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THE JAZZ RAG

DAVID GORDON TRIO

ISSUE 139 WINTER 2015
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DAVID GORDON TRIO

DAVID TELLS THE STORY OF HIS INTRIGUING NEW CD ON MISTER SAM RECORDS, ALEXANDER SCRIBAN'S RAGTIME BAND. (PAGES 14-15)

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UPFRONT

The 2015 winners of the longest established and most prestigious of awards to jazz musicians in this country, the British Jazz Awards, are listed in full on pages 18-19. Even among the sought after 'Jazz Oscars' the award for Services to British Jazz stands out, honouring not just musical expertise, but serving jazz in a whole variety of ways.

So Digby Fairweather is an ideal choice. His skill as a trumpeter is beyond dispute and as a bandleader he regularly scoops the Small Group Award with his Half Dozen, but his dedication to British jazz goes far beyond that. As an author he ranges through memoirs, instruction manuals and – as co-author – the admirable *Rough Guide*, as well as being a perceptive and generous reviewer. We on *Jazz Rag* have every reason to be grateful to Digby for his cheerful willingness to supply wise words on whatever topic claims our attention. A fine broadcaster and teacher and a perpetual encouragement to young musicians, he himself is proudest of his great work in founding and developing the National Jazz Archive.

So this is a good time to mention the Digby article that is missing from this edition. In *Jazz Rag 138* he promised further details of exciting developments in the National Jazz Archive. Now the plans for Southend have become even more ambitious and, as a result, will take a little longer to mature.

Photo by Merlin Daleman

Alex Garnett



UNION CENTENNIAL

The Mutual Musicians Foundation International, once known as Local 627 or the 'colored' musicians union and based at 1823 Highland in Kansas City, began in 1917 as a charter of the American Federation of Musicians. On June 16-18, 2016, MMFI will begin centennial celebrations with an awards gala for surviving black musicians from the 'colored' unions. Currently MMFI is seeking to contact any musicians who belonged to a segregated union or were represented by a black organiser of the AFoM for this celebration of a highly significant institution in jazz history.

www.mutualmusiciansfoundation.org

JAZZ AT NORDEN FARM

The jazz programme at Norden Farm Centre for the Arts near Maidenhead has an impressive jazz element in the New Year: the Big Band with Five Star Swing (January 14), the Alex Garnett Quartet (22), Sink or Swing (29) and Dave O'Higgins (February 12). Also of more than passing interest are D'Ukes, a ukulele sextet (December 19) and the London Klezmer Quartet (Jan. 21).

Tel.: 01628 788997

NEW NAMES FOR KESWICK

The 25th Jennings Keswick Jazz Festival (May 12-15) offers over 90 performances in seven venues, with first-timers to the festival

including the Funky Butt Hall N'Awlins Jazz Band, Hot Sauce Finger Snappers, Janet Seidel. La'al Big Band, the Dance Band Divas, Nevada Street Jazz Band and Tad Newton's Jazz Friends. Of course it's not all newcomers: those looking to hear festival favourites such as Enrico Tomasso, Alan Barnes, Spats Langham, John Hallam and Keith Nichols won't be disappointed.

Tel.: 017687 74411

www.theatrebythelake.com

JAZZ AT OPERA NORTH

In the middle of a varied programme of concerts, films and even a world opera premiere, the Howard Assembly Room of Opera North at Leeds Grand Theatre has a number of striking performances of jazz and world music. The Mingus Big Band appears on January 23 and American saxist/clarinetist Colin Stetson on March 13. Known as the 'father of Ethio-jazz', vibraphonist Mulatu Astatke (February 10) combines East African sounds with the jazz of Gil Evans and Duke Ellington. Two evenings of music and film feature pianist/composer/film-maker Christophe Chassol providing the music to his own film of life in Martinique (February 1) and Moishe's Bagel accompany the Soviet silent propaganda film, *Salt for Svanetia* (1930), with a new score on March 17.

Tel.: 0844 848 2700

www.operanorth.co.uk

CLEETHORPES JAZZ FESTIVAL

Grimby Jazz runs monthly sessions at the Old Clew Club, with the New Year bringing Chetro, Neil Yates's Chet Baker tribute (January 20) and the Rob Barron Quartet (February 17). Grimby Jazz also promotes the Cleethorpes Jazz Festival with top-class bands at McCormack's Bar from Friday evening through Saturday and Sunday. The 2016 festival, on June 24-26, features, among others, the Janet Seidel

Trio, Matt Skelton All Stars, Pat McCarthy, the Liz Fletcher Quintet, Alan Barnes/Gilad Atzmon Quintet, Mark Nightingale Quartet, Liane Carroll and the Alan Barnes Octet.

www.grimsbyjazz.com

STABLES JAZZ

Cleo's Christmas Show (December 18-19), featuring Cleo Laine with a host of family and friends, is the pre-Christmas treat at the Stables, Wavendon. 2016 jazz and jazz-related events begin with Brubecks Play Brubeck, Darius, Chris and Dan with Alec Dankworth and Dave O'Higgins (January 12) and also include the Syd Lawrence Orchestra (29), Christian Garrick and the Budapest Cafe Orchestra (February 4), The Temperance Seven (14), Cafe Society Swing (19), the Puppini Sisters (March 16), Denys Baptiste (24) and the Jive Aces (25). Appearing at Stage 2 at the Stables are Zoe Schwarz Blue Connection (Jan. 23), the Marco Marconi Trio (Feb. 9) and the Andy Panayi Trio (March 8). Tel.: 01908 280800

www.stables.org

JAZZ AT SCHOTT MUSIC SHOP

On March 11, between 6.00 pm and 9.00 pm, the Schott Music

Dave O'Higgins



Shop at 48, Great Marlborough Street, London, launches its new and comprehensive selection of jazz sheet music. The Tim Richards Trio provides the music at a drinks reception to launch an important new facility for jazz lovers and musicians.

www.schott-music.com

WEDNESDAYS AT THE CONCORDE

International Jazz Night at the Concorde Club, Eastleigh, resumes after its Christmas/New Year break with the Scott Hamilton Quartet (John Pearce, Dave Green, Steve Brown) on January 13, followed by *A Night in the Deep South* with the Mississippi Swamp Dogs (20) and the Bob Kerr Whoopie Band (27). February brings the Jive Aces (3) and the Back to Basie Big Band (10). Sunday Jazz Nights take a rest after the Christmas Jazz Party on December 20 with the John Maddocks Jazz Band and special guest Julia Titus. The West Side Syncopators start things going again on January 10, followed by Cuff Billett's New Europa Jazz Band (17), the Original Rabbit Foot Spasm Band (24), Graeme Hewitt's High Society Jazz Band (31) and John Maddocks Jazzmen (February 7). Valentine's Day brings a special Jazz Lunch with GOJO (Girls Only Jazz Orchestra), a 20-piece big band playing charts from the likes of Goodman, Basie and Ellington.

Tel.: 023 8061 3989

www.theconcordeclub.com

KING PLEASURE ON THE ROAD

King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys play Greystones, Sheffield, on December 18 before seeing in the New Year at Bournville Gardens. Bookings in early 2016 include the Artrix, Bromsgrove (January 2), Risby Village Hall, Bury St. Edmunds (22), the Tivoli Theatre, Wimborne Minster (30), the Robin 2, Bilston (February 4), Granvilles, Stone (21) and the Bristol International Jazz and Blues Festival (March 18). Bookings abroad take the band to the Swing'n'Sweet Jazzclub, Bergen (Jan. 23) and the Stadsschouwburg, Bruges (March 6).

Tel.: 0121 454 7020

www.kingpleasureandthebiscuitboys.com

MAY DAY ON THE ISLE OF BUTE

The 2016 Isle of Bute Jazz Festival occupies the May Day Bank Holiday from April 29 to May 2. Bands and musicians on the bill include, among many others, Richard White's Fivers, the Savannah Jazz Band, Anthony Purdy, the Bobby Wishart Band, the Chicago Teddy Bears, Havana Swing, Martin Bennett's Green River Band and the Bute Community Band. In its 29th year the festival offers over 40 events and lower ferry fares!

www.butejazz.com

Photo by Merlin Daleman

Enrico Tomasso



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London Jazz News

LIVE CONCERTS:

Sunday 31 January
Lippingham Theatre, Rutland
www.uppthearts.co.uk/

Tuesday 2 February
606 Club, Chelsea
www.606club.co.uk

Friday 5 February
Fleece Jazz Club, Suffolk
www.fleecejazz.org.uk

out 11th December 2015
Alexander Scriabin's Ragtime Band

www.davidmusicgordon.com/trio
www.misterjamrecords.com

JAZZ AT ILMINSTER

Iminster Arts Centre at the Meeting House promotes frequent Friday evening jazz events, resuming after the Christmas break with the Edison Herbert Trio playing lyrical guitar jazz on January 8. After Mike Denham's Speakeasy (22), an all-star trio of Alan Barnes, Bobby Wellins and Jim Mullen takes over the following week (29). The Kate Daniels Quartet features in *Glamorous Nights - from Hoagy Carmichael to Peggy Lee* on February 12, followed by the Mike Collins Quartet (26).
Tel.: 01460 54973
www.themeetinghouse.org.uk

MARSDEN NAMED YORKSHIRE'S BEST FESTIVAL

It's always pleasing to find jazz events and musicians recognised outside the specialist field, so many congratulations to Marsden Jazz Festival for winning the title of Outstanding Established Festival at the Yorkshire Gig Guide Grassroots Awards. Marsden is a three-day festival (this year October 9-11) which takes over the Pennine village for a long weekend, with big-name concerts at the Marsden Mechanics (this year's bill included Jean Toussaint and Evan Christopher) and many other performances at some 25 venues: bars, restaurants, schools and churches.
www.marsdenjazzfestival.com

LOVE REMAINS SUPREME

It was announced in November that the Love Supreme Jazz



Richard Exall

Festival, first held in 2013, will return to Glynde Place in East Sussex from July 1 to 3, 2016. Discounted Early Bird tickets are already on sale and the organisers promise the most ambitious line-up yet.
www.lovesupremefestival.com

VENTURE AWAY MUSIC WEEKENDS

Venture Away has five jazz weekends scheduled for 2016. At Warner's Holiday Village at Norton Grange on the Isle of Wight (March 18-21), with half price fare on the ferry, the bands include Richard Exall and Amy Roberts Quintet, Baby Jools and the Jazzaholics, the Dart Valley Stompers, the Savannah Jazz Band, the Sussex Jazz Kings and the Golden Eagle Jazz Band. The Savannah is also to be found at the Royal Hotel, Scarborough on April 15-18, with Dave Rae's Levee Ramblers, Matt Palmer's Millennium Eagle Jazz Band, the Dave Donohoe Band and Richard Leach's 7 Stars of Jazz.
Tel.: 01305 750797
www.ventureawaymusicweekends.co.uk

STAR NAMES FOR GATESHEAD

The 2016 Gateshead International Jazz Festival continues the celebrations of the life and work of Tubby Hayes by following a performance of the acclaimed film, *Tubby Hayes: A Man in a Hurry* (see review section), with a performance of his music by the Simon Spillett Quartet. The three-day festival at the Sage Gateshead (April 15-17) also features such star names as Gregory Porter, Courtney Pine and Zoe Rahman, Terence Blanchard with the E-Collective, Liane Carroll and John Surman with the Alexander Hawkins Trio.
www.sagegateshead.com

FIRST ACTS ANNOUNCED FOR CHELTENHAM

The first acts to be announced for Cheltenham Jazz Festival in 2016 (April 27-May 2) include three bands from the United States. Trumpeter Christian Scott brings a nine-piece band to play music from his album *Stretch Music*, influential saxophonist Tim Berne appears with his band Snakeoil and singer/songwriter Becca Stevens is featured with her band. An especially interesting



Scott Hamilton

UK premiere is *Let it Be Told*, an extended piece by Julian Arguelles presenting the music of South Africans in exile, with the Frankfurt Radio Big Band, Django Bates and Julian's brother Steve.
www.cheltenhamfestivals.com/jazz

NEWCASTLE JAZZ CAFÉ

The Jazz Café's 2016 programme comprises top class regional, national and international musicians. Zoë Gilby and Paul Edis (January 8) play Thelonious Monk in Gilby's Pannonica set. Guitarist Stuart McCallum returns to play a solo gig (22), vocalist Gilby appears once again in a voice-double bass duo with Andy Champion (23) and vocalist Alice Grace returns with her quintet (26). The Vieux Carré Jazzmen make a first visit to the Pink Lane venue at the end of the month (29). February sees Paris-based Hot Club violinist Dan John Martin working in the company of Swing Manouche (9). Alan Barnes makes a guest appearance with Seven Pieces of Silver (19), followed by the guitar duo Pete Oxley and Nicolas Meier (23).

JAZZ NORTH EAST

In 2016 Jazz North East celebrates fifty years as Britain's first grant-aided voluntary jazz promoter. A busy schedule of gigs at various venues includes the Roller Trio (January 10) at the Bridge Hotel, Newcastle, an all day extravaganza – Paris sur Tyne – at the Literary & Philosophical Society (24) and Entropi at the

Black Swan, Newcastle (February 4).

DARLINGTON JAZZ FESTIVAL

This year's Darlington Jazz Festival (April 21-24) will adopt last year's successful formula of staging concerts at various town centre venues. Al Wood will return once again giving workshops and performing alongside promising young musicians from the region.

USHAW COLLEGE

Ushaw College, formerly a seminary, on the outskirts of, Durham, is developing a year round programme of events including classical, folk and jazz concerts. January's jazz gig (29) features the brilliant young tenor player Matt Anderson with his Wildflower Sextet playing music inspired by Wayne Shorter. Later in the year the first Durham Jazz Festival @ Ushaw is scheduled for the August Bank Holiday weekend (Aug. 26-28) with a host of big names to be announced.

MILLIE AT THE DRUM

Legendary soul singer Millie Jackson makes her only public appearance of a UK mini-tour in a special pre-Valentine's Day performance at the Drum in Birmingham. Accompanied by a 10-piece band, she performs the appropriately named *An Intimate Affair with Millie Jackson* on February 7.
Tel.: 0121 333 2444
www.the-drum.org.uk



Roy Williams

Photo by Merlin Daleman

UPCOMING EVENTS

Oxfam Stomp at Kings Heath Cricket and Sports Club (January 8) features Jazz Salon Rouge, George Huxley's All Stars, the New Georgia Band and the Sopranos, plus jam sessions, providing four hours of jazz in support of Oxfam.
Tel.: 0121 444 1362
07518 822312

Jazz Steps' excellent Autumn season in the Nottingham area ends with Led Bib at the Bonington Theatre, Arnold, on December 17.
www.jazzsteps.co.uk

Friends of the Upton Jazz Festival hold their Christmas Party with Bev Pegg and his Good Time Jazz Gang at Hanley Castle High School on December 19. The first concert of 2016 sees Alan Barnes and Scott Hamilton lead an all-star quintet with John Pearce, Dave Green and Steve Brown on January 8.
Tel.: 01684 593794

The fortnightly jazz at the Bell Hotel, Clare, Suffolk, features some impressive soloists: Brigitte Beraha (December 20), Dick Pearce (January 3), Simon Spillett (17), Trudy Kerr (31), Gilad Atzmon (February 14), Alex Garnett (28), Laura Zakian (March 13) and Nicolas Meier (27).
Tel.: 01787 237653

HOHNER MELODICA COMPETITION

Winner of prize of a Hohner melodic for correcting identifying EARL 'FATHA' HINES is WILLIAM JAMES of Kirkcaldy, Fife.

Seeing out the Old Year for Tuesday Jazz and Swing at Wilmslow Conservative Club on December 29 are singer Marilyn Royle and trumpeter Dave Browning with the Steve Hall Trio. Dave returns on January 12 with Lucy Mae and Luc, billed as an 'exciting young couple' on vocals and guitar, and the Vinnie Parker Trio. The previous week (5) Liam Byrne shares the stand with mysterious fellow-reedman the Masked Jazzman, but on February 2 is on more familiar territory with the Brownfield-Byrne Hot Six. Other highlights of the regular Tuesday sessions are Nicki Allan and Rod Mason (Jan. 19) and Alan Barnes and John Hallam (Feb. 9), both with the Tom Kincaid Trio. The Sinatra Swingers continue at Cheadle Hulme Conservative Club on the first Thursday of each month, with guest singers Debbie Wilson (Jan. 7), Joanne Stewart (Feb. 4) and Rosie Harrison (March 3).
Tel.: 01625 528336

Tipitina's final date of 2015 is at the Ibis Hotel in Birmingham on December 17 and the band's New Year starts with a return booking at Ronnie Scott's on January 3.
Tel.: 0121 454 7020
www.bigbearmusic.com

Southern Sounds' Silver Anniversary French Quarter Festival departs on April 4, incorporating flights to New Orleans and 10 or 14 accommodation at The Four Points by Sheraton French Quarter and a whole series of jazz and non-jazz events.
www.southern-sounds.co.uk

Wednesday lunch-time sessions at the Spice of Life in Cambridge Circus, Soho, end 2015 with the swinging mainstream of the Brian Rutland Band with special guest Roy Williams (December 30) and kick off 2016 with Bob Dwyer's Rhythm Aces (January 13).
Tel.: 020 7437 7013
www.spiceoflife.com

On January 5 Neville Dickie presents *The History of the Jazz Piano - The First 50 Years* at Solihull Trad Jazz Club. The regular Sunday lunch-time gigs continue with the Savannah Jazz Band



Alan Barnes

Photo by Merlin Daleman

(January 10) and Tad Newton's Jazz Friends (24).
Tel.: 0121 688 6115

Pete Lay and the Gambit Jazzmen are hosting a series of three Jazz Festivals at Warner Leisure Hotels in 2016. Each features six bands: the Gambit Jazzmen, John Maddocks Jazzmen, Savannah Jazz Band and three others. The first is at Sinah Warren Coastal Hotel in Hampshire on February 26-29, with the Sussex Jazz Kings, New Orleans Heat and Cuff Billett's New Europa Jazz Band.
Tel.: 02392 466421 (quote JAX16)

Val Wiseman's *Lady Sings the Blues* takes to the road again in March, with shows at the Queens Theatre, Hornchurch (12) and the Borough Theatre, Abergavenny (16).
Tel.: 0121 454 7020

Watermill Jazz at the Friends Life Social Club in Dorking is closed during December, but opens up in the New Year with Ray Gelato and the Giants on January 7. The regular Thursday night sessions continue with A Tribute to Toots Thielemans led by Phil Hopkins (14), Tom Cawley's Curios Trio (21) and Joe Locke playing music from his latest album, *Love is a*

Pendulum (28). Confirmed February dates are the Liane Carroll Trio (4), the Stan Sulzmann Neon Orchestra (11) and MALIJA (Lockheart/Noble/Hoiby Trio - 18). The monthly Sunday afternoon jam sessions are on January 10 and February 7.
Tel.: 07415 815784
www.watermilljazz.co.uk

Plymouth Jazz Club celebrates New Year's Eve with the appropriately named Enjoy Yourself Jazz Band led by Graham Trevarton. The regular Sunday evenings at the Royal British Legion Club in Crownhill, Plymouth, continue with City Steam Jazz Band (January 17), Maggie Reeday with the Craig Milverton Trio (February 7) and Savannah Jazz Band (21).
Tel.: 01752 721179
www.plymouth-jazz-club.org.uk

Lichfield's Garrick Theatre starts a series of monthly Jazz at the Garrick events with Christine Tobin (January 13), followed by Partikel's String Theory (February 17) and Phil Robson's Organ Trio (March 15). An extra jazz event is the appearance of the Remi Harris Project on January 29.
www.lichfieldgarrick.com

THE CURIOUS DON

SIMON SPILLETT's tribute to DON RENDELL

Curiosity. One dictionary defines the term as a 'desire to know', and it was exactly this brand of self-improving inquisitiveness that was the guiding rationale throughout the remarkable 70-year-plus career of saxophonist, bandleader and composer Don Rendell, who passed away in October, aged 89.

Chronologically at least, Rendell belonged to the same generation as the two other great pre-Scott and Hayes British jazz tenors, Jimmy Skidmore and Tommy Whittle, both of whom predeceased him. With this triumvirate all now gone it's intriguing to compare and contrast their respective career paths. Although all three started with both feet firmly planted in the dance band world of pre-bop, the *de-rigueur* education for an entire generation of British jazzmen, following exposure to Lester Young's example each blossomed into a markedly individual stylist in his own right, forging swing and bop to his own ends.

Rendell, however, pushed his own personal musical envelope far further than either of his illustrious contemporaries ever dared do, beginning his musical journey by chasing fashion and culminating it in possession of a jazz voice all his own.

Listening back to Rendell's early 1950s work with The Johnny Dankworth Seven, then the hot British modern jazz outfit, or in the bands of drummer Tonys Kinsey and Crombie, one is instantly struck by both his poise and utter confidence within the uber-hip 'Brothers' idiom of Getz, Sims et al, an accomplishment made all the more notable for having been made largely in isolation from its source.

Indeed, pre-Tubby Hayes Rendell represented one of the most naturally confident of all local modernists, displaying his wares in a delightful series of quintets and sextets which offered glorious cheerful, parochial reflections of the West Coastish

leanings of Gerry Mulligan, Zoot Sims and others.

Although the saxophonist's albums from this time – including rare-as-hens'-teeth sets on the Tempo and Nixa labels – are full to the brim with the leader's authentic-sounding take on contemporary jazz, and remain impressive to 21st century ears, what is now perhaps even more striking is how, barely in his early thirties, Rendell already had band-leadership and talent-spotting skills second to none. Among those who gained valuable early exposure via his mid-1950s outfits were such soon-to-be stars as Kenny Wheeler, Ronnie Ross and Phil Seamen. He also had a taste for the maverick too: the unclassifiable trumpeter Bert Courtney was a frequent partner during these years, as was pianist Damian Robinson, a player whose composing and improvising had something of a quirky, Twardzikian air.

That Rendell himself was the real deal was confirmed several times during the 1950s, the decade in which he received a series of notable invites to work with *bona fide* US stars: in 1954 he accompanied Billie Holiday on her initial UK visit, a dream-like assignment for any Prez-inspired tenorman; two years later it was Stan Kenton who hired him as a last-minute replacement on his initial British tour; 'experience you could not buy', as Rendell once recalled it. And in 1959, he was a cornerstone of the one of the UK's first truly transatlantic modern jazz collaborations, Woody Herman's Anglo-American Herd, a ridiculously talent-packed band who made an anecdote-filled month-long jaunt around the British Isles under the auspices of the National Jazz Federation. The tour programme described the saxophonist as 'acknowledged as being the best in Europe', a claim confirmed when a bootleg LP of one of the Herman concerts appeared in the 1980s. Indeed, Rendell's personal account of the Getz/Herman-associated anthem *Early Autumn* would rate as a



classic under any flag.

Rendell, however, was never a man to stand still, and as the vanguard of jazz moved ever outward during the early 1960s, he found himself suddenly reinvigorated by John Coltrane's example. He later recalled a chance encounter with a recording by the American saxophonist - played as background music during the interval of a gig in Manchester in 1960 - as the moment when 'the door opened for me.'

From then on, Coltrane became Rendell's second great stylistic touchstone. To his credit, he was one of the very few British musicians who didn't balk at the controversial opening night appearance of Coltrane's sole UK tour in 1961, even going so far as badgering his way into the American's hotel room the following day in order to try and find out more about what underpinned his inscrutable methods. The discovery that Coltrane was similarly devout (Rendell was a lifelong Jehovah's Witness) was all but eclipsed by the revelation that they shared Lester Young as a primary inspiration. 'For me, nothing in jazz has been quite the same since,' Rendell once said of this epiphany.

And so the 1960s saw Rendell's musical world re-fitted for a new post-bop sensibility. For a time he headed a quintet featuring the Dolphy-meets-Cannonball alto saxophone of Graham Bond - part musical stimulus, part spiritual nemesis - recording the vaunted *Roarin'* album for the

American Jazzland label. When Bond was replaced by trumpeter Ian Carr in 1962 the recruitment of new blood was to launch not only one the saxophonist's best bands, but also an ensemble that was to re-write much of the rule book of local modern jazz. Re-billing itself as the Rendell-Carr Quintet, and featuring young lions Michael Garrick, Dave Green and Trevor Tomkins, the band soon garnered a reputation for its unique brand of home-grown experimentation: Carr's literary inspirations, Garrick's interest in Indian music and Green and Tomkins' Garrison/Jones-like synergy combined to spur Rendell to some of his greatest heights. The band attracted something of a cult following on the university circuit, and its sequence of classy albums for the Columbia label – *Dusk Fire* and the atmospheric *Live* among them – have remained some of the most engrossing records of the era, the perfect place in which to hear British jazz broaching a new language cast between cerebral reserve and the emotionalism of the avant-garde. They also showcased Rendell's growing mastery of composition and multi-instrumentalism, adding new textural variety on flute, clarinet and soprano saxophone.

But, as is often the way of all things British jazz, it couldn't last. By 1969, Ian Carr was chomping at the bit, eager to taste the richer pickings to be had in the nascent jazz-rock movement. For Rendell though, this was one musical avenue he saw as a dead end, and accordingly throughout the 1970s and into the '80s, he shuttled between work with

established leaders like Dankworth and Garrick and heading his own bands, featuring an impressive roster of new stars. There were quintets with saxophonists Barbara Thompson, Stan Robinson and Alan Wakeman, among others, and ambitious larger scale projects including the suite *Earth Music*.

During this period, Rendell had also realised the benefits of the burgeoning jazz education movement, becoming a highly respected teacher of woodwind at The Guildhall School of Music,

on John Dankworth's WAP courses and privately, a capacity in which many saxophone students first encountered him. (For a time, actor Warren Mitchell was among his pupils – in a twist of fate Mitchell, who was the same age as Rendell, passed away barely a month after his former tutor.)

However, performing remained his first love, well into his seventies. Although the technical fluency may well have begun to unravel by this point (not always helped by Rendell's at times

hypochondriac-like search for the perfect mouthpiece) there was never any doubting his commitment to improvisation or his love of sharing the joys of musical discovery. 'I feel remarkably fortunate that I have reached more than three score years and ten and still really enjoy playing,' he said in 2000, aged 74. 'I still have some breath left...and some teeth!'

What he also had was the accumulated practical wisdom of a lifetimes work as a jazz musician, gleaned throughout

what was undoubtedly the Golden Age for the music. As he'd readily confess, he'd heard and met them all – Prez, Hawk, Parker, Getz, Rollins, Trane and beyond. He played, though, like no-one but himself – the ultimate goal of all jazzmen. 'When I think of all the miraculous aspects of my long career,' he once confessed, 'I wouldn't change a thing.'

Don Rendell (March 4th 1926 – October 20th 2015)

ALLEN TOUSSAINT (14TH JANUARY 1938 – 10TH NOVEMBER 2015)

JUSTIN RANDALL of Tipitina remembers an inspiring figure in New Orleans music.

Allen Toussaint was a pianist, songwriter, producer and arranger from New Orleans. It's difficult to write about him without writing a book. He was a N'Awlins Piano Professor, carrying on a lineage from Jelly Roll Morton, through Professor Longhair and carrying on today with Dr John and Henry Butler. Professor Longhair ('Fess') was his mentor and greatest influence. Fess's style can be heard in all the New Orleans piano stylists to appear after him and can be heard in most of Toussaint's playing. His regular tribute was to perform *Tipitina*, Fess's signature tune and name of the main club in The Big Easy.

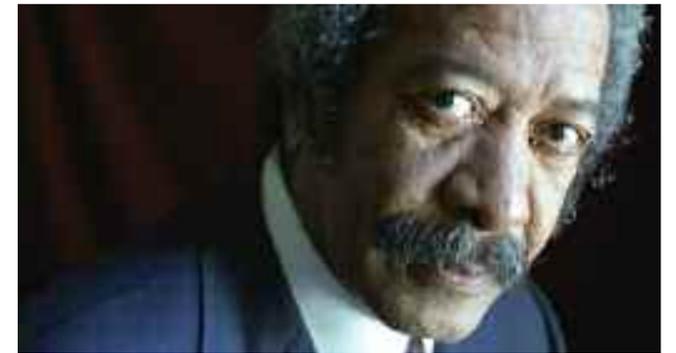
As a songwriter and producer, Toussaint began in the 60s with the New Orleans brand of R & B and Rock 'n' Roll, writing and recording with artists such as Irma Thomas (*It's Raining*) and Ernie K-Doe (*Mother in Law*). Black music styles then evolved to more soulful melodies and funkier rhythms and Toussaint was at the forefront in producing ground breaking music with Lee Dorsey, The Meters and Dr John to name but a few. They laid down the backbone of modern funk, although the music was still drawing upon the traditional Mardi Gras/street parade sounds which Toussaint then developed. His horn arrangements are also legendary and include The Band's *The Last Waltz* film.

He was a shy person and reluctant performer throughout

most of his career, preferring the confines of the studio, but came out of his shell in the last 15 years of his life. Ironically, the biggest push to this was possibly the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, in which he was forced out of his home and studio. He dryly called Katrina his 'booking agent' as he relocated to New York and began playing solo concerts that were well received and were to inspire him to develop his solo act further. During this time he recorded *The River in Reverse* with Elvis Costello and the Grammy-nominated 2009 album *The Bright Mississippi* as tributes to his beloved Crescent City.

I was lucky enough to catch one of his last solo concerts at Ronnie Scott's in April 2014. I was knocked out at the depth and versatility of his playing, having previously only heard him in band settings where a two fisted piano plunker can get lost in the mix and be limited both rhythmically and harmonically. Toussaint showed his true Professor status as he told great stories of his tumultuous career and inventively reworked all his greatest hits including *Fortune Teller*, *Working in a Coalmine*, *Southern Nights* and *Brickyard Blues*.

Toussaint returned to live out his last years in New Orleans in a typically modest house similar to the one he lost in the flood. He died from a heart attack following a concert in Madrid and



a tribute was held for the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame inductee and Grammy award winner at the historic Orpheum theatre in New Orleans. Jimmy Buffett, Boz Scaggs and Elvis Costello joined NOLA legends Irma Thomas, Dr John, Trombone Shorty and Jon Cleary onstage. This was followed in true New Orleans style by a procession with the Preservation Hall Band walking out of the theatre playing *The Preservation Dirge*. The funeral car followed them down the street to *Didn't He Ramble*, all the second line participants singing, clapping and playing to send Toussaint off in a way like no other on earth. Remarkable video footage of this can be seen on this website: <http://www.avclub.com/article/watch-allen-toussaint-gets-jazz-funeral-treatment-228855>. He was buried in a private funeral on November 21st (also Dr John's 75th birthday).

We have a mutual friend in Keith Spera, former writer for the *Times-Picayune* in New Orleans. Keith opened the door to the

city for my wife Debbie and me in 2013 when we visited New Orleans for the first time. He took us to places and gave us experiences we would never normally have had and tried desperately to arrange an afternoon for us with Toussaint but sadly he was exhausted after a grueling tour. Keith wrote a chapter on Toussaint for his book *Groove Interrupted: Loss, Renewal and the Music of New Orleans*. In his obituary for Toussaint Keith said he was 'remarkably accessible for someone of his status', always finding time to chat and have his photo taken with fans. He said, 'he had an air about him but never put on airs' and 'he did his thing, moving through life with ease. Serenity surrounded him. No one else looked as cool in socks and leather sandals. He was a tireless ambassador for the city, unfailingly pleasant and gracious, always a gentleman. Allen Toussaint's light was fully on, and then it was off. New Orleans is a little less bright without him.'

SO WHO ARE THE GREATEST?

After all the justified complaints about jazz being neglected by the media, it was great news that the BBC mounted a pop-up jazz station during the EFG London Jazz Festival. When the station drew up a list of the 50 Greatest Jazz Musicians for a playlist, interest was certainly piqued, but controversy was inevitable.

To those of us in the *Jazz Rag* offices who are convinced that Louis Armstrong is a shoo-in for the nomination as Greatest Jazzman Ever, his placing at Number 2 caused the odd raised eyebrow, but generally it was difficult to take exception to the BBC's Top 10, featured on all the Press Releases. However, as we delved deeper into the Top 50, oddities and eccentricities became ever more numerous. Where were such acknowledged greats as Bix Beiderbecke and Jelly Roll Morton – too far back, maybe, but what about Clifford Brown or Wes Montgomery? Is Jamie Cullum really a greater jazz singer than Joe Williams or Mel Torme? (Incidentally, we are quite confident Jamie had no hand in his own inclusion!)

So it seemed like a good idea to contact a few folk around jazz to see what their Top Five would be. **Richard Pite's** instant reply suggested we might well have asked for the *Hot Five*:

1. Louis Armstrong
2. Louis Armstrong
3. Louis Armstrong
4. Louis Armstrong
5. Louis Armstrong

Richard's sardonic comment, 'That should help re-balance the poll' expressed in a more extreme form the opinion of many of the correspondents.

Distinguished American jazz commentator **Scott Yanow**, for instance, turned round the BBC's first two places with the following choice:

1. Louis Armstrong
2. Miles Davis
3. Charlie Parker
4. John Coltrane
5. Dizzy Gillespie

No Duke Ellington? But Scott adds a coda: 'Anybody choosing Duke Ellington (my Number 6), Jelly Roll Morton or Art Tatum won't get any argument out of me.'

The people who do get some

argument from Scott are those who voted for the lower placings (outside the Top 10) in the BBC poll: 'How can anyone seriously list Nina Simone, Sun Ra (ahead of Ornette Coleman?), Loose Tubes (they were joking, right?), Gregory Porter, John Taylor, Esbjorn Svensson, Jamie Cullum, Jan Garbarek, Norma Winstone, Hugh Masakela (who is not even a jazz musician), Stan Tracey and Dianne Reeves in the Top 50? Has the BBC never heard of Coleman Hawkins, Bix Beiderbecke, Clifford Brown, Lee Morgan, Freddie Hubbard, Jack Teagarden, J.J. Johnson, Johnny Hodges, Benny Carter, Eric Dolphy, Jelly Roll Morton, James P. Johnson, Cecil Taylor, Charlie Christian, Wes Montgomery, Jaco Pastorius, Max Roach, Bessie Smith, Sarah Vaughan, Mel Torme and Joe Williams?'

'I suppose the BBC list is a little predictable,' said **Art Themen** – only from 1 to 10, Art! – 'but then so are my top five!'

1. Louis Armstrong
2. Charlie Parker
3. Duke Ellington
4. Art Tatum
5. Thelonious Monk

Two noted jazz wordsmiths were in less voluble form than usual, with **Digby Fairweather** coming up with the following list:

1. Louis Armstrong
2. Duke Ellington
3. Art Tatum
4. Charlie Parker
5. Clifford Brown

Dick Laurie's five began in a now familiar way before diverting onto some less predictable choices that got nowhere near the BBC's long list:

1. Louis Armstrong
2. Duke Ellington
3. Django Reinhardt
4. Anita O'Day
5. Barney Bigard

The most eloquent case for a selection well in tune with most of our correspondents, and with



a considerable overlap with Scott Yanow in comments on the BBC list, was made by **Bruce Adams**:

1. Louis Armstrong
2. Duke Ellington
3. Coleman Hawkins
4. Charlie Parker
5. Django Reinhardt

Bruce provided a justification for each of his choices – or rather, in the case of Louis, the pointlessness of having to justify it: 'While I recognise that opinions are subjective, I don't believe that the choice of Louis should even be challenged.' Of the Duke, Bruce singles out 'his ability to develop and present the talents of others such as Strayhorn, Hodges and Webster' as well as his own talents as pianist, bandleader and composer. As for Hawk, 'in Sonny Rollins' opinion, he was the greatest sax player ever, so don't argue with me, argue with Sonny.' Charlie Parker 'reinvented everything that stands today, no matter what horn you play' and Django was Bruce's first influence in jazz, 'a true original who still makes my hair stand on end – and he was Duke Ellington's favourite guitarist.'

Another issue (which Les Tomkins also raised) is the playlist that the BBC supplied for all the Top 50. Many choices were predictable and unarguable, but

some were a touch bizarre. Despite Ricky Riccardi's justified enthusiasm for the music of Louis' later years, *What a Wonderful World* is rather a feeble representation of a career of such explosive genius as Armstrong's, as Bruce reminds us, not only running through his transformative effects on music, but also his powerful interventions on Civil Rights. Sounding not at all humble, Bruce concludes that Louis was 'a force of nature and, in my humble opinion, the greatest jazz musician to ever tread the planet.'

Sharing a near-unanimity of knowledgeable judgement with Scott Yanow, Bruce writes, 'I find a list that includes Sun Ra, Loose Tubes, Gregory Porter, Esbjorn Svensson, Jamie Cullum, Hugh Masakela, Mark Murphy and Pat Metheny as representative of the greatest jazzmen laughable.' Bruce doesn't deny their talent, but not to compare with the omitted Ben Webster, Clifford Brown, Johnny Hodges, Jack Teagarden, Zoot Sims, Frank Rosolino, Fats Navarro, Roy Eldridge, Bunny Berigan, Bix Beiderbecke, Sonny Rollins, Artie Shaw, Stan Getz, Django Reinhardt, Charlie Christian, Wes Montgomery...and Bruce concedes even this list is incomplete.

Finally, as well as contributing a thoughtful article (too long to quote in full), **Les Tomkins** showed what a difficult selection this is. Without overlapping at all with the favourites or bearing much resemblance to the BBC list, Les came up with an 'arbitrary choice' of five 'people I like listening to':

1. Stan Getz
2. Art Pepper
3. Clark Terry
4. George Shearing
5. Milt Jackson

However, Les' full article presents the problem in more detail. He works through various categories (each instrument, singers, British musicians), mostly confining himself to people he has interviewed. All his choices are good ones, but include them all and the undoubted greats that Les never met and the figure 50 has long since been left behind.

As Les wrote, 'a different list of 100 could scratch the surface somewhat.'

Maybe a list of the Top 50 is as impossible now as a comprehensive single volume jazz history. Interestingly, in our strictly unscientific survey, only five musicians appeared in more than one correspondent's list – and they didn't include Miles!

JAZZ RAG TOP 5

1. Louis Armstrong
2. Duke Ellington
3. Charlie Parker
4. Art Tatum
5. Django Reinhardt

Please send your comments on our Top 5 and the BBC's list by email to jazzrag@bigbearmusic.com or by post to Jazz Rag, P.O. Box 944, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B16 6 UT.

THE BBC TOP 50

1. Miles Davis
2. Louis Armstrong
3. Duke Ellington
4. John Coltrane
5. Ella Fitzgerald
6. Charlie Parker
7. Billie Holiday
8. Thelonious Monk (Joint 8th)
9. Bill Evans (Joint 8th)
10. Oscar Peterson
11. Nina Simone
12. Dave Brubeck
13. Pat Metheny
14. Charles Mingus
15. Sun Ra
16. Ornette Coleman
17. Fats Waller
18. Loose Tubes
19. Herbie Hancock
20. Keith Jarrett
21. Gregory Porter
22. Count Basie
23. Wayne Shorter
24. Lester Young
25. Art Tatum
26. John Taylor
27. Esbjorn Svensson
28. Jamie Cullum
29. Buddy Rich
30. Kenny Wheeler
31. Jimmy Smith
32. Tubby Hayes
33. Art Blakey
34. Dizzy Gillespie
35. George Shearing
36. Jan Garbarek
37. Norma Winstone
38. Hugh Masakela
39. Woody Herman
40. Stan Tracey
41. Abbey Lincoln
42. Mark Murphy
43. Gerry Mulligan
44. Cannonball Adderley
45. Charlie Haden
46. Charles Lloyd
47. Betty Carter
48. Carmen McRae
49. Dianne Reeves
50. Mary Lou Williams

NEWARK JAZZ EXHIBIT

Newark, New Jersey, has its place in jazz history as the home town of such great figures as Willie 'The Lion' Smith, James P. Johnson, Sarah Vaughan, James Moody and Wayne Shorter, but perhaps even more so as the home of the Institute of Jazz Studies at Rutgers University, the oldest dedicated jazz institution of its type in the world. Founded by Marshall Stearns in the 1950s and permanently located at Rutgers for 50 years, the Institute was directed for 37 of those years by the eminent Dan Morgenstern.

Currently the Institute is involved in a community cultural project with the imposing title, *Jazz, Jews and African Americans – Cultural Interactions in Newark and Beyond*, an exhibit that runs until December 13 at the Jewish Museum of New Jersey in Congregation Ahavas Shalom, the oldest synagogue in Newark. Tad Hershorn, archivist at the Institute who has curated the exhibit, talked to *Jazz Rag* a week after the official opening (music provided by the Aaron Weinstein Trio) and felt that it was still growing as visitors suggested further themes to develop.

The exhibit, in a gallery on the second floor of the synagogue,

consists of art panels on many aspects of the subject, from cultural themes to the lives of individuals, in different styles, with great emphasis on visual impact. Nowadays the centrality of African American musicians in jazz is beyond dispute, but Hershorn is quite clear that there is no political or social agenda to give Jewish musicians their due recognition. He takes a broad view of jazz history and believes that the Jewish contribution is well recognised, from the great songwriters who gave jazz improvisers much of their best material to promoters and record producers – and, as the author of a very received biography of Norman Granz, Tad Hershorn should know plenty about promoters and record producers!

So the displays highlight musicians, but also such influential figures as Lorraine Gordon whose marriages covered years of jazz history – to Alfred Lion of Blue Note Records and Max Gordon of the Village Vanguard – before she herself took over the running of the Village Vanguard on Max's death. Nor are the famous figures from Rutgers itself forgotten: Dan Morgenstern, Ed Berger and



Vincent Pelote who worked together at the Institute for 34 years.

Hershorn's constant theme is bringing communities together. He wants to show how different cultures react to each other and he wants to involve the communities of Newark in the project. For instance, five different congregations are backing the exhibit, including African American and Hispanic church congregations.

The programme for *Jazz, Jews and African Americans* has included many interesting Sunday afternoon events, including a showing of *The Gig* (a film about a group of amateur Jewish musicians recruiting an African American professional for a gig in the Catskills) and a panel discussion with Dan Morgenstern among the participants. The closing reception on December 13 features Ben Sidran.

www.newark.rutgers.edu/news

WEST COAST JAZZ WITH A DIFFERENCE

RON SIMPSON talks to **PETER VACHER** about his new book, *Swingin' on Central Avenue*, subtitled *African American Jazz in Los Angeles*.

Peter Vacher's previous two books consisted of verbatim interviews with American jazz musicians: *Soloists and Sidemen* (Northway Books, 2004) and *Mixed Messages* (Five Leaves Publications, 2013). Neither of these has a theme as such, but *Swingin' on Central Avenue* uses the same format to present a picture of an important jazz community that Peter feels has been marginalised and neglected by jazz commentators: the African American West Coasters whose style developed before bebop.

These interviews took place between 1974 and 1990 with a pretty long-lived set of musicians born between 1898 and 1920. Since then Peter has added the occasional phone interview with the likes of trumpeter Norman Bowden, the only one still surviving. Peter, in fact, spoke to Norman on his 100th birthday only this September and is delighted to report that Norman's wife - 104 years old! - has read *Swingin' on Central Avenue* and pronounced it 'a wonderful book'.

What is West Coast jazz? To most jazz lovers the term conjures up cool hip white musicians of the 1950s, Gerry Mulligan, Shorty Rogers, etc. Until the merger of the black and white unions in 1953, the musicians he writes about literally belonged to a different musical world.

Peter Vacher's crusade to rescue this generation of West Coast African-Americans from obscurity began, oddly, with one of the few able to pass as white and work both sides of the colour line, the Creole clarinettist, Joe Darensbourg.

As Peter puts it, 'Back in the 1950s I developed a huge interest in New Orleans jazz and the music of the likes of Kid Ory. I wanted to learn more about it and make contact with the musicians. In those days Leonard Feather's *Encyclopedia* gave the addresses of musicians, so I

wrote to Joe Darensbourg out of the blue. In fact I probably wrote to several, but he was the one who replied. We corresponded and then we met up when he came to London with Louis Armstrong's All Stars.'

From these beginnings the friendship developed in what Peter calls a 'fortuitous and wonderful' circumstance, leading to him putting together Joe's reminiscences into the autobiography, *Telling it like it is*. When visiting Joe in Los Angeles, Peter was introduced to, and welcomed into, a thriving jazz community of which he had known little - in common with almost everyone outside of California. On all his visits to Los Angeles, he interviewed musicians and sometimes refined the results over more than one visit or added a London interview on one of the rare occasions these musicians visited here.

One of the points that Peter makes in the book and in conversation is that by and large his 16 subjects had a merely local fame, were limited to Los Angeles, to Central Avenue, especially before the union merger. I took issue with this to some extent: none of the musicians was born in California, many did their best known work in Saint Louis, Chicago or Kansas City, Caghey Roberts even went to Shanghai with Buck Clayton's band, and so on. However, his point is that, once in LA, they tended to stick there and also most of them were shamefully neglected by record companies. Some settled for comfortable domesticity.

Billy Hadnott is a case in point. Most of the musicians here are only known for the occasional brush with fame such as Roberts' two brief stints with the early Basie band, but Hadnott was in the Benny Moten band, the musical associate of Kansas City greats from Count Basie to Charlie Parker, played with Louis Jordan and Jazz at the Phil, then, at the height of his fame, re-

trained as an engineer and went to work for McDonnell Douglas. Though he had the ability to cut it in the new world of bebop and the formal skills to work in studio orchestras, Peter reckons his main concern was to avoid a repeat for his family of his own loveless hardscrabble childhood. One of the most memorable anecdotes in the book, incidentally, is of Hadnott's attempt to rescue Charlie Parker from himself - some horrifyingly graphic description.

Peter makes the point that these were 'jobbing musicians' who had to be prepared to take on different styles of music, taking to the road in minstrel shows or doing Cotton Club reviews, but it does appear that bebop defeated most of them. On the other hand Dixieland was something that many of them learned. During Teddy Buckner's two decades leading a traditional band in Disneyland, several of the interviewees had extended stints with him, but comments about the difficulty of coming to terms with the style are common. Trumpeter Andy Blakeney said of playing with Kid Ory, 'To tell the truth I didn't take to it so easy.' Blakeney also respected Barry Martyn for a late-career revival with the Legends of Jazz (the same happened with Floyd Turnham) without sharing his musical ideas.

It's certainly surprising that such musicians as Red Mack, Streamline Ewing and Chester Lane are not better known, given



Norman Bowden playing with blues guitarist T-Bone Walker (photo courtesy Norman Bowden)

their successful careers - google 'Chester Lane' and you are directed to Chester Lane Library, St. Helens! But *Swingin' on Central Avenue* is not a story of deprivation and prejudice. Admittedly there are a few hair-raising accounts of racial violence on tour and some of the musicians ended up in a pitiable state: Peter is still clearly saddened by Caghey Roberts' lonely poverty in his last days. However, middle-class comfort was the rule for many of his subjects.

Especially interesting is to put together the accounts (some not strictly accurate, of course) to form an overall picture of a musical scene. Maxwell Davis, for instance, in testimony of one musician after another, emerges as a top arranger and good strong tenor saxist, but who was Maxwell Davis? I certainly had never heard of him. Sadly he died in 1970, too early to be interviewed by Peter Vacher, and remains a pretty much unknown figure who, according to Peter, was so much in demand in the record studios, especially for rhythm and blues, that he almost literally worked himself to death.

Swingin' on Central Avenue is copiously illustrated with matt black and white reproductions of rare photographs from the collections of Peter Vacher and the musicians themselves and published by Rowman and Littlefield in hardback (ISBN 978 0 8108 8832 6) at £37.95.

THE GHETTO SWINGER

RON SIMPSON looks into the background of the book, *The Ghetto Swinger*, to be published by the DoppelHouse Press of Los Angeles in January.



The sub-title of the book, *A Berlin Jazz Legend Remembers*, points us towards its subject, the memoirs of Heinz 'Coco' Schumann, several times voted Germany's top jazz guitarist in the 1950s and still playing jazz at the time of the book's initial publication in Germany in 1997. Now, with John Howard's English translation about to be published, the nonagenarian Schumann can write in his preface, 'I am a musician who spent time in concentration camps, not someone in a concentration camp who also played a little music.' In other words, Schumann defines himself by his music, not his suffering, but for all that the main title focuses on a few months in 1944.

Now normally referred to by its Czech name, Terezin, Theresienstadt (as Schumann calls it) has increasingly been the subject of historical interest in recent years, as proved by the string of documentary films of the last 30 years featuring Coco Schumann and listed in an appendix. It may not have been the scene of wholesale slaughter that death camps such as Auschwitz-Birkenau were, but it reveals a peculiarly perverted and cynical aspect of the evil of the Holocaust and also the Nazis' success for so long in fooling a willingly credulous world.

Terezin was a fortress town in North West Bohemia that was converted into a ghetto/concentration camp after

1940. Its occupants were for the most part from Czechoslovakia and from the beginning contained a large number of academics and artists. A vibrant intellectual life developed there, not, at first, encouraged by the authorities, before gradually they saw the possibilities for a propaganda coup. An inspection visit by the International Red Cross in 1944 brought about a cleaning up operation, with the more sickly elements transferred to death camps and more room for the healthy; programmes of self-government, self-improvement and cultured relaxation made their phoney appearance. Most brazenly of all a film was made of the beautified ghetto, long thought to have the amazing title, *The Fuhrer Gives a City to the Jews*, though now it's believed that the official title was more formal. The Red Cross was suitably impressed by the visit, but the propaganda value of the film proved to be nil: the war ended before it had been edited and much of it was destroyed, though there are plenty of fragments to be found on Youtube.

In the film a string orchestra led by Karel Ancerl, later probably the greatest conductor of the Czech Philharmonic, plays; a children's opera, *Brundibar*, written by Hans Krasa shortly before his confinement, is staged, as indeed it was many times in Terezin; and a jazz band, the Ghetto Swingers, led by famous pianist Martin Roman, includes Coco Schumann on drums - when he arrived, the band already had a guitarist, and Coco was nothing if not resourceful, as the book proves time and again.

Survivors from Terezin included Ancerl, Schumann, Roman and the boy who became a major Czech novelist, Ivan Klima, but many more died, often after being transferred to Auschwitz or another death camp. Krasa was one of the victims, as was Victor Ullman whose satirical opera, *The Emperor of Atlantis*, written in Terezin, rehearsed but never staged, is now performed with some frequency. Schumann's

friend, clarinettist Fritz Weiss ('our Benny Goodman'), died in Auschwitz and, most ironically, Kurt Gerron found collaboration had no power to save his life. Gerron was an actor and singer who had achieved fame in 1928 in Brecht and Weill's *Threepenny Opera* and was now engaged to direct the film depicting the comfortable life of Jews in Theresienstadt. Before the film had been edited he received his reward in the gas chambers.

The story of Terezin arouses so much interest because of its strange mixture of cynical cruelty and the inspiring survival of the human spirit. The beautification of Terezin may have been phoney, but there was nothing spurious about the dedicated writing, composing, educating and performing that went on among people who had only transport to a death camp to look forward to. Coco Schumann exemplifies this spirit. He claims that music saved his life - forming a band in Auschwitz certainly kept him alive - but so did his decisive and opportunistic temperament, refusing to be outfaced even by Josef Mengele. He also refers several times to his guardian angel and certainly his luck in meeting old friends at times when they could help him verged on the miraculous!

Schumann begins his memoir with the recollection of the time he realised he was not, as he had always thought, a German, but a Jew. In fact he was a half-Jew, his father Aryan, his mother a German Jew - it was enough to get him excluded from joining the Hitler Youth with the rest of his class. Clearly young Heinz was not of a particularly religious temperament and it was only the sufferings he endured for his race that made him feel Jewish. His identification as a German also was fairly ambiguous in the post-war years. He considered emigration to the States, even (briefly) to Israel, and spent a few years in Australia in the 1950s, but settled back in Berlin. Later in life he claimed he did not know how to handle his concentration

camp memories: 'it cannot be forgotten, ignored or suppressed, but the remainder of your life should not be determined solely by the horrors that happened decades ago.' The book ends tellingly with his response - calm, polite, but acid - to young people in the 1990s who claimed that the tales of Auschwitz were 'one big lie'.

This is clearly a serious and important book, but also more entertaining to read than I may have suggested. Heinz was very much a city boy and his youth was spent roaming Berlin in search of hot music and other diversions. At 12 he claims that he and his mates had 'the coolest latest records': as well as German jazzers he lists the likes of Duke Ellington, Chick Webb with Ella, and Nat Gonella. In defiance of the race laws he continued playing jazz and anything else that he could in the bars of Berlin until arrested in 1943.

After Terezin and Auschwitz he was ultimately freed at Wolfratshausen and set about rebuilding his life: his parents had survived, in his mother's case thanks to a piece of quick thinking by his father worthy of Coco himself. Making some sort of a living playing music in the Occupation years again relied on Coco's ingenuity.

His first big successes came with violinist Helmut Zacharias, then follows a vivid and fairly brief account of an up-and-down career, swayed by the changes in musical fashion. At its best he jammed with Dizzy Gillespie, Ella Fitzgerald and Lennie Niehaus, but he adjusted to pretty much every style, working on cruise ships or turning out novelty songs when necessary, teaching classical guitar, before finally deciding that it was jazz or nothing.

The Ghetto Swinger, co-written with Max Christian Graeff and Michaela Haas, gets a clear and unfussy translation from John Howard and is illustrated by a fascinating range of photographs.

WHOSE RAGTIME BAND?

DAVID GORDON tells RON SIMPSON about the thinking behind his latest CD, *Alexander Scriabin's Ragtime Band*, due out on December 11 on Mister Sam Records.



Since this is probably the first mention of Alexander Scriabin in *Jazz Rag*, a few words of introduction would be helpful. The Russian composer, who died 100 years ago, was a great innovator, in his short life moving from Chopin-esque romanticism to controversial avant-garde. After his death he soon went out of favour: something more defiantly realistic, less mystical, was required by the new regime in Russia. In recent decades there has been something of a revival of interest in his work – in the

jazz world Bill Evans and Chick Corea have recorded his music much of which was originally written for piano – and now David Gordon's latest project takes it at least one stage further.

It's tempting to say that David Gordon is a one-man cross-over campaign, except that a quick look at the careers of the members of his trio – bassist Jonty Fisher and drummer Paul Cavaciuti – reveals the same versatility and mixing of styles. Both Jonty and Paul, like David

himself, are well known as composers, with Jonty's range of expertise taking in world music and television themes and Paul, a Berklee graduate, operating in the States as a Music for Health practitioner, working with sufferers from schizophrenia, depression and autism – both, of course, appear regularly in different jazz contexts, too. As for David himself, he is described on a press release as 'composer, jazz pianist and harpsichordist'. His work with his trio is solely on piano, but he not only plays harpsichord in chamber orchestras, but in Respectable Groove, a fusion of an early music ensemble and a jazz group, with Evelyn Nallon on recorder, Oli Hayhurst on bass and Tom Hooper on percussion. For such an original musician, David is pretty good at collaboration, working with Jacqui Dankworth, Christian Garrick and cellist Ben Davis in Butterfly's Wing, a chamber jazz group performing mainly originals. In the midst of these and other imaginatively named groups in various styles sits the simply titled David Gordon Trio which has been playing jazz since 1995 and is now on its sixth album. During these years David and the trio have gained a particularly enthusiastic following in Japan in that their albums consistently sell well there. As yet there has been no Japanese tour for the trio, but surely it's only a matter of time.

David talks fairly diffidently about his work, but he certainly has a large-scale view of it, seeing it in terms of 'projects' and identifying 'concepts'. His previous album, for instance, *The David Gordon Trio Speaks Latin!*, had as its theme the music of South and Central America, and he is much happier with some such concentration than with a sequence of unconnected numbers. The Scriabin project began by chance. One of his students broke her right arm, so he dug out his copy of Scriabin's Prelude for Left Hand. The piece, as he says, 'gave up its inner tango and early jazz influences' and became the first element in the album. It appears

on the album as *Prelude for Both Hands* and, sure enough, the elements David found can be heard, notably the Latin rhythms.

David had played Scriabin's music as a student and had entertained a vague desire to present it in a jazz context, but, after this provided the impetus, he became increasingly aware of the composer's relevance to jazz and popular music. A song he wrote for Jacqui Dankworth was heavily based on Scriabin's harmonies and he found the structure of much of Scriabin's music reflected that of popular song – the AABA format. If his music shares harmonic and structural features with Broadway standards, David claims it possesses more beauty. Incidentally, he points out that following Scriabin's rhythmic example was never an option: he was apparently notoriously wayward himself in performance. So far, so good with developing what David genuinely sees as 'a new standard repertoire', but, as the project developed, it became clear that the intensity of the Scriabin pieces needed relief – for the sake of both performers and audience!

That's when the project enlarged to include a sort of musical world-view of the year 1915 when Scriabin breathed his last at a time of great innovation in popular music. David's dating is not strictly precise – *Alexander's Ragtime Band*, for instance, dates from 1911 – but that hardly mattered as he put together a series of musical trends and fashions for the time: the development of jazz, tango fever in Europe, classical composers such as Debussy discovering jazz, the Russian diaspora helping to open the Great American Songbook.

The wonderful title of the album presented itself as a gift to David when he was trying to perfect the concept, but the Russian music-ragtime link was there already for him, two forms of music in which he is interested. In the trio's repertoire is George L.

Cobb's *Russian Rag* which rags a Rachmaninoff Prelude and dates from 1918 – near enough David Gordon's focus year. *Russian Rag* is not on the album, but *Alexander Scriabin's Ragtime Band* certainly is. After *Praeludium Mysterium* challenges the listener at the outset (haunting effects from all the trio), David explodes into what he correctly calls 'the last thing that anyone expects', a hilarious version of the Irving Berlin classic, with jaunty ragtime piano, precariously harmonized vocals, a passage of Berlin as it might have been adapted by Scriabin, and crazily wise words: 'If you want to hear Alexander Scriabin played as written,' you are advised to get out of here! It's a strange track to find on an album that is essentially serious, despite outbreaks of wit and eccentricity, but David claims that he has become 'more shameless' about such things as he's got older – and a good thing, too!

The CD as it exists in the pre-publicity form which I heard flows continuously from one track to the next, though, when we spoke, David still had a decision to make on whether that would be the case on the commercially issued version. It's rather appealing, giving the sense of the sounds of 1915 merging in one very disparate soundscape, but, given David's allusive style with such melodies as Debussy's *Cakewalk* (the golliwog tactfully removed in the interests of political correctness, no doubt), it's not always clear when the new track begins – a nice effect in my opinion, but a matter of choice for David!

Debussy, at the height of his powers embracing ragtime and the cakewalk, is only one of a series of more light-hearted interpolations into Scriabin. Many of them, such as the jazziest item on the album, *St. Louis Blues*, are fairly short, between more extended deconstructions of Scriabin's work. Several of these interpolations reflect David Gordon's love of Latin music, *Tres Lindas Cubanas* by Antonio Maria Romeo, for instance, providing a delightful and refreshing interlude.

Alexander Scriabin's Ragtime Band is the sort of album that attracts words like 'challenging' and 'ambitious' which might put the



frighteners on some members of the listening public, but in fact the show has already been thoroughly road-tested – with great success – in live performance. David believes that, if the concept works, then it works in its entirety, so audiences from Beaumaris to Hexham have enjoyed the full 70-or-so minutes of *Alexander Scriabin's Ragtime Band*. David happily reports that, for the second of two visits to the 606 Club, not only was there a full house, but the audience was pin-drop attentive. It's not a programme (live or on CD) for the lazy listener, and the set order is crucial in providing contrasts and light relief.

Unprompted, David Gordon volunteered the information that he has no idea yet what the concept for his next project will be. Clearly he intends it to be imaginatively themed and full of the sort of originality that the Scriabin project possesses. When he gives his reasons for focussing on the Russian composer (leaving aside the coincidence of the arm fracture) – the time was 'an era of innovation and novelty', Scriabin's 'inventiveness and elan lives on' – it's obvious what qualities David Gordon aspires to in his own music.

www.davidgordontrio.com

Dear Jazz Rag,

Looking For Mike Taylor

In regard to the piece in *Jazz Rag 138*, I have enclosed details on some Taylor writings that can be referred to.

If not already at hand and for anyone who may have follow up interest they could dig them out as they give some insight on Taylor's jazz life.

Also an excellent book to refer to is *Innovations In British Jazz Vol. 1. 1960-80* by John Wicks. This includes a number of references to Taylor's life, music, sessions and comment by fellow musicians who played with him, knew him and associated with him.

Happy Listening
Ray Whitehouse
Biographical (Jazz) Research Services, Milnrow, Rochdale

Melody Maker [GB]

- Taylor-Mystery Man of British Jazz – A Look at The Late Pianist [Feb 15, 1969 Page 8]
- In Memory of Mike Taylor plus Comments On His Talents by John Hiseman and Henry Lowther [Dec 6, 1969 Page 8]
- Caught "Music of Mike Taylor" Tribute w/Variou Artists (F. Ricotti/N.Winstone/I.Carr/B.Thompson/D.Gelly at LSE, London School of Economics [Dec 13, 1969 Page 6]

Coda [Canada]

- Pianist Found Dead [Mar/Apr 1969 Page 32]

Jazz Journal [GB]

- Part 1 – The Innovator, Into The Land of Warthogs & Rhythming Piano [Dec 1974 Page 18]
- Part 2 – Composer at Work, Into The Land of Warthog [Jan 1975 Page 21]

Jazzwise [GB]

- The Strange Life and Death of Mike Taylor [Dec 2007 Page 42]

FOUR UNUSUAL JAZZ CAREERS

by Scott Yanow

Jazz history is filled not only with acclaimed greats and innovators but unique and quirky figures who made an impact for a short time and then faded almost completely out of the history books. This article covers four unusual male instrumentalists who gained some recognition for their singing but are largely overlooked today for different reasons: Ted Lewis, Harry Barris, Leo Watson and Jackie Paris.

Ted Lewis (1892-1971) is the best known of the four but not for a good reason. Considered the epitome of corn as a singer (where Al Jolson was an influence), clarinetist and saxophonist, Lewis is best remembered for *Me And My Shadow* and his phrase 'Is everybody happy?' 'The high hatted tragedian of song' was overly sentimental in his singing (which was actually closer to talking), full of nostalgia for an era that never really existed. But despite this, many of Lewis' recordings contain excellent jazz and he was one of the earliest solo saxophonists to be featured on record.

Born Theodore Leopold Friedman, he began playing

clarinet as a youth and was a band leader as early as 1910. While he could play conventionally, he made a wide variety of odd sounds in his solos including squawks, roars and imitations of animals. Preceding such gaspipe specialists as Wilton Crawley, Boyd Senter and Fess Williams, Lewis was considered a sensation. In 1915 he moved to New York, joining pianist Earl Fuller's Famous Jazz Band. He made his recording debut with Fuller during 1917-18 and was the star of ensemble-oriented performances which sounded like a rather noisy version of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band. In 1919 he and the other sidemen left Fuller to form a new group with Lewis as the leader.

That same year, Ted Lewis began a long association with the Columbia label, recording prolifically and becoming a major star. There are a few surprising aspects to Lewis' acoustic recordings of 1919-25. He rarely sings, is heard on C-melody sax and alto much more than on clarinet, and he fits very well into the era. Some of the tunes, including his theme *When My Baby Smiles At Me*, are a bit corny and some of his solos are



Harry Barris

questionable, but the band (with cornetist Walter Kahn and trombonist Harry Raderman) plays hot dance music well. Even with his eccentricities, Ted Lewis comes across as an excellent clarinetist for 1921.

With the advent of electric recordings in 1925, Ted Lewis for the first time sounded as if he was falling behind the times. A major success on the vaudeville circuit who epitomized jazz to many listeners who were unfamiliar with black music, Lewis saw no reason to change or modernize his style. He kept his very expressive style on clarinet the same (considering that part of his act), getting more dated each year. Ironically his group steadily improved while the leader stood apart from his musicians as an odd show biz figure. By 1924, Lewis' band included trombonist George Brunies and he had one of the top tuba players around in Barry Barth. Barth was also one of the first string bassists on record with the 1925 recording of *Milenberg Joys* although that was just a one-time appearance. Lewis frequently featured the short-lived Don Murray on clarinet and saxophones during 1928-29. The

great cornetist Muggsy Spanier was a regular with Lewis during 1929-34, trombonist Jack Teagarden was with the band briefly in 1930, and Murray's successors included Frankie Teschemacher (for one session in 1929), Jimmy Dorsey (1929-30) and Benny Goodman (1931-32). Fats Waller even guested on a few songs in 1931. Goodman (who gained attention as a youth with his imitation of Ted Lewis) and the other clarinetists were sometimes mistaken for the leader on the recordings, a mistake that Lewis never discouraged! Many of his recordings have their rewarding moments and some have the unintentional humour of alternating his corny solos with those of his best sidemen.

Ted Lewis continued as a household name in the 1930s and '40s, rarely changing his act. In 1941 he recorded his last clarinet solos on *Tiger Rag* and *Jazz Me Blues*, still sounding as if it were 1921. He stayed active as a singer/personality into the late 1960s. Many of his recordings are worth getting for the work of his sidemen and even occasionally for Lewis' contributions.

Harry Barris (1905-1962) should have been a star. Check him out during the 1932 short *Rambling Round Radio Row* (which can be found on YouTube). He not only plays some rollicking piano and scats but verbally imitates drum cymbals (with his trademark 'pahhh'). Barris is clearly a predecessor for Slim Gaillard, Harry 'the Hipster' Gibson and other jive scat singers, and he is quite entertaining and witty. But typically, his moment in the spotlight lasts barely a minute.

Barris was a fine pianist, a unique singer and a talented songwriter, but he never really made it. During 1927-30, he was a member of the Rhythm Boys, a vocal trio also featuring the young Bing Crosby and Al Rinker. Barris inspired the group to perform a zany variety of hot jazz and was the most exciting of the trio. The Rhythm Boys, one of the very first jazz vocal groups, were featured with the Paul Whiteman Orchestra for two years (performing *Mississippi Mud* in the film *The King Of Jazz*) and briefly with Gus Arnheim's band. While with the latter, Crosby became such a major attraction that he launched his solo career and the Rhythm Boys broke up. Barris, who composed such Crosby hits as *I Surrender Dear*, *It Must Be True* and *Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams*, appeared in at least 44 films during 1931-50 including *Show Boat*, *Holiday Inn*, *The Fleet's In* and *The Lost Weekend*, but he was usually unbilled and his cameos often lasted no more than a minute, as if he were trying to remain anonymous.

Harry Barris, who drank excessively, had an aimless career and, although Crosby did his best

to help him, he sank quickly into obscurity and was long forgotten by the time he made his last film appearance. It has always seemed strange that he had very few solo recordings, is not listed in jazz discographies, and was not recorded by anyone in the 1950s.

Leo Watson (1898-1950) is even less remembered today yet he was an innovative scat singer who influenced Dave Lambert. A true eccentric, Watson gained notoriety one night when, employed as a drummer, he refused to stop playing during his drum solo. The police had to be called to drag him away!

Watson had the rare ability of being able to make up words as he sang and have it make sense. He emerged in 1929 as part of a vocal group that toured with the Whitman Sisters. After the tour, the singers broke away and were renamed the Spirits Of Rhythm. The Spirits consisted of acoustic guitarist Teddy Bunn, a drummer-vocalist and three singers (including Watson) who played the tiple (a small ukulele). Watson worked with the group off and on until 1941, making some obscure but swinging recordings.

In the 1930s, Leo Watson also worked with many other bands for a short time. He sang and played string bass on a session with the Washboard Rhythm Kings in 1932, performed with an early version of the John Kirby Sextet in 1937, and had brief associations with the big bands of Artie Shaw and Gene Krupa, recordings some dazzling scat singing with both orchestras. He also had a record date of his own in 1939 of which the highlight was his very original singing of *Ja Da*.



Leo Watson



Jackie Paris

After moving to Los Angeles, Leo Watson was associated with other eccentric singers including Slim Gaillard (with whom he played drums) and Harry 'The Hipster' Gibson. In 1946 he recorded four songs including a crazy version of *Jingle Bells* that really shows how inventive an improvising singer he could be. But unfortunately Watson scuffled during his last years, working at day jobs before passing away from pneumonia in 1950.

Perhaps the oddest career of these four singers was experienced by **Jackie Paris (1924-2004)**. An excellent and versatile jazz singer, Paris not only did not catch on but most of his recordings are as difficult to find now as they were during his life. He had a warm voice, swung at all tempos, could scat and had his own sound, but for some reason, few labels have ever been interested in reissuing his mostly excellent records.

Paris learned the guitar when he was quite young, tap-danced, and worked in vaudeville when he was growing up. After two years in the Army, in 1947 he made his recording debut, having a minor hit with his version of *Skylark*. His combo, which was inspired by the King Cole Trio, performed at the Onyx Club on 52nd Street for six months. Paris liked and understood bebop, was a friend of Charlie Parker with whom he toured (but unfortunately never recorded), and worked with Lionel Hampton during 1949-50. On Nov. 12, 1949 he became the first singer to record *'Round Midnight*. After coming off the road with Hampton, Paris was so exhausted that he turned down an offer to join Duke Ellington,

which would have made him the first white member of Duke's band.

By 1952, when he recorded *Paris In Blue* with Charles Mingus, Jackie Paris was still just 28 and seemed to be on the brink of greater fame. But somehow it never happened. While he recorded albums for the Coral, Brunswick, Wing, Emarcy, Time and Impulse labels during 1954-62, none were major sellers and all are scarce today. He worked in the 1960s with his wife singer Anne-Marie Moss but no recording resulted. In fact, other than one song with Charles Mingus in 1974 (*Duke Ellington's Sound Of Love*), he was off records entirely during 1963-80. In his later years Paris recorded for a few small labels and in Japan, remaining active until near the end of his life, but it seemed as if no one knew who he was. In fact, in the 1990s a major reference book reported that Paris, who lived until 2004, had died in 1977!

Was Paris' inability to catch on due to his personality, bad luck or missed opportunities? The worthy film *'Tis Autumn: The Search For Jackie Paris* (2006), which was made with the singer's cooperation and released posthumously, tries hard but does not really solve the mystery of why Jackie Paris, like Harry Barris and Leo Watson, failed to make it. But fortunately for today's listeners, their records serve as evidence of their talents, if one can find them!

Scott Yanow is the author of 11 jazz books and over 750 liner notes. He can be contacted on scottyanowjazz@yahoo.com.

BRITISH JAZZ AWARDS 2015

Once again *Jazz Rag* is proud to announce the winners of the British Jazz Awards in 12 categories for individual performers, two band categories and two industry awards for CDs. The Jazz Awards operate on the theory that musical talent is permanent, fashion is merely temporary and the recipients of these awards over the years have been musicians of the highest quality - and 2015 is no exception.

The final choice is made by individual voters, many of them *Jazz Rag* readers, but at an earlier stage a panel of distinguished writers/promoters/producers draws up a list of potential winners, though voters are welcome to make their own choices from outside that list.

In addition one award is made by nomination by the organisers themselves: Services to British Jazz. This year, not before time, the award goes to Digby Fairweather. As a musician, Digby's achievements are regularly recognised by the British Jazz Award for Small Group for his Half Dozen, but his services to British jazz go far wider, as broadcaster, writer, educator, archivist and record producer. *Jazz Rag* readers are familiar with his generous and knowledgeable reviews and articles and his work for the National Jazz Archive has been of major importance for British jazz. The original founder of the archive at Loughton, he is now engaged in developing a further site at Southend. He has produced volumes of biography and autobiography as well as co-authoring *The Rough Guide to Jazz*. Beneath his benign exterior is a dedicated workaholic, most of it in the service of jazz.

BRITISH JAZZ AWARD WINNERS 2015

TRUMPET

- 1 Guy Barker
- 2 Enrico Tomasso
- 3 Steve Waterman
- 4 Bruce Adams

TROMBONE

- 1 Mark Nightingale
- 2 Dennis Rollins
- 3 Ian Bateman
- 4 Roy Williams

CLARINET

- 1 Alan Barnes
- 2 Pete Long
- 3 Julian Marc Stringle
- 4 Mark Crooks

ALTO SAX

- 1 Nigel Hitchcock
- 2 Alan Barnes
- 3 Pete King
- 4 Derek Nash

TENOR SAX

- 1 Karen Sharp
- 2 Art Themen
- 3 Alex Garnett
- 4 Robert Fowler

PIANO

- 1 Zoe Rahman
- 2 Dave Newton
- 3 Gareth Williams
- 4 Craig Milverton

GUITAR

- 1 Jim Mullen
- 2 Martin Taylor
- 3 Nigel Price
- 4 Dominic Ashworth

DOUBLE BASS

- 1 Alec Dankworth
- 2 Dave Green
- 3 Andrew Cleynert
- 4 Len Skeat

DRUMS

- 1 Clark Tracey
- 2 Bobby Worth
- 3 Ralph Salmins
- 4 Steve Brown

MISCELLANEOUS INSTRUMENT

- 1 Amy Roberts (Flute)
- 2 Alan Barnes (Baritone Sax)
- 3 Jim Hart (Vibraphone)
- 4 Chris Garrick (Violin)

VOCALS

- 1 Clare Teal
- 2 Liane Carroll
- 3 Claire Martin
- 4 Tina May

RISING STAR

- 1 Laura Jurd
- 2 Remi Harris
- 3 Ben Holder
- 4 Alan Benzie

BIG BAND

- 1 BBC Big Band
- 2 Echoes of Ellington
- 3 Back to Basie
- 4 Beats & Pieces

SMALL GROUP

- 1 Digby Fairweather's Half Dozen
- 2 Remi Harris Trio
- 3 Brassjaw
- 4 Tipitina

NEW CD

- 1 Liane Carroll – Seaside [Linn]
- 2 Courtney Pine – Song [Destin-E Records]
- 3 Skelton Skinner Allstars Septet – play Ellington and Basie [Diving Duck]
- 4 Fishwick/Roberts/Basile – When Night Falls [Hard Bop Records]

RE-ISSUE CD

- 1 Johnny Dankworth Orchestra – Duet for 16 [Vocalion]
- 2 Tubby Hayes – Meets US Jazz Greats [Fresh Sound Records]
- 3 Freddy Randall and Friends – Before and After [Lake]
- 4 Eddie Thompson – In the USA [Hep]

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Digby Fairweather

Photo by Merlin Daleman



Laura Jurd



Mark Nightingale

Photo by Merlin Daleman

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Alan Barnes

Photo by Merlin Daleman



Clare Teal

MIKE DURHAM'S CLASSIC JAZZ PARTY

The Inspiration Suite, Village Hotel, Whitley Bay, November 6-8



Mike Durham's Classic Jazz Party ran for three days, from noon till late, with an extended dinner break, amounting to 30 hours of jazz in nearly 40 mostly themed sessions of an hour or less. My flying visit from Saturday afternoon to Sunday afternoon was nowhere near enough to sample all the delights of the festival, but enabled me to get the flavour of what must be a unique or nearly unique event. Certainly drummer Josh Duffee, one of a quartet of Americans present, in paying tribute to its founder, the late Mike Durham, claimed that such an event would not be possible in the States.

The Classic Jazz Party couldn't work without the versatility and reading and quick learning skills of some 30 musicians, with a large contingent from the well schooled jazz world of Northern Europe. Of course individual stylists make their mark, but the ability to understand and reproduce different styles is more important in the context of the festival. The new (to me) name to make the biggest impression was the young Norwegian trombonist, Kris Kompen, whose talents ranged from the fiercely laconic swing of Dickie Wells on the Spike Hughes session to the legato lead on *Smoke Rings* in the Casa Loma tribute. Similarly, established stars such as Matthias Seuffert and Michael McQuaid demonstrated an enormous range stylistically and, in some cases, instrumentally. McQuaid, for instance, Menno Daams' lead alto for the Spike Hughes big band, brought plenty of attack to Clarence Hutchenrider's clarinet solos for

the Casa Loma before following up with a Bixian lead in an informal Keith Nichols small group.

In an odd sort of a way the stars of Whitley Bay were the arrangers from the 1920s and 1930s – and, of course, the 21st century musicians who transcribed (and, where necessary, re-arranged) their scores and the others who learnt complicated parts in the run-up to the festival. The highspot for me was the restoration of the reputation of Gene Gifford and the Casa Loma Orchestra. In its later years the Casa Loma moved too far towards sweet music for the average jazz fan, but in the late 1920s and early 1930s Gifford's arrangements were enormously important in helping to lay down the template for the swing sound. Duffee led a fine 10-piece in a set that began with the cumulative riffs of *Stompin' Around* and soon hit on to one of the hottest numbers of 1931, *White Jazz*, with instrumental gymnastics from a terrific sax section of McQuaid, Seuffert and Robert Fowler. Having negotiated the vicious sax writing of *White Jazz*, they found themselves competing with a mighty brass team of Andy Schumm, Duke Heitger and Kompen in the fierce riffing of *Casa Loma Stomp*. This was undoubtedly the most exciting set I heard and I doubt it could stand comparison.

Equally interesting, if slightly less dynamic musically, was the Spike Hughes set, with trumpeter Menno Daams taking us through his short, successful and

controversial career in jazz. At Whitley Bay the educational element is never totally missing: you have fun and enjoy great music, but you'd better be prepared to learn something, too. The 14-piece band (a tight fit with its music stands on the modest-sized platform, with a Yamaha grand already in residence) hit the ground running with Hughes' most famous British piece, *Six Bells Stampede*, with the light and crisp sax sound of early Ellington, before Hughes took himself off to New York. There his all-star sessions were a strange but appealing mix of top American soloists and European semi-classical compositions such as *Arabesque* and his excursion into arranged folksong, *Donegal Cradle Song*, though *Sweet Sorrow Blues* tipped its hat to Ellington's jungle sound. Let off the leash for more extended solos, Seuffert relished being given the role of Coleman Hawkins.

Oddly enough, Claus Jacobi's set on the Cotton Club made rather less impact than Hughes or Casa Loma. It was a thoroughly enjoyable sequence of early Ellington which suffered somewhat in quality from what it gained in uniqueness. With the exception of *East St. Louis Toodle-Oo* and *The Mooche*, it consisted of lesser known numbers, several rather undistinguished. Most interesting was a medley Jacobi put together on the Ducal model of songs from *Blackbirds of 1928*, including an uninhibited romp through *Doin' the New Lowdown*. A word for Josh Duffee's period drumming, as upfront as Sonny Greer, but exercising enough restraint, and Martin Wheatley, reminding us how integral the banjo was to the Ducal sound circa 1927.

Regular bands were not much in evidence, but one that played a couple of sets of its own as well as supplying many of the musicians for other bands was the Union Rhythm Kings, the union in question being between Norway and Sweden. An elegant seven-piece under the direction of bass saxophonist Frans Sjoström, this band, too, paid

tribute to the great arranger/composers of the 1920s. A clever arrangement of *Davenport Blues* foregrounded Sjoström, the Adrian Rollini of the Skaggerak, and always he gave credit to the arrangers – Fud Livingston for the avant garde *Humpty Dumpty*, the great Bill Challis for *Clarinet Marmalade*, slick, smart, harmonically delightful – and even the archaeologist, New York bandleader Vince Giordano, who unearthed a 1930 Jelly Roll Morton obscurity, *Crocodile Cradle*, far from the best of Morton, but worth unearthing.

Maybe I have made the Classic Jazz Party sound too much like a seminar – which, in a sense, it was, but an immensely entertaining one. It's easy to imagine the likes of Bent Persson and Matthias Seuffert gleefully meeting up before next year's festival to mull over the obscurities they have found. The one I most regretted missing this year (only by an hour, too) was Josh Duffee's re-creation of the music of the much-loved giant of the xylophone, Teddy Brown.

The open-mindedness of the Classic Jazz Party is best illustrated by an easy-going set of Western Swing, reclaiming Bob Wills for the jazzers and playing out on Roy Rogers' *Happy Trails*, and a bizarre set under the title *Seagoon Serenaders*. Keith Nichols claimed to have been inspired by those spikily flatulent chords so beloved of the Goons, but, when the band went into a delightful *Someday Sweetheart* – McQuaid as Bix, Sjoström as Rollini – it sounded as though Bill Challis, not Spike Milligan, was the influence. But that was before Keith Nichols launched into *If I Give Up the Saxophone, Will You Come Back to Me?*

RON SIMPSON

The Mike Durham Classic Jazz Party will certainly return in 2016, but dates have yet to be confirmed. Check www.whitleybayjazzfest.org for details.

THE EFG LONDON JAZZ FESTIVAL 13-22 NOVEMBER 2015

One man's view by Peter Vacher

The London Jazz Festival may now be one of the most significant and substantial events of its kind in Europe but even so it remains below the radar as far as the majority of Londoners are concerned. There were posters around the city and one or two of the broadsheet newspapers offered previews and concert reviews once the festival was underway but that's about it. Of course, some events were carried on BBC radio but you'll have looked in vain for coverage on any of the terrestrial TV channels. Maybe that says something about the place of jazz in the cultural scheme of things in the UK; maybe it's just that the capital is now so polyglot and so suffused with artistic events that the LJF is just seen as more box to be ticked, its activities consumed and cast to the winds once done. It's also interesting to consider what the term 'festival' actually means. Consider Brecon, Swanage, Southport, Cambridge, Scarborough, and so many others more locally generated, usually concentrated in a manageable area, with ease of movement and a sense of collective endeavour that creates a collaborative experience. Not so London, as it is spread city-wide with key locations [the Barbican and South Bank, plus Cadogan Hall this year] set aside for 'marquee' names and myriad smaller venues, often hard to locate, spaced out across town. As the festival's closing press release has it: '2000+ artists, 300+ gigs, 50+ venues, 23 years, 1 city. Truly spectacular!'

All of this is to explain this partial over-view: one man's slice of a much larger pie, you could say. As ever or at least for the last eight years, my Festival experience began with Jazz Voice at the Barbican, in itself a colossus of jazz enterprise, with Guy Barker's massive orchestra in support of an array of vocalists, some central to the music like Elaine Delmar, others near if not wholly jazz-oriented like the impressive Joe Stilgoe, with still others from the

worlds of pop and soul whose jazz sensibility is totally absent. Still, it's a great occasion for sponsor schmoozing and general back-slapping. It also underlines Barker's ability to harness that great orchestra and to turn into a swinging jazz ensemble wherever the programme allows.

After that we continued on a largely vocal trajectory, alighting at Chelsea's vaulted Cadogan Hall, once a Christian Science temple built in 1907 in the Byzantine revival style and now the location of choice for the festival's mainstream concerts. First up was my vocalist of the year, the divine Cecile McLorin Salvant, part French and part Haitian, and a young singer of great expressive range, able to dig deep in to the Bessie Smith repertoire before deconstructing a contemporary song, sometimes taken perilously slow. At their core, her moments of adventure owed much to her inspiring pianist Aaron Diehl, whose lightning-fast reactions and John Lewis-like nimble touches set her on yet more adventurous pathways. Brilliant, brilliant music.

It was to be Allen Toussaint to follow but fate intervened with the news of his sudden death following a concert appearance in Madrid just days before his scheduled LJF Barbican appearance. The alternative might have been Cassandra Wilson at RFH but we decided no, thankfully given this diva's shameful failure to show. So back to CH a day later for the superb Kurt Elling also supported by a top trio, and in imperious form, that magical voice plumbing depths and hitting heights like the true improviser he is.

On to Maria Schneider's orchestra again at CH, easily the most eagerly-awaited concert of the year. The diminutive Ms Schneider darts to and from, cueing each variation, and eliciting beautiful sounds from her band of New York all-stars. It's her



writing of course, that they play, and the pieces heard (many from her current album *Thompson Fields*) were largely elegiac, lyrical, often evocative of time and place and quite beautiful, somewhat in the manner of her mentor, Gil Evans. Key soloists emerged, altoist Steve Wilson quickly moving into Ornette-like distortions and tenorists Scott Robinson and Donny McCaslin barking and grinding on her *Birds of Paradise*. What one missed was anything more stirring, more up-tempo and bright. *Lush Life*, pianist-arranger Alex Webb's centenary tribute to the life and songs of Billy Strayhorn came just days later, also at CH. Using three assorted vocalists, a narrator and Frank Griffith's neat Festival Tentet, this one-off account of a key musical life was just what a festival like the LJF should offer. Informative and very rewarding.

The final day highlight was the Jazz Repertory Company's hugely ambitious project, a kind of period bookend to Barker's opening salvo. Hosted at Cadogan Hall yet again, Richard Pite had corralled some 30 performers in a re-creation of Paul Whiteman's 1920s repertoire, subtitled *Bix, Bing & Rhapsody in Blue*. Bing being Spats Schneider darts to and from, cueing each variation, and eliciting beautiful sounds from her band of New York all-stars. It's her

entire orchestra, strings included. Tight playing, authentic replication with no hint of parody, an informative narration – Barker a delight in his Bixian interludes – made for a truly worthy achievement. So good that they played it twice. Having digested the afternoon PW extravaganza, there was time enough to dash to Pizza Express in Soho for a double-bill of bracing jazz modernism, with Alex Garnett's crunching Bunch of Five, featuring the brilliant US tenor-saxophonist Tim Armacost and then the New York Standards Quartet, here to launch their new Whirlwind CD, again with Armacost. Flanked by pianist David Berkman, Whirlwind proprietor and bassist Mike Janisch and the totally brilliant drummer Gene Jackson and fronted by Armacost, theirs was music whose frame of reference and balanced creativity was a total joy.

So there you have it. Too many superlatives? Well, there were no duds among what I saw and audiences, despite my caveats earlier, were truly plentiful. So what didn't we see? Well, Keith Jarrett for a start, his concert described by Clive Davis in the Times as a paean to 'self-love' or the mighty Kamasi Washington, or Terence Blanchard and so many more, edgy or avant-garde...next year maybe?

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QUARTETTHE BLUES HOT AND
COLD/ 7X WILDER

Phoenix Records 131613 72:30

This release contains two complete consecutive releases by Brookmeyer, both of which appear here on CD for the first time. *The Blues Hot and Cold* (1960) features Jimmy Rowles (piano), Buddy Clark (bass), and Mel Lewis (drums) whilst 7 x *Wilderness* (1961) has Jim Hall (guitar) and Bill Crow (bass) with Lewis retained and with Brookmeyer adding piano to his familiar valve trombone.

There is an evident joy in Brookmeyer's playing. *On the Sunny Side of the Street* and *I Got Rhythm* are just two examples. The only criticism that I have of the set is that sometimes Rowles' playing 'gets a bit too impressionistic in spots'. This aside, Brookmeyer seems to be playing at the peak of his powers.

The Alec Wilder set is a joy to behold. It leads off with

Brookmeyer on piano on *While We're Young*. His piano playing tends to steer clear of the sometimes 'galumphing comedy' of his trombone work and the presence of Jim Hall gives an almost chamber jazz feel to the session. *That's the Way It Goes* is the outstanding track of this set and the more familiar Wilder tunes like *I'll Be Around* and *Who Can I Turn To?* are also included.

Original sleeve notes and art work are included to make an almost perfect compilation and if you are new to Brookmeyer, this would be a wonderful place to get to know his music.

ALAN MUSSON

BECKY KILGORE
NICKI PARROTTTWO SONGBIRDS OF A
FEATHER

Arbors CD ARCD 19447 53.37

One can see the concept behind this pairing; two excellent singers from the acceptable quality end of popular singing could be teamed together in the belief that

two is better than one. Unfortunately, that adage is not always true and in this case the compromises required, from both of these ladies, to make this session work, weaken the individual contributions of both.

There is, also, a feeling that the session has been hastily prepared and casually approached. This reminds us how much artists are in the hands of the recording engineers. The pianist, Mike Renzi, a fine player and a more than capable accompanist, is vastly over-recorded, in some instances, his piano overpowers the singers, drowning out their words.

On the other hand, the other two musicians, Chuck Redd on bass and Harry Allen on tenor, suffer from under-recording, so the effect is a skewed balance.

Two singers singing in unison, as opposed to harmony, can produce an uneven sound even with singers with voices as similar as theirs. On their individual efforts both artists show that they can 'read' a good lyric and there is nothing wrong with the song selection which steers clear of well-worn standards with

numbers such as *Blue Moon*, *Moonglow*, *A Woman's Prerogative* and *They Say It's Spring*.

There is little to dislike about this record. It is simply that, instead of two voices being better than one, it is more the case that two voices are only half as good as one.

It would have been much better to have given them their own sessions. They deserve that.

JOHN MARTIN

FREDDY RANDALL
AND FRIENDS

BEFORE AND AFTER

Lake LACD 343 78.51

Freddy Randall might be called the British equivalent of Eddie Condon, although as a player he was closest to Wild Bill Davison. His bands specialised in the Chicago style of Dixieland: hot and swinging. This compilation presents Freddy as leader of his own band in 1957 and also as a member of 'Britain's Greatest Jazz Band' in 1972. The 1957



Monty Sunshine

MONTY SUNSHINE

REMEMBERING MONTY
SUNSHINELake Records LACD344 2CDs
73:53/78:34

Having acquired an instrument 'I got a squeak out of it [which] became a note'. Four weeks later, according to Monty, he was working with a band!

By 1952, he had joined forces with Chris Barber and Ken Colyer to form a professional outfit which can be heard on CD1 Track 2: Monty's own *Slow Drag Blues*. The band has an authentic feel, ingenuous and unpretentious. The clarinetist understands well the function of his instrument in free ensemble and his solos have a light, floating lilt. If he never quite became another Ed Hall he certainly kept the flag flying for traditional jazz up to the end of the century.

Disc 1 follows his career from that first essay into the New Orleans tradition around 1953 until the mid-sixties. Along the way he meets collaborators as diverse as guitarists Lonnie Donegan and Diz Disley, trumpeters Ken Colyer and Rod Mason and bassists Jim Bray and Jack Fallon. The tunes are culled from the familiar trad repertoire – *Down Home Rag*, *Saratoga Shout*, *Big Butter And Egg Man*. Then there are three Sunshine originals and a couple of early Ellingtons.

Disc 2 has Monty in the studio with a line-up which, in addition to his regulars, includes several modernists of the day. The result is a sort of cool 'sixties take on the Bob Crosby Band. Nicely

thought out and performed.

From then on, it's Sunshine's band at its best with scintillating trumpet from Alan Wickham.

Verdict: Worthwhile historical document, swinging jazz, great fun.

HUGH LEDIGO

CECILE MCLORIN
SALVANT

FOR ONE TO LOVE

Mack Avenue MAC 1095 52:48

When I reviewed Cecile's previous album, *Womanchild*, two years ago, although finding her a performer with much personality, I had problems with the contents of her compositions and was rather repulsed by what she did with one particular classic standard. This second trio-based, 12-track New York set is another story.

The five originals presented here are admirable, and benefit from the atmospheric variety of her enactment of her vivid lyrics. They are mainly meaningful slows, with *Underling* having personal appeal to me, as it carries the heartfelt message that the album title quotes from.

The reshaping of oldies is entirely to my liking. On *Trolley Song* her spaced-out verse leads into up-tempo, extensive variations on the chorus, propelled by her sterling support, led by Aaron Diehl, as before. As for her 10:33 take on Bernstein's *Something's Coming*, she maintains an effortless swing, whether easily medium or stompingly up - a



Cecile McLorin Salvant

tracks originally came out on a 10-inch LP, and they show what a fine band Freddy had. Besides Randall's virtuosic playing, clarinetist Al Gay is outstanding. The repertoire consists of Dixieland favourites like *Dr Jazz* and *Dinah* but they are given freshness by the solos and the ingenious ensemble sections.

The 1972 tracks were recorded in Wallsend at the end of an inaugural tour for Britain's Greatest Jazz Band. The line-up was indeed an all-star affair, with such great names as George Chisholm, Dave Shepherd and Brian Lemon. In fact these three musicians are given the lion's share of the solo space, with only four ensemble numbers out of nine tracks. But it is a delight to hear George Chisholm's ironic trombone and Brian Lemon's educated piano. Rather surprisingly, Freddy Randall is given few solos, although he makes an excellent leader.

This well-filled, well-remastered disc provides excellent evidence for the quality of the musicians who, together with those in Alex Welsh's band, set a high standard of Dixieland jazz in Britain.

TONY AUGARDE

MOONLIGHT
SAVING TIME

MEETING AT NIGHT

MSTCD002 48:53

Moonlight Saving Time comprises Emily Wright, vocals, Nick Malcolm, trumpet, Dale Hambridge, piano, Will Harris, bass and Mark Whitlam on drums. Making guest appearances are Jason Yarde, alto (tracks 2 and 7) and Dan Moore, organ (tracks 8 and 10). Ms Wright has a light, classical voice which, on *Clouds* is overdubbed from time to time, with trumpeter Malcolm playing obligato, whilst on *Meeting At Night* Malcolm has a free form solo, followed by Yarde on alto, with Wright's wordless vocals seeming to clash, purity after the power of trumpet and alto. Oddly, midway there's a fade before the wordless vocal reappears and the instrumentalists riff until the close.

After a while the double-tracked vocal, the odd tempo changes, sudden stops and the clash between the pure-sounding vocal and the more gutsy instrumentals led to more frustration than enjoyment for this listener.

GREG MURPHY

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Christian McBride



truly inspiring evocation.

Another high point I must mention is her beautiful French enunciation on *Le Mal De Vivre*, on which she comes over as a genuine *chanteuse*. I hope to hear her next release.

LESTOMKINS

THE KOFI-BARNES AGGREGATION

Woodville *wvcd 145 53.26*

Barnes, Woodville's estimable proprietor, continues his series of one-to-one encounters on record with this pairing with fellow-altoist Tony Kofi. He's also put together a new rhythm section for this album, comprising the perceptive pianist John Turville, the London-based US drummer Rod Youngs and this year's Musicians' Company Jazz Young Musician, Adam King on bass. In the notes, Barnes praises Kofi's 'indefatigable enthusiasm' but he's cut from the same cloth himself, their 'amiably competitive' instincts serving them both well. They're certainly aided by this terrific rhythm team

with Youngs hitting the mark every time over King's supple and very swinging line, Turville nimble and to the point in his solos.

All of this is evident in *Peverill Point*, one of five Barnes originals (the remaining three pieces are by Kofi) before *Los Caracoles* uses tempo variations in a neat way, ahead of Kofi's *The Village Blues Walk*, a valiant, blowsy strut that the late Art B. might have liked, the two altoists shadow-boxing agreeably, with Barnes on tip-toe before Kofi calls his children home. *Wendi* is more elegiac, plaintive almost, the harmonised theme prompting a fine Turville solo, before Kofi's edgy entry. His *Hoagy* is a surprise, a yearning melody with an interesting harmonic shape and I particularly liked Barnes's perky *In The Offing* with its stop-time rhythm and Barnes's zippy solo, before Kofi's *The Last Message* gives Youngs a chance to shine. And so it goes, piece by piece, with two accomplished soloists, pepper and mustard, you could say, in a true meeting of minds.

PETER VACHER

CHRISTIAN MCBRIDE

LIVE AT THE VILLAGE VANGUARD

Mack Avenue *MAC1099 68:35*

Christian McBride has emerged in recent years as a virtuoso bassist, with fine technique and ideas to match, and this live recording at New York's Village Vanguard features his regular trio with Christian Sands, piano and Ulysses Owens Jr., on drums. This is a high-energy trio, with pianist Sands exploring Wes Montgomery's *Fried Pies* at high tempo; it's as well he does considering the impetus set up by McBride and Owens Jr., but Sands is up to the challenge using both hands in his improvisation. McBride's solo runs the gamut before Owens Jr contributes and then it's back to theme and out.

The flying fingers of Christian Sands state the theme of J.J. Johnson's *Interlude* but he is quickly into improvisational mode, admirably driven on by McBride and Owens Jr, who take time to 'trade fours' to great effect before the theme is quickly restated. Sands' own composition *Sand Dune* follows at a more leisurely pace and as the piece progresses the pianist is at first lyrical but soon settles into some more intense improvisation. Other highlights include *Cherokee*, the basis for many fine improvisations and other compositions, and *Good Morning Heartache*, with some fine bowed bass from McBride.

In all, a hugely enjoyable trio set.

GREG MURPHY

KENNY BARRON

AT THE PIANO

Xanadu Records *906076 50:54*

Born in the early 'forties, Kenny Barron's most impressionable years coincided with the consummation of the bebop movement. Indeed, on this recording the influence of Bud Powell is very evident and two titles are by Monk.

Gifted with a prodigious technique, enormous stamina and



Kenny Barron

highly developed harmonic sense, Barron is well qualified to tackle the demanding role of solo recitalist.

Bud-Like is what it says on the label: fast and relentless with an insistent ground bass and long, percussive, single note lines.

Star Crossed Lovers, a beautiful Ellington ballad, is full of rhapsodic flourishes and arpeggiated flights that the composer would have been proud of.

Misterioso: Monk's haunting twelve-bar theme reveals the pianist's deep understanding of the blues. Unlike the preceding tracks, though, the flavour of the theme is not carried through into the improvisations.

Calypto: Barron's composition, has an attractive, deceptively simple theme, his solo is full of invention and dancing rhythms.

Body and Soul: Much of it is rubato, the theme stated in uncomfortable snatched phrases, the improvisation a glittering exhibition of technique but with none of the tenderness the song requires.

Enchanted Flower: Another of Barron's calypsos has a delightful floating quality.

Rhythm-a-ning: Monk's quirky up-tempo number is exciting, with more of Bud than Monk in the improvisations.

On his own *Wazuri Blues* the pianist re-affirms his commitment to the blues, with elements of both Boogie and stride left hand lending a convincing earthiness.

So, mostly good but, for me, he is inclined to let virtuosity obscure the true beauty of his music.

HUGH LEDIGO

CLIFFORD BROWN/MAX ROACH ALL STARS

BEST COAST JAZZ

Fresh Sound Records *FSR-CD 868 77:00*

Brown was known as a hard bopper in the style of Fats Navarro and it is interesting to hear him in the company of players from the West Coast scene.

Here we have the re-issue of two albums from 1954, *Best Coast Jazz* and *Clifford Brown All Stars* which together make for exciting listening. The 'All Stars' alongside Brown and Roach comprise Herb Geller and Joe Maini (alto saxes), Walter Benton (tenor sax), Kenny Drew (piano) and Curtis Counce (bass). The opening track, *Coronado*, a swinging bop blues theme sets the scene for what is to follow. These are essentially 'blowing sessions' with the shortest track clocking in at around 15 minutes but nevertheless managing to maintain the listener's attention

throughout. There is plenty of variety with a mid-tempo version of *You Go to My Head* and a gently buoyant interpretation of *Autumn in New York*. The audio quality is exemplary for the period.

I particularly enjoyed the contrasting styles of Geller and Maini, who has a more biting tone, with both showing the influence of Charlie Parker, and found Benton, a new name to me, to be an attractive player.

This is yet another well produced re-issue from Fresh Sound Records and well worth having available once more.

ALAN MUSSON

CAL TJADER

DEMASIADO CALIENTE

Cheese Cake 8245 79.00

After working as a drummer for Dave Brubeck, Cal Tjader specialised in Latin jazz, being one of the first musicians to mix a form of 'world music' with jazz. All his albums featured this style, with Cal's vibes leading groups which featured such Latin-American percussionists as Mongo Santamaria and Willie Bobo, plus rising jazz stars like pianist Vince Guaraldi and bassist Eugene Wright. This CD is compiled from various sessions between 1954 and 1960 by six different ensembles.

With a title that apparently means 'a bit too hot', this album

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is typical of the Tjader style: pleasant melodic jazz, with Latin percussion adding a rhythmic bite. The style becomes so predictable that the jazz element almost disappears, allowing the music to turn into easy listening. This is particularly true of the percussion solos, which can become rather samey. But there is some interesting flute work from the likes of Paul Horn and José Lozano. And Cal Tjader's vibes always sound good.

TONY AUGARDE

OSCAR PETERSON

EXCLUSIVELY FOR MY FRIENDS

MPS Records 0210325 MSW

8CD Boxed Set
41.32/40.13/40.38/40.56/
37.36/37.42/75.47/69.21

Through the 'sixties Peterson took annual trips to Hans George Brunner-Schwer's villa in the Black Forest. This boxed set of eight CDs is the result – mostly in trio format but also several solo performances. Peterson's two classic line-ups are represented: Ray Brown with Ed Thigpen and Sam Jones with Bob Durham. On the evidence of these recordings both bass players have a clear intuitive understanding of the maestro's requirements and each has commensurate skills. Little is asked of the drummers than that they swing mightily.

Which brings us to the man himself: a veritable Titan amongst jazz pianists. Over the years he has been accused of eclecticism and self-indulgence. One critic described his playing as 'relentless as a pile driver'.

Listening to eight CDs-worth of Peterson at the very height of his creative ability is, if somewhat mind-boggling, a good opportunity to get to grips with his huge musical personality.

Firstly, he has the most formidable technique of any jazz pianist past or present, combined with both power and finesse. Consequently, he can draw on the whole stylistic range of the jazz oeuvre and turn it to his advantage. He also has a wide

range of dynamics and an exhaustive chordal knowledge, so that his extemporizations become harmonic as well as melodic explorations. Add to this an incomparable sense of swing and a repertoire of superb tunes from the Great American Song Book and you have somewhere around six hours of superlative, definitive piano jazz.

HUGH LEDIGO

THEO TRAVIS DOUBLE TALK

TRANSGRESSION

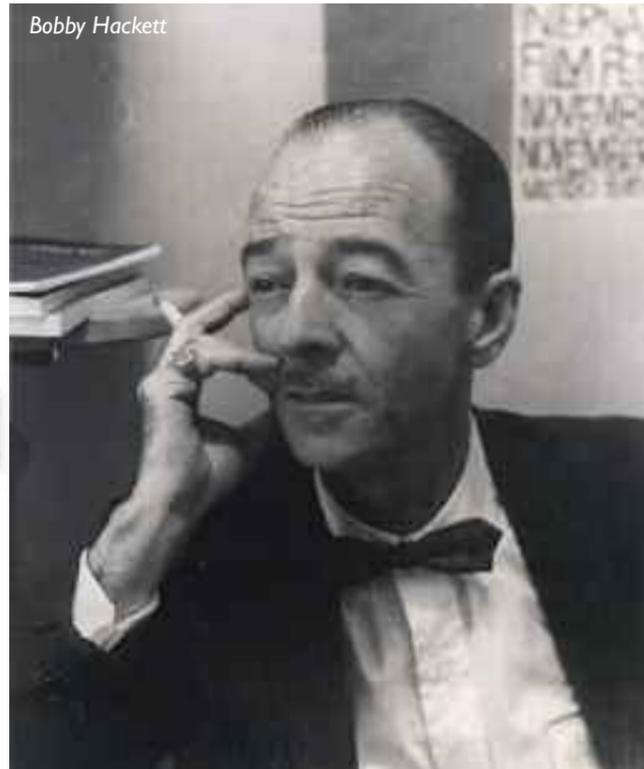
Esoteric/Antenna EANTCD1052
54:50

On his albums as band leader, Travis has played with numerous other jazz musicians. These have included, on his 2007 album *Double Talk*, guitarist Mike Outram and organist Pete Whittaker. Travis did not record another jazz album for eight years, and when he did so in 2015, he named his new band Theo Travis' Double Talk after the 2007 album.

The opening track, *Fire Mountain*, recalls the power of the Mahavishnu Orchestra with Travis' gutsy saxophone work enhancing the 'seventies feel which is enhanced by Mike Outram's fierce guitar outing. The feeling changes completely on *Transgression* with a haunting theme outlined by Travis, supported by Pete Whittaker's swirling organ figures, and *Smokin' at Klooks* ('Klook' was once the nickname of bop drummer Kenny Clarke) with fine soli by guitarist Mike Outram and Travis on flute before the gentle theme is restated. *Song For Samuel* has a haunting theme and some fine improvisations by Travis and Outram while drummer France keeps the rhythm moving in no uncertain terms.

The Mahavishnu influence can be heard again the powerful theme statement of *Everything I Feared* where guitarist Outram has an outstanding solo, but perhaps it's unfair to highlight individual contributions; this is an incredibly integrated band with a high listening value.

GREG MURPHY



Bobby Hackett

BOBBY HACKETT & ZOOT SIMS

COMPLETE RECORDINGS

Solar 4569961 71.21

Here are two LPs on one CD, the first *Strike Up The Band* from 1974 and originally on Bob Thiele's Flying Dutchman label, combining the two principals with guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli and a rhythm section led by pianist Hank Jones, and completed by the over-busy bassist Richard Davis and ace drummer Mel Lewis. Hackett is his usual crisp and clear self, Sims similarly righteous and at ease, their solos and those of Jones unfurling in breezy style, the ten tracks including five credited to producer Thiele which may tell you something about the date. If I'm bothered by the over-amplified bass sound, that's clearly my problem for the playing throughout is pleasing, this exemplified on the neat *Full Circle*. In truth these guys can do no wrong.

From there we regress to 1967 to a Verve album entitled *Creole Cooking* with a virtual big band playing the regular New Orleans repertoire using well-wrought arrangements by Bob Wilber who plays soprano and clarinet on the date. Annotator Stanley Dance notes Hackett's 'aerial

mobility' which is a good way to describe how the cornetist emerges from these crowded, sometimes agitated ensembles. Sims plays hardly at all for it's definitely Hackett's date, although trombonist Bob Brookmeyer does get the occasional look-in. Wilber does well here and there especially on soprano as on *Tin Roof Blues* with Dave McKenna's sinuous piano heard too. While it's fun to see what they do with *The Saints* and such old warhorses as *Fidgety Feet* and *Muskrat Ramble*, it's important to emphasise that these are quite short tracks, with very little development, none of them getting beyond three minutes and all accomplished in business-like fashion. Still, any chance to hear Hackett front and centre should be seized without delay. He was a master craftsman, one of a kind really.

PETER VACHER

ELLA FITZGERALD

RHYTHM IS MY BUSINESS

Essential Jazz Classics
EJC55672 76:38

An interesting Ella collection, in that, in my opinion, it demonstrates where she was at her best on disc. 13 tracks have her in front of a brassy 17-piece

big band, and point up some contrasts. She has a ball and the band romps on *Hallelujah, I Love Him So* and similar, but on the fast *Runnin' Wild* her voice sounds somehow forced, and Phil Woods' alto wailing comes as a respite. When we get to the relaxation of *I Can't Face The Music*, she is securely in her comfort zone and grooving nicely. Then *Laughing On The Outside* is the first of three ballads on which her delivery seems more expressive with a band than I've found it with strings.

I always enjoyed Ella most of all in live performance, and a live recording is the next best thing. Ten tracks are included from her appearance at the Newport Jazz Festival in 1957, that capture the whole happy ambiance of the event. Her initial ballad, *I Got It Bad*, proves that a trio - here Don Abney, Wendell Marshall and Jo Jones - was her ideal zone, phrasingwise, in this vein.

After a string of good old regulars, among which I am amused to note she sings about 'kisses at the bottom', she comes to a three-song climax. On *April In Paris* she stays with the lyrics a couple of times before scatting the Basie version, complete with 'just one more time' at the end. Then one of her all-scat masterpieces, *Air Mail Special*, embracing familiar riffs, exchanges with the drums, lots of funny quotes, her bass-humming and the final vocal swoop. Top of the show is *I Can't Give You* etc. with its spot-on impressions of Rose Murphy and Louis Armstrong. Here you have Ella at the peak of her jazz excellence.

LES TOMKINS

ERNESTINE ANDERSON

FOUR CLASSIC ALBUMS

Avid AMSC 1170 2 CDs 138.18

This is one of Avid's digitally remastered collections of four LPs on two CDs. Ernestine Anderson is now in her eighties but these albums were recorded in the late 1950s. *Hot Cargo* was taped in Sweden in 1956, where Ernestine was backed by a Swedish big band. *The Toast of the*



Clark Terry and Bob Brookmeyer

Nation's Critics from 1958 used songs by well-known writers like Hoagy Carmichael, Mel Tormé and the Gershwins. 1960's *My Kinda Swing* had arrangements by Ernie Wilkins who conducted an eleven-piece group in some swinging arrangements. The small group here, containing the likes of Clark Terry and Kenny Burrell, is superior to the big bands which accompanied Anderson on the other albums. The same year's *Moanin'*, *Moanin'*, *Moanin'* used a Basieish big band arranged and conducted by Hal Mooney.

One thing has hindered me in reviewing this album. *Jazz Rag* is a jazz magazine, so how can I usefully review the work of someone who, on the basis of this collection, hardly convinces me of her credentials as a jazz singer? To be sure, Ernestine sings in tune and with good projection, albeit sometimes rather shrilly, but she is more like a cabaret singer than a jazz performer. She hardly improvises at all, nor does she use jazz phrasing: two qualities I could expect in a jazz vocalist. To be frank, I found most of these 46 tracks faultless but boring.

TONY AUGARDE

CLARK TERRY BOB BROOKMEYER QUINTET

COMPLETE STUDIO RECORDINGS

Phono 870232 2 CDs
68.32 / 63.09

Terry and Brookmeyer are natural partners because they both bring a familiarity with, and a respect of, the backstory of jazz. They are both comfortable in any milieu and are beyond category. This is ageless music played with humour, wit and intense musicality; jazz without the labels. The repertoire is mainly originals by both musicians with a sprinkling of Monk, Parker, Basie, Ellington and a few standards thrown in.

The supple rhythm section on the first set has Bill Crow on bass and Dave Bailey on drums, colleagues of Brookmeyer's in his Gerry Mulligan days. A wise choice on piano was the brilliant and resourceful Roger Kellaway. The gorgeous sound of flugelhorn--Terry's preference on this occasion-- and Brookmeyer's valve trombone makes a mellifluous and seductive combination and the interplay between the two horns is astonishing. All the 15 tracks are

hugely enjoyable but perhaps Brookmeyer's ingenious arrangement of *Gal in Calico* defines the mood succinctly with its rolling, ever inventive drive. Especially worth mentioning is the superb work of Kellaway epitomised in his stride piano treatment of Terry's *Tete a Tete*

On CD 2, the piano spot is taken over by the matchless Hank Jones--so no fall in standards, there-- and Bob Cranshaw replaces Bill Crow. The material, again, features, mainly, Terry and Brookmeyer compositions and some fairly obscure, but worthwhile, tunes such as Jimmy Heath's *Gingerbread Boy*. Terry airs his singular vocal talents on *I Want A Little Girl*, there is a version of *Bye, Bye Blackbird* which offers an alternative choice to the Miles Davis version, and the ebullient *Green Stamps* where both musicians indulge in a no holds barred battle of skills and humour.

There is an overall spirit of good natured enjoyment throughout both these sets and the sleeve notes suggest that listeners will 'be caught in an undertow of pleasure'.

I couldn't put it any better.

JOHN MARTIN

FRANCES FAYE

FOUR CLASSIC ALBUMS

Avid AMSC 1177 2 CDs,
74:07/68:53

It's saddening in a sense to listen back to a talented artist whose public impact, although she lived much longer, was restricted to a limited period in the past. In the case of Frances Faye, who certainly had a unique approach for that era, her album-making success covered about nine years.

The main interest in this package is her 1953 breakthrough, *No Reservations*. Her strident, raunchy style sounds potent here, with a Dave Cavanaugh band featuring Jack Costanzo on bongoes. The dozen gems take in a hot *Summertime*, a dramatic *Miss Otis*, a classic *Sister Kate* and her own appealing ballad, *You're Heavenly*. *And Night And Day* has never had such a distinctive treatment. Plus she does two whole choruses every time.

Everything else is of like calibre. Highlights of a set of folk songs from 1957 are an entertainingly extended *Frankie & Johnny* and a really romping *Skip To My Lou* in which Don Fagerquist's trumpet blossoms out of the ten-piece. In 1956 and 1961, surrounded by further gatherings of West Coast jazzmen, Ms Faye recorded two more batches of good songs that were not as standard then as they are now. For devotees of dynamic jazz vocalising, this is warmly recommended.

LES TOMKINS

TEDDY EDWARDS

FEELIN'S

Xanadu Master Editions
906077 40.18

The decision by Elemental Music to re-release a series of Don Schlitten productions under the Xanadu ME heading has gained plenty of publicity recently. Beautifully presented in a high-quality jewel case with extra notes and session data this reissued session recalls a time when the established Los Angeles bopper Edwards had been without a 'name' album for some

seven years. Remembering past associations, Schlitten hired him for Muse and saw to it that the tenorist was given a classy line-up with which to work, this including the prominent trumpeter Conte Candoli, with pianist Dolo Coker, bassist Ray Brown and drummer Frank Butler in support.

Bear Tracks has the bluesy feel of a Blue Note number; the rotating riff secured by a single low note, Edwards sounding forced, trying too hard to be different, before he rips off a fast-moving run over the rather stodgy beat. Coker has some nice moments. The pretty bossa *April Love* is better with Candoli showing some prowess although the constant pattering of percussionist Jerry Steinholz is a turn-off for me and inimical to swing. Brown's rather oddly titled *Ritta Ditta Blues* has assertive Candoli in pure bebop mode, Edwards entering in stealthy style and building strongly. The final track *The Blue Sombrero* has a Latin feel and may be the best thing on the session. As Teddy's former UK manager Ernie Garside once said of another Edwards recording, 'it's one rehearsal away from being a good album' and this one feels about the same with its lack of cohesion and a poor level of swing.

PETER VACHER

THELONIOUS MONK

THE COMPLETE 1947-56 TRIOS

Essential Jazz Classics
EJC55677 2 CDs, 77.18/75.32

For once, a 'complete' set that lives up to the title; here we have all of the Thelonious Monk (1917-1983) trio sides recorded for Blue Note, Prestige and Riverside including alternative takes where available. It's a set that not only highlights Monk's compositional abilities but his pianistic technique; a highly individual stylist, his unorthodox approach to the piano, combines a highly percussive attack with abrupt, dramatic use of tempo changes and a strong rhythmic foundation.

This set illustrates Monk's individuality as a composer, with such advanced compositions as

Teddy Edwards



Round Midnight, *Well, You Needn't*, and *Misterioso* to name just three; all classics of the genre displaying innovative use of dissonance and unexpected, angular melodicism. But above all, the music has a sense of 'walking on eggshells' which prompts the listener to expect the unexpected, so to speak. For example, consider the original Prestige recording of *Bemsha Swing*, where Monk navigates the opening theme with ice-skating grace.

Then there's the complex *These Foolish Things* and the hugely enjoyable *Trinkle, Tinkle* but Monk's pianistic ability is really showcased on the Duke Ellington sides. Monk professed ignorance of these works and requested copies of the sheet music, but returned with these individual interpretations.

This fine set presents a truly enjoyable listening experience.

GREG MURPHY

COUNT BASIE & HIS ORCHESTRA

KURHAUS CONCERT 1954

Doctor Jazz DJ015 76:51

Adherents of the soloist-led drive of the Count Basie band's output are likely to have a few samples on their shelves. So these 'newly-discovered' recordings of a concert in Holland by the reassembled 'fifties line-up are possibly for completists only. But aside from a balance fault that makes some trumpet section passages a bit distant, the overall presence is good.

Among the 18 tracks are various special features. In relaxed mood, Marshal Royal's alto and Henry

Coker's trombone emote freely. The uppish *Rockabye Basie* has muscular baritone from Charlie Fowlkes. *Perdido* allows Frank Wess to show his prowess on both tenor and flute. There's the inevitable partnership of Wess and Foster on *Two Franks*. Temporary band member, trumpeter Joe Wilder gets a couple of powerful spots. As for the Count himself, his sparkling spates on *Nails* and *Basie Boogie* earn loud applause.

At the end of the CD, it's regrettable to me that *One O'Clock Jump* lasts only 1:40. It's a treat to hear swing bands riffing away at length on such flagwaving vehicles.

LEST TOMKINS

NEW ORLEANS HELSINKI CONNECTION

PARADISE ON EARTH

Spirit of New Orleans SONOP
0714: 75.47

LEROY JONES

SWEETER THAN A SUMMER BREEZE

LJCD 0780 44.26

Jones and his trombone-playing wife, the Finnish-born Katja Toivola, were among us recently and it's thanks to them that these albums have come our way. Unsurprisingly it's Jones who impresses, vocally and instrumentally, his characteristic clipped trumpet delivery, thinnish sound and almost boppish turn of phrase contrasting strongly in the NOHC band album with Toivola's

more workmanlike trombone work. As on their recent visit, theirs is a two-person front-line, the co-partners combining capably on what is mostly familiar Crescent City material, the exception Leroy's engaging samba *Caipirinha da Lapa*, their accompanists here including pianist Paul Longstreth, a sophisticated player who prefers to go his own way as do guitarist Todd Duke and bassist Mitchell Player. It's obvious that these musicians are clearly capable of moving well away from the restrictions operating in present-day New Orleans where repertoire and audience expectations can impose their own limitations. This also results in rhythm sections often playing in two, as on *Fidgety Feet* here, with the consequent loss of swing. Somehow one longs to hear all these players, Jones included, let loose on some decent tunes with a swinging pulse and no holds barred.

The lusty sounding vocalist Tricia Boutte is heard on several tracks and gives her all on *Stardust* with Longstreth finding some harmonic variations well away from the familiar, these picked up ably in Jones's solo. Gospel-influenced vocalist Yolanda Winsay does much the same on *My Funny Valentine*, this garlanded by Jones's sensitive flugelhorn. So, a set full of contrasts, familiar fare mixed with soulful creativity, much like New Orleans itself.

Jones continues with flugelhorn on his *Sweeter* album, retaining his rhythm section and adding a string overlay, the arrangements cleverly crafted by him. These days any trumpeter worth his salt feels the call to record with strings and Jones is no exception, annotator Terence Blanchard citing Clifford Brown as an exemplar. The results are engaging, the warmth of the Jones flugel sound and the quality of his ideas speaking for themselves. Naturally, Benny Golson's *I Remember Clifford* is given pride of place but each of these standards plus Jones's title composition reward attention. Final credits go to Katja who master-minded the graphics on both albums and acted as co-producer on the group session.

PETER VACHER

JENNY GREEN

CAUGHT A TOUCH OF YOUR LOVE

JG001 33:27

Here is a lady singer who struts her stuff regularly in the London/Surrey area. Her light, listenable sound is applied to some ear-worthy songs, with first-rate British players in varied support.

She opens with an easy-grooved, sextet-backed rendition of Oscar

Brown Jr's *Humdrum Blues*. Then *Taking A Chance On Love* has a neat score and nice trumpet from Bryan Corbett. Jenny's phrasing impresses on *You Turned The Tables On Me* with just the trio of Sean Hargreaves, Neville Malcolm and Winston Clifford. The title song, new to me, is lively and bluesy, enhanced by Ed Jones's tenor. He is also heard on her first ballad, *The More I See You*, interpreted meaningfully. The warmth of Let's Get Lost finds the trio particularly propulsive.

As an admirer of Duncan Lamont's fine songs, it's good to

hear his tenor filling out the sadness of her expressive reading of his *I Told You So*. Her spirited version of *Always Something There To Remind Me* illustrates that the Bacharach repertoire can lend itself to swinging. Finally, I'm interested to find a Rodgers & Hart song I'm not familiar with. On *This Funny World*, accompanied solely by the Hargreaves piano, Jenny brings her CD to a memorable close.

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TUBBY HAYES REMEMBERED

What would have been TUBBY HAYES' 80th birthday year the great tenor saxophonist has been commemorated in a flood of publications. Following Simon Spillett's acclaimed biography *The Long Shadow of the Little Giant* comes the long-awaited film, *A Man in a Hurry*, here reviewed by guest reviewer, distinguished jazz writer and fellow-tenor saxist DAVE GELLY. Also the work of Simon Spillett (with C. Tom Davis) is a recently released Tubby Hayes discography, the subject of RON SIMPSON's review.

TUBBY HAYES: A MAN IN A HURRY

A FILM BY MARK BAXTER AND LEE COGSWELL

Mono Media Films MMDVD 01

It wasn't all that long ago, but somehow the 1950s feel more distant and unreachable than the real, whiskery, historical past. It's not the music. That's a known quantity, the style and the sound of it, and you can enjoy it or not, depending on your taste. And the music is the people playing it. So when you see a photograph of one of them, or even a moving image, as in this film, it's familiar enough to seem almost contemporary. But step back a bit and look around and you really will find yourself in that past which LP Hartley famously called a foreign country, where they do things differently.

On the face of it, the film is a straightforward account of the life and career of Edward Brian Hayes, jazz musician and musical prodigy, from his birth in 1935 to his death on the operating table

38 years later. In this, in the space of slightly less than an hour, it is flawlessly efficient. The commentary, music, stills and moving images, combine seamlessly into a compelling narrative. The film clips of Tubby in full flight are particularly impressive. Even when playing at breakneck speed, his fingers seem hardly to move. And saxophonists will be fascinated by a few close-up shots of his embouchure, surrounded by an impressive array of facial muscle.

From this point of view the film makes a perfect companion piece to Simon Spillett's complete and knowledgeable biography, *The Long Shadow Of The Little Giant*. Indeed, the author himself carries the main burden of filling in detail at key points in the story.

But the film-makers have also succeeded in conveying the otherness of the world in which the events took place, and that's what sets it apart from most jazz-biographical films I have seen. In the first place, this is also a story of jazz in Britain and its role in youth culture and fashion. Tubby himself, as someone remarks, was

the wrong shape to be a fashion icon in the visual sense (although he had the right haircut, suit, shape of shirt collar, etc.) but the almost contemptuous ease with which he exercised his superhuman technique made him a king among the exclusive sub-culture of 'modernists'. There's quite a lot about style and attitude here - the dandyish, watchful, prickly modernists and their contempt for virtually everyone else, especially baggy-sweatered student types.

It was this fairly small coterie and its broader fringe of adherents which formed the hard core of Tubby's audience. When the Beatles came along and marginalised them, it had a profound effect on his career. For the first time he had to think about who he was playing for. The film illustrates this very effectively, with clips of him performing the *Pink Panther* theme with Henry Mancini, his appearance, along with Roy Castle, in the movie *Dr Terror's House of Horrors*, his album of mid-60s pop songs, and so on. Instead of setting the fashion he was reduced to following it. He looks uncomfortable, too, with straggly hair, sideburns and no tie. And he becomes increasingly gaunt and ill-looking as time passes.

Had he lived, he would probably have weathered it successfully, as contemporaries such as Bobby Wellins have, but it wouldn't have been the same afterwards.

There's a lot more in these 55 minutes, and do see it if you get the chance. I have just one complaint: why didn't somebody tell them how to pronounce Jimmy Deuchar's name?

DAVE GELLY

© Dave Gelly, 2015

100% PROOF: THE COMPLETE TUBBY HAYES DISCOGRAPHY

COMPILED BY SIMON SPILLET AND C. TOM DAVIS

Names & Numbers Discographical Publications, Almere, Netherlands (www.names-and-numbers.nl); ring-bound paperback; 978 90 77260 23 4; EUR 27.50 + 6.75 postage

The two main requirements of a discography are to be comprehensive and to be clearly laid out. Without being thoroughly versed in Tubby Hayes' output it's impossible to judge the former fully, but, with 160 pages in the main discography including obscure unissued live sessions and broadcasts and sessions accompanying a wide variety of singers all tracked down, *100% Proof* seems to score on that count. Certainly the different issues in various formats are meticulously recorded. As for clarity, the lay-out is simple and easy to follow, with interesting, informative and sometimes quirky notes separated from the main information.

With a career as dynamic as Tubby Hayes', you would hope that the discography would open a window on to his musical life - and it does so in fascinating detail. The first surprise comes with the 16-year-old Hayes' initial visit to a recording studio, accompanying singer Les Tomkins - these *Jazz Rag* reviewers get everywhere! Following sessions with such big names as Ambrose, Kenny Baker and Jack Parnell, Tubby took his own group into Decca Studios at the age of 20, featuring two trumpeters who worked with him frequently,

Jimmy Deuchar and Dickie Hawdon, and a pianist, Harry South, whose big band Tubby later played in.

For much of the ensuing period studio, live and broadcast recordings of Tubby Hayes' small group and big band (and for one spell, of course, the Jazz Couriers) alternate with appearances with all-star big bands and American giants such as Paul Gonsalves and Sonny Rollins, accompaniments to popular singers (Peter and Gordon, Matt Monro, Susan Maughan, Ringo Starr, plus frequent sessions with popular jazz singer Georgie Fame) and the occasional frankly bizarre session. How about the Little John Anthony Band from 1960? Tubby's tenor was described as 'tongue-in-cheek' on an album of Tony Crombie songs the composer didn't want to admit to - with titles like *Teen Beat Special* it's obvious why! Or Tubby's final recording, a broadcast duet with Bruce Forsyth's piano?

More seriously, a picture emerges of a time when jazz was much higher up in the list of cultural

priorities in the UK. Certainly a fair number of Tubby's broadcasts were in the service of pop or 'general entertainment', but just look at all those radio *Jazz Clubs* and television *Jazz 625s*.

Aside from the main discography, *100% Proof* adds a list of incorrect attributions (very short) and of films and television programmes, including feature films such as *All Night Long* (cross-referenced to the recordings in the main discography), incidental music for plays, a brief appearance on the early evening show, *Tonight*, in 1961 and, most remarkable, a full 13-week television series of *Tubby Plays Hayes*.

100% Proof is a first-class example of the discographer's art in all its meticulous detail, the indexes that round off the book typically thorough and accurate, but at the same time the open-minded browser will find an oblique, but often vivid, insight into the life of a top jazz musician half a century ago. And where is that unissued 1964 performance with the Ellington band?

RON SIMPSON

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RON SIMPSON'S ROUND-UP OF RECENT CDS



Bucky Pizzarelli

I guess the title of **RENAISSANCE** (Arbors ARCD 19448: 60.18) by **Bucky Pizzarelli** has a double meaning. According to the notes the 89-year-old guitarist is undergoing a recent renaissance (and I believe this is his first album for some years) but also the classical and jazz mix suggests a renaissance man. The key to the whole album, in fact, is melody. Castelnuovo-Tedesco's *Guitar Concerto No. 1* is full of appealing tunes and light textures and then Pizzarelli duets with fellow-guitarist Ed Laub on a largely ballad-based programme, often in the form of two-song medleys. Highlights of a likeable album include the Malneck/Kahn medley of *I'm Thru with Love* and *I'll Never be the Same* and the ageless Pizzarelli signs off with Gordon Jenkins' haunting *Goodbye*. Percussionist **Thomas Stronen** takes a less melodic approach to crossover. **TIME IS A BLIND GUIDE** (ECM 2467: 53.20) suffers from a typically uninformative booklet – probably ECM's policy aims to make listeners approach the music with open minds, but I rather like knowing what's going on – but research reveals that Stronen was commissioned to produce this suite for a specially selected combination of instruments. A basic jazz piano trio is joined by classical violin and cello and two extra percussionists. Titles such as *Everything Disappears*, *Lost Souls* and *The Drowned City* suggest the mystical mood of the proceedings, and much of the interplay with piano, strings and percussion is moodily attractive, with the main jazz interest coming from the excellent piano of Kit Downes. There's something of a classical influence,

too, in **WITH STRINGS** (Curling Legs CLP CD 139: 37.39) by Norwegian singer/songwriter **Live Foyn Friis**. The strings in question take the form of a string quartet in support of Friis' backing trio. Friis' edgy urgent vocal style and elusive compositions, poised between pop and jazz, are, I suspect, an acquired taste and on second hearing I was some way towards acquiring it. With imaginative string arrangements by Kasper Bai and Friis and accomplished guitar solos by Alex Jonsson, there is much to admire in this live set from Aarhus, Denmark. Live Foyn Friis also shows up on **GYPSET** (Hot Club Records HCR 438: 34.30) by Norwegian quartet **Touche** – another extremely short album from Scandinavia. Friis' version of *Autumn in New York* is fragile and soulful, clearly indebted to Billie Holiday. Most of the other tracks are originals, five of them by the fine guitarist Johan Tobias Bergstrom. Touche seems to be billed mostly as a Django-influenced group, but the opening *Marché Arabe* is strikingly Middle Eastern, guest clarinetist Georg Reiss switches to the Hungarian wind instrument taragato at one point and hints of bebop and rhythm and blues surface elsewhere. Touche is a very youthful group – and it shows, not always to advantage, but there is no shortage of originality or talent. At the other end of the experience scale **Brian Miller** has had a professional career of over 50 years, including work as diverse as 15 years as Marian Montgomery's MD, 21 years in the orchestra for *Cats* and time spent in jazz/rock and fusion bands! At the end of 2013 he

made his first recording under his own name: **WHATEVER NEXT?** (Inversion Records INV 001 CD: 69.33), consisting of nine of his own compositions. The result is as eclectic as you might expect, highly professional throughout, though maybe he tries to cover too many bases. Miller starts off on organ with a dynamic Blue Note-ish blues with powerful solos from himself, Phil Todd on tenor sax and John Paricelli on guitar. The extended, wanderingly atmospheric *Whatever Next* features Frank Ricotti on a collection of assorted percussion and much of the pleasure of the later tracks comes from Ricotti's work on vibes. Despite an equally varied career (notably working with the Mahavishnu Orchestra and Wayne Shorter) **Mitchel Forman** has produced a much more coherent album with the Los Angeles-produced **PUZZLE** (BFM Jazz 3020624312: 67.52), essentially a poised and melodic set by a piano trio, though he takes the odd diversion into other keyboard instruments,

including effective use of the melodica on a funky *Passing Smile*, the first of six originals. His treatment of other people's compositions can be equally original, especially the opening medley when the ominous pulse of Keith Jarrett's *Death and the Flower* elides into up-tempo variations on *What is this Thing Called Love?* Throughout drummer Steve Hass and bassist Kevin Axt are a splendidly creative and sympathetic complement to the pianist. More trio jazz comes from **Sam Coombes**, the British saxist better known in France where he has been based for some years. **PACE OF CHANGE** (POL-e-MATH Recordings SCPR 01: 59.40) does what it says on the tin (or, rather, in the liner notes): 'this album is about rhythms.' Indeed the album is much more interesting rhythmically than harmonically or melodically. Coombes' edgy dry-toned alto sax demands attention and he is accompanied by a talented and ever-attentive bass (Yoni Zelnik) and drums (Julien Charlet), but



Lurlean Hunter

it's all a bit mathematical. All tracks are Coombes' compositions and titles such as *Altered asymmetries* and *Go re-configure* are a bit of a give-away.

Lurlean Hunter is one of those fascinating figures in jazz who seem to have gone from commanding everyone's attention to disappearing without trace: she is mysterious enough to get very different biographies on Wikipedia (in German) and Allmusic, with Wikipedia making her nine years older than the sleeve notes from her albums. **FOUR CLASSIC ALBUMS** (Avid AMSC 1171: 2 CSs, 74.41/76.00) dates from the period 1955 (*Lonesome Gal*) to 1960 (*Blue and Sentimental*). Apparently she made one more pop-oriented album before obscurity beckoned, but in the late 1950s she was highly enough rated to be served by arrangers such as Manny Albam, Quincy Jones and Al Cohn and musicians of the stamp of Joe Newman, Urbie Green and her regular rhythm team of Barry Galbraith, Milt Hinton and Osie Johnson. How good was she? Good, with a rich mature voice, intelligent and tasteful phrasing and precise intonation, but without the great jazz singer's ability to get to the heart of a song. She is at her best on her last jazz-styled album, *Blue and Sentimental*, with Jimmy Giuffre's arrangements, Sweets Edison's inimitable muted trumpet and fine clarinet from Rudy Rutherford, but all the albums have their moments. Ira Gitler, in his notes for *Blue and Sentimental*, comments that she is 'a superior pop singer with jazz inclinations' – a good summary. The wonderful **Dinah Washington's COMPLETE RECORDINGS WITH DON COSTA** (Essential Jazz Classics EJC 55670: 2 CDs, 76.28/76.45) begins with *I'll Be Around*, the intense emotion, controlled power and unique vocal timbre dominating the string-based accompaniment which sounds at first sympathetically supportive. As the two 1962 albums (*In Love and Drinking Again*) continue and some of the songs are not so good, Costa's arrangements can be fussy, over-dramatic and sometimes plagued with wailing choirs. Washington herself is on top form, committed and uncompromising, despite her own reported dissatisfaction with

the arrangements. The double CD set is completed by tracks directed by Fred Norman and a fascinating 21-minute medley of ballads with flute (Frank Wess) and piano (Jack Wilson), trying out material, not a full performance. In contrast it's good to find **Sarah Vaughan** with a trio on **LIVE IN TOKYO** (Domino 891236: 2 CDs, 57.38/60.52) from 1973. Sarah's virtuosity is beyond dispute, but often her vocal style seems to some of us just too mannered, too elaborate. There is little sign of that here. In superb shape vocally, but also sounding very relaxed, she even reverts to her piano-playing early days on *The Nearness of You*, taking over from Carl Schroeder. Quality standards predominate, often complete with their verses, sometimes skipped through nonchalantly in less than two minutes, sometimes taken apart and reassembled at expansive length, including a memorable seven-minute *Over the Rainbow*.

It's interesting to come across **Paul Desmond's** recordings away from the Brubeck Quartet: they're always different and sometimes excellent. Sadly his first LP under his own name from 1954 is only the former. **DESMOND: HERE I AM** (Fresh Sound FSR CD 873: 67.12) begins with five short tracks from a piano-less quintet, all originals by tenor saxist Dave Van Kriedt who had a particular liking for fugues, and four more – including a couple of standards – with the irritating presence of the Bill Bates Singers. Desmond himself is, as always, pleasingly idiosyncratic and the presence of Barney Kessel on three of the choral tracks is a real boost, but otherwise it's a matter of waiting for the second album, much better, from 1956, a quartet, also piano-less, with Don Elliott's coolly inventive mellophone a fine complement to Desmond's alto and more extended treatments of some good tunes. Fresh Sound's tendency to find obscure albums/musicians is triumphantly vindicated on **3 SWINGING GUITAR SESSIONS** (FSR CD 869: 71.16), three early-mid 1950s 10 inch LPs by 'outstanding, but underrated jazz guitarists'. For various reasons such as geographical location and career choices these albums pretty

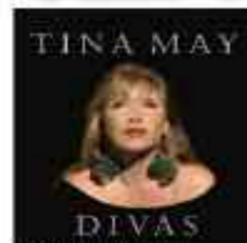
much stand alone for **Lou Mecca** and **Bill de Arango** and both are impressive and enjoyable sessions full of accomplished versions of standards. Mecca's fleet finger work operates in tandem with vibes player Jack Hitchcock and de Arango is very much the main voice in consistently short, but rather weightier and more imaginative, treatments of numbers such as *The Nearness of You*. **Chuck Wayne's** album is rather different. Better known than the others for his work with Woody Herman and George Shearing and with a major tenor saxist for company (Brew Moore on some tracks, Zoot Sims on others), he offers meaty bebop on (mostly) his own compositions. **Teddy Charles** can hardly be said to have languished in obscurity, but he, too, is much less well remembered than he deserves, possibly because in middle age he seems to have been keener on skipping a sailboat on Long Island Sound than on playing vibes. **FOUR CLASSIC ALBUMS** (Avid AMSC 1174: 2 CDs, 74.34/73.43) is remarkable for the sheer variety of his work in the 1950s. *Evolution* is essentially West Coast cool in style, though six tracks were recorded in Hackensack, New Jersey, and *Coolin'* teams him with Mal Waldron and the much underestimated Idrees Sulieman in a sharp sextet on a set of originals by the band members. Most striking, though, are *The Teddy Charles Tentet*, ambitious forward-looking arrangements, many of them originals, with a confident excursion into George Russell's Lydian mode, and *Flyin' Home, Salute to Hamp*. This captures the spirit of numbers such as *Air Mail Special* and *Flyin'*

Home, with a sextet including Art Farmer, Bob Brookmeyer and Zoot Sims, while Charles is fluency itself on his solo-with-rhythm features. On more familiar ground, CDs of **Chet Baker's** European years are thick on the ground. **ESTATE** (Domino 891237: 53.39) is a rather appealing one, Chet at his most lyrical – though *Cherokee* is suitably dynamic – in a trio setting with Philip Catherine on guitar and Jean-Louis Rassinfosse on bass, recorded in Brussels in 1983. Baker and Catherine prove perfectly compatible in an interesting set of songs, mostly tinged with melancholy. For a bonus a live recording of *My Funny Valentine* from Bologna highlights Chet's trademark vocal style. My only query is Domino's branding the release as a 'limited edition collector's item' when it first appeared in this form (same bonus track) on Gambit in 2008. Much more of a collector's item is Fresh Sound's issue of the **CARMELL JONES QUARTET** (FSR CD 867: 66.20), a previously unreleased session recorded in pianist Forrest Westbrook's studio in Hollywood in 1960. Jones made a couple of albums shortly afterwards for Pacific Jazz (now on Fresh Sound), but his recorded output as a leader was very small, so these six tracks (with four alternative takes) are a welcome addition. Essentially a hard bop player, Jones is also very much part of the main stream of jazz trumpeters, crackling with positivity and purpose and with a persuasive way with a ballad. Westbrook is an inventive improviser, probably more so than his leader, as he proves by taking off on the trumpet-less *Airegin*.

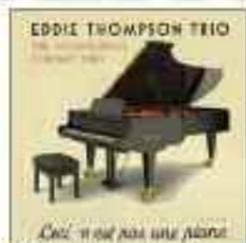


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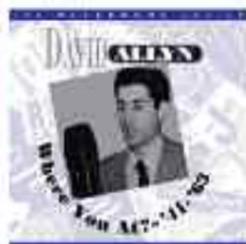
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