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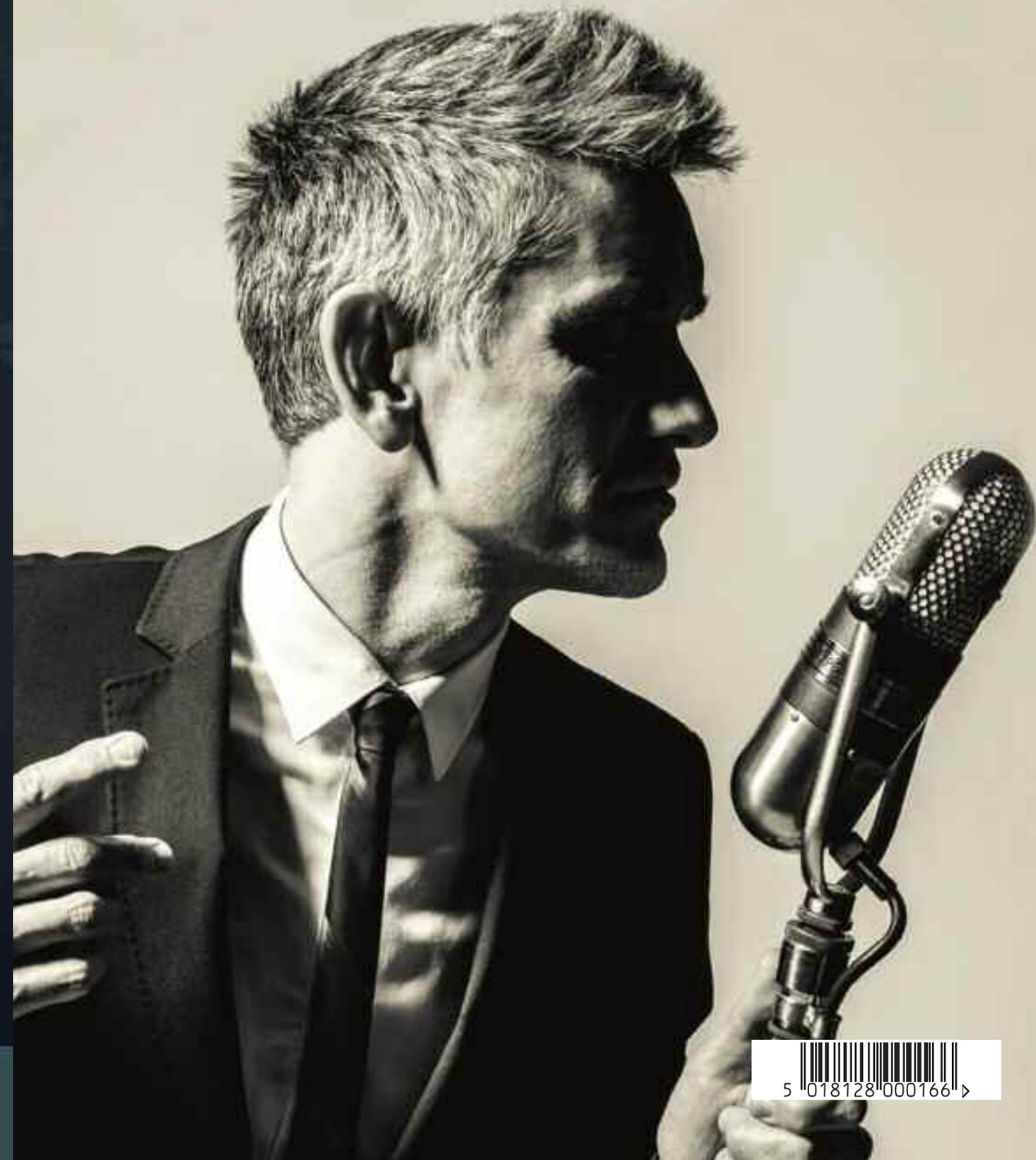
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ISSUE 131 SPRING 2014
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UPFRONT

BBC YOUNG MUSICIAN JAZZ AWARD

On March 8 the final of the first BBC Young Musician Jazz Award took place at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. The five finalists were three saxophonists (Sean Payne, Tom Smith and Alexander Bone), a trumpeter, Jake Labazzi, and a double bassist, Freddie Jensen, all aged between 13 and 18. They performed with the Gwilym Simcock Trio and the judging panel consisted of Django Bates, Trish Clowes, Julian Joseph and Jason Yarde. The winner was 17-year-old Alexander Bone from Darlington. He started playing saxophone at the age of six, taught by his father, but began jazz piano at an even earlier age. He plays in several groups including big bands and jazz quartets and is in his first year of 'A' Level study.

The BBC Young Musician Jazz Final will be broadcast on BBC Four on May 23.



30 YEARS OF PLYMOUTH JAZZ

Celebrating Plymouth Jazz Club's 30th anniversary, the club will hold a special Jazz on a Summer's Evening on July 19, with Richard Leach's 7 Stars of Jazz and the Great Western Jazz Company. Starting at 6.00 pm in the Great Barn at Buckland Abbey, the event includes a hog roast and a Pimm's tent, in addition to 5 hours of jazz for dancing or listening. The club's regular Riverboat Shuffle leaves Commercial Wharf at the Barbican, Plymouth, on August 11 and the regular club meetings are fortnightly on Sunday evenings at the Royal British Legion Club, Crownhill. Next up are Jazzacadabra (May 4), followed by the Great Western Jazz Company (18), Billy Thompson Gypsy Style with Karen Street (June 1), New Orleans Heat (15) and – the 30th Anniversary Founder's Gig – the Tony Harris Quartet with Martin Dale (July 6).
Tel.: 01752 721179
www.plymouth-jazz-club.org.uk

JUMP AND JIVE AT BLACKPOOL

Norbreck Castle Hotel, Blackpool, is the venue for four days of hot music and swing dance from November 21 to 24. As well as live performances from a first-class bill of the Swing Commanders, the Revolutionaires, King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys and the Fabulous Boogie Boys, Jump Jive Swing features dance tuition from G.I. Jive and music from DJ Ian Hartley.
Tel.: 01305 750797
www.ventureawaymusicweekends.co.uk



Rythme Futur

REMI HARRIS DATES

Guitarist Remi Harris brings his own personal take on gypsy jazz to Keswick for a pre-festival concert on May 4, followed by gigs at the Chase Hotel, Nuneaton (9), Conquest Theatre, Bromyard (17), the Newcastle-under-Lyme Jazz and Blues Festival (23-26), MAC, Birmingham (30), Warwick Arts Centre (June 5), the Harp, Albrighton (10), Leominster (19), Swansea International Jazz Festival (21), Botanical Gardens, Birmingham (22), Upton Jazz Festival (28 – lunch), Assembly Rooms, Presteigne (28 – evening), Housmans, Church Stretton (July 2) and Hollycroft Park, Hinckley (5).
Tel.: 0121 454 7020
www.remiharris.co.uk

JAZZ SERVICES TOURS

Two upcoming tours have been announced with Jazz Services support. Pianist Rob Terry takes his trio on a six-date tour of the English Midlands, from the Plough inn, Swindon (April 6) to the Holywell Music Room, Oxford (April 24) via the Big Bang, Oxford, Gumbles Jazz Club, Stafford, Chesterfield Jazz Club and Cotswold Cricket Museum. Trumpeter Nick Malcolm and his quartet range further, though with a bias towards the South West and Wales. The quartet begins in London with the SE Collective (May 20) and, before finishing at Shrewsbury Jazz (June 7), has a tight schedule, with gigs at Swing Unlimited, Bournemouth, the Queen's Head, Monmouth, Colston Hall, Bristol (foyer), St. Ives Jazz Club, Jazz @ Dempsey's, Cardiff, Pepper's Aberjazz Club, Fishguard, the Bebop Club,



Enrico Tomasso

Bristol, Milestones Jazz Club, Lowestoft, and the Vortex, London.
www.jazzservices.org.uk

VIVA VERDI!

The Royal Albert Hall's new restaurant, Verdi – Italian Kitchen, has a plentiful selection of jazz and allied music on Friday evenings and Saturday and Sunday lunch-times. Pianist Alex Hutton plays the restaurant every Friday evening in May and a selection of bands takes the Saturday at noon slot, with three weeks of Django-influenced groups: Club Royale (May 3), Note Noire Quartet (10) and Rythme Futur (17). The FoBo Jug Band resumes the Saturday lunch-time gigs on June 28. These are all free, but the Sunday Brunch sessions are paying events, including the price of the meal. Music tends more towards the Latin: Musica Paradiso (May 11), La Tipica Flamenco (25), London Tango Quartet (June 8) and Tango Volcano (July 13), though the John Martin Quartet ups the jazz quota on June 29. Meanwhile the RAH's Elgar Room hosts late-night jazz: the Basin Street Brawlers (May 15), Sarah Gillespie with *The Life of Bessie Smith* (29), Hailey Tuck – An American in Paris (June 12) and Balagan Cafe Band (19).
Tel.: 020 7589 8212
www.royalalberthall.com

KING PLEASURE ON TOUR

King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys resume their European travels with visits to Enkhuizen Jazz Festival (May 24-25) and Jazz Ascona (June 27). UK dates for the band include Chipping Norton Theatre (May 9), Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury (16), the Old

Brown Jug, Newcastle-under-Lyme (23), Beccles Public Hall (31), Moochers, Stourbridge (June 21) and Burton Agnes Jazz Festival (28).
Tel.: 0121 454 7020
www.kingpleasureandthebiscuitboys.com

WEDNESDAYS AT CONCORDE

The great American saxist Houston Person (7) kicks off the May programme at Eastleigh's Concorde Club. The Wednesday Jazz programme follows up with Pete Long's re-creation of Benny Goodman and Glenn Miller at Carnegie Hall 1939 (14), Martin Wheatley's Arcadians (21), Mike Sanchez and his Band (28) and Rico's Hot Rhythm with Enrico Tomasso leading the likes of Spats Langham and Alistair Allen (June 4). June 11 is a 'no jazz' night, but normal service resumes with the Swing Commanders (18) and Saxophone Madness with Derek Nash and Alan Barnes (25). The Sunday evening New Orleans Jazz for Dancing is interrupted by Bank Holidays and other events, so there are only five dates for May/June: New Orleans Heat (May 11), the Big Bear Stompers with Judy Eames (18), Sussex Jazz Kings (June 8), Colin Kingwell's Jazz Bandits (15) and the Savannah Jazz Band (22).
Tel.: 023 8061 3989
www.theconcordeclub.com

YOLANDA BROWN AWARD AT UEL

Double MOBO Award winner, Yolanda Brown has launched a music award to support final year students of BSc Music Technology or BA Music Production and Culture at the University of East London. The Yolanda Brown Music Award is available to up to



Yolanda Brown

four UEL students and provides them with £500 each towards equipment or studio time. Applications are now open on www.uel.ac.uk/alumni/annualfundawards/

FUNDRAISERS FOR NJA

The National Jazz Archive is holding a series of concerts from May to October to raise funds for its work and in particular the Heritage Lottery Fund project *The Story of British Jazz*. Founder and Lifelong Patron of the Archive, Digby Fairweather, said, 'We are deeply grateful to so many friends of the Archive for giving their services for these concerts absolutely free.' Most of the concerts are grouped together on a Friday evening and Saturday afternoon at Loughton Methodist Church, starting with the Gresty-White Ragtimers (May 30) and Kenny Ball's Jazzmen led by Keith Ball (31). A one-off with Paul Jones and Friends follows on July 18 at Chingford Assembly Hall, the 'friends' being an A Team of British blues stars. On September 5 and 6 it's back to the usual arrangement, with An Evening with Liane Carroll followed by John Altman's All Star Jazz Party, the saxophonist and film composer with an eclectic set of guests. Finally the Great British Jazz Band is reunited after more than 10 years under the leadership of Digby Fairweather, including original members Bruce Adams, Dave Shepherd, Roy Williams, Brian Dee and Len Skeat (October 24) before Digby's Half Dozen and Val Wiseman present *Jazz Goes to the Movies* (25).
Tel.: 020 8502 4701
www.nationaljazzarchive.org.uk

TIPITINA FESTIVALS

Back on the festival circuit, Tipitina can be heard at the Solihull Jazz Festival (May 24), Newcastle-under-Lyme Jazz and Blues Festival (25-26), Swansea International Jazz Festival (June 21) and Burton Agnes Jazz Festival (29). Before that there is a Bank Holiday celebration at the Grand, Clitheroe, on the afternoon of May 5, as part of the Ribble Valley Jazz Festival, with Tipitina joined by the One Voice Choir from Manchester.
Tel.: 0121 454 7020

UPCOMING EVENTS

Highlight of the programme at the Cinnamon Club, Altrincham, is the appearance of double MOBO winning saxophonist Yolanda Brown on May 22. Other jazz-related events include the monthly gigs by the club's resident Swing band, Dominic Halpin & the Honey B's (May 2, June 6, July 4), the Paul Farr Band (May 8), the Ben Cox Band (9), Snake Davis: The Suspicions (June 13), Charlie Cooper (27) and the Kyla Brox Trio (July 10).
Tel.: 0161 926 8992
www.thecinnamonclub.net

Shortly after the retirement of Toots Thielemans, another legend of European jazz has announced that his next tour will be his last. At the age of 86, pianist Martial Solal will make his farewell tour during Summer 2013 and season 2014-2015.

Serious is touring the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis playing *The Best of Blue Note Records*. The tour begins at Harrogate Festival (June

20), followed by the Corn Exchange, Cambridge (21), the Anvil, Basingstoke (22), Bridgewater Hall, Manchester (23), Symphony Hall, Birmingham (24), Colston Hall, Bristol (26) and Usher Hall, Edinburgh (27).
www.serious.org.uk/jalc

May gigs at Cambridge Modern Jazz at Hidden Rooms in Jesus Lane start with multi-instrumentalist Charlotte Glasson and her Quintet (4). The group is completed by a fine line-up of Mark Bassey, Chris Spedding, Mick Hutton and Sam Glasson. On May 8 Cambridge ConneXions present *Vesperados*, a local acoustic jazz quartet with plenty of percussion. Finally Memphis-born singer/keyboardist/composer Charlie Wood brings his trio (Dudley Phillips, Nic France) to the Hidden Rooms (22).
Tel.: 01223 514777
www.cambridgejazz.org

Tuesday Jazz and Swing at Wilmslow Conservative Club has some interesting musical combinations in the coming months: for instance, singer Lee Gibson joins trumpeter Dave Browning and the Vinnie Parker Trio on May 13, the reeds of John Hallam and Amy Roberts are supported by the Tom Kincaid Trio on May 27 and Zoe Kyoti, Alan Barnes and Dave Turner appear as a trio on June 10. The Julie Edwards/Kevin Dearden Quartet returns on May 20 and both Brownfield/Byrne groups put in an appearance: the Hot Six on April 29 and the Bop Six on July 22. Meanwhile Cheadle Hulme Conservative Club continues to host the Sinatra Swingers on the first Thursday of the month.
Tel.: 01625 528336
www.facebook.com/grahambrookjazz

Denise and Tony Lawrence continue their series of ever-popular jazz weekends. The Cliffside Hotel Jazz Weekend (June 20-23) at Bournemouth presents nightly jazz sessions with the John Maddock Jazzmen, the Pedigree Jazz Band (Chris Walker and Roger Marks) and the Denise Lawrence Band with Ron Drake. The 2014 Summer Jazz Weekend at the Langstone Cliff Hotel, Dawlish Warren (July 4-6) is one night shorter, but is a more packed programme, with lunch-time sessions and a line-up of the Mike Cox New Orleans All Stars, Steve Graham's Riverboat Four, the Dart Valley Stompers and Denise Lawrence's West Country Jazz with Ron Drake.
Tel. (Bournemouth): 01202 208632
www.cliffsidebournemouth.co.uk
(Dawlish) 01626 868000
www.langstone-hotel.co.uk/jazz

The 33rd Jazz sous les Pommiers at Coutances in the Manche department of Normandy runs from May 24 to 31, with headliners including Dr John, Laurent de Wilde, Dianne Reeves, Monty Alexander, Snarky Puppy and Mathias Eick.
www.jazzsouslespommiers.com

The 54th Jazz a Juan (July 11-20) is the latest incarnation of the celebrated festival at Antibes Juan-les-Pins. This year's bill is, as usual, packed with big names, though in truth a few are only on the fringes of jazz: among many others, The Family Stone, George Benson, Jamie Cullum, the Preservation Hall Jazz Band, Stacey Kent, Chick Corea/St Stanley Clarke, Booker T. Jones, Joss Stone, Gregory Porter and Stevie Wonder!

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www.solihullartscomplex.co.uk
 Box Office: 0121 704 6962 (10.30am-4pm Mon-Sat)

The great South African trumpeter Hugh Masakela celebrates his 75th birthday by touring with his full band. The UK and Ireland dates come in two short bursts: the Norfolk and Norwich Festival (May 21) and Hay Festival (26), then the National Concert Hall, Dublin (October 21), Canterbury Festival (22) and the Barbican, London (27).
www.serious.org.uk

Through May and June Swindon Jazz presents jazz every week on Sunday afternoons at the Plough Inn and on Tuesday evenings at Baker Street, plus twice a month on Thursday evenings at the Prince of Wales in Shrivenham – all free admission. The Plough programme consists of duo and trio performances by the likes of Louise Parker (May 25), Anders Olinder (June 1), Dave Newton (8) and John Pearce (29). For the

Dear Jazz Rag

If memory serves me correctly, it was in the early days of the Swinging Jazz Party that I first met John Bune and Dick Laurie (see obituary, Jazz Rag 130) at the Putney pub where Dick was entertaining the clientele. We got into conversation about the Party and subsequently I was invited to visit John at home in Fareham whenever I was in the area. I managed to get there when I had a day off from tennis (Hard Court Champs at West Hants Club Bournemouth) and was royally received with tea and homemade cake by John and his wife. He showed me the great number of CDs in his garage and generously offered any copies I would like to take. I suggested that it might be an idea for me to take as many as possible to sell at the next party but, to my surprise he was not interested in my proposition. What an unforgettable day it was - such a lovely man.....and the Zephyr records are all sitting on my shelves with the occasional well earned airing - BRAFF PLAYS WIMBLEDON - sounds just right don't you think ?

Thomas Baron
 Formerly of Swinging Jazz Party, Blackpool

most part Tuesday is quartets, with Ian Bateman (May 13) and Kevin Figs (June 24) among the leaders, but June 10 is an exception, with the Kentwood Jazz Choir. Thursday is again duos and trios, from Bex Latin Jazz Trio (May 8) to the Erica Lyons Duo (June 26).
 Tel.: 01793 522156 (Plough)
 01793 978011 (Baker Street)
 01793 782268 (Prince of Wales).

Dear Jazz Rag

I read with great interest Ron Simpson's article in the *Jazz Rag* (issue 130, Winter 2014) *Swing for the 21st Century?* I am a huge fan of electroswing and, conversely, it is how I discovered jazz. I've followed the releases of Nick Hollywood's three albums avidly and attended many of the White Mink events (which are superb).

I hope that electroswing can be welcomed within the jazz community as it brings with it many thousands of youngsters, as I'm sure you will have seen at the various events - something jazz I feel needs very much!

A great article which I thoroughly enjoyed.

Sam Fieldhouse
 National Jazz Archive

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'DOWN BY THE RIVERSIDE'

HAPPY 100TH BIRTHDAY!

SCOTTYANOW reviews the Class of 1914, jazz musicians who would have been 100 this year.

Back in 1914, the year that World War I began, jazz was virtually unknown to most people. The music, which was still two years away from actually being called 'jazz', had been around in the Southern part of the United States, most notably New Orleans, for nearly 20 years. However it was virtually unknown elsewhere. While Jelly Roll Morton was already playing in Los Angeles and Chicago and the Original Creole Orchestra (led by bassist Bill Johnson and featuring cornetist Freddie Keppard) began to tour as a vaudeville act in the North, the music had yet to make an impact with the general public. Ragtime and ragtime-oriented pop music was still the rage in the United States and jazz would not debut on records for another three years.

However by the time the 17 men covered in this article began to mature, jazz was everywhere as the swinging big bands dominated the pop charts. Unlike Herb Jeffries, who sang with the 1940 Duke Ellington Orchestra and celebrated his 100th birthday last year (pity that he is no longer singing), none of these 17 are still around. However, their legacies will always be a part of the music's history.

One could put together a rather unusual all-star band from these artists, with three trumpets, one trombone, just one reed, a singer, an arranger, and even a jazz critic plus one's pick of four pianists, two bassists and three drummers.



Erskine Hawkins

Erskine Hawkins, who was billed as 'The 20th Century Gabriel', was an exciting trumpeter whose outbursts in the upper register of his horn gave him his title. He began playing trumpet when he was 13, attended the Alabama State Teachers College, and became leader of the college band, the 'Bama State Collegians. The nucleus of the band turned professional in 1934 and as the Erskine Hawkins Orchestra, they were quite successful for 20 years. The orchestra, which also featured Dud Bascomb on middle-register trumpet, either Paul Bascomb or Julian Dash on tenor, baritonist Haywood Henry and pianist Avery Parrish, was a swinging outfit that delighted dancers and listeners alike. They had three major hits in *Tuxedo Junction* (before Glenn Miller's version topped his), *After Hours* and *Tippin' In*. After the orchestra broke up in 1953, Hawkins remained active with small groups including leading a band at the Concord Resort Hotel in upstate New York from 1967 until his death in 1993.

Ziggy Elman became famous playing with Benny Goodman and being featured on his hit *And The Angels Sing*. He was born as Harry Aaron Finkelman and was originally a trombonist with Alex Bartha's band with whom he recorded. After switching instruments, Elman was a member of Goodman's fabled trumpet section with Harry James and Chris Griffin. Ziggy would certainly have become more famous if the phenomenal James had not become Goodman's main trumpet soloist. However Elman had his features and he was an important part of the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra during 1940-47. Unfortunately Ziggy Elman started his own big band too late for the swing era and, due to a heart attack, his career was virtually over by the time he was 42 in 1956.

A mellow-toned swing trumpeter, Harold 'Shorty' Baker started his career playing on riverboats in the Midwest. He worked with the big bands of Don Redman, Teddy Wilson and Andy Kirk. Baker married Mary

Lou Williams who was Kirk's pianist and arranger but the marriage did not last. He found his greatest fame while with Duke Ellington's orchestra. He first played with Ellington for a few months in 1938, was with him in 1943 before serving in the military and was back with Duke during 1946-51, 1957-59 and 1962. Baker was also part of Johnny Hodges' combo during 1954-55. His lyrical style found him taking what used to be Arthur Whetsol's role with Ellington. Before retiring in 1964, Shorty Baker led a quartet in the Jonah Jones tradition at the Metropole and the Embers.

While Erskine Hawkins, Ziggy Elman and Shorty Baker would form an excellent trumpet section, Ward Kimball would have had his work cut out for him as the 1914 group's only trombonist. A part-time musician, Kimball was an important animator for Walt Disney films in the 1930s, '40s and '50s. He and some of his fellow animators, artists, writers and technicians used to have lunchtime Dixieland jam sessions at Disney before it turned into a band. During 1949-69 the Firehouse Five Plus Two recorded regularly for Good Time Jazz. Their music may not have been innovative but the popular group (dressed in firemen uniforms) played spirited Dixieland that delighted audiences.

There seems to have only been one significant reed player who was born in 1914, Tex Beneke. He had a rather odd career. A decent tenor-saxophonist, Beneke was one of the stars of the Glenn Miller Orchestra during 1938-42, taking short rhythmic solos and singing in a genial and friendly manner, becoming best known for his vocal on *Chattanooga Choo Choo*. He served in the Navy during 1943-44 and, upon his discharge, led the first Glenn Miller ghost band during 1946-50, reportedly getting bored continually playing the Miller hits. But ironically when he went out on his own, he was unable to escape from the shadow of Glenn Miller. Beneke spent his last 50 years playing many of the

same songs that he had helped make famous during his four years with Miller, never growing as a musician or singer.

The four pianists in this mythical band have little in common other than their birth year. Billy Kyle had a distinctive light touch when he was with the John Kirby Sextet. Although he tended to be very predictable during his long period with the Louis Armstrong All-Stars, not varying his solos even with the passing of years, he was fun to hear anyway. Graeme Bell was less known for his piano playing than for his leadership of his significant Australian revival band, playing trad jazz not only in Australia but in Europe and fortunately making many fine recordings. Billy Tipton was an obscure swing player who played in the Midwest and the Pacific Northwest, cutting two little-known albums in 1957. It was not until after Tipton's death that it was revealed that the journeyman male pianist was actually a female in disguise, hiding her identity from virtually everyone. Tipton apparently felt that it would be easier to work in the jazz world of the time as a male, but that was quite a sacrifice!

The other pianist is Sun Ra, who was always much more than just a piano player. Because Ra's infatuation with ancient Egypt and science fiction was reflected in his inscrutable philosophy, his band's often-outlandish costumes and in his music, it was easy to write him off. Sun Ra often did not make it easy for others to figure him out, releasing many of his sessions on his Saturn label without recording dates or personnel listings so one could not figure out just how ahead of his time was. However Ra was a superior keyboardist who experimented with electric keyboards by the mid-1950s, was a pioneer in the avant-garde, and loved in his later years to alternate free improvisations with colourful revivals of Fletcher Henderson arrangements.

The two bassists from 1914 both had long careers. Bob Haggart was associated with Bob



Slam Stewart

Crosby's Bobcats and big band for quite a few years, and he teamed up with trumpeter Yank Lawson in both the Lawson-Haggart Band and the World's Greatest Jazz Band. In addition to his playing in Dixieland and swing settings, Haggart was a skilled arranger and a composer who left us *South Rampart Street Parade*, *What's New* and *Big Noise From Winnetka*.

Slam Stewart gave us the unique sound of a bassist humming along (an octave higher) with his bowed bass during solos. Whether with Slim Gaillard (as Slim and Slam), Benny Goodman, the Art Tatum Trio or late in life with the Newport All-Stars, Slam Stewart displayed a timeless and witty style.

Few drummers were as important to jazz's evolution as Kenny Clarke while being so frequently overlooked. In the early 1940s he moved the time-keeping role of the drums from the bass drum (Gene Krupa) or the hi-hat (Jo Jones) to the ride cymbal. Rather than just stating the beat, he played unusual accents (called 'bombs') on the snare and bass drums that pushed soloists and ensembles. This became the established way of playing drums in a bebop setting as opposed to with a swing band. Clarke had already established himself in the swing world playing with Edgar Hayes, Roy Eldridge and Sidney Bechet. His work as the house drummer at Minton's Playhouse solidified

the new way of playing drums. But because he spent much of 1943-45 serving in the Army, and Max Roach rose to prominence during this time, Clarke lost his chance to be part of many classic Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie recordings. He had a long and productive career, including being an original member of the Modern Jazz Quartet and co-leading a notable big band with pianist Francy Boland during his many years living in Europe, but Kenny Clarke rarely received the recognition he deserved.

Also born in 1914 were Lee Young and Barrett Deems. Young, who was Lester's younger brother, was a solid swing drummer who worked with Fats Waller, Benny Goodman, Lionel Hampton and Nat King Cole. However he spent much of his life behind the scenes as an A&R man for record labels, a studio musician, and a record producer. Barrett Deems, who in the early 1950s was billed as 'the world's fastest drummer', worked with Muggsy Spanier and late in life led his own big band in Chicago. He is best remembered for his long period in the 1950s as the drummer with the Louis Armstrong All-Stars.

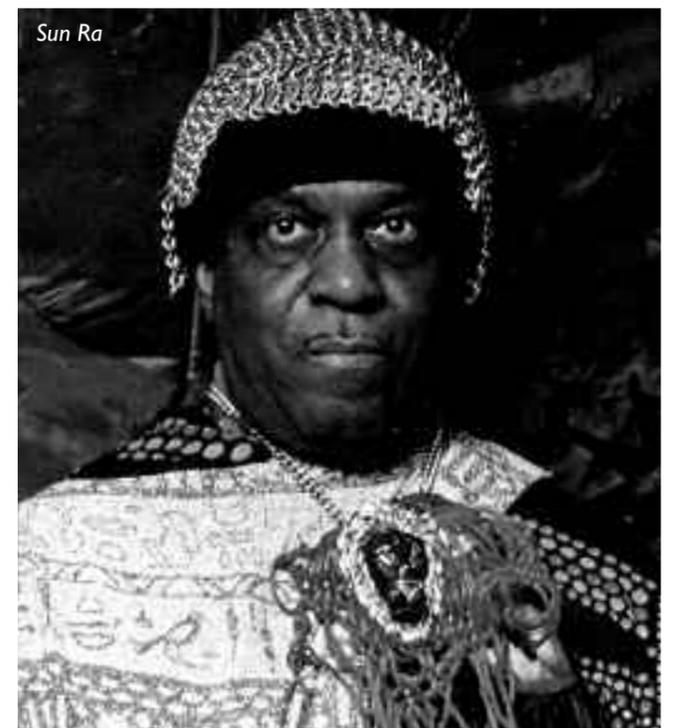
The singer for the 1914 band is Billy Eckstine, who would also be the perfect bandleader. While his influential baritone voice made him a natural in the 1950s and '60s on ballads and middle-of-the-road pop music, Eckstine will be always be a hero in the jazz world. After coming to prominence with the Earl Hines big band, in 1944 Eckstine formed a bop-oriented big band that included Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Art Blakey and many of the other upcoming bop players. After a year it was clear that his orchestra was not going to be a commercial success and that he could have a much more lucrative career as a single. Eckstine dug in his heels and kept the big band together for another two years, featuring such young greats as Dexter Gordon, Gene Ammons, Fats Navarro, and Miles Davis before finally being forced to give up.

Arranger for this orchestra would be Eddie Sauter. While the Sauter-Finegan Orchestra in the 1950s (which he co-led with

fellow arranger Bill Finegan) had some success, the lack of restraint hurt their music. However when Sauter was writing for bands led by Red Norvo, Artie Shaw and Benny Goodman, his adventurous charts were tailored to specific sidemen and were magnificent. His 1961 album with Stan Getz, *Focus*, is a classic. It would be intriguing to hear him blend together Tex Beneke and Ward Kimball with the trumpet section.

Leonard Feather was the most important jazz critic of his time, having a dominant role that no jazz journalist has assumed since. He also wrote songs (including *Evil Gal Blues*), played basic piano, produced many important record sessions, helped the careers of Dinah Washington and George Shearing, had a radio show, was the jazz writer for the *Los Angeles Times*, and gave us one of the first major history of jazz books, *The Encyclopedia Of Jazz*. While he had his faults (he disliked trad jazz, fusion and the avant-garde yet wrote about them regularly), he was a major contributor to jazz. He would be the perfect candidate to review the 1914 band!

Scott Yanow, who was not around in 1914, is the author of 11 books on jazz and more than 750 liner notes. He can be contacted at scottyanowjazz@yahoo.com.



Sun Ra

Note by Ron Simpson

Congratulations to Scott for putting together such a workmanlike band, with a great trumpet section and a first-class rhythm team of Sun Ra, Slam Stewart and Kenny Clarke - I'd be inclined to keep Bob Haggart on the books, too, to share arranging duties with Eddie Sauter and to feed Billy Eckstine songs like *What's New* and *My Inspiration*.

Being a bit worried about the thinness of the trombone and reed departments, I checked out what the UK could offer. Trinidad-born, Venezuela-raised Carl Barriteau came to London, played with Ken 'Snakehips' Johnson (also born 1914 if our band needs a dancer), was regularly voted Britain's top clarinetist and then emigrated to Australia. If he is something of a boost to the reeds, I am afraid I had no joy with the trombones. Though Tommy McQuater, the doyen of big band trumpeters, was born in 1914, his great compatriot, trombonist George Chisholm, dates from 1915.

And the UK can boast one surviving jazzman born in 1914: bassist Coleridge Goode whose career has spanned most things from *The Goon Show* (as a member of the Ray Ellington Quartet) to free jazz (with Joe Harriott).

THE TWO SIDES OF CURTIS STIGERS

RON SIMPSON talks to CURTIS STIGERS about his multiple careers in music.

On Curtis Stigers' website is a not wholly serious, but factually accurate, Frequently Asked Questions page. It begins, 'Is this Curtis Stigers the jazz singer or Curtis Stigers who sings the *Sons of Anarchy* theme song or Curtis Stigers the pop/soul singer/saxophonist from the 1990s?' The answer, of course, is that it's all of them. I never got round to discussing *Sons of Anarchy* with Curtis (which I had to use Wikipedia to identify as a very successful television drama series about bikers), but certainly the Curtis Stigers whose eighth jazz album for Concord, *Hooray for Love*, was released at the end of April is the same man who 20 years ago was playing Wembley with the likes of Elton John and Eric Clapton. And, although he has done a sort of reverse career switch (most singers, if they change course at all, move from jazz to the better paying field of popular music), what is interesting is that the two strands, at least, have been there from boyhood.

Growing up in Boise, Idaho, in the 1970s, Curtis was in love with the radio – and the pop music channels played a huge variety of material, so he found himself responding to performers as diverse as Joni Mitchell and Led Zeppelin, Willie Nelson and Chuck Mangione. Besides the radio he owed much to the Boise school system which served music very well, with jazz bands in the schools. His own music making had two strands: he played drums, crashing about to rock music in the cellar, and also studied clarinet, later graduating to saxophone, which led him more in the direction of jazz. A major stroke of luck for the young Stigers was the premature retirement to Boise of the great jazz pianist, Gene Harris. The word went round that he was playing every Tuesday in the lobby of an old hotel in the city and holding open house, so the teenager took advantage:

'There was alcohol being served there, but at 14 or 15 I could go there because it was an open lobby. Gene Harris used to

encourage us to play – we did stock tunes like *Blues Bossa* and *All Blues*. We probably weren't very good, but we were enthusiastic and Gene was wonderful to play with – he spoilt me for other jazz pianists for years afterwards. Much later he was to ask me to play with him on record which was a great honour.'

Curtis talks of early jazz influences on him at this time as being the fusion of Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea and Michael Brecker, graduating to the Dave Brubeck Quartet (who he describes, interestingly, as 'conceptual, not too challenging') and Miles Davis. Among singers he was lucky enough to hear regularly in Boise were the likes of Sarah Vaughan, Ella Fitzgerald and Bobby McFerrin, but the main influence was Mark Murphy:

'For a year and a half I tried to sound exactly like Mark Murphy. My music teacher took some of us to hear him in Seattle and I got to sing for him. When I asked him what he thought, he said, "That was great," then very dramatically, "but throw away all my records!" I didn't throw them away, of course, but I stopped listening to them for a while and started to sound more like myself.'

When Curtis Stigers left Idaho for New York City in 1987, the major change that came over his music was that he learned how to write songs. As he says, everyone was writing their own songs in New York at the time – he cites Elton John and Joni Mitchell as two of his heroes from that time – , but he still describes the group he had in a restaurant on the Upper West Side as 'a little jazz trio', doing material from Ellington, Steely Dan, Big Joe Turner and, of course, Curtis Stigers. This was not big-time, big money, he mentions riding the subway to work, but in 1991 it all turned round.

Record producers having found their way to eating on the Upper West Side, at the age of 24 Curtis Stigers was catapulted out

of obscurity with three hit singles, two of them, *I Wonder Why* and *You're All that Matters to Me*, worldwide hits, peaking around Number 5 in the UK. At this point Curtis' eclectic musical background, generally such an advantage, started causing problems. For 2 ½ years he reckons that he and Arista Records boss, Clive Davis, did nothing but say no to each other! The record company, not unusually, wanted more of the same 'blue-eyed soul middle-of-the road' records; Curtis was looking for something different.

Eventually the days of stadium concerts faded and Curtis found a new home at Concord Records. This was brought about partly by the return to the scene of his early mentor, Gene Harris. Harris had been lured out of retirement in Boise by the great bassist, Ray Brown, and was recording regularly on Concord. Curtis sang with him on some

tracks and through him met John Burk of Concord Records. The result of that was the release in 2001 of *Baby Plays Around*, already recorded in the Arista years, with such talents as Larry Goldings, Randy Brecker and Adam Nussbaum.

Larry Goldings has figured a fair amount in Curtis Stigers' Concord output, as pianist/organist/arranger, but not on *Hooray for Love* which features his working band of Matthew Fries (piano), Cliff Schmitt (bass) and Keith Hall (drums), plus what Curtis calls 'a couple of ringers', the fine guitarist Matt Munisteri and trumpeter John 'Scrapper' Sneider who co-produces. The up and coming French singer Cyrille Aimee, joins him for one song, the Sinatra favourite *You Make me Feel So Young*.

Hooray for Love is something of a side-step in Curtis' jazz albums. Hitherto, in between his own

songs, he has tended to give a timeless treatment to pretty modern material: Bob Dylan, maybe, or Steve Earle, Elvis Costello or Ray Davies, Merle Haggard or Lennon and McCartney. His 2005 album, *I Think it's Going to Rain*, took its title from a Randy Newman song. He even identifies a modern folk feel to his previous album.

Despite a superb reading of Steve Earle's *Valentine's Day*, *Hooray for Love* flips over much more into the Great American Songbook. Regularly playing on Curtis' website is a lovely version of *Love is Here to Stay* and the album also contains the likes of *The Way You Look Tonight*, *That's All* and *If I Were a Bell*. And the title track, I suggest, not having heard that one? Not so, says Curtis, this is an original, and he accidentally stole the title from Harold Arlen and Leo Robin:

'I wrote it a few years ago. I had been through a bad time emotionally with my divorce and I had just found a new partner. A friend of mine sent me a nice message and signed off, "Hooray for Love". What a great title for a song, I thought, not knowing that Harold Arlen had thought the same 60 years before!'

As it happens, Arlen and Robin had stolen the title anyway – from Dorothy Fields and Jimmy McHugh who wrote the first *Hooray for Love* in the 1930s. What other changes will we notice on the new album? Curtis says he wanted to set more of a 1950s template to the performances. Whereas on most of his Concord albums, tracks stretch out to, maybe, seven minutes and the musicians have room to develop solos over time, he has looked to go back to 3 or 4 minute performances, with soloists making their impact in a few bars. Most importantly, he's tried to put the songs first. He is interested in the stories the songs tell and not any embellishment he can add, no chorus after chorus of scat – 'I'm done with showing off,' is his disarming comment.

You can find all that in the aforementioned version of *Love is Here to Stay*, emotional, but straightforward, restrained, with plenty of space for the moving lyrics Ira Gershwin wrote after

his brother's death. John Sneider's brief trumpet solo recalls the days when soloists had to make their point in four bars.

Fortunately for UK audiences, Curtis Stigers is a frequent visitor here, describing Ronnie Scott's in London as his 'second home' and playing there regularly each year. This year a flying visit to the Cheltenham Jazz Festival (May 5) comes first, launching *Hooray for Love*. A longer stay starts with Ronnie Scott's (June 23-28) and includes dates at the Hop Farm Music Festival (July 5) and the Love Supreme Festival (July 6).

My impression is that Curtis would be happy to sing without categories, without barriers – a quick trawl of Youtube finds him still performing his 20-year-old hits with his jazz group – but his date-sheet in the States places him in such well-known jazz venues and festivals as Seattle's Jazz Alley, the Vail Jazz Festival and the Blue Note Jazz Festival in New York. Interesting, also, to see him returning to his roots with the second McCall Jazz Festival in Idaho.

There is no sign that Curtis Stigers misses the days of

performing at Wembley Stadium – despite wry comments about finding the way not to get rich – and he still sounds surprised it ever happened. His enthusiasm for the material he is recording and performing now and the jazz musicians he has had the chance to work with seems genuine and unforced. And the jazz world can always do with a stylish, unaffected, thoroughly professional singer who puts the song first – and can be relied on for a neat saxophone phrase or two.

www.curtisstigers.com





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RETRIEVING THE MEMORIES

RON SIMPSON pays a visit to Amsterdam to meet **CHRIS ELLIS**, jazz singer, record collector, recording executive, radio presenter and man about music, once of EMI, now of Challenge and Retrieval Records in Amersfoort.

A recent reissue on Digby Fairweather's Rose Cottage label, *Vocal with Hot Accomp*, recorded in 1986, features the talents of Chris Ellis, described by Digby as a 'great jazz singer' and, in a memorable phrase, 'quietly incomparable'. In his tall narrow house just off the Prinsengracht in Amsterdam, Chris dismisses such talk, insists the album was just supposed to be a private recording and claims that, if he'd known it would see the public light of day, he would have wanted to do re-takes on three tracks.

What is beyond dispute is that this is the only album in Chris' name, though he shows up on a fair number of recordings under other people's names. The most recent of these is *Moon Country* on Challenge from 1999. This collection of Hoagy Carmichael songs was put together by such old friends of Chris as Digby Fairweather, John Barnes and Martin Litton. Chris produced and sang some numbers – 'That was Digby's doing', he grumbles, 'I hadn't sung for years and I wasn't supposed to sing so many.'

So how do we square the circle of a great jazz singer who has such limited output? Digby, on the same liner note, thinks he has the answer, 'Chris' inbuilt sense of modesty'. Chris, predictably, has a different (and very modest) answer when asked why he never became a full-time professional:

'I didn't think I'd got enough talent to go full-time. I wasn't a bad singer at all, but I had enough experience to know the difference between a good competent singer and somebody who had that extra bit of magic. And I didn't think I had that.'

What is also true is that Chris, now in his mid 80s, has worn any number of hats during his career in music. One wall of the living room is completely covered by carefully packaged 78s – this is a serious collector! In his time in recording and music publishing he has launched record labels,

thought up hit shows, put together various highly regarded bands and recorded two ex-Bix Beiderbecke trombonists! The first thing he says to me, very emphatically, makes clear that his involvement in music is wide-ranging:

'I've never been totally confined to jazz. Jazz comes Number 1 – if somebody said to me I could only have one kind of music, it would have to be jazz. But I was brought up with a lot of other music before I even knew there was jazz – and the fact that I came to love jazz didn't mean I ceased to love show music, ancient films and all the rest of it.'

As if to prove the point, he points proudly to the staircase where there is a photograph of him with Ginger Rogers (whom he found delightful to record) – and, when I'm leaving, the new Challenge release that he thrusts into my hand is a handsomely produced CD/DVD of Schubert's *Winterreise*.

Indeed Chris' early musical interests had nothing to do with jazz:

'I've been singing as long as I've lived. I learnt to read from record labels. I had an awful lot of uncles and aunts and my mother, my sister and I lived with my grandmother. The house we lived in had a huge cellar – it was a very old house – and it had a proper dance floor because it had been used as a dancing academy years before. My youngest uncle was permanently part-paralysed and had to be treated exactly like a six-foot tall baby. One of my early jobs before I was three was winding the gramophone and putting records on for Uncle Duggie – it had to be happy – sad music would make him cry. So I'd have to find *Tiptoe Through the Tulips* or whatever else he asked for.

'My mother discovered very early on that, if it was a musical, I could be taken to the cinema and I'd sit there absolutely entranced, not

wanting ice creams or to go to the toilet, and I could come out and sing all the songs. I always had a freak memory for tunes and lyrics. In later years, when I was getting a soundtrack album out and they sent me the wrong stuff, I could remember all the five songs in *Top Hat*, what went on during them and so on – and I hadn't seen the film since 1935 or 1936.'

The first encounter with jazz came in wartime. A complicated tale of his grandmother moving to London, followed by evacuation, meant that Chris became re-acquainted after a lapse of time with the pile of records he had been allowed to play – the 'best' ones (Caruso and that) were off limits!

'There was a record in there that hadn't been there before. Where it came from I never found out. But it was a Brunswick of Red Nichols and His Five Pennies: *Original Dixieland One Step* and *Imagination*. When I played this, something hit me in the pit of the stomach, but this was one record – I didn't know there was anything else like this. Shortly afterwards an uncle by marriage got killed in the Air Force. His widow gave me a pack of his records, mainly just pre-war pops, but amongst them was Bob Crosby's *Jazz Me Blues* and *Washington and Lee Swing*. Then by sheer luck I came across *Radio Rhythm Club* – I was allowed to listen to that, a great concession, because generally my parents hated that sort of stuff. So now I was finding out what this thing called jazz was.

'Getting hold of records was another matter – the stock in record shops was poor because of the lack of shellac and what they'd got was the latest pops and not a lot else. They used to buy in records for scrap – three ha'pence for a 10 inch, tuppence for a 12 inch. One day I went into our local record shop to get out of the rain and was chatting to the assistant when in comes a

guy with a pile of records to sell. Before it went through the till I noticed the top record was an American Victor – I had never seen an American Victor! – *Royal Garden Blues* and *Dangerous Blues* by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band. I managed to walk away with eight records for a shilling before the owner got back!

Chris Ellis as record collector was on his way, visiting junk shops and markets. What astonished me was that, 70 years after the event, apart from the few he described as of no interest to him, he was able to go through the 78s he picked up that day: bands (ODJB, Original Memphis Five, Boyd Senter, Benson Orchestra of Chicago, 'Thomas Waller with Morris's Hot Babies'), titles of both sides and record labels.

The debut of Chris Ellis as a public performer came in Shrewsbury one New Year's Eve during the war. Heading for the local dance, the 16-year-old Ellis detoured to the pub with some older companions and arrived at the dance with inhibitions loosened by the unfamiliar intake of beer:

'At the dance was a local band, Kath Cannon and the Cannonballs. She played violin and saxophone – a moot point which was worse! Nothing would do for our group but Kath would play *One Meat Ball* which was a hit for the Andrews Sisters at the time. She said, "We've got the orchestration, we need a singer. If one of you wants to come up and sing it, we'll play it." I was the

“ Cashing in on the popularity of *Zorba the Greek* became possible when Chris found a Greek restaurant in Charlotte Street with a bouzouki player. ”

only one who knew all the words, I'd had a couple of drinks, so I got pushed up behind the mike. Later on Kath wanted me to do another one and said, "Find one you like." So I got out what was probably the oldest orchestration, but something I knew and liked, *Ain't Misbehavin'*. The following Saturday we went to the dance and I did the same two numbers. At the end of the evening Kath said to me, "Do you want to get your dances free and 10 shillings a week?". 10 shillings a week was half my weekly wages and so I started singing with Kath Cannon – whatever I was told to sing, mostly current pop songs, but it was good practice.'

When Chris was called up for National Service, luck intervened and he was pulled off the draft to Singapore and seconded to the War Office – saved by his shorthand skills, apparently! He arrived in London at a time when the jazz world was full of young aspirants, now household names:

'I'd already been to London to see the last concert of George Webb's Dixielanders. Now Humph had taken over and every Saturday I was either listening to him at 100 Oxford Street or the Cooksferry Inn. If Humph was in a really good mood, there were three of us he might let sing with the band. There was "Bunny Bum" (George Melly), there was Beryl Bryden, but I didn't get much of a chance because Beryl would push her way in anywhere!'

Back in Shrewsbury Kath had retired and Chris sang for a time with the band led by Esther Bennett, her son Denis doing the first arrangements of standards actually tailored to Chris' singing! Then Mike Farren arrived in town to work on the *Shrewsbury Chronicle*. Mike was a Bix-style trumpeter and the two of them formed a traditional jazz band, the Magnolia Jazz Band, which did pretty well locally with Chris in charge of management and repertoire as well as vocals.

The move to London came in 1960 at the age of 30. He was 'bored out of his head' running a distribution depot for ice cream and he was no longer involved with the Magnolia Jazz Band, so Shrewsbury had gone sour for him:

'Mike Farren died very suddenly, very young, some sort of blood disease. It was a great shock! Apart from being a very good trumpeter, he was a very nice guy and it knocked the stuffing out of me. And I packed it in – the trombone player took the band over and kept it running for about 30 years!'

Determined to get a career in music, Chris wrote to the major record companies and eventually received a job offer from EMI, but what a job! Chris describes it as a gopher: he became a 30-year-old office boy. The pay was less than he was getting with Lyons and he had to find accommodation in London instead of living at home. In a sentence Chris repeats many times in our conversation, 'Everyone said, "You're mad."'

In his 20 years at EMI before being made redundant, Chris progressed through various departments before being handed two hot potatoes, World Record Club and Music for Pleasure, which had already been turned down by more senior figures.

The bargain Music for Pleasure label was the result of the Chairman's enthusiasm for a rack job label of the sort he had seen in the States; in other words, a collection of LPs that could fill a rack and go anywhere, not necessarily in record shops. In those far-off times records, oddly, were mostly sold in record shops, not mail order (WRC) or at filling stations (MFP). As an aside, Chris reckons that there is now just one record shop left in the city of Amsterdam.

With severe limits on budget and repertoire, Chris had to rely on ingenious stratagems to make MFP viable. Sadly jazz had little part to play in them: in these years his main involvement in jazz for EMI was the Parlophone Jazz Series which he was permitted to do so long as he did it in his own time (Sundays), spent very little and continued to make money on other things.

Chris' breakthrough at MFP came when he was allowed to make new recordings: £1,000 budget for each album, no stars, reduced royalties (if any) for the performers. The answer he realised was genre recordings,

music identified by type, no stars needed:

'One day I discovered that our Press Officer, Sid Gillingham, played Hawaiian guitar and had a Hawaiian band as a hobby. We went into Abbey Road on a Sunday and knocked off 12 tracks. It was our first million seller! Sid Gillingham wasn't a name to sell records, the Beach Boys were high in the charts, so I put "Waikiki" in front – Waikiki Beach Boys! We had three million sellers before that bubble burst!'

Cashing in on the popularity of *Zorba the Greek* became possible when Chris found a Greek restaurant in Charlotte Street with a bouzouki player. The stories of Chris' coups and ducking and diving for MFP flow thick and fast, but these were not enough to save him from redundancy in 1980, though, after a spell free-lancing, he found himself being headhunted by EMI – the Publishing Department this time – for a further stint. In these years Chris was running several careers simultaneously. He did a couple of series of his own radio show, *Before the Rock Set In*, and regularly depped for legendary broadcaster Alan Dell on *The Big Band Sound* and *Dance Band Days*.

When he first came to London, Chris had decided, with customary modesty, to lie low as a singer. Chance, of course, stepped in. One regular feature of Chris' reminiscences is the number of people who he regards himself lucky to have met as friends and musicians – recording executives are the only class of people to make him waspish – and, when he first came to EMI, he encountered Neville Skrimshire who was working in publicity and was EMI's 'jazz expert'. Skrim became an important mentor and friend, introducing him to the 'inner circle' of jazz collectors, Brian Rust, John R. T. Davies and Ron Jewson:

'One day Skrim said, "I've got a gig tonight. Come along, you might enjoy it." It was Alan Leat running it in a pub on the Old Brompton Road and it was Dave Shepherd, the lovely Fred Hunt and Al Wynette on trumpet. It became a regular Thursday event and one time I brought a group of friends including a girl who

“ When I was singing, say, September in the Rain, John would be behind me on baritone and he'd be quoting from other songs, but every song he'd quote from would also be by Harry Warren! ”

asked me if I thought they'd play at her birthday party. They did and there were some people there who knew me as a singer, so I ended up doing a few numbers with the band – and after that I sang regularly with them.'

I sometimes think Chris overdoes the element of serendipity, of friends who happen to force him on to the stage. Despite his genuine modesty I think he was probably more strongly motivated than he suggests. There is no doubt, however, of his grateful admiration for the musicians he has worked with. One time he comments on how lucky he has been with his three regular pianists: Fred Hunt, Martin Litton and Keith Nichols. At this stage, though, it was a guitarist he relied on in his weekly gig which ran for many years at Peter Boizot's Hamburger Heaven, again in the Old Brompton Road:

'We had a trio with Alan Leat and, of course, Skrim. He wasn't a great soloist, but his time was immaculate – if Skrim was behind you, you could lean back on the beat, you were safe. Then there would be somebody like Al Wynette or John Altman. John was amazing on all the reeds, but especially on baritone sax. When I was singing, say, *September in the Rain*, John would be behind me on baritone and he'd be quoting from other songs, but every song he'd quote from would also be by Harry Warren!'

Chris is obviously particularly proud of the work he did with Dick Sudhalter when the American was based for some years in London – and once again, it appears, chance played a major part:

'Laurie Wright of *Storyville* magazine rang me up and said, "There's this American guy who's been in Germany, but now he's coming to London, and he's a very good trumpet player, a bit in the Bix line. I thought it would be a nice idea for you to put together an ad hoc band for a gig at the Lord Rookwood." I got on to John R.T., Keith Nichols and Skrim, of course, and we played the gig. We all got on so beautifully and it all went so well that we felt we couldn't leave it at that.'

Laurie had originally billed the band as the Anglo-American All Stars, but, as you would imagine, Chris took against that and the name was changed to Anglo-American Alliance, known to its members as 'The Tuesday Band' because every Tuesday they got together at John R.T.'s studio to rehearse, had a wonderful time and occasionally got a paying gig! Highlights of their time together included meeting, playing with and recording Bill Rank, Bix's trombonist on the famous Okeh sessions. Then there was Eva Taylor, 1920s blues singer and wife of pianist/songwriter Clarence Williams. Finally tempted to sing a song or two after 20 years layoff, Eva became so enthused that she cancelled a trip to the Continent and made her public comeback at the Lord Rookwood with the Anglo-American Alliance:

'Her voice wasn't what it had been, but, my word, she was still a star! She was singing songs she hadn't done for years and on *Red Hot Flo* (from *Kokomo*) which we recorded I'm actually sitting at her feet mouthing the lyrics to her, not that you'd know it from her performance.'

The second phase of the association with Sudhalter began when Dick went back to the States to research his Bix book and rang Chris one day to say he had come across the Paul Whiteman archive at Williams College, Massachusetts, the whole library, including unrecorded material. The book needed an orchestra of 30 musicians – highly unlikely, to say the least – and Chris dismissed it as a beautiful pipe-dream until Dick rang again to say that he had got a booking for the opening night of the Camden Jazz

Festival – and would Chris fix the British musicians?

The result was a sell-out concert for the New Paul Whiteman Orchestra and further bookings at the Queen Elizabeth Hall and Fairfield Hall, a television special, radio shows and a recording date. There was even talk of a tour of Europe until somebody did the maths for a 30-piece orchestra. Chris' role in this – even more than singing and compering the live show – was selecting musicians based around section leaders who knew the Whiteman style and phrasing – the principal violinist apparently was an old friend of Matty Malneck who took a similar role with Whiteman and was also a prolific composer/arranger. And how convincing was it?

'Alan Dell rang me one day and said, "Come in for the programme, I'm doing something I think you'll like." Half way through *The Big Band Sounds* he put on the original Whiteman recording of *From Monday On* and, where it segues into the vocal, on that bridge, he cut into our recording – one straight playing cut – and you couldn't tell it wasn't the same record except that it opened into stereo and there was me instead of Bing Crosby!'

At this stage in the story events

begin pointing Chris towards the Netherlands where he has now lived for 20 years. Two years after the original New Paul Whiteman Orchestra concerts a radio station in the Netherlands approached him for a Whiteman centenary tribute with the radio big band. They wished to book Dick Sudhalter, but he had returned to the States, so Chris got Digby Fairweather instead and also Danny Moss and Jeannie Lambe. While waiting to go on ('I'd got a dressing room to myself with a star on the door – the only time!'), Chris had visitors. One was Harry Coster who had a label called Grannyphone and presented Chris with two Paul Whiteman LPs as thanks for his work for Parlophone. As you do, Chris said he should look him up next time he came to London. The many Dutch visitors that ensued formed the nucleus of Chris' circle of friends and work associates in the Netherlands.

Another gig in the Netherlands, more visitors. Chris had recorded Keith Nichols and the Midnite Follies Orchestra and, when singer Johnny M dropped out for a while to do a show with Denis Waterman, who did Keith turn to for a gig at the North Sea Jazz Festival? This time, along with luminaries of the Dutch jazz record scene, Chris met yet another ex-Bix trombonist,

Spiegel Willcox with whom he later made two CDs, one with his own Challenge label.

With more and more of his work in the Netherlands Chris moved to Amsterdam 20 years ago. Everyone said, 'You're mad' as usual, but why? There are no traffic jams between Heathrow and Schiphol. He worked for some time with Timeless Records, especially on the Chris Barber Collection which, in fact, was drawn from the collections of John R.T. Davies and Chris Ellis. Then came the next 'you're mad' moment, investing his savings in the new record label Challenge. While it hardly represents the safest investment at the present moment, Challenge is still operating and producing quality product – and what more can you ask of a record company in these straitened times?

Apart from CDs referred to in the article, readers may be interested in Dick Sudhalter: Legacy 1967-2001 (Challenge) which includes tracks by, among others, the Anglo-American Alliance, the New Paul Whiteman Orchestra, Eva Taylor and Bill Rank.



Photo by Ron Simpson

RETURN TO CANNES - MIDEM (PART 2)

In Jazz Rag 130 YUEYANG began her report on 'the best MIDEM for many a year', with 6150 international delegates braving the unseasonably wet weather at Cannes for the music industry's most important international event of the year.

Now she completes her survey of the international music scene.

IRD International Records of Milan, long known for their Blues as well as Jazz releases, were represented by CEO Simone Veronelli whose Midem bag was stuffed full with an exceptionally wide range of excellent recordings. From catalogue items such as Dinah Washington and John Coltrane to Danish songstress Katrine Madsen, U.S. bopper Jerry Bergonzi, Detroit tenorman J.D. Allen and a whole bunch of great blues recordings including Magic Sam, Billy Branch and Shawn Holt - son of the legendary Magic Slim and now leader of his Dad's band, The Teardrops. As well as distributing an impressive roster of labels, IRD have their own imprint 'Appaloosa Records' with a very interesting current release featuring singer and guitarist Greg Trooper with a hefty band on *Incident On Willow Street*.

Formed in 1952, Copenhagen-based Storyville Records are Europe's oldest independent jazz label and that's some achievement. Not resting on their laurels they were active at Midem in the form of Director Mona Granager bearing the high quality jazz releases the jazz world has come to expect from this label. In 2010 Jazzhus Montmartre re-opened in their original premises in Copenhagen where so many leading jazz players graced that stage between 1959 and its closure in 1976, with the firm resolve to re-establish its reputation as one of Europe's leading jazz clubs. Unsurprisingly, Storyville has entered a collaboration to record a series of live sessions at the famous club. The first releases to be launched at Midem, both entitled *Live At Montreux* are impressive, the first featuring Eddie Gomez

and Carsten Dahl and the second The Nikolaj Bentzon Trio. Other new Storyville releases on parade included *The Eleventh Hour* by Sigurdur Flosason Copenhagen Quartet and *Here's To Love* by singer Clara Vuust.

Midem ever-present Holger Peterson of Edmonton, Canada's Stony Plain Records was clearly delighted at the label being named by The Blues Foundation, as the 2014 recipient of The Keeping the Blues Alive Award, so well done that man. Holger was at Midem with an armful of goodies including the impressive Rory Block release *Avalon* where she eloquently tributes the work of Mississippi John Hurt, the 4th release in her Mentor Series [Son House, Mississippi Fred McDowell and Reverend Gary Davis were her previous subjects]. Lovely stuff. Over a four decade career, there's not a lot that guitarist Amos Garrett hasn't done. He's appeared on over 150 recordings by other people including Paul Butterfield, Bonnie Raitt, Maria Muldaur, Emmylou Harris and Bobby Charles. Now he's got a jazz release on Stony Plain with his Trio. *Spread The Love* is the seventh Ronnie Earl and The Broadcasters Stony Plain album – and it's a cracking mix of down-home rocking blues from the ex-Roomful of Blues guitar man. In contrast, Monkeyjunk's *All Frequencies* release is their label debut. Out of Ottawa, Monkeyjunk deliver solid blues and boogie convincingly, despite not carrying a bass guitarist, citing as precedents that Hound Dog Taylor didn't and neither did Little Walter on occasion.

Lithuanian singer Giedre Kilciauskiene and pianist Andrej Polevikov charmed Birmingham audiences at the 2013 Jazz Festival, and here they were at Midem with their impressive Quartet album *Jazz Miniatures* and seemingly garnering much interest at the Lithuania stand. Also playing Brum's jazz fest last year were the quaintly named Sheep Got Waxed, a fiery and very original guitar, saxophone, drums trio whose in-your-face jazz punk, invariably played at near-impossible tempos instantly polarised opinion. This time, I'm

on the side of the music anarchists, I loved them and was delighted to see them featured on the excellent *Note Lithuania* sampler CD.

Just along from Lithuania, in Midem terms that is, was the Czech Republic stand where much of the activity was based around Czech Dreams, where Czech music of all styles is being energetically promoted Europe-wide, kicking off at Midem. Much of the jazz activity was centred around Ondrej Havelka and his Melody Makers. Andrej is a loose-limbed hokum tap dancer who also takes on the mantle of crooner in front of his 16 piece vintage swing band. The demonstration film is fascinating, full of good humour, tight arrangements, some fiery soloists re-creating 1920s big band swing with remarkable authenticity and a clear understanding and affection for the music. They're set to play London this summer, so watch this space. Following Midem, Czech Dreams have agreed to support the appearance of Jazzband Velke Losiny at Birmingham International Jazz & Blues Festival in July.

Blues-rooted Black and Tan Records from Holland came armed with an impressive collection flying under the flag *Keeping Living Music Alive* a commendable ambition. They have 39 CD releases to date, look out for Tangled Eye, Roscoe Chenier, Boo Boo Davis and more.

Midem regular Richard Chalk of Topcat Records from Dallas, Texas had an unusual offering in an album of Tom Jobin melodies performed by Alex Rossi Quartet, a lyrical harmonica virtuoso unashamedly waving the Toots Thielemans flag. Recorded in Belgium, mixed in Brazil and mastered in Nashville it is a beautifully crafted piece of music and worth seeking out. I had previously known of Rossi as a blues player – so this was something of a surprise. Topcat are celebrating their 20th year, with a double CD of what we've come to expect from them, and that's the Blues. *20th Anniversary Blues Extravaganza* is 40 tracks of



rough and rocking down home blues including tracks from Muddy Waters, Big Walter, Hollywood Fats, Johnny Nicholas, an occasional pop-up guitar from label boss Richard Chalk and – surprisingly – a spot on a Phil Guy track for the above-mentioned Alex Rossi on harmonica.

Canadian singer and guitarist Matt Anderson is no stranger to our shores having played UK club tours, but his upcoming *Weightless* album on True North Records is a real eye-opener. Strong songs, beefy Joe Cocker-influenced vocals and a distinctive Leon Russell-style sixties feel of a production. Matt was represented at Midem by True North President Geoff Kulawick.

Berlin-based Blackbird Music made its Midem debut with a catalogue of jazz and blues recordings, many of them emanating from the company owned-studio of the same name, operated by musician, producer and industry veteran Andreas Hommelsheim. He also fronts the jazz/rock/blues fusion combo B3 on their *Back to My Roots* CD. A standout album for me is their *No Man's Land* album by Dutch singer Qeaux Qeaux Joans who bears comparison with the likes of Norah Jones and Amy Winehouse and has already album-charted in Holland. Look out also for the gutsy Hammond B3-based combo of The Lucky Peterson Band with *Live at the 55 Arts Club Berlin*.

THE CHANGING WORLD OF JAZZ FESTIVALS

SWANSEA – A NEW FESTIVAL IN TOWN!

The inaugural Swansea International Jazz Festival (June 20-22) has developed from Swansea Jazzland which organiser David Cottle has been running for 16 years. Though, as he admits, the 'international' element is fairly limited – the only all-American band is Jeff Lorber Fusion – the line-up for the first Swansea festival is impressive and varied.

A unifying feature is the Swansea Waterfront, with three main venues – all compact at around 200 capacity: the Dylan Thomas Theatre, the Dylan Thomas Centre and the National Waterfront Museum. In addition eight further venues in the area

stage some 30 free events over the three days.

This is a particularly appropriate year for a new arts venture in Swansea – Dylan Thomas' centenary – and his name figures freely in the festival venues, but David has resisted the temptation to forge some spurious link between the jazz festival and the great South Walian poet. Instead he has put together a packed programme from (roughly) midday to late on all three days, with many of Britain's finest in the line-up.

The first event is aimed firmly at the next generation. Musicians from the area's schools will be brought together for a big band workshop led by Alan Barnes and Bruce Adams, culminating in a short concert by the South Wales Schools Big Band. Bruce



and Alan are also taking instrumental workshops the following day, as is David's brother, Laurence Cottle, on Sunday. All three figure on the concert programme, too, Bruce and Alan in their quintet, Laurence as part of the bands of Nigel Hitchcock and Claire Martin.

The above gives a flavour of the

calibre of British musicians involved. A further sample comes up with such varied names the Pete Allen Jazz Band, Huw Warren, Remi Harris, the Midland Youth Jazz Orchestra, Simon Spillett and Tipitina before the festival ends in a burst of jazz funk from Protect the Beat and Shakatak.

www.sijf.co.uk

TITLEY RETURNS

Titley Jazz Festival (July 25-27) is a fairly new festival, but hit its stride early to become an established part of the jazz scene. Maybe this had something to do with the fact that David Masters saw it as a successor to the sadly departed Appleby Jazz Festival, not an Appleby clone, but a festival that would fill that particular gap. Starting out at the former Titley Junction railway station in Herefordshire, the festival soon moved over the border to the Rodd, an arts centre in woodland near Presteigne in Powys. The opposite to the sort of festival that takes over a town centre, Titley emphasises on-site parking and camping!

The Titley mission statement tells us that 'the overriding ambition of the festival is to present the cream of British modern jazz' and it does that by means of 14 2-hour concerts following each other in rapid succession on a single performing area. The groups are a mix of regular groups and ad hoc arrangements, the same musicians recurring in different settings. The Titley Jazz Sextet which plays the final concert sums up the sort of musicians associated with the festival: Alan Barnes, Don Weller, Art Themen, David Newton, Andrew Cleyndert and Steve Brown.

With such names as Peter King, Dave Green, Jim Mullen, Anita Wardell and Steve Waterman on

the bill, it's obvious that Titley goes for musicians of proven quality: the 'modern' tag doesn't imply booking the latest, possibly temporary sensation. However, David Masters' programming makes more than a nod in the direction of the rising generation. One very sad omission from this year's programme is the late Stan Tracey who was scheduled to present a Duke Ellington tribute. Instead the festival will open with the Brownfield/Byrne Quintet Plays Ellington, the almost-local young group augmented by Titley veteran Alan Barnes, and Sunday afternoon features the National Youth Jazz Orchestra Plays Duke Ellington and Count Basie.

Even the 'modern' tag is not inviolable in the interests of

freshness and variety. On the final evening Enrico Tomasso present *Salute to Satch*, with Robert Fowler, Adrian Fry, Craig Milverton, Dave Green and Bobby Worth.

www.titleyjazz.com



Stan Tracey



LE TOUR DE JAZZ

Burton Agnes Jazz and Blues Festival is regularly known for its friendly atmosphere and elegant setting in and around the Elizabethan mansion in East Yorkshire. This year an added bonus, together with an attractive programme of jazz and blues, is its status as an official fringe event for Le Grand Depart, the start of the Tour de France, which this year takes place in

Yorkshire. The festival (June 27-29) features Le Mini Depart, with toddlers' cycle races! And, to add a little *je ne sais quoi* to the festival, Djangologie recalls the music of the most famous French jazzman. On the musical side the most interesting project is *Watching the Detectives*, Paul Baxter's Give a Little Love Jazz Band playing music associated with Columbo and Sherlock Holmes, featuring that eminent Holmesian Alan Barnes. Through

the weekend other jazz and blues bands appearing include, among others, King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys, Tipitina, the Alligators, the Lemon Monkeys and Ben Beattie's After Midnight Band, with festival organiser Simon Cunliffe-Lister guesting on sax.

www.burtonagnes.com/Jazz_Festival

BRECON AT 30

Brecon Jazz celebrates its 30th anniversary on August 7 to 10, in resplendent shape after the troubles of recent years. The headline acts are universally impressive – and very varied – and the festival is delighted to welcome the return of the Captain's Walk, one of the outdoor venues synonymous with the festival. The Captain's Walk apparently owes its name to the presence of French prisoners of war in the



Laura Mvula

Napoleonic Wars, but its present function is more mundane – a town-centre car park! Pablo Janczur, director of Brecon Jazz operator Orchard, said, 'Since we took over in 2012 we've been looking for an opportunity to bring back the iconic venue of the Captain's Walk in the middle of town, where fans and locals can expect a real party atmosphere with some high tempo, high quality music at what we believe is a reasonable cost.'

The Captain's Walk programme covers big band and party music on the Saturday and Sunday of the festival, with a special day ticket for strollers. With the award-winning Beats & Pieces Big Band and the Dennis Rollins Velocity Trio there will be plenty of exciting music on offer, but some of the quirkier outfits catch the eye. The Township Comets are a London-based group playing South African township jazz, led by Chris Batchelor and Adam Glasser and featuring Jason Yarde and, guesting with them at Brecon, Pinise Saul, the 'Queen of

UPTON 2014-STYLE

One of the greatest challenges for a successful and well established jazz festival is to make enough changes to stay ahead of the game and also stay sufficiently the same to please the loyal supporters. The latest to go through a transformation whilst trying to retain what has made it so popular is the International Upton-upon-Severn Jazz Festival which makes its 29th appearance on the jazz calendar from June 27 to 29.

One major change occurred last year and was enforced. The river meadows having disastrously flooded the year before, the Festival retreated to higher ground and the town centre. This year the process has been taken a stage further. As well as venues in the town centre, a new dedicated in-town festival field will accommodate marquees, stalls, music, bars and camping.

Branding has undergone several small changes. Though apparently the organisers have not used the term 'Oliver Cromwell Jazz Festival' for many years, it has been there on the mast-head

until recent times. Now it is replaced by the slogan JIVE – SWING – DANCE, though the old user-friendly 'Down by the Riverside' remains, even though less true literally these days.

The biggest change, however, is the appointment of Music Director, Rachel Hayward, vibes and banjo player, seven years MD at Bude Jazz Festival. Last September the news broke that 'Sir' Alan Buckley, founder and long-time director at Upton, had been, in some versions, sacked – or perhaps, declined to apply for his old job when required to do so by the council of management. The instant appointment of Rachel and Festival Chairman David Harrison meant that the focus could shift from explanations and counter-explanations to providing an excellent festival for 2014.

Rachel's own musical taste seems likely to chime with that of many of our readers. Asked who her favourite old-school jazz musician is, she comes up with Freddie Green and Lionel Hampton and mentions Benny Carter's wonderful album, *Further Definitions*, as her current in-car

African Jazz'. Most intriguing of all is the acclaimed brass band from the impossible nation of Kikiristan, Imperial Kikiristan, highly popular throughout Western Europe in the days of their exile!

Perhaps the nicest story connected with the Captain's Walk is the return of Mike Harries' Root Doctors. On its 30th birthday the festival is entitled to look back a bit and, in a former guise, the band represented home-grown Welsh talent at Brecon Jazz '84.

The other major concerts are far too numerous to list, but a brief trawl through the programme throws up three times Academy Award winner Burt Bacharach in a solitary Thursday concert in the Market Hall. From Friday onwards the pace quickens. The appearance of the anarchic 21-piece big band, Loose Tubes, at the Market Hall is another reason for nostalgia, the band having first appeared at Brecon in 1985. Other Friday highlights are Warren Vache and Alan Barnes at

the Theatr Brycheiniog and German pianist Michael Wolynn with his trio on the Chapter Stage at the Cathedral.

Saturday almost produces overload, with double MOBO winner and Mercury Prize nominee Laura Mvula at the Market Hall and appearances by Fapy Lapertin, Penguin Cafe, Don Weller and David Newton, and Marius Neset among others. Particularly appropriate is that, on the same day as a Tribute to Stan Tracey (led by his son Clark) at the Theatr, Huw Warren's *Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night* forms a centenary tribute to Dylan Thomas – whose *Under Milk Wood*, of course, inspired possibly Stan Tracey's most famous work.

The final day brings Gregory Porter into the Market Hall, with such varied UK favourites as the Big Chris Barber Band (Theatr), Polar Bear (Christ College) and Remi Harris' Gypsy Jazz Project (Guildhall).

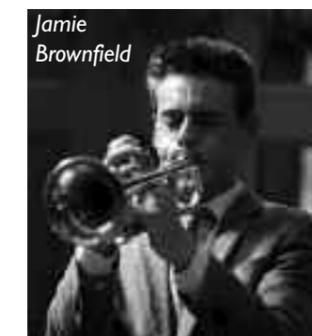
www.breconjazz.com

the Craig Milverton Trio, from the Remi Harris Trio to Debbie Arthurs' Sweet Rhythm – plus the MD's own Rachel's Dream.

The biggest single innovation, however, takes us back to JIVE – SWING – DANCE. A dedicated dance marquee will feature ex-UK Lindy Hop champions James and Bridget Hamilton, with music provided by Steve Steinhaus' Swing Band, Jazz Connection, the Swing Commanders and others. Dance classes are scheduled for Saturday and Sunday mornings.

Clearly the many devotees of Upton will find it recognisably the same, improved by the sort of freshening up that can be necessary after 29 years!

www.uptonjazz.co.uk



Jamie Brownfield

AWARD FOR EFG LONDON JAZZ FESTIVAL

The collaboration of London Jazz Festival, produced by Serious, and EFG International, sponsors of the festival, has been recognised as one of the top five partnerships by the Arts & Business Awards within the BP A&B Long-term Partnership Award, for its high standards and commitment to new and exciting arts initiatives. The EFG London Jazz Festival has also been shortlisted for the 2014 Parliamentary Jazz Awards.

As if to demonstrate the appropriateness of the award, on April 10th Serious announced the first artists for this year's festival, to be held on November 14 to 23. With a wide-ranging programme of over 250 shows featuring established stars and promising up-and-coming talent, the London Jazz Festival has been acclaimed by the *Guardian* as 'one of the best jazz festivals in the world'.

As yet, comparatively few of the 250 concerts have been announced, but the quality is evident. The opening gala will again be *Jazz Voice*, with Guy

Barker, a 40-piece orchestra and star singers. John Surman will take up a *Surman at Seventy* residency at Kings Place with different groups and programmes. Abdullah Ibrahim will appear with Ekaya and his New Trio at the Royal Festival Hall and other top trans-Atlantic names include Bill Frisell, Snarky Puppy and Chucho Valdes. In contrast Richard Pite stages two of his successful re-creations at Cadogan Hall: Benny Goodman and Glenn Miller at Carnegie Hall 1939 and The Newport Jazz Festival: the 1950s.

www.efglondonjazzfestival.org.uk



John Surman



Remi Harris

Photo by Merlin Daleman

BUSY DAYS AT NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME

This year's Newcastle-under-Lyme Jazz and Blues Festival boasts an enlarged programme of events in pubs, bars and restaurants throughout the town centre. Things begin with a scattering of quality performances on Friday, May 23. The Remi Harris Trio plays the Roebuck Shopping Centre at lunch-time and the Old Bull's Head in the evening and King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys appear at the Old Brown Jug in the evening.

The pace increases on Saturday, with 10 gigs from 12.00 onwards, but it's on Sunday that the festival reaches fever pitch with nearly 30 gigs before subsiding to a still substantial 20 on Bank Holiday Monday.

Piano/guitar duo Bob Hall and Dave Peabody kick off Saturday at the Roebuck Shopping Centre and from there on in it's a succession of crowd-pleasing festival acts. The Old Brown Jug alone hosts the Roy Forbes Quartet, Matrix Club Matrix, the Remi Harris Trio, the Bill Dayson Band, Elvis Fontenot & the Sugar Bees and Lewis Floyd Henry, while on the bill at the Rigger are

Alix Mazzo/Red Spektor, the 58's Blues Band, Peter Frampton's Escape Committee, Dirk Diggler's Blues Revue, the Alex McKown Blues Band, Lewis Floyd Henry and the Funkbreakers.

And there are many more venues – and such bands and musicians as the Chase Jazzmen, Steve Aja Blues Giants, the Jake Leg Jug Band, Tipitina, Ricky Cool and the In Crowd and Becky Brine and the Hot Club of Stonehouse.

www.newcastlejazzandblues.co.uk

BIRMINGHAM AVOIDS BRAZIL

Over the decades only World Cups have moved the Birmingham Jazz Festival from the first weekend in July – and this year is no exception. So the football-loving jazz public of the Midlands can relax: the 30th Birmingham International Jazz and Blues Festival runs from July 18 to 27.

The vast majority of the near-200 events are free admission, with museums, churchyards and village greens supplementing the more conventional venues such as shopping centres, bars and restaurants. The programme includes an even higher than usual tally of first-time bands and musicians and any number of fringe events from a festival where all that is predictable is the variety.

The 'international' tag is justified by some enterprising booking of less than familiar names. This year's roster includes several bands/musicians who have made an impact on the Birmingham public in previous years. Two of 2013's big successes were the Potato Head Jazz Band from Granada, Spain, and Lithuanian singer Giedre Kilciauskiene. The Budapest Ragtime Band, Jazz Band Velke Losiny from the Czech Republic and the New Orleans Jump Band from the Costa del Sol are long-time favourites. Newcomers to Birmingham include (from Europe) the Bratislava Hot Serenaders from Slovakia and Saxitude, a street band from Luxembourg, and (from the USA) the University of South Florida Jazztet and the astonishing Magnolia Sisters who present the full range of the music of South West Louisiana.

The headline Star City sessions of the first weekend feature the Potato Head Jazz Band and two of the strongest attractions at the festival over the years: King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys and Val Wiseman's Billie Holiday tribute, *Lady Sings the Blues*. Standout events of the second weekend see the inspired lunacy (and fine musicianship) of Bob Kerr's Whoopee Band at Hagley Road Village and two concerts in the sylvan surroundings of the Botanical Gardens, with, appropriately enough, the Magnolia Sisters and the up-to-the-minute retrospect of Electric Swing Circus, as featured in the last issue of *Jazz Rag*.

As well as any number of old favourites (from Tipitina to Remi Harris to Bruce Adams) Birmingham festival-goers can look forward to first-time appearances from Americana specialists, the Jake Leg Jug Band



Giedre Kilciauskiene

and Precious Penny Pluckers, London-based French-Algerian singer Florence Joelle, and Pacifico Blues.

www.birminghamjazzfestival.com

KEEPING THE TRADITION AT BUDE

Last year, in *Jazz Rag* 125, we featured the changes at Bude Jazz Festival, based around returning to its roots, with local people running it and a programme firmly based in traditional jazz. Paul Mayor explained how this had revitalised the festival which gives rise to the conclusion that each festival needs to know its public and identify its unique

selling point: one may prosper by enlarging its musical scope, another by narrowing it. The only certainty is that not thinking about what form a festival should take is a recipe for disaster.

Now Bude Jazz 2014 (August 26-29) is once again fielding a strong line-up of the traditional persuasion. American pianist Jeff Barnhart appears as co-leader of the Jim Fryer/Jeff Barnhart Select Six and of Ivory & Gold, with his flautist wife Anne. George Huxley and John Maddocks also double

up, co-leading Reeds United as well as their own bands. Keith Nichols Hot Five and Spats Langham are among the other headliners, along with the Savannah Jazz Band, Dennis Armstrong and the Great Northern Jazz Band, Richard Leach's 7 Stars of Jazz, Jim McIntosh's Jazzaholics and a total of over 20 bands.

Bude Jazz is, of course, helped by being in one of the most beautiful parts of the country that just happened to be the sunniest



Jeff Barnhart

place in the country in 2013! So the strap-line for the festival's posters is 'Join Us in Glorious North Cornwall' – well, you have to play to your strengths!

www.jazzfestivalbude.co.uk



Florence Joelle

BANK HOLIDAY AT SOLIHULL

The Solihull Jazz and Blues Festival has now found a formula for success which is to be repeated in this year's event on Spring Bank Holiday weekend, May 23 to 26. The Solihull festival is almost two mini-festivals in one: a daytime festival from lunch-time to early evening on two open air stages and evening events in pubs and restaurants in the town centre.

Once again Saturday and Sunday offer continuous jazz for the

shoppers in Mell Square and the strollers and (hopefully) sunbathers in Jubilee Gardens. Making their Solihull debuts are Florence Joelle, the French-Algerian singer whose CD, *Stealing Flowers*, was widely acclaimed last year, and the Jake Leg Jug Band, recently recorded for Lake Records. Regular festival favourites include Ricky Cool and the In Crowd, the Broombusters, Tipitina and Becky Brine and the Hot Club of Stonehouse.

The daytime events begin with a Parade with Bostin Brass on Saturday morning and include

appearances by Jordan Williams in the Touchwood Centre with *Buble Live*, accompanied by Brian Dee.

The Solihull festival begins on Friday evening with performances by Ricky Cool (Slug and Lettuce), the Roy Forbes Quartet (Assembly Rooms) and Al Jolson's Dog (O'Neills) and regular evening performances at O'Neills continue right through to the Festival Afterparty with the Broombusters on Monday evening.

www.solihullbid.co.uk

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ARCHIVE SPREADS ITS WINGS

The latest move of the National Jazz Archive to get its message across to the general public was an exhibition in the Music Library at London's Barbican Centre under the name *All That Jazz: The Golden Age of British Popular Music 1919-1950*. The exhibition, which ran until April 29th, was relatively small – four showcases, plus a listening post – but very well curated, with plenty of fascinating material, much of it from the collections of Jim Godbolt and George Webb. Ron Simpson reports on his visit.

The programme for the Original Dixieland Jazz Band's appearance is there, together with Louis Armstrong's 1932 autograph and the issues of the *Melody Maker* telling of the death of Snakehips Johnson and the disappearance of Major Glenn Miller. Given the provenance of much of the material, it is not surprising that photographs of George Webb, Humphrey Lyttelton and

assorted rhythm clubs and riverboat shuffles abound and one of the few three-dimensional artefacts is Reg Rigden's trumpet!

However, for me the greatest joy came from the quirky stories. Edgar Jackson is one of the great hero/villains of jazz journalism. Operating at the *Melody Maker* for two decades, often reviewing records under the coy pseudonym of Needlepoint, he attempted to impose middle-class British standards on this awful wild music from America, but at least he wrote about it and helped to give it respectability in this tight little island. There is a gloriously dignified photograph of Edgar Jackson dancing, his whole musical philosophy summed up in his pose. Better still is a letter from Jim Holloway to an American friend complaining (very convincingly) of Jackson's spite and pettiness – and the American friend is Harry Lim of Keynote Records, who the U.S. Mail was unable to trace in various Chicago hotels – the envelope is there as evidence.

Rather later Sinclair Traill's self-importance was another very British feature of the *Melody Maker* (alleviated, of course, by the likes of Max Jones) and I couldn't help thinking how he must have enjoyed the concerts (there are two flyers here) which billed him, as 'recitalist', above such names as the Christie Brothers Stompers, Wally Fawkes and George Webb's Dixielanders!

Benny Goodman's appearance at the London Palladium in 1949 threw up all kinds of unexpected treats. Of course, he couldn't bring his orchestra here, but he was allowed to feature pianist Buddy Greco (in a sextet with British musicians) and a young Belgian guitarist/harmonica player Jean Thielemans who (as Toots Thielemans) announced his retirement in March 2014! The programme also tells us that Woolf Phillips accompanied Goodman with the Skyrockets Orchestra, with such big names as Kenny Baker, Pat Smuts, Harry Roche and Johnny Dankworth (sic). And there, at the listening

post, undoubtedly the oddest of a fine selection of 10 CDs, including Ken 'Snakehips' Johnson (very obscure) and Bechet with Humph, is BG on *Hi Gang!* with Ben Lyon, Bebe Daniels and Vic Oliver. He copes nobly with the unfamiliar tasks of trading wisecracks and singing!

Every Tuesday late-opening at least one member of staff from the National Jazz Archive is in attendance and Sam Fieldhouse who, as Learning and Outreach Officer, was primarily responsible for the exhibition was able to tell me of the further expansion of the Archive's activities, from greater accessibility on line to exhibitions at Keswick Jazz Festival, Norwich Jazz Party and around the libraries of Essex. In fact, as we talked on March 18th, the Archive was between two successive Saturday activities: a Peter Vacher book talk and an Open Day.

www.nationaljazzarchive.org.uk

NIKOLAJ BENTZON TRIO

LIVE AT MONTMARTRE

Storyville 1018451 (68.47)

Nikolaj Bentzon may be a new name to many listeners, but he's a Danish pianist who was educated at Berklee College in Boston and was a member of the Danish Radio Big Band. Bentzon is heard here with his trio playing at a Copenhagen club in May 2013. The very first track (Les McCann's *Smile Stacey*) suggests that Nikolaj has an impressive technique, as he maintains a trill in one hand while playing the melody with the other – at lightning speed. Bassist Thomas Fønnesbaek and American drummer Winard Harper keep up the pace, and Harper plays some excellent speedy 12-bar breaks.

It is probably indicative that the opening tune is by Les McCann, as Bentzon is often as funky as McCann. Note how the trio changes the tempo continually in *Svetlana Botswana Rusticana*, which opens with a quotation from the Beatles' *Lady Madonna!* But the trio can also be relaxed, as in several other numbers - notably Frederick Loewe's *The Heather on the Hill*, which Nikolaj delivers with tender thoughtfulness. Nikolaj even sings on *My Blue Heaven*, although he's not the greatest vocalist in the world. But his trio makes up for his vocals, with a skilfully varied set of jazz standards and originals.

TONY AUGARDE

RAN BLAKE

PLAYS SOLO PIANO

ESP-DISK ESP1011 (35:19)

Ran Blake, seventy-eight and still running, a prominent adherent of 'third stream' music which endeavours to combine elements of classical and jazz traditions, has promoted his chosen genre assiduously over a long and distinguished career. His formative studies embraced mentors ranging from Oscar Peterson and Mary Lou Williamson to Gunther Schuller and George Russell. The outcome has included piano performances in concert halls, jazz clubs and on numerous recordings. He is also an established composer and held the professorial chair of Contemporary Improvisation at the New England Conservatory for an astonishing 32 years.

The recordings here, dating from 1965, show an accomplished pianist given to contemplative and complex improvisations and a predilection for dissonance. He is inclined to bury his basic themes in harmonic and rhythmic digressions, at times positively dismembering them and, even when the melody is easily recognisable, it is subjected to interjections which break the tune's continuity.

There are occasions when familiar jazz idioms emerge - running left-hand tenths worthy of Teddy Wilson, the odd funky or bebop phrase - but it rarely swings in the conventional jazz manner.

Standards, originals and other



Red Norvo

jazzers' compositions are all treated in the same vein: dense, intense explorations. Intriguing, but I'm not sure they're jazz.

HUGH LEDIGO

RED NORVO

FOUR CLASSIC ALBUMS

Avid Jazz AMSC1110

There is plenty of variety on this 2 CD package spanning the 1950's. *Dancing on the Ceiling* features the Norvo Trio with Tal Farlow and Jimmy Raney alternating on guitar and Red Mitchell on bass. Familiar jazz standards played in a light and delicate, almost chamber jazz style, and swinging throughout.

Red Norvo in Stereo features a fourteen piece band including players from the West Coast such as Bud Shank and Bill Perkins. Most arrangements are supplied by Eddie Sauter. Helen Humes sings on seven of the eleven tracks. The repertoire includes familiar 'standards' as well as some now long-forgotten pop songs.

Red Plays the Blues includes three tracks from a similar big band line up including Helen Humes once more. The remaining four tracks feature a sextet including Harry Edison and Ben Webster. Norvo sounds invigorated and the soloists perform at length making these some of the most satisfying tracks of the collection.

Music to Listen to Red Norvo By blends jazz with elements of classical music, with sextet featuring Buddy Collette on flute, Barney Kessel and Bill Smith from the classical world, playing clarinet.

ALAN MUSSON

ARI BROWN

GROOVE AWAKENING.

Delmark 5011 (65:27)

Brown is a fine saxophonist out of Chicago, mainly using tenor but with occasional use of soprano, sometimes both at once a la Roland Kirk, and piano on *Give Thanks*. The driving band behind him includes Ari's brother

Kirk on piano, Yosef Ben Israel on bass, Avreeyil Ra on drums and Dr. Cuz, percussion. Brown has a huge, warm tone on tenor, hauntingly melodic in places (*One For Ken, In A Sentimental Mood*) exploratory (*Enka*) and only occasionally does he become turgid and repetitive, noticeably on *Wayne's Trane*. There are echoes of Coltrane throughout the disc, but only echoes, and the treatment of *Lonnie's Lament* has a refreshing reggae rhythm. *In A Sentimental Mood* is a delight, with Brown at once exploratory and lyrical, helped by Kirk Brown's imaginative chording; there's a superb break by Yosef Ben Israel, who delivers some very fluent bass work.

All but one of the compositions are by Ari Brown, and it's an achievement to produce such a varied programme, not only in melodic content but with such improvisational possibilities.

GREG MURPHY

CHRIS INGHAM QUARTET

HOAGY

Downhome Records. DOH001

A five-star album if ever I heard one! I've been a huge fan of singer-pianist Chris Ingham ever since I first heard him in the Flanagan-Ingham Quartet several years ago now, and this is his finest showcase so far. A tribute to Hoagy Carmichael is always a good idea but this one, for me, is the best since Bob Wilber and Maxine Sullivan recorded fourteen of the old music master's classic titles back in 1969.

Ingham's crisp, witty and technically flawless piano-playing is easily matched by his vocals which effortlessly mark him out as one of this country's very best jazz singers. Essaying songs as diverse as *Huggin' and Chalkin'* and *How little we know* amid sixteen intelligently selected and skilfully-paced titles, each of his interpretations remains faithful to Hoagy's intentions, while betraying none of the 'flatsy-thru - the -nose' quality' which sometimes made their owner's own (by his self-admission) a little harder to take. Similarly

SUPER PRIZES TO BE WON!

Just answer the questions correctly and send your answers to Jazz Rag Competitions, PO Box 944, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B16 8UT. Please write the name of the relevant competition in the top left hand corner of your postcard, envelope or sheet of paper. If possible, add your telephone number or email as well as your address. Closing date: 6th June, 2014.

JAKE LEG JUG BAND CD

Lake Records have kindly supplied THREE copies of *Next Stop!* by the Jake Leg Jug Band, described as the 'authentic sounds of 20s and 30s America – with a twist of their own.'

1. Which song, originally made famous by Gus Cannon's Jug Stompers, became a Number 1 hit for the Rooftop Singers in 1963?
2. Which singer first performed under the name of Maria D'Amato with Jim Kworkin's Jug Band in the 1960s before changing her name on marriage to the group's guitarist?

ATLANTIC JAZZ LEGENDS

Warner Classics are providing TWO copies of a superb box set of 20 albums on the Atlantic label from the 1950s and 1960s under the title *Atlantic Jazz Legends*.

1. Among the musicians represented is Raasaan Roland Kirk. As a multi-instrumentalist, he played tenor sax and flute, plus which two obscure bizarrely named saxes?
2. One of the albums is John Coltrane's first for Atlantic, his breakthrough as a leader, recorded in 1959. What is its name?

CHRIS BARBER BOOK

Thanks to Equinox Books we have THREE copies of *Jazz Me Blues*, Chris Barber's eagerly awaited autobiography.

1. Who was the trumpeter with Chris Barber's band for 54 years from the band's formation?
2. The Barber band has gone under three names. Initially it was Chris Barber's Jazz Band, now it's the Big Chris Barber Band. What came in between?

WINNERS & ANSWERS NO. 130

CHRIS ELLIS CD

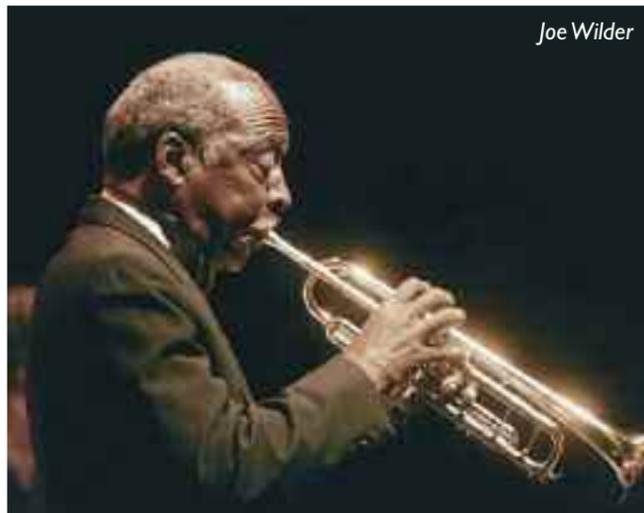
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AVISHAI COHEN CD

Congratulations to: MRS. WENDY MANTLE of Kington, Herefordshire; MR. MEL GUEST of St. Neots, Cambridgeshire, and JOHN GILL of Annitsford Bridge, Northumberland. Jacques Loussier/Chick Corea



Joe Wilder

Ingham's subtly crafted arrangements (faultlessly achieved) pay due reference to Carmichael's originals but regularly present delightful musical surprises of their own. And central to these – along with a constantly creative and sympathetic rhythm section – is the trumpet of Paul Higgs whose outstanding contributions throughout the album display a gorgeous tone, unflagging inspiration, stylistic cognizance at its most perceptive and enviably faultless chops to boot!

From its musical conception to its exquisite artwork (by Martyn Wainwright) and stylish liner note this album is simply a peach and – should anyone ask – will be high on my list of albums of the year.

DIGBY FAIRWEATHER

JOE WILDER

SUCH A BEAUTIFUL SOUND

Fresh Sound FSR-CD 812 (74.21)

In an interview, trumpeter Joe Wilder said 'I never played high; I was not that kind of player. I never screamed'. This is what makes him stand out from many other trumpet players. Like Hank Jones, the pianist on some of these tracks, Joe Wilder tends to be low-key, understated. His smooth tone is never abrasive. At times he makes the trumpet sound as sweet as a flugelhorn or cornet (the first instrument he ever played). He even takes an old warhorse like *Cherokee* at a moderate tempo. For many years,

Joe Wilder has been doing good by stealth and blushing to find it fame.

This compilation CD derives most of its tracks from Joe Wilder's LP *Joe Wilder 'n' Wilder* (1956) and the Pete Brown Sextet's *Peter the Great* (1954). Pete Brown is probably best known for his jump-jazz style, although he shows here that he can encompass a variety of styles, ranging from perkiness to mellowness. On *Moonlight in Vermont*, he matches Joe Wilder's tender restraint.

TONY AUGARDE

ROAN KEARSEY-LAWSON

PRESENCE IN MIND

144 Records 144CD002 (66:26)

Seven British players, eleven eventful tracks, adding up to a lot of absorbing jazz listening – yet with no lengthy solos. This is a debut studio selection of the compositions/arrangements of a busy and versatile musician, Roan Kearsley-Lawson, who is heard principally on vibes, but also marimba, piano and drums.

The album title indicates that all the themes have some kind of dedication. *Splendid Blues* is for Milt Jackson, and naturally has an MJQ feel to it, achieved admirably by the leader plus the keyboard of Dorian Ford, the bass of Larry Bartley and the drums of Dave Trigwell. The same sound is inevitable in *Bach East*, but here it is augmented by the flute playing of the son of a great jazz

reedman, Duncan Lamont Junior. This fine five-piece then delivers a beautiful melody, *My Love For You*, that calls for lyrics to be added. It probably has.

At 10:37, the longest track is *Concerto D'Afro*. Its stunning contents include changing tempoes, cross-rhythms, Roan on marimba as well as supplying his best jazz vibes of the disc, some masterly Ford piano, and above all, the young Duncan with smooth bass clarinet and peaking on tenor to prove he's as good as his dad. Substantial alto later on reinforces this fact.

The other two players emerge effectively elsewhere. On the folks/stately *Presence*, Geoff Mason's trombone has skilful richness. Ray Butcher brings his authority and style to *Serendipity* on trumpet, and to *Fondness* on flugel, both in uppish vein. Bearing the space factor in mind, I have to add that the majestic *Lullaby Of Love* and the happy *Brother's Bounce* are probably my favourites. But overall, it's a total winner.

LESTOMKINS

CHRIS ELLIS

VOCAL WITH HOT ACCOMP

Digby Fairweather Archives, Rose Cottage Records, RCR 005: 77.46

The opening track of Chris Ellis' 1986 album sets the tone: coolly jaunty delivery of the sort of song you feel you should know, given lift-off by the accompanying bass and guitar (Tiny Winters and Paul Sealey), soon to be joined by the urbane Martin Litton and Digby Fairweather. The song (in fact, totally new to me) is *You Can't Stop Me from Dreaming* by Dave Franklin and Cliff Friend, best known for *When My Dreamboat Comes Home*. It doesn't take long to realise that Chris Ellis' strengths lie not only in his nonchalantly relaxed delivery and the ability to point a lyric, but in knowing more songs than anyone else. A particular pleasure of the album is discovering unknown gems of the great songwriters, notably *Blue Again*, a lovely bit of Dorothy Fields and Jimmy McHugh, or

Johnny Mercer's most bizarre title for a love song, *The Bathtub Ran Over Again* (music by Michael Cleary). The whole session is pretty much free of drama, but communicates beautifully the sense of enjoyment obviously shared by the singer and four musicians (note, no drummer). The CD is completed by three tracks from 1979 (an exhilarating *Jeepers Creepers* a highspot, with Brian Lemon and Digby teaming up splendidly and Denny Wright in great form); two from 1984, with Pete Strange joining Digby in the front line; and a taster for *Moon Country*, the 1999 Hoagy Carmichael tribute, still available on Challenge. *Old Man Harlem* features Chris, his voice weightier with the passing years, duetting with Digby, in a bright arrangement with John Barnes on alto coming in like Pete Brown.

RON SIMPSON

PLAS JOHNSON

THIS MUST BE THE PLAS! MOOD FOR THE BLUES

Fresh Sound FSR-CD 818 (75.00)

A rare misfire from Fresh Sound, this reissue of a brace of Johnson's late-1950s Capitol albums doesn't really qualify as jazz *per se*. It's undoubtedly fine mood music though with *This Must Be The Plas* (ouch!) finding the soulful tenorist aided and abetted by a crack studio session team including Victor Feldman and Howard Roberts. Occasionally there's a glimpse of what the leader might have liked to have done given the chance – the brief Parker-ish cadenza on *If I Had You* is stunning – but the foreshortened nature of most of the music generally reins him in. It's also ironic that on a record so full of preaching tenor, it's his few appearances on baritone that most grab the ear.

The second session, *Mood For The Blues*, is even closer to easy listening and its unremitting atmosphere of late-night romance makes it the ideal album to be enjoyed in the company of a full-bodied little number. And I'm not talking wine here.

SIMON SPILLET

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Cecil Taylor



CECIL TAYLOR

THREE CLASSIC ALBUMS PLUS

Avid Jazz AMSCI 116 (79:59, 76:35)

One benefit of this survey of Taylor's early work is to see how far ahead he was of his contemporaries. The three albums comprise *Jazz Advance* (1956), *Looking Ahead!* (1958) *The World of Cecil Taylor* (1960) and two titles from *Love For Sale* (1959) and there is some remarkable music to be heard. *Jazz Advance* is nothing short of incredible, pointing to the free-form Taylor would later adopt; consider Monk's *Bemsha Swing* and the approaches to time, whilst *Charge "Em* is an entirely different approach to the blues. Taylor's reconstructions of *Sweet & Lovely* and *You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To* are unique, adding to the melodic content and displaying more of Taylor's time experiments.

Looking Ahead has more refreshing explorations of the blues in *Luyah*, *The Glorious Step*, with incisive right-hand work, and *Walling*, a tribute to Fats Waller also a beautifully constructed improvisation, whilst *Excursion On A Wobbly Rail* is a superb workout on *Take The A Train*. *The World of Cecil Taylor* effectively marked a career point where Taylor became increasingly free yet still retained an interest in reshaping standards; *This Nearly Was Mine* is a reshaping *par excellence*. It also

introduces Archie Shepp to Taylor's world and it has to be said that, for once, the saxophonist seems lost as he struggles through *Air*.

This is a rewarding release with so much to hear and enjoy.

GREG MURPHY

SIX CITY STOMPERS

THE FORMULA

Stunt STUCD 12172 [46.29]

Here's a puzzle. As the note says, 'Don't attempt to understand Six City Stompers'. Fair enough, so I won't. Piano-less for the most part, with alto, trumpet, trombone and guitar, all doubling something or another, these assorted Danes dress themselves up in surgical gowns and call themselves the Sick City Pharmacy. If that means that they apply their medicine to a variety of materials, then so be it.

On one hand, they attack something like *Struttin' With Some Barbecue* with authentic verve only for that to be contrasted with a band-written piece of Dirty Dozens-style funk 'n' rap like *Cream*. The musicianship is slick and some of the solo playing on the reworkings of selected classic pieces is pertinent and evocative. Add in some Harry Connick-like vocals and a fair amount of Crescent City rumbustiousness, and you have quite a rich mix.

As the note says, 'Take 1 dose 6

times daily. Do not operate heavy machinery while using this product'. An acquired taste, then? Sample before taking, I suggest, and definitely avoid operating that heavy machinery.

PETER VACHER

ARNETT COBB

BLUES AND BALLADS

Fresh Sound FSR-CD 813 (72.24)

Part of the grand tradition of Texas Tenor, Cobb is now something of a forgotten man, but at the time of these sessions he was undergoing something of a personal renaissance. After recovering from a horrific car accident in the late 1950's, he made his comeback on a series of delightful sessions for Prestige, two of which receive a welcome dusting down here.

The first is the more varied of the two and finds Cobb grooving away on a programme which, on *Black Velvet*, includes a wonderful tribute to fellow saxophonist Illinois Jacquet (Cobb had replaced Jacquet as the featured hot tenor man with Lionel Hampton back in the Forties). *Ballads by Cobb*, on the other hand, is largely down-tempo material including another nod to one of his forebears, Herschel Evans, on *Blue and Sentimental*. Actually the album's title is a little misleading as, half way through the record, Cobb offers an explosive account of *Sweet Georgia Brown*, the effect of which is rather like an unexpected alarm call.

Throughout both sessions the tenorist is accompanied by another Texan, Red Garland, just about to enter his period of post-Miles Davis obscurity. The pianist's subsequent neglect is made all the more puzzling when one hears how masterful he is here, reading Cobb's every move perfectly and playing solos that a far less notably fashion-conscious than those he'd essayed with Davis.

In summary, these are classy records by a class act.

SIMON SPILLET

BJARNE ROUPÉ

LIGHT AND DARK

Stunt Records STUCD 13102 (44:44)

Roupé emerged during the 'seventies in Sweden before defecting in 1979 to Copenhagen where he gained a prominent reputation. This, however, is his first recording under his own leadership in two decades. His work on this 2008 disc reveals dual talents. His guitar playing is restrained and gimmick-free. He creates nice lines, varying his tone colours between single-note lines, octaves and chordal passages, with unostentatious facility. I'd bet he numbers Wes Montgomery among his favourites. All seven tracks are his own compositions.

Compatriot and contemporary tenor saxophonist Tomas Frank became and remains one of Europe's foremost jazzers. He has a full tone, plenty of technique and an approach clearly drawn from the Coltrane school, though not without a passing nod towards Getz.

Lennart Ginman is an excellent bassist providing firm rhythmic support whilst contributing more than a basic walking line. Unfortunately, he is a touch under-recorded. Aage Tangaarde's drumming is equally sympathetic, sometimes quite complex but not intrusive.

The themes have a latter-day feel - long and sinuous with harmonic structures that need some listening to. There are some effective tenor-guitar unisons which Roupé achieves without sacrificing the chords.

Scandinavian jazz is clearly alive and well.

HUGH LEDIGO

MARIUS NESET

SUITE FOR THE SEVEN MOUNTAINS

Calibrated CAL1073 (46:49)

This was first issued in 2008, and constitutes Neset's debut recording. He leads a quartet, which he calls People Are

Machines, with Magnus Hjorth on piano, Petter Eldh on bass and drummer Anton Eger, with a string quartet on a seven-movement suite. It's a heavily structured work, with the string quartet seeming to impose a rigid approach, which the quartet cope with well if perhaps rather inhibited in the music. The first six movements suggest an uneasy compromise between structure and improvisation, although there are times when Neset's tenor soars with the strings, only to subside after some exciting blowing.

This all changes when the musicians reach the seventh movement, when Neset and Hjorth in particular begin to cut loose. The majority of this fifteen-minute-plus movement displays Neset's talent for improvisation, a *tour-de-force* where he explores all registers of the tenor, well backed by Hjorth and colleagues. This serves as an appetiser and the listener is left wishing more of the Suite could have displayed this uninhibited playing!

GREG MURPHY

SPORTIELLO METZ PARROTT

IT'S A GOOD DAY

Arbors records ARCD 19431 (63:49)

Given the opportunity, this trio might well stake its claim alongside the classic small groups of jazz. Not perhaps the grandstanding excitement of Peterson nor the innovative challenges of Evans, but pianist Rossano Sportiello's consummate musicianship, allied to the equal talents of Nicki Parrott on bass and Eddie Metz on drums, creates a compelling, totally satisfying sound that transcends the demands of fashion and novelty.

If there is an underlying flavour of bebop in Sportiello's phrasing, it is never blatant and there is a finesse and essentially melodic quality to his work that draws on the canon of jazz improvisation at least since Teddy Wilson.

Ms Parrott is a seriously good bassist who generates a swinging pulse, solos with the fluency of a

horn player and negotiates the leader's often quite difficult arrangements with aplomb. That her vocal abilities are also above average seems almost unfair.

Eddie Metz has been compared with Jake Hanna, not without reason. His phrasing is impeccable, he swings with a light touch and solos inventively. The result is a cohesive sound that embodies the essence of jazz.

The music draws on the equally timeless repertoire of such as Kern, Lerner, Gershwin, Arlen and even Beethoven and Bach.

Sportiello says '...the music is intended to make you feel good!' And it does.

HUGH LEDIGO

CAMPI QUI BOOGIE!

1ST INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF BOOGIE WOOGIE IN BARCELONA 2012.

Swing Alley Records SA023 (59.48)

Since the time of the great masters, Yancey, Ammons, Lewis and Johnson, boogie piano has expanded to incorporate other genres and styles. The four pianists featured on this album, while acknowledging the traditional message of the Thirties and Forties maestros, are moving forward with their own personal concepts.

The Barcelona event was the first of its kind and was organised by one of the participants Lluís Coloma. The other pianists taking part were Bob Seeley, August Tharratts and David Giorcelli.

The twelve tracks are split into eight solo performances, three duets and an 'every man for himself' finale.

The danger of too much sameness is avoided by the introduction of new material composed by the individual artists. I was particularly attracted to Coloma's *Dits de Foc* and Tharratts' *Pianosaurus* both of which showed what could be done with the confines of the music.

Andrea Motis and Joan Chamorro



The legendary Bob Seeley opts for the more traditional tunes, Ammons' *Boogie Woogie Dream*, *St Louis Blues* and *Amazing Grace*, all three being Seeley favourites and he is, possibly, the most outstanding player but all four are strong performers and display formidable techniques.

The nature of the music draws noisy appreciation from the Festival audience. It sounds as though everyone had a good time but, then again, that's what boogie woogie is all about.

JOHN MARTIN

ANDREA MOTIS & JOAN CHAMORRO QUINTET

LIVE AT JAMBOREE BARCELONA

Swit Records SWIT15 (72:22)

On this showing, Andrea Motis has an immediately identifiable vocal sound. Her musical antecedents would, I imagine include Billie Holiday and, like her, she has an in-built metronome that allows her to pull time around, sometimes speeding up her phrases, sometimes delaying them. She has less difficulty with English diction than many continentals, though her extreme American accent occasionally masks her words. Often, Ms Motis employs a little-girl quality in her voice which might be a bit of an acquired taste for some people, although I have to say I like it. Her trumpet playing has its moments but, to my ears, never really feels secure, and she wisely uses the instrument sparingly. On alto sax, she seems more at

home - sounding, on the one ballad she plays, a little like Hodges.

The rhythm is well integrated, approaching straight-ahead swing, bossas and the obligatory shuffle on *My Baby Just Cares For Me* with equal assurance. Solos are generally good, particularly the piano work of Ignasi Terraza, whose left-hand right-hand independence and ability to build improvisations to exciting climaxes is impressive. The inclusion of Scott Hamilton on this session is a bonus. Ms Motis ends her liner notes by saying 'Let's continue improving.' I guess we should all do that..

HUGH LEDIGO

GEORGIE FAME / MADELINE BELL

SINGER

Proper PRPCD120 (53:41)

This amounts to the song content of a potential score for a jazz musical. It was originally conceived in Holland 30 years ago, in a meeting between composer/arranger Steve Gray and singer/musician Georgie Fame. Together with singer Madeline Bell and Holland's Metropole Orchestra, it was performed at that time. Here we have a definitive concert recording made in Tilburg, Holland in 2004, involving five songs from Georgie, five from Madeline and two in duet, backed by the full force of the 60-piece big band/orchestra plus the 30-piece Jody Pijper Singers.

The story, of a young girl singer's progress to stardom, is

absorbingly and entertainingly told. It is a pity no personnel is provided, as all the musicians contribute superlatively. Georgie's engaging vocal persona has been consistent through the years, and his bluesy *Small Town* displays a sparkling four-piece rhythm section, probably with himself on piano, propelling the band and chorus. Orchestral atmosphere prefaces Madeline's entry on *My Second Home*, and her soulful power and style allied to the gospel choir are really thrilling. As per the roaring Basie-type brass and the tenor soloist behind Georgie's take of the title song, *Singer*. A beautiful Bell ballad, *Learning*, soars over lush strings, and the arrangement moves seamlessly into Georgie's exultant *Big Town*, replete with some wailing alto. The title *That's How Hit Records Are Made* betrays the age of the production. Supposedly depicting the singer's rise to public popularity, Madeline is gifted with a romping Riddle-style chart - far removed from the 'hit' sounds of today.

The remaining six songs are of parallel calibre and variety, two highlights being the Fame/Bell

collaborations. It is my opinion that, were it feasible, after all the pop musicals permeating the West End, this jazz musical should be completed and staged.

LESTOMKINS

TERRY GIBBS

FOUR CLASSIC ALBUMS

Avid AMSC 1100 (143.41)

I tend to think of vibraphone players in classes: the top class (Hampton, Norvo, Jackson, Burton, Locke) and the second class, which includes Terry Gibbs. His playing swings and it is generally fluent and technically assured, although he tends to stick to single-note lines without trying to expand his vocabulary. These qualities are illustrated in this generous Avid double album of four LPs from 1956 to 1960. *Swingin'* is mainly a showcase for Gibbs, backed by some fairly conventional big-band arrangements. *Terry Gibbs Plays the Duke* is by a small group with Pete Jolly playing accordion, which blends well with the vibes and provides a kind of orchestral

accompaniment to Terry's lightning strikes. He plays marimba and xylophone on some tracks.

In *More Vibes on Velvet*, the velvety backing is provided by a sax section arranged by drummer Mel Lewis. The mostly slowish music is performed efficiently but without much fire. The LP lacks the spark which would ignite the playing. Things brighten up with the final LP, *Music from Cole Porter's Can Can*. Gibbs simply plays with a rhythm section that provides good support, especially from pianist Frank Strazzeri and guitarist Herb Ellis. The quintet format gives Terry the freedom to stretch out in some shrewd but simple arrangements.

TONY AUGARDE

NATE NAJAR TRIO

AQUARELA DO BRASIL

Candid CCD 79988 (57:49)

Given that all the great jazz guitarists for many years have been plugged into the mains, with multiple results, it remains rare



for a player to opt to be unamplified. There was Charlie Byrd, of course, and latterly our own very impressive Remi Harris. Now here's another - New Yorker Nate Najjar. I had been aware of his skill from hearing his 2012 Candid release *Blues For Night People*, the latter composed by his inspiration, the brilliant Mr Byrd. This mixed set had a few Latin elements, but the new one is entirely devoted to the music and rhythms of Brazil - not all classifiable under the 'bossa nova' heading.

Nate's actual power source is as before - Tommy Cecil on bass and Chuck Redd on drums and vibes - with the bonus on two tracks of sublime tenor from Harry Allen, evoking the early-'fifties Getz innovations. Eight of the ten tracks are those enchanting melodies we've heard played or sung under varying titles - four of them naturally by Tom Jobim himself.

The jazz content is sometimes questionable, when Nate simply romps along on the tunes - most deservedly on what must be the world's best-known Latin song, the title track, which, in short, is Brazil. But on the three tracks where Chuck Redd moves on to the vibes, and the two with Allen's tenor, the facile swing is there in abundance. This is a very useful CD for getting that party going.

LESTOMKINS

PHRONESIS

LIFE TO EVERYTHING

Edition EDN1050 (63.28)

Phronesis (an Ancient Greek word for a type of wisdom or intelligence), was founded by Danish bassist Jasper Hoiby in 2005, it also includes British pianist Ivo Neame and the Norwegian drummer Anton Eger. This is intense, driving music, literally propelled by Hoiby with a muscular bass sound - the opening title, *Urban Control*, opens with a bass statement of considerable impact, before Neame and Eger add propulsion. Overall, the music is reminiscent of Keith Jarrett, with much rhythmic emphasis and adventurous chord runs, much to the approval of the audience at this 'live' London recording in November last year.

Writing responsibilities are equally divided between the three, but the themes are skeletal - this trio is all about improvisation, whatever the tempo. If this performance has a weakness, it is the unrelenting pace, but the dexterity of the musicians is to be applauded.

GREG MURPHY

SCOTT HAMILTON QUARTET

DEAN STREET NIGHTS

Woodville wvcd141 (62:40)

Stan Getz, Zoot Sims and Bill Perkins were always among my favourite tenor players - so I celebrate the fact that Scott Hamilton is still among us, and maintaining that tradition of straight-ahead, swinging saxophone eloquence. Here's Scott luxuriating in a 35-year residency, the Pizza Express in London's Dean Street, together with his regular local British

supporting trio - John Pearce on piano, Dave Green on bass and Steve Brown on drums.

That ultra-special sound flows warmly for three minutes on *I Just Found Out About Love*, John Pearce excels, Dave does his expert thing, and fine fours with Steve follow. *Sweet And Lovely* gets a becoming Latin feel. *Jitterbug Waltz*, 6/8-ing at 13:12, proves to be an out-and-out jazz peak, with the tenorman in full flamboyant flight either side of an out-of-time interlude with just piano.

His two ballads of the selection have positive personal impact for me. *If I Had You* is redolent with

romantic meaning. *Spring Can Really Hang You Up The Most* hits the same spot, complete with the evocative verse. The two other vibrant vehicles are *Zoot's Blues*, wherein he does summon up the spirit of that all-time great, and *Cherokee*, second longest at 11:29 and a pulsating climax to a magical Soho night.

LESTOMKINS

THE KEYNOTE JAZZ COLLECTION 1941-1947

Fresh Sound FSR-CD 815: 11
CDs

It's sometimes the happy lot of the jazz record reviewer to be assigned the very item he (or she) would most like to receive. All too often, the opposite is the case. Not so this time. I missed (i.e. failed to buy) the complete Keynote collection when it came out on LP way back in 1986. Now Fresh Sound, that most eclectic and wide-ranging of Spanish reissue labels (and its driving force, Jordi Pujol) have created the ultimate dream package with a box set of eleven CDs documenting the full Keynote jazz output, this accompanied by a superb illustrated booklet.

From its earliest beginnings in 1940 in New York, Keynote had focussed on quality. That said, its importance to jazz connoisseurs rests in its employment of Harry Lim to produce a series of swing and bop recordings. It's largely to him that we owe the 62 priceless sessions spread over these individual CDs. Lim was Javanese and had arrived in New York in 1936 from Batavia and was soon organising jam sessions, before moving on to Chicago and New Orleans in search of more good music. He joined Keynote in 1943 and concentrated on the greatest jazz musicians of the day; eventually leaving in 1947, due to 'professional difficulties' with John Hammond, who had become the label's boss.

Lim had recorded the George Hartman Dixieland band in New Orleans in 1941 and their four bright-and-brash sides open the collection, trumpeter Hartman and clarinetist 'Bujie' Centobie the standouts. Thereafter, he concentrated on New York swing starting with the celebrated Lester Young Quartet recordings in 1943, the first to feature Prez (then back with Basie) truly alone, sounding supremely relaxed and in good company. Perfect music. Dinah Washington's debut session came to Keynote via Leonard Feather and features a Hampton sextet with clarinetist Rudy Rutherford worth his place. Interesting to note that all four sides are blues

pieces by producer Feather! As the *Down Beat* review put it, 'Dinah and the boys are in there all the way'. Quite. There follows a personal favourite of mine: Roy Eldridge's Little Jazz Ensemble teaming three trumpet masters, Emmett Berry, Joe Thomas and Roy himself, with a top rhythm section. Just to hear their *I Want to Be Happy* is to define, yes, jazz happiness. Lim's liking for such distinctive line-ups was his producing signature, even as CD 1 closes with two (from eight made for Lim in 1944) brilliant Coleman Hawkins sessions, the first with the on-form Eldridge and Teddy Wilson, the second minus Roy.

If all that were not enough, CD2 opens with a Cozy Cole session that includes Hawkins again and Earl Hines, plus the underrated Thomas and trombonist Trummy Young (I remember an LP reissue of these tracks with truncated solos; here they are fully restored!). Their performance of Young's *Thru for the Night* has always been a hot delight, relaxed yet masterfully hip. Everyone on form. As were the Basie-ites a month later with their Kansas City Seven/Five sides, Young alongside his pals Clayton, the idiosyncratic Wells, Jones and Basie (as 'Prince Charming'). Pliant, hard-swinging and irresistibly creative. The Charlie Shavers quintet (with Hines and altoist Tab Smith) has a hard act to follow. The Hodges-like Smith sounds slightly cheesy and Shavers is a tad too florid for my taste. Another of Lim's imaginative line-ups is next, billed as Coleman Hawkins and his Sax Ensemble: that's Smith again, plus Hawk, Don Byas and Harry Carney. Carney impresses as does the Hawk-inspired Byas, drummer Sid Catlett the kicker.

There's more Hawk on CD3 but the prize goes to Benny Morton's Trombone Choir; another Lim special, with Vic Dickenson, Claude Jones and the quirky Bill Harris, this sounding more exciting than the all-sax group. Multi-trombone outfits are commonplace now: this was the first to record. Gloriously too, as on *Once In A While*. Fellow trombonist Lawrence Brown turns up with the non-Lim Rex Stewart Big Eight, its four originals arranged by Brick Fleagle, and sufficiently individual



to be worth their place. Stewart's evocative *Swamp Mist* has a *Mood Indigo* feel, with Carney playing bass-clarinet. Trumpet ace Jonah Jones partners the excitable Shavers in The Keynoters with tenorist Budd Johnson sounding Prez-like and energetic, but it's the indefatigable Johnny Guarneri on piano who shines here as he does so often elsewhere. CD4 starts well with the wheezy altoist Pete Brown's All-Stars, Lim favourite Joe Thomas stately on trumpet, Milt Hinton and drummer J.C. Heard swinging like the proverbial. A more modern note is injected with Red Norvo's all-stars with dry-toned clarinetist Aaron Sachs and Wilson again, their *Seven Come Eleven* picking up cheerfully from where Hamp and BG left off. Guitarist Remo Palmieri scores here. More good things follow with bassist Billy Taylor's Big Eight with Johnny Hodges's sole appearance on Keynote, sumptuous as ever and Carney's lively *Carney-Val in Rhythm* with the forceful Emmett Berry and shouty trombonist Vernon Brown justifying that terrible pun. Jonah Jones lines up next with a cohort of his Calloway colleagues, trombonist Tyree Glenn's ripe tones to the fore. Final cuts here come from traditionalist George Hartman pitched in with some New Yorkers.

Half-way through CD5 the realisation dawns that Lim and company had recorded no less than seventeen sessions in 1944. So much for the stresses of war-time! This has more Norvo and Hawk, and Shavers and then a peach of a session: George Wettling's loose-limbed New Yorkers, with Hawkins, Joe Thomas and the impeccable Jack Teagarden, Herman Chittison on piano, on *Too Marvellous for Words*.

And so it was. A more contemporary sound follows as trumpeter Howard McGhee and Chubby Jackson's Herman mates zip through *Northwest Passage*, composer Ralph Burns on piano before Cozy Cole rounds up another Herman-ite Shorty Rogers for his session.

Talking of zipping through, we'll take CDs 6 to 11 on the run as space closes in, pausing only to commend Barney Bigard (with Thomas and Guanieri) and a rare outing by pianist Horace Henderson (brother of Fletcher) with the recently-deceased Eddie Bert on trombone. Clarinetist Irving Fazola pops up on CD7, Babe Russin on CD 8, with label producer Eric Bernay favouring established white players like Bud Freeman on Volume 8, echoed by Lim on CD9 with Red Rodney's *Beboppers* as his label swan-song.

Forgive the breathless tone of this over-view, but what with 243 sides spread over 62 sessions and a booklet running to 124 photo-packed pages, there's enough meat here for a book-length study. And why not, for this label (and its producers) provided a window on a long-gone world when the music's greatest practitioners were at one in their desire to create memorable music? Fresh Sound see this box set as a homage to the visionary Lim and rightly so. Don't do as I did and wait for thirty years for another reissue to come along. Beg, borrow or steal the loot, but buy now.

PETER VACHER

*It should be noted that this box set only contains the original Keynote issued takes; earlier compilations included alternative takes and part-takes, often revealing significant changes in individual solos etc.

BOOK REVIEWS



JAZZ ME BLUES: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF CHRIS BARBER

CHRIS BARBER WITH ALYN
SHIPTON

Equinox Publishing, hardback,
978 1 84553088 4, £19.95

Jazz Me Blues can certainly be described as 'long-awaited', by eager Chris Barber fans, but also by Chris himself and Alyn Shipton who first discussed the project in 1982! The question is, 'Is it worth the wait?' Overall the answer is undoubtedly yes because we learn all sorts of things about a remarkable career expressed in a simple readable style, but compared to what it could have been the result is disappointing.

As someone who knows a reasonable amount about Chris Barber's career – and, indeed, recognised his account of some events nearly word for word with an interview I did – I was still amazed at his range of activities and the numbers of the great and good he has been associated with. We all know about the American stars he brought over and toured, from Muddy Waters to Ray Nance, but on the page their quantity boggles the mind – and the amount of successful touring his band did in the States took me by surprise, as did the revelation that he nearly took Ed Hall on as a permanent band member. His association with Harold Pendleton led to launching the Marquee Club and with it many illustrious careers in blues and rock. The likes of Eric Clapton, George Harrison and Van Morrison figure in his story,

as, thanks to his interest in motor racing, do Graham Hill, Colin Chapman and many others.

One reason why some of Chris' major achievements were unfamiliar to me is that much of his career has been away from these shores, especially in Germany. For instance, he writes with pride of the Concerto for Jazz Trombone and Orchestra that Richard Hill wrote for him which was performed in East Berlin in 1986 and 1988, but has never been performed in Britain.

One of the points British readers will instantly turn to is the breach with Ken Colyer. In fact Chris writes with unfailing respect of Ken's playing, only criticising his inarticulate leadership, and suggests that conflict of musical interests was not the cause of Ken leaving the band. Simply Bill Colyer took too much on himself when he decided to sack the rhythm section of a band that was a co-operative organisation, not really Ken Colyer's Band.

However, there are several problems with *Jazz Me Blues*. For a start it is only 147 pages long (plus discography and index, both good, as far as I checked) and Chris Barber is far from the best at prioritising what is most important. He makes nothing of his private life. His parents sound fascinating. Both decidedly left-leaning, his father was apparently offered both a knighthood and the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer in Attlee's government while his mother became Mayor of Canterbury. Otilie Patterson's parents – Latvian and Irish – are similarly interesting, but both sets receive

scant attention. Of Chris' four wives, only Otilie gets more than a met-wed-divorced mention.

So the attention should be firmly on his musical career – and so it is, to a point. After charting the band's progress to the formation of the Jazz and Blues Band, he gets distracted and the Big Chris Barber Band is afforded 5 pages for its dozen years of existence. The cars he has owned and raced receive a 10-page chapter, with prices paid and registration numbers duly recorded.

Two impressions persist: of a planned longer book started long ago that has been rushed to a finish and of Alyn Shipton finding Chris' anecdotal style too random to translate into a balanced narrative. But, unsatisfactory as it is, the Barber autobiography is more than welcome – and the photographs are often quirkily interesting.

RON SIMPSON

MR. B - THE MUSIC & LIFE OF BILLY ECKSTINE

CARY GINELL

Hal Leonard Books, paperback,
978-1-4584-1980-4, \$18.99

US author Ginell is a prolific writer on jazz, an earlier study of Cannonball Adderley in this Hal Leonard Jazz Biography Series having earned him a high degree of praise. Now comes this account of the life of a significant African-American jazz figure whose vocal appeal (and good looks) enabled him to cross-over into lucrative mainstream popularity. Surprisingly, perhaps, this is the first Eckstine biography and happily for the reader, it is a well-made and carefully researched over-view of Mr. B's life. The prose style is plain-Jane, no flights of fancy nor over-much tedious detail but enough to make the story run and quite a story it is.

Significantly, Ginell has earned the co-operation of family Eckstine (the original spelling of his name) and Ed Eckstein, one of Mr. B's five sons, and a former President

of Mercury Records, contributes a warm Foreword. The Eckstine antecedents were white immigrants from Germany with Billy's grand-father the first to marry across the colour-line and Ginell has been diligent in tracking down appropriate census details and family lineages, these culminating in William Clarence Eckstein Jr.'s birth on July 8, 1914 in Pittsburgh, then America's eighth largest city. The youngster showed an early interest in music and following a move to Washington began to appear in local shows and to sing with local bands. Ginell documents these moves and the confining setbacks that arose in those segregated times crisply but of more moment to *Rag* readers will be his encapsulation of B's time with Earl Hines (this generating his great hits *Jelly, Jelly* and *Stormy Monday Blues*) and his subsequent championing of bebop via his own star-studded orchestra. Hugely successful as this was, he chose nonetheless to move into more popular waters with MGM Records, making hit records and building an impressive reputation as a top club and theatre performer.

It's also clear that he hankered to parlay his good looks into a viable Hollywood movie career. Sadly this never happened, due in part due to an unfortunate press photo that showed adoring white girls pressed against him. Thereafter, Eckstine continued as a Las Vegas favourite without ever finding the further hit records or receiving the film calls (although many were mooted) that his talents and personality warranted. While never short of well-paid engagements, the last period of his life seems to have been a disappointment to him, carrying a sense of treading water rather than the triumphant conclusion to a great career. He appears to have remained a jazzman at heart and seems always to have regretted distancing himself from the jazz world. The many illustrations, though quite small, are well reproduced on art paper and valuable. Eckstine died in 1993. He was 78.

PETER VACHER



**GUEST REVIEWER
DIGBY
FAIRWEATHER**

ALL THIS AND
SLOWLY
DETERIORATING
FAST

JIM GODBOLT.

*Proper Music Publishing,
hardback (with CD),
0956121284, £12.69*

A book no larger than the average CD cover (with a CD for added value) is not the kind of jazz publication that turns up on a reviewer's desk every day. But this is exactly what you get with the typically (and quite wonderfully) titled *All this and slowly deteriorating fast*, the self-written final testament from critic, author, commentator and agent, the late Jim Godbolt, who died at the age of 90 on January 10th 2013.

The book's subtitle, 'Memoirs of a Geriatric Jazz Buff', says a good deal about Jim's outwardly-presented view of both himself and the world. The surface-image that he chose to display to us – hasty, impatient and monosyllabic, quick to ill-humour and resentful of critique both public and otherwise – sometimes masked a man whose love of jazz infused his soul, lit up his private days and nights and carried him through a life which sometimes bounced him unmercifully on the waves of popular music fashion. But I did know Jim as well as most – and better than some. And in my view (as well as those of closer friends down the decades, including that benign beacon of gentle perception, Ron Rubin) he had – like Revivalist compadres James Asman, George Webb, George Melly and some few others – heard the pure call of New Orleans jazz as it re-surfaced in Britain after the war, and unflinchingly determined to traverse the musical paths of the next sixty years of the music as a

faithful (if regularly querulous) disciple. But as he affirms on the cover of his last-ever memoirs here: 'in this book I hope to show the funny side of my activities and accord (my jazz associates) the pleasure they have given me both on a personal level and from their music making'.

The result is a happy, constantly disarming and fully updated autobiography, offering warm and fresh personal recollections of his years as a manager (for personalities as diverse as bandleader Ambrose, Mick Mulligan and George Melly and the Swinging Blue Jeans) along with new insights into his contributions to British jazz autobiography and history. These, as we know, include his definitive *History of Jazz in Britain 1919-50* (wisely republished by Northway in 2005) and its accompanying 4 CD set of 100 sides; issued (like the volume under review) by Proper Music, and incorporating a 12000 word booklet by Jim that could, in other circumstances, have deservedly won him a Grammy. His twenty-six years as editor of *Jazz at Ronnie Scott's* – the club's one-time house magazine and known almost universally as 'JARS' – produced in due time his *Jazz Farrago* (Hampstead Press, 2008), a vivid document of a vital – if occasionally perilous – period in the club's history which clearly illustrates that Jim himself was capable of allowing himself to be taken less than seriously where appropriate. Looking back over delightful books such as these – as well as his irresistible *World of Jazz in Printed Ephemera and Collectibles* (Studio Editions, 1990) – I'm re-struck both by their intrinsically British character (no bad thing) and equally their author's obvious affection with the older worlds of Ambrose, Roy Fox, the Savoy Orpheans and their contemporaries; an *outré* world which, to his and our advantage, separated Jim from many of his contemporary commentators. My copy of *World of Jazz* is kindly dedicated 'to Dig – a kindred spirit indeed!' and I treasure both book and sentiment.

There are, of course, one or two bloopers and spelling errors despite the fine work of editor Matthew Wright but they really

don't detract from this utterly delightful volume. Its accompanying CD, compiled by the equally admirable Mike Pointon (beginning with *I heard the voice of a pork chop* by Ben Curry from 1928 and concluding fifteen tracks later with Ellington's *Dance of the Floradores*) again offers a sly yet revealing view of the author and his personal perspectives on life and music. In short *All this and slowly deteriorating fast* is a compact yet exquisite memorial to the life of a central figure in Britain's jazz culture, a tiny but permanent monument more valuable than any stone.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG,
MASTER OF
MODERNISM

THOMAS BROTHERS

*W.W. Norton & Co., hardback,
978 0 393 06582 4, £25.00*

Not so long ago it was still possible for a writer to attempt to cover all jazz history in a book of manageable size. Now it seems that the life and music of just one man, Louis Armstrong, can't be contained within one volume. In 2011 Ricky Ricardi's acclaimed *What a Wonderful World* concentrated on his later years and now Thomas Brothers' second volume (following *Louis Armstrong's New Orleans*) details the years from the early 1920s to the early 1930s. I have only seen an advance reading copy and am not sure if the official length of 720 pages is accurate: in my edition 465 pages of main text are followed by over 100 pages of discography, bibliography and notes – and the index has yet to be added!

So the first thing to be said about *Louis Armstrong, Master of Modernism* is that it is long, too long! Apart from being encumbered by prodigious knowledge that leads him into minute analysis, Thomas Brothers does tend to repeat himself and can hardly resist the temptation to summarise: for instance the final 12 page section, rather than a climax to the narrative, is simply recapitulation.

The second thing to be said is that it really is a valuable book. It's useful to be reminded how

much of an innovator Armstrong was in the 1920s, though Brothers' division of his achievement into his 'first modern style' and 'second modern style' is tiresome, as is his discovery that Louis' musical artistry is based on the 'fixed and variable' model. But Brothers has much to tell us. For much of the Chicago period he sensibly reverses the common apprehension of Louis' work. I must confess that I have tended to look on this time as the era of the Hot Five and Hot Seven and not pay too much attention to, for instance, Erskine Tate and his Vendome Orchestra. Brothers foregrounds the importance of his dancehall and theatre work – and also emphasises the extent to which Armstrong was a schooled musician well versed in playing classical solos. Conversely, though he sometimes gets into unhelpful speculation about attitudes to race, he has much to say on the subject that is very revealing – although a much more harmless manifestation of racism than many others, I was taken with the idea that black musicians on *Shuffle Along* learned all the music because the white audiences didn't like to think they could read music. Brothers' account of the manifestations of racism on Louis' return visit to New Orleans is also particularly revealing. On the other hand, he can be lazy in accepting stereotypes: his presentation of Fletcher Henderson as an unjazz academic purveying dance music to the talented tenth of middle-class black America has some truth in it and fits his theme well, but is monotonous and unskillful.

On the other hand – and *Master of Modernism* frequently summons up those four little words – the research is magnificent and the use of primary and secondary sources in the text exemplary, for example, the comments of Dave Peyton of the *Chicago Defender* (of whom I was aware only in a generalised way), the aspiring middle-class jazz-hating lover of classical music who finds it impossible to resist Louis Armstrong. On the strength of the advance copy, the illustrations are only adequate; on the other hand, it's well edited and fairly priced.

RON SIMPSON

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RON SIMPSON'S ROUND-UP OF RECENT CDS



Grant Green

According to Wikipedia, **Oscar Peterson** made 15 albums in 1959, so it's no surprise that Norman Granz was always on the lookout for different themes for recordings. It does, however, mean that **OSCAR PETERSON SECOND SET: THREE CLASSIC ALBUMS PLUS** (Avid AMSC 1109: 2 CDs, 157.36) is to an extent limited by the material. *Swinging Brass* (1959) finds Russell Garcia supplying the extra heft Peterson doesn't need and *My Fair Lady* (1958) tends towards the routine, though *Porgy and Bess* (1959) is decidedly more distinctive and packs more emotional clout. But it's only on the 'plus' tracks that the Peterson trio is heard at its exhilarating best: three 1952 tracks from JATP and half an album from the 1956 Stratford, Ontario, Shakespeare Festival, Peterson in prodigious form supported by the magnificent Ray Brown and superb guitar from Barney Kessel and Herb Ellis respectively. **Oscar Peterson** also shows up with **Ben Webster** on **DURING THIS TIME** (MIG 80212: 71.25), recorded in Hanover in 1972 when Webster had only months to live. There is no sign of this on the CD, with Webster romping through *Cotton Tail* and other Ellington favourites. His ballad treatments are less breathy than of yore, but I guess the added edginess is a modest concession to moving with the times. On the excellent accompanying DVD (plenty of good close-ups),

Webster shows his age, sitting down to play, but the whole performance radiates energy. Peterson, as always, has a surprising ability for such a dominant player to adjust to another musician's style and repertoire. A very different piano great, **Herbie Hancock**, burst on the scene at the age of 22 in 1962, with **TAKIN' OFF** (Essential Jazz Classics EJC 55630: 68.40), highly authoritative, though in a style more in the hard bop mainstream than his later recordings. The album consisted of six originals, beginning with a defining performance of *Watermelon Man*, and the CD is completed by three alternative takes and an attractive, but overlong and fairly conventional, trio treatment of the Burke-Van Heusen gem, *Like Someone in Love*, live in St. Louis in 1961. For *Takin' Off* Alfred Lion and Blue Note provided their young star with a terrific quintet, including Dexter Gordon and the marvellous Freddie Hubbard. At the same time RCA Victor assembled a stellar seven-piece for an outstanding 19-year-old vibes player on his second album under his own name: **WHO IS GARY BURTON?** (EJC 55627: 78.20). Burton's distinctive pianistic style is effectively in place here and he has the confidence to allow his sidemen their share of the glory. An outstanding track is *My Funny Valentine* with Tommy Flanagan's delicate statement of the verse followed by Clark Terry's beautiful treatment of the main

melody – enhanced by Burton's evocative harmonies. A mystery is the presence of Chris Swansen, billed on the current release as playing valve trombone and in the original sleeve note as an extra percussionist! But who is Chris Swansen? Trawling the internet reveals him as a multi-instrumentalist who later specialised in synthesisers – very helpful! Certainly he composed two of the tunes here, but they're none too memorable. The CD is completed by the quintet tracks from Joe Morello's *It's About Time* (Burton and Phil Woods given space to stretch out) and a complete LP, *Subtle Swing*, by Nashville guitarist and Elvis sideman Hank Garland with the then 17-year-old Burton.

Back at Blue Note,

REMEMBERING GRANT

GREEN (EJC 55626: 68.57) from 1961 is joyously simple – and simply joyous. The guitarist sticks to classy standards (Berlin, Gershwin, Kern-Hammerstein, Dietz-Schwartz, etc.) and decorates them with airy improvisations. The sparse sound of Green's single lines and piano-less accompaniment from the admirable Wilbur Ware and Al Harewood gives the whole thing a delightful lightness. The CD is completed by two unused tracks and two takes of *Woody 'n' You* with a quartet (Sonny Clark on piano) from the same year. At the other end of the experience scale, **BG IN HI-FI** (EJC 55625: 76.34) from 1954 is one of the best **Benny Goodman** recordings of the 1950s. With no regular big band through the period – and sometimes no small group, either – his jazz didn't grow organically and the problem with re-creations of his 1930s and early 1940s material is comparison with the first time round. But here that's no problem. The big band assembled for the recordings is a crack outfit, with redoubtable cornermen from the 1930s such as Chris Griffin, Vernon Brown and Hymie Schertzer, Teddy Wilson's natural successor Mel Powell and a young trumpet star Ruby Braff – and Neal Hefti's on hand to throw a few new arrangements into the Henderson mix. Small group sessions feature Powell and

either Braff or Charlie Shavers. Bonus tracks include overspill from the original sessions and four trio versions of 30s standards, also recorded in 1954. On the experimental side Avid's 'Classic Albums' series brings us two sadly short-lived multi-instrumentalists. **Roland Kirk's FOUR CLASSIC ALBUMS** (AMSC 1111: 2 CDs, 146.17) covers 1960-1962 and includes his two most famous early albums: *We Free Kings* (with its unforgettable flute version in 6/8 of the Christmas carol) and *Domino*. Of the earlier albums *Introducing Roland Kirk* benefits from the crisp trumpet of Ira Sullivan and *Kirk's Work* gets a rhythm and blues feel from the presence of Brother Jack McDuff. It's difficult to sum up the appeal of Roland Kirk: the seriousness of his work accompanied by whistles and sirens, the straight-ahead blues-based tenor sax alongside the two-at-once playing of strangely named military saxophones, the bizarre musical textures and the humming along with the flute. Getting on for 40 years after his death, Kirk remains an exhilarating presence. **Eric Dolphy's FOUR CLASSIC ALBUMS** (AMSC 1112: 2 CDs, 159.55) lives up its name, commencing with Dolphy's first album as leader, *Outward Bound* from 1960. G.W. sets out Dolphy's avant garde credentials in its explosive opening, but there is much more to him than that: a sensitive and technically perfect treatment on flute of Rodgers and Hart's *Glad to be Unhappy*, for instance. Freddie Hubbard's trumpet crackles with intent and Jaki Byard, George Tucker and Roy Haynes form the first of four superb rhythm sections on the CDs. Eric Dolphy helped define the role in jazz for flute and bass clarinet as well as playing high-intensity alto sax – and *Out There* finds him experimenting with the jazz line-up. In a piano-less quartet, the wonderful Ron Carter joins him on cello, sharing melody lines with Dolphy's alto or duetting with George Duvivier's bass. The final two LPs are less unusual, but a fine reminder of Dolphy's association with the supremely talented Booker Little who died shortly



Eric Dolphy

after the celebrated live session from the Five Spot in 1961.

MANCHESTER CONCERT

(In Crowd 996692: 2 CDs, 129.58) by **Miles Davis** is full of fine music despite certain oddities. It's billed as the 'complete' 1960 concert from the Free Trade Hall, but is made up from two concerts (the same evening, I think) totalling less than 100 minutes. Furthermore, *Walkin'* cuts out part way through – 'complete'? Matias Rinar's note dwells on Coltrane's quitting the group on an earlier tour and how Sonny Stitt is not Trane! With Sonny Stitt on tenor and alto, it's true that the quintet takes on a less experimental, more bebop-aligned feel, with Miles less inclined to introspection, but it's none the worse for that, with a formidable rhythm team (Wynton Kelly, Paul Chambers and Jimmy Cobb) in great form. The 'filler' tracks come from St. Louis in 1963, with an equally magnificent rhythm section (Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter and Tony Williams) supporting Miles and another saxist Rinar seems determined to play down as a stopgap, the excellent George Coleman. **Ahmad Jamal's THE COMPLETE 1961 ALHAMBRA PERFORMANCES** (EJC 55629: 2 CDs, 151.22) brings together 2 LPs, *Ahmad Jamal's Alhambra* and *All of You*, and adds in some unused tracks and a 1958 studio session. The performances feature his classic early trio, with Vernel Fournier and Israel Crosby, soon to die sadly early. Remarkably Ahmad Jamal has been lauded as the most influential figure in jazz after Charlie Parker and dismissed as a cocktail pianist. I find neither view tenable. What is certain is that his lyrical, melodically inventive, often witty versions of a superb set of standards, with Crosby and Fournier giving empathetic support, are unfailingly enjoyable.

The oddest of the new releases is very appealing in a decidedly Gallic way. **ORLIE** (Laborie LJ23: 48.23) features on the cover two very intellectual-looking and rather wild young people and this is a fair representation of the album. **Gregoire Gense** plays piano and 'objets' (meaning he finds things to hit or scrape), **Elodie Pasquier** plays clarinet and bass clarinet, between them they compose all the pieces, some with such quirky titles as *Presque Rien* (87 seconds mostly of pinging and clanking). Gense, to my ears clearly classically trained, can move from impressionist Debussy-ish melody to discordant percussive attacks on the keyboard. Similarly Pasquier, from mellifluous mood creation to squawks and screeches. I can't pretend it will regularly be on my CD player, but on occasional hearing the freshness and originality are a tonic. I didn't get so much pleasure out of **CRAVING COFFEE** (Losen Records LOS 127-2: 42.44) by **Rita Lovise**, though this, too, scores heavily for originality and variety. It very much reflects the talents and intentions of Rita Lovise Haugseggen, singer, composer and producer of the album. There are songs in both English and Norwegian and I found the first two heavy going, with portentously poetic lyrics ('Fallen vultures enhance my flaws') and over-dramatic delivery, whether whispered or declamatory. Pretty powerful, I guess, and there is strong support from pianist Bjorn Andor Drage and tenor saxist Henning Gravrok, but for me things only started to look up with track 3, *Arer av kull*, Norwegian lyrics and an attractive melody very well sung. The titles on **Ben van Gelder's REPRISE** (Pirouet PIT 3074: 43.56) are a bit of a give-away: *Crystalline*, *Evocation*, *Into Air it Disappears*. Van Gelder's compositions and his alto sax

improvisations are introspective and atmospheric, elusively melodic, not strongly rhythmic. His group includes vibes and rhythm section, all rather self-effacing, though highly-rated tenor saxist Mark Turner guests on two tracks. Of the new releases the most straightforward is an attractive live set (at the Ploughboy, Saltash) from **Roger Marks' Cornish Armada: DRIFTING AND DREAMING** (Leap Frog Records LF 9692: 64.39). The Cornish Armada takes on a rather more traditional colouring (banjo and sousaphone, for example) than Roger's main Armada Jazz Band, but the set is by no means predictable. Apart from the leader's gruffly fluent trombone, Graham Trevarton – by turns forthright and delicate on trumpet and cornet – impresses and the tune selection is first class. Following on the bold decision not to use any numbers of the Armada's repertoire, the likes of *San*, *East Coast Trot* and the title track come up fresh. *Beer Barrel Polka* is a bit corny, to be true, but other off-the-wall choices such as *Happy Days are Here Again* and

Auf Wiedersehen Sweetheart work well.

DELMARK 60 YEARS OF JAZZ (DE 916: 67.31) is rich with the variety of output of the Chicago-based label. The contrasts are there in the opening two tracks, Josh Berman & his Gang with an avant-garde approach to *Sugar* (2011) and Dewey Jackson belting out a happy-go-lucky version of *That's a Plenty* from 1952, with Don Ewell's mighty piano covering the lack of a bass. Tenor saxists figure to great effect on this sampler, from a previously unissued take of Lockjaw Davis on *Lover* from 1947 to Ira Sullivan's lyrical *Along Came Betty* in 2011, via Sonny Stitt and (my personal favourite) Red Holloway. The collection is oddly balanced between the early days and the 21st century – nothing in between – and only the broad-minded will enjoy both the tensions of Kahil el' Zabar's Ritual Trio with violinist Billy Bang and the Fat Babies doing the Bix thing (excellent cornetist Andy Schumm), but what's wrong with broad-mindedness?

Rita Lovise



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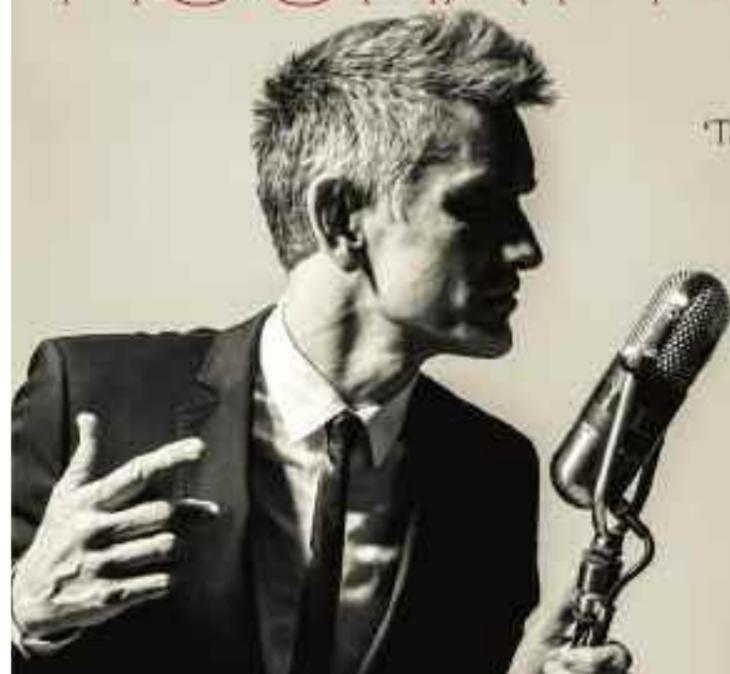
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