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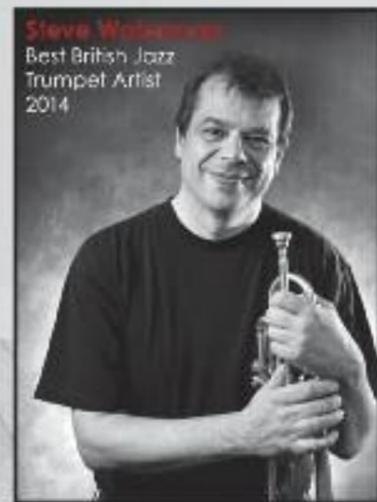
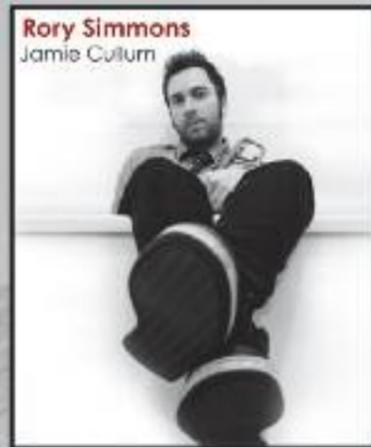
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FESTIVALS 2015

JAZZ RAG'S PICK OF THE 2015 JAZZ FESTIVALS (PAGES 18-21)
PEPPER OF PEPPER AND THE JELLIES PHOTOGRAPHED BY
MERLIN DALEMAN AT THE 2014 BIRMINGHAM JAZZ AND
BLUES FESTIVAL. THE ITALIAN GROUP IS DUE TO RETURN TO
BIRMINGHAM THIS YEAR.

4 NEWS

6 UPCOMING EVENTS

8 DIGBY'S HALF DOZEN AT 20

10 VIC ASH (1930-2014)

11 MIKE BURNEY REMEMBERED

12 2014'S TOP TRUMPET:
STEVE WATERMAN

14 BERNARD 'ACKER' BILK (1929-2014)
A LIFE IN PHOTOGRAPHS

16 HAPPY 100TH BIRTHDAY TO THE
JAZZ KIDS OF 1915
SCOTT YANOW CUTS THE CAKE FOR
BILLIE, FRANK AND THE REST

22 CD REVIEWS

32 BEGINNING TO CD LIGHT

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UPFRONT

NOW LISTEN TO JAZZ RAG!

London's first internet jazz radio station jazzlondonradio.com covers a wide range
of music, with extended programmes of both classic and contemporary jazz every
afternoon. Former Director of Jazz Services Chris Hodgkins is the presenter of
Jazz Then and Now on Mondays and Wednesdays at 3.00 pm and 8.00 pm.

From this issue, at Chris' suggestion, favourite tracks from CDs reviewed in *Jazz
Rag* will be packaged together as the *Jazz Rag* selection and played on
jazzlondonradio. Some eight tracks from this issue's reviews (plus, we must
confess, one from *Jazz Rag* 134 which we particularly enjoyed) will be played
regularly on jazzlondonradio until the next issue comes along.

The first selection was played in the last week of January at 6.00 pm on
Wednesday and Friday, so these may well be the regular times for the *Jazz Rag*
play-list.

www.jazzlondonradio.com



LADY SINGS THE BLUES

With Billie Holiday's centenary being celebrated this year, *Lady Sings the Blues*, the acclaimed tribute to Lady Day starring Val Wiseman and six of the country's best jazz musicians, can be seen in theatres throughout the country. Dates so far arranged include the Gala Theatre, Durham (March 27), Theatr Hafren, Newtown (April 11), the New Vic, Newcastle-under-Lyme (27), The Winter Gardens, Ventnor (May 3), Gorleston Pavilion Theatre (16), Burton Agnes Jazz Festival (July 4), the New Library as part of Birmingham Jazz and Blues Festival (10), the Tivoli Theatre, Wimborne (24), Lincoln Drill Hall (October 17), Cast, Doncaster (November 8) and Platform, Morecambe (27).
Tel.: 0121 454 7020
www.bigbearmusic.com

BOHEM AT 30

The Bohem Ragtime Jazz Band plans to celebrate its 30th birthday in style. On February 26 the band's birthday gala concert in ambitious in every way. It takes place in Hungary's greatest concert hall, the 1,300 seater Bela Bartok National Concert Hall in Budapest's Palace of Arts. The programme, to, is out of the ordinary: with the title *La Femme Fatale*, it explores the nature of women through great jazz songs in new arrangements, many dancers and, as a guest star, opera singer Viktoria Vizin, born in Kecskemet, but living in Chicago. She has performed at opera houses in New York, London and Los Angeles, but is apparently a fine jazz singer, too. The 24th International Bohem Ragtime & Jazz Festival (March 27-29) has moved for one year to the best hotel in Kecskemet, the Four Points by Sheraton, as

the Cultural Centre is being refurbished. As this means a reduction in capacity from 600 to 400, tickets are already in short supply. The Bohem band's eventful anniversary year also includes new recordings - including, certainly, a live recording of the anniversary concert - and tours to England and France (July), Denmark (August) and Switzerland/Austria/Germany (October).
www.bohemragtime.com

OXFORDSHIRE JAZZ

The monthly sessions of Live Jazz in Oxfordshire at Carswell Golf and Country Club continue with a top international line-up on February 27: American saxist Harry Allen with the Simon Woolf Trio, including Steve Brown and Italian pianist Andrea Pozza. Singer Kevin Fitzsimmons is accompanied by a fine quartet on March 27 and the programme continues with the Karen Sharp Quartet (Nikki Iles, Dave Green, Steve Brown - April 17) and David Horniblow and Ben Cummings' Tribute to Ben and Sweets on May 29.
Tel.: 01367 718903/01865 373950
www.oxfordlivejazz.com

25 YEARS OF JAZZ WEEKENDS

Denise and Tony Lawrence can point to over a quarter of a century of hosting weekend jazz breaks and for the past five years many of them have been under the aegis of Mercure Hotels. The format involves three nights dinner bed and breakfast, three bands (the Lawrence Band usually, not always, one of them) and Denise and Tony as a duo. After the Wessex Hotel, Bournemouth (March 13-16), the Lawrences start their 2015

Mercure programme with the Albrighton Hall Hotel & Spa, Shrewsbury (April 17-20): the Phoenix Jazzmen, Kevin Grenfell's Jazz Giants with Matt Palmer, and the Annie Hawkins Jazzmen. On May 1-4 it's the turn of the Windsor Castle Hotel, with the Dart Valley Stompers, Laurie Chescoe's Reunion Band and the Denise Lawrence Band with Ron Drake.
www.mercurehotelsdeals.com/jazzbreaks

STEPPING OUT IN NOTTS

Jazz Steps' programme in Nottinghamshire has three strands to it: frequent Thursday evening concerts at the Bonington Theatre, Arnold, occasional big-name concerts at the Djanogly Theatre at Nottingham University and Live in the Libraries, currently monthly, with a band playing Worktop, Southwell and West Bridgford on successive nights. Upcoming Bonington concerts feature Christine Tobin (February 19), Phil Donkin Quartet (March 5), Marlene Verplanck (19) and the Basil Hodge Quintet (April 9). The Djanogly hosts the Julian Siegel Quartet (March 3) and the Marius Neset Quintet (April 9). Swingologie (Feb. 10-12), the Nottingham Youth Jazz Orchestra (March 10-12), the Nicola Farnon Trio (April 14-16) and Tony Kofi with the Andrew Wood Trio (May 12-14) are all Live in the Libraries.
www.jazzsteps.co.uk



AZERIS AT RONNIE'S

The BUTA Arts Festival is a year-long project showcasing everything from Azerbaijani carpet making to contemporary photography - and jazz is not to be left out. On February 9 Ronnie Scott's hosts a double bill of Azeri jazz pianists. Amina Figarova attended Baku Conservatory intending to be a classical pianist, then continued her studies in jazz performance at Rotterdam Conservatory and Berklee College. As an international performer her successes have included the Newport and New Orleans Heritage Festivals. She brings her sextet to Ronnie Scott's. Isfar Sarabski shares the billing with his trio. A young pianist who currently studies at Berklee, he has already accumulated an impressive list of international performances, including playing a gala concert in New York organised by the Jazz Foundation of America and appearing at festivals in Switzerland, Norway, France, Russia and Georgia.
www.butafestival.com

SANDY BROWN REMEMBERED

Coinciding with the 40th anniversary of Sandy Brown's death on March 15 his former architectural partner pays tribute to the other side of his genius with a book, *Homes of the Hits*, which details the recording studios Sandy and his partners built. Sandy had previously been acoustic architect at the BBC and



much of British jazz and rock from the mid-1950s was recorded in these studios, such as Lansdowne. The book costs £11 including postage and packing, with cheques payable to David Binns, 7 The Chine, London, N10 3PX.

WATERMILL AT DORKING

Watermill Jazz at the Friends Life Social Club in Dorking begins an excellent February programme with *Celebrating Tubby Hayes* (5), with Simon Spillett assembling a stellar collection of Hayes alumni - John Critchinson, Dave Green and Spike Wells - plus guest Bobby Wellins to celebrate Tubby's 80th birthday. This is followed by the Jo Fooks Quartet (12), Laura Jurd's Chaos Orchestra (19) and Danish singer/saxophonist Mads Mathias (26). The March programme features Harry Allen with the Simon Woolf Trio (5), Iiro Rantala - solo piano (12), JT4 led by Jean Toussaint (19) and the Benn Clatworthy Quartet (26). Lined up for April are Zoe Rahman, John Etheridge, Gilad Atzmon, Tony Kinsey and Steve Fishwick.
Tel.: 07415 815784
www.watermilljazz.co.uk

TWO NIGHTS OF JAZZ

Under the aegis of Opera North the Howard Assembly Room in the Grand Theatre, Leeds, stages an enterprisingly varied programme of classical music, world music, film and even a children's opera, with jazz taking over for two evenings in March. First up is the Ravi Coltrane Quartet (11), the saxophonist joined by David Virelles (keyboards), bassist Dezron Douglas and drummer Jonathan Blake. The following evening (12) Norwegian trumpeter Arve

Henriksen presents a special concert based on his album *Places of Worship*, together with his long-time collaborator Jan Bang and visual artist Anastasia Isachsen.
Tel.: 0844 848 2727
www.operanorth.co.uk

NEW BASS LINES

The 100th birthday last year of bassist Coleridge Goode, famed for his work with such diverse performers as Ray Ellington and Joe Harriott, has been celebrated by a new re-designed hardback edition of *Bass Lines: A Life in Jazz*, the fascinating autobiography he wrote with Roger Cotterrell. The hardback is priced at £20, with the paperback available at £9.99, both published by Northway Books.
www.northwaybooks.com

JOHN HALLAM ON WINDERMERE

The 14th John Hallam and Friends weekend will take place on from April 17 to 19. These weekends are now well established with John's musical policy of showcasing British talent. His guests are a cross section of experienced stars, and up and coming talented musicians of the future. The Best Western Burnside Hotel in Bowness-on-Windermere has just acquired 4 star status and the new owner has made some exciting improvements including a new Health Spa and Concert Room. The hotel is also renowned for its excellent food, dining experience and friendly and helpful staff. On the April weekend John will be welcoming Amy Roberts on Friday evening, and Art Themen on Saturday and Sunday along with the talented Tom Kincaid Trio.
Tel.: 01924 811522
www.johnhallamjazz.co.uk



JAZZ AT THE CONCORDE

The Wednesday Jazz Nights at the Concorde Club, Eastleigh, continue with the Southampton University Big Band (February 11) and Kansas Smitty's House Band (18). The following week the main jazz event moves to Tuesday in the Moldy Fig wine bar, with Harry Allen's Quartet with Andrea Pozza (24). Normal service resumes on March 4, with the Back to Basie Big Band,

followed by Litton's Kittens, an all-female band led by Martin Litton (11), the Dave Lewin Trio who also play regularly on Fridays at the club (18), the MJQ Celebration with special guest Alan Barnes (25) and Robert Fowler's Tribute to the Gerry Mulligan Concert Band (April 1). Meanwhile, of course, Sunday evenings bring jazz for dancing to the Concorde Club.
Tel.: 023 8061 3969
www.theconcordeclub.com



COUNT BASIE CD COMPETITION

The Carolina-born musician who spent 47 years with Basie was, of course, the guitarist Freddy Green. The three winners of the Warner set of Basie Original Albums are KAY TURNBULL of Darlington, IAN HOLMES of Taunton and J.N. LAYCOCK of Tamworth.

PLYMOUTH JAZZ

Plymouth Jazz Club's twice-a-month programme at the Royal British Legion Club, Crownhill, regularly features one mainstream or modern band and one traditional. In March the Martin Dale Quartet with Roger Marks (1) is followed by the Sopranos (15), a Chris Pearce-led group owing its style to Sidney Bechet. In April the bands are Kevin Grenfell and Richard Leach's Slide by Slide Quintet (5) and Des Bacon's Red Hot Syncopators (19).
Tel.: 01752 721179/774343
www.plymouth-jazz-club.org.uk

UPCOMING EVENTS

To mark its 20th birthday the Scottish National Jazz Orchestra under Tommy Smith is presenting a special series of concerts entitled *The Jazz Genius of Billy*

Strayhorn. This is an enlargement and development of the 2003 concert devoted to the unknown Strayhorn pieces uncovered by Walter van de Leur; now more familiar pieces are added to the mix. *The Jazz Genius of Billy Strayhorn* can be heard at Queens Hall, Edinburgh (February 20), Buccleuch Centre, Langholm (21) and the Royal Conservatoire, Glasgow (22).

March/April bookings for King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys include Mill Rythe Holiday Village, Hayling Island (March 1), Solihull Arts Complex (26), the Jam House, Birmingham (April 2), Nantwich Jazz and Blues Festival (5), the Met, Bury (11), Cheese and Grain, Frome (18) and Forest Arts Centre, New Milton (25).
Tel.: 0121 454 7020
www.kingpleasureandthebiscuitboys.com

On February 8 Stafford Jazz Society departs from normal practice with an evening concert

by the Annie Hawkins Jazzmen. The following week the society, now settled at the White Eagle Club, returns to its customary lunch-time berth with Martin Bennett's Swamplanders (15), followed by Matt Palmer's Millennium Eagle Jazz Band (22), the Steve King Big Band (March 1), Funky Butt Hall N'Awlins Jazzband (8), Eric 'Busker' Newton's Willy's Weepers (15), Chris Pearce's Frenchmen Street Jazz Band (22) and the Phoenix Jazzmen (29).
Tel.: 01785 226950
www.staffordjazz.org

The busy programme at the Stables in Wavendon has its share of jazz, with Curtis Stigers due to play the main Jim Marshall Auditorium on February 12. Also in the auditorium are Colosseum (25) and the James Taylor Quartet (26). Sunday mornings twice a month at the Stables bring Jazz Matters, the second of them Live Jazz Matters. Next up

is Barbara Jay narrating a Tribute to Tommy Whittle and his Quartet (February 22), with a fine quartet of Art Themen, Richard Busiakiewicz, Dave Green and Clark Tracey. The following month (March 15) Marlene Verplanck is featured in Live Jazz Matters.
Tel.: 01908 280800
www.stables.org

The monthly concerts of the Friends of Upton Jazz Festival at Hanley Castle High School have a truly international flavour in the coming months. After New Orleans Heat (February 21), American saxist Harry Allen appears with his quartet including Italian pianist Andrea Pozza (March 6), followed by another Italian pianist Rossano Sportiello (April 24) and the Fryer-Barnhart International All Star Band (May 16).
Tel.: 01684 593794
www.uptonjazz.co.uk

LETTER**DISCOVERING THE RUMBLESTRUTTERS**

Dear Jazz Rag
I always appreciate receiving *Jazz Rag* and I am writing to you as a result of reading issue 133 (Autumn 2014). In the Birmingham International Jazz Festival spread of photographs I learnt about a local trio of musicians who I had not come across before, namely the Rumblestrutters from Mumbles. (One of the group lives about two minutes walk from my home.)

When the magazine arrived, I went on their website immediately: I knew, if they'd been booked for Birmingham, they must be worth hearing. Since then I have attended two of their local sessions and have been much impressed, particularly with their banjo and mandolin player.

Very warmest regards and may I wish you continued success.

David Griffiths
Swansea
(jazz columnist for the South Wales Evening Post on-line)

Graham Brook's Tuesday Jazz and Swing at Wilmslow Conservative Club continues with singer Marilyn Royle, reedman Dave Roberts and the Steve Hall Trio (February 10) before a first visit from Len Skeat, with Tom Kincaid and Gaz Hughes (17), followed by Don Weller and the Adrzej Baranek Trio (24). Future guest

stars include John Hallam (March 10/April 7), Amy Roberts (March 31) and Dave Newton (April 28). The monthly Sinatra Swingers sessions on the first Thursday at Cheadle Hulme Conservative Club feature guest vocalists Debbie Wilson (Feb. 5/April 2) and Loretta Scott (March 5).
Tel.: 01625 528336



Marlene Verplanck

The Tanglewood Summer season in Lenox, Massachusetts, includes a Popular Artists Series featuring occasional jazz-related concerts. Diana Krall features her latest album, *Wallflower*, on June 21, with

Tony Bennett joining forces with Lady Gaga on June 30. On July 14 Wynton Marsalis brings the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra to Ozawa Hall at Tanglewood.
www.tanglewood.org

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DIG'S HALF DOZEN AT 20

In 1995 DIGBY FAIRWEATHER formed a band that was decidedly different in style from any he had previously led – something of a risk, then, but in 2015 the HALF DOZEN is still going strong as it launches its 20th anniversary tour. With a few prompts Digby gave us his thoughts on the band...



Digby and the Half Dozen

Though there have been changes in personnel, there has also been great stability in the Half Dozen's line-up. How do you account for that?

I've been very lucky with the Half Dozen personnel and its stability! My late agent Jack Higgins used to say to me that one of the things we had going for us was that people knew who they were going to see on the stand – which doesn't always happen with bands. The members of the Half Dozen are mostly very well known names on the jazz scene now and I'm lucky they still give me priority whenever they can. The founder member with me is Julian Marc Stringle – simply one of the nicest people I've ever met and an absolutely phenomenal talent! Soon afterwards – round about 1998 – came Craig Milverton and Dominic Ashworth, then Nick Millward and Chris Gower who's been with us for well over 10 years now. The most recent arrival is bassist Al Swainger who joined us in (I think) 2010 after a UK tour with the soul-singer P.P Arnold.

What can you tell us about your initial choice of musicians?

Well, I really wanted to find people with open minds about all areas of jazz, not just one style – and who could sing as well! Which, believe me, was quite a challenge! But I'd been in love

with close-harmony groups like the Four Freshmen for years and wanted to give that a try. And we still do some which sets us apart from most bands, I think. We also did a bit of rhythm & blues – and even a number by the Coasters called *I'm a hog for you!* Great song – and we still do that one, too!

You've led many different bands over the years, but none has had the staying power of the Half Dozen. To what do you attribute its longevity?

I have been incredibly lucky to share the stand with so many great musicians over the years since the 1970s – Roy Williams, Dave Shepherd, Brian Lemon, Allan Ganley – I couldn't even begin to list them all. It was a huge honour then – and it still is. But I think what happened was that after 1987, when my embouchure collapsed completely, I wasn't playing well at all and really had to rely on friends like those and others to get through – Jim Simpson, for one, was incredibly kind and never stopped booking me when he could. But there was one particular turning point, I think. In 1994 Jack Higgins decided to re-launch his *Salute to Satchmo* show and nothing went well. I commissioned arrangements from Pete Strange, but nobody liked them. I wasn't playing anywhere near Louis at the time (or now!), and the whole thing

turned into a mess. We were up in Newcastle for two nights with dear Beryl Bryden who was our guest star. No one had bothered to bring the music, there were grumbles about Beryl (whom I loved, by the way) and I remember walking up and down the High Level Bridge at 4 in the morning fuming. I even called a band meeting, but, when we got together, I realised I couldn't say anything: these men had been my friends (and role models) for years! But that helped to trigger the mechanism to find younger players where I could assume some sort of artistic control. And at the time I must admit I was a bit tired of Dixieland. We'd done a gig with an all-star band at Michael Garrick's club around that time; the music was good enough and they wanted an encore. But one player said, 'No! Let's get the gelt and go!' And that was another point where I thought, this isn't right, at least for now.

Has the Half Dozen proved to be what you planned in 1995?

Absolutely. I was my education really. I got to know my band as a family – and never stopped being enthusiastic about writing for it, thinking up new things. But the other thing that I think important is that over the 20 years we've been able to try things out, find out what works and what doesn't, and create both a strong library and a show. Now I know that word is anathema to some people, but, as long as the music is good, I see nothing wrong with structure to a programme, a pre-planned presentation. So some nights we KNOW we'll do certain things, but, if the mood's right, we can dig into the book and bring out something different. It worked for Louis Armstrong after all!

What sort of music is the Half Dozen best at?

That's not for me to say, but I count the versatility of my players

as very important. They're all supremely grounded in the traditions of jazz, but within them they can do almost anything! Craig Milverton can play *Giant Steps* exactly like Fats Waller; Julian and Dominic even bring a classical theme to what we do because they are as good at that as they are at jazz. Chris loves everything from rock music – he plays with Suzi Quatro and Sir Cliff Richard as easily as he does all our stuff. And so does Nick Millward – he knows the entire percussion vocabulary from Baby Dodds to rock. So we have the players to start with. I think a lot of people like the singing, too. And we look as if we're enjoying ourselves on stage – which we are! I saw an interview with Branford Marsalis the other day where he made that point, too. As long as you take care of the music, it's nice for people to see that and they really do respond.

So not just a trad band?

Ah, the dreaded labels! Well, not really, I suppose, though we love good Dixieland and play it, too. But I know people like to put you in a bag – which, when we started, was a risk I was well aware of. We were doing a few different things: singing, using charts and – once in a while – 'crossing the barriers'. But I think it's good to remember that most listeners grew up hearing a lot of rock music, too – as well as standards – and I don't think younger listeners care about the old labels anyhow. As long as the music's good, and played 'from the heart', as Louis would have said, it can stand on its own feet.

The Half Dozen has regularly accompanied Paul Jones and, earlier, the late George Melly. Was it a challenge, working with such different personalities?

No, actually not. Of course it was marvellous to be asked to join George – which we did from 2003 to his last concert in 2007. But with the players I had we

Digby Fairweather



Photo by Merlin Daleman

could provide exactly what George wanted and also – hopefully – offer him something new, a more varied musical palette. The second album we did with him, for my old friend Alan Bates' Candid label, was – so he said – his best album ever which was a huge compliment. And I think the only problem was that, with all that youthful exuberance, we had to be careful not to take the spotlight away from George. Likewise with Paul – my guys were as able to cope with *Pretty Flamingo* or *I've been a bad bad boy* from his Manfred days as they were to play his beloved blues. The only problem was life-style, really! George drank, smoked, swore and indulged in every enjoyable vice known to man, woman – or bulldog! Whereas Paul is a born-again Christian and neither smokes, drinks nor swears! And he's been happily married for 29 years to Fiona

COMPETITION

A BUMPER BUNDLE FOR FAIRWEATHER FANS!

TWO *Jazz Rag* readers can win a copy of the new edition of *Notes from a Jazz Life* PLUS the CD *The Best of Digby Fairweather's Half Dozen* on Digby's own Rose Cottage label by answering the following question:

Before becoming a professional musician, what career did Digby Fairweather pursue?

Answers to Jazz Rag Competition, P.O. Box 944, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B16 8UT or by email to admin@bigbearmusic.com by March 10th, 2015.

Hendley who's a former actress and latterly a Christian speaker. Paul – who's a great singer of course and a superb jazz harmonica player as well – is still enormously busy, so we can't always meet up. But we've done our show *Rocking in Rhythm* since 2007 and love it. Paul's a very generous stage partner and a very good friend to all of us – and we're his fans!

You have a new album coming out?

In all we've made five albums since 1998 and the new one is a compilation of some of the tracks I like best. Listening back, I was really pleased, not so much with the trumpet, but with the band sound. I could listen to every one of the numbers and say, 'That's us' which of course is a nice thing – at least for me!

What have been the highlights of the last 20 years?

There have been lots. Back in the late 1990s we did an early concert of British music with Jack Parnell, Kenny Baker and a string quartet and I'd love to hear that now. We did a lot of South Bank concerts in the early years for the Park Lane Group. Then there were the years with George which I've written a book about and – looking back – they were quite extraordinary. That was when we played Ronnie Scott's for the first time – for long Christmas residencies which were dubbed the Pantomime Season as, before we joined him, George did a night in drag as his own grandmother with John Chilton and the Feetwarmers! The hours were long, finishing after 1 o'clock, which meant lots of hangers and night-club tans. But I remember Pete King who

The Half Dozen's dates in the next three months take them to:

Feb. 23 Theydon Jazz Club
Feb. 28 Huntingdon Hall, Worcester
Mar 12 Elgar Room, Royal Albert Hall
May 17 The Stables, Wavendon
May 20 Electric Palace, Harwich
May 21 Eltham Jazz Club
May 22 Spice of Life, London

NOTES FROM A JAZZ LIFE: NEW UPDATED EDITION

DIGBY FAIRWEATHER

Northway Books, 978 0 9928222 4 8, paperback, £14

Notes from a Jazz Life first came out in 2002 and the approving press quotations at the front of the new edition (including by *Jazz Rag*) stress the readability and humour, the comic anecdotes, the fact that it's 'a good read'. This is all certainly true, but I feel we were selling Digby a bit short. He is, of course, ever-ready to tell some comic tale of a good friend, but there is more bite in the book than I remembered, some alarming moments of honesty about his own shortcomings, some frank criticism of the approach and attitude of some jazzers (though no personal attacks) and plenty of passion about the music. In fact, I remembered it as very enjoyable, but a bit slight, and it's better than that, though slight indeed in comparison with the 1,000 page chronicle that Digby always threatens to produce!

It's much credit to Ann Cotterrell of Northway Books that she saw that the years after the first publication were key years in the Fairweather career. Now an added 7,000 words give a punchy account of what the Half Dozen means to him and a discerning and diverting survey of the George Melly and Paul Jones years. An index (good, on a quick check) is a real bonus, the absence of photographs regrettable, but understandable: there are plenty of drawings, by Peter Manders and one, memorably, by Humph. My only real criticism of a book that is readable, comic and engaging, but also carries some weight, is that the updating has not always been attentive enough to small text changes; in particular, some of the early sections on more recently departed jazzmen suggest they are still with us – sadly not!

RON SIMPSON

wasn't quick with a compliment saying in the club's house magazine how much he liked the band and what fun it was seeing people enjoy themselves! So there you go again! One New Year's Eve he even turned up in the dressing room with seven glasses and a couple of bottles of champagne and said, 'I suppose I'd better say "F...n' 'appy new year!"' Wonderful!

It's all been great, but I can truly say, 'The best of times is now.' I got married 18 months ago to a marvellous woman called Gwen and last year we decided to really go to town on the 20th anniversary of the band. So we did all the necessary toil: new

brochures, publicity and lots and lots of letters to jazz clubs and festivals. And it really seems to have paid off. In 2015 we're already looking at getting on for 40 major concerts at theatres all around the UK – and a string of great festivals, too. I don't think that would have happened even 10 years ago. But I think now – with the sad departure of so many of the Old Guard: Humph, George, Kenny Ball, Acker and the rest – people are beginning to recognise us as the logical successor to their legendary careers! If that's the case – and I honestly believe it is – then I really couldn't be any happier.

www.digbyfairweather.com

VICASH (1930-2014)

Vic Ash who died in November had in effect two very successful jazz careers. In the early 1950s, having been initially inspired by Benny Goodman, he was supreme among British jazz clarinetists. Later his excellence as a tenor saxophonist took him into many of the top big bands, accompanying any number of the greats of popular music and even enjoying a highly successful spell dipping in the Ray Charles Band!



Drummer Bobby Worth shares his memories of Vic...

“ I first met Vic in the late 1960s when I was appearing at the Talk of the Town with Frankie Vaughan. Vic was with the resident quartet of Phil Philips. I had seen Vic and heard him on recordings many times, so it was a privilege to finally meet him. Then in 1970, when I joined the Burt Rhodes Orchestra which played opposite the Phil Philips Band at the Talk of the Town, I got to know him well. Vic had a great sense of humour and was always interested in what you were doing.

I later had the privilege of working with Vic's quartet and saw him many times when I deputised with the Radio Orchestra. Although we all think of Vic's work with the BBC Radio Big Band, John Dankworth, Frank Sinatra and many more, I will always particularly remember the first time I met him in the Talk of the Town band room...





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MIKE BURNEY REMEMBERED

Jazz Rag editor JIM SIMPSON looks back over his long association with the tenor saxist who died in November last year

Mike Burney, one of the most significant jazz musicians to come from The West Midlands, died aged 76 in November following a two year battle with cancer. Never a household name, he played alongside a great number of important performers, including Mel Torme, Billy Eckstine, Dionne Warwick, Sammy Davis Junior, Bob Hope, Chaka Khan, Steve Winwood, Harry Edison, Byron Stripling, Bill Allred, Dusko Goykovich, Kenny Baker, Bruce Adams and Alan Barnes as well as American bluesmen including Shuggie Otis, Sonny Boy Williamson and Memphis Slim. He was with Roy Wood's Wizzard for three years, featuring on all of the hits, he toured with reggae star Jimmy Cliff and was a long-time fixture with The Syd Lawrence Orchestra and can be found on YouTube on many a Morecambe & Wise show.

Mike's reluctance to leave his native Birmingham certainly denied him a place on the bigger stage, but the music business in general and the jazz world in particular knew where to find him.

Mike Burney was a tenor saxophone player from the old school, what Lester Young, would refer to as a belly player. If that seems a dubious compliment, then remember that Pres applied this description to Herschel Evans, Coleman Hawkins, Ben Webster and Chu Berry. Mike played most other reed instruments, a relic of his time in the army when the Warrant Officer would simply order the musicians to take up any instrument to cover for a departing colleague. But his tenor work was outstanding.

Eloquent, facile and fiery, his playing constantly surprised. He was self-effacing regarding his own talent, generous with his time, advice and support and had a monumental, never-dimmed enthusiasm and love for music and for life. He never knowingly passed up an opportunity to play music, whether paid or otherwise

and put no store on financial gain, which he disdained. Music, friendship and family were his priorities.

Birmingham recognised his value. His name was always the first to go into the programme for the city's International Jazz & Blues Festival from its inception in 1985 until his illness intervened in 2013, in which year The Roy Wood Band, Steve Gibbons Band and King Pleasure & the Biscuit Boys played a fundraiser in tribute to a sell-out 400 audience who knew and valued Mike Burney.

'I was a late starter as a musician' he said, 'I didn't play until I was 17. My Dad gave me a tough choice. Did I want a Claude Butler bike or an alto sax? That was some decision for me to make, but I went for the alto, though to tell you the truth, I'm still not sure that I made the right decision.'

Mike never lost his enthusiasm for the music. Seemingly unaware of his own ability, he was always the fan. He travelled to Paris to listen to Bud Powell at The Blue Note on the night that Bud was sacked for drinking someone's beer. 'So much for the respect the French supposedly show the jazz greats!' Mike recalls. He remembered an English Hooray Henry that night, who lurched up to Bud Powell with 'I say, old boy, will you play a cha cha cha?' 'I think I died of humiliation at that moment,' Mike said, 'but Don Byas was at the club with Lou Bennett on organ. Don brought me a steak, he was really nice. I remember him telling me that he didn't like guys who doubled, he said they should stick to the instrument they know. Later I asked him if he played anything other than tenor sax "Sure", he said "I play oboe, bassoon" and went on to list a whole string of instruments.'

Mike once told me, 'If I could make any wish about which of my former bandleaders I could have phone me and offer me a date, it certainly wouldn't be the army



Mike Burney locking horns with Simon Spillett
Photo by Merlin Daleman

band. It wouldn't be the Blueshounds or King Pleasure & the Biscuit Boys either, because I just can't drink like I used to, there's a limit to the amount of fun a man of my age can have. No, I would choose Syd Lawrence. That was a great band; Syd was a great arranger and a brilliant musician. You know, when he played trumpet, he sounded just like Bobby Hackett, wonderful. He came through those great post-war British bands like Geraldo's. For years he was in that tremendous Northern Dance Orchestra. I've got some great memories of working with Syd, a session in Dubai spent playing chase choruses and swapping fours with Tommy Whittle, the same deal at other times with the fabulous tenorist Gary Cox, working in the sax section with the mercurial Ronnie Chamberlain who played every saxophone invented and with the impeccable Roy Willox who only knew one way to play – perfectly! That man never put a foot wrong!

Again, Mike Burney had nothing but praise for other musicians, again, not the faintest trace of ego. I wonder what these guys, famed as part of the cynical London Jazz Mafia, thought of the unassuming Brummie they found in the adjacent chair in the saxophone section.

'You know something' said Mike,

'Syd's band was the only one I got sacked from twice.' Typical Burney here, self-deprecating, unashamedly honest. 'The first time I was in Monte Carlo with Johnny Howard and Syd phoned, as if on a whim, to tell me he was going to fire me – "We're not compatible, mate, we just don't get on." I couldn't argue with that, I always thought of him, silently and aloud, as a man whose politics were somewhat to the right of Genghis Khan, so I couldn't help but agree. The second time, well that's a little bit hazy, but I believe that a hotel bedroom door slammed in someone's face and me throwing my SL-monogrammed band-jacket into reception might have played a part in it.'

Mike Burney, one of the finest musicians that the region has ever produced and certainly its top tenor, was always on top of his game, ready, willing and eager to take on all comers, deflate a few egos and get filthy (his word for swinging a room into bad health) when needs be.

The legendary flautist Harold McNair, when asked to record the master version of a song based on a demo recording that featured Mike Burney, said, 'Who the hell is that? Why book me when you've got him?'

Don't know about Local Hero, he was always more of a National Treasure to me.

2014'S TOP TRUMPET

A professional jazz trumpeter for 30 years, **STEVE WATERMAN** has built his reputation steadily over that time and was rewarded by the **British Jazz Award** last year. He discussed his career with **RON SIMPSON**.



It strikes me that Steve Waterman is very much the model of a modern jazz musician. His first interest was big bands and a couple of generations ago he might have found a niche in a series of increasingly well-known aggregations until he ventured into the financial minefield of his own big band or as featured soloist. Nowadays the picture is completely different. He puts out various bands under his own name, most often these days a quartet or quintet based on his Mainstem CD, *Buddy Bolden Blew It*. However, this is a tiny part of his output (and, one suspects, not a very large part of his income). In addition, he plays in other people's bands in a variety of styles, composes sometimes very ambitious pieces, regularly brings out highly regarded (and often themed) CDs with all-star bands, has a productive relationship with a trumpet manufacturer, maintains a comprehensive education programme – books, courses, regular teaching jobs – and, in the past, spent much time in the orchestra pit for shows such as *Miss Saigon*.

When I talked to him, he had just arrived in Birmingham to play a gig at the Red Lion in the Jewellery Quarter with Threeway, Ben Crosland's band that also includes pianist Steve Lodder, and which tends now to be a trio plus one, with Jim Hart or, more recently, Lewis Wright added on vibes. Steve has been playing for 10 years with Threeway and his involvement with various of Ben's bands goes back even further. He describes the music as 'chamber jazz' playing mainly Ben's compositions, but also a few by the two Steves. A visit to the Red Lion's upstairs room that evening to get a flavour of Threeway's music confirms Steve's assessment: interesting and distinctive compositions, with subtle interplay rather than dynamic solos, a controlled and lyrical feel to the music.

This is all very different from Steve's early influences in jazz:

'I started playing trumpet because of my dad's big band record collection – I was brought up on Harry James and Bunny

Berigan. At that time my aspirations were to play in a big band, but after a time I gradually discovered Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, and got into more modern jazz. I'd always had an ambition to be playing jazz. I was brought up near Bournemouth and for some years, from the age of 16 to about 20, I used to play the summer season with the Vic Allen Show Band at Rockley Sands Holiday Camp, near Poole. Colin Bryant who played sax and clarinet and Terry Shade, the pianist, were into jazz. I had never improvised in my life, but they encouraged me and helped me out when I got in trouble.'

From there Steve moved on to Trinity College of Music in 1980, studying classical trumpet for the very good reason that there was no jazz course. There was, however, plenty of jazz:

'Simon Purcell, who had just left Trinity, was coming in to do the Jazz Society, and there were players there like Martin Speake and Mark Lockheart – we had John Paricelli coming in to play with the Jazz Society, so it was fantastic for me to have a chance to play some small group jazz. And, to be fair to Trinity, they had a big band under the direction of Bobby Lamb, and that met regularly, with rehearsals each week – and, of course, I was working with the classical stuff, orchestral concerts and so on.'

In career terms, however, Steve never played 'the classical stuff'. He never wanted to and he took no time after leaving Trinity to get himself noticed in jazz and big band circles:

'When I was just finishing Trinity I got involved with the European Community Jazz Orchestra, partly through Bobby Lamb who was one of its directors. In doing that I met Michael Garrick, Graham Collier and others in the jazz world – and after that I worked quite regularly.'

Oddly enough, I don't remember

the word 'eclectic' occurring in our conversation, though Steve did once remark, 'I like the variety' (true enough!). When I asked him when he developed a distinctive voice as a trumpeter, he first of all talked about the variety of styles he has been at home in, from mainstream to contemporary, then, when asked for influences, mentioned musicians who directly affected his general musical awareness (Garrick, Collier, John Surman) rather than trumpeters he tried to emulate. Significantly, once he started on trumpeters, the list was long: Kenny Wheeler and Woody Shaw initially, then most of the great names of the early 1950s, including the sadly short-lived and now somewhat neglected Booker Little. But so many influences means no one huge influence – eclecticism again:

'I don't think I ever followed one particular person – I took little bits I liked from everyone and gradually developed my own style and personality from that.'

It's not always easy to get a solid perspective on Steve's varied career and I was somewhat surprised – and impressed – by his answer to a question about what he has been most proud of:

'In terms of performance one of the real highlights for me was going to Havana and playing the Havana Jazz Festival with a Cuban big band. About 15 years ago I wrote a conga concerto which was originally for Robin Jones. Sadly he couldn't come to Havana to perform it, so I got to perform it with an all-star Cuban big band, musicians from Irakere, Afro-Cuban All-Stars, Buena Vista Social Club, a 30-piece big band put together for the festival. It was an amazing experience to work with such fantastic musicians.'

Latin music and percussionist Robin Jones have been key elements in Steve's music at different times. Straight out of college, playing at Ronnie Scott's

in a band called Cayenne, he was heard by Robin Jones and ended up playing in King Salsa, Jones' band. 'This will completely change the way you think about jazz', said Robin about Latin music – and so it has proved. Steve still plays with Heads South, a band led by pianist John Harriman and playing Latin jazz from all over the world.

Steve describes himself – very quietly – as 'quietly ambitious' and it's obvious that his music has benefitted from both the quietness and the ambition. He is very ready to give credit to others, but also to assimilate and use other people's ideas. This is evident in his important relationships with Mainstem Records and Geneva Trumpets. These have both played a part in his increasingly prolific work as composer/arranger:

'I've really enjoyed all the albums I've put out. A lot of that is down to David Hays of Mainstem: he's come up with a lot of the ideas for the albums. He's been quite a figure for fixing the personnel and the music. Each of those projects has been really good fun and given me the chance to work with many different musicians.'

David often likes to combine small and larger ensembles on the same album. On *Our Delight*, dedicated to the music of Tadd Dameron and Herbie Hancock, the band is actually billed as 'Steve Waterman – Duo to Tentet'. *Night Lights*, the music of Gerry Mulligan and Chick Corea, is split between quintet and 10-piece band. Steve's composing has become increasingly ambitious; even so, his current major work, recently completed, comes as something of a surprise, a Concerto for Jazz Trumpet – and this is where Geneva Trumpets play a part in determining the nature of the work. It's a full-length work, clocking in at about 25 minutes in three movements, and it's scored for trumpet and brass band. Why brass band? Apart from the fact that the best of brass bands offer fine technique and a glorious sound, there's the Geneva connection: the manufacturers sponsor several brass bands and Steve hopes to be premiering his concerto with one of the best: the Brighouse and Rastrick. Steve has re-cast various themes that



he has composed over the last 20 years into concerto form, with a dialogue between trumpet improvisations and the brass band accompaniments. This is not his first work for brass band: the slow movement is, in fact, a re-working of a piece he previously wrote for another of the best: the Black Dyke Mills Band. Clearly his relationship with Geneva Trumpets is more than just a simple sponsorship-cum-advertising angle:

'I met Tim Oldroyd about 10 years ago. He had just started Geneva Trumpets and was looking for people to endorse his instrument. I spent a day with him and learned so much about trumpets that day. Previously I'd just picked up a trumpet and played it. He kept asking me what I liked about the trumpet I was playing and how it could be improved, taking it to bits, trying different valves, different tubes and pipes. There has been a Steve Waterman trumpet and flugel horn line, but mainly Geneva believe in customising to meet individuals' needs: trumpeters can go to them and try various parts and put together a trumpet that suits them.'

North Yorkshire-based Geneva Instruments, in fact, emphasise the importance of personal service for their customers and are racking up an impressive list of artists who endorse the brand, including Gerard Presencer and Rory Simmonds. Most relevant to Steve's latest composition, Tim

Oldroyd sought out advice from leading players in the brass band movement and now supplies such leading instrumentalists and bands as the Brighouse and Rastrick.

Steve's work as a composer/arranger ties in with the final major element in his musical landscape. Many jazz musicians have important roles in music education; few are as varied and committed in their education work as Steve Waterman. Professor of Jazz Trumpet at Trinity, he also regularly teaches or runs bands at the Purcell School, the Royal Welsh College, the Royal Northern College of Music and Christ Church University in Canterbury. And his enjoyment of the work is palpable:

'Most of the students I work with in colleges are aiming to do it professionally so the standard is extremely high and they're very keen and work very hard. The Purcell School has been wonderful as well, with younger students, some as young as 11 or 12. One of the lovely things is that they haven't got wide experience of jazz so you see their jaws drop the first time they hear Clifford Brown. And it's fantastic for me having all these charts I've written for recording and performing projects because I can use them so much in teaching.'

Steve's education work extends beyond his regular commitments

in colleges, universities and schools. His book, co-written with John O'Neill, *The Jazz Method for Trumpet*, is published by Schott. And, with Alan Barnes, a regular collaborator ('I play in his band, he plays in mine') he runs an annual Big Band Jazz Weekend in Bridgend in April:

'Every year for 10 years we've been doing a big band course with the idea of getting people together from all over the country who are interested in playing in a big band, playing my arrangements, Alan's arrangements and various other things. It's aimed mainly at semi-pros and the standard tends to be quite high so we can always put a pretty good band together and plenty of people have been coming regularly for the last 10 years.'

So what next for Steve Waterman? Basically, more of the same. He has ideas for a couple more CDs, but needs to refine and develop them with David Hays. Music education clearly matters a great deal to him and is far more than a way of remaining solvent between gigs. I guess composition is a major focus of his musical ambition – and, for the moment, we can all look forward to hearing the Brighouse and Rastrick Band essaying the accompaniment to his Concerto for Jazz Trumpet!

www.swj.co.uk
www.genevatrumpets.com
www.mainstem.co.uk

BERNARD 'ACKER' BILK 1929-2014

When Acker Bilk died in November 2014, he had been leading one of the country's most popular jazz bands for well over 50 years, often sharing the billing in recent years with two other indomitable veterans, Chris Barber and the late Kenny Ball. However, his other claims to fame are pretty much unique. The creation of 'Mr' Acker Bilk and his Paramount Jazz Band in bowlers and striped waistcoats set a trend (not always welcome!) for strangely garbed British traditional bands. His single, *Stranger on the Shore*, topped the Billboard Hot 100 in the States – apparently the first British act to do that since Vera Lynn! And his career took him from a blacksmith's shop in Somerset to meetings with Royalty – for his MBE and also performing on the Royal Variety Performance. These photographs hint at the richness of a remarkable life.



HAPPY 100TH TO THE JAZZ KIDS OF 1915

SCOTT YANOW looks back at the careers of jazz musicians born 100 years ago this year.

In 1915, the word 'jazz' was not yet in use. The music was still centred in New Orleans although an increasing number of its musicians were working throughout the Southern United States. Ragtime was fading in popularity, Jelly Roll Morton was playing music in Los Angeles, and the Original Creole Orchestra was introducing jazz to many Northern cities through its vaudeville act. Jazz was still two years away from being recorded.

Jazz might have been largely invisible at the time, but 1915 was a banner year for jazz births. The 41 men and women briefly discussed in this article were too young to contribute to the music of the 1920s but they matured during the swing era and were significant during the 1940s. All of the key instruments are represented and one could put together an oversize all-star big band of birthday boys and girls with six trumpets, two trombones, two altoists (both of whom doubled on other instruments), two tenors, a baritonist, two clarinetists, percussion and one's pick of four guitarists, seven pianists, two bassists, three drummers, six singers, and three arranger-composers including one survivor (Van Alexander) whose 100th birthday is May 2.

There is only one significant big

band leader out of these 41. Pianist Buddy Johnson, the composer of *Since I Fell For You*, led a jump blues orchestra in the 1940s and '50s that straddled the boundary between swinging jazz and r&b. However, as solid as his big band was, it is fair to say that he never led a group on the level of the 1915 band.

The trumpet section includes a cornetist, Bobby Hackett, whose mellow tone drew inspiration from both Bix Beiderbecke and Louis Armstrong while being quite original. Once when offering a horn for sale, he said that its upper register had never been used! Everyone (including Miles Davis and Dizzy Gillespie) loved his playing.

When it came to being distinctive, Harry 'Sweets' Edison was unbeatable, often being recognizable within one note. A master of joyful repetition and simplicity who also adopted phrases from Dizzy Gillespie, Edison followed his period with Count Basie with exciting music for an additional 45 plus years.

Taft Jordan was a reliable sideman, whether taking hot solos with Chick Webb or Duke Ellington. He could also sing, but never became a major name or an important leader, just recording three decent but little-remembered albums of his own during 1960-61.



Lee Castle led the Jimmy Dorsey ghost orchestra for over 20 years, playing comfortable but unadventurous music. However, earlier in his career, whenever he had the opportunity to get away from section work in big bands, he was an excellent Dixieland trumpeter.

Emmett Berry and Shorty Sherock were top-notch swing soloists who were overshadowed by others, never achieving the fame of Hackett and Edison. Berry was a strong asset as both a soloist and an ensemble player with Fletcher Henderson and Count Basie, spending the latter part of his career playing with smaller swing groups. Shorty Sherock was a fiery player (influenced by Roy Eldridge) who played with Jimmy Dorsey, Gene Krupa, the first Jazz At The Philharmonic concert, and on a countless number of studio sessions.

The six trumpeters are joined by two trombonists. George Chisholm, who was born in Glasgow, Scotland, spent much of his career in London. By the late 1930s he was highly rated, getting the chance to record with such visiting Americans as Coleman Hawkins, Benny Carter and Fats Waller. After working with the Squadronaires during World War II, he found steady work with radio and television orchestras, recorded often in jazz settings, and even had small roles in several films including *The Mouse on the Moon* and *Superman III*.

Turk Murphy was one of the few members of this band to avoid playing swing in his career. He stood for what he called 'traditional jazz', playing San

Francisco jazz (a variation of New Orleans music) with Lu Watters' Yerba Buena Jazz Band and for nearly 40 years with his own groups. He remains an influential force in trad jazz today.

Leading the saxophone section is Murray McEachern who had equally brilliant tones on alto sax and trombone. Born in Canada and an important player with the Casa Loma Orchestra, he became a busy studio musician who had stints along the way with Benny Goodman, Jack Hylton, Paul Whiteman and Duke Ellington (in 1973). The short-lived Ray Perry (who only made it to 1950) had a soulful sound on alto, played effective violin, and is best remembered for his three years with Lionel Hampton.

Flip Phillips stuck around much longer, staying active until his 2001 death. Whether with Jazz at the Philharmonic, Woody Herman's First Herd or in many freewheeling groups, the tenor-saxophonist added excitement to every group in which he played, holding his own onstage with Charlie Parker, Lester Young and Illinois Jacquet.

Although he spent six years as the pianist and musical director of the Ink Spots, George Kelly was most significant as the Coleman Hawkins-inspired tenor with both Al Cooper's Savoy Sultans in the 1940s and Panama Francis' Savoy Sultans of the 1970s.

For the group's baritone saxophone, one reaches to r&b and Paul 'Hucklebuck' Williams. He actually had a fairly late start, not making his recording debut until 1947, but Williams' *The*

Hucklebuck was a big seller in 1949. Williams was a respected bandleader who often led the groups playing behind major acts at the Apollo in the 1950s.

Two clarinetists are part of this swing-oriented band. Hank D'Amico never led his own big band, but he helped the groups of Tommy Dorsey, Red Norvo, Bob Crosby, Miff Mole and Jack Teagarden with his solid and swinging playing. Gus Bivona played briefly with many big bands (including the Hudson-DeLange Orchestra, Bunny Berigan, Tommy Dorsey and Bob Crosby), but was most closely associated with Steve Allen, often acting as a sidekick and uplifting some of Allen's records.

In addition to the trumpet, trombone and saxophone sections, the 1915 band has a guitar section. Les Paul was as significant an inventor as he was a guitarist, but he was also one of the first Americans to be strongly influenced by Django Reinhardt and he had the ability to play anything from jazz and pop to country while retaining his own witty musical personality.

Al Casey was playing with Fats Waller when he was still in high school and, although he outlived Waller by 62 years and switched to electric guitar, he was always happy to be asked about those early days, playing in a large unchanged style.

Billy Bauer made his mark with Woody Herman's First Herd, Lennie Tristano and Lee Konitz. He was part of Tristano's pioneering free jazz sessions, and his quiet sound and harmonically advanced playing seemed to predict the eventual emergence of Jim Hall.

Although he occasionally soloed, Allan Reuss was best known as a superb rhythm guitarist who kept the rhythm steady in the Benny Goodman Orchestra. He was always in demand for swing and studio dates, working with virtually every top musician from his generation, except perhaps Paul, Casey and Bauer.

The 1915 band has an excess of talented pianists, two of whom also sang. The best of these pianists on a technical level was Eddie Heywood. He had great

success with his mid-1940s sextet (having a hit with *Begin The Beguine*) and his easy-listening albums of the 1950s did well. But for the best Eddie Heywood, listen to him playing on Coleman Hawkins' 1943 recording of *The Man I Love*.

Linton Garner and his four siblings were all pianists, including younger brother Erroll. While he played with the Billy Eckstine bebop orchestra and wrote arrangements for Dizzy Gillespie's big band, he also worked outside of jazz for years. It was not until he moved to Montreal in 1962 (relocating to Vancouver 12 years later) that Garner worked fulltime in jazz although he always remained in his younger brother's shadow.

Two of our band's pianists also had parts of their careers when they were better known as organists. Milt Buckner pioneered 'block chording' while playing piano with Lionel Hampton in the 1940s, becoming one of the top pre-Jimmy Smith organists in 1952. Marlowe Morris played piano in the classic 1944 Lester Young film *Jammin' The Blues*, but found so few gigs later in the decade that he worked in the post office. It was not until he switched to organ in 1949 that he returned to jazz.

One suspects that pianist-singers Una Mae Carlisle and Harry 'The Hipster' Gibson would have liked each other although there is no record that they ever met. Carlisle, a protégée of Fats Waller, was a fluent and swinging pianist who contributed catchy vocals including 1941's *Blitzkrieg Baby (You Can't Bomb Me)*. Harry 'The Hipster' Gibson was an excellent boogie-woogie and stride pianist whose jive vocals and crazy on-stage personality gave him notoriety, but ultimately shortened his time in the spotlight. He was a rock and roll personality nearly a decade before the music began. His *Who Put The Benzadrine In Mrs. Murphy's Ovaltine* became a cult classic.

On bass, Al Hall and Vernon Alley were both dependable timekeepers who rarely took solos in their pre-Jimmy Blanton styles. Hall worked with Teddy Wilson, Mary Lou Williams, and Erroll Garner (on and off for 18



Una Mae Carlisle

years). Vernon Alley was born in San Francisco, played in New York with Lionel Hampton and Count Basie, and then chose to return home where he was a major part of the local scene for 60 years. He did leave town for tours with major artists including Erroll Garner and Ella Fitzgerald, but is most closely associated with San Francisco.

None of our three drummers are famous as soloists, but each were expert in swing settings, adding colour to the music. Nick Fatool worked with Benny Goodman and Artie Shaw, was a session musician in Los Angeles, and became associated with Bob Crosby's Bobcats. Harold 'Doc' West only lived to be 35, but in his brief life worked with Erroll Garner, Hot Lips Page and at Minton's Playhouse. Kansas Fields, although a bit of a journeyman, played along the way with a wide variety of jazz greats including Jimmie Noone, Roy Eldridge, Ella Fitzgerald, Cab Calloway, Dizzy Gillespie, Mezz Mezzrow and John Coltrane.

On percussion is the first major percussionist in jazz history, the Afro-Cuban innovator Chano Pozo. Although best known for his association with Dizzy Gillespie during 1947-48, Pozo had already had a major career in his native Cuba. He ranks as one of the founders of Latin jazz.

In addition to Una Mae Carlisle and Harry 'The Hipster' Gibson, the 1915 band is overflowing with vocal greats. Billie Holiday

and Frank Sinatra were mutual admirers; pity that they never sang together. They both changed popular music in different ways. Lee Wiley was the first jazz singer to record songbooks of American songwriters. Al Hibbler, with his odd English accent (he was born in Mississippi), hit it big with Duke Ellington before having an eccentric career. Wynonie Harris was always passionate, whether singing blues, jazz or early r&b. Midge Williams, the least known of these singers, made her recording debut in 1934, in Japan. Back in the U.S., her singing was quiet and direct a la Maxine Sullivan. She toured with the Louis Armstrong big band and recorded with her Jazz Jesters, a group that included some of the members of the John Kirby Sextet.

Three great arranger-composers from 1915 are perfect to write for this all-star band: Billy Strayhorn, Pete Rugolo and Van Alexander (who co-wrote and arranged *A-Tisket, A-Tasket*), giving the band arrangements that would blend together the best of Duke Ellington, Stan Kenton and Chick Webb.

Imagine what the 1915 Orchestra would sound like! They would certainly cause a sensation at Van Alexander's 100th birthday party.

Scott Yanow, who was not around in 1915, is the author of 11 jazz books and over 750 liner notes. He can be contacted at scottyanowjazz@yahoo.com.



Harry Edison

FESTIVALS 2015

Jazz Rag's pick of the jazz festivals around Britain this year



Carleen
Anderson

BRISTOL INTERNATIONAL JAZZ & BLUES FESTIVAL

March 5-8

The Bristol festival takes over the city's Colston Hall for three days, with concerts in the Main Hall and the Lantern throughout the day. Of particular interest is a focus on Louis Armstrong. On the Sunday morning the Louis Armstrong Story features New Orleans guests Clarke Peters (as narrator), Evan Christopher, Lillian Boutte and Don Vappie alongside a high-quality British big band under Denny Ilett playing Louis Armstrong charts that have not been heard since 1947. Additionally, the previous day Ricky Riccardi of the Louis Armstrong Museum talks about the great man. Also on the Bristol bill, among others, are the Bruce-Ilett Big Band, Dr. John, Carleen Anderson, Ray Gelato and his Giants, Andy Sheppard, Pee Wee Ellis' Funk Assembly with Huey Morgan, and Evan Christopher's Django a la Creole. Regular workshops in the Folk House include sessions by two very different saxophone stars, Bristol's own Andy Sheppard and ex-James Brown MD Pee Wee Ellis.

www.bristoljazzandbluesfest.com



Stan
Tracey

GATESHEAD INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL

April 10-12

The Gateshead International Jazz Festival fills the halls and foyers of the region's premier concert hall, the Sage Gateshead, for a packed

weekend of jazz, as well as crossing the Tyne into Newcastle for Late Night Jams at the Globe and the Jazz Cafe. The 50th anniversary of the late Stan Tracey's *Under Milk Wood* is celebrated in a performance featuring original soloist Bobby Wellins, with Andy Cleyndert, Clark Tracey and, taking the piano chair, Steve Melling. Narration is provided by Stan Tracey's grandson, Ben. The programme also features a double bill of Ruby Turner and the James Taylor Quartet and an appearance by the legendary big band Loose Tubes, with Andy Sheppard and Rita Marcotulli. David Sanborn and Joshua Redman are among the American visitors and John Scofield appears in a duo with Kent-born, New Orleans-based pianist Jon Cleary. Other names standing out in a packed bill are Gwilym Simcock with the Royal Northern Sinfonia and Manchester-based big band Beats and Pieces.

www.sagegateshead.com



Soweto
Kinch

RIBBLE VALLEY JAZZ FESTIVAL

May 1-4

Ribble Valley Jazz and Blues operate year-round in Clitheroe, Lancashire, and the May Bank Holiday sees the annual festival take over from their regular monthly programme. With a Saturday Street Fest, plenty of free events and two Blues Stages, the festival offers real Bank Holiday days out. Topping the bill this year is the ever-popular Stacey Kent Trio, with Andy Sheppard, Soweto Kinch and Arun Ghosh also appearing with their bands. Trumpeter/singer Georgina Jackson is featured with the Northern Jazz Orchestra and a sample of other groups in the festival includes the Alan Bone Trio, the John Ellis Trio and the intriguingly named Dread Supreme.

www.rvjazzandblues.co.uk

ISLE OF ARTS FESTIVAL, VENTNOR

May 1-4

The Isle of Arts Festival on the Isle of Wight benefits this year from the re-opening of Ventnor's Winter Gardens. Closed by the council in



Val
Wiseman

2010, it is now operating under private ownership and provides the venue for the festival's headline concerts. As the name implies, the Isle of Arts Festival is not solely a jazz festival, with names on the bill including Gyles Brandreth and Julian Lloyd-Webber; but the jazz and blues content is of a high standard. This year's programme includes the Mud Morganfield Band, fronted by Muddy Waters' eldest son, and *Lady Sings the Blues*, with Val Wiseman and six top instrumentalists celebrating 100 years since Billie Holiday's birth.

www.artsisle.org



Alan
Barnes

24th JENNINGS KESWICK JAZZ FESTIVAL

May 7-10

Keswick describes itself as offering the best in traditional, New Orleans, swing and mainstream jazz - and it's also clearly bursting out of its four-day limits. Pre-festival concerts now run at a rate of two a night, one in the Main House, a smaller group in the Studio, at the Theatre by the Lake for three days before the festival (May 4-6). All six are quality bands, the likes of the Big Chris Barber Band, Ray Gelato and his Giants, and Spats Langham/Martin Litton/Malcolm Sked. There is no room to do more than hint at the line-up for the festival proper and the festival's new website is recommended. Just as a taster: Martin Litton's Red Hot Peppers, Lake Records International Jazz Band, the Remi Harris Trio, Brownfield/Byrne Hot Six, Jake Leg Jug Band, Matthias Seuffert, Alan Barnes, Ken Peplowski, Barnhart/Fryer Red Hot Seven, the Savannah Jazz Band....

www.keswickjazzfestival.com

SOUTHPORT JAZZ FESTIVAL

May 8-10

The Southport Jazz Festival takes place in various venues around Southport's elegant Lord Street, most of them free. The ticketed



Pee Wee Ellis

events focus on the Atkinson, the 21st century arts centre (library, gallery, concert halls) created out of the town's separate Victorian facilities. Headliners at the Atkinson are the James Morton Quartet, featuring tenor sax star and ex-James Brown MD Pee Wee Ellis. Digby Fairweather and Craig Milverton offer Jazz in the Afternoon and two young breakthrough groups complete the Atkinson programme: the Joshua Cavanagh-Brierley Group and a brass band specialising in funk, hip-hop and aggressive jazz, the Riot Jazz Brass Band.

www.theatkinson.co.uk www.VisitSouthport.com



Jean Toussaint

NEWPORT JAZZ WEEKEND ON THE ISLE OF WIGHT

May 28-31

After a single concert on the opening night, the pace hots up with a total of 17 events across the four days, mostly in the Apollo Theatre, the Quay Theatre or the Medina Theatre, though Newport Minster is the venue for the Alan Barnes/Tony Kofi Quintet. There are a number of exciting tribute performances: Gareth Williams and Dave Green in the music of Bill Evans and Scott La Faro, *Roots and Herbs*, Jean Toussaint leading a stellar sextet in the music of Art Blakey, and *Peggy, Duke and Benny*, with Georgina Jackson and Pete Long. Other bands performing at Newport include the Bobby Wellins Quartet, Sax Appeal, the Zoe Francis Quartet, the Back to Basie Big Band and Denise and Tony Lawrence appearing with the Unity Stompers.

www.newportjazzweekend.co.uk



Robert Fowler

SWANSEA INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL

June 12-14

After last year's very successful event, Swansea Jazz Festival again takes over the Swansea Maritime Quarter, with concerts at the Dylan Thomas Centre, the Dylan Thomas Theatre and the National Waterfront Museum, plus 25 Fringe events at smaller venues.

With some headliners still to be confirmed, Swansea already has a varied and well balanced line-up, including Robert Fowler's Gerry Mulligan Concert Big Band and Clare Teal with the Capital City Jazz Orchestra. Enzo Zirilli's Anglo-Italians is a very interesting quartet featuring guitarists Jim Mullen and, from Verona, Luca Boscagin. Other bands on the Swansea bill include the Hamish Stuart Band, the Busquitos, the Laurence Cottle Quintet, the Geoff Eales Quinte, the Gareth Williams Trio with a Bill Evans tribute, the John Critchinson Quartet, Toby Stewart's Monsters on a Leash (the music of Tower of Power) and the Gary Potter Quartet,

www.sijf.co.uk



Matthias Seuffert

UPTON-UPON-SEVERN JAZZ FESTIVAL

June 25-28

Long-established to a highly successful formula, even so the Upton Festival is still evolving and seeking to develop. Facilities for festival-goers this year will be enlarged and improved and there will be an extra two Thursday evening concerts for early arrivals. The festival takes over the riverside town, with, as ever, a

list of bands and musicians that falls into the 'too numerous to.' Interesting international combinations include the Buck Clayton Legacy Band including Matthias Seuffert who also joins with Alan Barnes and the Craig Milverton Trio which also accompanies Ben Cummings and Amy Roberts in a Tribute to Chet Baker and Gerry Mulligan! Keith Nichols brings his Harlem Madness and Hot Six to the festival as well as forming a trio with Trevor Whiting and Nick Ward. A quick trawl down the programme also produces such names as Sammy Rimington's International Band, Spats Langham, Des Bacon's Red Hot Syncopators, New Orleans Heat and the Jazzoholics.

www.uptonjazz.co.uk



Sarah Gillespie

CLEETHORPES JAZZ FESTIVAL

June 26-28

Cleethorpes Jazz Festival's poster emphasises the seaside, sun and sand element of the festival which is fair enough as the programme, organised by Grimsby Jazz, takes place in McCormacks, a comfortable and fairly spacious bar adjacent to beach and fun park. The festival features a high proportion of top British musicians. Alan Barnes leads his own Octet as well as accompanying Anita Wardell with a Septet. The Dave Newton Trio, Namvula, the Dave O'Higgins Quartet, the Sarah Gillespie Quartet and the Pat McCarthy Band are all on the bill, together with an intriguing trio of John Horler, Alec Dankworth and Winston Clifford. And there are two contenders for best band name: the Jazz Worriers and De Jong's Cleynderts.

www.grimsbyjazz.com



Jo Harman

BURTON AGNES JAZZ & BLUES FESTIVAL

July 3-5

Burton Agnes Jazz & Blues Festival is one of those which gains its unique atmosphere from its setting and the involvement of the community. The concerts take place in the grounds and Great Hall of a particularly fine Elizabethan mansion near Driffield in East Yorkshire and attractions range from a vintage ice-cream van to a local brewer who combines good ale with jazz

guitar, from face-painting and balloon artistry to excellent camping facilities. Two major attractions for this year have been announced, both involving very different female singing stars. Val Wiseman brings a top-class sextet to Burton Agnes for her Billie Holiday tribute, *Lady Sings the Blues*, in the year of Billie's centenary. New sensation Jo Harman received four nominations in last year's British Blues Awards and her mixture of roots, blues, soul and gospel has been compared to the late Eva Cassidy.

www.burtonagnes.com



Saxitude

Photo by Merlin Daleman

BIRMINGHAM JAZZ AND BLUES FESTIVAL

July 3-12

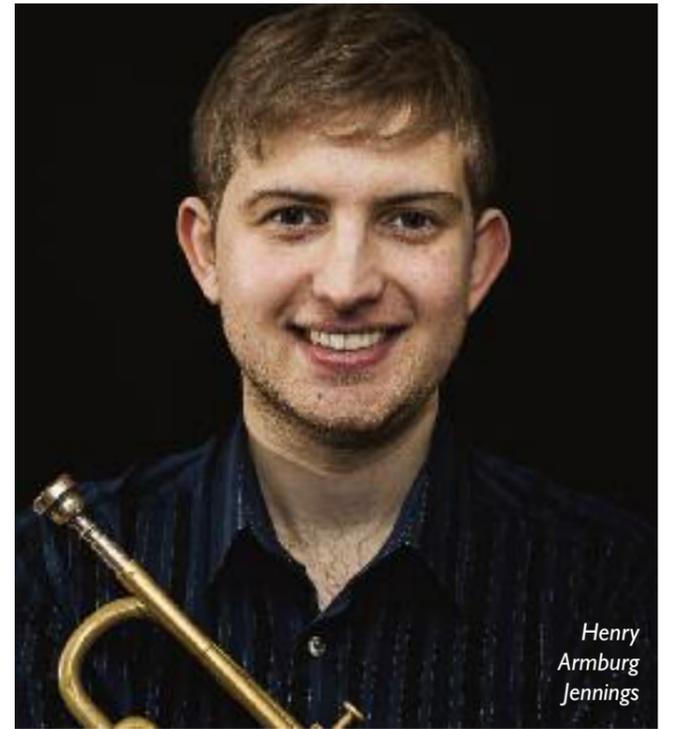
Birmingham is famously the festival where you can't escape from jazz for the 10 days of its duration. The number of events is never far short of 200 and the unwary passer-by can encounter jazz in museums and malls, on canal boats and in castles, walking the streets or travelling on public transport, in addition to the more conventional clubs, pubs, restaurants and hotels. It has been computed that the Birmingham festival provides 30 hours of free jazz and blues per day. The festival's other unique feature is the effectiveness of its scouting for new European talent. At least two of last year's big successes - Italy's Pepper and the Jellies, with vibrant and authentic versions of 1920s and 1930s songs, and Saxitude, the strolling saxophonists from Luxembourg - return in 2015 and first-timers from Europe include the Stockholm Stompers, the Nightlosers from Romania, and the latest Lithuanian band to come to Birmingham, the Schwings with Laura Budreckyte. The as-yet-incomplete roster of musicians and bands includes such festival favourites as Alan Barnes, Bruce Adams, Tipitina, Becky Brine, Ricky Cool and the In Crowd, Remi Harris and American singer/pianist Daryl Sherman - and, of course, Festival Patron Digby Fairweather will be in attendance!

www.birminghamjazzfestival.com

SWANAGE JAZZ FESTIVAL

July 10-12

Swanage is one of the classic English seaside celebrations of jazz, with a wider span of styles than most, described as 'New Orleans to contemporary fusion'. Two marquees take on very different characters, devoted, respectively, to the ancient and modern in jazz, while a number of smaller venues host Stroller events. Billtoppers include Clark Tracey's Stan Tracey Dynasty, Jean Toussaint's Art Blakey tribute, *Roots and Herbs*, Karen Sharp and Robert Fowler's Zoot Sims and Al Cohn programme, and Alan Barnes' Reed Breed. Young bandleaders new to Swanage include Henry Armburg Jennings, Rachael Cohen and J.J. Wheeler. Keith Nichols' Blue Devils and Martin Litton's Red Hot Peppers fly the flag for classic jazz, the Hot Jazz Alliance features young players from Australia and America, and Amy Roberts and Richard



Henry Armburg Jennings

Exall co-lead the modestly titled Magnificent 7. Dennis Rollins' Velocity Trio, the Georgia Mancio Quartet, Digby Fairweather's Half Dozen and the Savannah Jazz Band constitute a tiny, but fairly representative, sample of the jazz on offer.

www.swanagejazz.org



Jeff Barnhart

BUDE JAZZ FESTIVAL

September 1-4

Now sponsored by Tribute, the Bude Jazz Festival is one of the most successful and longest-established festivals of a traditional persuasion, aided, no doubt, by that part of Cornwall's reputation as a seaside setting of remarkable beauty. Among the bands already booked for Bude's long list of festival favourites in 2015 are Brian Carrick's Algiers Stompers, the Big Dog Boogie Band, Chris Walker's Swing Fever, Dave Stradwick's Sussex Jazz Kings, George Huxley's All Star Jazz Band, John Maddocks Jazzmen, Kevin Grenfell's Jazz Giants, New Orleans Heat, Reeds United, the Remi Harris Trio and Slide by Slide, with individual musicians such as Jeff Barnhart and John Hallam also on the bill.

www.jazzfestivalbude.co.uk



Zoe Francis

ZOE FRANCIS

THE VERY THOUGHT OF YOU

Diving Duck DDRCD023: 67:13

I had not previously heard this local vocal lady, but I hope to hear more. Her performances tick several boxes for me. Above all, she is totally a jazz singer - her lyrical phrasing is masterfully varied from chorus to chorus. Which justifies her admirable practice of coming back after instrumental breaks with whole new choruses - in some happy instances, also a third chorus. To top it all off, she provides consistently stirring extended codas to every song.

This gratifying end-result apparently stems from an early apprenticeship in New York, attending workshops run by the legendary pianist Barry Harris, from whom she learned songs and how to maximise her natural talent on them. Subsequently she worked with some leading American players. Here, live at the 606 Club, she is supported by Stan Sulzmann on tenor, Gareth Williams on piano, Jim Mullen on guitar, Mick Hutton on bass and Enzo Zirilli on drums.

The ten standards she brings new life to are less overdone than some, and largely have undated, grammatical lyrics. *Social Call* is an intelligent story/song from the 'fifties, enabling three times round for Zoe and great opening tenor and piano. She takes the seldom-heard verse of the title song out-of-time with guitar before moving into a smooth groove. A feelingful *My Man* is Mullen-backed completely. *Out Of This World* lends itself to Miles Ahead riffs from the ensemble. *Prelude To A*

Kiss sounds fine in Latin mode. *I Was Doing All Right* is a super-swing. The final *Born To Be Blue* is a revelatory up version of the Torme ballad, lasting around nine minutes, with stomping jazz all round. All the solos are superb throughout, inspired obviously by being with such an informed entertainer. If *Jazz Rag* had a star system, I would give this five. LES TOMKINS

LEE MORGAN / CLIFFORD JORDAN QUINTET

LIVE IN BALTIMORE 1968

Fresh Sound FSR-CD 824, 74.48

All the benefits and shortcomings of live recordings are in evidence here. There's plenty of excitement and unfettered creativity as you might expect but the session is hamstrung by a dodgy balance that over-favours piano and drums and almost eliminates the bass. Add in a ropery piano and a sense that form and shape have been largely suborned to bandstand spontaneity and you have something of the proverbial curate's egg. Lee Morgan's trumpet sound is off-centre and sometimes screechy, the recording quality doing him no favours, whereas Jordan is calmness itself, his quite high tenor sound in vivid contrast to the expected sonorities of other Chicago tenors like, say, Gene Ammons or Von Freeman.

As so often happens with impromptu collaborations, this pairing opt for safe ground, opening with Monk's familiar *Straight No Chaser* and taking it through an 18-minute seeing-to, any sense of swing largely upset

by John Hicks's manic piano comping, his own firecracker solo threatening lift-off at any moment. Ed Blackwell's drums are similarly choppy, the whole effect quite spirited if somewhat chaotic. There's a sense here of everyone straining for effect, of trying too hard. The 14-minute *Like Someone In Love* is calmer, Morgan sounding a tad more relaxed, his solo lines cleverly constructed as Jordan develops a fine solo, even if the piano is still too obtrusive and hard to ignore, although some adjustment does allow Workman's bass to emerge from the aural darkness and Blackwell plays good time. Miles's *Solar* takes 15 minutes while Mobley's *The Vamp* goes for 21 minutes. So four lengthy readings, with Jordan coming out on top, largely aimed at hard-bop diehards, I'd suggest. Sometimes less is more! Previously issued on Fresh Sound FSRCD 1037. PETER VACHER

MILES DAVIS QUINTET

THE COMPLETE 1960 HOLLAND CONCERTS

Green Corner 100890 (3 CD Set)

This set has been issued before and includes several tracks from *Kind of Blue* which had been released the year before. The versions here differ quite markedly in feel and tempo and Davis' playing seems to have gained an added edge. Also included are tunes which were to become staples in later incarnations of the Quintet such as *Walkin'* and *All of You*.

At the time there was bitter controversy about John Coltrane, who makes up the front-line for the majority of the sessions. He had, by this time, indicated his wish to leave the group in order to realize his potential elsewhere. Reluctantly he did the tour. There seems to be a clear tension in the air between Coltrane and Davis which shows in their playing at times. There are two tracks by the rhythm trio of Wynton Kelly, Paul Chambers and Jimmy Cobb.

By October Coltrane had left the quintet, his place being taken by alto saxophonist Sonny Stitt. The

feel of the group changes markedly with Stitt using the language of be-bop rather than the modal, sheets of sound approach favoured by Coltrane. Stitt is also featured in a ballad medley with the rhythm section.

Four bonus tracks are included - three featuring Coltrane with the rhythm section and one, a version of *Moonlight in Vermont* with Stan Getz and the rhythm section.

The recorded sound quality is good and there is an informative 20 page booklet. ALAN MUSSON

SHIRLEY SCOTT

FOUR CLASSIC ALBUMS

Avid Jazz AMSC 1140 2CDs: 72:03/74:45

I think you'd need to be a Hammond organ fanatic to get the most out of these two CDs. Four sessions are represented here, from 1958 through to 1962. All but one are trios with bass and drums kept firmly in their places as time keepers. The remaining set benefits from the addition of Stanley Turrentine's blues-infused, Prez-influenced tenor saxophone.

The earliest group of eight tracks - mostly standards - have a very immature Ms Scott getting to grips with her monster instrument and with the idiom. Almost every phrase finishes with a glissando and her solos are splattered liberally with the Bop clichés of the period, especially the ubiquitous triplet figure which identified the genre almost as much as the flattened fifth. The most wearing characteristic is a constant whistle, a sort of harmonic, which at times makes the notes incomprehensible. Two years later, she has honed her skills somewhat and there's a welcome respite in the form of some piano tracks which show what an accomplished and sensitive musician she can be. By 1961, she has tamed the beast, and her collaboration with Turrentine is delightful.

The last session reverts to the trio format and most of the irritating habits have disappeared but, considering the instrument's

potential, I'm surprised that she stays with just one setting or voicing when there could have been a wealth of tone colours at her fingertips.

Not without some good moments, and it certainly swings. HUGH LEDIGO

EDDIE THOMPSON

IN THE USA

HEP CD2100-66:42

Eddie Thompson (1925-1986) was a fine pianist who was sometimes accused of bravura performances at the expense of substance, but these performances from 1963 and 1975 show Thompson in fine form. There are ten titles from a 1963 New York studio session in the company of bassist Ron Lundberg and drummer Lou Berryman, (although to judge by Thompson's own notes, the names may have been transposed). The session opens with *Cherry*, which Thompson explores gently to begin, embellishing the theme before moving into a wide ranging improvisation; he was a dexterous pianist. There are now little heard standards, (*How Are Things In Glocamorra*, *Guess I'll Hang My Tears Out To Dry*) in which Thompson brings out the maximum melodic effect and several original compositions too.

The five closing titles are from a Jazz Piano Party in Santa Clara, California, during September 1975 where Thompson plays solo piano; indeed, the twelve years since the first sessions seem to have matured his style. Consider *All Too Soon*; out-of-tempo opening before Thompson breaks into a gentle tempo, with long right-hand runs a la Art Tatum. *Dancing On The Ceiling* has a complex bridge, followed by dazzling single-note runs. The ten-minute *St. Louis Blues* is the only example of perhaps overdoing matters, with the ghost of Art Tatum looming large, but the break-neck *Liza* is a tour-de-force.

A vote of thanks to Alastair Robertson's Hep label for making this gem available. GREG MURPHY

DIANA PANTON

RED

Inakustik INAK 9129 CD: 61:30

Here we have a Canadian lady singer named Diana, but someone younger and less gifted than Ms Krall. My feeling, after absorbing the 13 tracks, is that they may be directed towards susceptible men only, as her limited approach calls to be described as sultry and sensuous. However, some listeners may find her sound and style rather over-sweet. There's an echo of some

of what Stacey Kent does, but it's what she's doing all the time.

Certainly she's working with nine fine musicians, two of whom were productively associated with George Shearing in his latter years, and Don Thompson on piano and vibes and Reg Shwager on guitar do supply that very ambience at times. The contributions of tenorman Phil Dwyer are very worthwhile, and a line-up of two violins, a viola, a cello and a harp provides warm atmosphere whenever they're used. But arrangement-wise there's a repetitive formula that infects nine tracks, whereby Ms

Panton begins with piano only, out of tempo, on the verse in some cases, before other players move in at whatever time the song is going to be in.

Also, the chosen songs, good as they are, unremittingly carry the same come-and-get-it message. Her style does impart a suitably haunting quality to Ivan Lins' *Love Dance*, the Bergmans' *The Island* and Blossom Dearie's *Isn't That The Thing To Do?* The final offering, *Amazing* (Gimbel/Stern) is very slow and sad, and stays in the mind.

LES TOMKINS

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CHRIS BARBER'S JAZZ
AND BLUES BAND

THE CLASS OF '78

Lake Records LACD337 2 CD's

Those of us who know Chris Barber, also, know that he a restless soul physically, mentally and musically. Chris gives the impression that he always on his way somewhere and that is exactly what he has been doing with his band for some fifty years. Not for him the comfort zone of New Orleans Trad on which he cut his musical teeth. Chris is always trying something new; not in the sense of embracing the avant garde, but rather by experimenting in changes of instrumentation and personnel and, often, featuring guest stars from the various schools of jazz. This is the 1978 band where he added another reed instrument to change the sound. Chris has been assiduous in his search for a bigger sound. In this case Sammy Rimington brought his clarinet, alto and flute to the party, adding weight to John Crocker's hefty tenor.

Chris has always recorded live where possible and this was a date at Birmingham Rep in 1978. The band benefits from the concert atmosphere and offers a selection of recognisable standards but treated to fresh and original arrangements within the voluntary confines of Traditional / Mainstream jazz. The band's greatest asset is Pat Halcox, on trumpet. Pat, the one

original member of the band, is a consummate musician with a creative imagination which seems limitless. He can take his place with any of the great Mainstream trumpet players of the last fifty years. But this is not to underplay the vital contribution which the leader makes. Chris is the force which drives the band. His energetic, jostling attack makes sure that no-one is slouching and his low, growling ensemble playing and soloing would do justice to Tricky Sam Nanton.

This particular band lent towards the more traditional part of the band's repertoire and the fans will welcome that. The overall musicianship is superb. All the soloists distinguish themselves. Above all the band is exciting. There are many splendid moments. *Sidewalks* is a glorious track. *Texas Blues* and *Immigration Blues* are given lovely slow treatments. There is a vigorous arrangement of *Ain't Misbehavin'* which livens up the old warhorse. Musicianship, invention, enthusiasm, integrity: these are the hallmarks of the Chris Barber band and it is all here.

JOHN MARTIN

THE DONALD
BYRD SEXTET

BYRD JAZZ

Fresh Sound FSR 1666 54.30

Where would we be without Fresh Sound? Here's another long-lost gem, originally from the Transition label and recorded live

in Detroit in 1955. Byrd was then only 23 but already a fluent soloist, with a delicate, almost pristine tone who went on to greater success in academia and veered towards fusion in his mature years. He's joined by some Motor City chums with tenorist Yusef Lateef, easily the album's standout performer, stealing the attention, while euphonium player Bernard McKinney proves to be a surprisingly credible improviser, relaxed and cogent alongside. The rhythm section is suitably vigorous with pianist Barry Harris, sounding like an Al Haig-Bud Powell clone on a poorly-tuned piano and not yet the accomplished soloist he later became, as bassist Alvin Jackson and Blakey-like drummer Frank Gant do their stuff ably.

Essentially, this is hard bop, opening with Clifford Brown's *Blues Walk* with Lateef warm-toned and swinging hard, comparable to Zoot Sims in his fluency and run of ideas as he upstages Byrd's neatness. McKinney opens and explores Byrd's clarion-like *Torsion Level* original, sounding a lot like JJ Johnson and making nonsense of the euphonium's inherent lugubriousness. Byrd follows, skating delicately over the harmonies and gaining confidence as Lateef picks up and continues. Byrd's feature is the standard *Dancing in the Dark* and he does well. The later 14-minute version of *Parisian Thoroughfare* is a highlight as is *Yusef* a ballad feature for Lateef in quasi-Websterish mode. Not quite the finished article perhaps, but definitely worth hearing.

BEN COHEN WITH
BRIAN WHITE'S
MAGNA JAZZ BANDREMEMBERING BEN
COHEN

Lake LACD334 66.34

Cornetist Cohen was in on the beginning of the traditional jazz revival of the 1950s, playing in Chris Barber's first semi-pro band and recording on Esquire and Tempo, while holding down a job at Ultra Electronics. A steadfast supporter of classic 'hot' jazz and an aficionado of the Louis Hot Fives and Sevens, he joined clarinetist White's band in 1979 and this collection of their recordings covers sessions made in 1979, 1984 and 1987. Often glimpsed at festivals with White or in ad-hoc groups Cohen died in 2002. He's heard here playing

TRUDY KERR

CONTEMPLATION

Jazzziti Records unnumbered:
70:56

With the volume of excellent albums by the singer Trudy Kerr that she and her husband, bassist Geoff Gascoyne have released on their Jazzziti label, it must have been quite a task to compile this 'Best Of' collection. These 15 chosen tracks, involving 23 musicians, may be the best - certainly, they're all very good.

The overall atmosphere and communication are enhanced by the intermingling of varied backings. Five using the basic piano, bass and drums are expressive ballads, culminating in a notably different take on *Happy Talk*. One of two with a sextet is their own 3/4 original, *Save Me*, which features appealing trombone by Ashley Slater. Four are with a single significant horn. An up-tempo *Tea For Two* has Trudy joining forces on lyrics and scat with the baritone of Derek Nash. Coltrane's *Moment's Notice* brings speedy vocalese and skilful Alan Skidmore tenor. A nicely relaxed reading of Bacharach's *Seconds* is aided by the sound of Graham Blevins' alto. On a joyous *Making Whoopee*, it's Dick Pearce's trumpet adding colour.

Two tracks have been extracted from 2007's *Deja Vu*, which was graced by Sweden's Jan Lundgren on piano and the Juno String Quartet. A spaced-out *They Say It's Wonderful* is highly distinctive, and Jobim's *Two Kites* is a lively Latin treat. Two other tracks I must mention, as they might be deemed the best of the Best. Trudy delivers a very tender treatment of Monk's *Ruby My Dear* solely accompanied by Tom Cawley's piano. And just one from the classic *Like Minds* of 2009 teams her with the late, great Mike Garrick. For jazz vocal devotees, this is a must.

LESTOMKINS

bright, punchy, undeniably hot cornet, the ideas well formed, with nice, driving trombone from John Beecham on tracks 1-8, recorded in 1979. Clarinetist White does well, his style an amalgam of George Lewis and Ed Hall on this showing.

It may seem limiting to call this down-the-line traditional jazz but that's what it is, always musical and commendably well-wrought. All in all, a nice tribute to one of the lesser known names in the music who clearly had something worthwhile to say and the appropriate technique to convey it.

PETER VACHER

MARILYN MAZUR

FLAMINGO SKY

Stunt STUCD 14122 62.34

What strikes you first is a messy cover, with the names of the artists almost unreadable. The album consists of bits and pieces of music, meaningless lyrics in incomprehensible fragments, and a lot of riffs, repeated until you could cry. The drummers thump their instruments without rhyme or reason. I think this is what is called 'free improv'. The performers are Marilyn Mazur, Josefine Cronholm and Krister Jonsson. Mazur's website says: 'Marilyn creates and performs continuously in numerous exiting projects'. I hope she will exit from the music scene fairly soon.

TONY AUGARDE

PABLO HELD

THE TRIO MEETS JOHN
SCHOFIELD

Pirouet PIT3078- 63:33

Pablo Held is a twenty-seven year old pianist from Germany, whose trio includes bassist Robert Landferman and drummer Jonas Burgwinkel, joined on this concert recording from Cologne by guitarist John Schofield. Held has a phenomenal technique, both in his incisive soli and his near hypnotic comping behind Schofield, whilst the guitarist lives up to his reputation for lush chording and rapid single-string work. There are five extended titles here, two by Held, two by Schofield and one by Joni Mitchell,

on which both men are at their most lyrical. The bassist and drummer are an excellent supportive team.

The recording opens with Held's *Cameo*, an atmospheric near-fifteen minutes-worth of ideas exchanged between the two soloists, which opens gently and moves into impressionistic swing, with Scofield displaying shades of Kenny Burrell before breaking into a momentum over the solid bass support. Even more intense is the eighteen-minute *Kubrick/Camp Out*, which begins gently before moving into tempo, with arco bass and a stunning piano solo.

Held and company have produced over an hour of intense music with improvisation to the fore; it's not an easy-listen, but one that is, ultimately, satisfying.

GREG MURPHY

HARRY 'SWEETS'
EDISONPATENTED BY EDISON
AND SWEETENINGS

Phoenix Records 131607 68:07

Although LPs were well established by 1958 when the first of these sessions was recorded, virtually all the tracks on this CD are well within the old 78 rpm three minute format. They are, however, none the worse for that. Here are twenty-four little gems - a master-class in the art of swing. The themes, mainly 1940s and 50s standards, plus a few of Edison's own compositions, are delivered in a direct, eloquent style with due respect to the original melodies, while his improvisations epitomize the swing approach with great authority. There are no pyrotechnics, or self-indulgent flights of fancy, his solos are tasteful paraphrases of the tunes, performed with subtlety and economy and not a little blues inflection. Without intending to make any blatant stylistic comparisons, Edison shares Armstrong's ability to place each phrase - each note - exactly where it needs to be for maximum effect. Tenor saxophonist Jimmy Forrest shares the front line with his leader on many tracks, enhancing the theme statements but, oddly,



Chris Barber

THE ATKINSON

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having almost no solo space. Tommy Flanagan, Jimmy Jones and Kenny Drew take turns on piano – Flanagan in particular making some nice contributions. The bass and drum personnel, all of the same high calibre, are confined to time-keeping duties, which they do to good effect.

A small masterpiece.
HUGH LEDIGO

CATERINA VALENTE AND CHET BAKER

I'LL REMEMBER APRIL

Blue Moon Records BMCD 856 60.12

Oh dear! Yet another CD title intended to mislead us. Of the 24 tracks, there are only two tracks which unite the pair and both of these should have been left in the vaults. The other 24 tracks are solo efforts from each artist and these are uneven to say the least.

Of course, these are from the early days, 1958 and '59, when the two met up in Italy and both were learning their crafts so we

might make allowances but, really, I don't think much of this is forgivable, especially, in Miss Valente's case. Miss Valente warbles her way through some pretty safe ballads leaving a trail of destruction. Her concept of jazz singing seems to be to go wildly off tune and hit the occasional high note. *Stormy Weather* is quite the worst assault on Kern's lovely song that I have ever heard and when she attempts to scat on this number she sounds as though she is reading off a song sheet.

I wouldn't question the singer's ability as a middle-of-the road pop singer. Her popularity attests to that but my advice to her would be to stay away from jazz. It hasn't done her any harm. Chet's contributions, backed by large orchestras, sound tentative, sticking very closely to the melodies, but he causes no great pain.

This is such a mistake that one has to wonder whether the record company is harbouring some resentment against the artists.

JOHN MARTIN

MOSE ALLISON

COMPLETE PRESTIGE RECORDINGS 1957-1959

Fresh Sound Records FSR-CD 842 3 CDs 70:35/76:38/72:08

Allison's biggest claim to fame was, I imagine, his *Back Country Suite*, although *Parchman Farm* must be a close second. Both are present on these three discs.

Pianistically, he is an able technician – you couldn't be anything less in the company of people such as Getz, Mulligan or Cohn – though he was hardly a Tatum or Peterson. Stylistically, he must be close to unique. I can't think of any serious imitators – except, of course, Georgie Fame's vocal delivery. His roots are deep in the Delta with Sonny Boy Williams and John Lee Hooker, but his was the Bebop era and, by the time he began to establish himself in New York, he had achieved a distinctive amalgam of down-home blues and the effervescent free-running lines of Bud Powell, with clear references to Monk and, to my

ears, John Lewis. His blues-laden singing voice remains in Southern climes and complements his piano perfectly.

The performances on this 3 CD boxed set are all by his trio – the format which has served him well throughout his career. In a total of 65 tracks we are treated to material that ranges from authentic blues (*Eyesight To The Blind*), standards (*I Thought About You*, *Old Devil Moon*), classic Ellington (*Prelude to a Kiss*, *Do Nothing Till You Hear From Me*) and a plethora of originals which reveal a talent as an accomplished composer with a capricious turn of phrase and harmony which is still fresh 60 years on. By all counts a true original.

HUGH LEDIGO

LA MAGIA DE LA VEAU

Jazz To Jazz JJO14008 72.32

Saxophonist/bassist Joan Chamorro must be the doyen of Spanish jazz, constantly popping up in support of new, young

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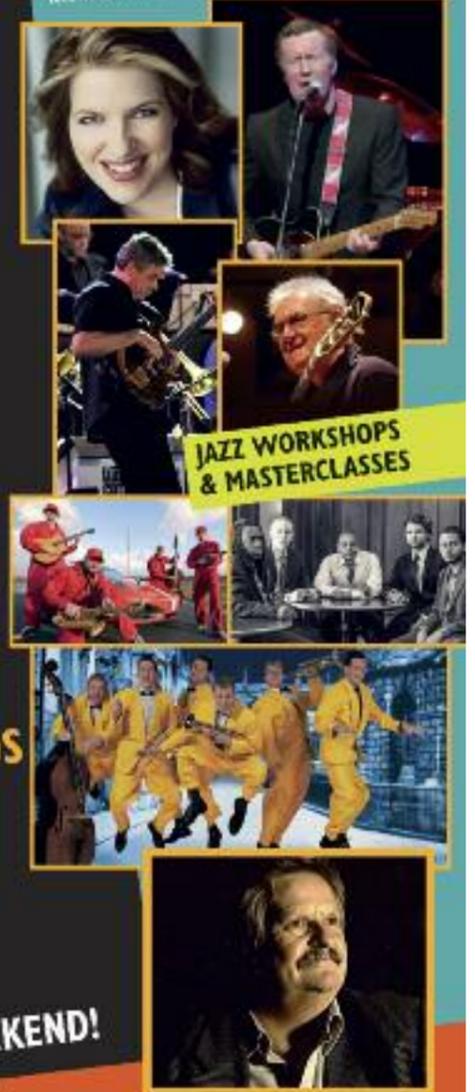
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Louis Armstrong

players, of which there seem to be a copious supply, if recent album releases are anything to go by. Here he and a fine rhythm section are heard with four young female singer/instrumentalists who combine as La Magia de la Veau, which roughly translated might be the *Magic of the Voice*, I guess. Conceived as a series of tributes to the great jazz vocalists of the past i.e. Billie, Dinah, Sarah and Ella, the album's seventeen tracks range from *Desafinado* through to *I Remember Clifford* and ending up with *How High The Moon*.

I often have some trouble relating to continental Europeans singing in English but these very

young women, who each tackle individual songs with a variety of instrumental accompaniments, do include the excellent Andrea Motis, whose trumpet work and easy vocal style rather put my prejudices to the sword. But then Eva Fernandez sings *After You've Gone* in nicely relaxed fashion, adding solo alto, with Motis also on alto, Chamorro on baritone and the Blossom Dearie-like Rita Paves on trombone and the familiar problem recurs.

To be candid, I prefer the ladies as instrumentalists rather than as vocalists for the reason stated above although their occasional forays as a harmonising vocal group work better. Even so,

there's fine playing on most tracks, especially that of the very fine pianist Ignasi Terraza and the whole project is a well-intentioned and nicely done. Incidentally, any designer who has the booklet text in a tiny point size printed blue coming out of black should be shot or at least supply a magnifying glass with every album.

PETER VACHER

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

AT THE CRESCENDO 1955: COMPLETE EDITION

Essential Jazz Classics EJC 55657: 3 CDs, 75.46/77.10/74.56

Jazz fans tend to cultural snobbery on the subject of Louis Armstrong. The Hot Five and Hot Seven tracks in the 1920s were the artistic peak, then he became – dreaded word – an entertainer! Such views ignore the hokum he was coming out with in his evening jobs in the 1920s and also the magnificent music he produced in four decades of commercial success. Almost my favourite Armstrong recordings

are the classic popular songs of the 1930s and Ricky Riccardi, his recent biographer, makes a strong case for the All Stars years.

Louis Armstrong at the Crescendo 1955, which includes the original two-volume album and all other existing material from the concert, proves Riccardi's point. No other jazzman so successfully combines the splendid and the irreverent, majesty of playing alongside a sense of fun and the popular touch. In 1955 Louis was still at the height of his powers, with a thrilling top register and a broad melodic sense to go with all those appealing vocals and asides. True, the repertoire is predictable, but is in fact quite varied, with good old good ones such as the inevitable *Indiana*, jazz classics such as *Basin Street Blues*, novelty songs (*Old Man Mose* a good idea, *The Whiffenpoof Song* less so, with its crude satire of bebop) and any number of popular songs from the 1930s and 1940s. *When it's Sleepy Time Down South*, topping and tailing each set, comes a bit too often, but is a good example of Armstrong's magic: dreadfully false antebellum sentimentality

transformed into something true and eternal – and, no, I don't know how.

The All Stars all get liberal features, though Louis doesn't sit them out: in fact, some of his most exciting playing is on Trummy Young's features, *Tain't What You Do* and *Margie*. Trummy himself is the ideal team player, supplying warm long notes and gentle obligatos behind his leader or exploding into fiercely shouting solos. It's pretty much the archetypal All Stars line-up, with Billy Kyle, Arvell Shaw and the noisy, but entertaining, Barrett Deems, and, if Ed Hall seemed to me to fit the band better, Barney Bigard is an elegant and distinctive soloist. The irrepressible, if inaccurate, Velma Middleton is at her best in the humorous exchanges with Louis.

The main filler is 15 tracks from radio broadcasts in 1954, but they add little: with short broadcasts, you're never more than 10 minutes away from *Sleepy Time* (4 versions in all), too many tracks fade out and nearly all the material is familiar from the Crescendo recordings.
RON SIMPSON

JOHN COLTRANE

GOLD DISK

Essential Jazz Classics EJC55656 (78:03)

This curiously-titled CD was inspired by a Japanese vinyl issue where critics compiled six titles originally recorded for Atlantic Records between 1959–60, to which EJC have added a further seven titles from the same sessions. Coltrane's Atlantic sessions conveyed a greater sense of certainty, compared with blowing-session quality of the previous Prestige recordings, and yet they still seem transitional to a degree. A hint of this comes with the appearance on two titles of McCoy Tyner, who was to be so much a part of the Coltrane legend; in contrast, Tommy Flanagan and Hank Jones, to be heard on other titles, sound workmanlike but unconvincing.

There is an impressive track-listing here – *My Favourite Things*, *Syeeda's Song Flute*, *Giant Steps* and the initial recording of the song that was to stay with Coltrane for almost all of his career, *My Favourite Things*, with

Tyner's hypnotic piano vamp behind Coltrane's soaring soprano saxophone. The beautiful ballad *Niama* conveys a sense of economic perfection that Coltrane was rarely to find again; his post-Atlantic recordings became ever-more exploratory and complex. If you do not have any of Coltrane's Atlantic recordings, this is a satisfying sample.

GREG MURPHY

DUKE ELLINGTON AND HIS FAMOUS ORCHESTRA

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE GREAT 1940-1942 BAND

Avid Records AMSC1143 2CD's 79.35 / 77.55

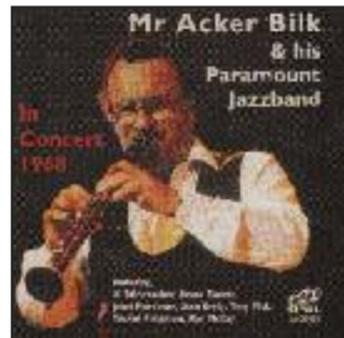
It doesn't get any better than this: the 40/42 band in beautiful re-mastered sound. Many would cite this as the Duke's best band and his finest period. Often referred to as the Ellington / Blanton / Webster band the reference being to the 21 years old Jimmy Blanton, the most influential bass player in jazz who, together with the

magnificent tenorist Ben Webster, gave the Ellington band a whole new lift.

The music heard here was the culmination of the bandleader's twenty years of playing and composing and, if the test of what is classic in music is its longevity, then seventy years on these miniature tone poems are very much in that category. These are three minute masterpieces. Ellington composed around the band members using their special and unique skills to draw upon. And what a selection! The band included, Cootie Williams, Johnny Hodges, Ben Webster, Barney Bigard, Joe Nanton, Juan Tizol, Harry Carney and Rex Stewart. All were among the greatest names in jazz.

All the favourites are here in the 49 tracks, *Concerto for Cootie*, *Never No Lament, Take the A Train*, *Blue Goose*, *In a Mellotone*, *Sophisticated Lady*, *Warm Valley*, *Sidewalks of New York*, *Blue Serge*, *Cotton Tail* and *Just A-Settin' and A-Rockin*.

But the star of the sessions is the orchestration. Ellington and Billy Strayhorn, the Duke's alter ego,



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wrote arrangements full of surprises and ingenuities and the musicians were intuitive in interpreting the scores. Exceptionally welcome are four piano / bass duets with Ellington and Blanton and, of course, *Jack the Bear*, Blanton's virtuoso feature.

The vocalists are Ivie Anderson and Herb Jeffries. Ivie, in particular, was the most compatible of all the Ellington vocalists. Her tone was almost instrumental and blended beautifully with the sound of the band.

My personal favourites? All 49 tracks. This is the disc to take to the Desert Island. You need nothing else.

JOHN MARTIN

CHARLES MINGUS

MINGUS MOODS

Properbox 188 4 CD Set

Mingus died 36 years ago but his influence is still felt in the jazz world. Listening to *A Foggy Day* from disc one, the thought struck me that Mingus was the Django Bates of his day. His music, whilst retaining the feel of hard bop also drew elements from black gospel music, free jazz and classical music. Out of this he forged his own music. He once said that his main influences were Duke Ellington and church music and through this set, that becomes clear. In a similar way to Ellington, Mingus took the skills of his musicians and their personalities into account when forming his groups and writing for them, often using unconventional instrumental configurations. As a performer he was a pioneer of double bass technique.

For anyone looking for an introduction to Mingus, this set is ideal. It covers the period from 1956 to 1960 – certainly a fertile period. Many of the Mingus favourites are here including *Pithecanthropus Erectus*, *Better Git It in Your Soul* and *Boogie Stop Shuffle*. So too are musicians who were to become well-known performers in their own right, such as Jackie McLean, Mal Waldron, Jimmy Knepper and Pepper Adams.

The boxset also includes an

illustrated 32 page booklet including a detailed discography.

Mingus' music is not always 'easy' but if you are new to his music and the challenge, this would be a wonderful place to start. For the diehard fan, it's a chance to replace your aging vinyl cost-effectively.

ALAN MUSSON

LARS GULLIN

PORTRAIT OF THE LEGENDARY BARITONE SAXOPHONIST

Fresh Sound FSR-CD 84111-2 4 CDS 77.32/75.30/68.41/67.39

This boxed set of four CDs contains a good portion of Swedish saxist Lars Gullin's recordings from 1956 to 1960. These might be called his most successful years, as drugs and other hindrances meant that his output was seriously diminished in quality afterwards. Strongly influenced by the style that Gerry Mulligan established in the 40s and 50s, Gullin had a similar supple approach and smooth tone. He had tried out various instruments in earlier years but settled on the baritone saxophone from the late 1940s onwards, and established himself as one of the foremost exponents of the instrument. He was also a significant composer and arranger, favouring the 'cool' sounds created by composer-arranger Tadd Dameron and by the album *Birth of The Cool*. Gullin's association with Lee Konitz was an important strand in his playing.

The two versions of *Darn That Dream* on the last CD illustrate the delicacy that Lars could bring to the baritone saxophone. As with British jazz of the same period, there was a very slight uncertainty in the playing, which arose from an awareness of how hard it would be for European jazz to overcome the supremacy of American jazz, despite the talents of the European jazzers. Musicians like Lars Gullin showed how that domination might be overcome.

TONY AUGARDE



Charles Mingus

BJØRN SOLLI

AGLOW: THE LINGØR PROJECT VOLUME I

Lingør Lyre01 70.00

Solli is a Norwegian guitarist who was born in 1979 and is now resident in New York City. New to me, he proves to be a facile improviser whose sound and style bears comparison with our own Jim Mullen and is clearly at home on bandstands around the world, with an impressive CV involving a whole roster of top players.

Lingør, it turns out, is an attractive community located on the South-East Norwegian coast and much favoured by second home owners and it is this peaceful place that has inspired Solli to produce this elegantly-conceived nine-part suite or project, albeit that its final part is dedicated to his dog! Lingør was also the site of a decisive battle in the Napoleonic War in 1812 when the Royal Navy destroyed the last ship in the Danish-Norwegian fleet, thus effectively ending their Napoleonic collaboration and this also prompted a specific piece.

More to the point for *Jazz Rag* readers, Solli has not only a knack for creating interesting themes and good lines but he has had the good sense to enlist the highly creative tenorist Seamus Blake,

often heard here with the Mingus Big Band, the excellent pianist Aaron Parks and trumpeter Ingrid Jensen (on three tracks) together with bassist Matt Clohesy and drummer Bill Stewart to record for him. Happily for him, and us, they turn in a series of fine performances.

I'm in no position to consider how accurate his evocation of this place is, but I can say that he has produced an album that both surprised and pleased me as a new listener to his work. He solos well but so do his conferees, the mood, track by track, varying from the pungent to the gently lyrical (viz Jensen on flugelhorn on *Calenture*) via the touchingly wistful. Worth investigating.

PETER VACHER

YUSEF LATEEF

FOUR CLASSIC ALBUMS

Avid AMSC 1147 2 CDs 74.14/75.13

I am never quite sure what to think of Yusef Lateef. One must admire his versatility: playing not only the tenor sax but also flute, oboe and various Middle Eastern instruments. He was one of the first musicians to start exploring 'world music'. And he has been employed by such reputable bandleaders as Dizzy Gillespie and Roy Eldridge. But what are we to make of a track like *Love*

and *Humor*, where conventional instruments are joined by what sounds like someone blowing into a bottle and rubbing a balloon? Are these genuine attempts to explore new sounds or an attempt to get away with nonsense? As usual, Avid's album release is a bargain. This double CD assembles four LPs from 1957 to 1960: *Sounds of Lateef*, *The Three Faces of Lateef*, *Lateef at Cranbrook* and *The Centaur and the Phoenix*.

On the first three, Yusef leads quintets, and on the last a nine-piece group which includes such master musicians as Clark Terry and Joe Zawinul. Lateef tackles a variety of styles: from such standards as *Take the 'A' Train* to many of his own original compositions. He has a warm, fluent style on the sax, and he can certainly swing with the oboe, although he commits several fluffs and discords. I still wonder how much the 'exotic' side of Lateef's playing is genuine, and how much it was an excuse for occasionally uncoordinated playing (e.g. in the theme of *Woody 'N You*). As with Yusef's later album, *Eastern Sounds*, the music here grows on me, so perhaps my doubts are unfounded.

TONY AUGARDE

DANISH RADIO BIG BAND

A GOOD TIME WAS HAD BY ALL

Storyville Box Set, 1088616 6 CDs, 70.31/78.34/76.08/73.18/78.52/ 79.79

These six CDs are by way of being a historical documentation of the Danish Radio Big Band from its inception in 1964 up until 2014. The fact that a Big Band can survive in the present economic climate is something of a miracle and Danish Radio has to be applauded for its commitment. That the Danish band is now in its 51st year is unbelievable. But it is a band worth saving. It is very good indeed; of International standard and it has employed many of the best European musicians over the years. The band can stand on its own reputation but it has a policy of inviting prominent musicians to guest with it

Lack of space only allows me to cover these excellent records, briefly. The first disc, 1964-74 has Stan Kenton playing and conducting Bill Holman scores on some tracks. The next CD covers the period of eight years from 1979-'87 when Thad Jones was resident in Denmark, conducted the band and took it on its first UK tour. Two concerts in Glasgow and York are covered. Georgie Fame shows up on disc 3 1991-'96, as do Bob Brookmeyer, Tony Coe, Art Farmer and arranger, Ernie Wilkins, premiering his *Suite for Jazz Band*.

1997 featured Django Bates with some of his compositions including *The Strange Voyage of Donald Crowhurst*, *Once A Penguin and Nights at the Circus*. The Brazilian pianist Eliane Elias recorded with the band at this time and the remaining tracks are from the band's Australian tour.

Disc 5 is from the period 1997-1999 and has the elegant French pianist Martial Solal on three tracks sharing the CD with Phil Woods, and Niels Jorgen Steen who wrote his suite, *The Governor*, for the band.

The final fifteen years 1999-2014

spotlights three premieres. Jim McNeely conducts a tribute to Louis Armstrong's classic music of the 1920's with the title of *The Power and the Glory*, Palle Mikkelborg conducts his own composition, *The Voice of Silence* and the music of Thomas Clausen is also featured.

The band carries off all of these ambitious projects with aplomb. The sections are tight, the individual soloists are superb and, most of all, the band swings mightily. This is a band which can stand favourable comparison with any band currently around.

JOHN MARTIN



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RON SIMPSON'S ROUND-UP OF RECENT CDS

Maybe I'm getting cynical, but a CD that claims to express 'the free spirit of improvisation' sets alarm bells ringing. However, **CIRCUS IN THE SKY** (MGP Records MGPCD 013: 57.42) is a pleasant surprise. The **Pete Roth Band** is a five-piece, with saxophonist Loren Hignell providing a second voice to the guitarist-leader. Roth's music is accessible, melodic, often pleasingly optimistic, and the album consists of nine distinctive originals. Roth produces with fellow-guitarist Nicolas Meier who joins him on the album's highlight, *The Return*. If Roth's originals all have a story behind them, **Kalle Kalima & K-18** take it one stage further on **BUNUEL DE JOUR** (TUM CD 038: 70.34), basing all the tracks on the films of Luis Bunuel! Bunuel's films are challenging, unpredictable, iconoclastic and not to everyone's taste – and I guess Kalima comes into the same category! The harsh discordance of *The Phantom of Liberty* makes for an unwelcoming start, but the sound world of Kalima's electric guitar with alto sax and accordion is always interesting and things settle down to calmer, more evocative moods, with Bunuel's early masterpiece about street children, *Los Olvidados*, given an almost bluesy feel – and full marks to Kalima for notes that explain exactly what he is trying to achieve!

Film also underlies **CAST YOUR FATE TO THE WINDS** (Essential Jazz Classics EJC 55659: 76.56), the 1962 album by the **Vince Guaraldi Trio**, originally titled *Jazz Impressions of Black Orpheus*. The original LP consisted of four numbers from the Marcel Camus film, two each by Luiz Bonfá and

Antonio Jobim, plus four others, including what is now the title track, a gently insinuating theme that became an unexpected hit. The CD has a fair number of alternative takes, plus three 1955 tracks by an earlier Guaraldi trio. The evocative *Manha de Carnaval* is the most memorable of the *Black Orpheus* tracks. Monty Budwig and Colin Bailey give Guaraldi creative support and the whole album is accomplished and attractive. A different take on Latin music comes in the infectious performance of **Eddie Palmieri and La Perfecta on LA PERFECTA + EL MOLESTOSO** (Malanga Music MM 826: 64.28), the first two albums (1962/63) under his own name. Most of the tracks are by Palmieri or Al Santiago or both, and all are identified by the Cuban dance rhythm (pachanga, son montuno, etc.) – rather like Victor Sylvester's strict tempo, but much more exciting. Singer Ismael Quintano gets to slow the tempo down with his own ballad (identified as a bolero) *Contento Estoy* where the normally gloriously raucous trombones of Barry Rogers and Joao Donato smooth it out like a dance band section. The success, more than anything, depends on the contrasting layers of the music: trombones contrasted with George Castro's flute (there are five trumpets, too!), Eddie Palmieri's bebop-influenced piano emerging from the uninhibited sounds of a five-man percussion section and a three-man chorus! **DATE WITH THE KING** (EJC 55660: 78.34) by **Benny Goodman** has much to enjoy, but both LPs (from as far back as 1955) fail to live up to what it says on the packet. The first is billed as by Goodman and **Rosemary Clooney**, but she

sings only on three tracks. Her phrasing is well suited to the material, even if *Memories of You* lies uneasily for her voice. The small group which plays three instrumentals contains the great Basie trumpeter Buck Clayton and mellifluous trombonist Urbie Green, but getting that front-line to bash out Ben Pollack's Dixieland warhorse *That's a Plenty* is a waste. The second LP is a case of same soup warmed over – twice! – though with some superb chefs such as Lionel Hampton and Harry James (in thrilling form). Goodman played on the soundtrack of the film *The Benny Goodman Story*, issued by Decca, but he was under contract to Capitol, so for that label he rush-recorded a second version of his old hits (with an excellent orchestra and quintet) purporting to be from the film! **BRUBECK PLAYS BERNSTEIN** (EJC 55487: 75.32) by the **Dave Brubeck Quartet** is far from a routine performance. The LP, originally titled *Bernstein Plays Brubeck Plays Bernstein*, includes elder brother Howard Brubeck's *Dialogues for Jazz Combo and Orchestra*, four movements that effectively and seamlessly integrate the performance of the New York Philharmonic under Bernstein with improvised jazz elements. It's not especially memorable music, but it works, as does the quartet's take on five Bernstein songs. *Jazz Impressions of Japan* is an attractive companion album. Brubeck's compositions rooted firmly in impressions and events during a tour of Japan and bringing plenty of Oriental colour, notably on *Koto Song*, to spice up the typical Brubeck sound. Jazz fans tend to think of **Lee Wiley** for her recordings with Eddie Condon in the 1940s, but she made numerous albums in the 1950s and, by general consensus, **FOUR CLASSIC ALBUMS PLUS** (AMSC 1113: 2 CDs, 77.55/79.04) includes the three best. Lee Wiley was always a singer who sang the song, not just the notes, and she was at her best on songs which viewed emotion through a sort of wry, but uncynical, worldliness – here, from different albums, *I've Got a Crush on You* and *A Hundred Years*

from Today – rather than more openly emotional numbers such as *How Deep is the Ocean*. *Night in Manhattan* contains some lovely songs, Bobby Hackett's inimitable cornet and nice work by Joe Bushkin, but Bushkin's *Swinging Strings* can be a bit fussy and four tracks are less interestingly accompanied by piano duo (as is her tribute to Vincent Youmans and Irving Berlin). The mostly bigish bands for *West of the Moon* and *A Touch of the Blues* are stuffed full of the right players playing generally good arrangements, but have their bland moments. As a bonus there are two tracks with a classy front-line of Butterfield, Cutshall and Hucko. It seems to me that the great **Carmen McRae** is too little thought of these days. **FOUR CLASSIC ALBUMS** (AMSC 1125: 2 CDs, 76.33/75.10) is a splendid reminder of the range of her artistry. Dating from 1955 to 1958, each of the albums is very different which means, inevitably, that the jazz content varies, though the quality never changes. *Torchy!* is full of stylish versions of wonderful songs (*But Beautiful, We'll Be Together Again* – as good as that!) with occasionally over-lush accompaniments. *After Glow* is pared down with piano trio (sometimes Carmen herself very capably on piano), some fairly obscure songs in with classics such as *I'm Thru with Love*. *Mad about the Man* is, astonishingly, an album of Noel Coward songs. Carmen makes *Mad about the Boy* an intense torch song (later than Dinah Washington's not dissimilar version, I think), and it's fascinating to hear her sailing through musical comedy favourites like *I'll See You Again* with impeccable diction and phrasing. And *Birds of a Feather* is simple delight. She includes Johnny Mercer's ornithological trilogy (*Skylark, Bob White, Mister Meadowlark*), plus *Baltimore Oriole* which should be Mercer, but is another master-lyricist Paul Webster. McRae sings with expressive freedom, and Al Cohn and Ben Webster are among the luminaries nudging her along. There is certainly no shortage of **Duke Ellington** on CD and **ELLINGTON UPTOWN/THE LIBERIAN**

SUITE/MASTERPIECES BY ELLINGTON (EJC 55655: 2 CDs, 79.14/78.17) comes into the category of interesting rather than essential. By common consent the Ellington band of 1947-1952, when these three albums were made, lacked the distinctive character of, say, the 1940 band or the late 1950s, but it's fascinating to observe the band in transition and also adjusting to the LP format. In 1947 (*Liberian Suite*) the rhythm section still contained traces of the 1920s in Fred Guy and Sonny Greer, together with the cumbersome two-bassists arrangement; by 1952 (*Ellington Uptown*) it had streamlined down to Wendell Marshall and Louie Bellson, giving his all on the celebrated drumfest, *Skin Deep*. The brass section was in a state of flux in these years, only Ray Nance suggesting permanence, while the saxes had almost

stabilised to the masterly late 50s quintet, though the temporary defection of Johnny Hodges brought in Willie Smith for a spell. As for LPs, giving 'uncut concert arrangements' of Ducal classics seems to have worked better than devotion to one extended suite.

Finally, I'm not really sure whether **BUD SHANK PLAYS THE MUSIC OF BILL EVANS** (Fresh Sound FSR 5012 CD: 75.26) qualifies as a new reissue. Recorded in 1996, according to various websites it is long deleted, but the packaging (complete with excellent booklet) is still 1997-vintage. What is certain is that, at this late stage of his career, Shank (always on alto) was inventive and fluent, his music sophisticated and accessible – and Bill Evans wrote more good tunes than I had realised!

MASTERWORKS ORIGINAL ALBUMS

How do you judge which version of classic albums to buy? Price, nature of bonus tracks, packaging, notes, simple availability? Suddenly arriving at *Jazz Rag* is a whole crop of releases from European label Masterworks Original Albums – new or just new to us? Reasonably priced, they will appeal to those who like neat compact stylish packaging, but those who enjoy the extended original notes that you get with labels such as Fresh Sound will find the largely factual offerings on Masterworks a bit tame. The extras are fine, on the usual model: two albums together or a sensible selection of linked tracks. The most striking thing is the quality of the original albums just released: it's as though Masterworks have just discovered and reissued all the most famous of 1950s and early 1960s albums. On their webpage you can find recent releases such as *Kind of Blue, Lady in Satin, Jazz Samba, Saxophone Colossus* and many others, while the six that I received all contain at least one album five-starred by *Down Beat* or *All Music*.

The only reason not to get **Clifford Brown & Sonny Rollins: PLUS FOUR + AT BASIN STREET** (21346: 79.49)

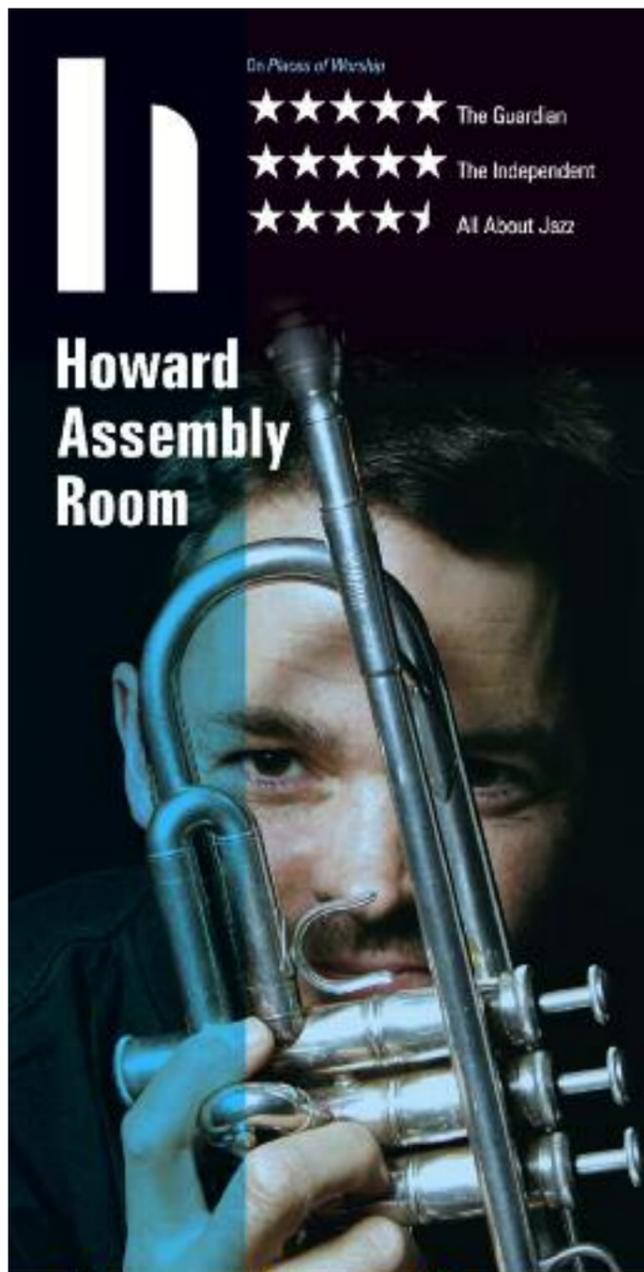
or **Art Blakey: MOANIN'** (21343: 77.37) is having them already, three of the defining albums of hard bop. The group on the Brown/Rollins CD is, in fact, the quintet led by Clifford and Max Roach and these are two of the last albums made before the untimely deaths of Clifford and pianist Richie Powell. The first puts a bit more emphasis on Rollins, creative, even lyrical, with two of his compositions. Richie Powell – almost the forgotten man in the accident that killed the greatest trumpeter of his generation – adds a couple of originals to the *Basin Street* album and impresses as a more direct version of his famous brother. The Blakey album is definitive, with classic originals from two band members: Bobby Timmons' title track and several from Benny Golson, including *Blues March*. The bonus tracks come from Paris concerts with the same group: *Moanin'* again and more Golson gems: *Whisper Not* and *I Remember Clifford*. Clearly remembering Clifford is the superb 20-year-old trumpeter Lee Morgan. **MULLIGAN MEETS WEBSTER** (21349: 76.48) was less influential than the previous two, but is probably the most successful of **Gerry Mulligan's** collaborations. Here the two saxophone greats from different generations are complementary, not competitive,



with the magic established on the opening *Chelsea Bridge*. The 11 tracks, only six of which were on the 1959 LP, are the same as on the 1997 Verve CD. **GO + A SWINGIN' AFFAIR** (21342: 76.16) captures **Dexter Gordon** at the peak of his early 1960s comeback, shortly before he moved to Europe. Supremely confident, he gives authoritative performances of fine ballads in between the originals. The two albums were recorded within a few days of each other for Blue Note at Rudy Van Gelder's Englewood Cliffs studio – and 50-odd years later the sound quality hits you from the opening notes of *Cheese Cake*. Finally there are **Thelonious Monk's** best-selling album and 'the pinnacle of **Wes Montgomery's** recorded studio work', according to Wikipedia – Masterworks are certainly pulling out all the stops with their current issues. **MONK'S**

R.S. **DREAM** (21345: 76.52) features his quartet with Charlie Rouse (who doesn't always get a good press, but to me partners Monk perfectly) plus wonderful solo reconstructions of *Body and Soul* and *Just a Gigolo*. Unlike previous CD reissues, this doesn't use alternative takes, but ingeniously adds earlier versions of six of the tracks on the album. Something similar is tried on **THE INCREDIBLE JAZZ GUITAR OF WES MONTGOMERY** (21340: 56.28), with versions of *D Natural Blues* and *West Coast Blues* recorded the same year (1960) with different line-ups. The album (by a quartet including pianist Tommy Flanagan) contains the first recordings of those two landmark Montgomery blues and is a great example of how to make technical brilliance easily accessible to the listener.





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