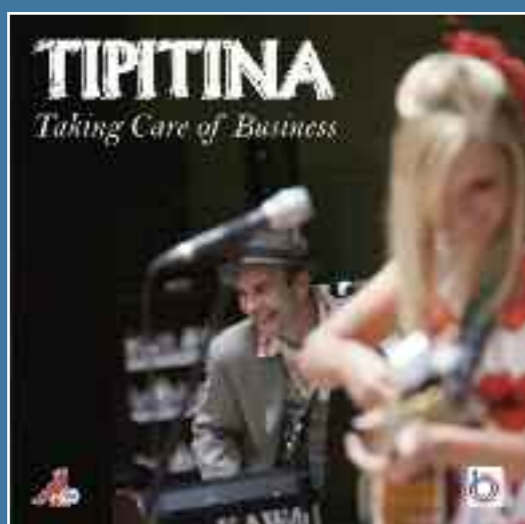


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# THE JAZZ RAG

## JAZZ FESTIVALS

ISSUE 142 SUMMER 2016  
UK £3.25



# NEW RELEASE ON BIG BEAR RECORDS



Liner Notes by Dave Gelly

Billie Holiday's life-story, as it has been told and retold over the years, is a catalogue of woes and tribulations. Reinforced by some of her best-known recordings, such as *Gloomy Sunday*, *Strange Fruit* and *Don't Explain*, it has come to define her image to the world. But the image is misleading. Millions of other people have lived troubled and unhappy lives, yet none of them became Billie Holiday. It's because of her rare gifts that she is loved and revered today, a century after her birth, and celebrated with affection by artists around the world.

This is the second album based on *Lady Sings The Blues*, the concert-show inspired by Billie. Its very title, *Laughing At Life*, should help to dispel some of the accumulated gloom, and the music itself will certainly manage the rest. The sheer variety contained in these songs shows off Billie's expressive range better than any learned article. There are 'swing-sing' numbers from the 1930s, ballads and 'mistreated woman' pieces from the 1940s, and a hint of the wealth of classic American songs which she finally got around to recording in the fifties.

The aim of *Lady Sings The Blues* is not to produce a slavish imitation of Billie or an exact reproduction of any of her records, even if that were possible. It's to revisit her repertoire and in so doing evoke the spirit, and to a certain extent the period, of her work. *That's Life I Guess* is a good example. The routine follows the 1936 version fairly closely, with the vocal delayed until the second chorus and brief solos from Julian

Marc Stringle on clarinet, Digby Fairweather, cornet, and pianist Brian Dee. (The originals were Benny Goodman, Jonah Jones and Teddy Wilson.) Val Wiseman's easy, almost conversational approach fits the tempo to perfection. It's her voice, not Billie's, but the effect is charming and convincing.

Sometimes a song suits a singer so perfectly that we assume it was specially written, only to find out that they only met later, by lucky accident. That's the case with *You've Changed*. There's something about the way the descending phrases of the melody chime with the despair of the lyric that are pure Billie Holiday. She recorded it towards the end of her life, in 1958, for the album *Lady In Satin*. So it comes as something of a shock to discover that it was written by Carl Fischer and Bill Carey in 1942 and first recorded by Dick Haymes, with Harry James's band. But it's Billie's song now and, for me, Val's version of it, with Brian Dee's brilliant piano accompaniment, is the high spot of this album. A wonderful lesson in how to sing one of Billie's songs without overt imitation but with the authentic feeling.

The material that Billie chose to sing, or that was chosen for her, consisted mainly of popular songs of the day. There's a marked difference between those of the 1930s and the '40s. Many of the former have tunes apt for swing treatment and lyrics consisting of the lightest of light verse, sometimes the merest doggerel. The melodies of the latter tend to have denser, more 'advanced' harmonies and depressive or angst-ridden lyrics. Your preference for one or the other is entirely a matter of taste. The difference between them coincides with a change in Billie's whole style of singing and presentation. This is not the place to be going into all that, except for pointing out how deftly Val and band handle the two approaches.

The earlier numbers – *That's Life I Guess*, *Miss Brown To You*, *How Could You?*, *Laughing At Life* – are full of energy, fun and terrific playing. In the case of the title piece the unbuttoned swing of Digby, Roy, Julian and the rhythm section easily surpasses the rather stolid 1940 original. The more sober songs of the 1940s are spiced with great playing, too, notably Julian's clarinet in *Lover Man* and Brian's piano throughout.

I enjoyed this so much, I dug out the previous *Lady Sings The Blues* CD and enjoyed that, too. I looked up its date (1990) and, apart from noticing how little Val's voice had altered in the intervening years, I discovered a strange coincidence. The distance between February 1990 and July 2015 is 25 years and five months. The distance in time between Billie's first studio recording (November 1933) and her last (May 1959) is 25 years and six months. Make of that what you will.

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## FESTIVAL TIME (PAGES 18-19)

MERLIN DALEMAN'S IMAGE OF SAXITUDE AT LAST YEAR'S BIRMINGHAM JAZZ AND BLUES FESTIVAL CAPTURES THE FUN OF THE FESTIVAL SEASON.

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Web: [www.jazzrag.com](http://www.jazzrag.com)

Publisher / editor: Jim Simpson  
News / features: Ron Simpson  
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International editor: Yue Yang  
Commercial Director: Tim Jennings  
Subscriptions & accounts: Nick Hart  
Research: Michael Fort  
Designed by Nerys James  
Printed by Warwick Printing  
[www.warwickprinting.co.uk](http://www.warwickprinting.co.uk)

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## UPFRONT

### HARD TIMES FOR THE INDEPENDENTS

As if the problems of declining CD sales were not enough, small labels across the world have been dealt a severe blow by the financial collapse of the Allegro Media Group of Oregon and the group's reported disregard for the interests of the independents.

In June the *Oregonian* reported, 'Portland-based Allegro Media Group, a distributor for small independent music and video labels, appears to be leaving a swath of unhappy business partners in the wake of its financial problems.' The report goes on to quote FJ Forest of Waveform Records who claims that his company has received no payments for over a year, was kept in the dark while employees of Allegro were being warned of lay-offs and now is faced with Allegro's refusal to return product.

And what have events in far-off Oregon to do with us? Among Allegro's labels is Scotland's Hep Records, now just into a fifth decade of producing high-quality CDs of jazz from the 1930s to the present and in no need of what appears to be cavalier disregard of business ethics by a supposed partner.



## LADY SINGS THE BLUES ON TOUR

The acclaimed Billie Holiday tribute show, *Lady Sings the Blues*, starring Val Wiseman, can be heard at Hever Castle, Kent (July 31), Buxton Opera House (August 28) and Theatr Brycheiniog, Brecon (September 15). Meanwhile the release of the CD of last year's concert at the Birmingham festival, *Laughing at Life*, has been delayed until October. Instead of employing the usual cliché of 'operational difficulties', Big Bear Records confess that the company's excessive work load has caused the delay. This year Big Bear Music has enlarged the Birmingham Jazz and Blues Festival to include Solihull and taken over the planning of a new festival at Sgnall Walled Garden at the end of July in addition to an existing commitment to the Newcastle-under-Lyme Jazz Festival at Spring Bank Holiday. Tel.: 0121 454 7020 [www.bigbearmusic.com](http://www.bigbearmusic.com)

## NEWCASTLE JAZZ CAFÉ

The Jazz Café on Pink Lane, Newcastle upon Tyne is to open a larger performance space. A regular programme will continue to present regional, national and international names. Henrik Jensen's *Followed by Thirteen* appears Sep 27. The David Lyttle Trio will appear on September 30 followed by two concerts in Jazz North East's successful *Women Make Music* series with Sarah Gail Brand working alongside Steve Beresford and John Edwards (October 11), and violinist Olivia Moore's *Unfurl Quartet* (November 18). US altoist Greg Abate renews acquaintance with the Paul Edis Trio (November 11), followed by

Manchester-based Mercury Quartet (25), Tommaso Starace (29) and vocalist/cellist Ayanna Witter-Johnson (Dec 9). [www.jazzcafe-newcastle.co.uk](http://www.jazzcafe-newcastle.co.uk)

## CHET BAKER FILM ON RELEASE IN THE UK

*Born to be Blue*, in which Ethan Hawke gives an acclaimed performance as Chet Baker on his 1960s comeback, goes on release in UK cinemas on July 25. Written and directed by Canadian Robert Budreau and with the music in the hands of fellow-Canadians David Braid and Kevin Turcotte, the film premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in September last year. Pianist Braid takes charge of the jazz element of the film score, with Turcotte providing the sound for Chet/Ethan Hawke's trumpet.

## TRANE'S LEGACY

At the time when a new documentary on John Coltrane is due out later this year, Rhino has assembled six of his mono albums from the Atlantic vaults. Re-mastered for CD and LP boxed set, *The John Coltrane Atlantic Mono Boxed Set* extends from *Giant Steps* in 1960 to *The Coltrane Legacy* in 1970, with a 7" single of *My Favourite Things* added to the vinyl set.

## DJANGO DYNASTY

Django's great-nephew Lulo Reinhardt is touring the UK with a quartet co-led by guitar wizard Andre Krengel from September 20 to October 2. The tour begins in London with further dates in Bury St Edmunds, Settle, Buxton, Dolgellau, Liverpool and Henley-on-Thames before moving on to the Scots leg of the tour on September 28. Meanwhile, a recent headliner at

Le QuecumBar in London was the latest member of the Reinhardt family to follow in the steps of Django, with his love for the style of music his forebear created. Nitcho Reinhardt is a direct descendant of Django and his trio includes his brother Youri.

## END OF YEAR JAZZ AT BIRMINGHAM HALLS

Birmingham's Town Hall and Symphony Hall have an excellent series of concerts at the end of the year. In the Town Hall an exciting programme over two nights features Robert Glasper's *Experiment* (November 20) and Madeleine Peyroux (21). In Symphony Hall Jools Holland's *Rhythm and Blues Orchestra* plays two concerts on December 14 and 15. Earlier the Birmingham Jazz Orchestra is at Symphony Hall on September 21 and *Enemy - Kit Downes, Pette Eldh and James Maddren* - plays the CBSO Centre on October 15. Tel.: 0121 780 3333 [www.thsh.co.uk](http://www.thsh.co.uk)

## SAGE GATESHEAD

Sage Gateshead's autumn jazz schedule begins with Tcha Limberger's *Budapest Gypsy Orchestra* (October 2) before Tim Garland Quartet (21) ends his fiftieth birthday tour in Gateshead. The *Cookers* return on November 14. David Weiss leads a stellar line-up: trumpeter Eddie Henderson, Billy Harper (tenor), Donald Harrison (alto), George Cables (piano), Cecil McBee (double bass) and Billy Hart (drums). Robert Glasper returns, this time with his electric band (November 17) before the indefatigable Chris Barber calls in (December 8) with the Big Chris Barber Band. [www.sagegateshead.com](http://www.sagegateshead.com)

## DARLINGTON NEW ORLEANS JAZZ CLUB

The monthly jazz club at St Augustine's, Darlington presents an additional concert date in October. Kevin Grenfell's *Jazz Giants* appear on October 1 with



John Coltrane

## FESTIVAL TIME WITH KING PLEASURE

King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys have a busy festival schedule this summer. After playing Solihull Arts Complex as part of the Birmingham and Solihull Jazz and Blues Festival (July 20), the band can be heard at the Sgnall Jazz and Blues Festival (22), the Y Not Festival (31), the Randers Festival in Denmark (August 12), the Aber Jazz Festival in Fishguard (26) and the Rotherham Show (September 11). Other upcoming dates for the band include the Queens Hall, Burley-in-Wharfedale (August 20), the Astor Theatre, Deal (September 16) and Circomedia, Bristol (24). Tel.: 0121 454 7020 [www.kingpleasureandthebiscuitboys.com](http://www.kingpleasureandthebiscuitboys.com)

## WATERMILL JAZZ IN NEW HOME

Watermill Jazz now operates every Tuesday at Betchworth Park Golf Club, Reigate Road, Dorking. On July 19 Italian virtuoso guitarist Antonio Forcione teams up with Brazilian percussionist Adriano Adewale, followed by Smitty's Big Four, young musicians re-working classics from the 1920s and 1930s (26). The August programme starts with the Anglo-American group *The Impossible Gentlemen* (2) and follows on with the Alison Rayner Quintet (9), Denys Baptiste with *The Late Trane* (16), Enrico Tomasso/Roy Williams Quintet (23) and Ian Shaw with *The Theory of Love*, his latest CD (30). Tel.: 07415 815784 [www.watermilljazz.co.uk](http://www.watermilljazz.co.uk)

## DARLINGTON NEW ORLEANS JAZZ CLUB

The monthly jazz club at St Augustine's, Darlington presents an additional concert date in October. Kevin Grenfell's *Jazz Giants* appear on October 1 with

Pete Horsfall's *Basin Street Brawlers* an added attraction on October 15. TJ Johnson appears on November 5 and in December (3) the Yorkshire Stompers close the club's 2016 programme.

## VENTURE AWAY JAZZ WEEKENDS

Venture Away has two jazz weekends in Southern seaside resorts in October and November. At Bournemouth's Royal Bath Hotel (Oct. 14-17) compere/vocalist Christine Tyrrell hosts five bands including Baby Jools and the Jazzaholics and John Maddocks Jazzmen. Five bands are also the order of the day at Torquay's Grand Hotel (Nov. 4-7), Baby Jools again, also the Savannah Jazz Band and JB Jazz & Blues Band, among others. Tel.: 01305 750797

## AUTUMN AT THE STABLES

The jazz content in the Autumn programme at the Stables, Wavendon, is impressive, to say the least, beginning on September 15 with the Big Chris Barber Band. October brings popular attractions, the Pasadena Roof Orchestra with *Puttin' on the Ritz* (1) and Stacey Kent (6) before two performances on November 16: the Gabrielle Ducombe Quartet (morning) and nine-

## DOCTOR JAZZ MAGAZINE

More surprises from the remarkable Dutch magazine *Doctor Jazz*. In the Summer issue, DJM 233, along with the comprehensive book and CD coverage and delving into jazz history (Benny Goodman rather more famous than many of the good doctor's subjects) is a jazz-related short story in English by Willard Manus, known to *Jazz Rag* readers for occasional despatches from California. Also, despite giving plenty of room to the older styles of jazz (Gerard Bielderman's column is uncompromisingly called *Europese trad jazz cd's* - no translation needed), *Doctor Jazz* is broad-minded enough to review Chet Baker and John Coltrane.

[www.Doctorjazz.nl](http://www.Doctorjazz.nl)

times Grammy-nominated smooth jazz saxophonist Dave Koz (evening). Two unusual jazz performances follow: trumpeter Andre Canniere with his settings of the poems of Rainer Maria Rilke and Charles Bukowski (18) and the David Patrick Octet's jazz version of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* (23). The month finishes with Martin Taylor's 60th birthday tour (25) and Clare Teal with her Trio (29). November begins with the Remi Harris Project (1), followed by BBC Young Jazz Musician of the Year Alexandra Ridout and her Quintet (6 - morning), *Classic Jazz in Four*

*Hands* with pianists Stephanie Trick and Paulo Alderighi (10) and Alan Barnes' take on *A Christmas Carol* (29). Tel.: 01908 280800 [www.stables.org](http://www.stables.org)

## RONNIE SCOTT'S PROGRAMME

Following a sell-out series of performances by the Average White Band, Ronnie Scott's Club hosts Antonio Sanchez with *Migration* (July 22) and the Nicholas Payton Trio with *Jane Monheit* (23). A stellar Main House programme then includes, among others, Alan Barnes and

Gilad Atzmon with the *Lowest Common Denominator* (27), the Mike Stern/Bill Evans Band (29-30), the Jason Marsalis Quartet (August 4-5) and *Echoes of Ellington* (7). Roy Ayers moves in for a full week (8-13) and among other August attractions is Bireli Lagrene (29-30). Courtney Pine's *House of Legends* kicks off September (1-2), followed by a week of Billy Cobham (5-10). The Harold Mabern Trio (19-20) and the Kyle Eastwood Band (21-24) share a week before Stacey Kent takes over from September 26 to October 1. Tel.: 020 7439 0747 [www.ronniescotts.co.uk](http://www.ronniescotts.co.uk)

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 Kevin Grenfell's Jazz Giants featuring Pete Allen - Sonic Jazz Project  
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APRIL 2016



Emma Fisk

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

Violinist Emma Fisk makes three North East appearances at St Cuthbert's. To avoid confusion...Fisk plays a duo gig with pianist Paul Edis at St Cuthbert's Centre, Crook (October 14), then a Hot Club du Nord session at the same venue (November 11), followed by a duo date with Dr James Birkett, guitar, at another St Cuthbert's - St Cuthbert's Church, Shadworth, Co. Durham - on December 8.

Serious is touring acclaimed pianist Robert Glasper in November with a new version of his Grammy-winning band, the Experiment. Starting at Koko (15) as part of the EFG London Jazz Festival, Glasper plays the Band on the Wall, Manchester (16), Sage Gateshead (17), Hull Jazz Festival (18), Colston Hall, Bristol (19) and Birmingham Town Hall (20). [www.serious.org.uk/robertglasper](http://www.serious.org.uk/robertglasper)

Jeff and Anne Barnhart with John Hallam and Ed Harrison present an evening of Ragtime, Jazz and the American Songbook in aid of Cancer Research UK at Haydock Park Golf Club on Merseyside on August 23. Tel.: 01942 811522 or 07801 844678 [www.johnhallamjazz.co.uk](http://www.johnhallamjazz.co.uk)

The Ken Peplowski, Julian Stringle and Ben Holder Sextet comes together for two dates only in August: Jazz on Tap in Burton (11) and Market Bosworth Jazz Club at the Parish Hall (19). The following Wednesday (24) the Ben Holder Quartet appears at Dunchurch Village Hall. Dunchurch Village Hall is also the venue for another Ben Holder show, *Louis, Louis and Louis* (the music of Armstrong, Prima and Jordan) on July 22, with a quintet including Jamie Brownfield on trumpet. Tel.: 07515 275655 email [steppelli@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:steppelli@yahoo.co.uk)

Eastleigh's Concorde Club's regular Wednesday programme is interrupted by a No Jazz night on July 20. Instead the Bratislava Hot Serenaders with the Serenaders Sisters play the club on July 24, this in place of the regular Sunday night Jazz for Dancing. Normal service is resumed the following week, with Digby Fairweather's Half Dozen (27) and Brian White's French Quarter All Stars (31). Tel.: 023 8061 3989 [www.theconcordeclub.com](http://www.theconcordeclub.com)

London-based Greek tenor saxophonist Vasilis Xenopoulos makes his annual visit to the north east of England to play two engagements with the Paul Edis Trio - the first at Opus 4 Jazz Club at the Traveller's Rest in Darlington (October 21) followed by Blaydon Jazz Club at the Black Bull (23). This year's EFG London Jazz



Ken Peplowski

Festival in November sees the live premiere of Norwegian virtuoso saxophonist Marius Neset's orchestral suite *Snowmelt* with the London Sinfonietta. The suite is due for an August release on ACT Records with Neset's regular quartet and the sinfonietta and was inspired by a 15-minute piece for solo saxophone, chamber orchestra and five singers which the Oslo Sinfonietta commissioned from Neset in 2013.

Mupa is a multi-venue performance space in Budapest known for its acoustic brilliance. Its programme includes classical concerts and opera, avant garde dance and cutting edge contemporary music. In the Autumn schedule, alongside such giants of classical music as Sir Anthony Pappano, Peter Eotvos and the Vienna Philharmonic and Cecilia Bartoli, there is one major

jazz concert, with the Donny McCaslin Quartet on November 4. [www.mupa.hu/en](http://www.mupa.hu/en)

Jazz at the Burnside Hotel and Spa in Bowness-on-Windermere (November 18-20) features Alan Barnes, Mike Daly, John Hallam and the Tom Kincaid Trio. Tel.: 01924 811522 or 07801 844678 [www.johnhallamjazz.co.uk](http://www.johnhallamjazz.co.uk)

Formerly known as Westwood Jazz, the club at Westwood Heath Club and Reading Room in Coventry now operates as Jazz-a-matazz, with a weekly programme of Carl Sinclair (July 24), Baby Jools' Jazzaholics (31), the Ben Holder/Tom Kincaid/Paul Jefferies Trio (August 7), Dave Moorwood's Rascals of Rhythm (14), Apex Jazz & Swing (21) and Martin Bennett's Old Green River Band (28). 02476 403707 [www.jazzamatazz.org.uk](http://www.jazzamatazz.org.uk)



Enrico Tomasso



Roy Forbes

The weekly Tuesday Jazz and Swing at the Wilmslow Conservative Club reaches its 600th show on September 13 when Roy Williams and Amy Roberts appear with the Tom Kincaid Trio. Amy returns on October 25 with Enrico Tomasso

and the Andrzej Baranek Trio. Other gigs in the Autumn programme include Lee Gibson and Alan Barnes with the Kincaid Trio (October 4), followed by Dave Newton and special guest Zoe Kyoti (11). Every third Thursday at Cheadle Hulme

Conservative Club is Rosie's Jazz and Swing, with Roy Forbes (September 15), Brownfield/Byrne Hot Six (October 20) and Greg Abate (November 17). Tel.: 01625 528336

Monthly concerts at Ushaw College near Durham continue throughout the autumn into winter. Gerry Richardson's Big Idea (a Hammond-led nine piece outfit) appears on October 28, the Hot Club-inspired Swing Manouche follows on November 25, with Alan Barnes' *Christmas Carol* show (December 17) likely to attract a capacity audience. [www.ushaw.org](http://www.ushaw.org)

Saltburn Community Hall and Theatre in Cleveland presents a 'first Friday in the month' jazz night of commendable variety. Vocalist Zoë Gilby is booked for October 7, Trio Gitan for November 4 and the Savannah Jazz Band for December 2.

Tipitina's summer programme includes three festivals: the Sugnall Jazz and Blues Festival (July 24), Aber Jazz, Fishguard (August 27) and the Great British Rhythm & Blues Festival, Colne (28). Other August dates include Otterton Mill, Devon (11) and Platform, Morecambe with the One Voice Choir (13). Tel.: 0121 454 7020

**LETTER: KING KONG IN LONDON**

Dear Jazz Rag

I saw *King Kong: An African Jazz Opera* in London in the early 60s. It was a big hit and there was nothing like it in the West End at the time with its vigour and political impact. I still have the original South African production soundtrack LP on Gallotone GALP 1040. It was possibly unplayed for 50 years until I was inspired by Ron Simpson's excellent article in *Jazz Rag* 141 to give it a spin. It still sounds great. My strongest memory is of the Sunday night at the original Marquee club (under the Academy cinema on Oxford Street) when most of the cast turned up and jammed with the Johnny Dankworth orchestra (with Dudley Moore on piano). The highlight was an extensive 'bump & grind' routine by one of the generously proportioned female dancers to the accompaniment of Spike Heatley's bass. I can still picture Spike's beaming smile as he played energetically with the lady's rear end gyrating wildly inches in front of him. Happy days!

Bob Weir

**BIG BEAR ARTISTS ON THE ROAD 2016**

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- Aberjazz Festival, Fishguard
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**SEPTEMBER**

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- 17 Bob Kerr & His Whoopee Band
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- The Rotherham Show
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**OCTOBER**

- 7 King Pleasure & The Biscuit Boys
- 14 Tipitina

- Lynton Town Hall
- Summerseat Garden Centre, Bury

Further information [admin@bigbearmusic.com](mailto:admin@bigbearmusic.com) / phone 0121 454 7020

# LADY DAY AND THE COMMUNISTS

**RON SIMPSON** looks at the human and political background to the song dubbed ‘the song of the century’ by *Time* magazine in 1999: *Strange Fruit*.

I suppose you could say that any African-American in the entertainment industry up to the 1950s (at least) was involved in political action on a daily basis, especially if his/her career took him/her to the Deep South. You think of Duke Ellington’s band travelling like the President in private railcars, simply to be certain of a place to eat and sleep where they would be treated with respect. Or the glorious absurdity of Charlie Parker’s 1950 Southern tour with red-headed Polish-Jewish trumpeter Red Rodney who was billed as ‘blues singer Albino Red’, to avoid the abuse that would have been directed at a mixed race band. Nothing comical, though, about musicians escaping through the back door when race-inspired violence broke out in the hall or having to use the service lift, as Billie Holiday did, on her way to a glamorous appearance in a hotel ballroom. But before the 1950s and the musical statements on Civil Rights from the likes of Charles Mingus and Max Roach it’s not easy to find specific political messages in jazz music or from jazz musicians.

There’s (*What did I do to be so*) *Black and Blue*, of course, but as originally performed on Broadway, Andy Razaf’s lyric was the lament of a woman losing her man to a lighter-skinned rival. It was only Louis Armstrong’s version that by implication deepened the whole thing to a statement on race – that’s the Louis Armstrong who, in the 1950s, broke allcomers’ records for accidental ambiguity by being investigated by the FBI for his views on race at the same time as being widely accused of being an Uncle Tom.

But there was nothing ambiguous about *Strange Fruit*:

Southern trees bear a  
strange fruit,  
Blood on the leaves and blood  
at the root.  
Black bodies swingin’ in the  
Southern breeze,  
Strange fruit hangin’ on the  
poplar trees.

It goes on to record the brutal reality of burning flesh and bulging eyes while nailing perfectly the preposterous chivalry in which elements of the South dressed their racism: ‘Pastoral scene of the gallant South’. But who were the three people responsible for this song making such an impact in 1939 that it was hailed as the *Marseillaise* of the underprivileged Deep South?

Of course there was Billie Holiday, African-American, if not from the Deep South (a Baltimore upbringing as far South as it goes), but the other two were both Jews born within a year of each other in the early years of the 20th century in the New York area, one in the Bronx, one in New Jersey. Both had left-wing principles that brought them up sharply against the political establishment in the course of long and productive lives.

Abel Meeropol was a teacher, poet and political activist, a committed Communist and active supporter of Civil Rights who wrote under the name ‘Lewis Allen’, taken from the names of his two stillborn children. In 1937 he wrote a poem which was published in a teachers’ union magazine. *Bitter Fruit* was inspired by the 1930 lynchings of Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith – surprisingly not in Alabama or Mississippi, but in Marion, Indiana. Later Billie Holiday was to claim that she, together with Meeropol, her accompanist Sonny White and arranger Danny Mendelssohn, wrote the melody – or, at least, William Dufty makes the claim in her name in *Lady Sings the Blues*, but that seems to be a case where her remark, ‘I ain’t never read that book,’ was justified. In fact, Meeropol wrote words and music and a performance at Madison Square Garden by him, with his wife Anne and black singer Laura Duncan, got considerable notice. Accounts differ as to whether Barney Josephson, proprietor of Cafe Society, heard it or whether

Robert Gordon, director of Billie’s performance at the club, did so and reported back.

Barney Josephson was yet another of those first generation Americans from Eastern Europe who contributed enormously to the country’s culture during the 20th century. His parents moved to the States from Latvia two years before his birth and, after succeeding in assorted occupations, in 1938 he was ready to fulfil his dream of founding a unique night club in New York. Cafe Society was a blow against the segregation that prevailed even in the North at the time. 80 or 90 years on we tend to think of the Cotton Club, for instance, as some kind of a paradise, with Ellington’s or Calloway’s band on the stand and Fredi Washington dancing to Artie Whetsel’s trumpet on *Black and Tan Fantasy*, but the reality was fine if you were a rich white socialite slumming it on Lenox Avenue, but not for the Harlemites who were refused admittance.

Cafe Society in Greenwich Village was the first fully integrated night-spot in the city and right from the start one of its star performers was Billie Holiday. Singing a song such as *Strange Fruit* in a New York night club was a brave, overtly political act and Josephson made certain it was presented in a unique way, almost ring-fencing it from the typical club atmosphere. It was the last song in Billie’s act, lights were dimmed, no table service was allowed immediately beforehand, encores were banned.

So there we have this remarkable song creating a sensation in a Greenwich Village club, but how are the people of America to get to hear it? John Hammond was Josephson’s musical adviser, a man who despite his patrician Ivy League manners did more than his share for racial integration in jazz (Benny Goodman small groups, for instance), but as Holliday’s record producer *Strange Fruit* was too much for him. It was too much for

Columbia and CBS radio, too. Into the breach stepped yet another Jewish New Yorker, Milt Gabler, founder of one of the great independent labels, Commodore Records. Milt took the risk, as he so often did, and got himself a million-seller, the best-selling of all Billie’s recordings.

Milt Gabler had much in common with Meeropol and Josephson. A few years younger than they were and even longer-lived (1911-2001), he was born in Harlem to Austrian and Russian immigrants. That was before Harlem became almost an exclusively black area, but his place of birth can be seen as prophetic in view of his later career!

The differences between Gabler and the others were that he spent a lifetime within the record business, for much of the time in the main stream, and he was associated with two controversial records, not just one, though Bill Haley’s *Rock Around the Clock* rather lacked the emotional impact of *Strange Fruit*! Gabler’s father owned the Commodore Radio Company on New York’s East Side and in the mid-1930s young Gabler took it over, changed the name to Commodore Music Shop, began reissuing earlier recordings by Venuti-Lang, Bix and Tram and Bessie Smith and also started up jam sessions at Jimmy Ryan’s on 52nd Street.

When he began producing records of his own, Gabler wasn’t afraid of being identified with left-wing causes, releasing on Commodore recordings by the Almanac Singers with Pete Seeger, in the days when he was regarded as a dangerous Communist, long before he became the much respected doyen of the American folk scene. However, in 1941, Gabler moved to Decca, though his Commodore label continued. Among Gabler’s early achievements at Decca were Lionel Hampton’s *Flying Home*, Billie Holiday’s own *Lover Man*,

the first teaming of Ella and Louis – and, outside the jazz scene, but still a great favourite, the Andrews Sisters’ *Rum and Coca Cola*. It certainly wasn’t jazz all the way: he wrote lyrics for Bert Kaempfert and in 1993 was inducted in the Rock ‘n’ Roll Hall of Fame by his nephew Billy Crystal whose dad used to run the shop for Milt!

So after *Strange Fruit* Milt Gabler’s life was very much at the heart of the American recording industry (the above is the briefest summary). The song itself gained such fame that David Margolick and Hilton Als even wrote a book, *Strange Fruit: The Biography of a Song*. Billie Holiday’s position as an icon of popular culture has continued undiminished, even after her early death in 1959, but what was life after *Strange Fruit* like for Barney Josephson and Abel Meeropol? Josephson’s career as a club owner reflected his political and social views: the slogan ‘The Wrong Place for the Right People’ was undeniably provocative and Josephson was quite capable of making artistic decisions on moral grounds. A neat connection to *Strange Fruit* comes in his decision to persuade Lena Horne not to sing *Sleepy Time Down South* which, with its pinewood-scented ‘dear old Southland’ paradise, can be seen as the dishonest antithesis of *Strange Fruit*. (Oddly *Sleepy Time* was written by an African-American; *Strange Fruit*, of course, wasn’t.)

Ultimately Barney Josephson had to sell up, indirectly because of his Communist connections. Having expanded by opening Cafe Society Uptown in 1940, both clubs employing a stellar list of jazz musicians, his business collapsed after his brother Leon was hauled before the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1947 as a Communist and was found guilty of contempt after refusing to answer questions. Right-wing columnists including Walter Winchell attacked Josephson and Cafe Society, attendances plummeted and Josephson sold up.

However, that was not the end of Josephson’s involvement in jazz. He moved on to run a small chain of restaurants, then in 1969 whittled that down to only one,



The Cookery, where he began putting on jazz again. From then until it closed four years before his death in 1988, the Cookery hosted performances by Mary Lou Williams, Alberta Hunter, Nellie Lutcher, Sammy Price, Teddy Wilson, Helen Humes and many others.

And what of Abel Meeropol? He lived until 1986 and it would be nice to think of him in his later years dining at the Cookery and enjoying the music, but there is no evidence of that! In the 1940s he left teaching, no doubt aided by royalties from *Strange Fruit*, some time later he left the Communist Party which post-war was less of a place for idealists than in the 1930s. Lovers of Jaroslav Hasek’s *The Good*

*Soldier Schweik* will feel that Meeropol was an appropriate choice to write the libretto for a new opera on the little-man-against-authority theme at New York City Opera in 1958. However, by then the second remarkable happening of Meeropol’s life had come along in 1953, one that is poignantly linked to the reason for Meeropol’s assumed name, Lewis Allen.

It again concerned New York Jewish Communists, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, found guilty of spying for the Soviets. He certainly was a spy and she seems at least to have been involved, but controversy still surrounds their deaths, going to the electric chair in Sing Sing on

the same day. Two sons, Michael and Robert, aged ten and six, were left orphaned. After a Christmas Party – at the home, appropriately enough, of the veteran Civil Rights campaigner and co-founder of the NAACP, W.E.B. DuBois – the Meeropols met the boys. A few weeks later took them in, then adopted them.

Integration seems to have been remarkably painless. Robert remembers Abel as ‘a real jokester’ and ‘incredibly soft-hearted’. Robert and Michael Meeropol both became college professors, both deeply involved in social issues. It seems like a nice epitaph for the man who wrote *Strange Fruit*.

# THE JAZZ RAG TOP TEN BOOKS

## UK JAZZ BOOKS BESTSELLER CHARTS

<b>1</b>		<b>JAZZ TALKING</b> Max Jones (The Perseus Books Group)	<b>6</b>		<b>CONVERSATION IN JAZZ</b> Ralph J. Gleason (Yale)
<b>2</b>		<b>TO A YOUNG JAZZ MUSICIAN</b> Wynton Marsalis (Random House USA Inc)	<b>7</b>		<b>THE HISTORY OF JAZZ</b> Ted Gioia (Oxford)
<b>3</b>		<b>DUKE ELLINGTON: AN AMERICAN COMPOSER AND ICON</b> Mercedes Ellington & Steven Brower (Rizzoli)	<b>8</b>		<b>30-SECOND JAZZ</b> Dave Gelly (Ivy Press)
<b>4</b>		<b>THE PENGUIN JAZZ GUIDE</b> Brian Morton and Richard Cook (Penguin Books)	<b>9</b>		<b>THE CHRONICLES OF JAZZ</b> Meryvn Cooke (Thames and Hudson)
<b>5</b>		<b>HOW TO LISTEN TO JAZZ</b> Ted Gioia (Basic Books)	<b>10</b>		<b>MILES DAVIS</b> Ian Carr (Harper Collins)

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# THE JAZZ RAG TOP 20 UK

## UK JAZZ CD SALES CHART

<b>1</b>	<b>SNARKY PUPPY</b>	<b>CULCHA VULCHA</b>	<b>Ground Up</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>ZOE RAHMAN</b>	<b>DREAMLAND</b>	Manushi Records
<b>3</b>	<b>GREGORY PORTER</b>	<b>TAKE ME TO THE ALLEY</b>	Blue Note
<b>4</b>	<b>LOUIS SMITH</b>	<b>LEGENDARY 1957-59 STUDIO SESSIONS</b>	Phono
<b>5</b>	<b>STAN GETZ</b>	<b>MILESTONES OF A LEGEND</b>	Documents
<b>6</b>	<b>STAN GETZ</b>	<b>MOMENTS IN TIME</b>	Resonance
<b>7</b>	<b>ALLEN TOUSSAINT</b>	<b>AMERICAN TUNES</b>	Nonesuch
<b>8</b>	<b>DAYME AROCENA</b>	<b>THE REAL MILES DAVIS (3 CD)</b>	Columbia
<b>9</b>	<b>SIDNEY BECHET</b>	<b>4 CLASSIC ALBUMS</b>	Avid Jazz
<b>10</b>	<b>SIDNEY BECHET</b>	<b>BLUES AND BALLADS</b>	Nonesuch
<b>11</b>	<b>BRAD MEHLDAU TRIO</b>	<b>4 CLASSIC ALBUMS</b>	Avid Jazz
<b>12</b>	<b>CHARLES LLOYD &amp; THE MARVELS</b>	<b>5 ORIGINAL ALBUMS</b>	Decca
<b>13</b>	<b>MANNY ALBAM</b>	<b>UNITY SESSIONS</b>	Nonesuch
<b>14</b>	<b>RAY BRYANT</b>	<b>PLAYS THE COMPLETE LITTLE SUSIE</b>	Lonehill Jazz
<b>15</b>	<b>BILLIE HOLIDAY &amp; LESTER YOUNG</b>	<b>COMPLETE</b>	Frémeaux & Associés
<b>16</b>	<b>MELTYOURSELF DOWN</b>	<b>UNFORGETTABLE</b>	Not Now
<b>17</b>	<b>PAT METHENY</b>	<b>5 ORIGINAL ALBUMS</b>	Decca
<b>18</b>	<b>RAY BRYANT</b>	<b>THE EPIC</b>	Brainfeeder
<b>19</b>	<b>BILLIE HOLIDAY &amp; LESTER YOUNG</b>	<b>THE COMPLETE CONCERT BY THE SEA</b>	Sony
<b>20</b>	<b>CLEO LAINE</b>	<b>WHEN YOU WISH UPON A STAR</b>	Okeh

This chart is compiled from sales in the following record stores

**CRAZY JAZZ, Northampton** [www.crazyjazz.co.uk](http://www.crazyjazz.co.uk) 01604 315287 Mail Order - [www.crazyjazz.co.uk/main/orderform.pdf](http://www.crazyjazz.co.uk/main/orderform.pdf)  
**JUMBO RECORDS, Leeds** [www.jumborecords.co.uk](http://www.jumborecords.co.uk) 0113 245 5570 5-6 St Johns Centre, LS2 8LQ  
**SOUND KNOWLEDGE, Marlborough** Facebook: Sound Knowledge 01672 511106 High St, Marlborough SN8 1LT  
**JG WINDOWS, Newcastle** [www.jgwindows.com/](http://www.jgwindows.com/) 0191 232 1356 1-7 Central Arcade, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 5BP

## JIM CHAPIN

**RON SIMPSON** talks to drummer **MALCOLM GARRETT** about his friend and major influence, the legendary drum teacher **JIM CHAPIN**.



Photo by Merlin Daleman

Malcolm Garrett with (L-R) Keith Bill, Len Skeat, Simon Spillett

Recently Fresh Sound brought out a CD of 1950s small group recordings by Jim Chapin who at the time led the Birdland Monday night house band including the great alto saxist Phil Woods. However, though he lived till just short of his 90th birthday in 2009, nothing much was heard of Jim Chapin as a recording artist after that date – and not a great deal in terms of playing with name bands, either. His major claim to fame at that time seemed to consist of siring, and playing drums with, three talented musician sons, Steve, Tom and the great singer/songwriter/humanitarian Harry Chapin.

However, Jim Chapin was far from a nonentity in jazz terms. Back in the 1940s he had produced the most influential primer for jazz drummers, *Advanced Techniques for the Modern Drummer* (still in print now), and he tutored an astonishing list of the very best of jazz drummers. Jim Chapin remains unknown to many otherwise knowledgeable jazz fans. It is not much of an exaggeration to call him a secret known only to drummers, so who better to talk about Jim's career than Malcolm Garrett? A Birmingham-based drummer, Malcolm shares with Jim Chapin a huge reputation as a teacher and a tendency to keep out of the spotlight. He became a close friend in the last 20 years of Jim's life, and first of all he supplied me with the background to a unique career.

Jim Chapin didn't take up drums until the age of 18 when his college room-mate, John Steinway III (yes, the piano family – Jim went to a classy college, William and Mary in Williamsburg) filled his ears with the Benny Goodman Orchestra, then lured him out to hear the band in the Madhattan Club. Chapin heard Krupa and the die was cast. He dropped out of college and – perhaps the most remarkable fact in a remarkable career – within three years of taking up the drums he had to all intents and purposes completed *Advanced Techniques*, though the book was not published until 1948, publication apparently being delayed by World War 2. Through the 1940s Chapin was on the road with various big bands, including Woody Herman and Tommy Dorsey. However, he never stayed long enough to be closely associated with a band, as were Dave Tough and Don Lamond with the former, Buddy Rich with the latter. Also he took the drum chair with rather less notable bands, such as Tony Pastor's, the past their best and sweeter by the day Casa Loma, and many others. From the 1950s Chapin, a native New Yorker, operated closer to home, though that still doesn't explain his comparative obscurity as a performer for the last 50 years of his life during which he continued playing without making headlines.

Malcolm told me about the Jim Chapin he knew:

'I attend the Percussive Arts Convention every year – it's the

biggest convention of its type and it's held in different places in America. I've been going to that since about 1989 and that's where I met Jim who was there with a couple of drum companies. I'd had his albums and his tutorial book which had a great influence on me when I started drumming. We got on like a house on fire. He told me he'd never been to England since he was seven and he'd love to come back – his grandmother was Scottish – so I said, "Maybe, if I organise some workshops or clinics, would you consider that?" He said he'd love to but I thought nothing more about it: maybe he was just being polite. Then two or three days after I got back, I got a call at 3 o'clock in the morning: "Hi, Malcolm. This is Jim Chapin. Are you going to fix me up to come over?" About a month or so later I picked him up at Birmingham Airport!

Following on from that, Jim Chapin came over about twice a year for the next 18 years, doing workshops and visiting drum fairs on the Continent as well as in the UK, using Malcolm's house as his home base. Only in the last two years of his life did his health deteriorate too much for him to come over. In the last few months of his life the journey was reversed, with Malcolm frequently flying to the States to



Jim Chapin

visit the man he saw as a father-figure.

Promising to avoid technicalities which only drummers would understand, Malcolm set about explaining to me what makes *Advanced Techniques for the Modern Drummer* one of the greatest books on the subject, even 70 years later, known in America as 'the blue Bible'?

'It was all about the independence of drumming, in other words, being able to play four different things at the same time. Drummers in the swing era didn't have this sort of super-independence; that came in with the advent of bebop. The book started when he was a big fan of Cozy Cole and O'Neil Spencer of the John Kirby group. A strong characteristic of their playing in the 30s was playing a shuffle rhythm with the left hand and the regular ting-ting-ting with the right. They couldn't play anything else, though, they couldn't play little independent figures at the same time. Jim was a highly intelligent man and thought, "If I start leaving beats out of the left hand shuffle rhythm, I can create melodic-sounding rhythms." And the book progressed from that.

'Before he had even started playing, Jim plucked up courage to ask Gene Krupa if he gave



Jim Chapin

lessons. Gene said, "No, I'm sorry, I don't have time to give lessons, but my teacher is a man called Sanford Moeller." So Jim studied with him and became identified with the Moeller technique. Moeller was a famous drum teacher in Long Island: Sid Catlett studied with him and not just jazz drummers, lots of orchestral players, too. He taught a technique he had learned from the old Civil War drummers, a very natural hand and arm motion, analysed and honed to perfection – and he reckoned Jim Chapin understood the technique better than any other student of his. In fact, in the 60s, when Krupa had semi-retired, he started taking lessons with Jim.'

When I suggested to Malcolm that Jim didn't appear to have been very ambitious as a performer, never looking out for the best bands to play with, he agreed totally, reckoning he just loved the drums and was quite happy as long as he could play

(and teach) drums: the style and quality of the bands he played with didn't seem to matter too much to him. From the 1950s teaching became his main career, with students of the quality of Max Roach, Philly Joe Jones and Roy Haynes. Jim was a visiting tutor at a couple of New York colleges, but his work increasingly was based around drum stores and private pupils. Eventually even the albums he recorded were educational: a series called *Music Minus One* which Malcolm described as 'a pioneering tutorial series' covering all instruments and featuring recordings with and without the relevant instrument. Once again, like Jim's ground-breaking book, they are still available today.

It would be glib to try to identify Malcolm Garrett with Jim Chapin, but there are enough similarities to make it easy to understand why they related so easily to each other. As well as his reputation as a teacher, Malcolm

shares with Jim a wide-open attitude to what music he plays – it's tempting to apply to him what he said of Jim, that he loves playing the drums so much that it doesn't matter to him what sort of music he is playing.

For me and many others, Malcolm is the assured, subtle and authoritative drummer who appears in the Birmingham Jazz Festival each year backing some of the star soloists from the UK and abroad. He teaches at the Birmingham Conservatoire and that, I imagined, fills his time for the rest of the year. Nothing could be further from the truth, it turns out. Though he is an established fixture at the Conservatoire – 25 years service – it is as a visiting tutor, meaning that his teaching can be arranged around his performing schedule:

'I've been a professional player since I left school – I've done a huge variety of playing, a lot of theatre work, I've spent a lot of time in orchestra pits, 26 years of the Birmingham Hippodrome panto doing 12 shows a week, commercial work, cabaret – and a little jazz work. I spent over seven years in the resident orchestra at the Night Out Theatre, I toured with *West Side Story* for two and a half years (not the original UK production – that was Phil Seaman). I've worked with Cilla Black, Dusty Springfield, Sandie Shaw, Harry Secombe, Michael Bentine, the Drifters, the Four Tops, the Temptations, the Detroit Emeralds, the Three Degrees, Les Dawson, Bob Monkhouse, Dickie Henderson, Ken Dodd....'

Having taken some prompting to list the stars he played drums for,



Malcolm Garrett with (L-R) Keith Bill, Bill Coleman and Alan Barnes

Malcolm now seemed to be launched on a never-ending list, but Ken Dodd proved a good place to stop. When we spoke, Malcolm had just returned from three days in Scotland, playing for Ken Dodd's Happiness show in Glasgow and Dunfermline. He seemed remarkably enthusiastic about it, given that it is one of the few five-hour gigs around!

Malcolm readily acknowledged the influence of Jim Chapin on his teaching, but also pointed to his 20-year career before he met Jim as well as another important influence on him: Joe Morello, the lynch-pin of the Dave Brubeck Quartet, with whom he had a few lessons. As for his own teaching, he first of all stressed the quality of his students before admitting that really he is pretty good at it:

'I seem to be able to communicate with students and teach stuff that they really need to make a career rather than just the hot licks of the day.'

Asked about Jim Chapin's ability as a drummer, Malcolm described him as excellent, but competent and capable rather than busy and showy. As for Malcolm's own drumming, some three weeks after we talked he was about to embark on his regular stint at the Birmingham, now the Birmingham and Solihull, Jazz and Blues Festival. His first gig, coincidentally after all the show-biz talk, is with Bruce Adams, in rather different circumstances from when they first met as teenagers on television's *Opportunity Knocks*, Bruce with his guitarist father, Malcolm accompanying an accordion player!

## GETTING IT RIGHT

## SIMON SPILLETT's appreciation of his fellow saxophonist JOE TEMPERLEY (1927-2016)

What others of his generation loudly hoped for – and in some instances achieved to far greater acclaim – Joe Temperley, who passed away in May, aged 86, did with quiet resolve.

After moving to New York City at the end of 1965, the saxophonist quickly made good, beginning what was to become a fifty-year career at the heart of the US jazz scene, working with bands and leaders as diverse as Woody Herman, Buck Clayton, Thad Jones/Mel Lewis, Joe Henderson, Mercer Ellington and, latterly, Wynton Marsalis, as well as heading his own groups for club, concert and recording work.

Perhaps it's because Temperley did all this in such an unruffled and natural manner that he's rarely mentioned alongside the UK's other great jazz exports, Shearing, Feldman, Holland and McLaughlin. Indeed, within a short time of going Stateside, it seemed as if he'd been there all his life, taking to New York like the proverbial duck to water.

The move, however, had been far bolder than anyone could have imagined. 'I went entirely on spec,' he revealed in 1988, 'I didn't really have a job to go to.' Despite his finding the city's attitude to musical standards 'a rude awakening', the Big Apple's musicians warmed instantly to the hefty Scotsman. As well they might: by the time Temperley arrived in America, he'd become a truly formidable player.

Born in Cowdenbeath, Scotland, in 1927, he'd passed through the usual career apprenticeship shared by most of his contemporaries. Dance bands (Harry Parry, Tommy Sampson, Jack Parnell, etc.) and modern jazz groups (Tony Crombie, Dizzy Reece, Tommy Whittle et al.) had been grist to his mill for most of the 1950s, a decade in which, by his own admission, his personality was as rawly outspoken as his – then tenor – saxophone playing.

London in the mid-1950s was no place to be an aggressive, up and coming, tenor saxophonist, what

with the quartet of Hayes, Scott, Whittle and Rendell holding court, but, in a twist of fate, after depping on a few gigs in Humphrey Lyttelton's band during 1957, Temperley found himself switching permanently to the baritone, a horn he'd sometimes played on big band gigs.

Away from the fractious insecurities of the pop scene, he found Lyttelton's band full of 'general well-being' and in order to prolong his stay he fibbed to Lyttelton that baritone was his main horn. Liking the idea of a larger front-line, the trumpeter asked him to join the band permanently, resulting in both an eight year professional association and a life-long friendship.

Listening back to the Lyttelton band's records from the early-to-mid 1960s, one hears Temperley at last finding his voice. As if suddenly freed from the fashion-chasing obligations of the modern jazz circuit, his wine-dark tone and affecting vibrato quickly set him apart from other local baritonists, including Ronnie Ross and Harry Klein, whose methods drew largely on the cool-school logic of Gerry Mulligan.

This timeless classicism now equipped him perfectly for a move into the wide mainstream of jazz. American musicians who toured with the Lyttelton band – including Vic Dickenson, Big Joe Turner and Jimmy Rushing – loved Temperley, and when the unit made a trip to the US in 1959, appearing on the same bill as Thelonious Monk and Lennie Tristano, the saxophonist made a promise 'to come back here sometime.'

For such a passionately proud Scot, Temperley made a surprisingly natural New Yorker. '[It's] like a place all unto itself,' he'd declare of his adopted city. 'It's not like anywhere else. The best tend to gravitate to New York.'

And the best gravitated to him too. During the 1970s, he had the honour of taking his musical hero

Harry Carney's chair in the Duke Ellington legacy band, headed by Mercer Ellington, as well as spelling another idol Pepper Adams in the ground breaking Jones/Lewis orchestra. What Temperley found in New York wasn't just musical fulfilment though; it was a sense of community irrespective of style that simply hadn't been there back in London.

In 1990, he celebrated this diversity in two hour-long documentaries screened by Channel 4, interviewing and performing with a wide variety of the city's jazz talent, from veterans like Sammy Price and Buck Clayton, to new stars including saxophonist Ralph Moore and pianist Mulgrew Miller, eager to show that for the truly committed jazz musician, age, race and nationality matter not one jot. Listening to the glorious rendition of *Easy To Remember* Temperley performs with Miller on one of these programmes, there is no doubting the baritonist's world class ranking.

Indeed, the late 80's and 1990s were to mark something of a purple patch for Temperley as a recording artist, making up for a dearth of releases under his own name by issuing a classy series of albums on the HEP label, including the majestic *Concerto for Joe*, composed for him by former colleague (and fellow Scot) Jimmy Deuchar.

The late 1990s saw him assume an anchorman role within a big band tailor-made for his eclectic and adaptable talents, The Lincoln

Center Jazz Orchestra, headed by Wynton Marsalis, with which he continued to perform until close to his death.

Whatever one may think of the leader's doctrinal declarations about the DNA of jazz, and of what does or does not comprise its traditions, it speaks volumes that for one of the LCJO's key chairs Marsalis chose a non African/American migrant, who had learned the basics of his art half a century earlier, poring over Stan Getz 78's in between gigs in British dance bands.

But then, Joe Temperley's musical journey had been anything but conventional. Asked about his own work, he preferred to divert the conversation towards the playing of other, usually younger, musicians. 'They're very interested in keeping [jazz] going...and paying mind to what's gone before,' he said of this new generation of colleagues. 'The historical part of it. I think it's very healthy.'

The health of the music, as well as the history of it, owes much to Joe Temperley. As a player, he embodied the best of swing-to-bop: as a professional he was unimpeachable and as a person he radiated a refreshing lack of self-aggrandisement.

The summary he once gave of his own musical goals serves well as an epitaph: 'I'm going to keep doing what I'm doing and hope I'll get it right one day.'

He did – and how!



## STILL SWINGING?

Upfront: Back to the Future (*Jazz Rag 141*) asked the questions, 'Where are all the small swinging jazz bands? Do they now mostly take the form of tribute bands re-creating an earlier era?' On pages 16 and 17 SCOTTYANOW looks back to the era of the great small groups (ironically enough the Big Band Era). Firstly two responses to the present situation, from Digby Fairweather and Tony Shoppee.



Thanks for your kindly mention of my Half Dozen as one of the bands that doesn't wholly tie itself to re-creation of some past jazz glory but tries at times to 'cross the jazz streams' (as they might have put it in one of my favourite films, *Ghostbusters*).

I think with the Half Dozen we do try and produce a variety of music – and even some 'originals' ('one of the most feared words in the British jazz vocabulary' in Alan Barnes' light-hearted definition!). But I think our rule has always been that the music should relate – and appeal to – lovers of the jazz genre and work within what are broadly seen as its accepted disciplines. One of my good friends told me lately that he felt that he should come away from a jazz performance with a necessity to be 'challenged' and an obligation to 'think'. 'In which case,' I was forced to respond, 'I don't think you'll enjoy our shows very much.'

Jazz as we know, is (in that over-used term) a 'broad church', but every church has its walls and boundaries and my view is that – without directly copying or duplication – there are now enough 'aesthetic vitamins' to draw on within its parameters to create material – as Alan does or Sir John Dankworth did – which is totally valid and original without being either challenging or unnecessarily revolutionary.

In fact very few people have ever been able to define jazz with any degree of authority at all. But in

my view the definition doesn't rely on stock answers like 'improvisation' or 'freedom of expression', but simply the intention to 'please an audience who likes jazz in some recognizable form.' Since jazz moved from formally-written ragtime to totally free improvisation within less than seven decades this is hardly a limited definition! The only requirement is (perhaps) to stay within these limitations and make intelligent choices as to what your audience will, in turn, recognize and be pleased by. Otherwise you may find some members shifting uncomfortably in their seats and going off in search of something more comfortably familiar.

However, I think it remains important not to rely on too much in the way of tributes and/or re-creations. The great figures of jazz frequently summoned sweat to their brows in the search for something new. And sometimes it's all too easy to bask in the re-creation of their masterpieces (or at least musical images) rather than work up new perspirations. True originality is possibly jazz's last challenge and with its now fecund heritage it's sometimes too big a challenge to work out how something new might work rather than going for something that's both nourishing and provenly digestible.

All this profound thought was prompted by picking up an old album by the Avon Cities Jazz Band, the Bristol-based band of Ray Bush and Geoff Nichols

which crossed the streams with a courage possibly only equalled by Washington's crossing of the Delaware. Here are its titles: *Norwegian Wood* and *Hey Jude* (Lennon and McCartney); *Lady of Carlisle* (Trad); *Slood Mood*, *Pullman Train*, *Bad Day at Black Rock* and *The Canon of W.M. Boyce* (yes; originals all, by bassist Bernie Attridge, clarinetist Ray Bush and trumpeter Geoff Nichols); *Magnificent Seven* (Elmer Bernstein); *Double Concerto* (J.S.Bach) and *Grandpa's Spells* (Jelly Roll Morton). Now, there's diverse for you!

The only problem (which occurred to me very early on in the Half Dozen's career) is that some jazz fans like to 'bag' a band; in other words to brand it, compartmentalize it and seal the label. Over the years some marvellous bands (including, for example, Bob Wilber's early band called The Six featuring the great trumpeter Johnny Glasel) tried to play everything well in virtually all styles. The Six, sadly, was not a notable success in its time. But we shouldn't be put off too much by such sobering predecessors if we want to continue to have creative fun.

## DIGBY FAIRWEATHER

*Jazz Rag* requested details of 'small swing bands regularly on the road that aren't deliberate re-interpretations of the past'. I would like to nominate The Rascals of Rhythm, a drumless Oxfordshire quintet led by acoustic guitarist and tune sleuth Dave Moorwood who also provides the arrangements of which there are a great number. The band is obviously inspired by the kind of groups led by Marty Grosz (with whom Dave once performed at a Birmingham Jazz Festival). The band specialises in reviving attractive tunes that are not well known to today's audiences, but is a swing band rather than a revivalist one – Dave's arrangements do not copy

old records and the repertoire is essentially pre-1945 (and occasionally pre-1925!).

The current regular personnel is Mike Wills (soprano, clarinet, tenor), Tony Blincoe (alto, clarinet, tenor, soprano), Geoff Barnwell (piano), Dave Moorwood (guitar, vocal) and Mike Bennett (bass). Without disrespect to the other band members, I personally would rate Mike Wills and Dave Moorwood as world-class, with the latter playing acoustic swing guitar solos in a style rarely heard these amplified days.

Besides its monthly gig at the Lamb in Wantage, the band often appears at many other venues and festivals and at Wantage sometimes features guest artists: trumpet-playing guests have included Enrico Tomasso, Digby Fairweather and Ben Cummings.

I enclose a copy of the sleeve notes I did for one of the band's albums which give an indication of the breadth of its repertoire.

## TONY SHOPPEE

Editor's Note  
The notes to the Rascals' 2014 album reveal a repertoire that stretches chronologically from the ODJB's 1918 *Clarinet Marmalade* to Buddy Johnson's 1950s *Save Your Love for Me*. If *Clarinet Marmalade* is among the better known jazz songs of nearly a century ago, other tracks fully justify Tony's reference to 'attractive tunes that are not well known to today's audiences'. If you're going to choose songs by such popular composers as Harry Warren and Irving Berlin, you can't get a great deal more obscure than *No Love, No Nothin'* and *I'll See You in C-U-B-A*.

**The Rascals of Rhythm appear at the Birmingham and Solihull Jazz and Blues Festival on July 17th.**



## SMALL BANDS IN THE BIG BAND ERA

by Scott Yanow

1935-46 is often known as the Big Band Era. Strange as it seems, considering the Great Depression, big bands were the rage for a decade. The popularity of dancing to swing meant that the music had a very large pop-size audience. Even with the economic situation being horrible during the 1930s, big bands were not only considered affordable by large dance halls but essential.

While big bands dominated the music scene, three different types of small combos also found a place in the jazz world. All-star recording sessions often teamed musicians who did not regularly work together. Most notable were the collaborations of Teddy Wilson and Billie Holiday which often utilized top soloists from whichever swing orchestra was in town including Lester Young and Buck Clayton from the Count Basie band. Also quite noteworthy were the all-star sessions headed by Lionel Hampton, Henry 'Red' Allen and Duke Ellington's sidemen. Of the latter, Johnny Hodges, Cootie Williams, Rex Stewart and Barney Bigard each had opportunities to lead timeless small-group sessions that had their personnel mostly drawn from the Ellington Orchestra.

The second type of swing era combo was the 'band within a band' concept which featured a smaller combo taken from a big band as a special attraction. This idea was actually first used in 1922 by Paul Whiteman with his

Virginians which recorded extensively during 1922-24. More jazz-oriented were the Georgians (also from 1922-24) which had trumpeter Frank Guarante heading an excellent combo taken from Paul Specht's large dance band.

The idea was revived in 1935 by Benny Goodman whose trio with Teddy Wilson and Gene Krupa was not only musically exciting but broke racial boundaries. The following year vibraphonist Lionel Hampton was added to the group to form the Benny Goodman Quartet. After the pioneering electric guitarist Charlie Christian joined Goodman in 1939, he expanded the group to become the Benny Goodman Sextet (with Hampton and Christian) and slightly later a septet that was called Benny Goodman and his Sextet (with Christian, trumpeter Cootie Williams and tenor-saxophonist Georgie Auld). Other bandleaders adapted the 'band within a band' idea for their own music. Tommy Dorsey's Clambake Seven gave Dorsey an opportunity to play Dixieland. His brother Jimmy Dorsey in 1950 had a similar group called The Original Dorseyland Jazz Band! Artie Shaw's Gramercy Five featured pianist Johnny Guarnieri on harpsichord. Chick Webb and his Chicks, which recorded just four numbers, put the spotlight on flutist Wayman Carver. Ben Pollack's The Dean And His Kids (succeeded by his Pick-A-Rib Boys) in 1936 featured Harry

James before he joined Benny Goodman and in 1937 had some hot cornet playing from Muggsy Spanier. Long before the Woodchoppers, Woody Herman led a quartet called his Four Chips.

Next to Benny Goodman's units, the group in this category that had the biggest long-time impact was Bob Crosby's Bobcats. The hot octet, which often featured trumpeter Yank Lawson, tenor-saxophonist Eddie Miller and Irving Fazola or Matty Matlock on clarinet, helped lead to the rise of Dixieland in the 1940s. Its success overshadowed both the Bob Crosby Orchestra and the leader's singing.

It is surprising that such big bandleaders as Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, Jimmy Lunceford, Earl Hines, Harry James, Gene Krupa and Count Basie did not regularly feature combos taken out of their big bands during this era except on rare occasions.

The third type of combo that was popular during the Big Band Era were the small groups that worked regularly and were independent of any orchestra. These bands generally performed in small clubs (many appeared on 52nd Street) rather than dance halls and ranged in styles from hot music to early cool jazz. Not including the revivalist bands of the 1940s (such as Lu Watters) and the early bebop combos, here are 15 of the most significant small groups to be active during the Swing era, listed in alphabetical order.

**The King Cole Trio** – Pianist-singer Nat King Cole, guitarist Oscar Moore and bassist Wesley Prince first came together in Los Angeles in the late 1930s. Their swinging drumless trio featured exciting piano and guitar solos, group vocals, and occasional solo singing by Cole. As the 1940s progressed, the focus gradually shifted to Cole's warm and friendly voice. 1950's *Mona Lisa* sealed the deal in making Nat King Cole a major middle-of-the-road pop singer although Cole never lost his impressive skills as a pianist.

**Eddie Condon** – A rhythm guitarist who successfully avoided taking solos, Condon led some of the hottest jazz bands of all time. Starting with his 1938 sessions, Condon became the major force in what could be called Chicago Jazz or Nicksieland (since his group was featured at Nick's in New York). His swing and Dixieland all-star bands featured distinctive soloists and explosive ensembles for over 30 years. It was often said that every night with the Condon band was like New Year's Eve.

**Bud Freeman Summa Cum Laude Orchestra** – It did not last long (1939-40) but tenor-saxophonist Bud Freeman's octet left some stirring recordings. Condon was a sideman along with trumpeter Max Kaminsky, valve trombonist Brad Gowans and clarinetist Pee Wee Russell. Freeman featured an excellent blend of arrangements (including on two sessions that paid tribute to Bix Beiderbecke's Wolverines of 1924) and freewheeling jazz.

**Eddie Heywood Sextet** – On the opposite end of the spectrum from Eddie Condon, pianist Heywood had success with his tightly-arranged three-horn sextet during 1944-46. His recording of *Begin The Beguine* sold a million copies. Heywood's arrangements, unlike his piano playing, kept spontaneity to a minimum.

**John Kirby Sextet** – Bassist Kirby put together a unique group in 1938 that featured the cool tones and virtuosic talents of trumpeter Charlie Shavers (who was usually muted), clarinetist Buster Bailey and altoist Russell Procope. Billy Kyle provided a light touch on the piano as did drummer O'Neil Spencer. Exploring classical themes, swing standards and unusual originals (including *Rehearsin' for a Nervous Breakdown*), Kirby's group displayed some similarities to the Modern Jazz Quartet of the 1950s and West Coast cool jazz while creating its own world of music.

**Wingy Manone** – The one-armed New Orleans trumpeter always had a great time in his music, playing hot melodic leads and providing good-natured vocals. He starred at 52nd Street's Hickory House during 1935-36 and led his groups on a long series of fun records. Manone was quite a character; check him out in the 1940 Bing Crosby movie *Rhythm On The River*.

**Joe Marsala** – The skilled clarinetist and his wife harpist Adele Girard made for a perfect team. Girard, the second jazz harpist (after Casper Reardon) and arguably the best, gave Marsala's combos a unique sound. Joe Marsala always swung and his brother trumpeter Marty Marsala often added heat to the band but the harpist made it memorable.

**Louis Prima** – Prima's career can easily be divided into three periods, including heading a big band in the 1940s and having his Las Vegas retro swing band in the 1950s. In the 1930s the New Orleans trumpeter-singer followed a similar path as Wingy Manone, recording a series of enjoyable sessions that mixed together New Orleans jazz and swing, peppered with his Italian humour and personable vocals. Pee Wee Russell was his clarinetist during the early glory years (1935-36) when Prima was the toast of 52nd Street.

**The Quintet of the Hot Club of France** – Featuring the first innovative European jazz musicians (guitarist Django Reinhardt and violinist Stephane Grappelli) during 1934-39, nothing like this all-string swing quintet had ever been heard before. 30 years after Django's death, the music and style made a surprise comeback as Gypsy Swing, a major movement that continues to this day. Happily all of the Quintet's remarkable recordings are available today on the JSP label.

**Raymond Scott Sextette** – Pianist-arranger Scott created colorful and episodic works that

had hilarious titles (such as *Reckless Night on Board an Ocean Liner* and *Dinner Music for a Pack of Hungry Cannibals*), having hits with *Powerhouse* and *Twilight in Turkey*. He taught his musicians the complex music by ear including their pre-arranged solos, creating a sensation for a couple of years with his rather unpredictable music. Some of the melodies became staples of Warner Brothers cartoons.

**Slim and Slam** – Guitarist-singer Slim Gaillard was a natural comedian who early in his career had an act where he played guitar and tap danced simultaneously. In Slim and Slam (which was originally a duo with bassist Slam Stewart), he introduced an eccentric brand of jive talk, hitting pay dirt in 1938 with *Flat Foot Floogie*. While such outlandish ditties as *Chicken Rhythm, Laughin' In Rhythm* and *Matzoh Balls* did not make the charts, Gaillard made audiences chuckle by performing similar material for the next half-century.

**Stuff Smith's Onyx Club Boys** – Arguably the hardest swinging jazz violinist of all time, Hezekiah 'Stuff' Smith and the exciting trumpeter Jonah Jones made for a perfect team during 1936-40. While the novelty *I se a Muggin'* was their hit, they can be heard at their best on such rollicking recordings as *The Man with the Jive*, *Old Joe's Hittin' the Jug* and *I Hope Gabriel Likes My Music*.

**Muggsy Spanier's Ragtime Band** – The trumpeter's four-horn octet did not actually play ragtime but hot Chicago jazz during its brief existence in 1939. While this group's recordings later became known as 'The Great 16' and they seemed to launch the comeback of 1920s jazz (which took place a few years later), Spanier was unable to gain much work for the band and it soon broke up. Spanier's music was both behind and ahead of its time.

**Art Tatum Trio** – One would not be inaccurate to state that the greatest swing band



Stuff Smith's Onyx Club Boys

performed whenever Art Tatum sat at the piano. While Tatum certainly did not need anyone else to help him create extraordinary music, in 1944 he put together a spirited trio with guitarist Tiny Grimes and bassist Slam Stewart that lit some sparks and did well for a time.

**Fats Waller and his Rhythm** – Before he formed his Rhythm (an infectious two-horn sextet) in 1934, Thomas 'Fats' Waller was primarily known as a pianist and songwriter. However, on scores of titles recorded for the Bluebird label over the next eight years and in his club dates, Waller

emerged as a singer and a lovable comic personality who always sounded like he was having a great party.

While the Swing era was launched by Benny Goodman and ruled by big bands, it would certainly have missed a lot of joy without these 15 classic swing combos.

**Scott Yanow has written 11 books on jazz and can be contacted on [scottyanowjazz@yahoo.com](mailto:scottyanowjazz@yahoo.com)**



The Benny Goodman Quartet



John Kirby Sextet

British readers, coming across Scott's reference to Frank Guarante's Georgians, formed from Paul Specht's Orchestra, will have immediately recalled the UK's most famous band within a band. In 1932 Lew Stone's band recorded *Georgia on My Mind* featuring the great trumpeter/singer Nat Gonella. When Nat fronted a small jazz group within the Stone band, he took the name The Georgians. In time Nat left Lew Stone and the Georgians became his full-time band.

## JAZZ FESTIVALS

## FESTIVAL LISTINGS FROM END OF JULY

## MANCHESTER JAZZ FESTIVAL

(JULY 22-31)

Based on the festival hub, the Hobgoblin Festival Pavilion, but using a total of nine venues in the city, from the Band on the Wall to RNCM, the Manchester Jazz Festival showcases many new names on the scene. In addition look out for a Jazz on Film season and such established stars as the Tim Garland Electric Quartet, the Jamie Brownfield Quartet, the Impossible Gentlemen and Emilia Martensson.

[www.manchesterjazz.com](http://www.manchesterjazz.com)



Jamie Brownfield

## STILL JAZZ AT BRECON

This year's ongoing saga in the world of jazz festivals has been the uncertainty over the future of the world-famous **Brecon Jazz Festival**. The excellent news is that the many bodies which have rallied round to preserve the festival have been able to announce that Brecon will host a programme of quality jazz on **August 12th-14th** with Tina May, Geoff Eales and the Brownfield/Byrne Quintet, among others. Included in that will be at least 20 concerts at the major venues: Guildhall Theatre, the Cathedral, Theatr Brycheiniog, the Muse and the Castle Hotel.

[www.breconjazzclub.org](http://www.breconjazzclub.org)

## PERSHORE JAZZ FESTIVAL

(AUGUST 19-21)

Pershore College is the venue for a packed three days, beginning with a performance by an all-star 10-piece Festival Orchestra directed by Keith Nichols and including the likes of Enrico Tomasso, Alan Barnes, Matthias Seuffert and Spats Langham. Many of these re-appear during the festival in different guises, together with Jeff Barnhart's Fats Waller tribute, Ken Peplowski and Julian Marc Stringle in *Clarinet Maestros* and many more.

[www.pershorejazz.org.uk](http://www.pershorejazz.org.uk)

## ABERJAZZ JAZZ 'N' BLUES FESTIVAL

(AUGUST 25-29)

Taking place in various venues around Fishguard, the Aberjazz festival is headlined by Courtney Pine. Others lined up to appear include the Sirkis/Bialas International Quartet, King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys, Dale Storr, Tipitina and the Tango Jazz Quartet from Argentina.

[www.aberjazz.com](http://www.aberjazz.com)

## TWINWOOD FESTIVAL

(AUGUST 26-29)

Swing, jazz and jazz-inclined acts on the packed and varied bill for the festival at the Twinwood Arena at Clapham in Bedfordshire include the Down for the Count Swing Orchestra, Sticky Wicket and his Swing Orchestra, Swing Noir and Juke Joint Jump.

[www.twinwoodfestival.com](http://www.twinwoodfestival.com)

## LLANELLI MUSIC AND JAZZ FESTIVAL

(AUGUST 28)

Starting at 12.30, there is continuous jazz in the Atrium and Lounge of Llanelli's Diplomat Hotel. Bands on the bill include the Sirkis/Bialas International Quartet, the Morrision Big Band and the Groucho Club and Dawn Sandell.

[www.llanelli-music-jazz-festival.co.uk](http://www.llanelli-music-jazz-festival.co.uk)

## WALL2WALL JAZZ FESTIVAL

(SEPTEMBER 1-4)

The Wall2wall festival kicks off with a Jazz Dinner at Abergavenny's Angel Hotel with Lee Gibson and the Dave Cottle Trio. Performing at various venues later in the festival, among others, are Christian Garrick, the Huw Warren Trio Brasil with Iain Ballamy, Dennis Rollins Velocity Trio and the Tango Jazz Quartet.

[www.blackmountainjazz.co.uk](http://www.blackmountainjazz.co.uk)

## ISLAY JAZZ FESTIVAL

(SEPTEMBER 9-11)

Though the programme has yet to be announced, the appeal of Islay's jazz festival is clear, with three of the festival's venues being distilleries, including the celebrated Laphroig.

[www.islayjazzfestival.co.uk](http://www.islayjazzfestival.co.uk)

## RICHMOND JAZZ FESTIVAL

(SEPTEMBER 9-11)

The North Yorkshire town's historic Georgian Theatre is the venue for concerts from the likes of Ian Shaw and the first winner of the BBC Young Jazz Musician of the Year, Alexander Bone.

[www.richmond-jazz-festival.co.uk](http://www.richmond-jazz-festival.co.uk)

## LANCASTER JAZZ FESTIVAL

(SEPTEMBER 16-18)

At the core of the festival is a one-off specially curated event at the Dukes Theatre by artist in residence, saxophonist/composer Cath Roberts.

[www.lancasterjazz.com](http://www.lancasterjazz.com)

## TEIGNMOUTH JAZZ AND BLUES FESTIVAL

(SEPTEMBER 16-18)

Teignmouth has a new base for this year's festival – Pavilion Teignmouth – plus three more venues nearby. In addition the festival has a crowded and nicely varied programme with, among many others, Gilad Atzmon's Orient House Ensemble, Greg Abate, Kevin Grenfell's Slide by Slide, the Jake Leg Jug Band, Andrea Vicari and Steve Waterman, and Paul Towndrow.

[www.teignmouthjazz.org](http://www.teignmouthjazz.org)



John Shillito

## CONSERVING JAZZ

St. Audries Bay Holiday Club in Somerset has many claims to fame: longevity (it was founded over 80 years ago), conservation (it has been awarded the David Bellamy Gold Award for 12 years) and beauty (it is officially an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). The club also runs many themed weeks and weekends and on **September 23rd-26th** it's the turn of jazz. **St. Audries Bay Jazz Weekend** consists of eight sessions between Friday afternoon and late on Sunday, with Digby Fairweather's Half Dozen and John Shillito's Band and Select Four among the headliners.

[www.staudriesbay.co.uk](http://www.staudriesbay.co.uk)

## CALLANDER JAZZ AND BLUES FESTIVAL

(SEPTEMBER 30-OCTOBER 2)

The largest rural jazz and blues festival in Scotland has an extensive line-up including, among many others, Jazz Connection, the Revolutionaires, the Jive Aces, Winston's Pennine Jazz and Penman's Jazzmen.

[www.callanderjazz.com](http://www.callanderjazz.com)

## EFG LONDON JAZZ FESTIVAL

(NOVEMBER 11-20)

London Jazz Festival's list of iconic venues and international artists continues to grow and is impossible to cover in this sort of space, so stand by for further details separately in *Jazz Rag 143*.

[www.efglondonjazzfestival.org.uk](http://www.efglondonjazzfestival.org.uk)

## WEST COAST JAZZ

For the **29th Bude Jazz Festival (August 29th-September 2nd)** the organisers draw on a well established and much loved set of traditions.

Bude is one of those festivals that really makes a virtue of the Stroller ticket, with ten venues all within walking distance. A great part of the tradition is regional pride. The Bude area wins awards as a holiday destination with monotonous regularity and the Cornish theme is there at the festival in everything from the main sponsor, Tribute Cornish Pale Ale, to many of the band names. Alongside top-ranking national bands such as the Bateman Brothers, the West Country makes itself noticed with the Great Western Jazz Company, the Dart Valley Jazz Band, Dennis Armstrong's Western Jazz Band, the Wessex Big Band – and what could the two counties in the Two Counties Jazz Band be but Devon and Cornwall?

[www.jazzfestivalbude.co.uk](http://www.jazzfestivalbude.co.uk)



Bateman Brothers

## IDEAL VENUE

## The Herts Jazz Festival

**(September 16th-18th)** is one of those festivals that takes place entirely within one venue, but takes it over completely – in this case the

Hawthorne Theatre, Welwyn Garden City. *Jazz Rag's* Peter Vacher, writing elsewhere, praised the venue for everything from space to relax to quality of food. The jazz is pretty good, too, as you would expect from a festival programmed by Clark Tracey. Ten main concerts take place between Friday evening and Sunday evening, but the free performances in the foyer still feature musicians of the calibre of the Nigel Price Organ Trio and Dave Newton and Andy Cleynert as a duo. Taking part in the ticketed events are bands led by the likes of Julian Joseph, Derek Nash and Gilad Atzmon and tributes to Ernie Wilkins and Monk and Mingus.

[www.hertsjazzfestival.co.uk](http://www.hertsjazzfestival.co.uk)

Julian Joseph



## TRADITION AND INNOVATION

In many ways **Scarborough Jazz Festival (September 23rd-25th)** brings the delights of the traditional British seaside holiday: the old-fashioned elegance of the Spa complex, plenty of respectable boarding houses to stay in and a droll Northern comedian as compeere to make you feel at home. However, things are not all traditional: the Spa has been imaginatively modernised and that comic also plays assorted reed instruments and goes by the name of Alan Barnes. Alan's concert performances this year include joining with Steve Waterman and Mark Nightingale in a tribute to Henry Mancini and playing in a five-saxophone group with Dave O'Higgins. Also on the bill, among many others, are Liane Carroll, Alan Broadbent and Georgia Mancio, the Abstract Truth Big Band and Adam Glasser's South Africa and Beyond.

[www.scarboroughspa.co.uk](http://www.scarboroughspa.co.uk)



Alan Barnes

## WHITLEY BAY REMAINS!

## Mike Durham's Classic Jazz Party

**(November 4th-6th)** is the proof that, whatever happens in the rest of the UK, Whitley Bay remains firmly linked to Europe. The 30 or so musicians being deployed

in many different line-ups to re-create the best of classic jazz include Bent Persson and Jacob Ullberger from Sweden, Menno Daams from the Netherlands, Lars Frank and Martin Gunnar Larsen from Norway, Jean-Francois Bonnel and Henri Lemaire from France, Thomas Winkeler from Switzerland and Claus Jacobi from Germany. Add in Americans Duke Heitger, Andy Schumm, David Boeddinghaus, Jim Fryer and Josh Duffee and any number of top British players and you have a top quality list of musicians to play the music of Duke Ellington, Red Allen, Fats Waller, Don Redman, Hoagy Carmichael and the rest – not to mention Fred Elizalde. (Thanks to Patti Durham for pointing out that *Jazz Rag 141's* photograph of Fred Elizalde was in fact Adrian Rollini – our excuse is that Rollini played in the Elizalde band and it's a very nice photograph!)

[www.whitleybayjazzfest.org](http://www.whitleybayjazzfest.org)

Duke Heitger



Paul Jones

## THE HILLS ABOVE HUDDERSFIELD

Place being a key factor in the success of any jazz festival, the **Marsden Jazz Festival (October 7th-9th)** has the advantage of a compact and characterful setting – and takes full advantage of it with an excellent annual festival that galvanises the whole village. In the Pennines above Huddersfield, on the rail route to Manchester, Marsden has the Mechanics Hall at its centre – and it's also at the centre of the festival, together with the Royal British Legion Club. On top of that bars, pubs, schools and restaurants play their part. The opening concert at the Mechanics features Digby Fairweather's Half Dozen with Paul Jones in *Rocking in Rhythm*. Other festival headliners are Ben Crossland with a Jaco Pastorius tribute, Jazz Jamaica and the Impossible Gentlemen.

[www.marsdenjazzfestival.com](http://www.marsdenjazzfestival.com)



Miles Davis

### MILES DAVIS SEXTET DUKE ELLINGTON & HIS ORCHESTRA

#### THE COMPLETE JAZZ AT THE PLAZA

*Essential Jazz Classics*  
EJC55697 2 CDs 77.42/77.57

The music here was originally released as two albums. *Jazz at the Plaza* included the music from the Miles Davis Sextet and *Jazz at the Plaza Vol II*, that of the Duke Ellington Orchestra. Both were recorded at a party for Columbia Records in 1958. The Ellington was not released on Columbia until 1973.

This issue has the added bonus of eleven further tracks. Vocalists Jimmy Rushing and Billie Holiday are featured with Ellington. The Ellington bonus tracks (again live) date from November 1958 and the Miles Davis from 1958 and

surprises here, in terms of the quality of the performance, however, and it is good to have music available once again.

The music performed by the Ellington Orchestra includes his *Toot's Suite*, which was to be recorded a year or so later in the studio for the album *Duke Ellington Jazz Party*. This serves to introduce various orchestra members including Sam Woodyard, Britt Woodman, Jimmy Hamilton and Paul Gonsalves. This is an exciting performance, well-suited to a party atmosphere.

Other pieces include *El Gato* with Cat Anderson, Clark Terry and all the brass. This is in contrast to the Johnny Hodges feature on *All of Me*.

Jimmy Rushing is featured on *Go Away Blues*, *Hello Little Girl* and *Love to Hear My Baby Call My Name*.

1959 with Red Garland substituting for Bill Evans.

The Miles Davis Sextet is on good form. Opening with *If I Were a Bell*, Davis starts out up front but quickly moves off mic. This seems to make Coltrane's entry even more dramatic, if again occasionally off mic. Bill Evans sounds particularly energised and the whole performance is underpinned by the Paul Chambers and Jimmy Cobb rhythm section. The repertoire will be familiar to Davis fans and includes *My Funny Valentine*, *Bye Bye Blackbird*, *Bags' Groove Groove* and *Oleo*. Most are lengthy tracks of between eight and eleven minutes, as befits a live performance. As mentioned, the recorded sound is not the best, despite having been remastered. However, the recording was never originally intended for release. The liner notes make the point that this is a release 'for hardcore jazz fans only, due to its dubious sound quality'. No

Billie Holiday had recently recorded *Lady in Satin* and here performs *When Your Lover Has Gone* and *Don't Explain*. Two versions of *Take the A Train* are included and a short rendition of the Clark Terry theme *Jones*.

#### ALAN MUSSON

### MIKE WESTBROOK & COMPANY

#### A BIGGER SHOW LIVE

*ASC Records 162~163*  
52.20/59.10

*A Bigger Show* is really a jazz/rock oratorio, with Kate Westbrook using the image of the fairground as a point of departure. Mike Westbrook's score for the twenty-one piece ensemble includes three vocalists/actors, acoustic brass and saxophones, electronics and double rhythm

section. Kate Westbrook and vocalists Martine Walter and Billy Bottle are joined by established jazz musicians together with pop and rock musicians, classical players in the Uncommon Orchestra.

The scale and ambition of is breathtaking, the scale and scope of *Propositions* (the longest title here, a little over thirty minutes) is underlined by the quality of the improvisations, the consistently strong orchestrations and the sheer quality of the instrumentals. Yes, but--the quality of the instrumental aspect has to be offset against the vocals, which sometimes border on the theatre of the absurd. That is not to say that there is any incompetence; each vocal is of the highest quality but somehow one is left with a feeling that the vocals clash with the instrumental qualities.

#### GREG MURPHY

### MICHEL PETRUCCIANI

#### BOTH WORLDS LIVE

*Dreyfus Jazz 538192130 CD 1*  
59:44/DVD 59:44/CD2 30:38

The 4-years-old Michel Petrucciani, having seen Ellington on TV, demanded a piano of his own. By age 10, he had fallen under the spell of Bill Evans. When this concert was recorded the pianist was 36 and, by now, he had evolved a very personal approach that still retained traces of those early inspirations. Evans' influence was apparent in the clarity and fluency of Petrucciani's improvisations, whilst the latter's compositions use the instruments at his disposal to give colour and form to his music – surely evidence of his Ducal inheritance.

The first of these three discs benefits from: the impressive trumpeter Flavio Boltro, whose Clack Terry-like delivery on flugelhorn is a delight; virtuosic saxophonist Stephano Di Battista and trombonist Denis Leloup, a more than adequate bassist Anthony Jackson and the remarkable Steve Gadd on drums which suggests long familiarity and mutual respect.

The pianist's themes – six of them – are not always instantly accessible, but they are beautiful and worth a little effort, and the scoring for the horns serves to support and complement the pianist's contributions.

The second disc, a DVD of the same performance, is an eye-opener when you see the difficulties this wonderful performer had to contend with.

The final CD has an extended work by Petrucciani orchestrated for full symphony orchestra. The scoring is full of tone colours and dynamics but, to my ears, the pianist becomes a lone voice immersed in a wash of sound.

Lastly, there's a duet with drummer Steve Gadd – an absolute gem!

Despite my symphonic reservations, this is a fitting tribute to an exceptional artist.

#### HUGH LEDIGO

### ALICE TESCA

#### ALICE'S ROOM

*Azzura Music TR11215 48.41*

I never thought I would say it but I think there is too much jazz being released by the record companies. Or, rather, there is too much that purports to be jazz being released. And a very large percentage of it is rubbish or mediocre, at best. I have the uneasy feeling that anything which doesn't fall into the pop or classical categories gets labelled as jazz.

This record is astonishing. How could any A and R man with half an ear, pass this off, not only as jazz, but as music? This confirms my long held belief that present record company executives know very little about jazz.

The young lady is Italian, comely and is totally incapable of staying in tune. She talks most of the lyrics, probably because she can't find the notes, which, in any case, are intelligible because of her strong accent. Her technique, if that is what it is, on the high notes is to shriek them out and hope she hits them. Unfortunately, she misses every time.

Now I know that artists spend time and money getting on to record and so we owe them a listen, or, even, several listens, but

we can't be expected to take these circumstances into consideration when we are reviewing something like this. We owe it to our readers to warn them and this record should have come with a Government Health Warning.

She starts with a molesting of *If I were a Bell* which I can only describe as malicious and from then on, it's downhill all the way. All her performances are excruciating and her assault on *Nature Boy* and *Skylark* cannot be forgiven.

The backing quartet are completely capable and don't deserve to suffer.

Who knows? We may have another Florence Foster Jenkins on our hands.

Of course, I did listen to this in unfortunate circumstances-my CD player was working.

JOHN MARTIN

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Michel Petrucciani



Mike Westbrook



John Coltrane

## SIDNEY BECHET

## FOUR CLASSIC ALBUMS

*Avid Jazz AMSC 1189 2CDs*  
78:04/64:31

Born to a musical family in New Orleans at the very beginning of the jazz era, Bechet was almost alone in elevating the soprano saxophone to the status of an important solo voice in jazz. His career embraced childhood sessions with the legendary Freddie Keppard and a meeting in his last decade with the equally revered Charlie Parker.

Despite his formidable solo powers, and his associations so many of the big name of the 'thirties and 'forties, it seems that public recognition in the States was slow in coming which is no doubt why, in his latter years, he spent much of his time in France where he was truly appreciated.

This two-CD set offers forty-seven tracks from this last period of his life, although there are numerous alternative takes. French clarinetist Claude Luter is the nominal leader on most of these recordings, but there can be no doubt who the boss is. Bechet's powerful sound and incisive, no-nonsense style, together with his distinctive wide vibrato, dominate the proceedings. He has the lion's share of the solo space and, I imagine, dictates the choice of tune. There are some jazz standards including *Wolverine Blues* and *Royal Garden Blues* but the bulk of the material comes from Bechet's own pen as, I suspect, do the ever-present arrangements. Very little is left to

chance - so numbers sounding decidedly dance-band-ish. At times, too, the rhythm becomes a bit pedestrian. Bechet nevertheless blows happily and often lyrically throughout.

If you enjoy the revivalist jazz of the 'fifties, you will enjoy this.

## HUGH LEDIGO

JOHN COLTRANE  
QUARTET

## STOCKHOLM CONCERTS

*Solar Records 4596970*  
3 CDs, 76.40/60.28/61.11

This set documents part of Coltrane's first European tour as a leader, having left Miles Davis and formed his own quartet in April, 1960; after a period of development, he embarked on his first European tour in November 1962. This was the legendary quartet, with Coltrane on tenor and soprano saxophones, pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Jimmy Garrison and drummer Elvin Jones. All the titles were recorded at two concerts at the Konserthuset, Stockholm on November 19th, 1962.

The sheer power of Coltrane is illustrated on *I Want To Talk About You*, a fixture in the Coltrane repertoire at the time, where he explores the progressions of what was a fixture in the Billy Eckstine big band, with gentle explorations of the melodic theme. There are two versions of *Naima*, the first version longer than the second, both bringing out the melodic content of the composition, and there are explorations of

numbers that would soon disappear from the repertoire; *Bye Bye Blackbird* and *The Inchworm* are seemingly presented here as finished versions. Yet *Traneing In* and *Impressions* (two versions in each case) clearly have some development.

This is the first time that the selections have been issued in their entirety (although some titles appeared on long-unavailable vinyl issues) and individual titles are linked together, although not always successfully - the transitions are not always smooth. Sound quality is clear if inconsistent, but not to discourage the purchase of a landmark set.

## GREG MURPHY

## SVEND ASMUSSEN

THE INCOMPARABLE  
FIDDLER

*Storyville 108 8618 5 CDs, 1 DVD* 274.43

You'll have heard of Stéphane Grappelli and probably Stuff Smith among jazz violinists. But have you heard of Svend Asmussen from Denmark? You will most certainly do so if you buy this generous boxed set sampling his work during nearly a century. The CDs cover, in order: recordings from 1937 to 1944; studio recordings from Hamburg in 1953 and 1958; Svend Asmussen with Stéphane Grappelli in the mid-sixties; Svend with Stuff Smith from 1966 and 1985; and Svend's Quartet from 1996. The DVD captures a live session from the Jazzhus Montmartre in Copenhagen in 1986. Thus you get a full cross-section of Asmussen's playing. And as he was born in 1916, this set celebrates his hundredth year, during which he is still playing.

The first CD presents his quartet almost as entertainers more than jazz improvisers, with vocals and popular songs. In fact he switched from jazz to variety entertainer in 1943 but returned to jazz after the war. The album with Stéphane Grappelli illustrates the contrast between their respective styles. Svend is gentler and less assertive than Stéphane. Another contrast is exhibited in the recordings

with Stuff Smith, although some of Smith's abrasiveness seems to rub off on Svend.

The DVD is by a starry line-up, with a rhythm section of Kenny Drew, Niels-Henning Orsted Pedersen and Ed Thigpen. You should be able to buy these six discs for about £20 - a real bargain, especially if you want to explore Asmussen more deeply.

## TONY AUGARDE

THE ORIGINAL  
CHICO HAMILTON  
QUINTETCOMPLETE STUDIO  
RECORDINGS

*Phono 870249 79:34*

Chico Hamilton (1921-2013) was known for his exotic sounds, underscored by Buddy Collette (f, alto, ten, clt) Fred Katz (cello) Jim Hall (guitar) Carson Smith (bass) with Hamilton on drums. This remarkable group was probably best known for their brief appearance on *Jazz On A Summer's Day*, the Bert Stern-produced record of the 1958 Newport Jazz Festival.

It has an almost chamber-music flavour, with Fred Katz' sonorous cello outstanding on *My Funny Valentine* and *Gone With A Wind* (aka *When Your Lover Has Gone*) and Jim Hall's mellow guitar throughout, playing an important part. Whilst Hamilton was less celebrated in the drum world than, say, Art Blakey, he too surrounded himself with gifted young musicians to ensure the success of his music. One piece, *Blue Sands* was featured on the *Jazz On Summer's Day* soundtrack, both in a rehearsal and in performance.

As time progressed, Hamilton maintained a high standard both on recordings and in person. It isn't everyone who records a tribute to their late son; the turn-of-the-century *Forestorn* was a tribute to his late son, also called Chico, a moving set on the Koch label. Meanwhile, the present disc is reference back to a worthwhile musical period that may jog a few memories.

## GREG MURPHY

## DUKE PEARSON

## FOUR CLASSIC ALBUMS

*Avid Jazz AMSC 1198*  
2 CDs 80.49/81.32

Duke Pearson sadly seems to be a rather neglected figure these days. Back in the 1960's as a producer, he played a part in shaping Blue Note Records' hard-bop direction. However, he was also an accomplished pianist and composer. The music on offer here bears testament to his talent. The four albums are *Tender Feelin's*, *Byrd in Flight*, *Profile*, and *The Duke Pearson Quintet - Hush!* They were recorded during the period between 1959 and 1962.

*Tender Feelin's* from 1959 is a trio outing with Gene Taylor on bass and Lex Humphries at the drums and a mighty swinging affair it is too. The material is largely familiar standards including *I Love You* and *When Sonny Gets Blue*. Sound quality is good.

Pearson came to the attention of trumpeter Donald Byrd whilst working with the Art Farmer/Benny Golson Jazztet and subsequently joined the Donald Byrd-Pepper Adams Quintet. He recorded *Byrd in Flight* with the trumpeter in 1960. This is a more urgent affair than *Tender Feelin's*, comprising mostly originals from Byrd and Pearson plus the standard *Little Boy Blue*. The group was a quintet featuring Hank Mobley on tenor sax on three tracks and Jackie McLean on alto on three others, Doug Watkins and Reginald Workman sharing bass duties. The recorded sound is superlative.

*Profile* returns to the trio format and was actually recorded a little over a month before *Tender Feelin's* and the formula is much the same.

*Hush!* from 1962 represents the high point of this outstanding collection. Donald Byrd returns for all but two tracks and trumpeter Johnny Coles is added to all but one of the tracks. Bob Cranshaw is on bass and Walter Perkins behind the drums for another swinging outing. The repertoire is made up of originals in the hard-bop vein with *Angel Eyes* and *Out of this World* added for good measure. *Child's Play* by

Byrd is first-class. A joyous recording from beginning to end. As is customary with Avid releases, original artwork and liner notes are included.

## ALAN MUSSON

## FRANK STRAZZERI

## STRAZZATONIC

*Fresh Sound FSR-CD886*  
58:20/63:48

Frank Strazzeri (1930-2014) was an articulate jazz pianist known for his compositional skills and his work with Terry Gibbs, Herb Ellis, Red Mitchell and Harold Land.

The present album gathers together three albums *Taurus*, *Frames* and *After The Rain*, recorded between 1973 and 1975. Strazzeri composed all the titles and gathered the musicians for each session, including trumpeters Bobby Shew, Conte Candoli and Gary Barone, saxophonists Don Menza and Sam Most, bassist Harvey Newmark and drummers Steve Schaeffer and Dick Berk.

Strazzeri was house pianist, but unfortunately abandoned the acoustic instrument in favour of the Fender/Rhodes electric keyboard. He was not alone in this (Hampton Hawes caused a furore when he did the same thing) but what is obvious now, in retrospect, is the loss of individual tone causing his solo work to sound like any other pianist - it's the tone of the Fender which contributes to this dampening of Strazzeri's undoubted solo skills. So we are left with the trumpeters and saxophonists' talents to enliven the sessions and lament the loss of Strazzeri's craft on the acoustic piano.

## GREG MURPHY

## BILL EVANS

## SOME OTHER TIME

*Resonance Records HUD2019*  
2CDs 54:35/39:30

Oscar Peterson and Bill Evans might well be seen as the most influential stylists of their generation but where the former



Chico Hamilton

was extrovert and flamboyant, Evans' approach was introverted, esoteric even, when one considers the complexity of the freely improvised interplay he encouraged in his musicians.

These two CDs are the result of the Bill Evans' association with highly regarded German producer and sound engineer Hans Georg Brunner-Schwer (a benefit also conferred on Peterson). The resultant recording quality is excellent and the musicians are clearly relaxed - due, no doubt, to the convivial atmosphere described in the fulsome liner notes.

Evans employs his not inconsiderable technique to explore the harmonic and melodic potential of his material with an intensity that excludes all superfluous ornamentation and bravura displays. His command of his instrument gives him the flexibility to vary the time patterns within each phrase and play complex chord passages with effortless fluency. He clearly delights in exploiting the tonal qualities of his Steinway grand piano.

Eddie Gomez's contribution to the music is electrifying. One reviewer has described him as 'roving parallel to the piano'. Certainly he does not conform to the bassist's accustomed role yet, when the music needs to be underpinned, he is right there.

Jack de Johnette, when heard, is a like-minded and equally inventive drummer though, on these recordings, he seems unaccountably subdued.

Apart from the Evans' originals, the tunes are drawn from the standard repertoire: *My Funny Valentine* and *Green Dolphin Street*, for example, spiced with less familiar fare such as Bernstein's *Some Other Time*.

Beautiful music beautifully played.

## HUGH LEDIGO

JOHN GRAAS &  
ART PEPPERCOMPLETE SMALL  
GROUP SESSIONS

*Phono 870252 2 CDs,*  
78:23/75:13

I would not have expected to see an album linking together the names of Art Pepper and John Graas. This is actually a collection of the record dates in which they both took part. CD1 consists of two albums that were put out in the name of Graas. The 11 tracks of *Jazzmantics* would have warranted display of the Pepper name, since he is happily well-featured throughout. His wonderfully wailing alto enlivens scores by Graas of originals and standards for a nine-piece stellar line-up. Most appealing sections



Chico O'Farrill

for me are where Art cuts loose with just the rhythm section, as on *Jazz Overture*. As for the Graas French horn playing, well-employed in the 'fifties after the Davis/Evans cool innovations - he solos on every track, pleasantly enough, but it must be said that there have been better jazz exponents of this unwieldy instrument. I suspect the other eight performances came out as *Coop De Graas*, rather than *Coup* as illustrated, seeing the great tenorman Bob Cooper has the majority of solo space. *Swing Nicely* and *Walkin' Shoes* are standout tracks.

CD2 is, for me, largely like revisiting old friends from the past. That joyful jazz of the Shorty Rogers Giants was prominent in my youth, and it was good later on to meet and interview Art, Shorty, Bud Shank, Jimmy Giuffre, Bill Perkins, Shelly Manne and other West Coasters. These 14 tracks from '51 and '53 include two exquisite Pepper ballad features. *Over The Rainbow* brings to mind a stunning version by Art at the RFH in the 'seventies. Worthy statements are also made by the Giuffre tenor, Milt Bernhart on trombone and Hampton Hawes on piano. Not forgetting the unique Rogers trumpet everywhere.

The remainder of the CD has a three-part suite by Graas from 1958 that is partly 'impressionistic', but allows for some straight-ahead blowing from Art, but more so, enjoyably, by the Perkins tenor and trumpetman Jack Sheldon, who

collaborated well with Art elsewhere. Some vibes by Larry Bunker and Bob Enevoldsen's valve trombone also shine.

## LESTOMKINS

STEVE LANE'S  
FAMOUS SOUTHERN  
STOMPERS

## REMEMBERING STEVE LANE

Lake Records LACD 347

Fashions and times may come and go but Steve Lane seemed to go on forever. The trad boom of the 50's and 60's passed him by, or rather Steve passed it by. To him jazz shuddered to a halt around 1935.

There are two ways of looking at this kind of jazz. The first is to admire and praise Steve for his dedication to the jazz of the 1920's.: most would call it purist. The other viewpoint would be to accept that this was a music for its time and that we should move on. These 22 tracks were recorded between 1960 and 1970. They could just as easily have been recorded in 1927.

To his credit he didn't dig up the tired old warhorses. Number such as *Papa De Da Da*, *Zig Zag Rag* and *Mindin' My Business* are real finds and one can't fault the enthusiasm and commitment on display. There are, also, some fetching arrangements which seem to show that the bandleader's ideas weren't entirely frozen in time.

This is rugged take-no-prisoners stuff and it separates Steve's approach from the more laidback styles of Ken Colyer and Mike Danels, two like-minded accomplices with similar convictions.

Obviously, with such diehard beliefs he came over as a 'character' and characters belong in jazz. My admiration goes out to him for insisting his bands rehearsed weekly although, apparently, he paid them only spasmodically.

Three girl singers feature on five of the tracks of whom Pam White is the loudest. The ubiquitous banjo creates a uniformity of sound which becomes monotonous after a time. But the inclusion of the excellent Alex Revell on clarinet is a big plus. Five of the tracks are by Steve's Washboard band, YJM, and they are great fun.

Devotees of the music of the 20's will want to have this disc. One can't but be impressed by the Steve's honesty and energy. These is room for all kinds of styles and characters in jazz and Steve was, certainly, a character.

## JOHN MARTIN

## CHICO O'FARRILL

THE COMPLETE NORMAN  
GRANZ RECORDINGS

Malanga Music MM831  
2 CDs, 78:13/79:50

Before writing this review, I had to check out the remembered quality of Benny Goodman's 1949 *Undercurrent Blues*. It was written by Chico O'Farrill and was excellent. However, that is not a word I can apply very much to the content of this double album from the 'fifties. The sessions originate from the Verve label, owned by Norman Granz, whose name I associate with top-notch jazz, which is in extremely short supply here.

Eight opening tracks can only be described as Latin dance music, mostly in mambo vein, although some Kentonish blaring might put dancers off their stride. Then four tracks from a swing-type band are spiced by snippets of Flip Phillips' tenor, Bill Harris's

trombone and Roy Eldridge's trumpet. The eight Latin items that follow are annihilated by the unwelcome sound of a Portuguese singer, who seems to find his ramblings cause for some laughter.

Then a 16:45 Afro-Cuban suite is a meandering miscellany of tempos and styles, with only the Phillips tenor to arouse any interest.

CD2 brings another 23-track spate of average dance music, Latin or otherwise, with passing tastes of Phillips and others. Finally, there's 17:14 of another suite, performed by the Machito Orchestra. Names in the line-up raise hopes, but it takes four minutes of blasting and banging before Charlie Parker improvises for a minute. A slow-down leads to a gentle segment by Phillips, who delivers fast jazz a bit later, on which he is joined briefly by Bird. Buddy Rich has a drum display, away from all the clattering. Harry Edison is present, but the staid trumpet occasionally is not by him. Pointless, all in all, and not recommended, unless you're addicted to heavy bongoes, congas etc.

## LESTOMKINS

## DUKE ELLINGTON

## ROTTERDAM 1969

Storyville Records 1018444  
78:10

Edward Kennedy 'Duke' Ellington had a band almost continuously for forty-odd years. Furthermore, he enjoyed the allegiance of numerous high profile soloists, some of whom stayed with him for the duration.

If this were not achievement enough, the Duke became the most prolific and accomplished jazz composer, extending, developing and orchestrating his material in a manner akin to classical disciplines, without breaching the integrity of his chosen idiom.

All these elements are in evidence on this concert recording from 1969. Hodges and Carney, who joined the band in the twenties, are still there,

defining the unique sound of the Ellington sax section whilst Cat Anderson, Cootie Williams and Lawrence Brown are names inseparably linked with the orchestra's.

*La Plus Belle Africanine* is an intriguing example of the composer's extended compositions. Almost Arabic in flavour, it is sultry and atmospheric yet unquestionably jazz.

The programme includes many of Duke's biggest hits, though some are sandwiched into medleys: *Mood Indigo*, *Sophisticated Lady*, *It Don't Mean A Thing*. Others, including *Things Ain't What They Used to Be* and *Don't Get Around Much Anymore* become Hodges features.

Crowd raisers there are a-plenty; Paul Gonzalves' *Up Jump* and In *Triplicate*; Cat Anderson's screaming high-note *El Gato*; the entre band's *Rockin' In Rhythm*.

Vocalist Tony Watkins' brief appearance is to my ears, the only downer!

Really, for a band that had been on the road for so many years, this is a remarkable performance - a worthy monument to an institution nearing its end and never to come again.

## HUGH LEDIGO

## SARAH VAUGHAN

## LIVE AT ROSY'S

Resonance Records HCD-2017  
2 CDs, 40:48/46:18

As in other cases, live shows were always the best way to hear the divine Sarah. And this is one of the best examples of her uninhibited live performance, recorded in May 1978 at a New Orleans club called Rosy's, backed superbly by her regular trio of Carl Schroeder, Walter Booker and Jimmy Cobb.

It is hard to pick highspots amid the near-90 minutes of the 20 tracks here. At age 54, with 12 of her 48 career years to go, I have never heard her more outgoing, creative and inspired. Within the opening three tracks, she indulges in initial spells of her exuberant brand of scatting. Her contrasting

restraint on *Time After Time* is wholly admirable. The peak of the ballads heard here has to be an early outing by her on a major show tune of that era, *Send In The Clowns*. This is an object lesson in masterly, moving interpretation.

I cannot recall having encountered so much in the way of vocal variations and instrumental interplay as on her second set here. Her up version of *Man I Love* has scat fours with pianist Carl and a chorus merging scat and lyrics. Her manner of swinging and savouring the words of *Watch What Happens* really enchants. *I Could Write A Book* is a riot of sounds, culminating in a wittily repeated phrase. The ultra-expressive *Everything Must Change* is both soaring and surprising. Sarah's climax is *My Funny Valentine* with piano only, and her phrasing gives totally new life to the song, with vivid word-play in her powerful enactment of it. What a voice, what a talent she had.

## LESTOMKINS

## OSCAR PETTIFORD

## SIX CLASSIC ALBUMS

Avid Jazz AMSC 1201  
79.12 / 77.03

As its title suggests, Avid's double CD assembles six of Pettiford's 1950s 'name' albums culled from labels as various as Debut, French Swing, Bethlehem and ABC-Paramount. Pettiford (1922-1960) had gained fame as the bassist with Duke Ellington from 1945 to 1948, having already formed up with the emerging boppers on 52nd Street, and was clearly an impressive (if temperamental) figure with a virtuoso's command of his instrument. By the time of these albums, Pettiford had also begun to perform as a cellist, often over-recording cello solos while still carrying the rhythmic weight on bass.

His associates here are all out of the top drawer, the writing (mostly by Pettiford himself) pleasingly open, the instrumentation often distinctive. His New Sextet from 1953 opens the collection, with Charles Mingus playing bass on this occasion, Pettiford tracking him on cello and soloing in facile



Oscar Pettiford

BRENDA BOYKIN  
AND JAN LULEY TRIO

## SEE YA LATER

Gema Luley Music  
LC 9346. 70.06

fashion. The voicing for French horn (Julius Watkins) and Phil Urso's Pres-influenced tenor saxophone has a Tristano-like clarity: the material largely Pettiford's. Nothing too startling perhaps; worthy rather than compelling. Three months on, Al Cohn replaces Urso and Kai Winding is on trombone, with Max Roach on drums, Pettiford moving from bass to cello as the music dictates, Tal Farlow on guitar. Livelier overall, these six tracks precede a quintet session with Charlie Rouse on tenor and Watkins again, Gerry Mulligan's *Sextette* a very spirited piece, Rouse in flying form, the overall effect cool rather than hot.

*Basically Duke* combines several Ducal pieces re-imagined by Pettiford with a stellar cast including the Ellingtonians, Clark Terry and clarinetist Jimmy Hamilton. As might be imagined, these bristle with creative zest. The justly celebrated *Oscar Pettiford Orchestra in Hi-Fi Volumes One and Two* complete Avid's assembly, this augmented ensemble including trumpeter Ernie Royal and tenorist Lucky Thompson plus a harpist. Sadly, Avid's booklet listing incorrectly attaches the personnel from *Basically Duke* to both these sessions. The notes help but clearly something is amiss here but don't be deterred for these sessions represent a highpoint for Pettiford - if not for Avid's compilers!

## PETER VACHER

Brenda Boykin is a veteran black singer from the West Coast of America who has, for some time, been gaining a solid reputation singing around the world in various clubs and festivals, including the Monterey Jazz and Blues Festivals and the San Francisco Festival. In 2004 she relocated to Wuppertal in Germany and is now resident there. She is predominantly a blues singer with a powerful voice and an extensive range but she is equally comfortable in the jazz field.

Jan Luley is a German pianist who is a master of all styles of traditional piano, barrelhouse, boogie woogie, stride, blues and New Orleans where he has immersed himself in the music of that city and sat in with the best. He is, also, an accomplished exponent of Latin American music and an in-demand accompanist who has backed many American singers.

The pair are often teamed for club and festival engagements and they work well together. This is one of their fairly recent studio sessions, and, if it lacks the presence of a live audience, which is where she really scores, then it still is a pretty commendable

exposition of classy New Orleans and swing repertoire.

Four inclusions are Ellington tunes and, although she does seem to have some trouble with the 'doo waa' phrasing on *It Don't Mean a Thing* (it is difficult to get right) she lets the guitarist take care of that. But she, certainly, knows her way around the Duke's music. Her interpretation of *Mood Indigo*, sung very legato, is the best version of that song that I have heard.

The overall atmosphere of the session is resolutely buoyant. The pianist is as much the star of the session as the singer although the piano is a little over-recorded in parts.

Boykin is very safe with the blues and is superb on the one gospel number, *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*, drawing on her childhood roots as a member of a gospel choir in her home town, Oakland.

Even the questionable choice of Bill Haley's infamous, *See You Later, Alligator* is given fresh animation with a R and B styling.

There is nothing particularly outstanding here. Just solid, enjoyable jazz played by artists who are good at what they do.

JOHN MARTIN

### BUNKY GREEN

PLAYIN' FOR KEEPS

Phono 870248 73.52

Alto-saxophonist Green (born 1935) has always been at the forefront of Chicago modern jazz, an impassioned player fit to stand comparison with other post-bop stylists like Greg Osby and Steve Coleman. Indeed, he is said to have been an influence on these innovators. Originally inspired by Charlie Parker and mindful of Sonny Stitt, he played with Charlie Mingus and has honed an approach to the alto that combines an edgy tone with exemplary instrumental fluency, this informed by a canny harmonic command, while making quite a parallel career for himself in education.

Phono have duplicated an earlier Lone Hill Jazz reissue with this

collation of a pair of his early albums *Playin' for Keeps* and *Testifyin' Time*, both recorded in the mid-1960s on Argo, the Chicago label. By and large these are quartet pieces, Green front and centre with pianists Billy Wallace and Willie Pickens featured. While it would be misleading to suggest that these soulful readings of familiar standards and originals are ground-breaking in any way, they certainly bear detailed examination. In later years Green went on to record easy-on-the-ear pop and Latin material while still pleasing hard-core followers with a scattering of more demanding releases. Here, though, he's on superior form, blowing hard, sounding good, a man knows his stuff, that's for sure. *Step High*, a single holdover from an even earlier album features the nimble piano of Wynton Kelly and is quite splendid, Green flying all over the horn and wailing fervently. Interesting.

PETER VACHER

### SARAH VAUGHAN AND HER TRIO

SWINGIN' EASY + AT MISTER KELLY'S

Essential Jazz Classics  
EJC55698 148:36 2 CDs

How to hear Sarah Vaughan at her best? Vaughan with lush orchestral arrangements or Vaughan the supper club singer with trio accompaniment? This Essential Jazz Classics double CD package focuses on the latter format, and it reaffirms Vaughan as a voice of unparalleled quality. No fewer than forty seven tracks, with a running time just short of two and a half hours, combining two LPs – *Swingin' Easy* and *At Mister Kelly's* – plus thirteen bonus sides recorded live for radio broadcast at Zardi's Jazzland and Birdland, makes this a 'must have' album.

*Swingin' Easy* comprises the eight cuts from the 1954 10" LP Images and five from the 1957 Valentine's Day NYC studio date with Jimmy Jones and Richard Davis replacing pianist John Malachi and bassist Joe Benjamin respectively. Drummer Roy Haynes can be heard on all



tracks. Vaughan's invention, her voice a bebopping instrument, is at its best throughout not least on *Shulie a Bop* and the joyous *If I Knew Then (What I Know Now)*.

Twenty one tracks account for *At Mister Kelly's*, recorded live at the Chicago club over three dates in August, 1957. Vaughan connects with the audience on this example of the early days of the 'live' LP recording. Sassy inadvertently disturbs a mic midway through Jimmy Jones' solo on *Willow Weep for Me*: cue suppressed laughter with our vocalist in confessional mood singing 'I've really fouled-up this song' adding 'They'll probably use that one'. Vaughan couldn't have imagined that it would indeed make the final cut!

This two-CD showcase of late-night Sarah Vaughan backed only by a rhythm section of piano, bass and drums is a delight from beginning to end.

RUSSELL CORBETT

### DEXTER GORDON

FOUR CLASSIC ALBUMS – SECOND SET

Avid Entertainment AMSC  
11992 2 CDs 79.42/76.20

Let me get the curmudgeonly bit out the way first. I can't quite work out why anyone would plump for this over the 'real thing' – that is, those Van Gelder Remasters which are still available at cheap as chips prices,

with jewel-case sized cover art and intriguing afterthought reflections by Bob Blumenthal included in their quality packaging. However, if Avid's Four Classic Albums series is your thing, then there's no need to pursue this argument further.

Onto the music: these are the Dexter albums that everyone knows and which every self-respecting jazz fan should already own (C'mon Spillett, stop that griping!), souvenirs from his second act, the glorious early Sixties re-emergence which saw the veteran bopper embraced by a new audience, as well as doing a little borrowing back from men who'd superseded him, like Coltrane and Rollins.

*Doin' Alright* wasn't just an album title – it was a progress report. Dexter was back, doing what he'd done before, only better. Listen to the groove-blues that is *Society Red* or the bel-canto feast he makes of *You've Changed*. Disc one is completed by *Dexter Calling*, a quartet set to rank with the finest in jazz from the era. Somewhat centred on Gordon's score for the the controversial play *The Connection*, the mood here is more modish, with themes like *Soul Sister* and *Modal Mood* revealing the tenorist's knack for getting inside jazz fashion without surrendering his own identity. Best of all, it includes the all-Dexter showcase *Smile*, a saxophone solo every jazz musician ought to hear.

Disc Two unites the August 1962 masterpieces that are *Go* and *A*

*Swingin' Affair*, pairing the leader with a tight trio headed by tragic piano genius Sonny Clark. The first album – with its definitive accounts of *Cheesecake* and *Love for Sale* – is genuine *Desert Island Discs* stuff. Its follow-up is equally as enticing (check out the opener *Soy Califa*). Indeed, Gordon himself once proclaimed *Go* his greatest recording. 'A classic', was his no-bull appraisal of the date. No arguments there. So forget the remastering and the charmless repackaging, get this for the car and head for the open road. Glorious stuff.

SIMON SPILLETT

### STAN GETZ QUARTET WITH MOSE ALLISON

THE SOFT SWING

Phono 870254 76.57

The minor torrent of Getz releases seems never to abate and that is fine by me. Pianist Mose Allison had only recently broken through at the time of this album recording, made for Verve in July 1957, and worked for Getz for just a few months before setting out on his own. Happily, this recording reveals Getz in imperious form, positively flying on the opening *All The Things You Are* with Allison belying his reputation as blues-oriented backwoodsman and playing nimble boppish piano. In reality, this Getz-Allison collaboration seems in retrospect to have been made in heaven, over all too soon but wonderfully worthwhile while it lasted.

Bassist Addison Farmer, trumpeter Art's twin brother, and

drummer Jerry Segal work their socks off to make the whole session a success, swinging hard, the entire quartet as one as Getz soars and the ideas just flow. There can be few finer sounds on tenor-saxophone than that offered by Getz when at full tilt as he is here. Only the first five tracks are from the original album, a further eleven tracks were culled from broadcasts, some with different bassists and drummers. All merit inclusion and the album is a joy, one's pleasure completed by a decent booklet.

PETER VACHER

### BOOKER ERVIN/HORACE PARLAN

COMPLETE 4TET/5TET/6TET RECORDINGS

Phono 870251 3 CDs  
71.21/76.33/72.24

In a typical Phono mash-up, here's one of those 'complete' boxed sets that may lead you to believe you're hearing the entire output of a regular working band. Spoiler alert; you're not. While Ervin and Parlan did co-head an outfit in and around New York in the early 1960s, the albums heard here, made for four different labels between 1960 and '63, with varying personnel and certain stylistic shifts, were never intended to be viewed as a collective body of work. Parlan's dates, which include the woefully underrated Johnny Coles on trumpet and Grant Green adding his piquant guitar work, are altogether more orderly (as per the Blue Note rationale) while



Ervin's (taped for Savoy, Candid and Prestige) are looser and rely heavily on the leader's ability to conjure spirited music from very basic resources. That said, all the playing heard here is wonderfully atmospheric. At a time when Trane and Rollins ruled the roost, Ervin succeeded in sounding like neither, making the most of a vocabulary steeped in vocalisations and mesmeric repetition. Parlan was a perfect partner: partially paralysed by childhood polio, his style was all about rich left hand chords and pithy right hand licks. As a composer too, he could build majestic things from the simplest of ideas. Try *Up and Down*, a theme that is as catchy as it is basic, and which prompts all hands into some magnificent soloing.

For the record, the albums included are; *Cookin', That's It!* and *Exultation* (Ervin) and *Up and Down* and *Happy Frame of Mind* (Parlan). It's also worth mentioning that as current EU copyright law draws the public

domain line at December 1962 and this set includes plenty of material from after that date (some of it not issued until the 1970s), it may be wise to pick it up as soon as you see it. One last thing: Winifred Atwell would have loved whoever tuned the piano on the Savoy session.

SIMON SPILLETT

### HERB HALL

OLD TYME MODERN

Sackville SKCD2 – 3003 39.53

I've known this album since it first emerged in 1970 on Sackville, a label then owned by John Norris and Bill Smith in Canada and now taken over by Bob Koester's Delmark Records in Chicago. Nothing has changed since then. Hall was the younger brother of the rather better known Ed Hall, and a clarinettist too, thus inviting the inevitable comparison with his sibling. His tone is less throaty than Ed's and there's less adventure or zest in his playing stance. Still with a stellar rhythm headed by pianist Claude Hopkins, with bassist Arvell Shaw, and drummer Buzzy Drootin in tow, he flies, generating interest on all ten tracks.

As the album title implies, Hall's values are those of the swing era, but set in a neat context, these mostly familiar pieces the ideal vehicle for his free-flowing individuality. Nothing fancy, just clearly articulated, relaxed playing, hot in the old sense, always poised but with hints of his Louisiana origins in the stylistic approach. *Crying My*



*Heart For You* taken at ballad tempo is a gem as is the stompy *Swinging Down Shaw's Hall*. It's good, too, to hear Hopkins at length: better known as a swing era bandleader, he solos and supports admirably here, his interventions flavoured by stride but always executed with a proper sense of form and shape. Delightful music, strong in a nice way. Good to have it back.

PETER VACHER

## TEDDY EDWARDS

## THE INIMITABLE TEDDY EDWARDS

*Xanadu Master Edition 906087 41.19*

During what were widely supposed to be the 'dark ages' for acoustic jazz, the 1970s, when everyone was either supposed to plug in or freak out, there were a few brave producers who simply ignored trends and stuck to their guns. At Pablo, the resurgent Norman Granz took up where he'd left off at Verve, creating latter-day studio classics by Peterson, Fitzgerald, Eldridge and others. Don Schlitten was another. Having moved from Prestige, through Cobblestone and Muse, he started the Xanadu label in the mid-1970s, largely with the aim of capturing talents that might otherwise have gone unrecorded. Teddy Edwards was an ideal candidate. Regarded by some as the first true bop tenor ('Do you realize that you changed the course of history?,' Fats Navarro once told him) and a veteran of a string of classy albums for the Contemporary label in the late 1950s/early 1960s, by the 1970s he was something of a forgotten man. However, albums like this, a solid 1976 quartet set featuring another unsung bopper Duke Jordan, aimed squarely to redress the balance. Make no mistake, there is nothing especially earth shattering here, nor as newsworthy as Dexter Gordon's contemporaneous 'comeback' discs, but that's the point; Edwards hadn't changed a jot during the Coltrane-era, so that anyone familiar with his earlier work will find this a very welcome coda. As well as the leader's juicy-toned playing, Jordan is in fine fettle, his elegant

solioing on *Mean to Me* a reminder of his stylistic debt to Teddy Wilson. Mark Gardner's original sleeve notes (reproduced in a high-quality booklet housed in one of the most frustrating jewel case designs ever) make great play for Edwards' unaccompanied intro to *Stella By Starlight* being the album's high spot, but for this listener it's the clear-eyed, tough-but-tender version of *Imagination* on which Teddy calls the best shots. Unpretentious, straight-forward and not requiring the listener to do anything especially cerebral in order to appreciate its merits, this is a timeless, no-frills album which could well introduce a new generation of listeners to Edward's quiet artistry. Recommended.

SIMON SPILLETT

## CECIL PAYNE &amp; DUKE JORDAN

BROOKLYN BROTHERS

*Elemental Music Xanadu Master Edition Series 906089 38:06*

Brooklyn born Cecil Payne and Duke Jordan were life-long brothers in jazz. This Xanadu Records' session reunited the bop pioneers on a studio date for the first time in more than a decade. Jordan had been working in some of New York's many bars as a solo pianist or in a duo with a bassist, whilst Payne toured with numerous big bands including Hampton, Gillespie and Basie. Bassist Sam Jones and a young Al Foster were recruited for this Don Schlitten-produced 1973 recording.

The co-leaders each brought three of their own compositions to the recording date in New York City, and two standards – *I Should Care* and *I Want to Talk About You* – clock in at nine minutes, adding precious listening time to an otherwise parsimonious offering. *Jordu* and *Jazz Vendor* feature Payne's fleet baritone work encouraged by an enthusiastic Foster with Jones the steadying influence. Payne's flute playing is heard on the swinging *Cerupa* as Jordan takes the honours with a fine solo.

It should be noted that much of

the material was written many years before this seventies' recording date. Perhaps the Brooklyn Brothers of the title of this recording were content to revisit former glories without seeking to reinvent the jazz wheel. That the album played a part in securing further recording dates is to be celebrated and this Elemental reissue will find a home in many a collection.

RUSSELL CORBETT

## RAY BRYANT

FOUR CLASSIC ALBUMS

*Avid Entertainment AMSC 11902 2 CDs 79.17/73.59*

Bryant's progress from new star to near pop star is effectively retold in this reissue. One of the most promising of the post-Powell wave of pianists to emerge in the 1950s, after work with, among others, Sonny Rollins, Miles Davis and Dizzy Gillespie, Bryant had the good fortune to score a commercial hit with *Little Susie* in 1960. Things were never quite the same after that, with *Susie's* gospel strains hanging round the pianist's neck like an albatross from then on.

Indeed, programmed chronologically, these four albums tell a familiar story. Bryant's Columbia debut from 1956 is a typical first album stuff, mixing established jazz standards (*Night In Tunisia, Well You Needn't*) with then current pops (*Cry Me A River*) and catchy originals (*Cubano Chant*), all the while showcasing the pianist's canny mix of bop and swing influences. The next album, *Alone With The Blues*, a masterful soliloquy based around the oldest musical resource in jazz, is perhaps the strongest thing on these discs, and offers a programme that defies category: there's truly something for all stylistic tastes here. Intriguingly, its final number, *Stocking Feet*, sounds like a blue print for *Little Susie*, the first track on Bryant's next album. The remainder of the *Susie* session is surprisingly less tethered to fashion, mixing a catholic repertoire moving from *Greensleeves* to a nice, slightly tongue-in-cheek nod to Garner on *Misty*.

However, Bryant's unexpected chart success led to the inevitable: an attempt to package his gifts for the easy-listening market, as documented on the final *Hollywood Jazz Beat* LP, a 1962 session dripping with saccharine string writing and a playlist that includes such unpromising jazz vehicles as *An Affair To Remember* and the *Theme from El Cid*. To his credit, Bryant cuts through the gloom where he can, but the tracks come and go without making much of an impression and it's hardly top-drawer stuff.

A friend of mine toured with Bryant in the 1970s and remembers by that point the pianist had become almost a pastiche of himself, a tragedy given the creative ability he shows on much of this compilation. Three quarters of this set is first-class piano jazz. Buy it for that.

SIMON SPILLETT

## MILES DAVIS QUINTET WITH JOHN COLTRANE

THE LEGENDARY 1960 EUROPEAN TOUR

*Solar Records 4569971 3 CDs 234:06*

All surviving recorded music, with the exception of the Paris and Stockholm concerts, of the Miles Davis-John Coltrane European tour of 1960 presented in its entirety for the first time on CD is a challenging proposition for the most ardent fan and perhaps an endurance test for others. Almost four hours' worth of music, spanning twenty three tracks, recorded in six cities during late March/early April, this three CD set is an historic aural account of on and off stage tensions and the imminent disintegration of a legendary ensemble.

There is the opportunity to compare and contrast six versions of *So What*. The music is as one would expect – of exceptional quality. However, the quality of the recordings is quite another matter. At one venue the sound quality is good, at another not so good, and that is being kind! That said, it really doesn't



matter that Wynton Kelly sounds as though he was in another concert hall and Paul Chambers and Jimmy Cobb were stuck in a corridor. The main protagonists – Davis and Coltrane – are, for the most part, recorded to better effect. On two versions of *'Round Midnight* Miles signals a coming change, showing a disregard for the melody, and Trane, in brilliant form, plays like a man possessed. Interestingly, the audience responds positively to his extended tenor solos.

For contractual reasons Davis opted out of an appearance in Düsseldorf. The concert date went ahead without him, effectively as the John Coltrane Quartet, and the performance is noticeably a more relaxed affair with Stan Getz sitting in on *Moonlight in Vermont*.

*The Legendary 1960 European Tour* is one for the dedicated fan of Davis and/or Coltrane and should be heard by anyone interested in the period and subsequent developments.

RUSSELL CORBETT

## ANNETTE WARREN

THERE'S A MAN IN MY LIFE

*Fresh Sound FSR-CD 885 2 CDs, 79:23/79:20*

This is a collection of 59 vocal performances, 90 per cent of which I would rather not have heard, even though they're quite short. Annette Warren was employed to dub the songs for supposed non-singing stars on various films. The CD notes are effusive, and she's a nice-looking lady, as per photos, but I can only report on what I hear.

On CD1, in the 'forties, the initial handicap is the quality of the

songs – they are mostly very corny, some downright bad, reducing her efforts to sheer tedium. When she gets to *Am I Blue?*, some expression is evident. On track 12, the first up-tempo item, *I Never Knew* is given some kind of groove aided by the piano of Paul Smith (whom she later married) and a Marshal Royal clarinet solo. After that it's downhill all the way to track 30, despite efforts on her part to raise the level.

As for CD2, in the 'fifties, the corniness goes on, almost unabated, and at the start Annette seems to be trying to imitate Eartha Kitt, not too well. Twelve tracks are the title album, that the note describes as 'critically-acclaimed'. Well, not by this critic. It's more mediocrity, mainly. You can't really hurt *More Than You Know*, but a prime example of how to kill a good song is *Suddenly It's Spring*. She tries to swing *Dearly Beloved*, to no avail.

The fact is that, in spite of her associations with quality musicians, on this evidence this lady is not a jazz singer. In latter years she virtually gave up singing for teaching, but the note says new projects include a CD. Well, I sincerely hope the years have been lessons for her.

LES TOMKINS

## STAN GETZ

MOMENTS IN TIME KEYSTONE KORNER

*Resonance Records HCD2020 56.16*

Back in 1975 Stan Getz was looking over his shoulder at a posse of young tenor players inspired by the radical ideas of

John Coltrane and who were catching up on him and other older players. These new upstarts were seeking new directions and were uninterested of the older styles. The new prophet was Coltrane. But the wayward Getz was not about to let them overtake him.

Never one to dodge a challenge, (remember the *Focus* and *Bossa Nova* albums?) the tenorist was up for a shot at the new approach.

This album is a record of Getz's week's stay at the Keystone Korner club in San Francisco in May 1976 during the tenorist's exploratory period (1975 to 1977) into the burgeoning movement. It is very different from anything which he had delivered previously.

His hiring of the advanced, and highly respected, pianist Joanne Brackeen to the new departure was a clever choice but he was, also, shrewd in taking the rest of Brackeen's trio, Clint Houston on bass and Billy Hart on drums, into the mix. Those three were a ready-made entity with an impressive familiarity of new concepts. Getz was set in his foray into this unfamiliar form.

Brackeen is hugely effective, as she throws out angular phrases and idiosyncratic chords to the leader. Getz sounds comfortable. His tone is cutting and abrasive and his lines are clipped and blunt; far from his usual immaculate style. Yet these are played with a conviction that displays that he was always available for, and adaptable to, change. Houston and Hart are old hands at cutting edge music and throw themselves, enthusiastically, into the new experiment.

The material is eclectic and has compositions by Silver, Ellington, Gillespie, Shorter and our own Kenny Wheeler. Shorter's *Infant Eyes* and Wheeler's *Cry of the Wild Goose* are remarkable renditions of these excellent tunes.

Hearing this, the conclusion must be that Getz could have easily made it in the avant-garde. The performances, here, are exciting and provocative and, if it is not the Getz we are familiar with, then it does show that he was

open to fresh ideas and, more than that, to putting his personal imprint on whatever he tackled, rather like the way that both Coleman Hawkins and Benny Goodman took bebop in their strides.

It is a question of musicality.

JOHN MARTIN

## CHARLES MCPHERSON

BEAUTIFUL!

*Xanadu 906083 50.33*

This is another in the newly reconstituted Xanadu series, a reissue (with an additional track not included on the original LP) of a 1975 session teaming altoist McPherson with pianist Duke Jordan, with Sam Jones on bass and drummer Leroy Williams. The booklet carries the original notes by Mark Gardner as well as Todd Panken's 2015 update and it's the latter's essay based on a recent conversation with McPherson which reveals that the altoist 'became preoccupied with Parker at age 14'. This is supported in his playing throughout this fine session, made when he was 36, the influence of Parker quite evident although filtered happily through McPherson's own mastery of the idiom, an added signal that Bird was best coming with the presence of one-time Parker pianist Jordan.

It's only fair to McPherson to point that he was no slavish imitator; rather that his tone bears comparison with Bird, although the fact that many of tracks are taken at ballad tempo, rather precludes any need for startling complexities or fireworks, even if *Lover* and *It Had To Be You* do get quite hectic treatment with McPherson's solos a model of fluent thought and execution.

This is just highly palatable boppish jazz, alto at the centre, the fund of ideas always pleasing, with Jordan's improvisations like a glimpse of clarity and logic. I liked *It Could Happen To You* best, Jordan's solo a quiet gem. Good to have this back in the catalogue.

PETER VACHER

## WAITING FOR BUDDY GUY: CHICAGO BLUES AT THE CROSSROADS

ALAN HARPER

University of Illinois Press, paperback, 978 0 252 08157 6, £12.99

Alan Harper is a British journalist and magazine editor. He is also a blues fan and an anorak of massive proportions, as an appendix to *Waiting for Buddy Guy* reveals: a listing of every blues gig he attended in his visits to Chicago in 1979, 1982 and 1985. The book focuses on the second of those visits when, according to the list and my uncertain mathematics, Harper listened to the blues live on 88 evenings during a 114-day stay – usually in two or three different clubs each night!

He planned, he tells us in his Epilogue, to write an epitaph for the blues, but somehow it all seemed too complicated to get down on the page and the book remained unwritten, only to surface over 30 years later as something more personal, mostly a wonderfully wide-ranging series of short interviews with denizens of the blues in Chicago. He talked to bluesmen (Jimmy Dawkins, Fenton Robinson, Hip Linkchain, Luther Allison, across the generations with Carey and Lurrie Bell) and failed to talk to others such as the easily bored Junior Wells who wanted money for an interview. As for the title of the book, that derives from the disparity between the number of times Buddy Guy was billed at the club he co-owned, the Checkerboard, and his actual performances – mostly he preferred simply holding court in the club. In the last chapter proper of the book, Harper got to hear Buddy Guy – and it was worth the wait!

Besides bluesmen Harper interviewed an impressive cross-section of Chicago blues society: Pervis Spann, the Blues Man, broadcasting on WXOL; Amy O'Neal of *Living Blues*; Ralph Metcalfe, Jr., local politician and blues fan; Theresa Needham, owner of the oldest blues club in Chicago; Bob Koester, founder of

Delmark Records; and many more. Plenty of vivid, even eccentric, characters there, none more so than Big Bill Hill, one-time blues promoter, manager and disc jockey, now officially done with the devil's music and greeting Harper in his boarded up store-front church.

The personal stories are the strength of the book, but Harper relates to his original intention from time to time. In 1982 things were changing: the last of the old-time bluesmen from the South were dying out, many black bluesmen preferred working in the blues clubs on the predominantly white North Side rather than the often dangerous South Side; clubs were closing, Theresa's Lounge, for instance, only surviving till 1983. It's also interesting to read about the new generation of the early 1980s, Sugar Blue, for instance, with real star appeal, trailing the glory of recording with the Rolling Stones. In 2016 he seems to be still working, but the headline shows and CD releases have been pretty sparse over the last 20 years.

Harper's Epilogue doesn't add a lot, with a rather incongruous account of hearing a young white Englishman, Thomas Ford, singing the blues in a West Country pub, but the appendices, with notes and brief biographies of all the bluesmen referred to, give weight to the anecdotal main text.

RON SIMPSON

### MELODY GARDOT

LIVE AT THE OLYMPIA, PARIS

Decca/Eagle Vision 102:00

The remarkable story of Melody Gardot is well-documented, but worth retelling. Already a performer on piano, at 19 in 2003 she was cycling in Philadelphia when hit by a car, causing serious head and spine injuries. During a year in hospital confined to lying on her back, her slow recovery included learning guitar and writing songs as part of her therapy. Her initial albums in 2008 and 2009 revealed a beguiling, jazzy singing style and a talent for creating novel-sounding vocal material. In 2015, *Currency Of Man* was released, evidencing



a move to a more 'funky' vein than previously. This DVD, recorded in live concert at the Paris Olympia, presents performances taken from the latter album, backed by seven musicians rather than the larger line-ups on the CD.

Visually, it's an atmospheric scene. The hall, which has seen massive jazz events in the past, is packed out. This reflects her very evident popularity in France – the 2015 release apparently charted at No.5, and the two preceding at Nos. 3 and 4. So a joyous reception is assured as Ms Gardot strides onstage, resplendent in a black wide-brimmed hat and matching suit. The audience's indulgence means that only eleven items performed in one hour and forty minutes is no problem, a huge ovation following each extended episode.

Melody's first four songs, all couched in a similar medium groove, concern relationship problems. Clearly, her relations with the musicians are fine, as she allows them very ample solo space. The most listenable of them is altoist Irwin Hall, while some tenor wailing during *Bad News* leads to some less palatable sounds. Some time is spent by her chatting volubly, mainly in French, to the people. A source of impatience for this viewer is also the repetitive nature of some of the ensemble passages.

At item five on the programme, she puts down her guitar and moves to an open-fronted upright piano. After another spate of French chatter, the bass player has a freewheeling unaccompanied solo, including use of the bow. When the band

plays a drawn-out theme and someone blows alto and tenor simultaneously, I deduce from the DVD box that this is *March For Mingus*. The Gardot contribution is piano touches and some high-range chanting sounds. She seems to be enjoying herself immensely. The big applause after a chaotic close says the spectators loved it too.

Some shorter pieces provide respite and contrast. *Les Etoiles* is a jaunty Gallic song, with an authentic feel and some nice clarinet, which the crowd happily clap along to. An ultra-slow ballad, *Baby, I'm A Fool* falls comfortably on the ears.

A personal favourite recent MG song is *Preacherman*, and it has deservedly been a hit single. A steady build-up leads into a definite swing, driven by Melody at her most powerful, and features some storming guitar (not by her). The Olympia fans display their familiarity by joining in a chant element. This climax sparks some protracted, insistent applause. The inevitable sequence then is the 'false exit' and the band returning for a triumphant encore.

Said encore is the anthemic *It Gonna Come*, and here my eyes and ears part company with the prevailing venue ambiance. An indifferent riff is overdone before the star returns to the stage to do her stuff. Then after her naming the players, another over-extended riff precedes the final departure. Assuredly the reception is ecstatic, and a wonderful time has patently been had by all.

LESTOMKINS



### BURTON AGNES JAZZ & BLUES FESTIVAL

JULY 1-3

There are many different forms of successful jazz festival and the Burton Agnes festival is one that can claim to be unique. At the heart of the festival is the fact that the festival organiser and jazz saxophonist Simon Cunliffe-Lister, as a boy, inherited the historic late Elizabethan/early Jacobean hall with its extensive grounds, walled garden and woodland walks. Festivals using the grounds of stately homes, if not common, are not remarkable, but I have not come across one where the jazz and the life and activities of the hall are so closely integrated. In particular, apart from the Main Stage on the lawns, informal day-time concerts take place in the Great Hall of the house under the gaze of 18th century ancestors and concert-goers are quite welcome to take a tour of the house at the same time.

Burton Agnes is a very English jazz festival. Behind the Main Stage, beyond the ha-ha, there's a tented village where festival goers spend the weekend under canvas or in their motor homes, coming up to the lawn with their windbreaks, umbrellas, improvised tents, folding chairs and cool boxes to listen to the jazz. Unfortunately, on the Saturday night, the Englishness extended to the weather, with a blustery wind coming in off the Yorkshire Wolds (or possibly the North Sea).

Elaine Delmar, ever the professional, continued undeterred and the audience responded, though some took advantage of the fact that the beer tent was well within

listening range. The performance followed strictly the programme title, *Elaine Delmar Sings Porter and Gershwin*. The first 45 minutes consisted of songs by the Gershwins, with a little biographical information thrown in, then it was Cole Porter's turn. Elaine gave her own personal twist to many of the songs, in the slow laid-back opening of *I Got Rhythm*, for instance, or the half-tempo *What is this Thing Called Love?*. However, her respect for the material was obvious and she treated the audience to some wonderful Ira Gershwin verses: the familiar (*A Foggy Day in London Town*) and the unknown, at least by me (*I'll Build a Stairway to Paradise*).

With her impeccable diction, expressive lower register and the range and precision of her singing, Elaine gave full value to a series of great songs. Programming was a little rigid – first half Gershwins, second half Porter – but she built in enough variety and finishing the Gershwin set with four from *Porgy and Bess* worked perfectly, notably a joyful *There's a Boat that's Leaving for New York* with extended solos from the band.

Backing Elaine, Brian Dee, the consummate accompanist, also had room for expansive, occasionally idiosyncratic solos. Bruce Adams revealed his lyrical qualities on such songs as *A Foggy Day* as well as bringing his customary panache and urgency to the likes of *It's All Right with Me*. *Summertime* was an evocative vocal-and-bass duo with Alec Dankworth who also contributed to a highly atmospheric *Night and Day*. Matt Home completed an outstanding quartet, with his time in the spotlight coming on the military rhythms that kicked off *Strike Up the Band*.

The Burton Agnes Jazz and Blues Festival runs from early evening Friday to early evening Sunday, with jazz in the Beer Tent taking over on Friday and Saturday till midnight after the Main Stage closes down at 10.00 pm. Like many festivals Burton Agnes takes a fairly liberal view of what constitutes jazz and blues – and why not? The other Main Stage headliner on Saturday was PP Arnold and the performances in the Great Hall ventured into many different areas: I enjoyed sampling father-and-daughter Pete and Polly Bolton switching between mandolin, guitar and banjo and ranging from Appalachian folk song to Randy Newman's *Louisiana 1927*.

I visited between Saturday afternoon and Sunday and most of the bands I heard on the Main Stage were young, with original ideas that worked more often than not. I was disappointed to catch only the last three numbers by Pan Jumbo, virtuoso steel pannist Dudley Nesbitt featured with a conventional jazz quartet line-up. Sonny Rollins' *St. Thomas* was the ideal number for them to go out on, Nesbitt's Caribbean exuberance teamed with the more intense saxophone of Richard Ormrod. Blind Monk Trio followed, hard-edged, well-drilled, uncompromising, but overall over-emphatic and raising the question whether musicians should be as demanding of the audience as themselves. No doubt about their ability as musicians, though, or the variety within their programme: bassist Hugo Harrison's take on Elvis Presley's *Can't Help Falling in Love with You* was an unexpected delight!

Matt Holborn's excellent quartet was yet another fine gypsy jazz group, an undeniable growth area in British jazz. Arrangements

were often imaginative, *What is this Thing Called Love?* emerging in Balkanised form before slotting into the familiar Hot Club groove, but the dominant influence was Django and Stephane, *Minor Swing* being followed by *Nuages*, this a duet for Matt Holborn's violin and Ben Mallen's guitar. This was a highly enjoyable set to get Sunday off to a relaxing start before Lindsay Hannon's unpredictable mix that I sampled only briefly: a deconstruction of *The Very Thought of You* (sort of Anita O'Day for the Age of Anxiety) was followed by a melancholy self-penned love song.

The opening of Lindsay Hannon's set had coincided with an exhilarating hour with Ben Beattie's After Midnight Band in the Great Hall. Beattie's alto sax led a very accomplished quintet, with intense and thoughtful solos from piano and guitar, the group as happy with African rhythms – a joyous finale – as with Luiz Bonfá. At a guess the band's default position would be something like Cannonball Adderley's *Mercy Mercy Mercy* which they played with as much wit as attack. A few hours later the After Midnight Band, Burton Agnes favourites for some years, wound things up on the Main Stage, but the intimacy of the Great Hall performance increased its impact.

Burton Agnes emerged as a highly sociable jazz festival, with face painting and balloon sculpture for the kids and nice walks for the large dog population, a stately home to tour, gardens to explore and plants to buy, but, if that all makes it sound a bit cosy, the music itself was anything but, a well-chosen mix of the accessible and the challenging.

RON SIMPSON





# RON SIMPSON'S ROUND-UP OF RECENT CDS



Malou Beauvoir

**Malou Beauvoir** is a Haitian/American singer and actor now living in France who lists the influences on her singing as including the likes of Aretha Franklin, Barbra Streisand and Dolly Parton – no jazz names, but **ISTHIS LOVE** (Panthera Music International jazz cie: 51.03) is a pretty convincing and very enjoyable jazz album. Recorded in New York City, it features some fine players, notably Donny McCaslin on saxes, but the key element is Andy Ezrin's sympathetic piano accompaniment. Malou Beauvoir's singing is nicely unaffected, the Billie Holiday influence obvious on some songs, but without any hint of straining at imitation. The choice of songs is also interesting, with some unexpected selections – a Latin *La Vie en Rose*, for instance – but a solid core of great standards which Beauvoir treats intelligently and respectfully: *Skylark*, *You've Changed*, and so on. Chicago guitarist **Andy Brown** impresses on many levels on **DIRECT CALL** (Delmark DE 5023: 55.58), an accomplished and unpretentious quartet recording with a good and varied selection of material from a lively waltz treatment of *One Morning in May* to the ten-bar blues *Freak of the Week*. He starts on familiar ground swinging into *The Jeep is Jumpin'* before giving the old Russ Columbo ballad *Prisoner of Love* a superior lyrical treatment with all the melodic sense you'd expect of a musician whose previous recording was duetting with Howard Alden. Here he has his regular quartet which operates very much as a unit, the excellent pianist Jeremy Kahn sharing solo space with Brown. On

**SYNCHRONIZE** (Gateway Music B01CJWYWG: 56.23) Danish musician **Sarah Elgeti** shows herself equally skilled on the whole range of reed instruments (tenor and soprano saxes, flute, clarinet and bass clarinet) and as a composer who can be genuinely tuneful. In a quintet with Marianne Caecilia Eriksen on alto and baritone saxes clever arrangements interweave the instruments attractively. There are some meaty improvised solos, but the default position is cool, melodic and somewhat bland. Sarah is happy to head her website with a quotation from a German review: 'A real Easy Listening Treat.' That, taken as both praise and criticism, is a fair summary.

**INTERNATIONAL JAZZ GROUP/ANDRE PERSIANY IN NEW YORK** (Fresh Sound FSR CD 887: 79.31) belongs firmly in the 'What's not to like?' category of recordings. The fine French pianist made these two albums in New York in 1956. The International Jazz Group is led by Arvell Shaw, with arrangements by Persiany and Budd Johnson and plenty of originals by Johnson and other band members, notably Vic Dickenson with his lovely ballad feature, *What Have You Done with the Keys to Your Heart?* The music is both urbane and swinging, with Johnson in fine form and Taft Jordan switching from sweet to hot in Harry James mode. The second album features a big band stuffed with wonderful players such as Henderson Chambers, Seldon Powell, Lawrence Brown and Hilton Jefferson (plus Johnson, Jordan and Shaw from the small group). Persiany's originals and

arrangements predominate, unpretentiously imaginative and giving plenty of scope to his soloists. Also unpretentious, with even more scope for soloists, is **COMPLETE SONG BOOKS** (Phono 870247: 75.59) by **Les Brown and his Band of Renown**. Brown's long-running band (over 60 years under his leadership) is modestly described in the notes as 'more of a dance band than anything else', but the 1959 album, *Jazz Song Book*, is more impressive than that, with the band in crisply precise support of a series of excellent guest soloists, two tracks each. The wonderful Frank Rosolino still opens eyes over half a century later, Zoot Sims is his inimitable self and both benefit from Bill Holman arrangements, as does Terry Gibbs, while Buddy de Franco and two Les Brown alumni, Ronnie Lang and Don Fagerquist, are no slouches. *Swing Song Book* offers a similar mix of jazz standards and the Great American Songbook, with good section work, but no guests, and arrangements of variable jazz content. The bigish band (usually **10 or 11 pieces**) on **THEME MUSIC FROM THE JAMES DEAN STORY** (Fresh Sound FSR 1668: 42.19) could hardly sound more different. The obvious choice to play music for James Dean was his musical Doppelgänger, **Chet Baker**, and he and **Bud Shank** carry the weight of Leith Stevens' movie music in arrangements by Johnny Mandel and Bill Holman. The music is highly suitable to its subject, super-cool with underlying angst, Baker and Shank are in fine form backed by top West Coast jazzers, but it can't always rid itself of the sense of

being a soundtrack rather than a musical construct. On the credit side, Jordi Pujol has done a typically skilled job tracking down and documenting the complete package – and Chet is most affecting in the vocal version of Livingston and Evans' *Let Me Be Loved*, the only non-Stevens song on the album.

Despite some smart writing for trombone choir (three trombones and bass trombone/baritone horn) and excellent solos from the leader, Carl Fontana and Wayne Andre, **Kai Winding's TROMBONE PANORAMA** (Phono 870234: 50.16) is of its time (1957) – and not in a good sense! A third of the album is devoted to the title track, Winding's none too interesting narration of the history of the jazz trombone with brief impressions of Tommy Dorsey, Trummy Young, Tricky Sam Nanton and the rest – very well done, but fewer bars than 52nd Street! Elsewhere a quirky choice of songs throws up a jaunty version of *The Preacher* and a nicely humorous *When the Red Red Robin*, but also another bout of narration, toe-curlingly faux-hip, on *Frankie and Johnny*. **BIRDLAND 1951-52/NEWPORT 1955** (Solar Records 4569967: 75.03) will appeal to **Dave Brubeck** completists and anyone interested in what the Brubeck Quartet sounded like before it sounded like the Dave Brubeck Quartet as we know it. The Birdland tracks are nearly all songbook standards and the performances are pretty unexciting, with even Paul Desmond less distinctive than in the classic years. The Newport



Kai Winding

tracks have more impact, though it's a pity that one of the two originals, the *Christopher Columbus*-based *Crazy Chris*, is cut just as it's getting going. The final track, the only one of the Newport tracks previously issued, has added significance in the Brubeck story: a rowdily enthusiastic, undisciplined and enjoyable jam session on *Tea for Two* draws in big names from other bands, Clifford, Chet, Gerry Mulligan and the future star of Brubeck's classic time-twisters, Joe Morello. **FOUR CLASSIC ALBUMS** (Avid AMSC 1185: 2 CDs, 82.30/78.54) by **Don Elliott** is an interesting case where the package is more impressive than the individual albums all of which are enjoyable, but not especially memorable. However, the remarkable range of Don Elliott's talents deserves to be remembered and applauded far more than it is. George Shearing's vibes player, in the 1950s he regularly topped *Miscellaneous Instrument* polls for the mellophone as well as excelling on trumpet and assorted percussion and singing a bit in most styles from the wordlessly eerie to Sarah Vaughan impressions. Each album is different. *Don Elliott Quintet* features all his talents, plus composer (a handful of very decent originals); *Mellophone* confines him to one instrument (plus a burst of bongos) with an ultra-reliable eight-piece (McKusick, Galbraith, Hinton, etc.) on a nice set of standards; *Counterpoint for Six Valves* is a two-trumpet feature for him and Rusty Dedrick on Dick Hyman compositions with some fine interventions from Mundell Lowe; *At the Modern Jazz Room* is a live session with his regular group at which he appears to have left the mellophone at home. **Jim Chapin** who died in 2009 at the age of 89 is now best remembered as an innovative teacher of drum technique and as the father of the great singer-songwriter Harry Chapin, but in 1954 he came off the road with various big bands to record two sparky small group albums: **JIM CHAPIN SEXTET AND OCTET** (Fresh Sound FSR CD 881: 70.38). The arrangements on the sextet album, all by members of the group, skilful and imaginative rather than adventurous, hint at Chapin's big band background and, though Phil

Woods is the only big name in the group, there's no lack of solo power, trombonist Billy Byers especially impressive. The octet album, originally titled *Profile of a Jazz Drummer*, brings in the stars, with Bob Wilber playing tenor and arranging and a brass team of Jimmy Nottingham and Urbie Green. It's all a bit wild, with Nottingham hitting the high notes and both solo space and recording balance favouring the drummer, but it's good, nobody-sleeps jazz, if a bit disjointed. **Walt Dickerson** is another who is less celebrated than he deserves, though the neglect was partly self-inflicted. **FOUR CLASSIC ALBUMS** (Avid Jazz AMSC 1183: 2 CDs, 79.03/67.28) are all quartet albums dating from 1961-62. Down Beat editor Don DeMicheal described him at the time as the John Coltrane of the vibraphone and he is acknowledged as one of the few vibes players to get the hang of free jazz. Throughout, despite his winningly delicate way with a ballad, Dickerson's challenging originals predominate. By the time of the album *Relativity* he is capable of the arrhythmic *The Unknown*, question and answer with Ahmed Abdul-Malik's arco bass, then, in contrast, relishing Vernon Duke's lovely melody *Autumn in New York*. The climax comes with his ambitious and subtle 17 ½ minute *To My Queen* (inspired by his wife) from the album of the same name. Dickerson's musical soulmate, appearing on three of the albums, is the excellent drummer Andrew Cyrille. But what happened next? The next couple of albums seem to have been less striking and Dickerson retired from music for over a decade, coming back with a burst of albums for Steeplechase in the last 1970s (again with Cyrille) before confining himself to the local Philadelphia scene until he died in 2008. I'm not sure that **Billy Taylor's FOUR CLASSIC ALBUMS** (AMSC 1200: 2 CDs, 68.24/80.41) are exactly 'classic', but they seem to be rated the pianist's best of the 1950s. Leonard Feather gave Taylor the fairly modest encomium, 'a consistent and adaptable artist' and he was certainly that. With the precise touch born of his classical training he combined a gift for melody and a more than passing acquaintance with blues and gospel. Here the first two



Billy Taylor

albums from 1954 represent Taylor's mambo phase (with such experts as Machito and Candido on board) as well as a highly enjoyable set of standards and originals. *The Billy Taylor Touch* is unusual, combining trio tracks from 1957 with quartet tracks from 1951 – again mostly standards, brightly optimistic. The most challenging album is the 1959 *With Four Flutes*, Taylor showcased as writer on an unpredictable mix of standards, originals and oddities, with Frank Wess the main feature among the flutes.

Elemental's Xanadu Master Edition has over the past year released on CD many of the albums produced by Don Schlitten for Xanadu in the 1970s and 1980s. **Sam Jones' CHANGES & THINGS** (906088: 42.10) is a very superior hard bop album, slightly short on time by modern CD standards, but that is compensated for by preserving the integrity of the original concept. Tenor saxist Bob Berg impresses, keeping up with the brilliant Blue Mitchell and the always resourceful Slide Hampton. Barry Harris and Louis Hayes make up a top quality sextet, the material consists mostly of originals, and there is a nice balance between organised ensembles and colourful solos. **HOME IS WHERE THE SOUL IS** (906082: 45.58) is one of two albums **Kenny Drew** made for Xanadu on a brief return to the States from Copenhagen in 1978, trio performances with Leroy

Vinnygar and Frank Butler, plus a solo bonus track, *Yesterdays*, from the same session. An unusually fleet *Work Song* kicks off proceedings in fine style and Drew shows all his versatility as a pianist and composer, moving from a swinging uptempo treatment of his *Only You* (nothing to do with the Platters) to the modal subtleties of *Three and Four Blues*. It's a highly accomplished piano album, if with a touch too much of what Ted Panken's notes quaintly term 'improvised rubato concertizing'. Meanwhile Jordi Pujol at Fresh Sound is bringing us the recordings of saxist **Don Menza** from the same period. Following the release of a 1981 live recording, **FIRST FLIGHT** (Fresh Sound FSR-CD 891: 2 CDs, 72.06/51.50) is a studio recording from 1976 consisting almost entirely of the leader's compositions. Menza says it all when he explains that one of the great things about California was the presence of 'one of my very favourite trombone players – Frank Rosolino.' On the opening *Bones Blues*, unaccountably omitted from the 1970s LP, Rosolino inspires Menza (and possibly vice versa) to a blues performance of blazing intensity. Not all the album is at the same pitch, but Menza, mostly on tenor, is in fine form and Rosolino as always covers all the bases from the hard blowing to the lyrical with amazing facility. One oddity of the Fresh Sound package is that the second CD is entirely alternative takes of 6 of the 10 tracks on the first CD.

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