ease and simplicity, it is insufficiently appreciated.

For many years, Shorty Baker belonged to Duke's republic of aristocrats, in which every man had rights and an individual role. For the four trumpets there were variously dramatic, glamorous, pyrotechnical and lyrical roles, and to Shorty fell the last, the least spectacular. But when Jonah created a new fashion for solo trumpet with rhythm, someone at King—an ex-trumpeter probably—remembered Shorty and produced this admirable record.

Shorty's tone has long been recognized by trumpet players as something to emulate. Whitney Balliett has described it as "serene" and "cowlike". (The first adjective is very appropriate, but the second shows Whitney has lived too long in the city.) It is a warm, expressive tone which complements his clean articulation and obligingly rounds out his style. Its smooth beauty recalls the sound of Joe Smith and the later Frank Newton, but it has a more positive quality, which probably derives from a lead's sense of definition. Only occasionally, as on *After You've Gone*, is it plaintive. The style is an essentially singing one and this brings up an interesting point of background. Shorty is from St. Louis and has been professionally active for about thirty years. (It takes a long time to acquire his kind of mastery of the horn.) He remembers playing with Charlie Creath, whom Don Redman cites as one of the greatest blues trumpets and a probable influence on Tommy Ladnier in his formative period. It was in St. Louis, too, that Joe Smith served his apprenticeship, only Joe, with whom one inevitably

compares Shorty, was playing in New York with Fletcher Henderson when Shorty was eight years old. If jazz is ever to attain a measure of mature stability, this is just the way its heritage should be maintained, sometimes jumping years and phases to kindred temperaments who use it to create anew.

Although largely confined to melodic statements and variations a la Jonah, Shorty shows that there is more to his style than records have previously revealed. Since his early days with Duke, he has grown in flexibility. He still loves the flowing phrase and normally uses little vibrato, but for accentuation he incorporates a buzz, a growl or a half-valved effect as indigenously as a singer's inflections. All the music on this album was recorded at one long session — quite a trial of strength for any trumpet player. There is, however, no let-down, nothing haphazard. The numbers, in view of the obvious objective, were very well chosen, and so were the tempos. (May I suggest that dance tempos are as close to the heart of jazz as improvisation?) A little shuffle rhythm was obligatory, and it is by no means offensive on 'S Wonderful and Rosetta, where the inspiring attributes of the tune launch Shorty into joyful flight.

Perhaps it was the years with Duke which taught him to regard a song not merely as a number but as a subject for which you should visualize a whole enhancing treatment. This is apparent in his moving version of Close Your Eyes. It results, too, in a performance that can seem definitive, so that when you hear the song again from others you instantly recall it. Cherry, I think, is an example of Shorty's ability in this direction. But perhaps the real measure of his artistry lies in paradox: one is almost equally conscious of his constant concern for quality and of the wonderful feeling of relaxation in his music.

The rhythm section is not particularly impressive. It neither "ticks like a clock" nor provides any notable lift, but Jimmy Jones is his usual skilful, musical self at the piano.

Stanley Dance

**DAVE BRUBECK:** Fantasy 3-8, 3-11, 3-13, 3-20 Columbia CL 590.

Dave Brubeck, piano; Paul Desmond, alto; Bob Bates, Ron Crotty, or Wyatt Ruth, bass; Joe Dodge or Lloyd Davis, drums.

With each successive recording certain things become more apparent about pianist Brubeck and his featured altoist Paul Desmond.

Elements of Brubeck's style that once occurred infrequently — interminable, bombastic chord sequences, a method of ballad playing that relies on the worst features of nineteenth

century romanticism, a use of jazz clichés—are now his entire battery of effects, rather than the occasional lapses of taste they once seemed to be. Paul Desmond, on the other hand, is the trickster, juggler, magician par excellence: he can play on his horn anything that anyone else can, and many things no one else could attempt, but all, apparently, with his mind on something else. He is all delicacy and subtlety, playing endlessly fascinating and amazingly intricate figures with a curious and almost complete lack of involvement. Brubeck is apparently a musician of almost painful honesty, determined to go his own way no matter how wrong-headed it may seem. His way seems to be an attempt to make jazz out of several non-jazz devices which he has never succeeded in assimilating in the way that, for instance, John Lewis has. When he does use jazz, it is often the dullest jazz cliché, reminiscent of his teacher, Milhaud's, conception of jazz in *La Creation du Monde*. His honesty will make him work through an idea (it is usually a melodic variation), until he gets lost in it and has to get back through the use of a jazz banality. It would seem that jazz is not his natural form of expression, but he is determined to play jazz, as if a man who knew five hundred words of French were to attempt a novel in that language.

Brubeck continually exposes his weaknesses as if he were picking open sores, in front of everyone. Most notably he lacks a feel for melody. His compositions, with a few exceptions (*In Your Own Sweet Way* is one) are superficial and overly romantic. (I do not feel that *The Duke* shows an unusual understanding of Ellington.) But he continually attempts to be a melodist, with often disastrous results.

Desmond, on the other hand, can create an exquisite melody without trying, and he does almost every time, carrying long, logical lines of almost Grecian perfection past the point where other musicians would falter. On *Stardust* on Fantasy 3-20 ("Jazz Interwoven"), he creates a melody of high, delicate, flute-like beauty, that I think no other altoist could achieve, only Rima the Bird Girl. His facility and musical knowledge — particularly of how one song is related to another — are nothing short of amazing. He seems, at times, to be playing duets with himself, and has another rare quality — musical humor. Perhaps he is merely getting by on that astounding facility, but perhaps his curious detachment, the opposite of Brubeck's complete involvement, is the result of something else. He is a perfect musical example of a remark of Truman Capote's: "My own theory is

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furious,  
impassioned,  
thundering.\*

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that the writer should have considered his wit and dried his tears long, long before setting out to invoke similar reactions in a reader. In other words, I believe the greatest intensity in art in all its shapes is achieved with a deliberate, hard, and cool head." In a sense, the two men complement each other perfectly Brubeck is essentially an involved romantic of the bombastic German school (those are his favorite implied harmonies), with little delicacy of touch and an essentially ponderous approach. Desmond, on the other hand, is the jazz version of the French composers who wrote marvellous cameos. Brubeck is rhythmic and harmonic, Desmond is melodic.

One way at looking at the two men is to see what tunes they quote. Both of them interpolate more than almost any other musicians, but in different ways. Brubeck's quotes may be there because of the lyrics of the song quoted or its title, and his point even seems to depend on a verbal knowledge of the material. (On one record, for instance, destined to be their first big success, he quotes **We're In the Money!**) Desmond will quote songs whose musical structure are similar to the pieces being played. They both quote extensively from Goodman sextet riff tunes and Stravinsky, and delight in neo-Bach counterpoint with each other, but at that point the resemblance stops. Brubeck is found of inserting Chopin and nursery rhymes, while Desmond is partial to obscure pop tunes and old English Christmas carols.

Ever since the group's career began, Brubeck and Desmond have been outside anything that could be remotely termed the mainstream of jazz (except that much of Brubeck depends on a misunderstanding of Waller, and much of Desmond on an affinity with Lester Young on clarinet), and they have resolutely refused to enter it. Brubeck at times tries to sound "funky", to little avail, and Desmond has given up trying to sound what he calls "hostile enough to be currently acceptable." Brubeck has his own reasons for entering jazz; I quote from the liner notes to his **"Storyville: 1954"** album (Columbia CL590.): "The point is that I am getting more and more from jazz what I had hoped to get out of formal composition. One of our tapes that has not been released yet has an **On the Alamo** that says as much for me, in ten minutes of my best improvisation so far on records, as any symphony I ever hoped to write when I didn't have as much command of the jazz idiom as I have now." To my mind, this performance (the tape is, of course, the one on the album) is a compendium of Brubeck's faults, amounting to a heavy-handed symphonic development passage of

a theme that has never been stated. But Brubeck is a rarity in more ways than this. Since his career started he has played only with his own group, and since his listening, for all practical purposes, was done a long time ago, he has remained remote from all influences, growing more and more inbred, and eventually, for lack of nourishment, may cancel himself out. In his early days, he produced some excellent albums, by far the best of which is **"Jazz at Oberlin"** (Fantasy 3-11), closely followed by **"Jazz at Storyville"** (Fantasy 3-8) and one sterling track (**All the Things You Are**) on the **"Jazz at College of Pacific"** lp (Fantasy 3-13). This last, based on the circle of fifths progression that lies at the heart of much of the classical music Brubeck was trained on, was almost a perfect vehicle for him. He has, to be sure, played the song badly at other times, but this time he came up with a marvellously ordered, flowing, logical solo that could stand as one of the few examples of an honest wedding of classic and jazz techniques. Those days, apparently, have gone. These last remarks are true of Desmond, but to a lesser extent. He is closer to jazz than Brubeck, has, indeed, made record dates with other groups, and, I understand, has started to widen that practice. When the quartet first began, it was said that Desmond should have his own group. Unlike Milt Jackson and the MJQ, for instance, of whom the same thing was once said, Desmond might find his best answer in just that. In many ways he is, and in the right context can be even more, one of our most important jazzmen.

Joe Goldberg

#### TADD DAMERON: "Fontainebleau". Prestige 7097.

Kinny Dorham, trumpet; Harry Coker, trombone; Sahib Shihab, alto; Joe Alexander, tenor; Cecil Payne, baritone; Tadd Dameron, piano; John Simmons, bass; Shadow Wilson, drums. **Fontainebleau**; **Delirium**; **Clean is the Scene**; **Flossie Lou**; **Bulla-Babe**.

Dameron should have become one of the most prominent post-war composers and arrangers, for he is certainly one of the most gifted. He may lack the technical glibness of men like Johnny Richards, Manny Albam or Ernie Wilkins but everything he has written is marked by an individual approach. Dameron's melodic writing is the most distinctive aspect of his work, but his orchestration, especially for small or medium-sized groups, is always instantly recognizable. While he does not seek any really unusual textures, his voicings are unobtrusively original so that the ensembles have a freshness that is not, in this lp at least, matched by all solos.

All five compositions are by Dameron and of them **Fontainebleau** (described in the liner notes as "where the Bourbons used to cavort") is the most ambitious. It has remained one of the more successful extended modern jazz pieces although there has been little recognition of the fact during the four years since it was recorded. The formal organization is relatively simple although, according to Dameron, it is cast in three sections. Part one, **Le Foret**, opens with a brooding introductory theme that is heard first on the bass, then on bass and baritone, then on the other horns. This leads to the main theme of the section — and of the whole work — stated by Dorham. It is a flowing, lyrical melody unsuitable, perhaps, for large-scale development but entirely appropriate to its limited use here. This is extended in a written alto solo played most expressively by Shihab, and by the ensemble. A transitional piano solo leads to **Les Cygnes**. This opens with a brief ensemble that manages to suggest the main **Foret** theme without direct statement. Following this a baritone ostinato leads to the **Cygnes** theme, the other principle idea of the work. It is announced by baritone and trombone accompanied by another ostinato on alto and tenor. As this is developed trumpet and alto interpolate motives derived from the main **Foret** theme. The transition from **Les Cygnes** to **L'Adieu** is ill-defined and the third section introduces no new material. It commences with another ensemble suggesting the main **Foret** theme, followed by the baritone ostinato that earlier appeared at the beginning of **Les Cygnes**. Over this a modification of the **Cygnes** theme is given by alto and tenor. It resolves, still over the baritone ostinato, to the introductory **Foret** theme on alto, then on alto and tenor. This, too, is in modified form: almost jaunty compared with its sombre initial appearance. Restatements of this motive, by trumpet then by alto and tenor, alternate with two further ensembles the last of which brings the work to a close.

The thematic cross-references from one section to another helps to produce a satisfyingly tight structure, and the interest is sustained by a ready melodic invention. Orchestration is effective but variety is mainly achieved by diversified themes — and the melodic constructions arising from them — not by instrumental textures. Dameron produces a notable effect by introducing two of his themes — the **Foret** introduction and the **Cygnes** — first in low register and then transposed into high on their reappearances. Analogously the baritone ostinato is succeeded by an alto and tenor one in **Les Cygnes**.

These changes, allied to the slowly quickening tempo, produce an effect of increasing brightness as the work moves from its brooding opening to an affirmative conclusion. The weaknesses, as noted, are the vague demarcation between *Les Cygnes* and *L'Adieu*, and the fact the latter, because it introduces no new thematic material, does not constitute a really independent third section. *Fontainebleau* is in two, not three, parts.

This lp is chiefly of interest because of *Fontainebleau* and is worth buying for that alone. The other items are less rewarding, though all have excellent themes attractively orchestrated. *Flossie Lou* is wasted as a solo vehicle for Coker. His opening gambit is a quotation from *The Continental* and for the rest, his ideas are neatly phrased — except for some insecure double-timing — but pedestrian. His tone is not really expressive. Alexander similarly fails to take advantage of his opportunities on *Delirium*. Fortunately his two solos are relieved by an extremely fine offering by Dorham. Dameron himself is featured in *Clean is the Scene*. Although he accompanies well, Dameron's solo playing, while exhibiting real melodic invention, lacks the individuality of his writing. It is unfortunate he chose to feature Coker, Alexander and himself instead of Dorham and Shihab — the real soloists on the session. Happily everyone has a chance in *Bulla-Babe*, a blues. Once more the theme is a good one well orchestrated, with Dameron interpolating tellingly between the horns' block chords. Shihab's is the most distinguished solo here, and his improvisation has long, contrasting, well-shaped lines and real continuity from one chorus to another. He always sounds far better on alto than on baritone and his tone here is precisely right for this kind of blues playing.

Max Harrison

**DIZZY GILLESPIE and CHARLIE PARKER: "Diz 'N' Bird In Concert"**  
Roost LP 2234.

*Night In Tunisia*; *Dizzy Atmosphere*; *Groovin' High*; *Confirmation*; *Swing Low Sweet Cadillac*; *Tin Tin Deo*; *Ooh Shoo-bee Doo-bee*; *School Days*.

What a careless way to reissue records! Teddy Reig evidently had these Parker-Gillespie sides, originally on "Black Ace" 78s, and as there were only enough of them to make up half an lp, poked through his files until he found four tunes that Dizzy made a few years later with his own band. (It was a band that I doubt Bird would have cared to work with since it was mainly a shucking and jiving group with little care for musical quality.)

Collectors will be interested in this

release for some excellent solos by both Charlie and Dizzy on the first side, but it is bad enough that they must listen to them through the terribly poor recording without having to pay the price of a whole lp for only one side of it. And Joe Carroll fans interested in the other side will hardly find the Parker concert to their taste.

I am perfectly aware that business is business, but I regret that this document of Charlie's playing (which we are lucky to have in any condition) should fall into the hands of the likes of Mr. Reig. It is infuriating to read the hokey-pokey that masquerades here as liner notes. The flags of Art, Genius, History, State Department, American Way of Life, Jazz Tradition and Freedom are so vigorously (and ungrammatically) waved that it almost seems the duty of a good citizen to draw out his savings to buy this record. How did they miss pasting Old Glory on the cover? Since the liner notes are worthless as a source of information about the music or the musicians, here is a brief account of what goes on.

Side A: A group consisting, according to reliable sources, of Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Al McKibbin, John Lewis and Joe Harris. I don't know the date or location of the concert where the recording was made, but I hear it was Carnegie Hall, 1947. It was evidently recorded with only one small mike; Charlie and Dizzy are reproduced clearly, but the piano is nearly inaudible, the bass is muddy, and the drums are a horrible distortion of cymbal whine, bass drum and rim-shot shudder. On the piano solos the volume has been turned up, so the piano becomes a little more audible and the drums completely unbearable.

Charlie plays brilliantly on *Tunisia*. A measure of the end of his second chorus is lost because of the board fade that was made on the original editing to fit two sides of a 78. Fade in again to a very good chorus and a half by Dizzy, a lost piano bridge and out. *Dizzy Atmosphere* features spectacular high-speed improvising by both horns, and panic in the rhythm section. *Groovin' High* has three marvelous choruses by Bird, one by Dizzy, and one whole chorus of loud bass drum with faint piano solo. On *Confirmation* Charlie plays some of his best choruses of the concert, and the final fade-out is made during the first bar of Dizzy's solo.

Side B presents the small group that Dizzy led in 1952 with Bill Graham on baritone sax, Wynton Kelly at the piano, Al Jones on drums, a bass player I don't remember, and Joe Carroll doing the vocals. It was recorded at an unknown concert with pretty good balance. There is a small

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portion of good Gillespie trumpet, a great deal of loud, tastless drumming, and equal portions of Joe Carroll's ultra-hip, salivary singing. Dizzy's conga drumming and novelty vocals, and general good-natured horsing around with the audience. Records of Dizzy the entertainer shouldn't be packaged and sold as records of Dizzy the jazz artist; this side of the album will only interest collectors of rubbish.

Bill Crow

**THAD JONES: "Motor City Scene". United Artists UAL 4025.**

Thad Jones, cornet, fluegelhorn; Billy Mitchell, tenor; Al Grey, trombone; Tommy Flanagan, piano; Paul Chambers, bass; Elvin Jones, drums.

**Let's Play One**, Minor On Top, Like Old Times, No Refill.

Everybody here blows up to his usual standard except Thad who is somewhat inconsistent. This is a pick up date, but these men have played together before and everyone complements everyone else beautifully. The four tunes written by Thad are functional.

On **Let's Play One** (reminiscent of Rollins' **Doxy**), and **Minor Flanagan** plays a little more percussively than usual, and it's a refreshing change. Everything he does sounds right anyway. Thad is relaxed and thoughtful on this track, as is Mitchell. **Minor On Top** is a twelve-bar blues. Thad leads off on fluegelhorn with a solo that is alternately witty and powerful. His sound here is surprisingly like Clark Terry's. Chambers is a gas in solo, and in section, throughout the album. He just got in a groove and stayed there. Somebody will have to show me who plays with more authority. Grey contributes his best solo in this track; I don't think he is quite up to the exceptional standard of the other musicians on this album, but he has a frankly humorous approach that is fun to hear. He phrases something like a trumpet.

**Like Old Times** sounds something like a Bird composition. Mitchell really comes on in this track. I thought I detected a little Lucky Thompson influence in his playing in previous albums and it becomes very apparent here. His tone is much softer than before but he loses none of his force. I would guess he was playing like a Hawk man in the forties and then went like Rollins before he softened again. One of the reasons Mitchell, Lucky Thompson, and Don Byas (Thompson's major influence) are so effective at up tempos is that their phrases are shorter than those of most tenor men. The force of their attack plus the relative gentleness of their tone gives an impression of restraint and strength at the same

time.

Thad's solo is inventive but lacks his usual conviction, though, a lot of trumpet men would be happy to play as well. His solo on **No Refill** is not as well constructed as many others I have heard by him. Chambers' accompaniment is also a counter melody. Billy Mitchell again cops honors with his warm lines. Elvin's playing is really choice. He understands his brother very well. Thad needs a drummer who begins quietly and gets louder as Thad gets more intense. Elvin seems to have calmed down considerably since he hit New York if his playing here is representative. Not a compliment or condemnation; merely an observation. I think with this album and some other dates he has made recently (the **Monk** on **Riverside**), Thad will begin to get some of the attention he deserves. I would like to hear him again with an experimental group like Mingus' because I believe it would provide him with a little more challenging setting than this kind of session does.

Harvey Pekar

**JACKIE McLEAN: "Lights Out".**

**Prestige LP 7035.**

Jackie McLean, alto; Donald Byrd, trumpet; Elmo Hope, piano; Doug Watkins, bass; Art Taylor, drums.

**A Foggy Day**; Kerplunk; Up; Lorraine; Indig; Lights Out.

**JACKIE McLEAN: "Jackie's Pal".**

**Prestige LP 7068.**

Jackie McLean, alto; Bill Hardman, trumpet; Mal Waldron, piano; Paul Chambers, bass; Philly Joe Jones, drums.

**It Could Happen To You**; Sublues; Steeplechase.

**THE JAZZ MESSENGERS: "Hard Bop".**

**Columbia CL 1040.**

Bill Hardman, trumpet; Jackie McLean, alto; Sam Dockery, piano; Spanky De Brest, bass; Art Blakey, drums.

**Cranky Spanky**; Stella by Starlight; Little Melonie; My Heart Stood Still; Stanley's Stiff Chickens.

All these records made during 1956, emphasized the rapid development of Jackie McLean as a soloist. While he leads only on the first two albums, the Blakey lp features him enough to give a comprehensive picture of his capabilities at the close of that year. Influenced by Dexter Gordon, Lester Young and, of course, Bird, his approach represents a consolidation of one particular aspect of Parker's style: the freedom of the phrase in relation to the entire construction of the solo. Perhaps because of the guidance he received in the late 'forties from Bud Powell, McLean's rhythmic conception adheres somewhat more closely than Parker's to the mechanics of the beat; he is never so rhythmically adventurous within the phrase. Yet his melodies are just

as asymmetrical, and have a personal lilt that often cuts effectively across the basic movement to implement its strength.

On the earliest album, **A Foggy Day** has McLean using a tone that overshadows Byrd's in expressiveness, and a sense of melody that fits in very well with his rhythmic conception. And **Lights Out**, a slow, poignant blues, he blows with great confidence; Byrd, plays well too, with cleaner execution than at rapid tempo. Elmo Hope contributes some engaging solos.

**Jackie's Pal**, made not long after Hardman's appearance with the Mingus unit at Newport, has the same instrumentation, but more tightly knit music. But there is the character of Hardman's work: technically uncertain — there are vagaries of pitch in **It Could Happen to You** — and immature in the profusion of notes he plays, he nonetheless plays with a restless, stabbing energy that complements McLean better than Byrd's overt lyricism. The rhythm section produces a more supple beat than the section on the **Lights Out** lp. I should say that the change of drummers was mainly responsible for this. Art Taylor is gifted at highlighting the melodic line and pushing the soloist with a hard-driving beat. Philly Joe Jones shares these qualities, but incorporates them in a rhythmic movement of greater flexibility. One is reminded of the difference between Buddy Rich and Jo Jones. In **Sublues**, a twelve-bar blues by Hardman with a theme extended over two choruses, and **Steeplechase**, with its exciting final chase between the two horns, the group is at its most eloquent: Jones' open cymbal work is a joy to the ear, Waldron solos and chords with assurance, and McLean plays with increased mobility and inventive range.

Shortly after this record, the two hornmen joined the Jazz Messengers and **"Hard Bop"** shows the effect upon them of three months in that band. Blakey's assertive variety of thunderous rhythm built around the characteristically incisive hi-hat heightens the appeal of both Hardman's and McLean's playing. It gives the trumpeter the foundation necessary to his multi-noted phrasing; and, as **Stella by Starlight** proves, complemented his furious energy that sometimes could transcend his limited melodic capabilities. On McLean its effect was altogether different: where Hardman, and Dockery too, would seize upon Blakey's polyrhythmic suggestions, the altoist often cut across them, setting up a curious tension in the music. His solo on **Stanley's Stiff Chickens** draws much of its force from this unusual tension. Seemingly oblivious to the accents, rolls and double-tempo rhythms,

McLean strides purposefully ahead, his phrases set square upon the basic meter, the brooding fierceness of his tone adding to his overall sense of determination. It would be no exaggeration to say that on these tracks he features a leaner version still of what had a leaner version still of what had always been an austere melodic style. The dynamic level is as uniform as ever. The phrases are aired out with longer rests. Double-time has become relatively rare, and is never used for its own sake or to screen momentary inventive weaknesses, but only to throw into relief the gaunt shape of the solo as a whole. In this respect McLean's style makes interesting comparison with Dexter Gordon's recent work on *Daddy Blows the Horn*. It was fortunate, I feel, that he should have been associated with Blakey at what seems in retrospect a crucial period of his career.

McLean's early playing contains many passages of durable worth. Formal precision has never been his strong suit, but all three of these records prove that in the right company his patent quest for self-expression more often than not results in music whose unity is as real as its power.

Michael James

**"THE MASTERSOUNDS in Concert".**  
World Pacific WP-1-269.

Buddy Montgomery, vibes; Monk Montgomery, electric bass; Richie Crabbtree, piano; Benny Barth, drums.

Stomping at the Savoy; Medley: In a Sentimental Mood, Our Very Own, These Foolish Things; Love for Sale; Star Eyes; Two Different Worlds; Somebody Loves Me. In spite of C. H. Garrigues' liner notes, I find it impossible to listen to this group without the MJQ coming immediately to mind. But this is a group without the lively interplay and sense of structure which make an uniquely integrated unit of the MJQ. The Mastersounds have developed a sonority very similar to the MJQ's, but seems to have captured only the most superficial qualities of the MJQ. Buddy Montgomery's vibes dominate the group and Montgomery's style is founded directly on Milt Jackson's, but Montgomery is not yet capable of the extended melodic development of Jackson at his best, and his solos usually become a series of well articulated sounds. But Montgomery seems to have the best solo potential of the group; *Star Eyes* indicates that he may well be able to construct more significant solos.

Crabbtree is a pianist of adequate talent but few ideas who plays with considerable but superficial swing. I found Barth annoying throughout the recording. He has a choppy style of accentuation, barren of subtlety. On *Our Very Own* he eschews his

usual style and plays like Connie Kay.

I find it difficult to judge Monk Montgomery as a soloist on the basis of this recording, and I haven't heard enough of his work elsewhere. However, his solo on *These Foolish Things* is trite at best.

H. A. Woodfin

**CHARLIE MINGUS: "A Modern Jazz Symposium of Music and Poetry."**  
Bethlehem BCP 6026.

Charlie Mingus, bass; Dannie Richmond, drums; Jimmy Knepper, trombone; Shafi Hadi, tenor and alto; Clarence Shaw, trumpet; except Bill Hardman on tracks; Bob Hammer, piano; except Horace Parlan on tracks 2, 4, 5, and left hand on final solo of 3; Melvin Stewart, narration.

Scenes in the City; Nourag; New York Sketch Back; Duke's Choice; Slippers.

A man of searching and often unpredictable talents, Charlie Mingus, bass player and jazz composer, has been a time coming of age.

With lps like this and the Brandeis collection, he is making it. Avoid being steered-off by the cumbersome title; It's a significant jazz package. In format the lp is an arrangement of thematic material set around a central piece, *Scenes in the City*, and this in turn is a blend of voiced narration and instrumental sounds. Nothing new there. Mass entertainment media have attempted this many times without any important result, mainly because of the limitations inherent in the Schillinger system of composing music.

Mingus' success derives in part from his own varied and catholic professional background. Associations with band leaders as varied as Kid Ory, Lionel Hampton, and Bud Powell are mentioned in Nat Hentoff's excellent liner notes. Mingus' success also derives from his creative instinct, high seriousness, good taste, imagination, and capacity for taking pains. He has achieved a subtle blend of free improvisation and linear writing which adds dimension to the voice track and brings forth an exciting experience.

The script for *Scenes in the City* was conceived and written by actor Lonnie Elders in collaboration with Langston Hughes and is narrated by Melvin Stewart. It is a rambling, introspective monologue of a young man of the city, any city, whose thoughts and dreams have been influenced by jazz, and it is a skillful amalgam of Harlem vernacular, Tin Pan Alley references, and believable bits of everyday speech.

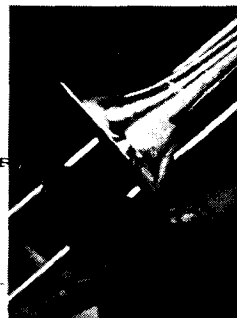
The scoring is all by Mingus. It should be required listening for the music hacks of Hollywood who in their many years of labor have learned nothing about the spirit or sound of jazz. This writing is

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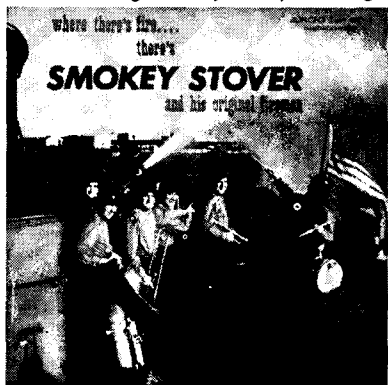
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supple and polyrhythmic.

There is variety and balance between the human voice and the sound of the jazz instruments. There is even logical use of that crutch of the hack recording engineer, the echo chamber.

The sidemen on the date are not of star caliber, but there is ample opportunity to hear out Shafi Hadi's voluptuous alto saxophone on **Nourog**, Clarence Shaw's trumpet on **Duke's Choice**, and Jimmy Knepper's insinuating trombone on **Slippers**, **New York Sketchbook** is written for the instrumental ensemble alone. Again the writing is melodic and polyphonic, without any of the deadly vertical clichés of the would-be jazz composer. Mingus manages to skirt classical music by his abandonment of constant meter, the 32-bar form, and the use of a piano style (Bob Hammer) which is classically oriented.

Further credit is due the engineer. The lp is truly high fidelity and with both depth of dimension and a warm overall sound. Nat Hentoff's notes are first-rate and afford many interesting (and overdue) biographical details on the many-sided Charlie Mingus.

The success of this production points to certain contemporary trends. We are in a period where the ability to produce jazz of good quality on traditional instruments, plus a few previously unexplored, is widespread. Conversely, large creative talents, and especially leadership, is lacking — perhaps outside of the hard core of the eastern bop school with its handful of old pros, there are none. Certainly there is no grand figure, no Prez, no Bird, to break the trail which all others must follow — only imitations, assimilations, extensions, and imitations of imitations. It is just possible that the course of romantic, individual improvisation has run full circle and talents of another nature will prevail. Certainly lack of the leadership, not to mention the organizational genius, that produced such classics as the Hot Fives dates, Smith-Jones, Parker Quintet, or even the Benny Goodman small groups has been painfully wanting in the avalanche of lp's issued during the past ten years. The Mingus lp, like "Birth of the Cool," would seem to be a manifestation of an entirely different kind of creative activity.

Ross Russell

#### CHARLIE MINGUS: "Jazz Portraits". United Artists UAL 4036.

**Nostalgia in Times Square**; **I Can't Get Started**; **No Private Income Blues**; **Alice's Wonderland**.

John Handy, alto; Booker Ervin, tenor (except on track 2); Richard Wyands, piano; Dannie Richmond, drums; Charlie Mingus, bass.

On most of the records Charlie Mingus has made these past five years, each performance is very much of a piece and demands to be treated as such. It is usually pointless to single out this or that section for praise or blame.

Mingus has shown great perception in picking the members of his bands, and seems able to inspire them all with the same constant fervor he never fails to project in his own playing. Booker Ervin and John Handy, both of whom had apparently not recorded before, show facility and no little emotional depth. John Coltrane's influence is clear, and Handy, who until recently was working in the San Francisco area, has apparently listened to Ornette Coleman as well. Do not imagine, though, that these men have no more to offer than a conglomeration of other people's mannerisms; for their solos are well-formed and full of attractive melodic turns, especially Handy's. Ervin's allegiance to the tunes is stronger than one would expect in a musician of his generation, and while this makes him a less interesting soloist than Handy it by no means invalidates his work; rather it lends his versions of Coltrane's figures a passionate directness that seems as good a springboard as any for the development of a truly personal style.

Without imposing on either of these saxophonists or, as far as I can judge, cramping them in any way, Mingus has used their talents to create four unusually cohesive pieces. **Nostalgia in Times Square**, with its striding, moody melody, features the comparatively simple device of accenting the first three beats in the bar to advantage and the recurrence of such passages gives great unity. The repartee between bassist and drummer before the final theme statement has a desperate humor that fits the overall atmosphere very well, illustrating once again the leader's emphasis on content as against more formal design. **I Can't Get Started** contains some excellent work from Handy and a stunning bass solo; the way Mingus makes some of his high notes sing is reminiscent of Django Reinhardt. **Alice's Wonderland**, which, like **Nostalgia in Times Square**, was written with a specific situation in mind, is a fascinating blend of the sour and the romantic. The initial theme ends with a strident wailing effect. This section is repeated at the close. After a short piano interlude, the central melody follows, slow, almost serene, leading to a remarkable alto solo in the course of which Handy's fierce lyricism is unrestrained either in range or conventional phrasing. The extended trills he plays at one point are thoroughly integrated with their context. **No Private Income Blues** builds up to a sequence of exchanges between the horns that

get shorter and shorter until in the last few choruses we have a tight informal counterpoint; the rhythm section functions magnificently. The resonance of Mingus' bass sound is a joy in itself, while Richmond's sense of dynamics is exemplary. As his accents become more and more profuse, the basic rhythm stays as forceful as ever; this is vital with Mingus who takes greater liberties with the beat than most bassists. Wyands' chording is suitably spare. The strong pulse of all these performances is the chief element that lends them unity in the face of all the textural changes. Even the chase passage on **Nostalgia in Times Square** between Mingus and Richmond has this quality, implicit as it is. After experimenting with various techniques for several years Mingus has found his own way at last, a personal manner rooted in the jazz tradition of extemporization and a swinging beat. These two fundamentals are as evident in his solos as in the performances of the bands he has led. In both there is the same vivid expressionism, in both the same devotion to the task at hand. This record is a more than worthy successor to the lps "Pithecanthropus Erectus," "East Coasting" and "The Clown."

Michael James

"SONNY ROLLINS and the Contemporary Leaders." Contemporary M 3564. Sonny Rollins, tenor; Barney Kessel, guitar; Hampton Hawes, piano; Leroy Vinnegar, bass; Shelly Manne, drums.

**I've Told Every Little Star**; **Rockabye Your Baby with a Dixie Melody**; **How High the Moon**; **I've found a New Baby**; **Alone Together**; **In a Chapel in the Moonlight**; **The Song is You**. Victor Feldman, vibes.

You. This record could be called "Way Out West, part two" if it weren't so weak in comparison with that first Contemporary date (C3530) by Rollins. At this summit meeting with the west, it turned out about like the other better known one. Nothing much got accomplished. The most striking thing about the date is Sonny's unwillingness to be "serious" on even one of the tracks. Even though Sonny's music is set up around certain unique and biting turns of musical phrases, which become vrey humorous at times, still, they are seriously applied musical techniques. I mean that when Rollins squawks and draws his tone out lazily, and a little off key in the middle of some of his best solos, he has that innate "serious concern" that makes these flippancies musically admirable. On this date, however, he seems either, (a) not very much concerned with the results, or, (b) so certain of his musical domination over the rest of the group that to play at his best would be sort of wasted effort. In either case, except

for **I Found A New Baby**—which is the best thing on the album, and very swinging, intelligent performance—the music is shallow and superfluous.

LeRoi Jones

# **"SONNY ROLLINS and the Big Brass".** **Metrojazz E1002.**

Sonny Rollins, tenor; Nat Adderley, Clark Terry, Reunald Jones, Ernie Royal, trumpets; Billy Byers, Jimmy Cleveland, Frank Rehak, trombones; Dick Katz, piano; Rene Thomas, guitar; Henry Grimes, bass, Don Butterfield, tuba; Roy Haines, drums; Ernie Wilkins, arranger.

**Grand Street; Far Out East; Who Cares; Love is a Simple Thing.**

Rollins; Grimes; Charles Wright, drums.

**What's My Name; If You Were the Only Girl in the World; Manhattan; Body and Soul.**

Gunther Schuller contends that Sonny Rollins has added a new dimension to jazz improvisation chiefly by using techniques of thematic variation.

Schuller does not denigrate other approaches: "... we have seen that it is possible to create pure improvisations which are meaningful realizations of a well-sustained over-all feeling. Indeed the majority of players are perhaps not temperamentally or intellectually suited to do more than that." I am not convinced that we can ask more of music than that in the long run. Of course, the point is not just that Rollins analyzes a tune in his playing, reuses, extends, develops, varies the tune or figures in it, but that in so doing he gives to a piece a superior coherence of his own, and not just the result of repetitive chord structures.

The unified structure thus achieved would, presumably, make Sonny Rollins' work aesthetically pleasing at least from an analytical point of view. But need musical coherence follow if it were not a "meaningful realization of feeling."

I assume that a musical style is significant more for its power to capture the imagination, than for the specific techniques it uses.

Though analysis reveals Rollins' right to be regarded as a serious artist, it ignores (or glosses over or attempts to explain away) many disparate elements in his musical thinking.

For I believe Rollins really a romantic who has a sense of the "glory of the imperfect."

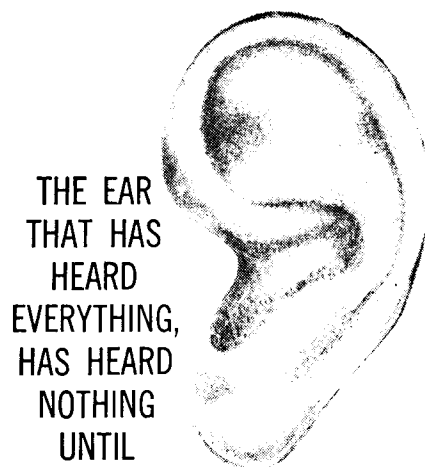
Many of these disparate elements may be heard on this lp. In the intro of **Grand Street** Ernie Wilkins caught the spirit of Sonny's unconventional phrasing, but in other respects the accompaniments are unsympathetic. Particularly if one has listened to the trio side first, the piano seems quite gratuitous. This is especially evident in two instances on this tune and **Far Out East**, where Dick Katz almost mechanically echoes

the stuttering repeated-note motive Sonny is partial to. But I suspect that the fault is not in the accompaniment per se, but in the way Sonny reacts to it, and the way he chooses to play in its context. **Grand Street** has the advantage of an attractive tune. **Far Out East**, a Wilkins original of the **Jeepers Creepers** family, is humdrum and poorly performed: the trumpet figures are sloppily executed and the rhythm never establishes a firm pulse. Midway through his chorus, Sonny plays a phrase from the **Irish Washerwoman**, as if to dissociate himself from the proceedings. Unfortunately the interpolation also detracts from the coherence of his solo. In a proper context it might be musical humor (although that is usually pretty dreary), but Sonny is neither musical wit nor buffoon, and his quotations, and belches, come across with fatal earnestness as a kind of self-destructive irony.

**Who Cares?** juxtaposes guitar, bass, and piano interludes which sound like excerpts from three different tunes, and something seems to have gone wrong with the recording balance too. But there are coruscating phrases from Rollins towards the end that redeem this band.

**Love Is a Simple Thing** opens with tenor and tuba couple, a neat bit of orchestration also used effectively on **Grand Street**. In his solo, Sonny takes one tack after another and develops none. Rene Thomas, the voice of reason on this entire side, shows how a solo can be constructed within the confines of one chorus of a standard tune.

Three tunes on the B side are Sonny with bass and drums and one is wholly unaccompanied — although one of the trio performances, with sparse accompaniment, is virtually a capella. **What's My Name?** begins with a facet of Rollins' talent which I much appreciate: his ability to state a melody with absolute directness and simplicity, but at the same time to introduce just enough variation in pitch and rhythm to give the line a high degree of internal tension. Structurally, the arrangement is curious; the same eight-bar passage is used for prelude and postlude. While it works in terms of doing something (anything) in order to get started, it has no obvious relationship to anything else in the tune. And since it isn't a significant chunk of music in itself, its use as a coda struck me as highly arbitrary and formalistic. This device is also use on the unaccompanied **Body and Soul** and works no better. Calling any formal structural procedure arbitrary is, of course, no condemnation. The trouble here, I think, is that, an introduction using material strikingly different from that heard in the tune arouses some expectation of hearing it



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again, but what follows after is so long that the edge of expectation is dulled — it no longer matters whether we hear the intro again. (Imagine, for instance, if Joe Oliver had used the intro to **Dippermouth** at the end of the record as well. On the other hand, the intro to **Salt Peanuts** works as a postlude, because it is part and parcel of the principal theme.)

The absence of any competing voice on this side lends relief to Rollins' procedure in improvisation. He reuses phrases of the original theme all right, but with a great deal of figuration between them, in such a way that individual phrases of the original no longer have the position in the chord structure of the tune they originally had. Rollins is, so to speak, out of phase with the chord progression and, since the chord progression in jazz is so much a part of the metrical pattern, with the rhythmic structure of the tune as well.

While it is true that Rollins plays "off the chord", it is not that he doesn't know any better. Rather he is trying to remove himself from the environment of the tune, as usually conceived, just as, in choosing tunes like **If You Were the Only Girl in the World**, he tries to remove himself from the jazz repertory.

Rollins' phase-shift is not the almost automatic procedure employed by many jazzmen of the past, by Louis Armstrong for one. It works both ways, since phrases are also compressed and seem to come too soon. Certain jazz improvisations suffer by being too consistent in texture, too insistent on the same kind of rhythmic motion. Rollins exaggerates in the other direction, and his solos are a mosaic of figures, sharply differentiated. Some are reminiscences of the tune, some vulgar noises, explosive low tones, choked clucking, false-fingerings, and some are filligrees borrowed from Charlie Parker. Among the most striking tiles in the mosaic are the awkward, perhaps deliberately naive (some say "corny") rhythmic motives that seem arcana from some locked book to which only Rollins has the key.

It must be hard to play for a man like this. Henry Grimes has a great deal of trouble presenting a coherent bass line. **Manhattan** is particularly disturbing in this respect. Grimes plays so many non-chord tones on accented beats that no sensation of effective chord change is possible. Perhaps this is the way Sonny wants it, for, presumably, he thereby has more room to move around. In that case, the whole function of the bass needs to be reconsidered, especially its metrical role.

On the last band Sonny and his horn stand alone, and I think that is

where he wants to be. Here he is free to swing or not, extend the chord or not. **Body & Soul** is an obvious choice as Leonard Feather points out in the liner notes: the listener would be aware of the structure of Sonny's improvisation in terms of chorus, bridge, etc. But, equally obviously, it can be seen as a challenge to Hawk and the kind of jazz he represents. The effort to enlarge the horizons of jazz will, I think, eventually do away with jazz as such. There are too many cultured and sophisticated musicians with great gifts for improvising for jazz to remain something you can tap your foot to. It will be a good thing for our musical culture in general to regain some of the vitality and unity of the past when improvisation and composition went hand in hand. And it will be good for jazz to be faced with the necessity of dealing with problems of form and content. But that is in the future. Meanwhile, Sonny Rollins is suffering from the growing pains as are others — to name only two, Charlie Mingus and Gil Evans. Although there are many passages in his playing where he blows freely and with vigor, Rollins leaves the impression that he is dissatisfied: with his horn, with the limitations of jazz tunes, with the playing of other musicians. In wanting to be himself he gives us too much, and too much that is obscure from an emotional and a musical point of view.

Preoccupation with form and formal procedure is no guarantee of coherence, as I think the history of 19th century music demonstrates. At the same time, such a preoccupation often overshadow's other drives, which perhaps go deeper or are perhaps opposed to it. The majority of 19th century composers found their artistic salvation in the external stimulus provided by a musical text or program. Whether this provides a specific lesson for jazz, I don't know; but I think Sonny would do well to force his lyric gifts to the limits, even at the expense of other considerations.

What Rollins gives us, on this lp as elsewhere, is a running record of his unformed and vigorous artistic urge. There is too much there for us to regard it merely as skillful, charming, clever improvising. Still, it is not as though Sonny had succeeded in abstracting himself from the context of jazz, not as though there were no large element of tradition, of powerful and ingenuous blowing that steadies the vessel in the roughest waters. But I think more confidence in the effectiveness of his own playing and a less aggressive approach to the (perhaps illusory) problem of communication would leave him free to develop a personal style on whatever ground he wishes; but one that creates

its own context, as it were, rather than annihilates it.

Larry Gushee

#### **CAL TJADER: Fantasy 3283 "A Night At The Blackhawk".**

Cal Tjader, vibas; Vince Guaraldi, piano; Silva, tenor; Al McKibbon, bass; Willie Bobo, drums and timbales; Mongo Santamaria, conga drum.

**Bill B.**, **Stompin' At The Savoy**; **I Love Paris**; **I Hadn't Anyone Till You**; **Blue And Sentimental**; **Night In Tunisia**.

The group on this record is really two in one: a Latin-American sextet and a jazz quintet. It is difficult to consider them together, for when the conga drummer joins in to play mambos, everyone in the quintet completely changes his musical attitude. A strong idea that would bring the group into focus is missing, and the Latin bit apparently fails to stimulate anyone's creativity.

On the American tunes Silva indicates that he has listened to Ben Webster, Al Cohn, Stan Getz, Zoot Sims, etc. He has good ears and has heard more than just their mannerisms, but he hasn't developed his own musical viewpoint. What he has learned about form, phrasing and taste goes out the window on the mambos. He overblows, plays with less inventiveness, and resorts to some sales techniques perfected at **Jazz At The Philharmonic** concerts and taken over by rock 'n' roll. The trouble may partly be the difficulty he must have in hearing himself through the clatter being set up by his associates, galloping in pursuit of **ritmo caliente**.

Playing tunes like **I Love Paris** and **Savoy** as mambos is in exactly the same category as playing **Tea For Two** as a cha-cha. If the only motive of the musicians is "look, this tune that we all know also works as a mambo", then we have a gimmick instead of a good musical idea. Rhythm should be a cause, not an effect. The musician's response to the pulse of the music determines his conception of form, phrasing, dynamics, and to some extent, melodic structure. If Latin rhythms are not stimulating to the soloist there is little point in using them as accompaniment. On this album they do not even appear particularly stimulating to the drummers.

An illustration of Latin drumming with a strong musical idea can be found in the work of Chano Pozo and Jimmie La Vaca. Charlie Parker's solo on **Mango Mangue** demonstrates that Latin rhythms can be stimulating to a jazz soloist who approaches them with honesty and imagination. In Tjader's group there is meagre understanding of the strength and richness of rhythmic form of any kind. Stylization is being utilized for effect, but there is no evidence of any

passionate involvement with the music. Despite the tendency of the timbalist to accelerate tempos, this is acceptable music for dancing, partying, watching, or ignoring. The fact that Guaraldi and McKibbin can play jazz well makes them flexible and valuable sidemen, and Silva's tenor is agreeable when he's not trying to sell those mambos. But please, don't talk about Tjader building a successful career "without sacrificing any of his musical standards to commercialism" (liner notes). From the indifferent way he ruminates through his jazz choruses and the energetic way he attacks his Latin gimicks, I can only deduce that his musical standards and commercialism are synonymous — he makes his music that way because it sells, *punto final*.

Bill Crow

**LESTER YOUNG: "Blue Lester". Savoy MG-12068.**

Billy Butterfield, trumpet; Hank d'Amico, clarinet; Lester Young, tenor sax; Johnny Guarneri, piano; Dexter Hall, guitar; Billy Taylor, bass; Cozy Cole, drums.

These Foolish Things; Exercise in Swing; Salute to Fats; Basie English.

Lester Young, tenor sax; Count Basie, piano; Freddie Greene, guitar; Rodney Richardson, bass; Shadow Wilson, drums.

I Don't Stand a Ghost of a Chance; Indiana Blue Lester; Jump Lester Jump.

Jesse Drakes, trumpet; Jerry Elliott, trombone; Lester Young, tenor sax; Junior Mance, piano; Leroy Jackson, bass; Roy Haynes, drums. Crazy Over Jazz; Ding Dong; Blues 'n' Bells; June Bug.

**LESTER YOUNG: "Laughin' to Keep From Cryin' ". Verve MG V-8316.**

Harry Edison, Roy Eldridge, trumpets; Lester Young, clarinet, tenor sax; unidentified rhythm section.

Salute to Benny; They Can't Take That Away From Me; Romping; Gypsy in My Soul; Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone. The claim Lester Young made just before he died, that he was still renewing his style, is borne out by the Verve lp, which dates from 1958 and is therefore amongst his last recordings. His phrases are more consistently spare, their austerity tempered by a softer tone than we knew in the past. Unfortunately the effect is spoiled by his failure to handle either instrument with any kind of confidence. The clarinet solos are worse in this respect; Young falters badly in the theme statement of *They Can't Take That Away From Me*. Although his understanding of phrase displacement is often as acute as ever, the lassitude of his playing invades his ideas too, so that *Gypsy in My Soul* contains about the most lamentable solo he ever put on record. The plastic feel of his previous work gives way to a weird aerated quality. On *Romping*, easily the best track, the

artistic potential of this change is fulfilled, but elsewhere tenor and clarinet solos are dimly delineated, fuzzy rather than poised.

It is vital to distinguish this lack of precision in producing notes from the freedom of line which was Young's greatest gift to jazz and which helps make "Blue Lester" so important and beautiful an album. Young was able to ignore conventional phrase patterns precisely because he was so deeply aware of the beat. Usually little is made of this aspect of his work, but performances like *Indiana* and *Blue Lester* show that he could phrase in a very direct way when he wished, although his timing remained elegantly retarded. Untypical as they are rhythmically, they fully reveal the charm of his tone and his unique appreciation of light and shade. The other 1944 session is not so successful. The tight incisive beat of Cole's drumming makes a poor backdrop to the tenorman's shrewd indolence of style, and Guarneri's eclectic style often misses. With the 1949 *Ding Dong* date it is a different story, for the tenor lines ride freely on the flowing tide of Haynes' cymbals. Young sets his phrases off cleverly against the ensemble riffs, sometimes interweaving his line with theirs, sometimes answering their insistence with gay, upward-curling melodies, a master of every situation he creates. Rarely can such rhythmic licence have fostered so sure a sense of design.

What of the other soloists on these two records? Basie is his terse, effective self. Hank d'Amico and Butterfield are adequate but generally uninspired. Elliott is competent but dull, Drakes furiously uninventive; Junior Mance plays well, punctuating his bounding phrases with strongly defined chords. The other musicians on the Verve lp have more to offer, for, though neither pianist nor guitarist really has much personality, both trumpeters contribute shapely and forceful solos. Eldridge does nothing that equals his performance on *This Year's Kisses*, recorded two years earlier with Dickenson and Young on that "Jazz Giants" lp, a classic of its kind, but not once is his playing disfigured by the screeches that have spoiled many of his concert appearances. The climate of his work is correspondingly subdued, without, however, weakening its impetus; and his biting tone lends point to the riffs the trumpeters fashion behind Lester Young. Edison, unadventurous melodically, does wonders with the small vocabulary he does employ. What better example could one find than the first trumpet solo in *Romping*, where the majestic tone and fine sense of time combine in the simple phrases to yield a solo of extraordinary power?

Michael James

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# BOOK REVIEWS

**Jazz Improvisation** by John Mehegan. Watson-Guption Publications, 1959.

This volume is a very different proposition from Mehegan's *Jazz Style Piano Folio* reviewed here in February, 1959. It is hardly concerned with executive problems but is a thorough survey of what might be called the tonal mechanics of jazz improvisation, with considerable attention given to rhythmic matters as well. Everything is presented in relation to the piano, but the book should prove of much value to students of all instruments.

Mehegan has organized his material in a systematically rigorous but logical way. It may be questioned whether so thorough a codification is desirable for a creative activity like improvisation, and if, indeed, improvisation is susceptible to teaching at all. In the last analysis it is not possible to teach improvisation to those with no talent for it but, as Mehegan rightly says in his introduction, talent without knowledge is nothing. If a large body of material is to be presented to students a system is essential if they are to assimilate it in the most beneficial way with each fact correctly related to the rest. If much of this book embodies a somewhat mechanical approach it is because it is concerned with the basic

material of jazz improvisation only. There will presumably be less rigidity in the second volume in which the author will deal with style.

A start is made with sevenths. Mehegan shows how these are built on every degree of the major scale, explains all normal chromatic alterations and produces a vocabulary of sixty chords upon which the lessons are based. The student must memorize these before proceeding further, and throughout the course they have to be practiced in a variety of ways. In describing these chords Mehegan has, wisely I think, adopted the figured bass method. In lessons eight to twenty a series of standard songs in all major keys, with amplified harmonizations by the author, illustrates the use of these chords. One has to be studied in all twelve major keys. The student has to transfer these to his paper in conjunction with the original melodies.

Inversions of the sixty chords are described and listed, both in notation and figured bass numerals. These, with the addition of diminished chords, bring the vocabulary up to two hundred and four chords. Mehegan describes this as "the complete harmonic system of jazz." The student will find this misleading when he hears creative improvisors—Monk or Cecil Taylor for two—using things not mentioned in this book. Again, reharmonisations of standards illustrate the use of these inversions.

It is unnecessary to list all the material covered here for the above gives an idea of the system adopted. Once arpeggio extensions of chords have been dealt with the student is able to do an increasing amount of original work—either improvised or written—using a widening range of resources.

The appearance of a book of this kind is encouraging but it is unfortunate its price is as high as fifteen dollars. The ring binding is necessary to let the pages of a book of this size (8½" x 11") lie flat on the piano desk, but the layout is unduly spacious.

It is impossible to express a conclusive opinion on Mehegan's project until the all-important second volume, on style, is to hand. If in it the author can, as it were, 'humanise' the system laid out here he will have produced a unique work. The present book provides an enormous amount of work—sometimes one sentence involves considerable application: "Play the scale-tone chords in open position, axis the third, in twelve keys; all five qualities and their inversions on twelve tones" (page 177). If all the tasks it sets are performed conscientiously the student will have the basis of a thorough understanding of jazz improvisation.

There are a few minor eccentricities. For example, in figure one on page twenty-three if the final chord is based on D flat it would surely be better, and

correct grammatically, to spell it that way—D flat, F flat, A flat and C flat—rather than alter all the letter names. More accidentals would be needed but the student would be able to think of it more clearly as a simple flattening of the initial chord rather than a new combination built on a different bass. Nor can I agree that the student should be encouraged to think of Oscar Peterson as the "outstanding jazz pianist today." However, such observations are minor points in face of the body of material the author has placed before his readers. Mr. Mehegan's second volume is awaited with greatest interest.

Max Harrison

## THESE JAZZMEN OF OUR TIME

by Raymond Horricks with Charles Fox, Benny Green, Max Harrison, Nat Hentoff, Ed Michel, Alun Morgan, and Martin Williams. Victor Gollancz Ltd. (London) 1959.

Of the fifteen essays included in this volume, those on Thelonious Monk, J. J. Johnson, Bud Powell, Milt Jackson, Max Roach, Art Blakey, Dave Brubeck, Gigi Gryce, and Quincy Jones, were written by Raymond Horricks. I think that they are, at best, naive collections of anecdotes and, at worst, fan magazine nonsense and gush.

The piece on Monk is a fair example of Horricks' method. The first part consists of Horricks' impressions of Monk in Paris in 1954; impressions which are of the gee-but-he's-eccentric variety. The rest regales us with other people's opinions on Monk's musical and personal eccentricities and a superficial survey of some of Monk's recordings. None of this is useful criticism. The biographical material used by Horricks is not of the slightest value in understanding Monk as an artist, rather it consists of bits of hip information. I am not arguing against the use of details about an artist's life and milieu, but all of Horricks' pieces here fail precisely in the vital task of bringing us closer to an artist's work.

Alun Morgan follows Horricks' approach with a valueless survey of Miles Davis. He considers Davis an extremely important figure; perhaps, thinks Morgan, the most influential musician since Bird, but his article gives no particularly good reasons why Davis should be so highly esteemed.

With Max Harrison on Gerry Mulligan we move, finally, into jazz criticism. Harrison gives a useful summary of Mulligan's career and develops a most interesting evaluation of Mulligan's curious role in recent jazz. It is not an evaluation with which I am inclined to agree since I believe he overestimates Mulligan both as a composer and as a performer. For example, he concludes:

In addition to the personal expression of his solos what Mulligan has given jazz is a fresh ensemble style. Whereas men like Armstrong and Parker, in forging a new mode of

solo utterance, give us primarily themselves, Mulligan, like Gil Evans, has given his fellow musicians a new way of thinking about playing together, a new approach to the jazz ensemble. This may be questioned in view of the limitations of his compositions, the somewhat narrow range of their emotional content, and his lack of interest in such matters as tone-colour, yet the distinctive sound of all his groups, from the Quartet to the Tentet, is at once apparent. His improvising and writing can now be considered as extensions of each other and it is his achievement that, while seeking to realize all facets of his own potential, he has created an ensemble style in which much of the spirit of the authentic modern movement is reconciled with the apparently inherent limitations (the emotional withdrawnness and so on) of the white musician. Thus Mulligan has shown himself to be the most remarkable white jazz musician of the decade.

There is much that is debatable here. However, even when disagreeing with Harrison, one cannot be deny that he is one of the best men about; he seriously and critically comes to grips with his subject.

Charles Fox deals quite adequately with Gil Evans without, however, really considering the musical difficulties which I believe Evans has yet to handle satisfactorily, those hinted at in this magazine last July.

Benny Green presents an indictment of John Lewis which is a serious one and which must be seriously discussed. Briefly, Green accuses Lewis of emasculating jazz in an attempt to achieve respectability. I think this is to miss the significance of Lewis' efforts and achievements. At the time of the formation of the MJQ, jazz was in stylistic difficulties. The question Lewis must have asked was about the possibilities of introducing a new vitality in jazz by adapting European contrapuntal forms. Lewis has, it seems to me, produced new form for jazz. And this form is now a jazz form.

The most notable contribution to the book is Martin Williams' essay on Sonny Rollins. Although ostensibly a consideration of Rollins, Williams contributes insights on Bird and Coltrane, and his survey of the problem of form in modern jazz merits serious consideration.

Nat Hentoff's essay on Charlie Mingus is a valuable and sensitive study of the man. However, it suffers from being a loosely connected compilation of three liner note essays. One wishes that Hentoff had reworked this material into a longer and more connected piece.

Ed Michel contributes an admiring study of Jimmy Giuffre which records Giuffre's career with more admiration than critical acumen.

H. A. Woodfin



LOUIS ARMSTRONG, currently touring Europe, takes two NORELCO 'Continental' recorders wherever he goes. Says Louis, "I tape phono records and airshots all the time and if I'm in the room talking with friends, my NORELCO's keep right on copying with the volume turned down." Louis also finds the choice of three speeds convenient, using the slowest, 1½ ips for interviews and speech recording, the 3¾ speed for some music, and the 7½ speed for live recording. He says, "I've tried lots of tape machines since I got my first one in 1948, but NORELCO is the one for me." Recently he picked up two NORELCO 'Continental's in Copenhagen. Set to run on the European power frequency of 50 cycles, they will be reset for 60 cycles when he returns to the United States. Like all NORELCO recorders they can be set in a few minutes for any power voltage requirement anywhere in the world; from 110 to 250 volts. The NORELCO 'Continental' is a product of North American Philips Co., Inc., High Fidelity Products Division, Dept. 1EE2, 230 Duffy Ave., Hicksville, L. I., N. Y.

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This is the first article of a projected series called **FIVE MOTHERS** by John Benson Brooks dealing with the formal contributions of Scott Joplin, Jelly Roll Morton, Duke Ellington, Thelonious Monk and George Russell.

## GEORGE RUSSELL

### John Benson Brooks

Mothers? They assimilate culture, are always acutely aware of low standards on the scene, and are hell-bent on reproducing and bringing it up better.

The jazz scene was in a dither in the 'forties for a number of reasons which, like instrumental sounds have since cooled. Attention has settled around the tonal problem, and those players who are working out something along this line (Coltrane, Bill Evans, Farmer, Miles and Cannonball, to name a few) especially engage our interest at the moment.

The boppers of the 'forties inherited the jazz scale—natural major with traditional options on the flat 3rd, flat 7th and flat 9th (or flat 2nd) and put the blue note, freedom squawk, or fly in the ointment (a feature absolutely essential to jazz's life) on the so-called flatted fifth, or F# in the scale of C. Notice that the last two options in the history of the scale are enharmonically tonic and fifth of the F# scale.

Inevitably this soon had everybody playing around with polytonality, and if you were blowing in a C gravity while the bass was in F# then, crazy. And why worry, since the circle of perfect fifths was an equilibrium with a magic gravity that would carry you through? And some knew (from Schillinger) that similar freedom was available by symmetrizing the chromatic scale into 3 tonics (C, E and A flat), 4 tonics (C, E flat, G flat, and A), 6 tonics (C, D, E, F#, G#, B flat). Tunes which had chord circles with several tonic stations (like *How High, All The Things*, etc.) were the thing and everybody was trying to work out a chromatic mobility (12 tonics) that would make melodic sense.

It is to George Russell's everlasting credit that he did it.

It required a new wig-scene which I'll attempt to summarize roughly:

- (1) C, D flat, D, E flat, E, F, F#, G, G#, A, B flat, B is the chromatic scale.
- (2) C, D, E, F#, G, A, B, is not the natural major scale with an F# but a Lydian scale since F, G, A, B, C, D, E is the Lydian Mode (222122) and the former is 222-122 also.
- (3) C, D, E flat, F#, G, A, B then is logically the Lydian Dim. Scale.
- (4) C, D, E, F#, G#, A, B the Lydian Aug. scale.
- (5) Retain C, D, E, F#, G#, B flat the whole-tone or Aug. scale.
- (6) C, D, E flat, F, F#, G#, A, B is an Auxiliary Diminished scale.

- (7) C, D flat, E flat, E, F#, G, A, B flat and Auxiliary Dim. Blues scale.
- (8) C, D, E, F, G, A, B, the traditional major scale and
- (9) C, D, E flat, E, F, F#, G, A, B flat the blues scale.

#### Note:

- (1) Becomes the Lydian Chromatic Scale. (12 Tonics)
- (2) was the bopper's scale (Schillinger's two tonics).
- (3) includes Schillinger's four tonics.
- (4) his three tonics.
- (5) his six tonics and was Debussy's favorite.
- (6) was the Arabian Zer Ef Kend (6th Century A.D. String of Pearls) 2 plus 1 all the way up.
- (7) is it's inversion, 2 plus 1 all the way down.
- (8) and (9) are included in the family of scales because of their application in horizontal tonal situations and because of their historical and social significance.

How do these scales make the chromatic scale any more negotiable than the family of major and minor scales derived from Europe and taken for granted for so long?

Well, for one thing, it happens that the Lydian scale has also been known as the Pythagorean scale and one of its peculiarities is that when it is laid out in its third expansion it exhibits an arc of perfect fifths C, G, D, A, E, B, F#; and similarly in the flat direction C, F, B flat, E flat, A flat, D flat, G flat. Hence a scale (or order) of "close to distant relationship" (dictated by the Lydian cycle of fifths) is established among the tones of the chromatic scale itself and the "Lydian Chromatic Scale" with it's family of fractional scales and its built-in gravity becomes a natural fact. Lydian Chromatic Scales maintain a close to distant relationship to one another based upon the same cycle of fifths order.

The scale of close to distant relationship of tones within a single Lydian chromatic scale or of Lydian chromatic scales themselves:

IV# II VI III VII IV I V II VI III VII IV#

(The perfect fifth being the strongest harmonic interval after the octave)

Another idea that's been around (and Schillinger had a concept of it) is that none of our Western music is in any one 'key' really, but is mostly just scales and their modes in motion! The tone in any melody, or stretch of continuity, that has the most duration (adding up all the times it appears) is the real key-center and therefore the primary axis of the tune whether the key signature indicates this or not. In cases of several competing tones their position formally (starting, closing or special symmetrical prominence) would help you figure which one. Of course, today's continuities frequently exhibit several primary axes to a stretch.

Now it follows that if you were blowing in an uncomplicated, free and easy, horizontal, Mid-Western manner (like Pres) you'd make fewer changes of scale than if you were in a vertical storm (like Hawk) and changing scale every four bars every chord, or every beat if the tempo allowed.

Random and condensed quoting from Russell's *Lydian Concept of Tonal Organization* (Russ-Hix Pub.):

"(1) He (the improviser) can superimpose a sequence of scales (their modes or modal chords) upon a single chord or upon a horizontal sequence of chords.

(2) When a single Lydian Chromatic Scale is imposed upon a sequence of chords it (rather than each single chord of the sequence) becomes the center and conveyor of tonal gravity.

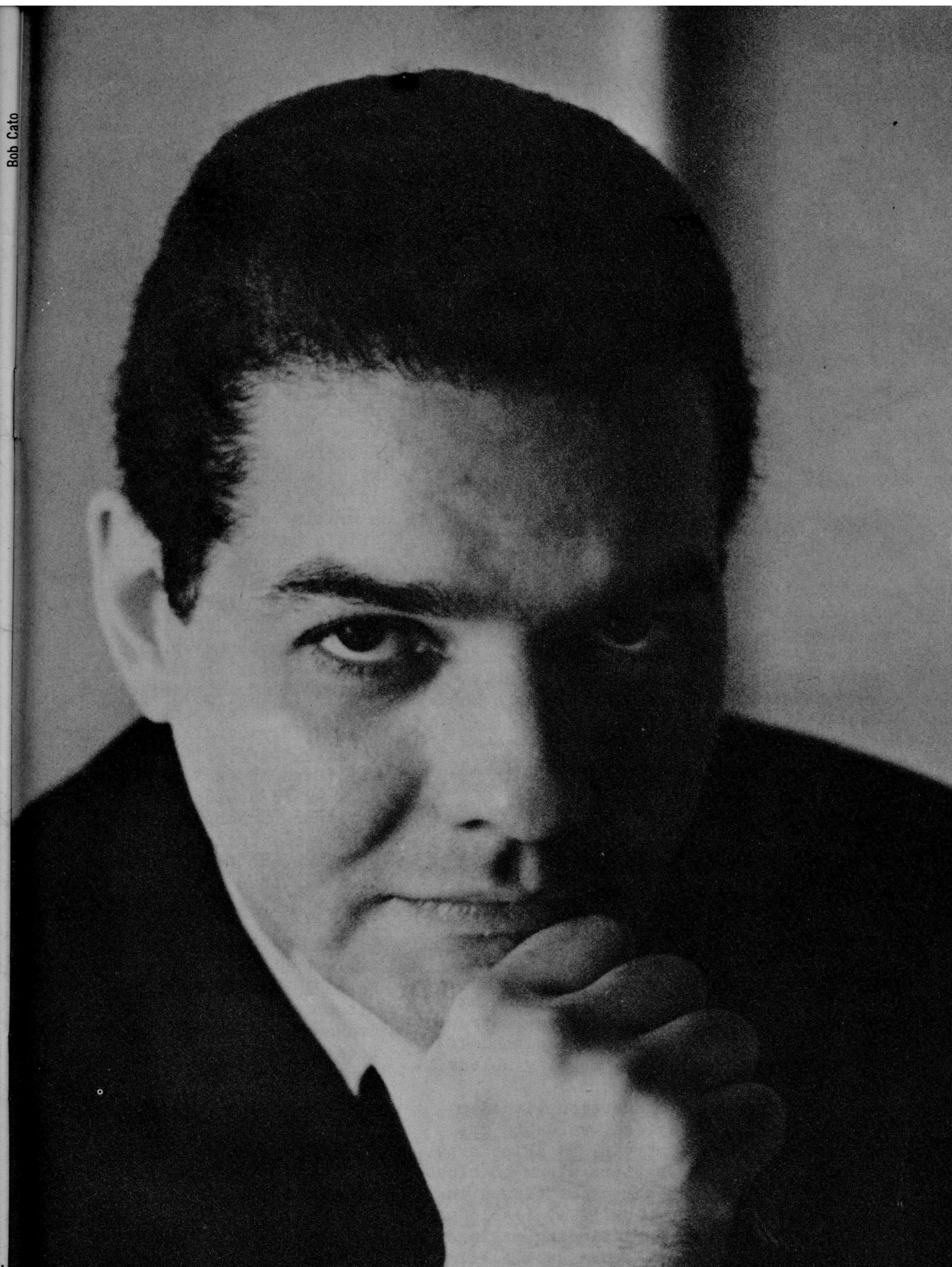
(3) Given a scale, any melody resolves inward to tones contained in or outward to tonics not contained in that scale structure. An 'outgoing' melody of the Prevailing Lydian Chromatic Scale may assume the form of one of the scales belonging to a different Lydian Chromatic Scale. While still retaining its identity with the prevailing LCS."

The implications from paragraph (3) run from nonchromatic unimodality into chromatic polymodality or pantonality. Note George's contrapuntal build-up and dissolution; these harmonic lines (mono or homophonic) have become subject to control since Stravinsky laid down the *Petrushka* chord (C-F#) in 1911. Take your choice; the interval between any two axis notes is consonant to less consonant from thirds to tritone and Schillinger has a four-fold harmonic correlation which specifies the scales on any two axis notes as unital (or polytonal) and unimodal (or polymodal). (U-U, U-P, P-U, P-P). Schonberg's use of the P5th down for his Shape Transpositions also reacts on this situation. So; the tonal gravities of complex patterns of chromatic modalization follow the laws of counterpoint, (Interdependent vertical and horizontal tonal spheres in motivic and rhythmic integration) and the permutations here may take as much as a century to work out.

Of course, the players have it coming but listen to Art Farmer and Bill Evans in the context ("*Jazz Workshop*" album and on *All About Rosie*)—and the high level performance, enthusiasm and inspiration of all the players of all the players involved. Another fact looms as significant for the future: the use of the chromatic scale in this manner is not necessarily limited to jazz. It is, to my knowledge the first theoretical contribution to music-in-general emanating from the jazz-world, but the longhair (particularly the younger ones) may pick it up too, and it may become a part of the conservatory scene.

In which case this makes George Russell one of those *Mothers*.

Bob Cato







BILL SPILKA

## JAZZ IN PRINT

by NAT HENTOFF

Exposed: Dorothy Kilgallen in the New York Journal-American: "Leonard Bernstein took his family to the Five Spot to catch Ornette Coleman, who seems the musician most likely to affect the history of jazz this season, although many of his fellow players (especially The Jazz Review crowd) maintain that his offbeat style won't have a lasting effect. More objective aficionados think he's fabulous." Bob Sylvester in the New York Daily News: "There is now a little magazine named Jazz Review which is published by a Chinese named Win See. This figures, as native-born jazz critics are always suspect. Anyway, in some silly quiz an arty type named Dom Cerulli has to take a poke at us jazz buffs here on THE NEWS. In the little world of Dom Cerulli, nobody is old enough to remember that on this paper the late Burns Mantle was writing nice things about jazz and jazzmen before most of these know-it-all new

critics had failed their first piano lesson." As I've long suspected, Win See and Dom Cerulli (a Korean?) are probably pseudonyms for John Mehegan.

Tony Gieske quotes Max Roach in the Washington Post: "I haven't heard anything else [new] since Sid Catlett died and Kenny Clarke left the country."

About Philly Joe Jones: "He used to come to my house for lessons every week in Philadelphia. I still don't hear anything." About Shelly Manne and "melodic" drumming: "The drum is an instrument of indefinite pitch. If you want to play melody, play a horn."

In connection with Sam Charters' valuable The Country Blues (Rinehart), a Charters album of blues recordings mentioned in the book is available at \$4.95 including postage from Record Book & Film Sales, Inc., 121 West 47th Street, New York. Title is The Country Blues and the interpreters include Blind Lemon Jefferson,

Lonnie Johnson, Cannon's Jug Stompers, Peg Leg Howell, Blind Willie McTell, Memphis Jug Band, Blind Willie Johnson, Leroy Carr, Sleepy John Estes, Big Bill, Bukka White, Tommy McClennan, Robert Johnson, Washboard Sam.

Unfortunately the excellent British bi-monthly, Record Folk Music, edited by A. L. Lloyd, has been forced to go out of business. The last issue, November-December, 1959, has articles on calypso and gypsy music. Writes Lloyd in his farewell: "There is a crisis in folk song, a crisis reaching to almost every corner of the world where traditional music is to be found alive. The animal is changing its shape; its behavior is no longer easily predictable; the watching folklorist, at least in our part of the world, is filled with dubiety, perplexity, dismay. Even in regions where folk music seemed to have remained unchanged for centuries, suddenly innovation seems to have more prestige than tradition. The once 'classical' balladry of the Appalachians is transformed by hill-billy and the rock. In the Balkans, the great spring ritual dances become a stage-show rehearsed after factory hours and accompanied by a works band including saxophones and all. The African cattleherder adapts the guitar breaks of Jimmy Rodgers to his native lyre, while his confrere on the Mongolian plains makes up space-travel songs whose melodies ring with echoes of Soviet march-tunes. It's all very exciting for the folk. all very baffling for the scholars." Good summary of "The

'Race' Labels" of the  
✓ twenties by Bob Koester in  
the December Jazz Report,  
published monthly by Ko-  
ester at 439 South Wabash,  
Chicago 5, Illinois. It's  
a dollar for twelve issues  
. . . Dr. Edmond Souchon  
writes from New Orleans  
that the D.H. Holmes De-  
partment Store there is  
offering a headquarters to  
the New Orleans Jazz Club  
rent free for the next ten  
years. Part of the build-  
ing will be used as a jazz  
museum. Harry Souchon,  
Edmond's brother was re-  
sponsible for the gift and  
"appeared before the City  
Council with a plea for  
an appropriation of  
\$10,000 (\$5,000 to do the  
interior of the museum as  
we want and \$5,000 for a  
Curator who would live on  
the place and take good  
care of it.)"  
Norman Granz took a full  
page in the December 30  
Variety to tell about Ella  
Fitzgerald on The Bell  
Telephone Hour. Granz and  
Ella agreed to appear with  
the Teddy Wilson trio. At  
a meeting with producer  
Barry Wood, wrote Granz,  
"I was told . . . about  
the difficulties he had  
with integrating Negro  
and white artists on this  
show, and I expressed at  
that time my extreme  
bitterness about this  
policy, but I privately  
felt that perhaps this  
question could be met if  
it arose again. I felt  
rather than pulling Ella  
off the show, which would  
accomplish nothing, it  
might be better to have  
Ella on the show and  
fight the problem if and  
when it came up again."  
Granz asked that Ella's  
regular guitarist also ac-  
company her. Wood called  
him and said: "If you in-

sist on using the guitar-  
ist, okay, but it would  
have to be a Negro guitar-  
ist instead of a white  
one." Granz continued: "I  
asked Wood why that was  
necessary and he said that  
the sponsor, the Bell  
Telephone Company, never  
allows a mixed group to be  
on its show. I can't for  
the life of me, even as  
a practical matter, under-  
stand why the Bell Tele-  
phone Company doesn't want  
a mixed group . . . to ap-  
pear on its television  
show, because I'm positive  
no person in the south is  
sufficiently prejudiced  
to take his telephone out  
because he saw a non-  
segregated group on a TV  
show under the sponsorship  
of Bell." After Granz's  
threat to pull Ella off  
the show if the white  
guitarist were not used,  
Wood agreed, but the  
mixed group was not on  
camera at any time. Granz  
ended his page by pointing  
out to Robert Sarnoff,  
Chairman of the Board of  
NBC, and Robert Kintner,  
President of NBC that  
"they must concern them-  
selves with sponsors' pol-  
icies which foster racial  
prejudice—the worst kind  
of prejudice in America.  
It isn't even a question,  
as it's so often put, of  
the eyes of the world upon  
us; it's simply one of  
self-respect and respect  
for our fellow men. I  
think this is a responsi-  
bility that NBC must con-  
sider, and I submit that  
Messrs. Sarnoff and Kint-  
ner ought to do something  
about it immediately be-  
cause this is as important  
as any fixed quiz show or  
paid off disc jockey."  
Bell Telephone later de-  
nied the charge. No com-  
ment from NBC.  
Connie Kay, interviewed

by Valerie Wilmer in Jazz  
News (London): ". . . if  
John brings in an idea we  
don't like, we don't play  
it. This quartet is a co-  
operative and there's no  
real leader. Whatever the  
four of us agree on, hap-  
pens." John Lewis, in an  
interview in the same bi-  
weekly paper: ". . . if I  
am composing a piece I  
really depend on the per-  
sonality and equipment of  
the people who play it.  
I find it very difficult—  
almost imposible—to write  
for blank faces. I really  
have to know these people  
and know what they are  
going to do and, even  
then, I have to alter and  
adjust the music to suit  
the particular soloists."  
Steve Allen turned out  
to be the "late, legend-  
ary" Buck Hammer on Han-  
over. Ralph Gleason was  
the first reviewer to pull  
off the shroud, and Time,  
commenting on the hoax,  
noted that, according to  
Down Beat, "Hammer plays  
with both hands and has  
the elements of a vital  
blues attack in either of  
them" while the New York  
World-Telegram reviewer,  
Charles Schreiber, felt  
that Hammer's "recent  
death was a tragic loss."  
Mike Lipskin writes on  
ragtime pianist, Donald  
Lambert, a fixture at  
Wallace's in Orange, New  
Jersey, in the November/  
December Record Research  
. . . Boosey and Hawkes is  
assembling a book on drums  
with chapters to be writ-  
ten by experts on sym-  
phonic and jazz drumming.  
One of the latter to be  
included is teacher Stan-  
ley Spector of Boston.  
A reader from Columbus,  
Ohio, whose name we have  
lost, answers Ernest  
Borneman's question about  
what musically untrained

people can get from modern jazz:

". . . it seems to me that the same problem arises with every kind of music that has evolved beyond simple song-type structural complexity. Most certainly it applies to the greater part of 'classical music' and even more so the advanced music of our century . . . Every interested person will realize that appreciation of music must involve recognition of its formal construction. This is, I believe, possible for everyone with a reasonably sensitive ear, at least to a certain extent. Depending solely on the ear, it can of course only be achieved with music that has its content and architecture related to scales, e.g. up to Bartok, most of Stravinsky, Milhaud and others. I don't know how the human sense of listening can be conditioned towards dodecaphonic and other more advanced systems of composition. Modern jazz has, to my knowledge, not yet evolved beyond the complexity of the above-mentioned 'classical' modernists, at least as far as harmony goes.

"A musically 'illiterate' listener can by some listening effort, follow a certain chordal pattern. Evidence for this is the fact that experienced but completely untrained people will recognize a well known melody in the improvised variations of this melody, even if there are no melodic lines that resemble the original version. He will notice the tonic, dominant and subdominant parts of the development, and this distinction can be made in

most of the postwar musicians. Expansions and condensations of the theme or parts of it can be heard, and the more elementary transformations of it can be traced. For example, the mirror image of a theme, the theme spelled backwards.

"A simple method of following the sequence of chords, used by many people I know, is to sing loudly or silently the untransformed theme along with the improvisations. In this manner, I think I get a fair amount of understanding of how far an improvisation can go as when I follow Charlie Parker's choruses in Koko with the original version of Cherokee in mind. An untrained person can be quite aware of different interpretations of a melodic line or motif in terms of rhythm (for example, in Monk's improvisation on Bags Groove on Prestige) or the unorthodox allocation of a theme to an odd number of measures in many bop numbers or later derivatives of this music.

"An 'illiterate' listener can recognize the employing of different keys by different lines of the melody (as played, for example, by the trumpet and tuba in some of Miles Davis' orchestral pieces). These features . . . are meant by the jazz musicians for a listening ear and not for a transcription, but it may be difficult for people without knowledge of the correct terminology to express their experiences to someone else. It would, of course, be unreasonable to claim that intense listening must reveal the complete structure of a musi-

cal piece to everyone. Lack of training does not prevent the understanding of music, but it keeps it within certain limitations. But they are not as narrow as Mr. Borneman seems to think.

"It is true that this method of musical appreciation becomes increasingly difficult with the progression of jazz. Musicians like Coltrane have left but a few doorways to their music for us unfortunate people. One will still recognize the beauty of their melodic lines even if for the most part they cannot be related to each other or to an underlying harmonic sequence. But I have had it happen quite often that even in quite hopeless cases, continued listening effort revealed little by little some of their structure. And, after all, I don't think it is the intention of people like Coltrane to create a crossword puzzle for musicologists but to achieve a more fragrant or a more harsh kind of beauty in their music. I do notice that this effect is produced by following melodic or harmonic sequences that have a certain quality of inner tension by employing two or more conflicting types of musical logic. If these relations and contradictions could not be felt, music would be reduced to a form of mathematics . . . An untrained listener will undoubtedly not reach the depths of a trained person's understanding, but since satisfaction does not rely so much on the extent of success but on the effort spent, the advantage of an educated listener will almost be cancelled out."

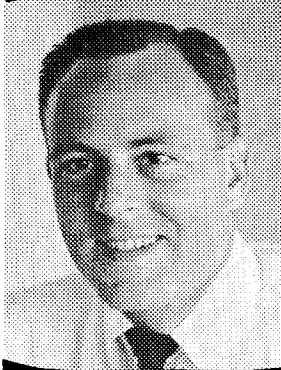
People wait with  
for Bore  
that those who can,  
Duke, etc.

rainbow (chromatic)  
ability to slide, gliss, lower sounds, subtle changes (easily out of pitch)  
crossing channels (makes turns & ~~easy~~ <sup>2</sup>)  
allows for easy adjustment of vibrato

The  
Jazz  
Knob  
at  
the  
center  
of  
the  
dial  
in  
Los Angeles

difficulties  
will  
rapid movement

what about a continuum of use?  
early players w/ wide vibrato, using slide  
modernists no vibrato, no slide  
what about Bill Harris' tuning?  
Non-fadedness of team players.  
the waning divide between needs of trumpet (analog to F.V. Horn)



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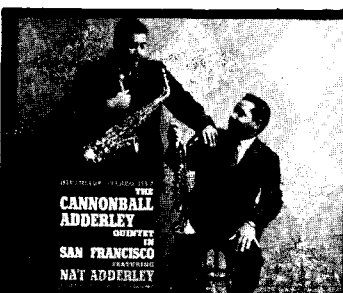
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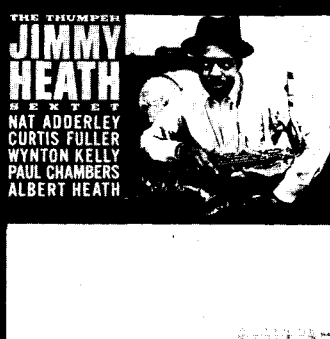
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