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UPFRONT

BRITISH JAZZ AWARDS RESULTS

Jazz Rag is delighted to announce the results of the 2014 British Jazz Awards: see pages 18-19. For nearly 30 years the awards have honoured the best in British jazz irrespective of fashion on the basis that class is permanent, fashion is temporary.

For this reason there is a certain similarity among the winners year on year, but who would sensibly deny great musicians such as Mark Nightingale and Alan Barnes their awards simply because they were already great musicians a decade or two back? However, it's always pleasing to find new names among the award-winners, especially when they are such fine musicians as Steve Waterman and Soweto Kinch who have somehow missed out in the past.

The individual and band winners of the Jazz Oscars and the trade awards for CDs are joined by a special award for Services to British Jazz, the only one nominated, not voted for on-line and via *Jazz Rag*. This year we are delighted that the award goes to Paul Adams, the inventive and indefatigable boss of Lake Records.



Larry Goldings

RONNIE'S AT CHRISTMAS

What with Main Shows, Late Late Shows, Lunch Shows and bands in Ronnie's Bar, the festive programme at London's Ronnie Scott's Club is so crowded that a few highlights must suffice. In residence most nights from December 15 to 30 are Ray Gelato's Giants and they are joined by Georgie Fame and the Ronnie Scott's All Stars for a Black Tie New Year's Eve Party. On December 26 and 27, the Giants take a break and Liane Carroll's *Christmas Carol!* is the main show. Christmas Cabaret Lunches are the order of the day and the late sessions feature such bands as the Brandon Allen Quartet (10/17), the Femi Temowo Quartet (12/13) and Fletch's Brew (5/6/19/20). Into the New Year, January's Main Shows include NYJO (5-7), Carleen Anderson (8-10), Booker T. Jones (14-17), Larry Goldings/Peter Bernstein/Bill Stewart (19/20) and the Harold Mabern Trio (21). The Sunday lunch-time sessions feature such bands as the Jive Aces (18) and Tipitina (25).
Tel.: 020 7439 0747
www.ronniescotts.co.uk

THE LAWRENCES IN 2015

Tony and Denise Lawrence's Jazz Weekends take a short Sabbatical for the colder weather, then resume on March 13-16 at the Wessex Hotel, Bournemouth. The formula is pretty much the successful one regularly adopted by the Lawrences, with possibly a touch more of a gourmet touch with a five course Gala Dinner. Otherwise expect an excellent hotel in a very pleasant place and with plenty of leisure activities and a moderate amount of jazz

from two or three other bands (in this case, the John Maddocks Jazzmen ad Kevin Grenfell's Jazz Giants) and Denise's own band with guest clarinetist (Ron Drake). April brings the Mercure Albrighton Hall Hotel & Spa, Shrewsbury (17-29, with the Grenfell Band again, the Phoenix Jazzmen, Annie Hawkins' Jazzmen and Denise and Tony as a duo) and May takes them to the Mercure Castle Hotel, Windsor (1-4, Dart Valley Stompers, Laurie Chescoe's Reunion Band and Ron Drake joining the Lawrence band) - and seven more weekends to come in 2015!
Tel.: 01189 690625
www.jazzbreaks.com

CHANGE OF VENUE AT STAFFORD

Stafford Jazz Society's Sunday lunch-time sessions continue at Stafford Rangers Social Club on December 7 with Martin Bennett's Swamplanders. However, the following week's Christmas Special sees a move to Stafford's White Eagle Polish Club, a move that continues with the 2015 concerts. Featuring on the Christmas Special are the Phoenix Jazzmen and Sheila Fawkes. The society has been running since 1981 and sees this move as a very positive step forward. Certainly Chairman Nick Balmforth's summary of its advantages is quite impressive: 'a bright and spacious hall accommodating audiences of up to 200....an elevated stage, a wooden dance floor, professional kitchen facilities, a well-stocked bar and a large, secure ad free car park' - and it's near the city centre!
Tel.: 01785 226950
www.staffordjazz.org

WATERMILL JAZZ

Watermill Jazz at the Friends Life Social Club in Dorking takes a rest in December except for the monthly Jam Session (7) on the first Sunday afternoon of every month, except for January - the second Sunday (11). The main Thursday club re-opens on January 8 with an early celebration of Billie Holiday's centenary: the Billie Holiday Songbook with Gwyneth Herbert and the Buck Clayton Legacy Band, led by Alyn Sipton, with such luminaries as Matthias Seuffert and Alan Barnes in the line-up. The Allison Neale Quartet (15), Larry Goldings/Peter Bernstein/Bill Stewart (22) and Dylan Howe's Subterraneans with the Music of David Bowie (29) follow. February starts with another anniversary celebration - Tubby Hayes's 80th - with a quintet headed by Simon Spillett and Bobby Wellins (5). After Jo Fooks Quartet (12) and Laura Jurd's Chaos Orchestra (19), Danish singer/songwriter/saxophonist Mads Mathias (26) completes the February programme.
Tel.: 07415 815784
www.watermilljazz.co.uk

KING PLEASURE AND THE BISCUIT BOYS

King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys are due to spend New Year's Eve at the Musician, Leicester. Other public gigs in December include Greystones, Sheffield (12) and Norwich Arts Centre (13). January 2015 takes the band to Artrix, Bromsgrove (3), the Tivoli, Wimborne (16), Ashcroft Arts Centre, Fareham (23) and Robin 2, Bilston (29).
Tel.: 0121 454 7020
www.kingpleasureandthebiscuitboys.com



Jo Fooks

BRISTOL PROGRAMME ANNOUNCED

The third Bristol Jazz & Blues Festival (March 6-8) has just announced a full and exciting event in the Colston Hall, with two main concert spaces: the Main Hall and the Lantern, plus the foyer. Between Friday evening and the two following afternoons and evenings, the Lantern hosts ten events and the Main Hall eight. Of especial interest is the presence of Ricky Riccardi, Curator of the Louis Armstrong Museum in Queens, New York. Ricky begins Saturday in the Lantern with a talk on Louis and also spends two weeks in Bristol, visiting local schools. Louis Armstrong is also honoured in a Sunday afternoon concert, with a 17-piece big band and New Orleanians Lillian Boutte, Evan Christopher and Don Vappie, featuring big band scores last played by Armstrong in 1947. Among other attractions are Ray Gelato and his Giants, the Bruce/Ilett Big Band, the Andy Sheppard Quartet, Django a la Creole with Evan Christopher, Bill Wyman's Rhythm Kings, the Huey Morgan and Pee Ellis Funk Assembly, and Dr. John.
Tel.: 0844 887 1500
www.bristoljazzandbluesfestival.co.uk

DECEMBER IN BARNES

The Bull's Head in Barnes has a nightly music programme, with varied jazz events figuring largely. In December the jazz and jazz-ish acts includes Chris Ingham with his 'Hoagy' Quartet (4), Sara Spade & the Noisy Boys, vintage acoustic swing with ukulele to the fore (7), Zeeteah Messiah, jazz/blues/reggae/pop singer (12), the Humphrey Lyttelton Band (16), the Samuel Eagles Quartet



Dr. John

(18), Art Themen (19), Bill Posters Will Be Band, with hints of Spike Jones (21/28) and Peter Miles and the Duncan Lamont Quartet (23).
Tel.: 020 8876 5241
www.thebullshead.com

MORE ELASTIC AT THE HALF MOON

Dick Laurie has been kind enough to give *Jazz Rag* (and, doubtless, everyone else) a stop press exclusive news story. The Elastic Band is booked in to the Half Moon, Putney, for 24 gigs in 2015, the first and third Sundays of the month. Ever the high-pressure salesman, Dick promises: 'Usual place, faces and tunes. You'll like it.'

UPCOMING EVENTS

The Stables at Wavendon kicks off December (2) with the appearance of singer/songwriter/saxophonist A.J. Brown on Stage 2. In the main auditorium smooth jazz star Euge Groove appears (4) before the traditional seasonal celebration in aid of Wavendon Allmusic Plan, Cleo's Christmas Show (11-13), with family and friends. January sees appearances on the Main Stage for Sax Appeal

(23) and the Syd Lawrence Orchestra (30), among others, whilst Stage 2 hosts Joanna Eden (23) and a resumption of Live Jazz Matters with pianist Tim Richards (25 - 11.30 am).
Tel.: 01908 280800
www.stables.org

Now celebrating ten years of presenting weekly jazz in Wilmslow, Graham Brook has a nicely varied programme of Tuesday Jazz and Swing at the Wilmslow Conservative Club. Rather mysteriously December 2 features Howard Murray and the Masked Jazzman with the Tom Kincaid Trio - which shows up again with John Hallam and Mike Hall (16). Shades of Shearing (9), Little Jo and her Jazzmen (23) and the Tom Kincaid All Stars (30) complete the December programme. The January programme features Zoe Gilby (6), Zoe Kyoti (13), Gilad Atzmon and Bruce Adams (20) and Alan Barnes and John Hallam (27). The Sinatra Swingers sessions at Cheadle Hulme Conservative Club on the first Thursday in the month now feature guest vocalists, Marilyn Royle on December 4. There is no show on January 1 and the series resumes on February 5 with Debbie Wilson.
Tel.: 01625 528336



Gilad Atzmon

Wakefield Jazz's Christmas celebration takes place on December 12 at Wakefield Sports Club, with the Steve Melling Trio joined by Dick Pearce and singer Esther Miller.
Tel.: 01977 680542
www.wakefieldjazz.org

Lady Sings the Blues, Val Wiseman's Billie Holiday show, kicks off its 2015 tour celebrating Billie's 100th at Durham's Gala Theatre on March 27. Further dates arranged so far include the New Vic at Newcastle-under-Lyme (April 27) and the Winter Gardens, Ventnor, IOW (May 3).
Tel.: 0121 454 7020
www.bigbearmusic.com

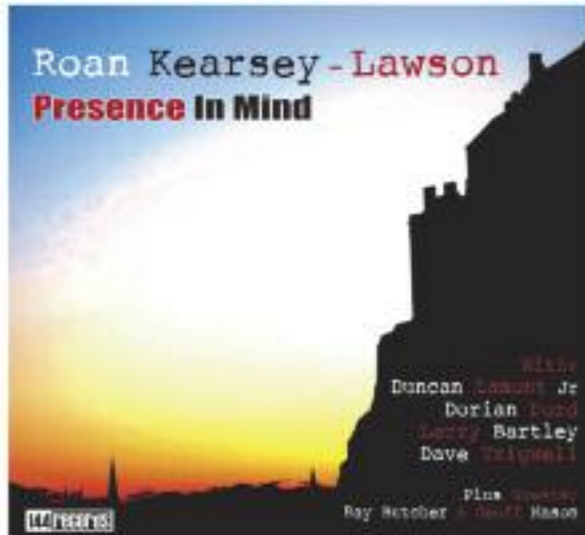
Wednesday night jazz at the Concorde Club in Eastleigh takes a Christmas break following the appearance of the Big Chris Barber Band on December 3. Friday nights with the Dave Lewin Trio continue throughout December, as does Sunday night jazz for dancing: the Big Bear Stompers (7), Brian White's French Quarter All Stars (14) and a Christmas Party with John Maddocks' Jazzmen and the Spitfire Sisters (21). When Wednesday jazz resumes, highlights include Echoes of Ellington (January 28) and Back to Basie (March 4). An extra

Friday night jazz gig features Curtis Stigers (February 6).
Tel.: 023 8061 3989
www.theconcordeclub.com

Southport Melodic Jazz, warming up for Jazz on a Winter's Weekend on February 2-5, have a splendid Christmas Special at the Royal Clifton Hotel on December 14. Alan Barnes leads an all-star octet for the premiere of his new suite based on Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* in the afternoon, followed by Christmas Dinner accompanied by Harry Hussey's accordion and a trio performance with Alan joined by two other members of the octet: David Newton and Simon Thorpe.
Tel.: 01704 541790
www.jazzinsouthport.co.uk

Tipitina pay a return visit to Ronnie Scott's on the lunch-time of January 25 and can also be heard at Swansea Jazzland on February 18.
Tel.: 0121 454 7020
www.bigbearmusic.com

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JERRY BROWN – A PERSONAL REFLECTION

A vast number of readers of this magazine will have CDs on their shelves purchased from Jerry Brown's Jazz 'n' Blues or from his record bars at various jazz functions around the country. Jerry had taken over J 'n' B after thirty years in the Police Force, originally working from home until his wife Ann couldn't get into the kitchen for photocopiers and stock. His newsletter became a lifeline for many with his detailed information of global CD releases.

Jerry, gregarious by nature, enjoyed the social aspects of the jazz scene, always happy to share a pint and a chat, became a well-known face around the country at the traditional jazz weekends and later at festivals in Keswick, Nairn and Southport with his record bar. He also travelled to the USA on many occasions to hear music in New York, Chautauqua and at the various Mat and Rachel Domber Arbors events.

Like many of us, Jerry became interested in jazz as a teenager and was quickly a supporter of Norwich Jazz Club and Jacquards, where artists such as Jimmy Witherspoon appeared on their Sunday night off from Ronnie Scott's. He would also become a stalwart of the Norwich Jazz Society until he sadly died in Papworth Hospital on September 29th, aged 71.

I got to know Jerry well in the early 2000s after he had moved the business to Lakenham Leisure Centre and decided to introduce a programme of live music, often using American musicians whose tours I organised. We were both involved with the Blackpool Jazz Party and the decision at the 2006 event to end it led Jerry, a week later, to suggest we do something together and the Norwich Jazz Party was born. For eight years from 2007 we presented what many musicians felt was the best of its kind anywhere in the world.

Audiences enjoyed the atmosphere, the variety of jazz and hearing many musicians they may otherwise never have heard live. Our pleasure was to see so many happy people and also to have raised funds for special charities with our raffle. None of it could have been achieved without our gallant helpers organised by Ann and Jerry in their own inimitable way!

Good friend Alan Barnes remarked that Jerry and I made strange bedfellows which is perhaps true, but I think we complemented each other. Jerry was very keen on the computer and I'm sure was frustrated by me not looking at my emails every day, often phoning me to see if I'd received one he had sent earlier in the day. Jerry liked making lists and within a week of finishing one party he would send a list of his proposals for the next year's cast. Me – I like to ponder and reflect and I probably infuriated him. We didn't agree

on all aspects of jazz or even some of the protagonists, but then that is the nature of the music. We did however agree on our finalised line-up for each party and I like to think we succeeded both musically and socially. We were always keen to support local talent and encourage young players and tried each year to include both aspects in the party.

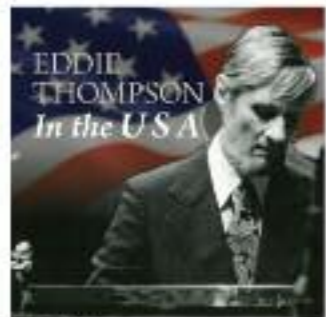
I will miss the phone calls, sometimes from the middle of a field at a festival with a report on events. The week will certainly not be the same without our conversations. Jerry was definitely a one-off with an unusual array of highly coloured shirts who will be missed by all and particularly by Ann, their two daughters and their families including five grandchildren.

BRIAN PEERLESS

Happy Christmas



CD2101 My Kinda Love Tina May featuring Frank Griffith, Freddie Gavita, Sammy Mayne, Nicol Thomson, Ian Laws, Julia Pearce, Dave Green and Winston Clifford. The Bowfiddle String Quartet. Guest soloists: Duncan Lamont and Jimuz Carmello.
Titles: My Kinda Love, Lazy Afternoon, Spook!, I Wish I Knew Where Were You In April, If You Should Go, A Sunday Kind of Love, An Occasional Man, You Came A Long Way From St. Louis, Haunted Heart, Manhattan In The Rain, I'm Through With Love.



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Titles: Cherry, How Are Things in Gloccaemorra, Shepherds Pie, Mood For Teachers, I Guess I'll Hang My Tears Out To Dry, Baby Mine, Home Brew, Bread For Ed, Chive Con Carne, Sassa Occasion, All Too Soon, Dancing on The Ceiling, Laura, St. Louis Blues, Liz.

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JIM SIMPSON

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Havill & Travis are very pleased to present an exhibition of Jim Simpson's photography. Many of you may know Jim through his production of the highly respected Birmingham International Jazz Festival or his management of Black Sabbath. Jim's photography of the 1960's was prolific and his collection documents an exciting and creative era of new bands in their formative years. In the early 1960s, Jim Simpson divided his time between playing trumpet with his band The Locomotive [who later hit with the Ska single "Rudi's In Love"] and taking photographs of Rock and Roll and blues musicians. By the end of the decade he had stopped playing, formed Big Bear Records, was managing Black Sabbath and photography had taken a back seat. Jim's work includes photography of The Rolling Stones, Little Richard, Black Sabbath, Nina Simone, Marianne Faithfull, Ginger Baker to name only a few. For those interested in music of that era and the local music history of Birmingham this exhibition really should not be missed.

For further information email: info@havillandtravis.com
www.havillandtravis.com

LADY SINGS THE BLUES

RON SIMPSON considers how to celebrate a notable centenary.



Billie Holiday

Next year no doubt the commemoration of Billie Holiday's centenary will be high on the agenda of jazz clubs, festivals, publications and, of course, lovers of the music. Billie Holiday, dubbed 'Lady Day' by Lester Young, widely considered the greatest of jazz singers, was born on April 7th, 1915, in Philadelphia and brought up in Baltimore. She started performing as a young teenager, but the major breakthrough came in 1933 when she was spotted by John Hammond and made her first recordings, *Riffin' the Scotch* and *Your Mother's Son-in-Law*, backed by a Benny Goodman-led group. Her 1930s recordings with all-star groups often led by Teddy Wilson, mostly of great popular songs and inferior popular songs she made sound great, cemented her reputation, but, as her career progressed, her personal tragedies gained as many column inches as her vocal achievements! Even her most compelling number, *Strange Fruit*, introduced to stunned audiences at Barney Josephson's Cafe Society in 1939, attracted attention mainly as a political statement.

Billie Holiday herself contributed to the myths surrounding her life by writing (or handing over to William Dufty to write) a notoriously unreliable autobiography, *Lady Sings the Blues*, in 1956 - ironically, Billie herself seldom sang the blues. *Lady Sings the Blues* later became an even more unreliable film, where a fine performance by Diana Ross was not enough to make it a convincing account of Lady Day.

In 1957 a memorable performance of *Fine and Mellow* on television's *The Sound of Jazz*, with Lester Young turning the clock back, reminded everyone that Billie Holiday was about more than drug and alcohol problems, abusive husbands and legal wrangles, but two years later she was dead, bringing to an end 27 years at the top, from when she took over the singing spot from Monette Moore at a New York club called Covan's - where she was to be spotted by John Hammond.

27 years is also the time that has elapsed since the first performance of a rather different *Lady Sings the Blues*, a celebration of Billie Holiday's songs performed by Val Wiseman and a group of the best British musicians. In July 1987 it was staged at the Birmingham International Jazz Festival. Since then it has been on the road, sometimes intermittently, but always to critical acclaim and enthusiastic audiences, and now Big Bear Music is arranging a new tour in 2015 to celebrate Billie's centenary.

Val explains that Birmingham Festival Director Jim Simpson put the show together because she was 'captivated' by Billie Holiday as a performer and wanted to build a concert round her idol. Tellingly she remembers that Pete Strange was commissioned to make arrangements and transcriptions that 'captured the sound of the early recordings.' A constant theme of Val's conversation is that *Lady Sings the Blues* presents Billie through her songs which were sometimes

decidedly buoyant. Too often there have been stage presentations dealing solely with her life problems, a Billie Holiday whose life ricocheted between brutal beatings and vain attempts to hide heroin scars. Val rejects the view that Billie was simply a sad victim and *Lady Sings the Blues*, whilst telling some of the tale of her declining health and brushes with the law, is overall a fairly optimistic evening - and a celebration of a great talent!

Commissioning new arrangements might seem a bit extravagant for a one-off performance, but those were easier times financially and anyway one show soon became scores of performances. In 1990 a studio recording was made for Big Bear Records, with an all-star line-up, including three musicians who are still regulars in the band 27 years later: Digby Fairweather, Roy Williams and Len Skeat. Also on the recording, which picked up a British Jazz Award, were Al Gay, Brian Lemon, Jim Douglas and Eddie Taylor.

Riffling through a collection of cuttings, it becomes obvious that *Lady Sings the Blues* was recognised as something special from the start. In *Crescendo* magazine the late Ken Rattenbury hurled compliment



Billie Holiday

after compliment at the album - 'this delicious package'. *German Jazz Music* opined, 'The British singer is in a class of her own.' It's interesting to see that the majority of reviewers picked up what the show is all about. Val herself explains that she wanted to put over the style and feel of Lady Day, especially her vulnerability, but by no means imitate her: 'I'm still very much me.' Pete Martin of *The Guardian*, reviewing a performance in Manchester in 1991, got the point: 'Ms Wiseman has...developed a vocal style which allows her to capture much of the spirit of Billie's recordings without submerging her own individuality.' Given her emphasis on the songs - both cheerful and melancholy - Val was probably less pleased with the headline, 'Sad Soul of Lady Day' the next year, though the review that followed was actually quite nice!

Lady Sings the Blues has done its share of travelling in Europe and beyond, with Val remembering gigs and festivals in Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, Norway, the Republic of Ireland and Tunisia. However, one booking in the Netherlands never happened, the promoter enthusiastic after listening to the album, but pulling out when photographs revealed

Val to be white! Apart from suggesting the authenticity of Val's vocal performance, it sets up nicely ironic references that she is sure Billie would have relished. After all Lady Day was a comparatively light-skinned African-African (some Irish ancestry!) and had to suffer the contrasting humiliations of applying dark make-up with the Basie band and using service lifts to avoid contact with customers and members of the white Artie Shaw band!

One aspect of the success of *Lady Sings the Blues* that Val is keen to emphasise is the quality of the accompanying group - and not only the quality, but the amount of team-work involved which is something she feels marks out the Teddy Wilson recordings as something special. Billie's soul-mate in many of these recordings was Lester Young, of course, but Val feels the musical relationship with Wilson himself was just as important. His playing, always in sympathy with the singer, reveals the importance of listening, a quality which has been shared by the two pianists who have been mainstays of the

Lady Sings the Blues band, Brian Lemon and Brian Dee. Val enthuses over the musicians who have played in the band over the years - and their ability to inspire each other and her own performances. Veterans of many years as first call for the band, apart from the original musicians, include Alan Barnes on reeds and drummers Ralph Salmins and Bobby Worth.

Not being a regular band and employing only high quality (and thus in demand) musicians, *Lady Sings the Blues* has always needed to call on outstanding depts and has indeed been graced by many of Britain's top players - and a few from elsewhere! From time to time Val and the others have been joined by special guests, on two occasions all-time jazz greats who had worked with Billie. The guitarist Mundell Lowe was featured on many late 1940s tracks by Lady Day and the pianist Nat Pierce actually played on *The Sound of Jazz* and his later recordings included a tribute to Billie Holiday with Rosemary Clooney. Thoughts of Nat Pierce prompt Val into reflecting on the many denizens of the *Lady Sings*



Val Wiseman

the Blues band who are no longer with us. She speaks fondly of two members of the original band, Al Gay and Brian Lemon, of the fine trombonist and superb arranger, the always underestimated Pete Strange, and of another distinguished guest with the band, Kenny Baker. Jeff Clyne - who her memory suggests was on the first Birmingham Festival performance, though not the album - was another who played occasionally with the band, as were Martin Drew and Bill LeSage. On the other hand, half the original band remains intact and the lists of British Jazz

Awards are always full of past, present and future LSTB depts: Bruce Adams, Mark Nightingale, Dave Newton, Julian Marc Stringle, Enrico Tomasso and the rest...

So hopefully 2015 will be one of *Lady Sings the Blues*' busy years. I guess, such is Billie's stature in jazz history, it will be a year full of tributes to her - in song and in drama, excellent, good, bad and downright unpleasant. For sure, file *Lady Sings the Blues* under 'excellent'.

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NEWPORT – NEVER PLAIN SAILING

RON SIMPSON finds a holiday photograph stirs his memory of events he never even attended.



Having mistimed a visit to Newport, Rhode Island, by a couple of weeks and missed the 2014 Jazz Festival, I was struck by these words on the Opera House marquee – by the way, the appeal for funds is for the Opera House, being refurbished, not the festival! My first reaction was to think how rightly proud we are of festivals such as Brecon and Birmingham which have clocked up only half that time (and in Brecon's case under different managements), then a moment's reflection and I realised that Newport and George Wein together have not staged 60 festivals. A moment's more reflection suggested that the circumstances of Newport make George Wein even more of the great survivor.

He was co-opted in 1954 to run the festival by rich socialites Elaine and Louis Lorillard – and the fact that Newport is home to the 'cottages' of the prodigiously rich and the patrons of the festival came from their number helped and hindered the festival. No fledgling festival got more attention from the media, but probably resentment of the super-rich helped fuel some of the riots and alternative festivals that occurred. In 1972, the year after riots involving gatecrashers, Newport Jazz Festival upped sticks and moved to New York City, moving back a decade later as half of a two-city festival with NYC. The Jazz Festival also found it hard to establish a permanent home in Newport. Beginning with

the Casino grounds, it soon moved to Freebody Park. Now it is settled in Fort Adams, also home to the Folk Festival.

I suspect that now Newport is just a very good jazz festival. Somehow, though, in the early days, it was part of the consciousness of jazz lovers who had never even considered making a trip to Rhode Island. So here are four memories of the heroic days of Newport....

July 7th, 1956

The events at Newport on this day were at least partly responsible for the fact that many of us were able to delight in an imperious Duke Ellington Orchestra in the late 1950s and 1960s. It's easy to take for granted the continuity and excellence of the great jazz orchestras, but none had got to the mid-1950s unscathed (even Count Basie had re-charged the batteries with a spell in charge of a small group) and the Ellington band was reportedly tired and listless and losing its grip on the jazz public. Enter George Wein who in the end got it right by getting it wrong.

Terry Teachout's *Duke* gives a model account of events which I drastically summarise here. Wein arranged for George Avakian to record the 1956 festival for Columbia and both Wein and Avakian put pressure on Ellington to produce a new suite, *The Newport Jazz Festival Suite* or some such. He and Billy

Strayhorn rapidly assembled three movements without great interest.

The concert began disastrously. Jimmy Hamilton, Clark Terry, Ray Nance and Jimmy Woode were unaccountably absent from the afternoon rehearsal and the opening of the evening concert. George Wein had had the none too clever idea of getting Ellington to play a short introductory set at the start of the evening and the main concert later. 'What are we, the animal act – the acrobats?', snapped the Duke, but it probably gave him a chance to deliver some kind of a pep talk between times. Still the performance of the suite was sloppy, Ellington didn't even pretend the overall work had a title! Things didn't improve and, when singer Jimmy Grissom had finished a flabby version of *Day In, Day Out*, something had to be done.

What he did was call *Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue*, originally performed in 1938 and which for some years had featured a 'wailing interval' of blues choruses by Paul Gonsalves between the two sections. That evening at Newport the tenor saxist totted up 27 choruses, driven on by two great big band drummers, Sam Woodyard and, shouting encouragement and beating the stage with a rolled up copy of *The Christian Science Monitor*, ex-Basie-ite Jo Jones, appearing at Newport with Teddy Wilson.



And that was it, the solo that saved the Ellington band. Of course it wasn't as simple as that, but the solo put life into a concert performance that was recorded and presented the Duke to the public in a more vital and up-to-the-minute light than in the previous year or two. This set up a virtuous circle of demand for the band, heightened industry and public perception and, along with this, an actual improvement in the band's music, even though, now and again, musicians were still liable to wander onstage late!

July 17th, 1956

'Dear gentlefolk of Newport...'

Thus begins one of jazz's hit records, by no means one of Cole Porter's best songs, but still regarded with affection because of the performers, Bing Crosby and Louis Armstrong. *High Society* was not a film about the Newport Jazz Festival (we had to wait four years for that), but it seems to me that already the association between patrician millionaires and low-down jazzmen somehow only worked with the added ingredient – Newport. For the record *High Society* was a musical re-make of *The Philadelphia Story* (pretty obviously not set in Newport) and was very sniffily received on its release on July 17th, 1956. Now it's among many people's favourite films; then critics panned Crosby and Grace Kelly and opined that it gained nothing from the move to Newport. Oh,



yes, it did – the jazz connection – and Armstrong and the All Stars. Incidentally the film received no Oscars, two nominations, both for musical features. It was doubly disqualified when nominated for the Best Picture Story: the story had been around since *The Philadelphia Story* two decades earlier and the wrong people were nominated, the writers of a Bowery Boys film called *High Society* in 1955!

July 4th, 1957

By the reckoning of those days this was Louis Armstrong's 57th birthday – in more innocent days it just seemed right that the great man should be born on the Fourth of July in 1900, so no one took the trouble till years later to find that he was actually born over a year later. This was also the day when Louis Armstrong chose to display the determination and stubbornness, and sense of obligation and entitlement, that lay beneath the perpetual smiles. I am indebted to a re-reading of Ricky Riccardi's excellent book *What a Wonderful World* for the details of the birthday party that went wrong.

Essentially the problem was that George Wein and the organisers saw July 4th as an individual celebration of Louis, but he saw it as a concert by his All Stars whom he regarded as family. Especially he was protective of Velma Middleton, on nobody's list of the world's greatest singers, but a larger-than-life entertainer/singer/dancer who fitted the All Stars' concert style perfectly.

When Louis arrived three hours before the concert, he found that he was due to perform with

virtually every act on the bill, including the three trombonists (apart from the All Stars' Trummy Young) he was most associated with: Kid Ory, J.C. Higginbottom and Jack Teagarden. The finale was to be with Ella Fitzgerald and then the assembled multitudes would sing *Happy Birthday*. This did not please Louis: 'We haven't rehearsed and I'm not going to go out there and make a fool out of myself. I go on with my band to close the show – no other way. We don't do less than an hour.'

Things got worse. One singer they thought was enough: Ella, not Velma. Velma heard the news and burst into tears. What followed was brilliantly described by Dan Morgenstern:

'Louis, who has fantastic ears, hears her crying. Suddenly he appears from the flap (of his private tent), wearing nothing but a handkerchief tied round his scalp. Shouts and alarms. Women shriek, grown men flinch, and everyone scatters to the winds, Louis's curses in their ears. Like an ancient African king he smites them with his righteous wrath.'

Then Louis proclaimed, 'I'm playing with my band and my singer and none of this other shit!'

And how did the evening turn out? A special Newport society dinner went ahead without its chief guest; Louis, the All Stars and Velma played a (by all accounts excellent) concert; Louis graciously played a trumpet obligato to Ella and Johnny Mercer's singing of *Happy Birthday*; finally the birthday boy studiously ignored whispers that

Ory and the rest were waiting to come on for a jam session, played the National Anthem and strode off, leaving his huge birthday cake untouched!

1958/1960

Bert Stern's film, *Jazz on a Summer's Day*, filmed at the 1958 festival and released in 1960, put a new phrase into the jazz vocabulary: how many festivals have you come across that use or adapt the phrase?

It is actually a surprisingly short film, some 85 minutes, given the number of great jazzmen to fit in, and I think most of us recall little snapshots of magic rather than the whole film:

Jimmy Giuffre, Bob Brookmeyer and Jim Hall playing *The Train and the River* against images that could more accurately be term 'The Boats and Long Island Sound'.

That amazing lady in a large hat deconstructing *Sweet Georgia Brown* – the wonderful Anita O'Day.

The slightly guilty feeling on realising that one of the most

enjoyable acts was Chuck Berry – even then jazz festivals could be fairly expansive in their definitions of jazz!

And here, as always, the strange link between the conservative establishment at play and the jazz musicians at work – not quite the animal act, as the Duke had claimed in a rare breach of his customary urbanity! The yachts of the America's Cup form a graceful and opulent background to the sounds of surprise and, of course, we have a band from Yale, Eli's Chosen Six, filmed by Stern in jolly and playful situations.

George Wein has been described as 'the most important non-musician in jazz history', though he is (or, at least was) an adequate jazz pianist.

Who would get your vote at jazz's most important non-musician? Norman Granz, Joe Glaser, John Hammond, Alfred Lion, Rudy van Gelder, Irving Mills.....?

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BRIAN LEMON (1937-2014)

Pianist Brian Lemon who died on October 11th had a remarkable career. From early days with the likes of the Freddy Randall and Alex Welsh days, later in his career he had long-term relationships with such groups as the Pizza Express All Stars and the band for Val Wiseman's *Lady Sings the Blues*. He played with a multitude of top Americans: Benny Goodman, Ruby Braff, Warren Vache, Scott Hamilton, and so many more. A multiple British Jazz Award winner, he finally had the remarkable tribute of a record label, Zephyr, set up to showcase his playing. Brian was very much a musician's musician, so *Jazz Rag* turned to the musicians for their memories of Brian.

Working with Brian Lemon was always a joy, an education, and a privilege. I first met him in the early 1980's at the Pizza Express in Dean Street, and was immediately struck by the depth of his musical knowledge and sensitivity. He simply knew every tune ever written, and played with a sensitivity and musicality that always left me in awe. Brian's solos were always improvised melodic statements that made you wonder where in the world he came up with them. Each was a unique and beautiful thing that lived in the moment he played them and then faded, only to be replaced by another equally or more inspiring. I seldom heard him repeat himself. He had the ability to play with heart breaking beauty while never sounding sappy or maudlin.

I was fortunate enough to have done many duet concerts with Brian, and always did my best to play up to his level. Brian was one of the world's best accompanists. He always made me sound better and feel comfortable. Not an easy thing to accomplish. While we never spoke of the specifics and there were no spoken lessons so to speak, every time I played with Brian I learned something. He took you to a place that was pure music and beauty. He was and will ever remain for me one of the very best musicians I have ever known.

I remember doing a recording for Zephyr with Alan Ganley, Dave Cliff and Dave Green. On the second day Brian Lemon showed up, and played one track with us. As usual he played a solo that left us all amazed. All we could do was look at each other with huge smiles on our faces and shake our heads in mutual wonder. It was always a gift to hear Brian, but being able to play with him

and share a part of that joyful, ethereal sonic world of his was a reward.

WARREN VACHÉ

Brian was a joy to work with in the early days of *Lady Sings the Blues*. He really captured the subtle nuances of Teddy Wilson and I treasure the fact that his intimate and very personal style is captured on the album we recorded of the show back in 1990. By his own admission he had a weakness for ladies' ankles and was partial to his favourite tippie, but he always insisted, quite indignantly, that the glass of wine captured on top of the piano on our album cover, was mine and not his!

VAL WISEMAN

It has been a privilege to have known Brian as a colleague and a friend and have lots of great memories. One especially comes to mind: as members of the Alex Welsh Legacy Band, we were recording a CD in Hamburg for Negel Heyer Records.

The musicians included, American trumpeter Tom Saunders, John Barnes (saxes), Roy Williams (trombone), Dave Shepherd (clarinet), Jim Douglas (guitar), Harvey Weston (bass) and Brian.

As always Brian played great, but one track in particular *Nobody but me*, which featured Brian and Roy Williams, is very special, I think it should be re-titled, 'Nobody But Brian Lemon'.

BOBBY WORTH

Much has been made of Brian's seemingly unassuming nature but I witnessed two occasions which belied that conception. The first was on a two-day recording session with a bigger-than-usual

Zephyr line-up. John Bune was paying some of the band and worriedly told me (as his assistant) that one of the musicians had demanded portage for two days when his instrument had in fact stayed overnight. 'Tell Brian,' said Bune. I did. 'I wish you hadn't told me that, dear boy,' said Brian. Within moments, though, gentle man turned into bandleader and the notoriously blustering miscreant had been discreetly persuaded of his 'mistake'.

On the second occasion he performed an exemplary feat of self-discipline. I sometimes met him at opening time at a pub round the corner from the recording studio. On this occasion we were to record three of his arrangements. 'How did they go?' I asked. 'They're still in my head,' was his morose response as he tackled the large brandy and a pint of beer which were serving as his breakfast. He took some manuscript paper from his briefcase and jotted down a few bars. With his conversation alternating between the brandy, the replenishing and the music, he covered the page with astonishing speed. This continued for nearly two hours as he applied himself courteously to the musical, social and conversational tasks to hand. We presented ourselves with time to spare at the studio, the three arrangements completed, the arranger refreshed and the Benign Gopher relieved.

DICK LAURIE Benign Gopher, Zephyr Records for 4 years

I first saw and heard Brian at the 100 Club, London, in the early sixties. He was with Sandy Brown in a band which included Al Fairweather, Tony Milliner, Brian

Prudence and the drummer, Benny Goodman. Brian's playing certainly was an eye opener, and pointed me in the direction to the kind of jazz I wanted to play, I was even lucky enough to 'sit in' with them on one occasion. At the time I had no idea that I would spend many years working alongside him, first with the Alex Welsh Band and later the Pizza Express All Stars, with many other things along the way.

I think some people were surprised when he joined Alex but he fitted in beautifully with the band, having a love for the 'Condon/Chicago' style of jazz. He reckoned one of his favourite jazz numbers was *Jazz Me Blues!* Memories which have always stayed with me are, getting a lift to a gig, and hearing on the CD player, what I thought was a recording of Teddy Wilson and Gene Krupa. I assumed it was one of those Robert Parker 'cleaned up' recordings, and was floored on being told that it was Brian and the drummer Allan Ganley. It was one of those marvellous John Bune Zephyr recordings with Ruby Braff, the great American cornet player, because of course Brian was greatly revered by many of the visiting American musicians.

Another fond memory of Brian was when he and I were invited to the Bern Jazz Festival in Switzerland. We were working with 'The World's Greatest Jazz Band' of Yank Lawson and Bob Haggart. Brian was asked to play a feature, which he was rather diffident about doing, but his performance of *Beautiful Friendship* had drummer Jake Hanna in raptures! It was one of the highlights of the festival.

There are so many things including the wonderful string

arrangements he did with guest soloists for the Jimmy Young Show - here I must pay tribute to producer Bill Bebb for his tireless efforts to get jazz played on the BBC.

So, farewell to a brilliant musician and dear friend. It was a privilege to have known him.

ROY WILLIAMS

I first met Brian in 1973 after the landlord of the jazz pub called The Mitre near the Blackwall Tunnel asked me to put a band together the same night! Monty Sunshine had dropped out and Charlie said, 'If you can get a band together you can have Monty's money!' - which was quite a lot.

So I put together my 'dream band' of the time - Henry Mackenzie, Tony Milliner, Ron Russell, Phil Franklyn and of course, Brian Lemon. Brian had probably never heard of me, but kindly came across town from Ealing to play the gig which turned (for me) into musical Heaven.

Afterwards we travelled back through the tunnel and I was struck by his gentleness and the fact that he spoke about the men he called 'The Masters'; Kenny Baker, Danny Moss, Tommy McQuater and more. And that was the first of many, many musical meetings over the next forty years.

Brian was a slow-talking, gentle and funny man who never said a bad word about anyone - a rare quality. It was my constant privilege to share a stand with him and Brian was - of course - himself a 'Master' of the highest order. I was proud to know - and play with - him and (like his galaxy of friends) will forget about him the moment I die.

DIGBY FAIRWEATHER

I'd played with Brian quite a few times in the 80's and 90's but really got to know him much better during the time he was recording with Zephyr Records in the 90's.

The owner and producer of the label, John Bune, was a great one for hyperbole and always addressed us by surname. We



always responded by calling him Mr Bune. His opening words were usually: 'Lemon is all fired up!' Not quite the description I would have used to describe Brian, joining him in the pub across the road for our usual morning pint and brandy.

One time Bune started off with, 'Lemon's all fired up - I've got him to do some new arrangements.' On the session Brian handed out pieces of blank manuscript. 'What's this one, Brian?' asked Roy Williams, scanning the empty page. 'It's *On the Alamo* - as it looks, tune, solos all round and then head for the hills,' was the response.

Brian was a superb pianist with an encyclopaedic knowledge of tunes and harmony. I once asked him if he could show me Harold Arlen's *A Sleepin' Bee* - a fairly obscure tune. He showed me the song copy changes, and then demonstrated the different ways Brian, Evans and Oscar Peterson had of playing the tune. Now, that's really knowing your stuff!

Noone who saw Brian duet with Ruby Braff could ever be in doubt as to the depth of his repertoire as he negotiated verses, choruses, key changes and anything else Ruby could throw at him.

He would often introduce himself as 'Lord Lemon of Ealing', usually followed by, 'I'm very rich, you know.' I always thought that this fooled nobody until one time

when we were both playing in New York with the Charlie Watts Tentet. In a bar across the road I asked for 'Large Brandy for Lord Lemon' and the staff were genuinely impressed. We had free drinks all night, while Brian talked of his castle and draining the moat etc. The evening ended in us being photographed with a Korean rock band.

The Zephyr sessions were often hilarious. Brian had a long drawn out way of telling a joke. He'd start and then, say, Allan Ganley would walk in half way through. 'Allan, you would enjoy this, I'm going to ask Roy's permission to start again - I'm sorry I keep laughing because I'm thinking of the punch line.' We'd get nearly to the end and Dave Green would come in. 'Dave, you would enjoy this, I'm going to ask Roy and Allan's permission, etc., etc'

Warren Vache was on a lot of the recordings alongside Tony Coe, both brilliant with entirely different approaches. Tony loved going into harmonic detail with Brian. Warren would growl, 'No wonder you lost the Empire,' and finally blow a whistle on a lanyard round his neck. 'OK, time's up, put on the light.'

Mr Bune had some great ideas and some stranger ones. 'Elton John songs in the style of Teddy Wilson' was one of the more radical ones which Lemon took with his usual calm, one eye closed against the smoke from his fag, replying with a sip of

brandy - 'Splendid, John,' and, a little quieter, 'over my dead body.'

One time Andy Panayi had been asked to arrange Weather Report's *Birdland*. He responded with a superb chart, but it was not a tune that interested Brian. 'Record that at the end,' he said. When the time came the piano part had disappeared. I had a sudden memory of earlier noticing a small fragment of manuscript floating in the toilet bowl of the studio. I'm sure it was an unrelated incident.

Towards the end, when he could no longer play, Brian would often come to Col jazz concerts near Chatham. 'Large brandy?' I'd ask. 'No, dear boy, those days are behind me.' 'OK - something else?' 'Large gin, please,' and then the trade mark, 'I leave the size to your discretion.'

Brian was a magnificent piano player and musician and was a man completely without malice. He could hear positive things in a player that others would have dismissed out of hand.

The last time I saw him, I sensed that all was not well. The large brandy I bought him at 8 o'clock was still on the table at midnight.

ALAN BARNES

THE 2014 MONTEREY JAZZ FESTIVAL

SCOTT YANOW reports



In 1958 when Jimmy Lyons founded the Monterey Jazz Festival (four years after the beginning of Newport), it presented major jazz artists over a September weekend at the Monterey Fairgrounds. 56 years later it still does, making it the longest running annual jazz festival held at its original location.

During the Monterey festival's early prime (1958-70), virtually every top jazz artist appeared at one time or another, from Louis Armstrong to the 1961 John Coltrane Sextet (featuring Eric Dolphy and Wes Montgomery). Among the many special performances were Dave Brubeck's *The Great Ambassadors*, Duke Ellington's *Suite Thursday* and Jon Hendricks' *Evolution Of The Blues*. The live recordings that were made at Monterey during 1964-67 included classic performances by Charles Mingus, John Handy, Charles Lloyd and the Don Ellis Big Band.

In the 1970s and '80s, Jimmy Lyons and the festival often seemed to be resting on their laurels with plenty of fine if predictable bop jam sessions but much less of the contemporary scene, whether it was fusion or the avant-garde. Lyons retired in 1991 and Tim Jackson took over as the festival's artistic director the following year, reinventing

the festival and opening it up to more modern and often cutting-edge jazz artists.

The number of stages has gradually increased from two to five, with two outside (including the main arena) and three in nightclubs on the Fairgrounds; there are also two other part-time stages. An indoor movie theatre gives one the opportunity to see what is going on at the main stage when it gets a bit cold outside. In addition to the music, over 100 vendors give fans an opportunity to shop and socialize throughout the weekend.

While most listeners catch one or two groups per hour, it is always my goal to see a bit of every single group, which can be difficult with five bands often playing simultaneously. I have learned to leave right after seeing an exciting highlight since invariably a ballad or an introduction to the band is next. If one gets the timing right, highpoints follow one after the other.

The 57th annual festival had a constant stream of performances covering a wide span of jazz (although extremely little pre bop) along with panel discussions, tributes, some blues and nonjazz (which traditionally takes up some of the venues on Saturday afternoon) and college

and high school groups (part of Sunday afternoon). I managed to see 48 groups in 2 1/2 days ranging from full sets to cameo appearances. 43 made very favourable impressions.

As fans joyfully entered the fairgrounds, they were greeted by the duo of pianist Jeremy Siskind and alto-saxophonist Caleb Curtis. Succeeding pianist-singer Judy Roberts and tenor-saxophonist Greg Fishman (who were great in previous years), Siskind and Curtis played high-quality versions of bop and swing classics including *Tricotism* and *Memories Of You*.

The main stage on Friday night offered Cecile McLorin Salvant, the Robert Glasper Experiment and Herbie Hancock. Ms. Salvant is a wonder, adding drama, fresh approaches, wit and superb musicianship to each song she interpreted. On *Yesterdays* she emphasized low notes worthy of Sarah Vaughan, her eccentric *The Trolley Song* would have been appreciated by Betty Carter; and her version of *Guess Who I Saw Today* was the best since Nancy Wilson's. Making it impossible to typecast her were her renditions of Bert Williams' 1905 tragicomedy *Nobody*, a saucy *I Wish I Could Shimmy Like My Sister Kate* (she knows 1920s jazz well) and an eerie *What A Little Moonlight Can Do* that made one realize what the moonlight could do.

Since Robert Glasper chose to emphasize repetitive R&B and Herbie Hancock merely trotted out his umpteenth versions of his hits (*Watermelon Man*, *Chameleon*, etc.), they can be quickly dismissed in favour of what was taking place elsewhere. A quintet co-led by singer Claudia Villela and tenor-saxophonist Harvey Wainapel performed enjoyable interpretations of bossa-nova classics from Stan Getz and the Gilbertos. Villela let us hear what Astrud Gilberto might have sounded like if she was also a skilled scat singer. The potentially significant young tenor-saxophonist Melissa Aldana was reminiscent of Sonny Rollins at times, playing post-bop originals

in a pianoless trio. Also showing future potential was pianist-singer Sarah McKenzie who displayed a lovely voice on *Got The Blues Tonight*, *Moon River* and *I Won't Dance*. Her group of young musicians from Berklee included fine soloists in tenor-saxophonist Daniel Rotem and guitarist Andrew Marzotto. Bassist Christian McBride had fun playing straight ahead jazz such as *East Of The Sun* in a trio with pianist Christian Sands and drummer Ulysses Owens Jr. While Sambada was a Latin dance group outside of jazz, it had an excellent keyboardist in Tammy Hall. Veteran pianist Harold Mabern was in top form during his trio performances with bassist Michael Zisman and drummer Peppe Merolla, particularly on *Mister Stitt* and *Cherokee*. In addition, Charles Lloyd made his first of three appearances, playing folk-oriented melodies on tenor and flute in a trio with tabla master Zakir Hussain (who also sang) and drummer Eric Harland.

On to Saturday, which had music for over 12 hours straight. Saturday afternoons are always quite a grab-bag. Organist Booker T. Jones played spirited R&B and soul music including his 1962 hit *Green Onions*. Red Baraat offered entertaining and danceable East European dance music that included several fine horn soloists and a virtuosic dancing sousaphonist (Jonathan Lampley). A sousaphonist was also part of Davina & The Vagabonds, a blues band led by pianist-singer Davina Sowers that included trumpet, trombone and drums. In addition to low-down blues and rollicking jams, they played a spirited *Shake That Thing*. Gary Clark, a superior guitarist and a personable singer, performed high-quality blues and roots music. From Cuba, Habaneros matched clarinetist Alden Ortuno Cebezas with a string quartet on charming traditional melodies that at times could be described as Cuban ragtime.

Drummer John Hanrahan paid tribute to John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* in the best possible way, by performing a fresh rendition of the full work with his quartet;



tenor-saxophonist Brian Gephart was excellent. The United States Air Force's 17-piece Commanders Jazz Ensemble played some hard-swinging arrangements on such pieces as Oliver Nelson's *Miss Fine*, *Groove Merchant* and *Lady Bird*. A blindfold test held by *Downbeat* magazine found guitarist Lionel Loueke guessing the identities of guitarists George Benson and Kurt Rosenwinkel, but not Kenny Burrell. A panel discussion on the 75-year history of the Blue Note label with its current president Don Was and Robert Glasper had particularly humorous storytelling by Bobby Hutcherson about Alfred Lion. Another panel discussion gave Harold Mabern, Donald Brown and Geoff Keezer opportunities to talk about the late pianists Mulgrew Miller and James Williams and the Memphis jazz scene. Warming up for that night's Laura Nyro tribute, singer Becca Stevens performed a variety of folk and pop music in her set while the remarkable Lisa Fischer sang soul and r&b for a packed house.

Overall it was not a bad way to spend an afternoon! Acting as a transition between day and night, an all-star group from the Blue Note label called Our Point Of View featured trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire, tenor-saxophonist Marcus Strickland, Lionel Loueke, keyboardist Robert Glasper (playing jazz this time), bassist Derrick Hodge and drummer Kendrick Scott performing stirring and competitive solos on new originals; Strickland often took honours.

Jason Moran is a brilliant modern pianist but his Fats Waller Dance Party was a flop. Moran chose to turn many of the songs from Waller's repertoire into one or

two-chord funk jams that had the themes popping up at irregular moments. The sophisticated joy of Waller's music was replaced by mundane 'modernizations', making his set rather disappointing and dull. Much better if often outside of jazz, pianist Billy Childs revived the music of late 1960s folk/pop singer Laura Nyro. Childs' group with altoist Steve Wilson, harpist Carol Robbins and a string quartet provided the jazz while Shawn Colvin, Becca Stevens and the powerful Lisa Fischer had two vocal features apiece. It worked well. Later that night at one of the nightclubs, Childs and his combo had an opportunity to stretch out on their own material including *Backwards Bop* and the pleading ballad *Stay*.

One of the bookings at Monterey made no real sense. The Roots, a hip hop/rap group with no jazz content, was one of the bands on the main stage on Saturday night. But luckily there was so much else to see. Christian McBride's Philadelphia Experiment with keyboardist Uri Caine played fine funk jazz. Charles Lloyd created melodic duets with pianist Gerald Clayton. Pete Escovedo led an 11-piece Latin jazz orchestra that delighted dancers and listeners alike. One had a rare chance to see pianist Donald Brown who led a quartet and creatively played the songs of James Williams and Mulgrew Miller. Another quartet, pianist Aaron Diehl's group with vibraphonist Warren Wolf, paid tribute to John Lewis and the Modern Jazz Quartet with his commissioned piece *Three Streams Of Expression*.

Sunday afternoons tend to be a bit slow if one skips the student bands, allowing one to more fully appreciate the festival's atmosphere. One of the

highpoints of the afternoon was a surprise. Michael Feinstein, the popular cabaret singer, showed his expertise with the Great American Songbook during an hour-long discussion in which he discussed (often with humour) the origins of many of those tunes. An interesting new singer, Youn Sun Nah, scatted very complex lines and held endless long notes during her duet set with guitarist Ulf Wakenius. Electric bassist Marcus Miller and his young sextet were both funky and very musical during a high-quality set that also included some straight ahead jamming; altoist Alex Han showed that he is a future great. Trumpeter Daniel Rosenbloom played some high-powered avant-funk with his quintet which co-starred altoist Gavin Templeton. On the minus side was pianist Jon Batiste & Stay Human. The group spent much of the time tearing apart standards in outlandish fashion but their jokes were not as good as their musicianship. The lack of subtlety and wit quickly became tiresome.

As day became night, the events at Monterey continued to speed up, leaving one in a happy daze. Drummer Brian Blade's Fellowship Band with Melvin Butler and Myron Walden on saxophones performed frequently-explosive and always-stimulating music. The bluesy Pamela Rose with organist Wayne De La Cruz was rollicking on *He Loves Nobody But Me* and highly expressive on *Close Your Eyes* and *It's Raining*. Harold Lopez-Nussa, one of many piano greats from Cuba, was passionate and often dazzling with his trio; he deserves to be much better known. Trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire, after having guested with several different groups, finally had his own set, leading a quintet that included the outstanding tenor-

saxophonist Walter Smith III. Tenor-saxophonist Ben Flocks played with the beauty of Stan Getz on *Stardust*. Organist Tony Monaco's trio with guitarist Bruce Forman gave listeners bop-oriented soul jazz. Michael Feinstein with a big band paid tribute to Frank Sinatra in versions ranging from respectful to corny. Two of his sidemen, guitarist Russell Malone and tenor-saxophonist Harry Allen, had their spots but should have also led their own sets. Drummer Eric Harland's *Voyager* (with Walter Smith on tenor, guitarist Julian Lage and pianist Taylor Eigsti) played colourful and exciting modern jazz, ranging from hard bop to free.

The festival closed with two of its oldest veterans providing bright moments. 79-year old pianist Ellis Marsalis, with a quartet featuring one of his sons Delfeayo on trombone, stole the show during a magical trio feature on *If I Were A Bell*. And Charles Lloyd at 76 showed that he was still at the peak of his powers. His third appearance at the festival was with his quartet (which included Jason Moran), with the highlights including lyrical versions of *What's New* and *Let My People Go*, plus a remake of his hit from the 1966 Monterey Jazz Festival, *Forest Flower*.

All in all, it was quite a weekend. It leaves one feeling optimistic about the modern jazz scene.

Scott Yanow, author of 11 jazz books and over 750 liner notes, has attended the last 28 Monterey Jazz Festivals. He can be contacted at scottyanowjazz@yahoo.com.



TIERNEY: FROM OMAHA TO PARIS

American singer TIERNEY SUTTON has made about a dozen albums since 1998, five of them Grammy-nominated, most of them featuring the Tierney Sutton Band. This was not the case, however, with her two most recent albums. RON SIMPSON asked the questions after Tierney's September dates at Ronnie Scott's.

The first time I encountered Tierney Sutton's work was almost 10 years ago with an excellent CD, *I'm with the Band*, and to an extent that title has summed up my impression of her work. The Tierney Sutton Band has been together for some 20 years, with virtually no change in personnel. Pianist Christian Jacob and drummer Ray Brinker have been regulars throughout and the story of the bassist sums up the unity of the group. Trey Henry was the original choice, but, when he was unavailable for some time, Kevin Axt was recruited. The group members – for TSB is very much a co-operative unit – liked Kevin, they liked Trey, so they solved the problem by using two bassists!

Tierney would say her musical education came from working with musicians. Born in Omaha, Nebraska, she has an impressive educational CV, including Wesleyan College in Connecticut, and the presence of Berklee on the list leads to the conclusion that she did ever-more advanced musical study at a variety of institutions. Not so – Tierney mentions more than once that her stay at Berklee was only brief and, in fact, she wasn't a Music major at Wesleyan:

'My degree is in Russian Language and Literature and I would say a lot of my education was from my bandmates and musicians I admired. I heard jazz in college and fell in love with it basically, but still continued on to get my degree in Russian. Then I went from Wesleyan to Berklee – briefly! When I moved to LA I just decided to jump in and ask questions. I transcribed a lot of things, I went to a lot of people's gigs to see what they were up to, I learned a lot of songs...I sort of learned as I went along – and still have a lot to learn!'

The Tierney Sutton Band dates from those early days in California in 1992. Though Tierney worked with many other musicians, they were enough of a



unit to begin recording together in 1996. Tierney is refreshingly free from ego: she pays a huge tribute to the members of the TSB and extols the virtues of co-operation which is a practical manifestation of her long-standing Baha'i beliefs – of which more later:

'I've had very rare luck in being able to play with such great musicians for so long. Somehow we've been able to share a lot of common musical aesthetics as well as ideas about why bother to do something. I know I have grown so much because of the relationship we have and I hope it's the same for them. It's not easy to do things co-operatively, but there is definitely a magic that comes out of finding something that emerges from the whole rather than a manifestation of one person's idea. That definitely resonates with my Baha'i beliefs; that is, that the best problem solving happens when there is both effort and detachment on the part of everyone involved.'

It might seem strange in view of

such comments that Tierney's last two albums on BFM Jazz were recorded without the band. *After Blue*, a Joni Mitchell tribute released in 2013, is an ambitious programme of sophisticated vocals with varied high-quality accompaniments: several tracks with the Turtle Island String Quartet, guest appearances from the likes of Hubert Laws and Al Jarreau, sterling contributions on half the tracks from pianist/organist Larry Goldings, either Peter Erskine or Ralph Humphrey on drums. Two of the more striking tracks, however, are the simplest: *Don't Go to Strangers* and *Answer Me, My Love*, standards not by Joni Mitchell, but loved by Tierney in Joni's versions, lovely relaxed performances accompanied only by guitar (Serge Merlaud) and bass (Kevin Axt). These, in fact, are a foretaste of her next album, *Paris Sessions*, recorded in 2012 and just released. So why not TSB on these albums? There is certainly no schism – Tierney expects her next album to feature the band – and the reason is simple, the product

basically of chance and circumstance:

'My Tierney Sutton band-mates were busy doing some other things, but also this project is one that resonated with me personally. It wasn't adopted as a TSBand idea. Also, right at the time I was thinking about the project, Peter Erskine, Larry Goldings, Al Jarreau and the Turtle Island String Quartet all came into my life – for various reasons. So the personnel emerged completely naturally.'

Tierney is accustomed to Grammy nominations and favourable critical response, but it seems to me that *After Blue* was greeted with unusual enthusiasm, almost giving the album instant classic status. Whatever the reasons for this, whether tailoring of different songs to particular accompaniments had anything to do with it, Tierney is in no doubt about the quality of the material or her reasons for choosing to do an album of Joni Mitchell songs:

'I've said many times that Joni

Mitchell is one of the rare post-1960 composers and lyricists whose songs stand up next to Mercer and Ellington. She's a genius and, honestly, I'm too accustomed to great songs to accept something else.'

It seemed to me that, at this stage of her career, Tierney Sutton needs a concept for an album. Starting out, it's possible simply to record songs you like and sing well, but, as time goes by, you need a specific identity to distinguish your latest album from the others. Tierney doesn't disagree as such, but enlarges on the theory:

'Frankly, I've always needed a "concept" to organise my thoughts. There's so many directions I can go at any given time, so it's always an invaluable first step to get an idea – a performer, a composer, a concept. Before Joni I'd done Sinatra (*Dancing in the Dark*), Bill Evans (*Blue in Green*), *Desire*, the pursuit of happiness (*On the Other Side*). In many cases an album starts with one concept and morphs into another: *Desire* began as Cole Porter and became a meditation on materialism.'

And what is the concept for *Paris Sessions*? It could best be described as a philosophy – and a musical partnership:

'I've made my career from re-working and re-imagining songs. I wanted to be a jazz musician with sophisticated time-signatures and harmony and all the rest. I still love those things, but at this point I have come full circle back to wanting to sing the song. Just sing the song and present, as clearly and emotionally as I can, the sense I feel in the song. That's what I tried to do with *Paris Sessions*.

'The album was basically spontaneous in that Kevin first played a note with Serge only hours before we recorded. We decided to play things we all knew – although I spent some time learning Serge's compositions. Everything was finished in less than two days.'

Paris Sessions is an overwhelmingly lyrical album, with poised and gently emotional interplay between Tierney's often

wordless vocals and Serge Merlaud's richly melodic guitar playing, all backed by unobtrusively sympathetic bass guitar from Kevin Axt. It's also an interesting commentary on the things they all knew. Apart from three Merlaud originals, the songs are sort of standards, but, with the odd exception such as *Body and Soul*, hardly familiar. *You're Nearer* is not the first number to spring to mind from the Rodgers and Hart Songbook! And why use Serge Merlaud rather than the TSB?

'I first met Serge Merlaud in 1992 – I had a week in Paris between gigs. At that time he introduced me to some music that was to influence the early albums of the TSB. He gave me Bill Evans' *You Must Believe in Spring* and Kenny Barron's *Landscapes*. I wore the records out and went on to record compositions and even one arrangement with the TSB. I really didn't see Serge again until 2012 and, when we got together and played, I was struck by the beauty and lyricism of his playing. Some people are just true lovers of music in a deep and entirely selfless way. Serge is like that and I felt it when I sang with him – and Kevin Axt felt it when he heard Serge's playing. There is an intimacy and emotion in this CD that I am very glad to be sharing at this time in my life and this time in the world. It's been called a listen-by-candlelight album and I say that it can lower blood pressure...'

The Tierney Sutton Band can't be a regular year-round touring band because of the other commitments of the in-demand musicians and Tierney's responsibilities as Vocal Department Chair at Los Angeles Music College, though she insists on a co-department head to run things smoothly when she gets her own particular show on the road. However, the TSB will probably be back in the recording studio for Tierney's follow-up to her two current highly distinctive albums.

Omitting consideration of Tierney Sutton's commitment to the Baha'i faith would be neglecting a key part of her work as a performer as well as of herself as a person. Brought up as an atheist, she discovered Baha'i about the time she discovered

jazz, in late teenage years. The first two impressions that drew her to it were the complete acceptance of inter-racial couples – something she had not seen in the liberal world of her parents – and the stress on our common humanity and the truth of multiple faiths.

Baha'i was founded in the 19th century and the element of its doctrine that seems to have most effect on Tierney as a musician is the belief that all the leaders of great religions (Abraham, Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha, etc.) were Messengers, bringing different truths. This inclusivity was expressed stylishly by Tierney in an interview with the *New York Times*: 'Spirituality grows in the elegant workings of human togetherness.'

And how does this affect the career of a highly respected jazz singer and bandleader?

'The Baha'i Faith has many writings about the importance of group problem-solving. The core Baha'i belief of the oneness of humanity (and the oneness of all the great religions of the world) has a clear relevance to

musicians. Our work is to be "in tune" with one another and to "harmonise". Quite often audiences tell me that my concerts have a devotional feeling about them and that they felt like they had been "at church". Yet I almost never do anything overtly religious. I also have the experience often (I just had it again while touring the *Paris Sessions* music with Serge and Kevin) where a club will warn me at the soundcheck that the audience will probably be loud and inattentive. But once we start (very quietly) you can hear a pin drop for the entire show. I think people are craving unity and I think they want to feel oneness among the musicians and with them. Another Baha'i concept is that any work done in a spirit of service is an act of worship, so from Baha'i perspective this work is devotional, like anything done in this spirit. My idea of the Baha'i spirit is that there is an end of the concept of "us and them" and maybe in the same sense there is an end to the dualism of "This is work and this is my spiritual life" – it's all one thing.'

www.tierneysutton.com

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- 3 Alan Barnes
- 4 Derek Nash
- 5 Sam Mayne

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- 2 Dennis Rollins
- 3 Roy Williams
- 4 Ian Bateman
- 5 Mark Bassey

TENOR SAX

- 1 KAREN SHARP
- 2 Simon Spillett
- 3 Art Themen
- 4 Robert Fowler
- 5 Alex Garnett

CLARINET

- 1 ALAN BARNES
- 2 Pete Long
- 3 Julian Marc Stringle
- 4 Mark Crooks
- 5 Shabaka Hutchings

PIANO

- 1 DAVE NEWTON
- 2 Zoe Rahman
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- 5 Derek Nash - Funkerdeen [Jazzziti]

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- 4 Dominic Ashworth
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- 3 Len Skeat
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- 5 Al Swainger

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COUNT BASIE CLASSICS

The latest in Warner's ORIGINAL ALBUMS series (0825646288502) presents the New Testament version of the COUNT BASIE ORCHESTRA in its early prime. *Jazz Rag* asked five musicians for their views on how these classic albums sound in 2014 and was also fortunate enough to get the comments of SCOTTY BARNHART, leader of the Count Basie Orchestra.

BASIE AT BIRDLAND

Classic Basie line-up; classic Basie repertoire. Even quite good reproduction for a live recording. If you take the dictionary definition of 'icon' to mean 'an object of particular admiration' then the Count is iconic as is the sound of his band. The leader's distinctive piano has never been convincingly emulated. Eddie Jones' constantly interesting walking bass lines and Freddie Green's unobtrusive, but ever-present guitar, tied together by the propulsive percussion of Sonny Payne, give you a matchless rhythm team.

The front line section-work is unbelievably precise but is saved from sounding mechanical by continuously shifting dynamics and tone colours, interspersed with superb solo work, particularly from the tenors of Budd Johnson and Frank Wess.

The titles, conjuring a world gone by, are none the less exciting for that: the very fast *Little Pony* with its shock-tactic ensembles and hair-raising tenor battle; the medium tempo *Blues Back Stage* sporting a trombone solo that emerges from unfathomable depths; and the perennial *One O'Clock Jump* all swing in that inimitable manner that gave the era its name. Times gone by perhaps, but never surpassed. **HUGH LEDIGO, jazz pianist and *Jazz Rag* reviewer**

THE ATOMIC MR. BASIE

Count Basie's first album for the Roulette Label became the definitive recording of Basie's sixteen men swinging. The pleasure of listening to this reissue was enhanced by the excellent sound from this transfer to CD, though the microscopic sleeve-notes were unreadable. 57 years have passed since the music was recorded, but the album has lost none of its appeal. Basie's Swingin' Machine

plays Neal Hefti's catchy arrangements with a relaxed unity of purpose, dynamics, swing, and perfect tempos; a lesson in how big-bands really should play. Hefti knew how to write for a jazz orchestra and - specifically, he knew how to write for Basie. Hefti's *Atomic* charts provided Count Basie with the framework of his concert programme for the next twenty years. The opener *The Kid From Red Bank*, Basie's up tempo feature, demonstrates what a great piano player he was. From then on come all those familiar arrangements sounding better than you remembered them: *Duet, After Supper, Flight Of The Foo Birds, Double-O, Teddy The Toad, Whirlybird, Midnite Blue, Splanky, Fantail*, and lastly, that musical duvet *Li'l Darlin'*. Well recorded, brilliantly written, timeless arrangements, played by the greatest big-band of all time.

PAUL LACEY, leader of the Back to Basie Orchestra

ONE MORE TIME

Recorded between December 1958 and January 1959, *One More Time* promises much, boasting as it does a real full strength A-Team version of the Basie band, featuring compositions by Quincy Jones. However, mainly due to some oddities in either the studio engineering or the remastering, we are presented with an aural picture of all this majesty which is curiously out of balance. Many of the solos sound as if the soloist is way off-mike, and the bass seems to be engineered in such a way that its middle-register frequencies clog the horns in a non-specific cloud of gloom. This reaches its low point in *The Midnite Sun Never Sets*, which puts the listener's ear right under the bells of the cup-muted trumpet section and Marshall Royal's alto some distance down the studio corridor!

It's not all bad news, though - for the committed listener who is prepared to hear the wood from the trees, we still have

magnificent chug of the classic Basie rhythm section, and in the case of *Muttnik* in particular, some ensemble playing with the swinging bite of the best of Basie. For those expecting the fully relaxed fire-breathing behemoth that the Basie-Jones alliance can assume, such as on the classic *It Might As Well Be Swing*, there will be an element of disappointment. Plenty of goodies for the die-hard Basieist though. That slow, slow *Lena And Lenny* - amazing!

PETE LONG, leader of big bands playing the music of Goodman and Ellington

BASIE/BENNETT

This 1959 disc by Tony Bennett and the Count Basie Orchestra is part of a long list of collaborations between the Count and a Who's Who of jazz and pop singers between the mid-50's and early 70's. At the time, Bennett was just beginning to hit his straps as a jazz singer having scored huge pop hits throughout the 50's. One could argue his interpretation at this 'early' stage had yet to reach the emotional levels of, say, his work with Bill Evans later on but, on the whole, he equips himself well, delivering eleven songs with gusto. The Basie aggregation, of course, are exemplary and swing their way through the Ralph Sharon charts as only they could. Sharon, Bennett's long time pianist/MD also plays in Basie's place on all but two of the tracks.

If there was a criticism; it's that some of the writing is a bit 'un-Basie'-like, but that would be in comparison to the Neal Hefti and Quincy Jones efforts for the Basie/Sinatra sessions of '62 and '64 that are so good it's almost unfair to compare.

DENNY ILETT guitarist and singer. Co-Leader of Bruce-Ilett Big Band.

CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

From the opening shuffle that builds into *Blues in Hoss' Flat* this album showcases the acclaimed

Basie Band of the late 1950's. This 1958 release typifies the old style simmering swing that is constantly threatening to come to the boil with frantic textures that could jump out of the pan at any point. However, the Chairman of the Board - Count Basie himself is very much in control of the temperature and his subtle yet authoritative piano makes a vibrant stamp on each track. The saxes bite and growl in *Kansas City Stomp*, the trumpets triumph in *The Deacon*, the woodwinds dance alongside the soloists in *Speaking of Sounds* and of course there is the famous trombone fanfare of *HRH - Her Royal Highness*. This is a truly versatile album that is a real celebration of a great band and the stunning arrangements of Thad Jones, Frank Foster, Frank Wess and Ernie Wilkins. The original stereo mix sounds fabulously warm and exciting and this pressing is complete with Leonard Feather's original liner notes. A must have for every jazz collection!

JAMES PEARSON, jazz pianist/Artistic Director at Ronnie Scott's Club

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Which Carolina-born musician joined the Basie band in 1937 and was still there at the time of the leader's death in 1984?

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Scotty with Endre Rice



Photo by Merlin Daleman

SCOTTY BARNHART SAYS....

Chairman Of The Board is perhaps my all time favourite Basie recording and the one I recommend most. The orchestra superbly demonstrates how in the late 1950s they had arrived at a level of blues-based sophistication and unparalleled swing. The original composition and arrangement of Frank Foster's *Blues In Hoss' Flat* sets the pace for the album and is probably the most perfect piece of music ever written for The Count Basie Orchestra. It stands the test of time because it has everything Basie insisted on in his arrangements such as the perfect tempo, which is held solidly by Basie, Freddie Green on guitar, Eddie Jones on bass, and the ever masterful Sonny Payne on drums, whispering and shouting the blues, space for Basie's perfectly placed solo, and several other solos with the most notable being the plunger of Joe Newman. We still play this every night and I inherited the trumpet solo some 20 years ago. It is a thrill beyond description to play it. Also worth noting is the excellent and forward thinking writing of Thad Jones on his composition and arrangement of *Speaking of Sounds*. Thad's use of the flute of Frank Wess and the bass clarinet of baritone saxophonist Charlie Fowlkes is groundbreaking. Thad then adds one of the most soulful trumpet solos in jazz history on top of it. Lastly, we have to acknowledge the superb contribution of Frank

Wess and his original composition of *Half Moon Street*. We played this at Frank's memorial service in New York in January 2014 and I put this on the set list every night. It's a masterpiece of precision writing and execution with nice solo changes to play over for the soloists. *Chairman of The Board* also got major promotion with the major motion picture *The Errand Boy* where he pantomimes to the shout chorus of Foster's *Blues In Hoss' Flat*. This is a classic album and definitely one of the top two or three Basie ever recorded.

The Atomic Mr. Basie was a groundbreaking album that opened the door for even more new and exciting arrangements for the orchestra. With the writing of Neal Hefti, which Basie edited in the studio to keep things clear and at the perfect tempo, the orchestra blazes through tunes like *The Kid From Red Bank*, which shows how the orchestra can play fast but still totally relaxed. Basie's piano solo is a textbook example of knowing what to play and also what not to play. *Splanky* also set a new precedent in playing in a 'laid back' style that this orchestra practically invented. Note how they play the shout chorus (after the soulful tenor solo), a series of 12 eight notes beginning at 1:54 or in the fifth measure after the shout chorus begins. No other orchestra in history had played this way before and it began a way of doing things for the orchestra

that has affected everything that came after. *The Atomic Basie* shows the orchestra's power and unprecedented swing that is supported by the greatest rhythm section for a big band in Basie, Freddie Green, Sonny Payne, and Eddie Jones. As evidence of Basie's genius, the great and wildly popular ballad of *Li'l Darlin'* by Hefti was originally an uptempo piece, but when Basie heard the first run through, he told Neal, 'That's not the right tempo...let's slow it down...' The rest is history as *Li'l Darlin'* became one of the top two or three ballads in jazz history for a jazz orchestra and it's still one of our most requested pieces to play each night. I also have the good fortune of having inherited the trumpet solo for this as well.

Hearing the Count Basie Orchestra play live is one of the greatest thrills anyone could have and *Basie Live At Birdland* is an outstanding example of hearing and feeling the energy in an atmosphere that is actually the best way to experience this orchestra. *Birdland* was the main place to hear live jazz in New York at that time in the late 50s and Basie did annual residencies there to the delight of anyone within a few hundred miles of New York. From the excellent arrangements of Frank Wess' *Segue In C*, Freddie Green's *Corner Pocket* (arranged by Ernie Wilkins), Wilkins' tour de force of Basie, which we still use to close our sets every single night, and Frank Foster's *Easin' It*, to his perfect display of the mixing the

old and the new with his original composition and arrangement of *Discomotion*, which we still play today, the abundance of outstanding soloists has to also be noted. On *Easin' It*, the entire trombone section and trumpet section trade four bars and demonstrate the seven distinct personalities as they swing the blues away. Frank Foster, perhaps Basie's most prolific and consistent arranger, who also hired me in 1993, is someone who needs to be mentioned with distinction. Of all of the arrangers who wrote for the orchestra, Frank's combination of deep blues understanding, writing the perfect rhythms for the saxes and brass, and knowing what not to write, is why his work personifies Basie's intent and desires for how he wanted his orchestra to sound. And Frank was in his early 20s when he was writing these tunes! *Basie At Birdland* is also a great way to hear the soloists stretch out. Quincy Jones also contributes a masterpiece in *I Needs To Be Bee'd With*. The tempo is perfectly Basie and it allows for Basie to take his time and play one of his classic solos. The trombone of Quentin 'Butter' Jackson takes over while Q's background riffs for the horns provide one of the most solid blues-based cushions for a soloist (Jackson is the lucky one) to play on top of. This album should be played at parties and just whenever one wants to invoke a happy and friendly atmosphere wherever one might be.

TUBBY HAYES

ENGLAND'S FOREMOST
TENOR SAX MEETS U.S.
JAZZ GREATS

Fresh Sound Records FSR-CD
839 2 CDs 74:53/63:35

In reviewing this new 2-CD set, I have to first declare an interest, having provided notes to accompany the previously unreleased session which concludes disc 2.

Virtually any rediscovered Hayes is worthy of attention, but these Boston-TV recordings find him at close to his peak. Just listen to the torrid invention of *Opus Ocean*, for example. There's also a neat interview with show host Herb Pomeroy on which Tubbs puts the argument for British jazz.

However, by no means does this 'new' material overshadow the impact of remainder of this set, which includes both Hayes' US recorded albums *Tubby The Tenor* (1961) and *Tubby's Back In Town* (1962). OK, so long time TH collectors will already have this material - first issued in the UK on Fontana - but beautiful remastering and the inclusion of the rarer US label art work and sleeve notes make this collection a must. Highlights come thick and fast, proving time and again how Hayes could more than hold his own in the heaviest of company: try the virtuoso account of *Airegin* on disc one, or the three-sax jam with James Moody and Roland Kirk on *Stitt's Tune*, during which Hayes slams down a truly formidable gauntlet. The Boston session also includes a nice

reminder of Tubby's more lyrical side on *Sometime Ago*, a gently waltzing excursion containing some of his finest flute work. Very highly recommended.

SIMON SPILLETT

CHARLIE WOOD

NEW SOUVENIRS

Perdido DOR 1401: 51.42

Memphis-born Charlie Wood is often loosely categorised as a blues singer/pianist. However, his first studio album to be recorded in the UK, co-produced with his wife Jacqui Dankworth, reveals a much wider range than that implies. All 12 songs are originals, with the opener, *No Repose*, pleasingly suggestive of early Randy Newman, even in the piano style, the vocalising rather smoother. The funky *Music is My Monkey* gets nearer his roots, the vocal style more abrasive and from time to time his years leading a Hammond organ trio show to great effect, but by and large this is a very thoughtful album, seldom harsh, often melancholy despite the chirpiness of songs like *Detache*. It's not surprising that the publicity emphasises the quality of the lyric writing, not that Charlie Wood is any slouch at writing melody: sometimes repetitive maybe, but a much more attractive set of tunes than on most self-composed albums. Production and accompaniment are excellent, with the long central song, the conversationally soulful *Don't Think*, boosted by fine interplay between Wood's piano and Ben Castle's saxophone, the strings used

subtly and effectively, as they are behind Tom Walsh's keening trumpet on *Until the Fall*. Chris Allard on guitar makes the most of his solo opportunities and Dudley Phillips, Nic France and Mark Nightingale complete a fine backing group (Ms. Dankworth backing vocals) aided at times by a double string quartet under Magnus Johnston.

RON SIMPSON

BUDDY TATE

SWINGSVILLE SESSIONS

Fresh Sound Records FSR-CD
835 2 CDs 112.00

Texan saxophonist and clarinetist Buddy Tate is a somewhat forgotten character these days. He made his name with a band led by Andy Kirk but is probably best known as a member of Count Basie's band which he joined in 1939 and with whom he stayed until 1948. After leaving Basie, Tate found success on his own, starting in Harlem in 1953. The three albums re-issued here cover the period 1959 to 1961 and comprise *Tate's Date*, *Tate-A-Tate* and *Groovin' with Buddy Tate* and together form a delightful package of generally easy swinging blues and jazz standards. The first set is by a seven piece group with a front line of trumpet, trombone, tenor and baritone sax plus a conventional rhythm section. As good as this set is, *Tate-A-Tate* is even better, being a quintet with the wonderfully chuckling sound of fellow former Basie-ite Clark Terry providing his customary 'twinkling musical merriment' on trumpet and flugelhorn, in contrast to Tate's darker tone. The ever reliable Tommy Flanagan is in support on piano.

Groovin' is a quintet with a front line of Tate and guitarist Wally Richardson and we also get to hear a little of Tate's clarinet too. Tate was one of the great tenors of the swing era with a full-bodied, at times, almost overwhelming sound. This is a most enjoyable, 'compulsively swinging collection of easy blowing sessions'. The original, informative liner notes are included too.

ALAN MUSSON

SUE RANEY

COMPLETE CAPITOL YEARS
1956-1960

Fresh Sound FSR-CD811
101.50

I think that it is a fairly accepted fact that most jazz fans appreciate good singers. Especially singers who can instil some jazz phrasing into their styles and, because there is a dearth of jazz vocalists, and in our enthusiasm to spot new candidates, we often give credit to quality singers that have little to do with jazz.

Such a case is Sue Raney. In the 1950s Sue was a quality singer of pop songs: good voice, good range, good diction. All these things but it would be a stretch to include her in the jazz category.

She was the vocalist with the Ray Anthony band at the early age of eighteen and she had been singing semi-professionally from the age of four. So she knew her way around a song.

Capitol were impressed and made a worthy effort to launch her career as a ballad singer but that was at the time that rock 'n roll was in the ascendant at that time and she fell into that black hole which enveloped all singers of her style. The record company even gave her Nelson Riddle and Billy May to help her on her way. Unfortunately they not give any of these talented people the quality material which might have just made it all happen for her. Instead they tried to re-launch her with some pallid rock 'n roll songs.

I can't find anything on these 40 tracks which remotely relates to jazz. She sings with a confidence beyond her years but, occasionally, she seems not too certain about the melody and her up tempo numbers are more of an attempt to achieve a rock 'n roll beat.

Sue Raney is a superior singer but don't think Ella. Think Doris Day.

JOHN MARTIN

JOHNNY HODGES &
EARL HINES

COMPLETE RECORDINGS

Solar Records 4569947 : 2 CDs,
72:32/ 67:53

The ongoing CD reissuing of classic jazz LPs supplies a treasure trove for younger listeners, as well as, for longer-termers like me, providing gems missed the first time around. The three albums contained here, from 1966 and 1967, came out when, more than listening, I was spending time interviewing everybody, including the relaxed Mr Hodges and the smiling Mr Hines. So it's nice to hear them now.

Once Upon A Time is a mixed bag of seven performances, showing the pianist in a big band setting. It means he takes his turn for solo space among a bunch of outspoken Ellingtonians, plus the unique clarinet of Pee Wee Russell. One track, *Fantastic, That's You* is by a quartet, featuring the more conventional clarinet concept of Jimmy Hamilton, elsewhere heard on tenor. Another good change-over is trumpeter/violinist Ray Nance displaying his vocal prowess on the lusty *Blues In My Flat*. Hines shines brightest on one of his own songs, *You Can Depend On Me*.

That Hodges also eloquence comes into its own on two small group sessions teaming him with Hines - *Stride Right* and *Swing's Our Thing*. On the first of these, guitarist Kenny Burrell contributes strongly. Hines' happy romping enlivens his *Rosetta*, and Hodges takes off mightily on *C Jam Blues*. The later date brings back Hamilton and fellow Ellington sidemen Cat Anderson (trumpet) and Buster Cooper (trombone), and adds another, Sam Woodyard on drums. And the ten tracks typify something that is occasionally evident - here are seven musicians who are palpably having a very good time. The fun leaps out to the listener.

Sadly, these double albums can be padded out with lesser material. In this case, it's the contents of three 78s, which are largely mediocre female vocals. Then five from an LP that are permeated

by some obnoxious male singing. Ignore these - enjoy the impeccable majority.

LES TOMKINS

HART/GREEN/RIDLEY/
BROWN

MJQ CELEBRATION

King's Gambit KGR001 66.30

The late Mike Garrick first conceived the idea of a tribute group devoted to the music of the Modern Jazz Quartet, enlisting vibist Jim Hart, bassist Matt Ridley and drummer Steve Brown to complete his quartet. I heard their debut appearance at Swanage jazz festival and felt straightaway that they were on to something, especially given Mike's own quirky touches and Hart's invariable creativity.

So no direct note-for-note replications for this foursome, rather a fresh look at a familiar repertoire, now with pianist Barry Green in for the departed Garrick. Subsequent hearings have only confirmed my initial view and there has often been the added bonus of alternating tenorists Alan Barnes and Dave O'Higgins for that part of the back-story that brings in the MJQ's collaborations on record with Sonny Rollins. Since those early days, the group has become a regular feature at club and festival appearances up and down the country and gathered the most fulsome of compliments. Deservedly so.

For their debut recording on Ridley's own label, the quartet adds O'Higgins as 'special guest' and it's pleasing to report that the original concept hangs together really well. From the pristine opening to *The Golden Striker* with Ridley following the Percy Heath line perfectly right through to Green's probing solo interjections and Hart's ebullience, the group sounds animated and involved. While this music may seem simple at first hearing, the component parts need to be well-judged and balanced, with no over-playing or sudden departures from the script. Hart is a wonder of the age, of course, with Green, Brown and Ridley not far behind. I loved O'Higgins on the Rollins

driver *The Stopper*, fast-moving and fluent, with Hart and Green flying, and for me, it's the best thing on the album, with Brown at his best. Buy without hesitation - even better, catch the band live.

PETER VACHER

KEN MATHIESON'S
CLASSIC JAZZ
ORCHESTRA

CLARINET GUMBO

Lake LACD333 63.38

There's a discussion raging in certain jazz circles about replication; the practice of faithfully reproducing a past classic either as a mark of respect or as a rite of passage. One musician likened it to wearing someone else's underwear and poured scorn on its value. These thoughts are prompted by what Mathieson is seeking to do here with his Classic Jazz Orchestra and their evocation of the New Orleans Clarinet Tradition. Happily, he has come up with a fresh approach to the period material that he has selected, idiomatic for sure but vivacious, the musicianship of a high order and the inclusion of travelling clarinet star and New Orleans scholar Evan Christopher adding an extra layer of class.

Casting any hesitations aside, it's worth saying straightaway that Mathieson has worked hard to find pieces that suit Christopher and the playing of his cohort is both accomplished and pleasing. There are little-known rarities like Jelly Roll's *Stop & Go* and *Ganjam* which the great man never recorded and which Mathieson has adapted from printed lead sheets, through to *Jelly Roll* by Charles Mingus, re-imagined for this classic line-up of trumpet, trombone, three reeds, piano, bass, & drums plus Christopher as clarinet soloist. Bechet, whose *Moulin A Café* is played by a clarinet trio, and then Bigard and Simeon each get a look-in, via original pieces and a version of *Black Bottom Stomp* (taken fast) where Evan has the Simeon tone and feel to a T. Engaging, varied and yes, valid so forget the underwear jibe for

these guys swing hard, in part thanks to the leader's lively drumming and their music should please anyone with an open mind and ear.

PETER VACHER

MANNY ALBAM –
ERNIE WILKINS AND
THEIR ORCHESTRA

THE DRUM SUITE

Fresh Sound Records FSR-CD
837: 66.22

A wonderful release including not only *The Drum Suite* but also *Son of Drum Suite*.

Drum Suite is described as a musical portrait of eight arms from six angles. The power of the four drummers together with saxophonist Hal McKusick and trumpeter Joe Newman get things off to a rousing start. Issued in 1956 and selling almost 100,000 copies, this six-part suite is a delight throughout. The drum solos are written, with no one allocated more than eight bars at a time. The drums never overwhelm the melodic, carefully constructed sketches in which drums are allowed to shine. Albam and Wilkins – both outstanding composers and arrangers – work their magic with aplomb. On *Bristling* we have brushes backing a quartet of trumpet, alto, tenor and trombone. There are interesting tonal colours with the band including English horn and piccolo. The recording made the most of the techniques of the time and *Son of Drum Suite*, recorded some four years later, exploited to the full the new stereo sound. No less than five drummers were assembled in a wide semicircle to enhance the stereo sound. There are no self-indulgent, long drum solos. Charts were provided by Al Cohn and amongst the soloists are Clark Terry and Bob Brookmeyer.

This is a welcome addition to the Fresh Sound catalogue and the 24 Bit digitally remastered sound is a bonus.

ALAN MUSSON



Tubby Hayes



Sarah Moule

SARAH MOULE

SONGS FROM THE FLOATING WORLD

Red Ram RAM 002 53.00

Presentation is not of prime importance, but it often helps. So why does this album have a front cover which is disconcertingly gloomy? Sarah Moule appears as a ghostly face looming out of a dark background. A Google search shows plenty of photographs in which Sarah is undoubtedly attractive, but the choice of this cover picture is a mistake.

Thankfully the music is much more appealing. Sarah has long been renowned as an interpreter of songs by Fran Landesman, and ten of the 16 tracks on this CD have lyrics by Fran set to music by pianist Simon Wallace, Sarah's reliable accompanist. Landesman lyrics are noted for being literate and often ironic, as in the opening *Lord I Wanna Be Good*, a desire which is qualified by 'But please not right away'. And the jazz standards benefit from fresh approaches. For instance, Sarah takes *I've Got You Under My Skin* as a delicate ballad.

I'm not usually a great fan of contemporary vocalists, many of whom tend to sing out of tune and without any jazz feeling. But Sarah Moule wins me over by singing in tune with plenty of feeling - and an undercurrent of hot emotion which suggests that her first name should be rewritten as Sahara.

TONY AUGARDE

THE EVERGREEN CLASSIC JAZZ BAND

EARLY TUNES 1915-1932

Delmark Records Jump 12-37 69:32

The Seattle-based Evergreens have been around for just on thirty years. As you may have gathered, they specialize in early jazz performances. On this disc much of the material is drawn from the embryo bigish bands which emerged in the first third of the twentieth century. Regardless of the social and economic vicissitudes of the era, much of the popular music came across as ebullient and optimistic and these qualities have been captured very well by the Evergreens, despite their need to reduce big-band section work to just four front-line instruments.

Predictably, Ragtime and Charleston rhythms are much in evidence and *Swipesy Cake Walk*, written by a protégé of Joplin's, is a particularly happy track, as is Dan Grinstead's rendition of *Nappy Lee*, a set Ragtime piece from 1903.

Armstrong is represented by *Stomp Off Let's Go* and *Put 'Em Down Blues*, Keppard by *Stock Yards Strut*. Although Jimmy Noone's *Apex Blues* and *She's Funny That Way* are two familiar tunes, I confess most of the seventeen tracks are unknown to me, but I'm prepared to believe these versions are as faithful as possible to the originals, certainly where the arrangements are concerned. Solo work is competent, if lacking the flair of their early models, and the whole

thing comes across as a loving tribute to a bygone era, although a certain restraint in the drum department (or perhaps under-recording) does rob some tracks of their potential excitement. Nevertheless it's great fun.

HUGH LEDIGO

MACK AVENUE SUPERBAND

LIVE FROM THE 2013 DETROIT JAZZ FESTIVAL

Mack Avenue MAC 1086 77.27

The Mack Avenue label has a roster of such top-class musicians that it is able to assemble a supergroup from them, which is heard here performing at the Detroit Jazz Festival in 2013. You might expect such a pick-up group to perform like the musicians on one of those undisciplined jam sessions that end some concerts in near-chaos. But this is a well-rehearsed ensemble which plays with cohesion and mutual respect. The result is a live recording that conveys the excitement of the occasion and contains brilliant playing from some fine musicians.

The stars might be singled out as trumpeter Sean Jones, saxist Kirk Whalum, and two vibists - Gary Burton and Warren Wolf - who also tackle the marimba, notably in a duet on Chick Corea's *Señor Mouse*. Warren Wolf may seem fairly new on the scene but he holds his own well with Gary Burton. In another Chick Corea number - *Chick's Tune* - Sean Jones' solo proves that he has plenty of technique but he also manages to remind you of the chords underlying the tune. Pianist Aaron Diehl and drummer



Chick Corea

Carl Allen impress on this track and elsewhere.

Guitarist Evan Perri shines on the closing *Two Bass Hit*, which makes a suitable finale to an uplifting album.

TONY AUGARDE

JIM RATTIGAN, THOMAS GOULD, LIAM NOBLE

TRIPLICITY

Pavillion 003 - 56:21

The idea of French horn, violin and piano improvising may be difficult to approach; the only other French horn in jazz I am aware of is that of Willie Ruff, of the Ruff/Mitchell Duo. And yet Rattigan, Gould and Noble's attempts to reach common ground in improvisation make an interesting listening exercise. The eleven titles were all composed by Rattigan; consider *Sweet Tamarinds* where the ensemble is pleasing and the sonorous French horn sounds like an improvising instrument, whilst piano and violin are nimble. The sense of purpose and mutual interest really lifts this title, and the next title, *Blitzar*, has the same qualities even if the tone of the French horn is not quite so uplifting.

But all too often, the listener is left with the slightly alarming feeling that the spiritual glue that binds the three is coming unstuck, so to speak. Those listeners used to classical chamber music may not identify with this feeling, but those used to the rhythmic devices and harmonies of jazz may well agree.

GREG MURPHY



Matt Skelton

SKELTON SKINNER ALLSTARS SEPTET

PLAY ELLINGTON AND BASIE

Diving Duck DDRCD 022 44.51

This group might be called a slimmed-down version of the Skelton Skinner Allstars Big Band, an ensemble which has been specialising in retreading the steps taken by the Terry Gibbs Dreamband. On this new CD they are a tight little septet full of first-class musicians, including guest star Alan Barnes, who is as starry as usual. You might also say that they are treading familiar ground, arousing the question 'Would you prefer to hear this band rather than the Ellington or Basie orchestras to which they are paying tribute?' Framed that way, the question almost answers itself. Who could match Basie's original performance of *Splanky* or Ellington's *Squatty Roo*? And how could altoist Colin Skinner match Johnny Hodges' gorgeous tone in a number like *The Jeep is Jumpin*?

Yet these players are no slouches and they produce very enjoyable versions of the chosen repertoire, although the CD lasts for barely 45 minutes. Co-leader drummer Matt Skelton has an enviable technique (well, I envy him) and Colin Skinner is adept on alto sax, an instrument that Alan Barnes wisely stays off to avoid competition. Pianist Rob Barron catches the right elegance in *Fantail*, and Gordon Campbell contributes neat muted trombone in *Everybody Knows* (an unhackneyed Ducal tune). So a pleasant album, although the comparison with Ellington and Basie may be odious.

TONY AUGARDE

TINA MAY

MY KINDA LOVE

Hep Jazz CD 2101: 60:59

This brings my total of excellent Tina May CDs on my immediate shelf to nine. It's her second for the Hep label, one year after *Divas*, which I reviewed in JR 129. American-born reedman Frank Griffith is again largely in charge of supplying imaginative settings for an inventive jazz singer.

As ever, Tina has selected some not-overdone standards for diverse treatment. Four with an eight-piece include a Latin take on *I Wish I Knew* with her fervent phrasing and fine solo spots, such as John Pearce switching to Rhodes piano. On her vociferous *Long Way From St. Louis*, an extended scat exchange with the trumpet of Freddie Gavita is enjoyable. On *S'posin*, it's the voice of drummer Winston Clifford with which she scats happily, and the Griffith clarinet and Janusz Carmello's trumpet indulge in some fours with the drums before her second whole chorus, lyrically shared with Clifford. Tina's French/English delivery of *If You Go* is as expressive as expected, backed beautifully by Ian Laws on acoustic guitar, plus the rhythm trio that is buoyed by the time-honoured bass presence of Dave Green.

The known songs are splendidly augmented on two of four that employ the sounds of the Bowfiddle String Quartet. I am gratified to have become familiar with the songwriting of the celebrated saxophonist/arranger Duncan Lamont, as well as his soloing and accompaniment skills. All are delectably heard here when Tina gives her all to two of his ballads, *Where Were You In*

April? and *Manhattan In The Rain*, the latter being a nicely-constructed story of a 'fleeting meeting'.

It's all good stuff, and strongly recommended, but part of performing is 'how you finish'. This accomplished lady finishes superbly, giving much appealing feeling to *I'm Through With Love*, with just the Pearce piano and the Carmello flugelhorn in perfect support.

LESTOMKINS

MARCIN WASILEWSKI TRIO WITH JOAKIM MILDER

SPARK OF LIFE

ECM 2400-73:51

Wasilewski, a Polish pianist, established a musical partnership with bassist Slawomir Kurkiewicz and drummer Michal Miskiewicz in the early-1990s which led to Polish trumpeter Tomasz Stańko mentoring the group for several years before recruiting the trio as his working band in 2001. The benefits of being a working band are easy to hear and help the trio host a guest appearance for tenor saxophonist Joakim Milder, a fine Swedish musician, whose ethereal tone complements the 'stillness' of the trio. That is to say, there are few driving rhythms and the music often seems to 'float'.

Wasilewski is a fine composer, witness the gentle, elegiac *Austin*, a musical portrait of a friend passed on, and the title track, heard here in two slightly



Tina May

different versions. *Three Reflections* has the same 'floating' quality, whilst the Herbie Hancock composition *Actual Proof* is one of the few with a driving rhythm, which allows drummer Miskiewicz a lively solo. The version of *Message In A Bottle* on this disc is at odds with much of the music; here, it seems to have a skeletal framework which affects the improvisation somewhat, but overall *Spark Of Life* is an enjoyable session.

GREG MURPHY

DEXTER GORDON

THREE CLASSIC ALBUMS PLUS

Avid Jazz AMSC 1138 : 2 CDs 79:29 / 79:24

There are certain jazz names the sight or sound of which immediately conjure up virtuosity. Such a name is Dexter Gordon. Born in Los Angeles in 1923, he was a genuine West Coast. Yet with the advent of the 'fifties' 'West Coast Jazz' movement, although he had worked with the likes of Parker, Hampton and Armstrong, he found himself under-employed. But as he told me in 1962: 'Inside of me it was still swinging - I kept hearing the changes. As the song says, they can't take that away from me'.

This Avid collection from 1955 and 1960 contains some powerful evidence of his improvising genius. The six tracks from 1955 that open CD2, released originally as *Daddy Plays The Horn*, are particularly rivetting. Driven along by Kenny



Duke Jordan

Drew, Leroy Vinnegar and Lawrence Marable, Dexter produces flows of creative tenor jazz for up to four minutes at a time on some blissful blues and a resounding *You Can Depend On Me*. That distinctive big sound is at its ballad best on *Autumn In New York*.

The second-best selection are nine under a *Hot And Cool* heading, that actually means fast and slow. It's a quintet on three tracks, with a trumpet added, but again the quartet works ideally, the talented pianist here being Carl Perkins. The stand-out ballad is his feelingful *I Should Care*, and his original *Blowin' For Dootsie* is the ultra-swing of the set.

A dozen other tracks have him sharing space in a sextet format, and he consistently outshines his associates. The 1960 album referred to his *Resurgence*, as he hadn't recorded for five years. Dexter wails wonderfully on them, but I found his smoothly strolling two minutes on *Lovely Lisa*, by his pianist Dolo Coker, very welcome. The big man made around 40 more discs before his 1990 demise, but these are as typically masterful as any.

LES TOMKINS

STEFANO BOLLANI

JOY IN SPITE OF EVERYTHING

ECM2360-75:57

Bollani is a well-established jazz pianist known for his association with Enrico Rava and solo and duet recordings for ECM; this is his first session as a group leader, with guitarist Bill Frisell, tenor saxophonist Mark Turner, bassist Jesper Bodilsen and drummer Morten Lund. The bassist and



Donald Byrd

three albums recorded for Tom Wilson's tiny Transition label in 1955-56, the common denominator is Donald Byrd, one of the most prolific of all the trumpet talents to emerge post-Clifford Brown (he appeared on over thirty albums in 1956 alone). Nearly sixty years later, the jury is still somewhat out on Byrd's merits: was he truly Brownie's heir? Or was he, as some critics had it, too facile and faceless to really stand out? These albums provide plenty of opportunity to reach your own conclusions. For the most part Byrd is on top form, with the final quartet session giving him ample room to display his gifts. Elsewhere he shares the spotlight with what might be called the 'hard hop stock company'. Byrd's *Eye View* is actually by the Blakey/Silver Jazz Messengers line-up with added starter Joe Gordon, who occasionally bests his better-known brass partner, while *Watkins At Large* (headed by bassist Doug) throws in ringers Kenny Burrell and Duke Jordan. As expected the music on offer is pure hard bop heaven, with, to this writer's ears, the ubiquitous Hank Mobley all but stealing the show. In summary, if Fifties East Coast jazz is your bag, this is for you.

SIMON SPILLET

BILL EVANS

THREE CLASSIC ALBUMS PLUS

Avid AMSC 1119 79.57/78 .17

Avid continue to offer us a feast of delights, combining three Evans albums plus six alternative takes in a two-CD package that truly deserves to be in everybody's jazz collection. To hear this series of trio recordings can seem like

an exercise in familiarity until you realise that so many of today's crop of pianists have been influenced by Evans and it's his harmonic language that they're speaking. Here's *Portrait in Jazz* from 1959 with Scott LaFaro, bass, and drummer Paul Motian, then it's *Everybody Digs Bill Evans*, from a year earlier with Sam Jones and Philly Joe Jones, and on to *Sunday at the Village Vanguard*, with LaFaro and Motian again this plus the alternative takes. So, as I say, a feast and for once the strap line is right, these are classic albums. Contemporary critics were united in their praise for the trio and it's clear that LaFaro was an artist of considerable consequence, whose death just ten days after the Vanguard gig in a car accident was a catastrophe. He was 25. Evans seems so sure-footed, never hesitant, transforming the harmonies, keeping interest at a high level, his precise, almost brittle sound always engendering swing.

PETER VACHER

DUKE JORDAN

THREE CLASSIC ALBUMS PLUS

Avid Jazz AMEC 1145 2CDs: 67:42 178:24

Born 1922, Jordan was thirty-three on the first of these sessions. He'd probably begun his career in a pre-Bop environment and grown alongside the new music – but only so far. He has a beautiful touch with clean articulation but none of the fluency of a Bud Powell or the pianistic mastery of a Peterson. His improvisations are invariably single note lines, always correct and considered, never urgent or exciting. Perhaps his talent lay in his writing since by far the bulk

of this material comes from his pen. Indeed, some of the tunes are pleasing enough though, fifty-odd years on, they do not have the impact that, perhaps, contemporary ears would have experienced. And there is little beyond unison theme statements to add colour to his themes.

The real interest of these sessions lies in his illustrious sidemen. The first four tracks of disc one boast Oscar Pettiford and Kenny Clarke in the rhythm section and some delightful cool alto from Gigi Gryce, replaced for the remaining numbers by Percy Heath and Art Blakey plus, for the last five tunes, Eddie Bert on valve trombone and Cecil Payne, baritone sax.

Disc two benefits from the services of Dizzy Reece and Stanley Turrentine for six tracks, Charlie Rouse and Sonny Cohn for another seven, with equally prestigious rhythm teams.

For my money, these CDs are more than worthwhile for the wealth of improvisational skills on offer rather more than for the leader's own contributions.

HUGH LEDIGO

TIERNEY SUTTON

PARIS SESSIONS

BFM Jazz 302 062 427 2: 51.39

Paris Sessions is unique among Tierney Sutton albums, very personal, very intimate, establishing a mood and maintaining it through 12 tracks. Not that there is no variety in the material: a heart-felt version of the Bergmans' lyric to Michel Legrand's *You Must Believe in Spring* is followed by her wordless vocal to Serge Merlaud's *Bachian Ilm* and a beautifully pointed reading of *Don't Go to Strangers*. Instead of her usual band, Tierney is here working with Parisian guitarist Merlaud, more an equal partner than an accompanist. Many of the numbers begin with an extended guitar introduction, unfailingly melodic, the tone almost bell-like, and three of his compositions appear in an interesting mix of songs. Alongside a couple of bossa novas there are fine

versions of *Body and Soul*, initially hushed, in expressively broken phrases, and *Answer Me, My Love*, delivered straight, one of two tracks to have previously appeared on *After Blue*, Tierney's Joni Mitchell tribute album. On *Paris Sessions*, with only Merlaud and (on some tracks) Kevin Axt's unobtrusive bass guitar, Tierney cuts out the vocal pyrotechnics and communicates simply and directly; it comes as no surprise that the album was recorded in only two days, there are no tricks or clever arrangements to take time. I guess its appeal will be to a specialised audience and it will be interesting to see if the customary Grammy nomination comes Tierney's way, but, if you're looking for a peaceful, relaxed, gently stylish album, look no further.

RON SIMPSON

PAUL SMITH TRIO AND QUARTET

THE BIG MEN/THE SOUND OF MUSIC

Fresh Sound Records FSR-CD 838 78:04

'Too profound, I'm not. I'm more interested in my family and golf... And also surfing'. An astonishing pronouncement for one of the most outstanding pianists of his age. An admirer of Tatum and Peterson, Smith had, in his thirties, assimilated all he needed from these – plus Shearing, Garner, Bach and even Grieg – and made them his own.

On these recordings from 1959/60, Smith demonstrates his eclecticism with a programme few would have risked. The first half of the disc contains swinging twelve-bar work-outs and standards such as *Tea For Two* and *Cheek to Cheek* contrasted with solo performances of ballads which, if not exactly jazz, explore the sonorities and expressive range of his instrument. The *pièce de résistance* is a seven-minute set of scintillating variations on *Who's Afraid Of The Big Bad Wolf*. Threatening and whimsical by turns, we are treated to the romantic grand concerto, the dizzying pyrotechnics of a Disney cartoon, a touch of Garner and even a bit of Bach. Improvised it may be – though not without



DR JOHN
THE LOUIS ARMSTRONG
STORY WITH CLARKE PETERS
THE PEE WEE ELLIS FUNK
ASSEMBLY FT. HUEY
MORGAN
RAY GELATO & THE GIANTS
MATT SCHOFIELD
ANDY SHEPPARD QUARTET
MIKE SANCHEZ
DJANGO À LA CRÉOLE
AYNSLEY LISTER BAND
TCHA LIMBERGER
CARTOON JAZZ
THE BIG SWING
SLOWLY ROLLING CAMERA
ALICE ZAWADZKI
THE PARADOX ENSEMBLE



www.bristoljazzandbluesfest.com



Lars Gullin

premeditation - but nevertheless it is a small masterpiece.

The remaining tracks are devoted to jazz re-workings of *The Sound Of Music*. For this, Barney Kessel is added - with some spectacular results. There are some unexpected treatments: *My Favourite Things* and *Edelweiss* becoming 4/4 swingers. *The Sound of Music* is accorded a thoroughly unromantic super-fast tempo and *Do-Re-Mi* becomes a spectacular samba.

Whatever his mood, Paul Smith delivers with finesse and good humour.

HUGH LEDIGO

BREW MOORE

SVINGTET 14' – BREW MOORE IN EUROPE

Fresh Sound Records FSR-CD 840 77:52

Fittingly, for an individual so hip he warrants a name-check in Jack Kerouac's *On The Road*, Brew Moore was the ultimate jazz nomad. Having famously declared that 'anyone who doesn't play like Lester is wrong', he might have seemed like a shoo-in for the cool-school climate of 1950s California, but even that didn't seem to suit his tastes, leaving him to wander all over the States for close to a decade. By 1962, he'd wound up in Denmark, somewhat ahead of the main wave of American jazz ex-pats, ready to put down what looked like firm roots. The main body of this release, *Svingtet 14'* find him in musical rude-health, accompanied by a shifting cast including saxophonists Sahib Shihab and Lars Gullin. Swinging, inventive and with less of the Youngisms that had coloured his

work in the late '40s, here Moore sounds like no-one but himself. The scope of his individuality is never better displayed than on *The Monster*, a blues with free-form sections which reveal ears very much open to then-new jazz developments. Elsewhere, it's all about heads-down blowing, with *Rent A Hop* (which replays the Pres-patented blues-with-a-bridge idea) providing a particular high-spot. Listen out too for bass wunderkind Neils-Henning Orsted Pedersen, playing truly astonishing things at the age of just 16!

Five bonus tracks, lifted from various Scandinavian TV and concert appearances, make a nice filler, one including a contribution from fellow migrant Don Byas. Moore comes up best on the lovely closing version of *My Funny Valentine*, weaving heartfelt variations round a song often loaded with false sentiment. Beautifully remastered and repackaged, this album shines welcome light on a player in dire need of re-evaluation.

SIMON SPILLET

VARIOUS

BRITISH TRADITIONAL JAZZ AT A TANGENT VOL. 6

Lake LACD 335 (74.00)

Sub-titled 'The Classic Style Bands', this is Volume 6 in a series which traces various styles of traditional jazz in Britain. This CD samples the work of seven bands to illustrate the 'Classic Style', which Paul Adams' valuable sleeve-note admits is a vague term. The closest one can get to pinpointing the genre is to say that it derives from pioneers like Jelly Roll Morton, King Oliver and Johnny Dodds, whose styles can

be detected on various tracks here. The approach is perhaps best represented by individual contributions, such as Steve Lane's work with his Southern Stompers, Chris Watford's clarinet solo on *Beale Street Blues* with the Dolphin Jazz Band from Hastings, and my old friend Gordon Blundy's trombone solo in *Snake Rag*.

Mike Daniels' Delta Jazzmen diverged from the strictly classic idiom in swinging the music more than the originators did, although groups like Colin Kingwell's Jazz Bandits stick to the more four-square style. It is rather surprising to find the Temperance Seven in this company, as their eclectic methods only included classic modes among many other influences. Their technique is not exactly flawless, but then Colin Kingwell's band was also guilty of some mishaps in intonation. Altogether this is an interesting package which illustrates how hard it is to put labels on the varying styles adopted by traditional bands in their heyday.

TONY AUGARDE

SIGURDUR FLOSASON COPENHAGEN QUARTET

THE ELEVENTH HOUR

Storyville 107 4289 - 57:46.

This CD features Sigurdur Flosason, an Icelandic alto-saxophonist with a Danish rhythm section, namely Nikolaj Hess on piano, Lennart Ginman on bass and Morten Lund on drums exploring ten Flosason compositions. Flosason has a fluent, Paul Desmond-like tone; he opens *By Myself, All Alone* fittingly with a gentle solo statement before piano, bass and drums join him for a mid-tempo outing for a promising start with piano, bass and drums. *While The Night Lingers* has a melancholy theme, which is sustained throughout although it does allow pianist Hess to rhapsodise in a gentle solo.

Generally, the writing is similar throughout with that air of melancholy to the fore. An exception is the title track, which

takes on an urgency not heard elsewhere on the disc. But by the following title, *No One Knows*, the gloom returns and one wishes that there could be a little more rhythm in the soul.

GREG MURPHY

BUDDY TATE QUARTET

TEXAS TENOR

Sackville SK 3027 47.18

The Texan tenor-saxophonist Buddy Tate enjoyed three distinct phases to his career. First he was an able section player in a series of territory dance bands, then a star soloist in the Count Basie Orchestra at or very near its peak, and then came his final triumphant period as a bandleader and widely travelled solo artist, who spent much of his time in Europe and the UK. Here, he's nearer to his New York home, recorded in Toronto by John Norris for the Canadian Sackville label on 16 July 1978 (this data is absent from the sleeve) the resulting album now reissued with the same catalogue number by Delmark (but with two extra tracks), this Chicago-based label having presumably acquired the Sackville catalogue following the death of Norris.

Tate is a player from the 'old school' and I mean that as a compliment. He concentrates on presenting the melody in bite-size chunks before unwrapping its potential. He uses mostly short, terse phrases, the tone husky and well-filled and on up tempo plays with punch, using tonal variation and rhythmic emphasis to give a tune some bite. The Canadian rhythm section is perfect for him with pianist Wray Downes quick on the draw and inventive in his solos, and Pete Magadini's assertive cymbals offering plenty of stimulus.

Tate is in great form here, confident, breezy and often imperious; he plays Lester-like clarinet on two numbers, *Georgia* taken very slowly and *Lullaby of the Leaves*. Great tunes, superb recording, a delight all the way through.

PETER VACHER

THE EFG LONDON JAZZ FESTIVAL

14-23 NOVEMBER 2014

A partial view by PETER VACHER

Festivals should be, well, festive and this LJF certainly was. The crowds were plentiful; their reactions often verging on the ecstatic and for this aged reporter the headline artists provided a decent balance between the noisily emerging and the serenely sure-footed. Festival fare, indeed. Or to put it another way, there was apparently less emphasis on the oddly obscure and rather more on must-see performers that otherwise rarely come our way.

In the past, Serious, the festival organisers, seemed inclined to follow a more contrary path as once summed up by John Bungay in the *Times*: 'The EFG London Jazz Festival descends on the capital offering an ear-bending cavalcade of Nordic minimalists, US avant-noisemakers, Ethiopian roots, kora players and turntablists, who all now march under the multilingual, multinational banner, marked "jazz".' Less so, this time, happily for me.

Inevitably perhaps, concentrating on marquee names meant overlooking many of the other valuable LJF-related events taking place across the metropolis. This year's Festival Brochure ran to some 60+ pages, with activity strands devoted to the Blue Note label's 75th anniversary [see below], South African jazz, emerging British talent, special commissions and Jazz in the New Europe, with performers from Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, Denmark, Poland, Ireland, Belgium, Spain, France, Switzerland and Italy, each supported by their respective cultural quangos.

As ever, the glittery Festival kick-off at London's Barbican Hall was 'Jazz Voice', something of a vocal circus with selected singers emoting to a backdrop provided by the superb Guy Barker orchestra, in effect a big band with strings attached. No need to dwell on the also-rans like Vula



Dave Douglas

Malinga or the mis-cast Jacob Banks, better to celebrate Kurt Elling and Georgie Fame, each at the top of their game, with both Jacqui Dankworth and Emma Smith drawing plaudits, too. Two days later, at the Festival's alternative South Bank location, it was tenorist J.D. Allen's trio at the QEH, this stocky 41-year old a doughty improviser evincing a strong stylistic identity, his originals well-supported by feisty young New York drummer Jonathan Barber. Fast-forward a couple of generations and you got to pianist Randy Weston, still upright at 88 and OK on the 88s, and still committed to a pan-African cultural palette, with veteran tenorist Billy Harper alongside in a duo set that promised more than it delivered, Harper oddly quiescent. Earlier, it had been a joy to observe the Trinity Laban student ensemble blossoming in a programme devoted to Gerry Mulligan's Concert Band repertoire, under the expert tutorial eyes of saxophonists Mark Lockheart and Mick Foster. Interestingly, Foster turned up later in the week playing bass-saxophone, yes, bass-saxophone, in trumpeter Laura Jurd's adventurous Human Spirit band.

Sloane Square's imposing Cadogan Hall hosted Richard Pite's ever-enterprising Jazz Repertory Company in a celebratory programme linked to the 1950s Newport Jazz Festivals. This embraced Ellingtonia with *Diminuendo & Crescendo in Blue* re-invented by tenorist Mike Hall, *High Society* with Enrico Tomasso on Louis-duty, *Jazz on a Summer's Day* with Georgina Jackson ably recalling Anita O'Day, and Dizzy Gillespie's big band bonanza on *Manteca*, all done with

commendable panache and exemplary skill. Back in Barbican Hall, Italian pianist Stefano Bollani was in ecstatic communion with his keyboard, almost mounting the piano itself in his eagerness to offer a counterpoint to the dazzling bandolim (it's a kind of mandolin) playing of Brazilian Hamilton de Holanda. Dazzling doesn't even begin to describe this set. Second half delights were somewhat reduced with trumpet miserabilist Tomasz Stanko a curiously detached presence on stage, like the Samuel Beckett of jazz, enigmatic, remote, stylistically taciturn and vocally silent, his repertoire of tiny sounds and occasional eruptions in contrast to the dynamism of his New York trio featuring Cuban pianist David Virelles, an implacably creative newcomer and drummer Gerald Cleaver as a simmering rhythmic presence.

Then came a sublime experience, a conjunction of all that is good in this music, with a performance to match, by the duo of pianist Kenny Barron and bassist Dave Holland, their last gig in a prolonged European tour and a minor miracle of creative interplay. No sign of strain, no need for over-the-top display for this pair had the kind of creative ease that can be best summed as 'the art that conceals art' but with added joy.

Blue Note's exemplary role in the music from early boogie to cutting edge contemporary jazz was duly and appropriately celebrated over the festival's final weekend, the Royal Festival Hall a premiership setting for yet another duo, this time the twin pianos of Jason Moran and Robert Glasper. These two were a delight, tossing the pianistic ball

to and fro, Moran the more steely, offering a boogie line at first, before moving to a freer, bluesy mode, and then erupting with some fire of his own, as Glasper paced and purred alongside. They were followed by an all-star grouping of the label's current pace-makers, comprising trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire, described to me by Mike Hobart of the *Financial Times* as 'awesome' as he was, tenorist Marcus Strickland, Beninese guitarist Lionel Loueke, Glasper again, bassist Derrick Hodge and drummer Kendrick Scott. Their music was fiery, intensely creative, contemporary yet accessible, and hard-swinging. Everyone a winner, you could say.

Another substantial highlight followed with Joe Lovano and Dave Douglas's Sound Prints, completed by pianist Laurence Fields, bassist Linda Oh and the coiled spring drumming of Joey Baron. Committed to the music of Wayne Shorter, this group was direct, technical flawless and deeply satisfying; Douglas's centred sound and fierce attack a true delight. I was less sure about Charles Lloyd's *Wild Man Suite*, a collaboration between the jazz master himself, his quartet and lyra player Socratis Sinopoulos amid the vibrant sounds of the cimbalom played by Miklos Lukacs. Lloyd, an elongated, Jacques Tati-like figure who wanders the stage as if bemused, played tenor with his own special brand of elusivity, ghosting between phrases, adding wonderful flute playing, a burst of taragato and concluding with a poem. He's his own man, for sure. The audience loved every note and phrase. And why not?

PROPAGANDA SWING

NOTTINGHAM PLAYHOUSE, OCTOBER 8TH

Peter Arnott's new play, *Propaganda Swing*, which ran at the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, and Nottingham Playhouse during September and October, takes as its background one of the more infamous, but fascinating, episodes in the history of swing music. Charlie and his Orchestra, basically the Lutz Templin dance band under the nominal leadership of singer Kurt 'Charlie' Schwedler, was a key element in the black propaganda of Nazi Germany against the Allies, churning out versions of American popular songs which combined smartly swinging arrangements with new lyrics abusing Churchill, the Jews and the Allied war effort. Interestingly, while William Joyce (Lord Haw Haw), who shared their propaganda broadcasts, ended up being tried and executed, Lutz Templin just went on with his music career after the war and Kurt Schwedler even spent some years in the United States. Of course Joyce's nationality made a major difference, but this still suggests the moral neutrality of the musicians.

To point up the drama Arnott creates more polarised political figures. Templin and his band are more specifically anti-Nazi than was probably the case, so the transformation into Charlie and his Orchestra becomes a Faustian pact with the Devil. The real Charlie, though employed in propaganda, was too much of a playboy to have taken part in the political manoeuvring Arnott gives him (though ultimately he is outmanoeuvred himself).

Arnott takes historical figures and creates characters and relationships that make the situation more vivid in dramatic form. Lala Anderson, the famed singer of *Lili Marlene*, is married to Templin and sings with his band. Anita Spada, who also recorded that iconic song, becomes the amoral recipient of the favours of co-operation. However, the main innovation is a new character, Bill Constant, an American journalist, a sort of Ed

Murrow figure, who acts as narrator and pursues a double quest (both ultimately unsuccessful) for Lala and for the opportunity to report the truth.

While the human stories are therefore largely fictional, Arnott presents a convincing picture of this area of the wartime Berlin scene, backed up by several authentic arrangements of Charlie and his Orchestra. The tone is effectively controlled, with musical fun and entertaining satire on the wild excesses of German propaganda balanced by serious presentation of life and death issues for Jews, the mentally ill and political nonconformists.

A uniformly excellent cast of eight, directed by Hamish Glen, included Richard Conlon as the archetypal honest American abroad, Callum Coates' unnervingly convincing William Joyce and a superb dancing-on-the-edge performance from Chris Andrew Mellon as night club owner Otto Stenzl.

As for the music, there is less jazz than the script references might suggest, but it's cleverly balanced and, under Musical Supervisor Hilary Brooks, was extremely well played in this first production of the play. Jonny Bower's Charlie put over the doctored lyrics clearly and proved a fine balladeer on *Stardust*. Tomm Coles' assertive soprano sax contrasted with his mild manner as Templin and Miranda Wilford's Lala was every inch the star, her singing ranging from the zany to the affecting. Clara Darcy combined a solid trumpet style with the perfidy of Anita and Paul Lincoln dashed in from his role as the Nazi propaganda controller to offer some polished clarinet solos. The permanent trio of Steve Tromans, Dave Storer and Matthew Green had their moments in the spotlight with numbers such as *Big Noise from Winnetka*.

It would certainly be surprising if this intelligent, thoughtful and entertaining piece didn't surface again soon, possibly even in this production. If it does, see it if at all possible, but don't expect an evening of Benny Goodman numbers!

RON SIMPSON



SWINGTIME FOR HITLER

Prompted by the recent production of *Propaganda Swing* MIKE POINTON recalls a ground-breaking BBC programme of 25 years ago.

I was intrigued to read the article in the *Summer Jazz Rag* on Peter Arnott's *Propaganda Swing* as I was the first to present a documentary on the notorious Charlie and his Orchestra since their brief existence on wartime radio.

In the mid-80s I was involved with an interviewing project for BBC Radio's Sound Archives and, thanks to the late Willie Bonwick – one of their studio managers - I first heard some of the long-unheard recordings the band, led by Lutz Templin, made. Such unashamedly pro-Nazi lyrics distorting Cole Porter as 'You're the top, you're a German flyer, you're the top, you're machine gun fire' were a macabre revelation. I was captivated and repelled and wanted to learn more. Willie informed me that some LPs of such material had been released a few years before in Germany, but almost instantly withdrawn for infringement of copyright. I then found that an extract of one such track had been included in one of the popular Scrapbook series on the Home Service years before: *St. Louis Blues* with its lyric referring to Churchill and the bombing of the London docks in 1940, 'I hate to see the evenin' sun go down, 'coz the German he done bombed this town... Wasn't for Churchill an' his bloody war, I wouldn't feel, yeah, so doggone sore'.

I also traced some rare 78s of the band in the BBC Gramophone Library, with the help of Derek Lewis who was then Head Librarian. It had been reported that they were dropped over Allied lines during the war as propaganda even though

shellac was easily breakable! I'd read a brief mention of Charlie's orchestra in George Melly's wartime memoirs, but didn't know George well enough at that time to ask him for reminiscences although I did write to Spike Hughes who had referred to the broadcasts in one of his volumes of autobiography. He responded with a postcard, briefly stating that he had no further information. Then came a breakthrough. John Chilton told me that German drummer, Fritz 'Freddie' Brocksieper, who had taken part in the broadcasts, was still alive and that British drummer Eddie Taylor had met him whilst playing in Munich. I was writing documentaries for BBC Radio at the time and had heard an excellent one on Buddy Bolden produced by David Perry. I took the idea of an investigatory programme on Charlie's music and its use as propaganda to him. In 1987 – unlike under the present regime - ideas were considered comparatively quickly and, thanks to David's belief in the project, we were soon given the go-ahead by Radio 4. Brocksieper agreed to be interviewed so we flew to Munich and found him to be a fascinating character, still playing and proud of his status as an elder statesman of German swing ('The German Gene Krupa'). Freddie produced an amazing scrapbook signed by many visiting Americans he'd accompanied over the years. He informed us pragmatically that at the time of the 'Charlie' broadcasts, although he was aware of their use as propaganda, if he had turned down the gig he would have been sent with the Wehrmacht to the eastern front as part of the onslaught against the Russians. As

a working musician he naturally preferred the less dangerous option... He told us that the band was recruited from leading European swing musicians including an Italian trumpeter but also instrumentalists from such over-run countries as Holland, Belgium and Czechoslovakia - but none of them black. It seems that Freddie was the only one willing to speak of his experiences after the war. He had kept recordings made at the time which included one where you could clearly hear bombs falling outside the studio when the band were playing. Through the help of a collector of such rare material we located an original announcement for one of the broadcasts which, linked with atmospheric interference, provided a perfect intro to our half-hour show. Bruce Bastin of Interstate Records was just releasing the Charlie tracks on LP so we were able to liaise with him in obtaining material.

We also felt that it would be of interest to show how the allies dealt with this aspect of propaganda so we interviewed Hungarian Martin Esslin, ex-head of BBC Radio Drama, a producer for the World Service during the war, who informed us that such bands as Gerald's had reciprocated by broadcasting songs from Bush House, London in German. We were able to include an example of this. BBC files revealed that much of the sheet music used by Lutz Templin was obtained illicitly via agents who liaised with London contacts. We also learned that vocalist Karl 'Charlie' Schwedler moved in English-speaking society circles in Berlin at the time P.G. Wodehouse was under house arrest there. My only regret was that an interview we did with retired producer Leslie Perowne – a pioneer of jazz programmes in the 30s - was unable to be used for technical reasons since it was he who had discovered the Charlie 78s now in the BBC library. They had been left in an abandoned Nazi radio station in Crete.

We decided to call our programme *Swingtime For Hitler*, thanks to a suggestion from ace film publicist Laurie Bellew, and its impact on Radio 4 listeners was astonishing.

It seems that the feedback via Broadcasting House switchboard was unprecedented.

This led to a TV programme and a feature on Brocksieper in the *Daily Mail* which brought Freddie a fresh 15 minutes of fame. Playwright Peter Nichols (brother of trumpeter Geoff Nichols of the Avon Cities Jazz Band) took me to lunch and told me he was considering writing a drama based on this bizarre episode. This came to nothing, except that few years later I believe Nichols stated in another radio programme, with perhaps a touch of amnesia, that he'd first heard of Charlie via Barry Humphries!

My colleague Russell Davies was to present a series on Radio 2 dealing with propaganda swing later. Then playwright John McGrath informed me that he was planning a film to be written by a celebrated Hollywood blacklisted. This never materialised either so I'm pleased that eventually Peter Arnott was able to realise some of this fascinating subject's potential. Perhaps the most detailed published study of this period is *Hitler's Airwaves* by Horst P. Bergmeier and Rainer E. Lotz (Yale University Press, 1997) which gives the complete history of Charlie & his Orchestra and reproduces many of the original scurrilous lyrics, the worst of which is the virulently anti-Semitic *British Soldier's Song* sung to the tune of *Onward Christian Soldiers*, from 1939, as featured in our pioneering programme: 'Onward conscript army, you have naught to fear, Isaac Hore Belisha will lead you from the rear. Clad by Monty Berman, fed on Lyons pies, fight for Yiddish conquest while the Briton dies. Onward conscript army, marching on to war, fight and fight for Jewry, as we did before.'

Something that brought the whole situation home to me once I'd presented the programme was a letter from a listener asking what, as a musician, I would have done at the time. Quite a question...

ABDULLAH IBRAHIM

HOWARD ASSEMBLY ROOM, LEEDS, NOVEMBER 20TH, 2014

How many numbers do you expect in an 85-minute concert? Maybe as few as five or six if you've a string of good soloists, but what if it's a single instrumentalist? How about one – 60 minutes – then after a pause a 20-minute encore? Abdullah Ibrahim's concerts are not like other people's. At this stage in his wonderful career there is no attempt to reach out to the audience, but that hardly matters because the audience is made up of devotees. It has been rightly observed elsewhere that his concerts are more like a religious observance.

The main part of the concert was a medley of Abdullah Ibrahim compositions, but pretty much only the contemplative ones – his slyly buoyant recall of African markets, dance halls and churches seems to have been set aside now he has achieved the venerable – and venerated – age of 80. Since he vouchsafed not a word all evening, on my return I was left scurrying through youtube and various CDs trying to place a song title somewhere. I failed, partly no doubt because I am less familiar with Ibrahim's tunes than I should be, but also because he presented many in a truncated form and at times they merged into a pattern of fragments of melody separated by long spells of rhapsodic introspection – a sort of arpeggiated till ready, rather than vamp till ready. Only at the end of the encore was an exquisite melody – one, to my shame, I have yet to place – developed in full and the genius of Abdullah Ibrahim became obvious as he was leaving us.

From the outset the meditative prayerful tone, with the occasional Ducal flourish and gently unpredictable harmonies, was appealing as a prelude to something else, but the only something else was more of the same, with Ibrahim consistently favouring slow tempos and minor keys. At 45 minutes Africa appeared in a form my Western ears could recognise, with a loping dance tune followed by a

nice spacy Sunday morning melody, but it didn't last.

It's difficult to be critical of Abdullah Ibrahim, not only because of the great things he's done from the Jazz Epistles to Ekaya, but because his piano artistry remains: the touch beautifully delicate, the power (though seldom used) undiminished. Above all, what could be better for his Leeds devotees than to fill the smallish space of the Howard Assembly Room to hear him express himself at close range? However, for those like me who are admirers rather than devotees, it was all a bit boring.

But, for the Howard Assembly Room, nothing but praise: architecturally and acoustically excellent, it offers an enterprising programme, with a fair bit of jazz in among the classical recitals, operas, choral concerts, folk and country, films, installations and the rest – and that's apart from its day job as home to Opera North's remarkable orchestra.

RON SIMPSON

COMPETITION WINNERS & ANSWERS NO. 133

COLERIDGE GOODE BOOK
Congratulations to MADELINE & JEFF DAWES of South Normanton, Derbys., and RAYMOND BRAY of Skegness. Ray Ellington/Joe Harriott

COLERIDGE GOODE CONCERT
Congratulations to ALAN BRINKWORTH of Redditch. Studying engineering/Michael Garrick

POLLY GIBBONS CD
Congratulations to: PHIL DOYLE of Blandford Forum, Dorset; IAN HOLMES of Taunton and JOHN SHEFFIELD of Newark. Billie Holiday/James Pearson

JAY AND KAI TRIBUTE CD
Congratulations to: GERHARD HOPPE of Berlin, Germany; JANE RATCLIFFE of Swindon and ROY YATES of Failsforth, Manchester. Jazz at the Philharmonic/Birth of the Cool

DIANA KRALL BLU-RAY
Congratulations to: MRS. W. M. MANTLE of Kington, Herefordshire, and MRS. M. BARNES of Newcastle-on-Tyne. Elvis Costello/Ray Brown or Rosemary Clooney

RON SIMPSON'S ROUND-UP OF RECENT CDS

A rather surprising combination of band and material is the **Danish Radio Big Band's SPIRITUALS** (Storyville 101 4293: 57.14). **Vincent Nilsson**, a trombonist with the big band, dates his enthusiasm for spirituals back to hearing *Louis and the Good Book* and has been performing them with his small group for years, but this is his first venture into arranging spirituals for big band. He gets a full, if fairly conventional, sound, with smart section work and some excellent soloists: a whole string of trombonists and clarinetist Peter Fuglsang stand out and Eiel Lazo impresses as a percussionist. As a singer he makes less impact; in fact none of the singing, whether solos or band choir, does much for me. Another attractively straightforward big band release from Continental Europe, **NATURAL** (Igloo Records IGL 247: 76.36) by the **West Music**

Club from Belgium focuses on music related to weather and the outdoors, with a few great standards such as *Over the Rainbow* and *Softly as in a Morning Sunrise* alongside big band compositions and the Beatles' airiest tune, *Blackbird*. The West Music Club, now conducted by **Richard Rousselet**, proclaims 45 years of swing and promotes conviviality as one of its aims. This luxuriously produced album (DVD included as extra) lives up to that, with arrangements by the likes of Neal Hefti, Nelson Riddle and Bill Russo alongside more recent work. The orchestra is well drilled, vocals not great (Chrystel Wautier the best of the singers), but not frequent either, and there's a fair range of good soloists such as Isabelle Guerin on flute. **QUINTONIC** (Stunt Records STUCD 14072: 44.25) features prolific Boston tenor saxists **George Garzone** and **Jerry Bergonzi** with a Danish

rhythm section led by pianist **Carl Winther** who also produced and supplied a chunk of originals. This is one of those irritating CDs that refuses to tell you anything (beyond the fact that it was recorded in Boston and mixed in Denmark) and for once the internet yields little, so I don't even know whether Quintonic is the name of the group. The music is unfailingly committed, from the freely discordant shrieks and honks of the opening *Gorgonzola* to the more melodic *Crystal Ball*, more controlled, but equally intense.

The numerous pre-1964 compilations are, as always, a mix of loved ones and forgotten ones, the predictable and the eccentric. High on the list of eccentricities comes **THE EXTROVERT SPIRIT OF SLIM GAILLARD 1945-1958** (Avid AMSC 1141: 2 CDs, 79.44/79.13). Slim Gaillard, guitarist, pianist, singer, songwriter and fantasist, was mostly known for his crazy vocals and hip verbalisings and up to about 1951 most of the tracks are his own compositions: *Flat Foot Floogie*, *Chicken Rhythm*, *Cement Mixer (Puti, Puti)* and the rest. As well as regular partners such as Bam Brown and Zutty Singleton, he is accompanied on odd tracks by the cream of bebop musicians: Lucky Thompson, Howard McGhee, even Diz and Bird! There is a wonderful live recording from 1946 of *Opera in Vout*, just Gaillard and Brown swapping instruments and nonsensical remarks and swinging like mad. A 1952 session (with, possibly, Harry Carney) is more blues-based and, to complete a highly enjoyable collection, *Slim Gaillard Rides Again!*, a 1958 LP, finds him delivering his own brand of vocalese on several standards as well as performing such classically named originals as *One Minute of Flamenco for Three Minutes*. Always of interest are those reissues by musicians who disappeared from general view, but still had long careers. **THE KING FLEMING TRIO** (Fresh Sound FSR CD 834: 2 CDs, 50.40/53.06) made these three LPs in the 1960s, then the pianist continued his career in Chicago undisturbed by record companies until 1996. (Eventually Fleming died earlier

this year at the age of 91.) Half the tracks are originals, many of them attractive melodically, and his choice of standards tends towards the gently romantic: *Moonlight in Vermont*, *I Didn't Know what Time It Was*, *Dearly Beloved*, etc. And indeed his default position is firmly at the gently melodic end of jazz, though the second album *Stand By* is more varied, more swinging, with bassist Malachi Favors a potent presence and vibes player Charles Stepney guesting on two tracks. Trumpeter **Ted Curson** had an equally long career (he died in 2012) and, though he remained a much more prominent figure than King Fleming, in terms of fame he never quite lived up to the justified claims in 1960s sleeve notes. **FOUR CLASSIC ALBUMS** (Avid AMSC 1139: 2 CDs, 79.59/77.40) is impressive, indeed, even though his well-known 1964 album, *Tears for Dolphy*, is not included. After leaving Charles Mingus, Curson started at the top with *Plenty of Horn* (1961): crackling crisply articulated hardbop trumpet, imaginative compositions and an all-star line-up of Kenny Drew, Jimmy Garrison, Roy Haynes and Curson's regular musical partner, Bill Barron. Also from 1961 *The Tenor Stylings of Bill Barron* sees Curson as sideman in a group that includes Bill Barron's brother Kenny on piano. All the tracks are originals by the tenor saxist, rather more cerebral than Curson's compositions, but the trumpeter is well at home, as he is playing standards on the fine 1962 album *Fire Down Below* and lifting a less illustrious quintet on a live session playing Curson's own genuinely original originals at La Tete de l'Art in Montreal. Listening to *The Young Bloods* (1956) on **Phil Woods: THREE CLASSIC ALBUMS PLUS** (AMSC 1144: 2 CDs, 73.17/74.27) it's exhilarating to hear Woods and trumpeter Donald Byrd, two of the great survivors of the bebop era (Byrd died last year), bursting on the scene with the energy, imagination and fearlessness of youth – and Woods' originals (which predominate) are well worth the remembering. Otherwise, though there is plenty to enjoy, the



Slim Gaillard

package doesn't live up to its *Phil Woods Classic Albums* label. *Bird Feathers* from 1957 was originally a New Jazz LP of tracks by vaguely Parkerish alto saxists that hadn't found their way onto the intended albums: Woods shows up with Gene Quill on two tracks. Then come two live sessions which are not led by Woods, but team him with two more saxists in ad hoc groupings. *Bird's Night* consists of four Parker compositions, with Woods joined by baritone saxist Cecil Payne, just as inventive if not so fluent. Finally there are two long tracks from *Jazz Alive!* recorded at the Half Note in the relaxed and assured company of tenor sax masters Zoot Sims and Al Cohn. Something of the same applies to **Frank Wess: FOUR CLASSIC ALBUMS** (AMSC 1124: 2 CDs, 77.28/77.19). Two of the albums are with the Prestige All Stars, one nominally under the leadership of Thad Jones, both much indebted to Mal Waldron who supplied a string of originals. *Wheelin' and Dealin'* features three tenors (John Coltrane and Paul Quinichette in addition to Wess who doubles on flute) and is good stuff, but a bit inclined to too many lengthy solos. *After Hours* has a better balance and understanding between the soloists (Kenny Burrell in addition to Thad and Frank). Two excellent albums under Wess's own name make up a fine tribute to another great veteran who was active until his death last year. *Opus in Swing* (1956) has Wess on flute only, with a superb two guitar combination: Burrell for the solos, the immaculate Freddie Green for the rhythm. *Southern Comfort* (1962) features light-touch Oliver Nelson

arrangements for an eight-piece that includes the incisive trumpet of Al Aarons who had just joined Wess in the Basie band.

Two jazzmen who are by no means short of reissues of 1950s and 1960s material are **Chet Baker** and **Grant Green**. **SEXTET AND QUARTET** (Joker 6086: 75.00) was originally known as *Chet Baker in Milan*, a well-chosen mix from 1959 of bebop favourites and attractive standards, with Chet in relaxed confident form and a very capable set of Italian musicians, the best known tenor saxist Gianni Bassi. The filler LP, which once bore the rather pompous title of *Chet Baker with Fifty Italian Strings*, dates from the same time and will appeal to those who enjoy Chet playing or singing – very well, with no hint of later frailty – some quality songs: *The Song is You*, *Autumn in New York*, etc. The fifty strings will probably appeal less! **Grant Green's NIGERIA** (Essential Jazz Classics EJC 55649: 60.42) is in many ways a companion to the similarly Rollins-named *Oleo* reviewed by John Martin in *Jazz Rag 133*: recorded in the same month (January 1962), with similar personnel, and, remarkably, both unissued until 1980, after Green's death. Grant Green is the reverse of the many musicians we encounter on reissues who were apparently going to do great things, but are now forgotten, and it's easy to see why his reputation grows year on year. Green's guitar style was essentially straightforward, swinging, inventive, with a delicate melodic gift and on these sessions he was paired with a musical soul-mate, the even more short-lived Sonny Clark. On

Nigeria they are joined by the immaculate Sam Jones and the uplifting Art Blakey and highlights include a relentless bluesy groove on *It Ain't Necessarily So*, followed by a subtle exploration of Cole Porter's lovely *I Concentrate on You*. Bonus tracks come from the same session, plus *Grant's First Stand* from 1960 with Wynton Kelly, Paul Chambers and Philly Joe Jones – Green certainly knew how to pick a rhythm section! With **Miles Davis** the problem is which to choose between the many CDs of his classic albums. *Dream Covers* have a novel approach. Two highly rated albums, originally released in 1957, **MILES AHEAD** (6087: 75.54) and **'ROUND ABOUT MIDNIGHT** (6085: 78.56), appear on CD in both mono and stereo format. In the case of *'Round About Midnight*, incidentally, 'stereo' means a 1962 version 'electronically rechanneled for stereo'. *Miles Ahead* is the first post-*Birth of the Cool* collaboration with Gil Evans: material (unlike later projects) from a wide variety of sources, from Delibes to Brubeck to Kurt Weill, but through-performed as a suite, with Miles on flugel horn throughout. *'Round about Midnight* features Miles' then-quintet, including John Coltrane, with the leader's distinctive delicate muted trumpet to the fore on standards such as *All of You* and *Bye Bye Blackbird*. For myself I would rather have more Miles for my money, for instance, *Miles Ahead* on an Avid 4-album package or *'Round About Midnight* with *Milestones* on Sony, but those with subtler ears than mine and a geekier approach to technology and music-making will find *Dream Covers*' approach tempting.

In *Jazz Rag 133* seven trumpeters assessed reissues of the prolific Jonah Jones, with a fair measure of disagreement. **THE UNSINKABLE MOLLY BROWN + JAZZ BONUS** (Blue Moon BMCD 853: 65.46) makes a case for both sides. Jonah Jones at his best was a fiercely expansive, but humorous, player, technically assured, with hints of Louis Armstrong and a rich tone despite his penchant for playing muted, but *Molly Brown* is a perfunctory affair according to a popular formula, easy listening, but an opportunist selection from 1960's latest hit show, only one track of 11 even reaching 3 minutes. *Jazz Bonus* from two years later is a different matter: a sextet with two guitars and Dick Hyman on organ, a good varied selection of tunes and Jones taking more risks. In a sense **Art van Damme** occupied similar territory to Jonah Jones: frequent albums of popular songs, short tracks, catchy themes and inviting covers. Van Damme was a very capable accordionist who led a group with the interesting line-up of vibes, guitar, bass and drums. In 1962 for **A PERFECT MATCH** (Cheese Cake 8243: 71.38) **Johnny Smith** guested on guitar for an always pleasing mix of standards, originals and jazz numbers from the likes of Lester Young and Sonny Rollins. It's enjoyable and well crafted, if hardly exciting, but the filler, *Martini Time* from 1953, bland versions of good songs, suggests that Smith was a good influence – either that or Van Damme had a bit more confidence in his audience by 1962!



George Garzone



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