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# THE JAZZ RAG

CHICK WILLIS

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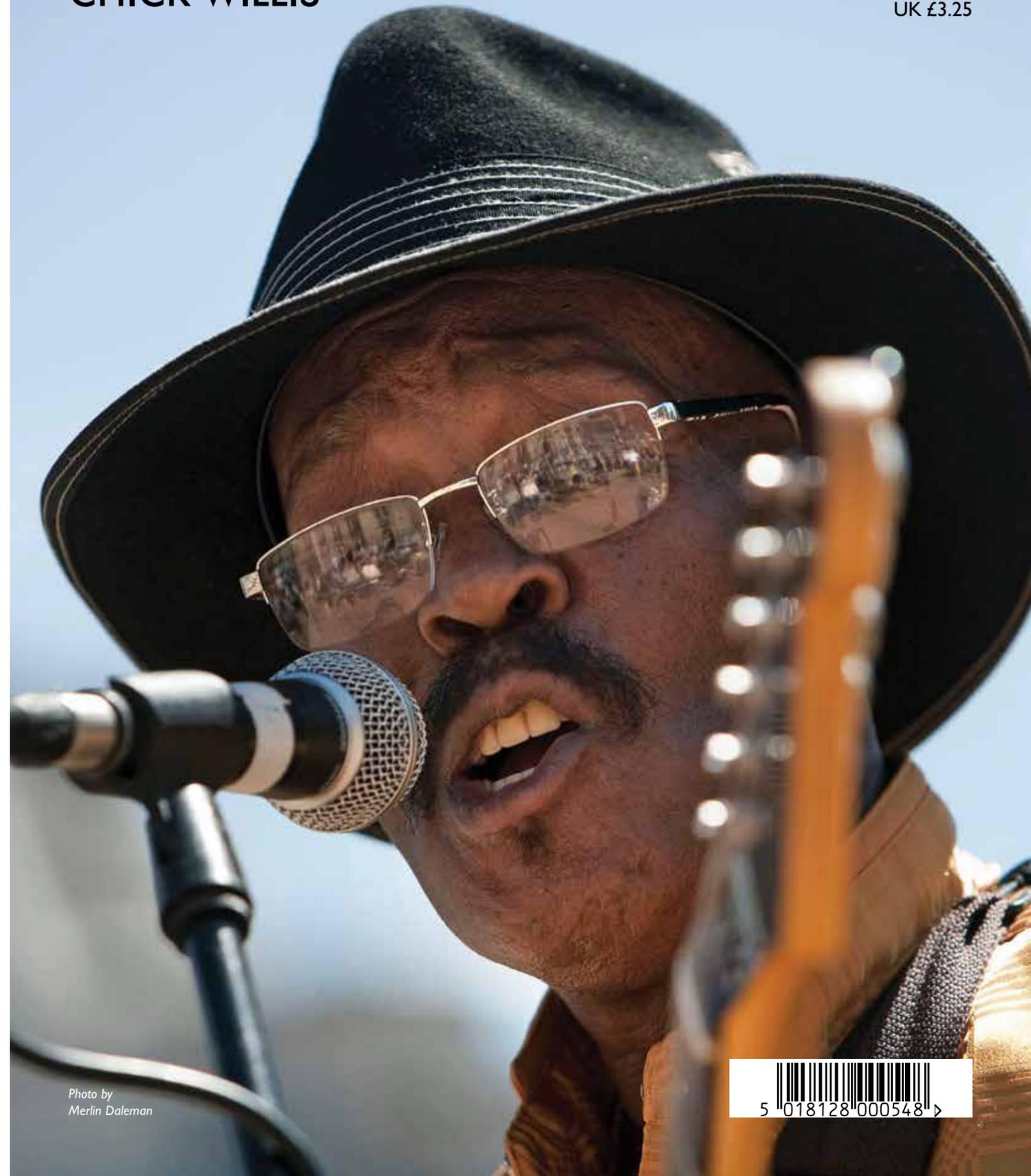


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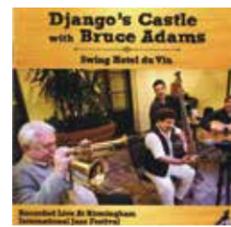
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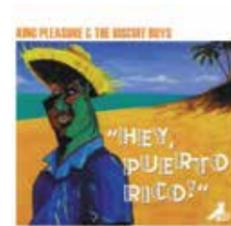
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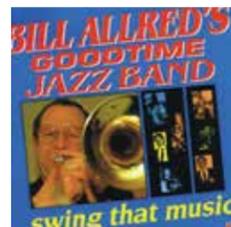
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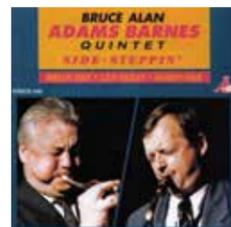
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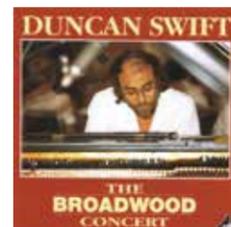
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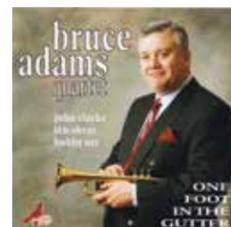
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**Duncan Swift**  
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**Bruce Adams Quartet**  
One Foot In The Gutter

Photo by Merlin Daleman



CHICK WILLIS pictured at the Birmingham Jazz Festival. Chick makes an appearance in a new feature for Jazz Rag. We link up with Henry's Blueshouse in Birmingham to present *Henry's Bluesletter* (pages 32-33)

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## FIND US ON FACEBOOK

The *Jazz Rag* now has its own Facebook page. For news of upcoming festivals, gigs and releases, features from the archives, competitions and who knows what else, be sure to 'like' us. To find the page, simply enter 'The Jazz Rag' in the search bar at the top when logged into Facebook.

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## UPFRONT

### REASONS TO BE CHEERFUL

In a time of gloom, characterised by cancellations, postponements and ingenious attempts to preserve something like live jazz, there are reasons to be cheerful: perhaps there are hints now of soon-to-return near-normality. But for many of us the best news came in the recent Honours List, not a place where jazz lovers regularly find much to delight in.

This year anyone who loves jazz must have been delighted at the award of the MBE to Roy Williams. From Eric Batty's *Jazz Aces* via lengthy spells with the great Alex Welsh and Humphrey Lyttelton Bands to an internationally acclaimed freelance career, Roy was for many years beyond doubt the nonpareil of British jazz trombonists.

In *Jazz Rag* 159 Digby Fairweather profiled Roy at length, referring to him as 'simply the most perfect trombone-player I have ever had the privilege to play with'. The British Empire is lucky to have him as a Member!

**Roy Williams in Pictures: pages 18-19**

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# A FESTIVAL IN TIME OF PLAGUE

How does the jazz world respond to the overwhelming presence of COVID-19? There are any number of responses possible on the scale from hunkering down till it's over to trying to carry on as near-normal as possible. The experience of the Birmingham Sandwell and Westside Jazz Festival is instructive, confusing and ultimately rather inspiring.

To start with a bit of background. The original July dates were clearly impossible, though a virtual jazz festival kept the name alive. So there was a choice between cancellation and postponement. Cancellation was unthinkable given the number of committed stakeholders in the Festival, so the next question was the date. By working on the principle that the later the date, the more chance of being virus-free, the Festival organisers showed they had no more idea of the likely progress of COVID than did our government. October 16-25, timed to catch the last of British Summer Time, also coincided with more stringent restrictions on activity. In retrospect November would have been even worse, with the second lockdown forcing the EFG London Jazz Festival to be totally online and Hull Jazz Festival to cancel all events or reschedule for April.

So, based on the Birmingham experience, here are the rules for organising a festival in time of plague:

- Remember everything is provisional. In a sense this is true of all festivals – a singer may lose her voice or musicians may miss a flight – but it's an essential of plague-time planning.
- Be light on your feet. Smart instant responses to crises have to be like London buses – another one along in a minute.
- Remain charitable. Musicians and venues will inevitably have to go back on their word. Smile nicely and say, 'How about next year, then?' In Birmingham's case an original schedule of 74 events (still much lower than the 200-plus of July festivals) was whittled down to about 30, but that's still a sizeable festival.
- Remember that the Festival Director is not the only boss. If Festival organisers have to jump through hoops to get into a venue or a set has to be cut short for safety reasons (too loud maybe, causing too much dangerous shouting), be grateful that venues are maintaining audience safety.
- Look for alternatives to orthodox live performances. Live streamings and audio and video presentations can supplement the programme.
- Always expect the unexpected.

To illustrate my last remark (as Johnny Mercer put it), coming into the last few days before the start of the Festival the organisers' main fears were two-fold: that Birmingham, a rising hotspot a week or so

before, might come under special measures and that the Government might impose a national circuit breaker lockdown during Festival week.

As it happened, neither came to pass. Instead Italy, up to that point stable in infection figures, suffered a spike and a day or so before the Festival the UK Government imposed quarantine restrictions on arrivals from Italy. Since the Festival's sole European band was the Jim Dandies from Bassano del Grappa, with seven shows from Wednesday onwards, action was clearly required:

**Thursday:** Try to switch flights to Saturday before quarantine introduced.

**Friday 0658:** Call from Italy – this is not possible.

**Friday 0859:** Alternative strategy: replace the Jim Dandies with the re-formed blues and Americana super-group Wang Dang Doodle, assembled for last year's *Leaving Mississippi, Birmingham Bound Festival*.

**Friday 1100:** The Government announces that Lancashire is moving to Tier 3, restricting the movement to Birmingham of Leyland-based Tipitina, two fifths of Wang Dang Doodle and playing two shows under their own name.

Two pre-emptive strikes on the contagious effects of jazz and blues, but there's always (well, usually) an alternative. As it happens, some of the replacements for Jim Dandies' appearances were among the highlights of the Festival. On the final Sunday two gigs from the Alan Barnes/Dave Newton Duo, both clearly energised

from their long lay-off from live performance, were outstanding and on the previous evening the Bruce Adams/Dave Newton Quartet was in fine form in West Bromwich Central Library. The audiences for the Adams/Newton gig, however, were nowhere near the Library, but in two pubs in Birmingham, four retirement villages and their own homes, watching on YouTube. In the time of COVID the live stream has come into its own. Another set from a Sandwell Library (Wednesbury) teamed saxophonists of different generations (Alan Barnes and Alex Clarke) to terrific effect and two bands, Shufflepack and Tipitina, were so disappointed at missing the festival that they live streamed sets into Birmingham pubs.

Printing the programme was delayed as late as possible to reduce changes, but 75 per cent of the events in it had to be altered, whether changes of time, venue or band, cancellations or even (occasionally) additions. When a venue pulls out two gigs 24 hours before the first of them, there's not much to be done, but Festivalgoers didn't suffer unduly: both were outdoors and the scheduled dates were the only two rainy afternoons out of ten days!

And maybe we should add one more rule, 'Always trust your audience.' All the changes and confusion in programming were greeted with stoical cheerfulness by jazz lovers just grateful to be around what was pretty much the last jazz festival standing! [www.birminghamjazzfestival.com](http://www.birminghamjazzfestival.com)



Alan Barnes & Dave Newton  
at the Botanical Gardens



Alex Clarke at  
Wednesbury Library

Photos by Kev Maslin

# THE VIRUS IN NUMBERS

The International Jazz Musician Survey by Jazzfuel.com paints a vivid picture of the effects of the coronavirus on the world of jazz as of October 13th. The full survey of 266 musicians (59% in Europe, including 22.5% in UK, 35% North America, including 28% in USA) makes fascinating reading, with some extremely revealing results alongside some we could all have predicted.

It is hardly surprising that on a scale of 1-10 the average musician's optimism for the jazz scene is as low as 4.2 – in fact, it's quite impressive that it's even as high as that. Similarly the fact

that 61% of jazz musicians said that their 2020 income would be at least 50% lower than 2019 (30% at least 75% less) will astonish no one. In fact, reading between the lines, that figure is more startling when taken together with the actual scale of financial loss: the average lost income from cancelled shows was £9,378 (£13,315 in the USA and £7,093 in Europe). Of course the lost income is based on shows that were never arranged as well as those cancelled, but the figures are hardly suggestive of a financially rewarding life at the best of times.

Some of the figures looking forward are particularly relevant. Perhaps the most horrifying is that, by mid-October, 55% of jazz musicians had no live performances scheduled for 2021 – with the figure as high as 73% in the United States. However, the survey also reveals the flexibility of jazz musicians, 62% claiming that the events of this year have changed their plans for releasing music. In particular livestream concerts are here to stay, with 49% performing at least one and 27% extremely likely to carry on doing so.

The most cheering part of a generally depressing survey is the element of positivity in many of the individual comments, revealing the resilience of the typical jazz musician. Whether honing admin skills, reassessing their musical direction or improving their playing, musicians found advantages in the time of COVID and a respondent from the USA summed up the implied dedication of many:

'More than ever I can't imagine doing anything else with my life that would be as meaningful.'  
<https://jazzfuel.com/covid-jazz-survey/>



Guy Barker



Derek Nash

## JAZZ IN VISION

Live jazz may have been at a premium in recent months, but there has been no shortage of jazz films to enjoy. Broadcast on BBC 4 in October, the late Jeremy Marre's stunning documentary, *Count Basie through his Own Eyes*, drew on Basie's home movies and personal diaries to give a vivid picture of his private life as well as chronicling his musical career. Currently available online, it is due a DVD release from Eagle Rock.

Also in October Oliver Murray's acclaimed portrait of a jazz club, *Ronnie's*, went on cinema release, followed by a November showing on BBC4. With talking heads from Mel Brooks to Quincy Jones and previously unseen archive performances from the likes of Nina Simone and Dizzy Gillespie, it charts the history of Ronnie Scott's Club.

The film of one of the best dramatic fictions on a jazz

subject, August Wilson's *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, is scheduled for Netflix release from December 18. The play centres on the tensions between the blues singer, her band and her white manager and producer. This new version, directed by George C. Wolfe and adapted for the screen by Ruben Santiago-Hudson, stars Academy Award winner Viola Davis as Ma Rainey and the late Chadwick Boseman as ambitious trumpeter Levee, with a score by Branford Marsalis.

## CHRISTMAS COMES TO SOUTH KEN

The Royal Albert Hall gets back into action with a series of Christmas events, carols, *Messiah* and all, one of the first of them the perennially popular Guy Barker's Big Band Christmas on December 11. Clare Teal co-presents and featured soloists include Tommy Blaize, Vanessa Haynes, Joe Stilgoe, Adrian Cox and Giacomo Smith.  
[www.royalalberthall.com](http://www.royalalberthall.com)

## JAZZ AT THE CONCORDE

Wednesday evening jazz at Eastleigh's Concorde Club returned for the first time in many months with the Ben Holder Jazz Quartet on November 18. After the second lockdown the pre-Christmas programme consists largely of tribute shows, though the John Maddocks Jazzmen hold their Christmas Party on December 13. In the New Year the Concorde has a much fuller programme of jazz and jazz-related music, with Noel McCalla and Derek Nash featuring the music of Stevie Wonder (January 9), the John Maddocks Jazzmen (17), the Ben Holder Quartet (27), the Derek Nash Quartet (February 3), The Blues Band (18) and Snake Davis – Classic Jazz Solos (25).  
Tel: 023 8061 3989  
[www.theconcordeclub.com](http://www.theconcordeclub.com)

## STABLES JAZZ AND BLUES

The December programme at the Stables at Wavendon has been disrupted by COVID restrictions, with a pantomime among other events to be cancelled, but there are still elements of jazz in the programme, with performances by Jazz at the Movies (Joanna Eden and Chris Ingham) on December 10 and the Jazz Dynamos (20). The pace picks up in the New Year, especially with re-scheduled shows from the long lockdown. Jazz, swing and blues concerts feature Jake and Elwood with the Black Rhino Band in a *Blues Brothers* tribute (January 16), Ma Bessie and her Blues Troupe (27), the Syd Lawrence Orchestra (29), the Eduardo Niebla Duo (February 10), *King for a Day: The Nat King Cole Story* (11), the Budapest Café Orchestra (20) and a double bill of blues bands, the Ben Poole Band and the Oli Brown Band (28).  
Tel.: 01908 280800

# 'A TRUE NEW ORLEANS CHARACTER'



In the normal way of things the death of a retired American coroner would be well outside the range of interest for a British jazz magazine, but Dr. Frank Minyard was not your normal everyday coroner. The headline in John Pope's obituary in the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* (which provided much of the information for this piece) read, 'Frank Minyard, for 40 years New Orleans' trumpet-playing coroner, dies at 91.' Dr. Minyard's

career is both an interesting example of the quirks of the American system of elective local office and a telling tribute to the power of jazz in New Orleans.

When he first stood for office as coroner, Dr. Minyard had barely an idea of what a coroner did, but he and Sister Mary David Young were running a methadone clinic for heroin addicts in Tremé and he wanted to continue treating some of his patients who

had ended up in Orleans Parish Prison. Only the coroner could give permission. He refused, so Dr. Minyard decided to run for coroner – and lost. Four years later in 1973 he changed his image and labelled himself 'Dr. Jazz' – Pope describes him as 'a trumpeter who donned a white suit for posters and for performances in bars and churches.' This time he won.

On his retirement in 2014 Minyard described his campaign style, 'In the bar I get the trumpet out and get on the bar and play *Saints*. In church *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*. I think my trumpet does more to get me elected than my background in medicine or my experience.'

Was he a good coroner? Apparently his early campaigning zeal faded somewhat and there are suggestions that he increasingly took the comfortable course of action, but there is no doubt that he was popular – voted in ten times for a 40-year stint!

One of his early campaigns led to the founding of Jazz Roots, an annual series of jazz concerts for charity. Minyard had been arrested in the French Quarter for playing his trumpet to protest a crackdown on street musicians. The judge apparently told him he should find a more constructive

use for his trumpet, so he did. In less official acts of charity, as coroner he helped musicians on hard times by finding work for them as morgue attendants!

Dr. Minyard's jazz links including sitting in with Dejan's Olympia Brass Band and playing with his friends Al Hirt and Pete Fountain. New Orleans author/columnist Keith Spera recalls that, when Fountain played his last performance at the Hilton Riverside Hotel in 2003, he called on Minyard to sit in. Later, backstage, he told Spera, 'He sat in for the opening night. We wanted to see if he'd got any better in 26 years.' One young musician who benefitted from Minyard's encouragement (he was brought on stage by him at the age of 9!) was Harry Connick Jr. whose father was the Orleans Parish District Attorney and thus a close associate of Dr. Minyard.

Keith Spera, summing Frank Minyard up as 'a true New Orleans character', described him thus:

'Frank Minyard was emblematic of New Orleans in that he represented both the city's beauty/joy and danger/sorrow. He played happy New Orleans jazz, but he also chronicled the grim toll of New Orleans crime.'

## SCOTTISH JAZZ AWARDS

The 8th Scottish Jazz Awards were announced at a virtual ceremony on October 18, an interesting and judicious mix of established figures and newcomers. Biggest winners were the Glasgow-based nu-jazz collective, corto.alto, who released new music every three weeks and scooped Best Band and Best Album. The band, the inspiration of multi-instrumentalist Liam Shortall, is a dramatically successful newcomer to the Scottish jazz scene. Paisley's Kittie, regularly compared to Amy Winehouse, picked up the Best Vocalist award while Best Instrumentalist went

to a more familiar name south of the border, the excellent pianist Fergus McCreadie.

The Services to Scottish Jazz Award went to writer and critic Rob Adams and, following such names as Carol Kidd and Martin Taylor, drummer and man about jazz Ken Mathieson received the Lifetime Achievement Award. Ken's career has ranged from running the first Glasgow International Jazz Festival in 1987 to playing with, and arranging for, Fat Sam's Band, Picante and, of course, his Classic Jazz Orchestra. At the other end of the scale in terms of experience trombonist/singer Anoushka Nanguy was voted in as Rising Star.



Fergus McCreadie

# I GET A KICK OUT OF...

Promoter JOHN BILLETT answers the questions



### What track or album turned you on to jazz?

I lived next door to a jazz band rehearsing in their lounge. I loved the sounds. Age 8 I was allowed in every week to listen. I heard improvisation and syncopation for the first time and was hooked on jazz.

### What was the first jazz gig you went to?

The Crescent City Stompers, a traditional 6-piece band playing the Exeter Civic Hall. A weekly jazz gig for great music and social meetings.

### What is your favourite jazz album and why?

Miles Davis – *Kind of Blue*. Having grown up with tunes, and improvisations on their chord sequences, modal jazz turned that all upside down and I was spellbound.

### What was the best jazz performance you've ever seen?

Miles Davis with Wayne Shorter, Chick Corea, Dave Holland and Jack De Johnette in their *Bitches Brew* era at The Apollo, Hammersmith. Just when you

thought you knew what was happening the music steered us off into a totally different direction. Wonderful!

### What's the best jazz performance you've seen in the last 12 months?

Our JBGB Events presentation of the music of Gil Evans at St John's Smith Square, with a band of RCM Alumni playing his original album arrangements of *Porgy and Bess*, featuring Steve Fishwick, Freddie Gavita, Henry Lowther and Martin Shaw. I have never before in jazz been so uplifted and inspired.

### What's your favourite jazz release (new or reissue) from the last 12 months?

The reissue of John Coltrane's *Giant Steps* (see page 23) I bought the original album immediately and remain amazed at the 'sheets of sound' virtuosity overlaying such a complex sequence. And it remains something to enjoy regularly. Such a shame he had Tommy Flanagan on piano, who

was just not up to it, but led soon to the historic arrival of McCoy Tyner.

### If you could meet one jazz musician, living or dead, who would it be and why?

Charlie Parker, the man who single-handedly invented modern jazz. He created the bebop revolution, taking the alto saxophone from its home as a mellow toned band instrument and turned it into a dazzling, fast and hard driving solo performer. His legacy lives on today.

Despite the ongoing necessary restrictions on live performance due to Coronavirus, John Billett's JBGB events is continuing to promote a series of in-demand shows at Crazy Coqs Brasserie Zedel. For more details visit [www.jbgbevents.com](http://www.jbgbevents.com)



## ESQUIRE COVERS CLUB

The EFG London Jazz Festival (November 13-22) was unfortunate enough to land right in the middle of lockdown, but still operated successfully via streaming and digital presentations. One feature of particular interest runs until January: the Esquire Covers Club. Curated by Stefano Wagner, it takes the visitor to the website into what is described as 'a specially built digital exhibition hall', with the exhibition of record sleeves of American

and British jazz releases supplemented by John Fordham's interviews with legendary illustrator Ralph Steadman, Val Wilmer, Ron Atkins and many others. [www.esquirecover.club](http://www.esquirecover.club)

## JAZZ LEEDS BACK IN ACTION

Jazz Leeds' Autumn season of Thursday night gigs at Seven Arts, Chapel Allerton, resumed in October with Fergus McCreadie. The new format combats restrictions on audience size by playing two houses, of 75 minutes

each, at 7.00 and 8.45 and making a recorded version available to members unable to attend. After the further disruption of the second lockdown December gigs feature the Nigel Price Organ Trio with Vasilis Xenopoulos in *Wes Reimagined* (3) and Adrian Knowles with The Sound of 59 (17). Sunday afternoon sessions are also continuing, with Tom Sharp's Sontuno on December 6. [www.jazzleeds.org.uk](http://www.jazzleeds.org.uk)

## THE PRICE OF SUCCESS

Remarkably, Nigel Price managed to put together a series of some 30 dates for his Organ Trio (Ross Stanley, Joel Barford) between October and December, often with added guest musician. Clearly November was a month of cancellations, but scheduled for December, coronavirus restrictions permitting, are dates at Seven Arts, Leeds (3), 1000 Trades, Birmingham (4), The Hive, Shrewsbury (5), Penrhyn, Llandudno (7), Brecon Jazz (8) and Stafford Jazz (9). [www.nigelprice.biz](http://www.nigelprice.biz)

## JAZZ IN THE NORTH EAST

The North East seems especially keen to get the jazz scene operating again after lockdown. Newcastle's Prohibition Bar has three December gigs: Lindsay Hannon (5), Paul Grainger and Simon O'Byrne (12) and Julija Jacenaite and Alan Law (19). The Hot Club du Nord plays the Lubetkin Theatre, Peterlee (10) and an afternoon show at Hurworth Village Hall (13). Other December jazz gigs include the Smokin' Spitfires at the Cluny (6 – 1.00), Fergus McCreadie Trio at the Globe (6), the Washboard Resonators at Bobik's (8) and the Strictly Smokin' Big Band at Garforth Civic Theatre (19). Looking further ahead, the Sage Gateshead has three jazz events in February: Binker Golding Quartet (5), Linda May Han Oh (18) and Pete Long with the Strictly Smokin' Big Band (27).

## COMPETITION: POPS AT CHRISTMAS

What could be more appropriate to the Christmas spirit than a book covering Louis Armstrong's big band years from 1929 to 1947? Ricky Riccardi of the Louis Armstrong House Museum, renowned expert on the great man, has already dealt with the later years in his acclaimed book *What a Wonderful World!*.

Now Oxford University Press is offering TWO copies of Ricky Riccardi's *Heart Full of Rhythm: The Big Band Years of Louis Armstrong* to Jazz Rag readers who can answer the following questions:

1. In the 1938 film *Going Places* Louis memorably sang a Harry Warren-Johnny Mercer song to a horse. The song was nominated for an Academy Award and became a standard. What song was it?
2. Who was the Panamanian pianist whose big band was taken over by Louis Armstrong in 1935?

Email your entries to [jazzrag@bigbearmusic.com](mailto:jazzrag@bigbearmusic.com) (or post to the address on page 3) by December 17th, 2020.



### SAD NEWS FROM WAKEFIELD

Jazz Rag is saddened to read of the COVID-related death of Alec Sykes, prime mover in the establishment of Wakefield Jazz Club as a pre-eminent venue in Yorkshire. Amiable, devoted, deceptively hard-working and Dick Morrissey's biggest fan, Alec ran the club from 1987 to 2004, commissioned several original suites and saw the club awarded the Parliamentary Jazz Award for Best Club.

Wakefield Jazz itself continues, if in a reduced form at the moment. Having restarted the scheduled programme in October, the club – like everywhere else – had to abandon it in November and now plans to suspend it after one final pre-Christmas gig: Dave Newton/Liz Fletcher Duo on December 4. Plans to resume in 2021 have yet to be finalised, but are likely to involve local groups until the situation stabilises.

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

### SHEFFIELD JAZZ 2021

Sheffield Jazz has announced an excellent programme of Friday night jazz at Crookes Social Club for the New Year. The first four gigs feature Trish Clowes' My Iris (January 22), the Ant Law Quintet (February 5), Alan Barnes + 11 (26) and Andrew McCormack Solo and Trio (March 5), with the likes of Clark Tracey and Fergus McCreadie lined up for later in the year.

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

### 606 RETURNS TO LIVE PERFORMANCE

The 606 Club in London, having kept active with livestreaming, returns to a more conventional programme in December, Government restrictions permitting. Hard bop saxist Dan Reinstejn celebrates 18 years of the 606 on December 10, having first played there as a medical student, now returning as a distinguished professor of eye surgery, after an educational profile alternating Berklee with

medical school. The Coalminers bring 'swamp soul' to the club on Dec. 11, followed by Tony Kofi Plays Monk (12), Sarah Jane Morris (13), Jo Harrop (17) and Gwyneth Herbert (20).

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

### RONNIE'S IN DECEMBER

Though the format shows some changes, in particular earlier performance times, Ronnie Scott's Club's programme is steadily building towards its pre-virus dimensions. December is the time for Christmas with the Ronnie Scott's All Stars (3-5, 10-12), Soft Machine (6) *Motown and More...* with Natalie Williams' Soul Family (7-9, 15-17) Ronnie Scott's Blues Explosion Quintet (13-14), Ray Gelato and the Giants (18-23), Liane Carroll's Cold Turkey (26-27), Ronnie Scott's Jazz Chamber Orchestra (28-29) and Joe Stilgoe (30). Lunch shows are back on the agenda, too, with the likes of Tina May/James Pearson (6), Simon Spillett Quartet (13) and Joanna Eden/Enrico Tomasso (27).  
Tel.: 020 7352 5953  
[www.606club.co.uk](http://www.606club.co.uk)

### DARK MONTHS AT PIZZAEXPRESS LIVE

Despite an announced December programme for Dean Street full of such big names as Alan Barnes, Dave Newton, Dave O'Higgins and Antonio Forcione and a scheduled Latin Jazz Festival in Holborn, PizzaExpress Live's jazz programme has been shelved, certainly for three months. Even before the announcement of the second lockdown, PizzaExpress announced the suspension of events until, at least, March. There appears to be no specific reopening policy, but it's to be hoped that one of the capital's major jazz venues will be back in action in a Spring return to near-normality.

PizzaExpress jazz venues throughout the country are suffering similarly, most sadly the Maidstone restaurant, where the Music Room has been a staple of local life for 30 years. The restaurant has closed permanently, apparently for non-COVID-related reasons. The explanation is that the need for structural work and refurbishment made re-opening after the first lockdown uneconomical.  
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Gwyneth Herbert

## GOODBYE TO A STAR

ROGER COTTERRELL pays tribute to PETER KING

My favourite jazz blog is JazzWax. Its author Marc Myers, based in New York, is a music columnist for the *Wall Street Journal*. I like his weekly blog posts because they fit my preferences in jazz, and he has a special sensitivity to European, especially British, musicians and their music. He has often happily featured Tubby Hayes, but also many other British jazz names, including those that have never been 'names' at all in the States.

Myers often notes the deaths of jazz stars and, after our great British altoist Peter King died in August, I was surprised that there was no mention of this in JazzWax. Surely, many people knowledgeable about modern jazz in Britain would have little hesitation in saying he was one of the finest alto saxophonists this country has produced, and among the best in the world. As I write this in September, the full obituaries are mainly still to appear, but there has been a huge outpouring of appreciation on the internet of Peter's work, as well as many reminiscences of him as a person – usually stressing his modesty, gentleness and kindness, alongside his formidable musical talent.

I wrote to Myers in case he had not heard the sad news. 'Yes, I heard,' he wrote back. 'Peter was a good guy, but I'm just not intimately knowledgeable about him nor passionate about his playing... Takes nothing away from his gifts, just that I never felt a soulful bond.' The comment says a lot, not just about jazz experience being a very subjective thing, but perhaps also about cultural distance.

Although King travelled a lot, he pursued his career mainly in Britain and made his best recordings here. But he had many firm friends and admirers in the US. Among musicians they included, notably, fellow altoist Phil Woods with whom his style is sometimes compared (although they are easily distinguishable) and Benny Golson who wrote the preface for King's autobiography. And



Peter King (front right) at the 1987 British Jazz Awards with (back) John Barnes, Dick Morrissey, (middle) Martin Taylor, Dave Green, Brian Lemon, (front) Allan Ganley, Roy Williams, Humphrey Lyttelton.

King played and recorded over the years with a galaxy of US stars: Milt Jackson, Elvin Jones, Philly Joe Jones, Zoot Sims and Anita O'Day are just a few of many he worked with. In Paris, he played with the legendary Bud Powell. But he didn't put down roots in US culture. He didn't try to build a career there. And he rejected an offer to join Ray Charles' orchestra (a band he loved) permanently, because it would have required relocation to the US.

Peter emerged as a musician in the era when British modern jazz players looked to the US for their models. But, although he started out as a confirmed bopper in the Charlie Parker mode, there was always something in his musical personality that was going to flower into a distinctiveness pulling him towards European influences. He became better known on the Continent than in the US and, while older Brits like Tubby Hayes and Ronnie Scott yearned for US recognition measured against the standard of the best American improvisers, Peter began to move in a different direction. Increasingly, from the 1990s, he drew on influences from European 20th century classical music – especially Bartok, his favourite composer – which in no way interfered with the power and conviction of his jazz playing.

He was recognised early as a technically amazing bebop soloist. He kept all that virtuosity but, from the 1990s, added a more reflective side, as well as a greater concern with musical structure and texture learned from Bartok's compositional techniques. He became a composer himself, not just a creator of good jazz tunes (which he had long been) but someone who wrote an opera, and also a five-part suite, *Janus*, which he recorded with his jazz quartet and the Lyric Quartet in 1997. Unlike very many attempts to draw on both jazz and classical idioms, King's methods did not compromise either. He wrote for the string quartet in a way that made it support, inspire and give freedom to the jazz soloists.

Maybe Marc Myers had only heard King's pre-1990s albums, where just sometimes he does indeed sound, as Marc suggested to me, 'a little too rushed'; a bit too frenetic, as though he is trying to put absolutely everything into his solos, often at breakneck speed and using all his dazzling technique. But his 1995 album *Tamburello*, followed by *Lush Life* (1999) and, above all, *Janus* (issued in 2006) showed a striking musical vision that had been latent all along but, enriched by his Bartok studies, had finally found the right means of expression.

That confident maturity showed in all his subsequent music.

Peter suffered plenty of ill-health. He was a sensitive man and his personal life, detailed in his autobiography *Flying High*, was complicated, to say the least. For many years he was a heroin addict, not helped by destructive influences from some other musicians. When my wife and I knew him through the last two decades of his life he often seemed terribly frail, but kept on performing, often when he was in pain, and stayed full of ambition to expand his musical horizons. Northway Publications, run by my wife Ann, published his autobiography in 2011. It is a searingly honest book, which reflects Peter's strange mix of vulnerability and determination, the intensity with which he approached almost everything in life, his total lack of boastfulness, and perhaps his bewilderment that he somehow survived the dark times in his helter-skelter career. His wife Linda who died in 2007 was an essential support for many years.

It is our great fortune that despite all the ups and downs, Peter King, who lived to the age of 80, managed to leave a wonderful legacy on record that will gradually gain ever wider appreciation in the international jazz world.

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## BBC YOUNG JAZZ MUSICIAN

The BBC Young Jazz Musician really takes the term 'young' literally, with this year's Final consisting of five musicians aged between 18 and 22. As it happened, this year's winner was the oldest competitor, Deschanel Gordon, a pianist from Hackney in London, a recent graduate of Trinity Laban and already to be enjoyed widely on Youtube playing sets in Lockdown streams from such places as the 606 Club and Kansas Smitty's.

Of the finalists, the most familiar to *Jazz Rag* readers was saxophonist Alex Clarke whose stay at Birmingham Conservatoire was rather brief, preferring as she does to gig, mainly round the Midlands and North West, in a variety of styles and in some pretty exalted company, most recently a livestreamed quintet session with Alan Barnes from the Birmingham, Sandwell and Westside Festival.

The Final at Cadogan Hall – socially distanced, of course – took place as part of the EFG London Jazz Festival on November 14 and was broadcast on BBC4 on November 22, presented by Yolanda Brown. Joining Deschanel and Alex, and accompanied by Nikki Yeoh and Michael and Mark Mondesir, were three other musicians, all currently studying at conservatoire. Saxophonist Matt Carmichael from Glasgow is a student at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, guitarist Ralph Porrett from Telford is at Guildhall and the youngest of the five, 18-year-old bassist Kielan Sheard from Hertfordshire, has just joined Trinity Laban.

The five finalists had been chosen from a pool of 25 in the Semi-Final, judged by Zoe Rahman, Tim Garland and Byron Wallen. For the Final the requirement was to perform a 15-minute set, including at least one composition or arrangement of their own, in front of a judging panel of Nubya Garcia, Orphy Robinson and Guy Barker.

The BBC Young Jazz Musician event, which takes place every two years, is part of a stable of Young Musician competitions, and Paul Bullock, BBC Young Musician Executive Editor, commented, 'It is a source of particular joy at this time to showcase these special young performers and provide BBC audiences with a chance to hear their music. BBC Young Musician, in all its forms, is by definition about the future.' True enough, but we thought *Jazz Rag* readers would also enjoy the viewpoint of an outstanding young player with whose work many are already familiar. What was it like for Alex Clarke?

Absolutely fabulous, apparently! Her enthusiasm for the event, her fellow-competitors, the rhythm section, even the process of making a television programme, is total. For those interested in taking part in two years time, the process involves an application with video (in her case, two videos, one of gigs, one recorded in her bedroom during Lockdown) and, apparently, quite a long wait. When things started to happen, they happened at speed. She was summoned to the Semi-Final, then within two weeks it was Cadogan Hall and the Final.



Deschanel Gordon

'We were there for two days, rehearsing on Thursday and Friday, and that was really good because we all got on so well. We didn't feel competitive because we were all so different in style we couldn't really be compared – there were no losers, we all felt like winners. I was a bit apprehensive that the Final itself might be a bit flat with no audience, but it was terrific. Given current circumstances, just the social interaction was wonderful.'

Alex's three song set consisted of her arrangements of *Lullaby of the Leaves* and *In Your Own Sweet Way* and an original based on the chords of *After You've Gone*. Of course she admits she felt some disappointment at not winning, but her praise for Deschanel Gordon seems genuine and unforced: 'He finished with *Round Midnight* which was brilliant.'

The great bonus is the television exposure. Alex is actually a remarkably well known performer for a 20-year-old, but even so there will have been plenty of club owners and festival directors watching BBC 4 who will be noting her name – together with those of Deschanel Gordon, Matt Carmichael, Ralph Porritt and Kielan Sheard – for that happy time when normal jazz activity returns.

The BBC Young Jazz Musician is certainly influential on careers. Deschanel is only the fourth winner of the competition and

the previous three have gone on to the anticipated success. Alexander Bone (2014) no longer plays with Jam Experiment (the group now re-christened Bonzai) and he has diversified away from jazz to some extent. He works as much as arranger/composer/producer as saxophonist, but anyone who can point to two Proms appearances and work with the likes of Nile Rodgers and Kylie Minogue must be doing something right!

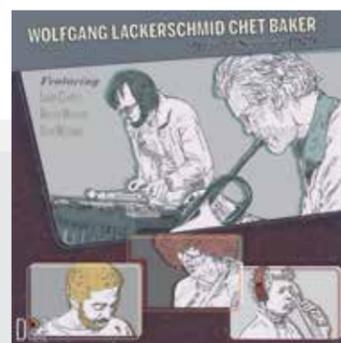
Oddly Alexandra Ridout (2016) has made the same number of Proms appearances and leads her own successful quintet as well as being in demand for countless different jazz ensembles. The onward progress of Xhosa Cole (2018) has been slowed by the fact that nine months of the two years since he won have been taken out for live performance, but he is already an established name in jazz circles, working with the likes of Jay Phelps and Soweto Kinch.

Most interesting of all – certainly to Alex, Matt, Ralph and Kielan – turn to page 6 of this magazine and check out who won the Best Instrumentalist in the Scottish Jazz Awards – Fergus McCreddie, a non-winning Finalist in the BBC Young Jazz Musician as recently as 2018! As Alex says, there's a winner, but there are no losers!



Alex Clarke

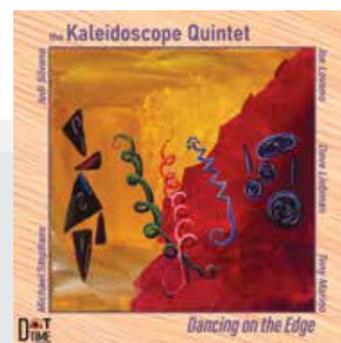
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# SUPERBLY SWINGING

ALAN BARNES continues our series about great musicians of the Golden Age of British jazz – the much-missed tenor saxophonist DICK MORRISSEY.



Saxophonists Peter King, Don Weller and Dick Morrissey were all born in South London in 1940 and all began their musical careers as clarinetists in traditional jazz bands. I once asked Don about his transition to the tenor saxophone.

'Dick Morrissey and I went to the West End to buy our first tenors on the same day. A month later I heard him on a gig and he could play it and I couldn't. That was the difference.'

This coming from one of the great individual voices on the instrument gives some indication of just how natural a player Dick Morrissey was. It was as if he and the tenor saxophone were made for each other and were just waiting to meet that day in the Selmer shop, 114-116 Charing Cross Road. He did play flute and soprano saxophone at various times in his later life, but it is on the tenor that he developed into, and became recognised as, a world class musician.

He not only changed his instrument that day, but also his whole musical direction. Whilst still playing clarinet, he had joined the Buck Clayton-inspired Gus Galbraith band where he came under the direct influence of Peter King. King had already moved on to the alto and by careful analysis of Charlie Parker recordings had become astonishingly adept at the new

musical language. The clarinet has never been a natural bebop instrument, with cross fingering complexities and difficulties with being heard in the lower register. Any serious attempt to move into the modern jazz world would require a change of instrument.

Just how quickly Dick grasped the mechanics of the saxophone and the stylistic subtleties of the music can be heard on his first album *It's Morrissey Man!*, recorded in 1961 when he was still 20 years old. His style is already perfectly formed and he delivers a confident, accomplished and swaggering debut. His huge sound is at times reminiscent of Sonny Rollins or Johnny Griffin with Stanley Turrentine overtones in the phrasing. His mastery of all the genres, hard-bop, calypso, blues and ballads, sounds like the inspired outpourings of a much more experienced man. This is beyond precocious and it's no surprise that Tubby Hayes began to actively encourage him. By 1966, he was ranking second to Tubby in the *Melody Maker* tenor poll.

Between his recording debut and the mid 70's Dick had a nine month residency in India, led his own quartet with Harry South recording three albums, had residencies at Ronnie Scott's and the Bull's Head, toured with Jimmy Witherspoon and Jack McDuff, played, intriguingly, for a short period with the Ted Heath band, was a member of the Animals big band and, in 1969, formed the jazz-rock band *If* with guitarist Terry Smith and fellow reeds man Dave Quincy. He relocated to Sweden and toured Europe, the U.S. and Canada with the band, a staggering seventeen times.

In 1975 at the instigation of Average White Band saxophonists Malcolm 'Molly' Duncan and Roger Ball, both fans of Morrissey, Atlantic records offered Dick a showcase recording in New York. He asked

guitarist Jim Mullen, then cooling his heels after leaving popular band Kokomo, to be involved. The two musicians instantly found they had a natural way of phrasing and playing unisons together that was almost uncanny. Dick was very interested in producing a Crusaders type album and this recording, released as *Up*, set out the band's policy of playing contemporary feels without sacrificing any of the jazz content. There followed an exciting six week residency at Mickell's in New York. The word soon got around and the list of celebrity sitters-in during their sojourn includes Steve Gadd, David Sanborn, George Benson and, every night for a week, the Brecker Brothers who amazed both the leaders with their abilities to instantly assimilate the unfamiliar material. In various incarnations the hugely popular Morrissey-Mullen band continued until 1988, including a long residency at the Half Moon in Putney where punters had to be shoe-horned into the packed room. Later on, the two leaders played in a more straight ahead setting in *Our Band*, led by Martin Drew.

Any musician who played with Dick at any stage of his career will have happy memories of the occasion and similar experiences to share. He was always completely absorbed in the moment and in the music, both when playing or cheering on other's efforts. He consistently made a genuine emotional connection with his audience, through subtle, tasteful and musical means rather than by any kind of grandstanding or playing to the gallery. Any photo taken of him playing the saxophone captures his total involvement. His enthusiasm was infectious – this was not a man to consider the option of coasting. The consistency and high standard of his every performance brings to mind, and rivals, that of another great tenorist, Zoot Sims.

Never one to carry sheaths of music around, he would always

ask others, including horn players, what they fancied playing and would go along with their suggestions, changes and chosen keys. Even some great players will want to include their own well practised material and set routines when they are being presented as the visiting star. Dick was always more interested in bringing out the best in all the players on the stand. He presumed everyone was trying as hard as possible to play well and disapproved strongly of others who were critical of those not coming up to par on the stand.

Local rhythm sections in those days could be a challenge and Dick would tell the story of the night fate dealt him an undertaker with a long white beard on piano, a van driver on bass, the local butcher on drums and no P.A. They eventually by, torturous process, got a set list together and took to the stage. Jim Mullen has described Dick as 'England's greatest opening batsman' and following his first solo could be a daunting prospect for the most accomplished player. This night, however, nobody fancied soloing at all, on anything, in either set. Afterwards the drummer observed, almost in triumph, to the exhausted saxophonist: 'Not your night, tonight, was it?'

Wherever he was and whoever he was playing with, Dick had the same warm up routine. He would find a quiet couple of pubs or bars and have two or three of pints of Guinness on his own, arriving at the gig no earlier than ten minutes before the downbeat. If the band needed to be guided through parts or routines, that was someone else's job. Socialising happened in the interval and often for extended periods afterwards, but not before. No food was taken before the gig. Even in New York, he found a bar, Fitzpatrick's, serving his favourite brew on draft, which was a rarity in those days. However, the small dimpled glasses it was being served in proved most unsatisfactory

until Dick noticed a cocktail shaker behind the bar. The lower, glass portion of the object was virtually pint sized and a price to fill it was negotiated. The bar owner found several of these shakers in a back room and soon a trend was established amongst the locals of drinking pints of the black liquid in this fashion. Anyone who has witnessed one of Dick's opening solos at a performance will attest to how well this method worked for him. In Jim Mullen's words, the rest of the musicians were 'drawn like iron filings to magnet' to his beat and his immaculate time. He had an ability to make those around him raise their game and to make every gig special.

However, Dick could have a slightly cavalier attitude to his schedule. He did have a diary, but seldom looked at it. His devoted friend, fan and driver (he never drove) Sally Haser also had another diary she held for him so the odd confusion was, perhaps, inevitable.

One night the Morrissey Mullen band, by this time travelling with two vans to accommodate musicians, equipment and a sound man, pulled up at the Concorde Club in Eastleigh. The club was in total darkness and there was no evidence of anyone being on the premises. Dick, who had taken the booking, woke up in the back of one of the vans, viewed the scene and commented, 'Ah, perhaps it's next month then.'

Other diary clashes were amicably resolved, but financial considerations didn't seem to be part of any decisions made.

Dick's tenor looked as if it had spent time at the bottom of an ocean. Many saxophonists have horns which have lost their lacquer and as a result get some green verdigris growing on their surfaces. Dick's instrument took this to new levels. He wasn't one of those players who meticulously clean the instrument out after each performance and so his shade of green was more livid than most and elastic bands were often a feature, replacing broken rusted springs. One day during his New York residency, when he was staying in a brownstone walk-up in the sweltering humidity of the

summer, several creatures were spotted moving about in the saxophone, seemingly enjoying the combination of Guinness residue and the warm damp.

Returning to the UK, he made his home in Deal, Kent but he kept a barge in Little Venice to accommodate him on London dates. Boat maintenance was not high on the list of priorities and he was awoken one day with the news that the boat had sunk along with its generator. Fortunately, he wasn't on board and he managed to sell the re-floated vessel but, typically, didn't realise the value of the generator until it was pointed out by pianist Johnny Burch rather too late.

As a retreat he had a modest place in Portugal, shared with his brother, where he enjoyed peace and solitude and a different approach to life, once describing how precious water was in the hot climate, and how any left from washing would go on the plants.

A couple of happy personal memories:

In the mid 80's, Dick was booked to deputise for Tommy Whittle in a band we had: Straight Eight. He maintained he wasn't a sight reader and asked for the parts and the recording beforehand. On the gig I noticed that he wasn't even looking at the parts, but had the whole thing down. I had one of those 'You really must start and get it together' moments as I realised that he knew the music much better

than I did. There were a couple of Mick Pyne compositions to play with tough harmonic sequences which he negotiated with ease. He also taught me *Bluesology* by Milt Jackson that day, a head that I still play on gigs.

In 1991 we played a quintet gig at the Swanage Jazz Festival and I gained first-hand knowledge of his amiable and generous way of putting a set together. The Sonny Rollins composition *Airegin* came up and he described how tough it had been for him, as a young man, to have to follow Tubby Hayes on that sequence: 'He went through it like a knife through butter, as if he were just playing the blues.' About an hour later, he sailed through the chords just as he'd described and I began to understand how he'd felt all those years ago.

Dick remained modest about all his achievements, even denying it was him playing tenor on the Ridley Scott movie *Blade Runner* despite musicians assuring him it was instantly recognisable as him. He eventually remembered and conceded that he had done a session for Vangelis, the composer of the soundtrack.

Great moments in his recording career include a cameo performance in *Dotheboys Hall* in Dankworth's *What the Dickens!* suite where he holds his own with Tony Coe, Peter King, Bobby Wellins and Tubby Hayes. There is a lovely moment on the LP *Jimmy Witherspoon at the Bull's Head* where the singer (not always the easiest man to please)

demands that Dick delivers a second solo on *I got a Girl* to his obvious delight.

Throughout the 90's, Dick put up a brave fight against the cancer which eventually put him in a wheelchair and took his life at the age of 60. He continued with occasional performances at his local pub in Deal where, making light of his poor health, he would always play with his old fire, often with his son Jasper on drums. His final performance was at the Astor Theatre in Deal with the re-formed Morrissey Mullen band. He sent postcards to musicians who had played at his many benefit concerts. One read, in describing his illness, 'I just can't seem to shake off this devilish thing.'

Dick was stylistically incredibly flexible. All of his playing seemed to come from the same deep well, be it hard-bop, jazz-rock, funk or pop. His commitment to whatever music he was playing at the time was total and he had an ability to break down barriers and communicate directly to his audiences – he was universally loved. His superb sense of swing, huge sound and ability to make everyone feel good mark him out as one of the finest of players.

Michael Brecker summed it up perfectly:

'Dick had a direct line from the heart to the horn.'

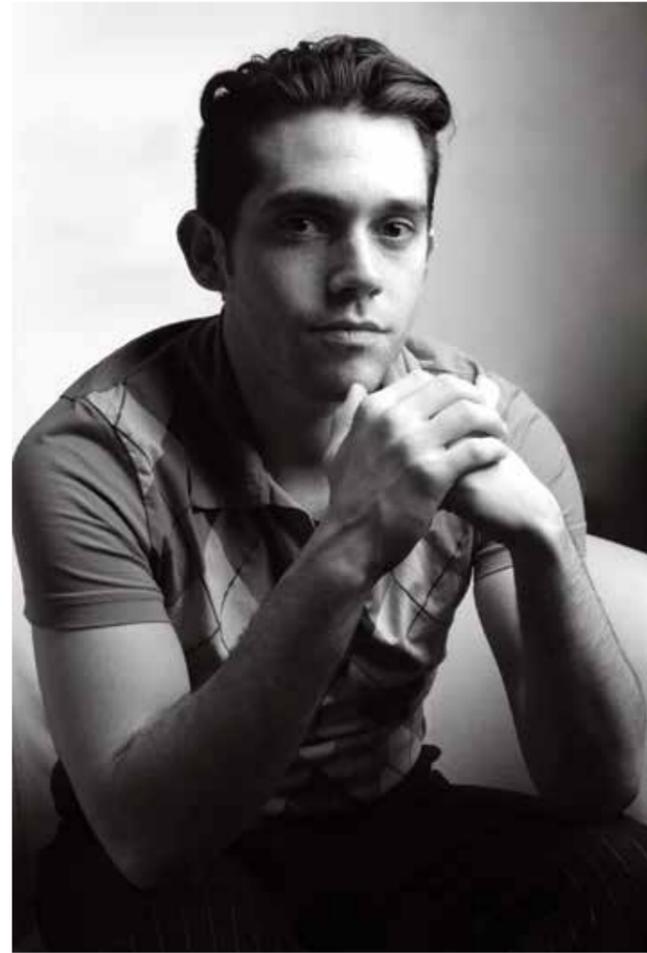
**Alan would like to thank Jim Mullen for his help in preparing this article.**



Dick with U.S. tenor star Teddy Edwards

## FRENCH BOOGIE STAR

Among the many disappointments caused by the coronavirus pandemic, British fans missed the opportunity to hear BEN TOURY at the postponed Birmingham, Sandwell and Westside Jazz Festival in July. RON SIMPSON profiles a remarkable and versatile pianist.



It wouldn't quite have been Ben Toury's first appearance in the UK – a few years ago he played Sandwich Jazz Festival – but, compared with his international touring, ranging from the USA to Russia, British audiences have been relatively deprived. His UK fans are more likely to have encountered him on YouTube where his videos total several million views.

So what is special about Ben Toury? Let's start with that versatility. Many of us first encountered him on YouTube as a boogie woogie pianist with as much originality as virtuosity. His biography defines the style of his band as 'a heavy and modern Rhythm 'n' Blues' and refers to 'a subtle mix of classical and Arabic-sounding scales'. Indeed, the most recent Youtube video I found when starting this article in early October was entitled

'Classical meets boogie woogie piano'. So what does Ben have to say about the different styles of music he plays?

'When I'm alone, I'm more free to play what I want, so I can, for example, play real traditional boogie woogie. When I'm with my band, it's a real show we are giving, with lots of energy. Our repertoire is mainly built on my compositions and a few covers from the 1950s, but really different from the originals. I like to call it heavy Rhythm 'n' Blues because it's like boogie woogie mixed with modern rhythm and fat guitar solos. It's like Full Metal Boogie Woogie.

'I like to mix different musical influences to see the result. I'm self-taught coming from blues and boogie so I play in those styles, but sometimes I pick up some riffs of other music (I like

classical music) and try to mix them in. A lot of musicians did the same and created new music style: James Brown, Ray Charles, Jimi Hendrix...'

Benjamin Toury was born in La Chatre in central France on January 20th, 1982, and his musical education (none of it formal) began when he was four or five years old. His father was a blues musician/singer, heavily influenced by John Lee Hooker, who performed with his brother from about 1959. Toury, senior, like his son self-taught, played guitar, drums and harmonica – no piano. The piano came into young Ben's musical universe when he began to dabble with a small keyboard while his father was performing onstage or in the studio – and what began with the blues soon spread to a much wider range of music.

'Nobody knows why I chose piano. We guess it was because I was bored, so I started to play on the keyboard and I was able to pick up the notes from blues discs and reproduce them on my keyboard. When I was ten I had an electronic piano and I developed a passion for boogie woogie.

'Why boogie woogie? Well, at home there was always music playing and I always loved three of the LPs in particular: two were by Memphis Slim, one of them live at Les Trois Maillets in Paris, and the other *Old Time Shuffle* by the wonderful Lloyd Glenn. I guess I've been sensitive to the sound of the piano since I was a child. Later I discovered other pianists such as Jerry Lee Lewis, Art Tatum and Phineas Newborn.'

Though his public performances have been few recently owing to the pandemic, Ben clocked up his 2,500th performance in 2020. Since he is only 38, this suggests an early start – and that's exactly what he got! In 1993 at the age of 11 he formed the Good Ol' Boogie duo with his father, playing blues standards and Ben's own compositions, already

more than 15 in number. Ben's versatility goes beyond styles of music: even at this early age he was playing drums and harmonica on stage in addition to his main instrument, the piano.

By now the absence of formal teaching had become a policy decision, prompted by the belief that a teacher would distort his way of playing. Anyway at that age he had no plans to be a professional: in interviews he said he wanted to become a stuntman or, at worst, a Formula 1 driver. Viewers of YouTube, enjoying Ben's dare-devil, high-risk strategy as a pianist may feel that his ambitions have not changed that much!

In fact, spending weekdays in the classroom and weekends and holidays in smoky bars brought Ben early success, as a composer as well as a pianist. One of his boogie pieces with the offbeat title of *Virtuous City* ('extremely fast', Ben comments disarmingly) was a particular favourite and Ben remembers that in November 1993 an American guitarist joined them for that number and several others before encouraging Ben to keep to his style of playing. That was the occasion when the 11-year-old pianist played five numbers with Alvin Lee of Ten Years After.

By the age of 15 Ben had recorded two CDs and performed more than 200 shows. The Good Ol' Boogie show was now frequently heard at major events in France such as the Printemps de Bourges. His biography describes the year 2000 as a 'turning point' in Benjamin's life, though the events of that year were hardly unexpected given the successes of his teenage years. At the age of 18, having obtained his baccalaureate, he became a professional musician and moved to Paris. At the same time he disbanded the Good Ol' Boogie duo, immediately replacing it with another with the same personnel!



The Benjamin Toury Duo, still Ben and his father, was different in style, confined just to piano and drums, without the multi-instrumentalism of the Good Ol' Boogie. This was the group that started making waves with the French jazz establishment, notably pianists Siegfried Kessler, Fabrice Eulry (who still advises his 'young boogie competitor' with his career) and the great Claude Bolling.

A further development occurred when they added the English double bassist Nick Whewell whose background in classical Russian music gave a new direction to Ben Toury's music. Since then, for the next 20 years, new directions have been what his career has been about: triumphs at classical festivals, addition of two saxes to form the Ben Toury Corporation, replacement of the saxes by a jazz guitarist to make the Corporation a quartet, programming more of Ben's vocals, adding a front line of three to form the Ben Toury Machine. Sponsorship by the prestigious piano company, Pleyel, brought a clutch of prestigious gigs,

including (improbably enough) one in the Emir's Palace in Abu Dhabi!

Ben is always open to new ventures and new styles, but – paradoxically – remains true to early influences. The Ben Toury Corporation has recorded prolifically in more contemporary style, but in 2013 Ben went back to boogie woogie and recorded *Wild Boogie-Woogie Vol. 1*, to be followed two years later by a second volume. Volume 3, focussing on boogie dance, is on the way. For anyone typing in 'Ben Toury' on YouTube he is pre-eminently a spectacular boogie-woogie pianist, one who has spent part of the enforced lay-off developing teaching techniques for boogie woogie piano.

Typically in 2019 Ben released a new album, *Siberian Piano*, based on classical compositions, but he also took blues and boogie back home to the States by playing the Cincinnati Blues Society and the Bloomington Boogie Festival.

So Ben fuses tradition with originality, even exploration. Perhaps the best summary of

what he is about comes in his comments about his approach to boogie woogie:

'Boogie woogie is not a dead music. A lot of people are playing the same licks from 1925 and that's all – the book is closed. This magnificent music deserves more in my opinion.

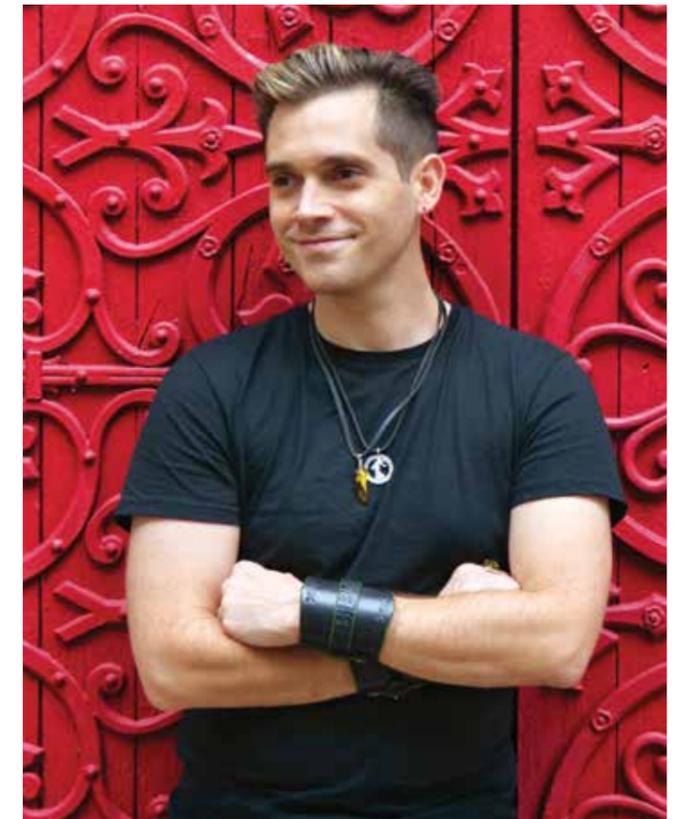
'I want to keep this music alive, evolving. Let's try to play it with another background rhythm maybe or mix this shuffle rhythm with a classical scale. Boogie woogie is a powerful music style and a unique piano technique. For instance, I composed a jazz song named *African Smoke*, transposing a boogie ostinato bass, keeping

the rhythm and technique of boogie, but using a different scale and different harmonies. Another example: I like to play a traditional boogie structure, with a turnover stolen from Chopin – and it's surprisingly good! (My band thinks I'm mad to do that!)

'I don't know if I'm adding something, but I'm searching. The priority is the music, not me. If you are trying to change something, it's not because you dislike it, it's because you believe it can be different or even better.

'The most important thing is to respect the music.'

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# 50 BY LOUIS ARMSTRONG

by Scott Yanow

For this article, I sought to do the impossible and possibly irrational. I guess I could blame Ricky Riccardi, Louis Armstrong's biographer, who a few years ago said that he was compiling a list of Armstrong's 50 greatest recordings. I never did see the list, but thought that it was an interesting idea. Now, knowing full well that there are many more than 50 great recordings (individual songs rather than full albums) by the most famous and influential of all jazz artists, I have nevertheless plunged ahead with my own list which is in chronological order and covers a 45 year period. Only two songs are listed twice and, yes, I know that I left out *What A Wonderful World!*

**1) Cake Walkin' Babies From Home** – Jan. 8, 1925 – While Armstrong made his first recordings in 1923 with King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band and made a major impact during his period with Fletcher Henderson's orchestra, his solos in both settings were generally brief. In contrast, one can only imagine what listeners thought when they first heard his playing on *Cake Walkin' Babies From Home* which found him battling Sidney Bechet.

**2) Careless Love** – May 26, 1925 – Armstrong's interplay with Bessie Smith (the accurately-titled Empress of the Blues) is both tasteful and assertive.

**3) Heebie Jeebies** – Feb. 26, 1926 – Louis Armstrong's Hot Five and Hot Seven recordings of 1926-27 forever changed jazz from an ensemble-oriented music to one featuring brilliant soloists, none hotter than Satch. His scat-singing on *Heebie Jeebies* may have been preceded on record by others including Gene 'The Ragtime King' Greene back in 1911, but it resulted in scatting catching on.

**4) Come Back Sweet Papa** – Feb. 22, 1926 – A wonderful song and superior melodic improvising by Armstrong. It is strange that this song did not stay in his repertoire for long.

**5) Cornet Chop Suey** – Feb. 26, 1926 – An example of flawless virtuosity that must have amazed other trumpeters.

**6) Wild Man Blues** – May 7, 1927 – Armstrong's dramatic breaks during the first chorus of this piece cannot be topped.

**7) Potato Head Blues** – May 10, 1927 – One of the most popular of Louis Armstrong's early recordings, topped off by his blazing stop-time chorus.

**8) Struttin' With Some Barbecue** – Dec. 9, 1927 – While Armstrong played this song many times over the next 40 years, this version has a perfect solo chorus, one with a beginning, middle and end. Was it improvised on the spot or worked out in advance, and why did he never repeat this solo?

**9) Hotter Than That** – Dec. 13, 1927 – Living up to its title, this performance has mutually inspiring interplay between Satch and guitarist Lonnie Johnson.

**10) West End Blues** – June 28, 1928 – Armstrong's recordings with his Savoy Ballroom Five in 1928 found him at his most advanced, playing off the equally avant-garde ideas of pianist Earl Hines. *West End Blues* was Satch's personal favorite of all of his recordings and it is universally considered his masterpiece, from the stunning opening cadenza (which Charlie Parker quoted in full during a live broadcast on an unrelated song) and the atmospheric wordless singing to the remarkable final chorus. This performance should be memorized by all jazz musicians

**11) Weather Bird** – Dec. 5, 1928 – The one duet recording by Armstrong and Hines. They challenge each other throughout and play with time without losing a beat.

**12) I Can't Give You Anything But Love** – Mar. 5, 1929 – During 1929-46, Armstrong mostly recorded with big bands and was accused by some in the jazz world of going 'commercial'. In



reality, he simplified his trumpet playing a little and emphasized his singing a bit, but never lost the ability to spontaneously create musical magic. This is one of many former pop songs that he turned into a jazz standard.

**13) Ain't Misbehavin'** – July 19, 1929 – In 1929 there were eight other recordings of the Fats Waller classic before Armstrong got to it, but his version is the one that is remembered.

**14) Black And Blue** – July 22, 1929 – A protest song against racism in 1929? This may have been the first one ever recorded, and it is certainly one of the most effective and quietly emotional.

**15) When You're Smiling** – Sept. 11, 1929 – While many of Armstrong's early recordings are full of hyper-excitement, he shows remarkable restraint on this song, building up the tension and suspense as he plays the melody fairly straight but in the upper register.

**16) Dear Old Southland** – Apr. 5, 1930 – While his duet with pianist Buck Washington is not as competitive as *Weather Bird* with Hines, it is filled with dramatic trumpet playing.

**17) I'm A Ding Dong Daddy** – July 21, 1930 – Dazzling scatting (after singing 'I dun forgot the words') and a perfectly constructed trumpet solo that builds and builds.

**18) Shine** – Mar. 9, 1931 – The words may not be politically correct but this song has very viable chord changes that Armstrong takes full advantage of during his stirring solo.

**19) Star Dust** – Nov. 4, 1931 – Originally this Hoagy Carmichael gem was a medium-fast dance band number. Isham Jones slowed it down in 1930 and Armstrong immortalized it, even while playing around with the melody and the words.

**20) Home** – Jan. 27, 1932 – While Louis Armstrong's big band recordings of 1929-31 are generally quite rewarding, his 1932-33 sessions were sometimes subpar due to the erratic playing of his sidemen. The heartwarming *Home* is an exception and he puts plenty of feeling into the lyrics and theme.

**21) Hustlin' and Bustlin' For Baby** – Jan. 26, 1933 – This is an overlooked song that would not be recorded again (other than by Ruby Braff in 1955) until Marty Grosz dug it out in 1986. Based on this version, it should have become a standard.

**22) Dinah** – Oct. 21, 1933 – This is one of three numbers on this list that is taken from a film. Louis Armstrong performed *Dinah* many times in the 1930s including for a remarkable three song miniset filmed in Copenhagen. His scatting and superb trumpet solo are still exciting to see today.

**23) On The Sunny Side Of The Street** – Nov. 7, 1934 – While in an off-period during part of 1933-35 when his trumpet chops were worn out and he was living in Europe, Armstrong only had one overseas recording session. This magnificent version of *On The Sunny Side Of The Street* was the highpoint.

**24) Swing That Music** – May 16, 1936 – The joyous uptempo

piece has a happily exhibitionistic solo by Armstrong; how many straight times does he hit the same high note during his solo? It gives one an example of how he excited audiences.

**25) Jubilee** – Jan. 12, 1938 – After Armstrong performed this Hoagy Carmichael song in the otherwise forgettable film *Every Day's A Holiday*, he owned it, but soon discarded it. No one else adopted it for long because they could not top his version.

**26) I Double Dare You** – Jan. 13, 1938 – It is strange that this song (first recorded by Woody Herman in 1937) did not catch on. Armstrong's singing and trumpet playing is heard very much in its prime even if the record was not a hit.

**27) Down In Honky Tonk Town** – May 27, 1940 – Armstrong and Bechet had a one-time reunion in 1940 and this was the hottest number from their last encounter.

**28) Back O' Town Blues** – May 17, 1947 – In 1947 the trumpeter took a chance, broke up his big band, and formed Louis Armstrong's All-Stars. It resulted in a much smaller payroll, musical flexibility, and his unparalleled popularity as he became a constant world traveller for the rest of his life. *Back O' Town Blues* (from his famous Town Hall concert) is full of his homespun wisdom.

**29) Jack-Armstrong Blues** – June 10, 1947 – Louis Armstrong and Jack Teagarden had a perfect musical partnership, bringing out the best in each other. This is their finest joint recording with the closing trumpet solo being Satch's best of the 1940s.

**30) Someday You'll Be Sorry** – June 10, 1947 – Armstrong occasionally wrote songs throughout his career. This is his best-known original.

**31) La Vie En Rose** – June 26, 1950 – Satch had two parallel recording careers in the 1950s, with his All-Stars and as a single who often recorded with orchestras. This offbeat recording with an orchestra (and soon played nightly with the All-Stars) finds him interpreting the Edith Piaf classic in his own way.

**32) Ole Miss** – July 12, 1954 – From the *Satch Plays W.C. Handy* album, Armstrong and his All-Stars romp throughout the joyful piece.

**33) St. Louis Blues** – July 13, 1954 – Louis Armstrong recorded Handy's *St. Louis Blues* with Bessie Smith in 1925 and with his big band in 1929, 1933 and 1934. However none compare to this nine-minute version which is extraordinary in every way including the long melody statement, the humorous singing, Trummy Young's boisterous trombone, and every note that Satch plays.

**34) Basin Street Blues** – Jan. 21, 1955 – Armstrong loved to start *Basin Street* as a ballad and then, after a drum break, have it swing hard. This is one of the better versions.

**35) Honeysuckle Rose** – Apr. 27, 1955 – A highlight of the *Satch Plays Fats* album, Velma Middleton takes one of her better vocals before the leader's trumpet makes it hot.

**36) Mack The Knife** – Sept. 28, 1955 – Louis Armstrong's hit is such a departure from this morbid song's origin that it can be enlightening to compare the two.

**37) Indiana** – Oct. 30, 1955 – The exciting set solo developed by Armstrong over several years it served as the perfect opener (after his theme) to nearly every performance.

**38) Tin Roof Blues** – Oct. 30, 1955 – The passion displayed by the frontline of Armstrong, Trummy Young and clarinetist Edmond Hall is remarkable during this slow and burning version.

**39) Struttin' With Some Barbecue** – June 1, 1956 – Completely different than his 1927 recording, Louis Armstrong had developed a new solo and ensemble part for this piece. Even though it became predictable, it was still always exciting to hear.

**40) St. Louis Blues** – July 14, 1956 – Performed with Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic (and filmed), this is a very memorable meeting



between classical music and Dixieland with the inspired Armstrong, Young and Hall amazing Bernstein.

**41) Stompin' At The Savoy** – July 23, 1957 – Louis Armstrong made three full albums with Ella Fitzgerald. This uptempo romp gets a bit crazy with plenty of ad-libbing and a brief but explosive trumpet outburst.

**42) Rockin' Chair** – July 6, 1958 – While Armstrong teamed up with other singers through the years on this humorous but often-touching piece, Jack Teagarden was the perfect foil. They had a reunion at the 1958 Newport Jazz Festival, resulting in this version that was filmed for *Jazz on a Summer's Day*.

**43) Avalon** – May 24, 1960 – In 1959 Louis Armstrong had a heart attack that put him out of action for a few months. He made a full comeback and joyfully hits very high notes during this performance with the Dukes of Dixieland.

**44) Drop Me Off In Harlem** – Apr. 4, 1961 – While it is unfortunate that Armstrong never recorded with the Duke Ellington Orchestra, Duke did make a double-album in which he sat in with the All-Stars. This is a fine Ellington song that Satch otherwise never seems to have performed.

**45) Summer Song** – Sept. 13, 1961 – At the 1961 Monterey Jazz Festival, Louis Armstrong sang and acted in the Dave Brubeck show *The Real Ambassadors*. Other than the album that was made, the show was not staged again for 50 years. Satch puts plenty of honest feeling into the Brubeck ballad.

**46) Hello Dolly** – Dec. 3, 1963 – No matter how many times one

hears this, it is impossible not to smile.

**47) A Kiss To Build A Dream On** – Apr. 18, 1964 – Louis Armstrong began performing this ballad in 1950 (it was in the movie *The Strip*) and never lost his affection for the song.

**48) Jeepers Creepers** – Apr. 18, 1964 – From the *Hello Dolly* album, this version has one of Armstrong's last great trumpet solos.

**49) Blue Yodel No. 9** – Late 1970 – Louis Armstrong's health gradually declined after 1965 and he was barely active in 1969. However he came back in 1970 and even began playing trumpet again later in the year. He appeared on the Johnny Cash television show and collaborated with the singer on a revival of *Blue Yodel No. 9* which he had recorded with country pioneer Jimmy Rodgers in 1930. Look for this heartwarming performance on YouTube.

**50) Sleepy Time Down South** – Every version – Louis Armstrong's theme song from 1931 on, he performed this song a countless number of times through the years, always with his typical warmth.

**Scott Yanow has always considered Louis Armstrong to be his favourite musician. Scott can be reached for liner notes, bios, press releases, reviews and other interesting assignments at scottyanowjazz@yahoo.com.**

**Please email us with your favourite tracks not on Scott's list. The reaction in the Jazz Rag office was, 'What, no Mahogany Hall Stomp?', but Scott said it came 51st!**

# ROY WILLIAMS M.B.E.

BORN SALFORD, MARCH 7, 1937



Photo by Derek Evans



Above: British Jazz Award winners in Birmingham : ROY, Dave Shepherd, Kenny Baker, Martin Taylor [rear].Allan Ganley, Len Skeat, John Barnes, Peter King, Tommy Whittle and Brian Lemon[front].

Right: At Birmingham's Grand Hotel : ROY, Humphrey Lyttelton, Allan Ganley, Tommy Whittle, Bruce Turner, Randy Colville.



Since 1987 Roy Williams has picked up well over 20 British Jazz Awards for Trombone.



Roy has played with such stars as Buddy Tate, Ruby Braff, Doc Cheatham, Bud Freeman, the Harlem Jazz & Blues Band and many others, including (appropriately enough) The World's Greatest Jazz Band.

*'Not every player combines the qualities of supreme creativity with open friendliness to all humanity, but the great Roy Williams does so with ease and our jazz world is infinitely the richer for it.'*  
Digby Fairweather



Top: ROY with Gene 'The Mighty Flea' Connors at the first Birmingham Jazz Festival[1985].

Above: *Drummin' Man* on tour somewhere in Germany : Bruce Adams, Alan Barnes,ROY, Len Skeat, Peter York, Brian Dee, Val Wiseman and Pascal Michaux.



Left: On the road with *Lady Sings The Blues* : Jim Douglas, Len Skeat, Al Gay, Val Wiseman, Brian Lemon,ROY, Digby Fairweather, Eddie Taylor.

# REFLECTING DREAMS

**MARILYN MAZUR** explains to **RON SIMPSON** what the band **FUTURE SONG** means to her and how the newly issued Stunt CD, *Live Reflections*, looks back on 25 years of the band's life.

Marilyn Mazur is usually described as a Danish percussionist/composer, but in reality she is rather more international than that. Born in New York of Polish and African-American descent, she moved to Denmark at the age of six. Most of her career has been spent there, but by no means all of it. In 1985 she took part in the recording of *Aura* in which Palle in which Palle Mikkelborg paid tribute to Miles Davis. Miles himself was present and shortly afterwards Marilyn was invited to join his band and she toured the world with Miles, Wayne Shorter and Gil Evans until 1989.

When she returned to her Danish base, she immediately formed the group Future Song, with Aina Kemanis (voice), Elvira Plenar (keyboards), Nils Petter Molvaer (trumpet), Klavs Hovman (bass) and Audun Kleive (drums). What prompted the creation of this new band?

'Very inspired by my years with Miles Davis, I wished to create a new band with musical soul mates, each member with their own strong voice, yet all able to unite into a joint expression. I thought of the project as a dream of a future where people have developed an empathic/telepathic way of close communication and understanding rather than just developing their technology. The size of Future Song is large enough to have many sound colours in its palette, but small enough to be a flexible and spontaneous unit.

'In 1989 I also missed creating and playing my own music which was very different from the sort of music Miles' band played in the later 80s. I felt much closer to Miles' 70s music and its mysteries. Loving a more collective way of playing together with space for everyone at the same time, I used my instincts to gather some of my favourite musicians, many of them Scandinavian, for this grand and long-lasting dream.'

The dream has indeed lasted well, but in recent years has been more intermittent. Marilyn Mazur has, between times, led groups such as the Primi Band and Shamina, spent several years with the Jan Garbarek Group and collected many top awards, including the Jazzpar and Ben Webster prizes. Future Song continued, with changes, until 2009 – and now Stunt Records' *Live Reflections* is a retrospective which filters three periods of Future Song through the perspective of 2020. Essentially the tracks are live recordings of a 2015 reunion mixed and mastered this year by Audun Kleive and Sven Andreen: 'they have done their best in building a strong sound picture from the slightly chaotic live recordings. I feel that these mixes have re-created the magic of the band's live playing.' Added to these are one track each from the original studio recording of the band in 1990 and from the Molde Jazz Festival of 2008. So, as well as a coherent album (what Marilyn calls 'a whole story of its own'), we have a snapshot of the development of Future Song, Kleive and Hovman (Marilyn's husband) have been constants, but the band has enlarged slightly and made more use of electronics:

'In 1992 Future Song did a special project in Tonsberg, Norway, with a local choir and four dancers: *Dreamfog Mountain* which is on *Live Reflections* was written for this project. For this occasion we added Elvind Aarset to the band and it was so nice to have his soundscapes that he became a regular member after that. This way electronics came naturally into the largely acoustic sound of Future Song, although it was still a very organic, improvising and live-creating music form. In 2008 the wonderful Aina Kemanis stopped singing and touring. It was very important for me to find a new singer and I stumbled upon the exciting Norwegian, Tone Aase, who works a lot with electronics in her voice. So, without it being a deliberate choice, the electronics caught up

with the naked human sounds and in this way Future Song kept up with the sound of the new Millennium, although still focusing on the warm human aspects of music.'

So that's the 2015 Future Song, with electronics in the hands of Tone Aase and Eivind Aarset, but also an added horn. After trumpeter Nils Petter Molvaer was in the original band and saxophonist Hans Ulrik in the 2008 version, they team up together in 2015 for tracks from two live sessions: at Copenhagen Jazzhouse and Bodo Jazz Open. But how did Marilyn Mazur, who produced the album herself, decide on the two archive tracks?

'I have always been very happy with the first Future Song recordings. Our first CD didn't have room for the tune *Reflections* so for this 'anniversary' release I really wanted to include this never-released tune so the original group would have a part.

'2008 was an important year for the new version of Future Song, as was my residency at Molde Jazz Festival, so I also wanted this group to have a part on the new album. I found *Vinterstykke* – which then was brand new and played live for the first time – was a fine addition to the celebration concerts.'

The element of uniting then and now that runs through the album also surfaces in the inclusion of *First Dream*, recorded in 2015:



'For the start of Future Song I composed seven 'Dreams', each with its own dynamic quality and each featuring one of the musicians. *First Dream* links 1990 to 2015.'

What about Marilyn Mazur's own approach to music? Generally she identifies as a percussionist, though on her website the term 'drummer' also appears. Of course a drummer is a percussionist, but few use the term – and, of course, Mazur also includes a drummer in the line-up of Future Song.

'Besides being strongly into composing music, I actually started with piano and dancing, performing with the Creative Dance Theatre as a teenager, and then drums and percussion became my true instrument. I have always found both drums and percussion are important to me. Perhaps I feel most fulfilled at the drum kit, that gives a lot of power to shape the musical dynamics of the band, but I am drawn to the broad sound spectrum of multiple percussion. So from my point of view I am equally a drummer, a percussionist and a composer.'

Certainly I get the feeling that she is more than equally a composer. Clearly the years with Miles Davis, while rewarding and exciting, became frustrating when she spent night after night playing someone else's compositions. Her account of forming Future Song tells of a need to create



Photos by Per Morten Abrahamsen

a world view through her music. When she talks about composition, her method seems flexible and open to the influence of chance:

'Through the years I've kept writing new music for Future Song to challenge the group and bring even more freedom

and adventure into the music. I definitely compose for specific musicians. Sometimes the music simply arises from a mood, vision or vibration, other times I work more focused on creating a project from certain ideas. I don't have one specific method, but I am very inspired by nature and by instruments.'

The music of *Live Reflections* contains both rich sonorities and a typically Scandinavian sense of space. The dreams of the opening intent of Future Song are there alongside aggressive percussion, so I ask about contrast: 'I play – and compose – in a very intuitive way. I start somewhere and see where it leads me to. I like music to have contrasts and many different shades and colours. Poetic beauty and wild energy!'

Aina Kemanis, originally, and Tone Aase, more recently, are key members of Future Song, but Marilyn Mazur's approach to writing for the human voice is somewhat unusual, though once again she claims that it's not a deliberate decision on her part:

'On this album there are no lyrics. This wasn't a conscious choice; it just ended up like that. I love the sound of the human voice which gives the music a true human closeness, both as a melody-carrying instrument and as an improvising soloist. When the song is without words, the voice speaks in a more abstract

and dreamy way, touching the listener as pure music.'

A quick tour of Marilyn Mazur's website reveals an obviously restless talent. She lists eight groups which she leads, though inevitably not all are active at any one time, much attention currently focussing on Shamina, a 10-piece all-female band which often features an improvising dancer. Despite the coronavirus, she remains remarkably active in live performance, the variety of groups – whether led by her or someone else or co-operative – as striking as the number of gigs. However, it's clear that Future Song – which she refers to as 'my beloved Future Song' in the CD booklet – holds a particular place in her affections as the band she formed when re-starting her career in Denmark. *Live Reflections*, she believes, does exactly that: reflect the impact of the band's live performances.

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

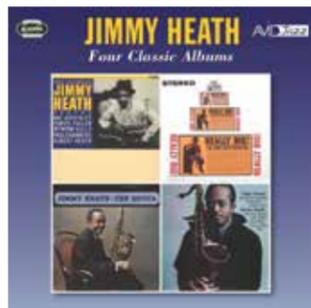
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## CD REVIEWS



## JIMMY HEATH

## FOUR CLASSIC ALBUMS

Avid Jazz AMSC1375 2  
CDs 76.37 / 76.01

When the tenor-saxophonist and composer Jimmy Heath died last January aged 93, it seemed as if he was the last of the great boppers to go. Only Sonny Rollins and Lou Donaldson have outlived him, and both are now retired.

Here was a musician who had been leading bands since the 1940s and who had suffered many vicissitudes along the way, not least several spells in jail

for drug dealing and addiction. Safely through and clean, he had then embarked on periods of exemplary creativity and it's four Riverside albums from this immediate post-prison period that Avid have collected here.

*Thumper* was his first album as leader (made while he was on probation) and it's followed here by *Really Big!*, *The Quota* and *Triple Threat*, these dating from November 1959 through to January 1962 and teaming Heath as both player and composer with many of the very best talents of the day, not least his brothers, bassist Percy and drummer Albert aka 'Tootie'.

From the off, with *For Minors Only*, written, incidentally, while he was in jail, it's Heath's gift for writing memorable themes and his flair for voicing a three-man front-line as if were altogether larger that impresses, this further exemplified in the 10-piece *Really Big!* session, with the stirring *Picture of Heath* as its standout.

Add to this his virile, passionate tenor playing, albeit with a hint of his boyhood friend Coltrane's approach, and it's easy to see

why he was so revered. All four albums feature Heath pieces that have become standards, each has a glittering line-up, with the Adderley brothers, Clark Terry, Freddie Hubbard, and Cedar Walton and more, all caught at their mid-career hard bop best.

## PETER VACHER



## CHICK COREA

## CHICK COREA PLAYS

Concord CJA00284 2  
CDs 58.09 / 53.53

Now 79, Corea's public appearances are audience-pleasing affairs, as is evident from this double-CD of 'selections from a few recent (solo) concerts'. None of the locations are identified nor are dates shown; suffice to say that the piano sound is superb, the audience response effusive, whereas the booklet, which is a compendium of colour photographs taken, presumably, at the concerts themselves, is pretty useless. Oh well.

The premise on the first CD of this pairing, as Corea explains in his rather chatty announcements, is to consider connections where, say, his improvisation on a classical composition or on a single standard song suggests an affinity to a friendly companion piece. So Bill Evans' *Waltz For Debby* leads on to *Desafinado* by Jobim before segueing to Chopin and Scriabin, and Mozart's *Piano Sonata in F* morphs into *Someone To Watch Over Me* before Scarlatti suggests *Yesterdays* and Monk relates to Stevie Wonder, each improvisation offered as a single musical entity.

The energy is palpable, the playing bravura, its range and mastery quite astonishing, not to say spectacular. Corea, clearly, was having a whale

of a time; he talks a lot, even creates impromptu portraits on the second CD of two of his audience members, before duetting briefly with fellow-pianist Yaron Herman, also plucked from the audience, and then tackling eight of his own *Children's Songs*.

Streets away from a conventional jazz album, this is Corea, the 'consummately expressive player with a complex intellectual stance', as Morton and Cook once described him. Unusual, distinctive, different: one of the most significant jazz musicians of our day having fun.

## PETER VACHER



## GRAHAM SOUTH QUARTET

## BY AND BY

Efpi Records EFPI FPO32 58:28

Graham South is a mainstay of Manchester's contemporary jazz scene. As a student in the city, trumpeter South developed lasting friendships and musical associations. A founding member of Ben Cottrell's acclaimed *Beats & Pieces Big Band*, South's many other commitments (Article XI, Johnny Hunter Quartet, Manchester Jazz Collective) precluded, until now, recording and releasing an album as a band leader.

South was commissioned to arrange the five African American spirituals central to *A Child of Our Time* and present a complementary performance alongside a staging of Michael Tippett's oratorio at the 2018 Southwell Music Festival. *By and By* was recorded in April 2019 and, in this year of the pandemic, a CD finally sees the light of day.

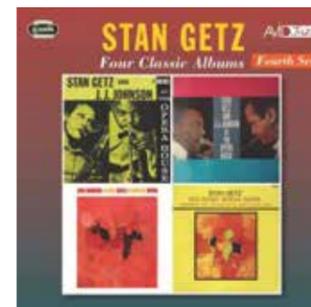
South reimagined Tippett's five pieces for his quartet.

Purposely sparse arrangements afford space for considered improvisation. *Beats & Pieces'* pianist Richard Jones, bassist Seth Bennett and sometime *Beats & Pieces'* drummer Johnny Hunter share South's desire to respect the material without stifling their own creative impulse.

The spirituals will be known to all: *Nobody Knows* (perhaps recalling Paul Robeson's memorable recording), *Steal Away*, the title track *By and By*, *Go Down*, *Moses* and *Deep River*. A brief interlude is positioned between the first two tracks with the album's total playing time approaching the hour mark.

The quartet's empathetic interplay focuses upon fine detail rather than bold, brassy solo statements. A subtle swing time sensibility surfaces from time to time and for the listener with an interest in current developments, *By and By* is well worth checking out.

## RUSSELL CORBETT



## STAN GETZ

## FOUR CLASSIC ALBUMS: FOURTH SET

Avid Jazz AMSC1369 2 CDs  
76:50/67:05

The albums here are Stan Getz and J.J. Johnson - *At the Opera House, Chicago* (stereo) Stan Getz and J.J. Johnson *At the Opera House* (mono), Stan Getz - *Jazz Samba* and Stan Getz - *Big Band Bossa Nova*.

These albums will be well-known to most readers; however, for those unfamiliar with his work, this package makes a welcome introduction to the music of Stan Getz.

The first two releases date from 1957. The leaders are supported

by Oscar Peterson on piano, Ray Brown on bass and Connie Kay at the drums. Although presenting largely the same material in mono and stereo, the music comes from two separate performances, only one of which was recorded at the Opera House, the second emanating from The Shrine Auditorium. The performances were recorded within a month of each other and it is interesting to compare the individual performances. The Shrine offers a bonus in the form of *Yesterdays*, with a group such as this satisfaction is guaranteed.

*Jazz Samba* from 1962 proved to be one of his most popular releases. This reportedly surprised Getz who, whilst liking the music, felt that it was a modest effort compared to the major artistic achievement of *Focus* (from 1961) which had a lesser commercial appeal. The matching of Getz with guitarist Charlie Byrd for this small group recital was inspired but later lead to unhappiness on Byrd's part as Getz refused to share with him the Grammy award for *Desafinado*, the opening track on the album.

*Big Band Bossa Nova*, also from 1962, is an ideal companion piece containing music from Jobim and Bonfá. The big attraction is the chance to hear the compositions and arrangements of a young Gary McFarland.

## ALAN MUSSON



## DJANGO BATES

## TENACITY

Lost Marble LM009 53:10

Django Bates first came to prominence as a member of Loose Tubes. The freewheeling jazz orchestra enjoyed huge popularity during the 1980s, since



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when the composer/pianist has gone on to work on many other projects, winning the prestigious Jazzpar Prize along the way.

Bates' trio - Petter Eldh, double bass, Peter Bruun, drums - recently recorded an album with the Norrbotten Big Band celebrating the music of Charlie Parker. *Tenacity's* ten tracks were recorded in Sweden and mixed and mastered in London. Four reimagined Charlie Parker tracks are central to the project: *Ah Leu Cha*, *Donna Lee*, *Confirmation* and a joyous *My Little Suede Shoes* are complex yet accessible, capturing the essence of the bebop icon.

The Norrbotten Big Band (directed by Walter Brolund) rose to the challenge when presented with Bates' demanding charts. A sense of fun permeates the work and Bates' composition *We Are Not Lost, We Are Simply Finding Our Way*, suggests a musician who recently turned 60 retains an impish sense of humour. *Tenacity* is highly recommended.

#### RUSSELL CORBETT



### MARIA FAUST SACRUM FACERE

ORGAN

Stunt Records  
STUCD20072 39.25

If I don't wholeheartedly recommend this original and evocative album in a jazz publication, the clue is in Jan Sneum's helpful note: 'Even though Maria Faust has been labelled a "jazz musician"... she cannot be categorised by... genre labels.' So, although there are explorative improvised solos from Ned Ferm on tenor sax, Tobias Wiklund on trumpet and Faust herself on alto sax, I was more often reminded of classical models: the superb

French organ composers of the late 19th century, maybe, or Faust's Estonian compatriot Arvo Pärt - even Mussorgsky's *Great Gate of Kiev*.

*Organ* is composed for organ, three reeds, three brass and - most importantly - the acoustic of St. Nicholas' Church in Tallinn, the wonderful sound of the King of Instruments reverberating through the 13th century church, matching slow-moving blocks of sound with the wind sextet. The basis for the album was a piece for organ and electronics entitled *Stroma* composed for Estonian organist Ulla Krigul and here rearranged for conventional instruments and divided into three segments spread through the album.

Krigul is again - splendidly - the organist, with Emanuele Maniscalco taking over for the remaining six tracks. Faust creates magical sonorities - Jonatan Ahlbom's tuba resonating in the depths - and the music has an irresistible timeless quality reminiscent of the cool mysticism of Arvo Pärt. Is this a particularly Estonian quality? I've no idea, but I do know that this is a fine album with a rather tenuous connection to jazz.

#### RON SIMPSON



### GUILLAUME NOUAUX THE STRIDE PIANO KINGS

Self-released GN2020 53: 28

This CD, featuring the cream of current international jazz stride pianists, is put together by Guillaume Nouaux, who plays resourceful drums on all tracks. It's not long since he successfully masterminded a similar project with The Clarinet Kings, which also featured some

of the pianists we find here. Again he deserves huge credit for overcoming considerable logistical difficulties involved in getting together with musicians from throughout Europe and beyond - as well, not least, on the extremely high quality of the recordings. Since he supplies no sleeve notes, we can only conjecture how he does it.

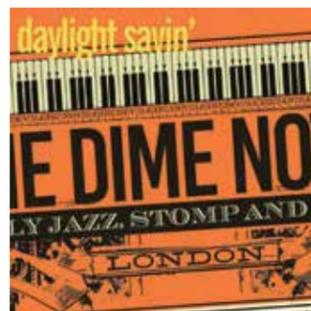
All seven pianists, Bernd Lhotzky, Louis Mazetier, Luca Filastro, Chris Hopkins, Rossano Sportiello, Harry Kanters and Alain Barrabes, showcase their bravura talents on a couple of tracks each. Clearly they devotedly share a spiritual home of Harlem in the Twenties, but collectively they demonstrate the sheer range and diversity of stride-playing.

Their left hands make a self-conscious art form of avoiding the simple repetitive oompah-oompah, that familiar if still impressive stretching from chord to single-note bass line of lesser players. Their academy-trained digits race across the treble keys, fast and frenetic, creating much more complex patterns even than many of the acknowledged early masters.

Filastro's *Handful of Keys*, for example, might even give the original a run for its money. *Jitterbug Waltz*, another Fats Waller composition, is sometimes tackled by modernists at breakneck finger-busting speed as a sort of party piece. Kanters's version is more temperate and richer in improvisation. Chris Hopkins, from New Jersey - not a million miles from the fountainhead - introduces new and invigorating rhythms to *When I Grow Too Old To Dream*, delightfully slipping in a couple of cheeky little asides.

The prolific Nouaux, with a discography approaching a century, the majority self-produced, deservedly received the coveted Hot Club de France Prix Spécial, in 2019, for his clarinet album. Similar honours no doubt lie ahead for this polished pianistic gem.

ANDREW LIDDLE



### THE DIME NOTES

DAYLIGHT SAVIN'

Lejazzetal Records  
LJCD23 47:33

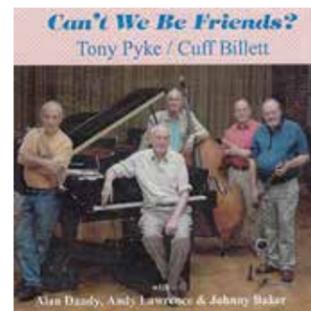
Guitarist Dave Kelbie's Lejazzetal label has an enviable track record of releasing consistently good, if not excellent, recordings. The Dime Notes' latest album maintains the standard. *Daylight Savin'* features Kelbie himself in the engine room alongside recent recruit Louis Thomas playing double bass, and the show-stopping clarinet-piano pairing of David Horniblow and Andrew Oliver.

In 2018 Horniblow and Oliver set themselves the task of learning all of Jelly Roll Morton's compositions; *The Complete Morton Project*, also available on Lejazzetal, was the result. The Dime Notes' liking for some of the lesser-known tunes of the 1920s and 30s led to Jelly Roll Morton's *Pep* making the cut on the new album.

Whereas Morton recorded the tune as a solo piece, the Dime Notes have arranged it as a stomping set closer. Three other Morton numbers - *Grandpa's Spells*, *Fickle Fay Creep* and *Why* - take their place on the 12-song CD. Perry Bradford supplies the title track and the Dime Notes' take on Duke Ellington's *Jubilee Stomp* is exceptional.

David Horniblow's quicksilver clarinet is a delight, Andrew Oliver's piano playing stands comparison with the very best of them and in forming an alliance with the Kelbie-Thomas rhythm section, *Daylight Savin'* is a contender for album of the year.

RUSSELL CORBETT



### CUFF BILLET AND TONY PYKE

LIVE IN THE UK

Jazz Crusade JCCD3083 71:00

Upbeat continue to re-issue Jazz Crusade's back catalogue and this, featuring two giants of the traditional scene, is certainly worth another spin.

Cuff Billett first took his hot trumpet to New Orleans in 1963 and moved freely in the company of George Lewis, Louis Nelson and a galaxy of indigenous revivalists. A couple of decades later he was rubbing shoulders and exchanging riffs with such as Bud Freeman, Peanuts Hucko, Al Casey and Bill Coleman, having widened the range of his playing. Some might call it a cultural shift.

After many years and two spells with Ken Colyer, Tony Pyke toured widely and was clarinet of choice for many notable bands, most of which were recognisably New Orleans in style.

This recording session in 2002 finds them now a pair of mellow sophisticates - backed by Alan Dandy, on piano, Andy Lawrence, string bass, and trombonist-turned-drummer Johnny Baker, three well-travelled and most accomplished musicians.

For the most part, they play mid-tempo with only occasional fusillades of spontaneous fire. Pyke's smooth, fluid, lean-toned tenor intoxicates - albeit a maturely controlled and well-mannered experience - as they swing across some lovely old tunes like *Pagan Love Song*, *I'm in the Mood for Love*, *When I Grow Too Old to Dream*. Brisk and bristling renditions of *Weary Blues*, *Rip 'Em Up Joe* and *Baby Face* vary mood and measure, allowing Cuff to extend himself.

Piano, gently syncopating, and muted trumpet fashion between them a quite breathtaking *Dream A Little Dream of Me*, one of those eternal wonders from the early thirties. It's a rare piece of salon sophistication that even Cuff might not have envisioned in his robust Barry 'Kid' Martyn days.

ANDREW LIDDLE



### MACHITO WITH CHARLIE PARKER, FLIP PHILLIPS, HOWARD MCGHEE, BUDDY RICH, MILT JACKSON, HARRY BELAFONTE.

COLLECTION 1941-52

Acrobat Music ADDCD3354  
2 C Ds 72:20/72:41

In this country we were first introduced to Latin American music through a flock of films made in the 1940s and featuring Xavier Cugat and his rather anodyne version of Brazilian music. The real passion and fire of Latin America was not to arrive until the 1950s: it came from Cuba and it was Afro-Cuban jazz.

The major protagonist was the singer and maraca-wielding Machito or, to give him his full name, Francesco Raul Gutierrez Grillo who, together with his musical director, Mario Bauza, created a new type of music fusing big band jazz arrangements with the rhythms and percussion of Cuban music. It had been a marriage coming for a long time and a natural blending of two styles of music which had been running in parallel.

It immediately caught on with the more progressive jazz musicians, some of whom, like the peripatetic tenorist Brew Moore, spent most of their careers in these innovative bands. Drawn to the Afro-Cuban mix

were the musicians listed above, but don't expect long solo forays from these jazz luminaries.

In Afro-Cuban music it was always the ensembles that counted and apart from the redoubtable Howard McGhee, who seems to have taken to the new music like a duck to water, and the ever adaptable Flip Phillips, the other big names are largely absorbed into the wild collective whole.

I think what may have attracted those jazz celebrities was the passion and flamboyance of this new combination, perhaps, reminding them of the same

excitement and spontaneity of the days of early jazz.

Side 1 (12 tracks) features the cream of the first flowering of Machito's bands of the 1940s and Side 2 traces the progression of Afro-Cuban into the Afro-Cubop of the Fifties of which Dizzy Gillespie was the notable champion and this compilation of 40 of the best tracks of this progressive time is a real treat. As we expect, the music is raw and constantly full on, relentlessly overpowering. The sections all have their functions; the saxes provide the melody, the rhythm sections chatter away underneath, on a mass of percussive devices,

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**RSK**

creating a relentless underpinning and constant switching of rhythms and tempos but never losing the place, and above this controlled cacophony, the brass punch out their fierce and screaming dissonances.

Favourites? Too many to mention, but I must cite the arrangement of *Caravan* (as you have never heard it before) and *Tanga*, a combustible performance. Included, too, is the celebrated *Afro-Cuban Jazz Suite*.

This is a veritable feast for the ears. You will hear nothing more exciting than this, in a long time.

#### JOHN MARTIN



#### JUDITH & DAVE O'HIGGINS

HIS 'N' HERS

Ubuntu UBU0066 45.28

Husband-and-wife instrumental teams are by no means usual in jazz; so, let's applaud this two-tenor outing by Mr and Mrs. O'Higgins. Dave is one of our most prominent solo players, known for his own projects but also as a key member of Darius Brubeck's touring quartet whereas Mrs O'Higgins is less often heard, principally because by day, she works as a forensic pathologist and also a graphic artist. Indeed, the neat cover design here is hers.

For this March 2020 debut album, they chose a top trio as accompanists, with pianist Graham Harvey plus bassist Jeremy Brown and drummer Josh Morrison. Tenor duos abound in jazz and always seem to work well; more so when the players are as compatible and as technically assured as this pair.

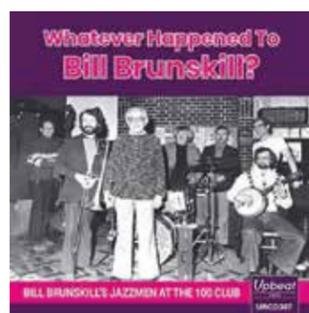
Perhaps unsurprisingly, there's a similarity in their tonal approach and improvisational style; more

to the point, they are at one in their determination to swing and to explore these pieces with alacrity and coherence. So, no tenor battles here, more a case of catch as catch can between the two of them.

They open with an upbeat number of their own, *Fourth Dimension* which jumps in, tenors alternating ahead of Harvey's crisp solo, just one of many. Their *We'll Forget March* is in ¾ and moves along well as does their ballad version of *Spring Can Really Hang You Up The Most* in an elegant arrangement.

I especially liked the down-home groove on Buddy Johnson's *Save Your Love For Me* and Dexter Gordon's yomping *Hanky Panky*.

#### PETER VACHER



#### BILL BRUNSKILL'S JAZZMEN

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO BILL BRUNSKILL?

Upbeat URCD307 64.04

This takes you back – to New Orleans, I suppose, for some of the tunes and the general style, but more particularly to the mid-1980s when George Melly presented a television documentary of the same name. To those of us outside London, Bill Brunskill appeared as a rather elusive figure, but in fact he was a local government worker in the East End who, as a trumpeter, led a band with a devoted following in London pubs for some 50 years.

Mike Pointon, who produced this album as well as playing trombone on the 1976 session (100 Club), gets it right in his notes: 'unpretentious' and 'authentic', he says, and draws attention to the band's 'rugged drive'. Bill Brunskill was essentially a hot player,

a forthright lead capable of muted subtlety at times, and, when driven by Pointon's rhythmic trombone and the uninhibited drumming of Bryan Hetherington, he lifts the roof on numbers such as *Moose March* and *Over in the Gloryland*.

As with Ken Colyer and, indeed, many New Orleans bands, Bill Brunskill had a taste for sentimental old songs and the opener, *Girl of My Dreams*, taken at just the right tempo, put a smile on my face that one or two stodgy slower numbers couldn't erase. Les Allen's clarinet, somewhat pallid for my taste, complements Brunskill's trumpet nicely and is appealingly lyrical on *Someday Sweetheart*, and the whole thing is a joyous reminder of the jazz – uncomplicated, but not unskilful – that kept the folk of Kingston and Thornton Heath happy for two generations.

#### RON SIMPSON



#### MARILYN MAZUR'S FUTURE SONG

LIVE REFLECTIONS

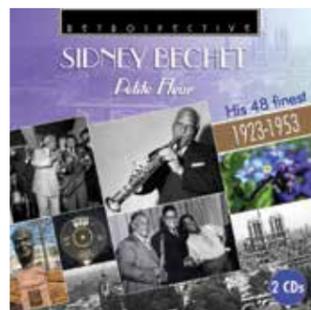
Stunt Records STUCD 20082 56.45

When percussionist Marilyn Mazur returned to Denmark after her stint with Miles Davis, she formed the band Future Song, at that time a six-piece with trumpet the only horn and the human voice used instrumentally in wordless vocals. *Live Reflections* mainly features tracks from a 2015 reunion of the band by which time electronics played a large part in its music and Nils Petter Molvaer's trumpet was joined by Hans Ulrik on reeds. However, the album also includes one track each from 1990 and 2008 (both previously unreleased) to give a composite picture of Future Song. Mazur often uses the word

'dream' in relation to the music of Future Song and three of the nine originals that make up the album include the word 'dream' in the title. So *Gong-Pri*, the opening track, begins with a solitary flute in a spacy acoustic, gradually joined by other instruments and especially electronic effects, all finally fading to a dream-like ending. Though *Subwaygroove* breaks the mood with insistent percussion building powerfully, we are soon back in the atmospheric arrhythmic world of dreams, Tone Aase's electronics-enhanced vocals on *The Dreamcatcher* especially effective.

*Live Reflections* is very much conceived as a unit, despite the 25 year time-lag in recording, and the placing of the 1990 track, *Reflections*, is shrewdly done. *The Holy* is a decidedly challenging track, 12 minutes long and created from fragments of sound, then, in a total change of mood, *Reflections* bursts on us with Elvira Plenar's keyboards and other-worldly vocals from Aina Kemanis, then develops a pattern of heavily rhythmic repetition. The 2008 track, *Vinterstykke*, is an appropriately atmospheric closer with echoes of the sound world of the opening *Gong-Pri*.

#### RON SIMPSON



#### SIDNEY BECHET

PETITE FLEUR 1923-1953

Retrospective RTS 4372: 2CDs, 78.39/79.34

Back in 1919 Sidney Bechet was probably the first jazz musician to gain the attention of the mainstream music public, with the conductor Ernest Ansermet's acclaim for him as 'an artist of genius'. Thereafter, though recognised as one of the giants of jazz, his career rather proceeded by fits and starts.

Early in his career his wanderlust and his dangerous temper meant that he was often in the wrong place at the wrong time and he seems to have missed out on the infinite possibilities of the 1930s, his only extended regular employment in the rather stodgy Noble Sissle Orchestra. As a result this fine collection of 48 tracks is a medley of a whole lot of small groups put together for recordings – far too many to mention individually in a review of this length.

The 1932 New Orleans Feetwarmers are represented by a couple of dynamic tracks, Tommy Ladnier in fine form on *Sweetie Dear* followed by Bechet's coruscating soprano sax on *Maple Leaf Rag*. Then, from the late 1930s onwards, a string of tracks show Bechet's power and melodic invention at its best, usually in distinguished company prepared to stand up to his tendency to dominate.

Here are *Summertime*, Blue Note's first release, one track apiece from Jelly Roll Morton's 1939 New Orleans Jazzmen (a splendid *High Society* with Albert Nicholas) and Bechet's 1940 match-up with Louis Armstrong, and – to my ears best of all – three tracks from the wonderful Bechet/Spanier Big Four, a perfect partnership, subtle and swinging by turn.

Other Blue Note sessions follow, usually with Art Hodes on piano, the best of them Bechet duetting with Albert Nicholas in 1946, the final one a romp through *I've Found a New Baby* with Wild Bill Davison in 1949. A parallel set of recordings for Victor include various line-ups of Feetwarmers (Charlie Shavers magnificent in three 1941 tracks) and such surprises as a compelling Trio recording of *Strange Fruit*.

In 1949 Bechet moved to Paris and here we find him romping through *Margie* with a quartet powered by ex-pat drummer Kenny Clarke, trotting out the Gallic charm on the title track and the always catchy *Le Marchand de Poissons*, and sneaking over to London to record illegally with Humph. This collection of 48 tracks (with barely a dud) ends with him on tour in the States

in 1953 jamming away with his old buddy from the Blue Note days, Vic Dickenson.

#### RON SIMPSON



#### WAYNE MARSHALL & WDR FUNKHAUSORCHESTER

BORN TO PLAY GERSHWIN

WDR 8553007 73:51

Pianist Wayne Marshall, chief conductor of the Cologne Funkhausorchester, has a long association with Gershwin which considerably predates his acclaimed solo album, *A Gershwin Songbook*. In the dual Previn-esque role of musician and *dirigent* he has also completed a masterly compilation of Gershwin's complete output for piano and orchestra with the Aalborg Symphony Orchestra.

This latest release allows us to hear something approaching a definitive version of Gershwin's *Second Rhapsody*, perhaps a more coherent work than the *Rhapsody in Blue*, and the one the composer himself regarded the more highly of the two. Both pieces exist in different versions, Gershwin being an endless reviser of his own material, and Marshall – born in Oldham in 1961 – resists the temptation to improvise overmuch, as many have done quite legitimately following Gershwin's wont.

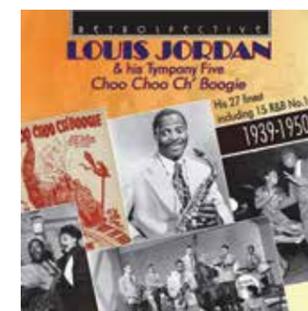
It is impossible not to be brought to a pitch of excitement by Marshall's bravura playing before Cologne radio's mighty orchestra, not least when he fires off in the *Second* the famous hammer blows that had the composer at one time considering the name *Rhapsody In Rivets*. For good measure, and not in total contrast, the maestro also extends his repertoire to include excerpts from Paquito D'Rivera's

*Brazilian Fantasy*. Is it too fanciful to suggest the modern composer is attempting for Latin American music what Gershwin did for American? D'Rivera turned his back on Castro's Cuba in 1981 but his music ever recalls the sinuous swirling rhythms of his country of birth.

Certainly the unusual juxtaposition of composers works very well. We hear in the *Second* and to a lesser extent in *Blue*, Gershwin's exploration of Latin rhythms that he would later feature in the Cuban Overture – which in turn find echoes in D'Rivera's pulsing cadences.

Listeners will instantly recognise in the *Brazilian Fantasy*, D'Rivera's setting of Antônio Carlos Jobim's *Corcovado* (*Quiet Nights of Quiet Stars*), a bossa nova that Stan Getz transmuted into a jazz standard.

#### ANDREW LIDDLE



#### LOUIS JORDAN & HIS TYMPANY FIVE

CHOO CHOO CH'BOOGIE 1939-1950

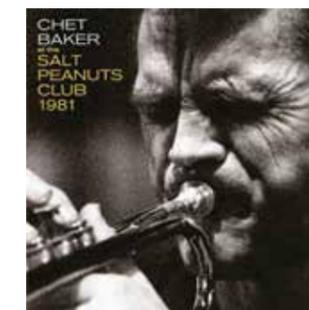
Retrospective RTR 4374 78.52

The majority of the tracks here come from the years 1945-1947 when Louis Jordan & His Tympany Five couldn't stop having hits: 11 of the 15 R&B Number 1s on the CD come from this period. At this time the original line-up (Jordan's alto supported by trumpet, tenor, piano, bass and drums) was enlarged by Carl Hogan's electric guitar and the hints of rock'n'roll to come were becoming clearer. Most significantly, in those years the piano chair was taken by the redoubtable Wild Bill Davis, later famous for the glorious Count Basie arrangement of *April in Paris* and already responsible for many of the Tympany Five arrangements.

What is there to say about Louis Jordan that we don't already know? His songs took a new lease of life with the stage show *Five Guys Named Moe* and here they follow each other like old friends: *Choo Choo Ch'Boogie*, *Is You Is or Is You Ain't My Baby*, *Caldonia*, *Ain't Nobody Here but Us Chickens* and the rest. It's impossible not to enjoy Louis Jordan: the tight little band, the down-home wit of the lyrics, Jordan's incisively swinging alto, his droll singing, with its occasional excursions into lyrical balladry, farmyard impressions and cod-Caribbean.

And this excellent collection teams him with some fine guests: Bing Crosby, Ella Fitzgerald (three tracks) and Louis Armstrong. The few post-1947 tracks are among the best on the album. With an augmented trumpet section *Saturday Night Fish Fry*, to me the quintessential Jordan song, follows a cute take on *Baby, It's Cold Outside* with Ella, then both Louises combine gloriously on *You Rascal, You*.

#### RON SIMPSON



#### CHET BAKER

SALT PEANUTS

Sleepy Night Records SNRCD021 79.30

Baker's band played Salt Peanuts, a Cologne club for a week in May 1981, as part of their European tour. Lord's discography shows that the German Circle label issued sets taped at the club on the 21st, 23rd & 24th May and this is from the 23rd and 24th May so presumably collared from those Circle releases.

As was his habit, Baker enlisted his band as he went along; this version adds US trumpeter John Eardley, then a Cologne resident, playing flugelhorn, plus altoist Bob Mover, a regular Baker

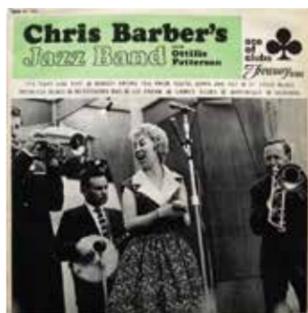
associate, and young Chicagoan pianist Dennis Luxion with a local rhythm section, whose drummer didn't survive opening night.

Luxion, who is still around and is interviewed for the booklet, teamed up with Baker while he was in Europe and speaks of his pleasure at working with Baker and Mover. If the trumpeter is almost ethereal at times, certainly Miles-ian in his tonal melancholy, Mover is positive and fluent in post-Bird fashion.

The rhythm section, or what remains of it, is reticent, but the front-liners combine well on something familiar like *Lady Bird*, even if the rest of the material is quite varied. *Resonant Emotion* has Eardley rewardingly prominent and there's some supple alto from Mover.

Recording quality is adequate and while Baker is sometimes tentative, there are bursts of animation, viz *Ray's Idea* which has some of his most engaged playing of the set, the lines unfurling cleverly ahead of the ensemble interjections. Baker's discography is packed with chance 'live' recordings and air-shots; this is no better or worse than most of them.

#### PETER VACHER



#### CHRIS BARBER'S JAZZ BAND & OTILIE PATTERSON

##### THE ALAN GILMOUR TAPES

Lake Records LACD963  
2 CDs 44:19/42:01

Paul Adams at Lake Records has been down in the vaults again and has come up with this club performance by the Barber Band of 1961 in Nottingham. The occasion was the 20th Anniversary of the Nottingham Rhythm Club and this would

have normally taken place at the town's convivial Dancing Slipper Ballroom but, because a Barber visit warranted a bigger venue, it was recorded, instead, in a larger hall by the Dancing Slipper's in-house recording engineer, Alan Gilmour and the recording has all the advantages and disadvantages of a live club session.

First, the benefits; there is a great atmosphere and the performances are boosted by that. The band is in top form and produce 24 hard-driving tracks with scarcely a pause for breath.

The choice of repertoire is adventurous, blues, gospel, originals and Kurt Weill. The recruitment of Ian Wheeler at that time was an inspired decision and his clarinet, alto and harmonica broadened the colour, sound and the repertoire of the band.

He also brought a new energy to what was already a very energetic crew. His ensemble playing is massively assertive and his solos are distinctive and assured.

Pat Halcox on trumpet was a musician incapable of playing a wrong note. His Berigan-styled intro to Barber's original tune, *It's The Truth*, is sublime. What a loss he is to the British Jazz scene!

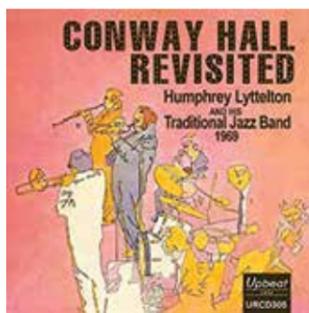
Chris is in his usual swashbuckling form, displaying the same enthusiasm for the music which he has loved since he was a schoolboy, and which still consumes his life today.

If I have any reservations it is with the rhythm section which sounds rigid by today's standards but was what seemed perfectly adequate for that time.

Although we must be grateful to Alan Gilmour for this valuable record of this expanding era in British Traditional jazz, on, what was homemade equipment, the circumstances of trying to get a live performance exactly right are often formidable. I feel that the balance of the front line wavers a little from time to time, but does not detract from the sheer enjoyment of a club gig and a glimpse of that moment in time. The two discs are worth the price if it is only to hear again, on six tracks, the

astounding voice of Otilie Patterson, the greatest blues singer this country (Northern Ireland) has ever produced. Go on. Cheer yourself up.

#### JOHN MARTIN



#### HUMPHREY LYTTTELTON AND HIS TRADITIONAL JAZZ BAND

##### CONWAY HALL REVISITED 1969

Upbeat URCD305 76.27

Humphrey Lyttelton was always the most open-minded of musicians, ready to pursue adventurous new tracks, but somehow never discarding the past. On the 21st anniversary of his first band he returned to a favourite venue of the 1950s with an eclectic group of musicians: Wally Fawkes and Keith Christie were stars of Humph's early bands, though Christie had since pursued a rather different musical course. Like Christie, Mick Pyne and Dave Green were not obvious 'traditional' choices; drummer Pete Staples and Charlie Bentley on banjo (apparently a late addition) were less well known Manchester jazzmen.

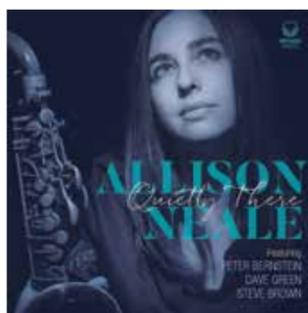
From the opening *Fidgety Feet* you know you're in for a happy hour and a quarter; Humph's lead imperious, Dave Green and Pete Staples building irresistible momentum. *Cakewalkin' Babies from Home* is similarly fiery and the first of two of those fondly remembered Lyttelton/Fawkes two-clarinet jobs.

The second is a Mezzrow/Bechet number that became a speciality of the 1950s Lyttelton band, *Out of the Gallion*. Despite Humph's dismissal of nostalgia in his notes, it's there in force with *Out of the Gallion* and the

rousing closer, *The Old Grey Mare*: huge fun, with raggedly raucous vocals, roaring solos and Mick Pyne's piano driving the band relentlessly. It's rather surprising, given that Humph was not a man for labels, that the band was termed 'traditional' – and Christie, Pyne and Green get a chance to bely that title on a thoughtful 10-minute excursion into *Gone with the Wind*.

The live atmosphere is infectious: odd problems of sound balance are negligible compared to the party mood and wild enthusiasm of the Conway Hall crowd.

#### RON SIMPSON



#### ALLISON NEALE

##### QUIETLY THERE

Ubuntu UBU0062 62.12

I have already listed this recording in my Top Ten albums of 2020 in another place, which may serve as an endorsement of its quality. Its title *Quietly There* sums up both Neale's essentially unhurried, quite decorous approach to the alto, and her slightly underground reputation on the scene at large. Never one to shout from the roof-tops, she has built a reputation for sure-footed jazz improvisation that places her among our best practitioners on the instrument.

All of this, and more, is clear from this excellent session, which teams her with visiting US guitarist Peter Bernstein in a piano-less quartet bolstered by bassist Dave Green and Steve Brown on drums. Excellent company in every way, you could say.

And so it proves, Neale's seemingly fragile Paul Desmond-cum-Art Pepper alto sound blending perfectly with Bernstein's limpid guitar,

somewhat akin to the highly-praised Desmond-Jim Hall collaborations from way back. Take *Darn That Dream*, at ballad tempo, Neale's exploration thorough but never flustered, the ideas well-formed and thoughtful, Bernstein similarly on point.

They duet on *Midnight Sun*, each intent on mining the harmonies for felicitous outcomes. Horace Silver's perky *Split Kick* has a boppish feel and they take it first as a harmonised line, the tempo up, as Neale unfurls her stock of neat ideas.

And so it goes throughout the eleven tracks, nothing cliché-ridden or trite, Neale and Bernstein clearly at ease in each other's company, the quartet on song all the way. Good for Ubuntu in picking up this previously unreleased 2016 collaboration.

#### PETER VACHER



#### ART PEPPER

##### FOUR CLASSIC ALBUMS: SECOND SET

Avid Jazz AMSC1373  
78.11/81.02

You'd be hard put to find a better encapsulation of the first phase of the career of the headliner on this, the latest taste of Art Pepper on Avid.

Bracketed by *Surf Ride*, collating a clutch of 78rpm singles for the Savoy label from the early 1950s, including such classic West Coast signatures as *Chilli Pepper* and *Susie the Poodle*, and *Smack Up*, a moody 1960 quintet date that finds the leader embracing the bang-up-to-date material of Ornette Coleman no less, the middle of this double CD set includes two further recorded triumphs in *Art Pepper + Eleven* and *Gettin' Together*, both of

which make the altoist's case for being so much more than a Californian sensation.

Indeed, the playlist of the former has him reinventing the classic modern jazz songbook of Parker, Gillespie, Monk, Silver and co. in the company of a coterie of LA-based notables under the direction of Marty Paich, for which he also dusts down his tenor and clarinet.

For once, there is absolutely no qualification whatsoever in calling an album a classic. + *Eleven* is exactly that. Only slightly further behind is *Gettin' Together*, his 1960 sequel to the earlier *Meets The Rhythm Section*, on which he shakes hands with the engine room trio of the 1960 Miles Davis Quintet – Red Garland, Paul Chambers and Jimmy Cobb. Trumpeter Conte Candoli also pulls up a chair.

In sum, this is a collection brimming with riches, one made all the more appealing for its budget price and almost absurdly generous playing time. Go get!

#### SIMON SPILLET



#### VARIOUS ARTISTS

##### VINTAGE JAZZ RARITIES, 1924-36 FROM THE JOHN R.T. DAVIES ARCHIVES

Upbeat URCD304 60:49

John R.T. Davies: his name is enough to authenticate the worth of this CD, compel the *cognoscenti* to buy it. Although R.T. died in 2004, his memory burns bright not least in his own recordings with such as Crane River, Mick Mulligan, Cy Laurie and Sandy Brown, not forgetting a close involvement with Temperance Seven. His legacy as an indefatigable, insatiable, unappeasable collector of rare jazz material

is here for all to see and hear in this priceless compilation of genuine (no hype) vintage jazz rarities. No review of this compass could possibly do justice to a collection so diverse and astir with interest as this.

The track list would say so much more, indicate Fletcher Henderson giving way to Wingy Manone, Joe Venuti preceding the Duke, Blue Steele being followed by King Oliver. Upbeat are to be complimented for putting together this cavalcade, this drive past of jazz floats freighted with genius, greats from the golden age of 1924-36. What insights into the freewheeling, borderless, raceless progress of the developing music (early Jazz, the Charleston, Harlem, emergent Swing, Swing), which we now often remember best through popular standards! How good to find unknown material, genre prototypes and alternative arrangements.

Eddie Lang's *Walking The Dog* is a well-oiled vehicle for Andy Secrest to emerge from Bix's shadow, keep company with Hoagy on piano, compete with some wacky bass-slapping from Mike Trafficante. Even the most ardent Ellingtonian may not have heard this recently discovered take on *Tishomingo*, featuring, gloriously, Tricky Sam, Bubber Miley and, newly recruited, Barney Bigard and Johnny Hodges.

It may well be Red Nichols on Al Steele's *Singing the Blues*, recorded in 1929 a couple of years after Bix immortalised it. It's got more than a hint of Red's colouration: he was with Brunswick at the time though, alas, no personnel are listed. The latest recording, cut in 1936, is of the Carolina Cotton Pickers, featuring William 'Cat' Anderson - who later joined Ellington - riffing exuberantly across *Charleston Swing*.

Mike Pointon in his hugely informative sleeve notes calls R.T. 'a true friend of Jazz'. Sixteen years after his death, this CD may well extend his circle of boon companions.

#### ANDREW LIDDLE



#### HOUSE OF THE BLACK GARDENIA

##### THE NEW LOWDOWN

Self-released 59:06

The House of the Black Gardenia is a nine piece outfit based in Newcastle upon Tyne. At times difficult to categorise, perhaps the band's publicity best describes the sound - 'viper jazz', 'dirty blues' and 'infectious swing rhythms'.

Nine of thirteen tracks are credited to composers within the ensemble: the song writing partnership of Neil Hopper (string bass/sousaphone) and Elise Rana (washboard/vocals) contributes six compositions, Rana and drummer Kit Haigh contribute two numbers and Michael Littlefield (guitar/banjo/vocals) supplies a down home country blues. The original compositions compare favourably with four other numbers drawn from disparate sources including Tin Pan Alley, the world of street corner jug bands and traditional blues.

*Graveyard Shift* (Haigh/Rana) and Kansas Joe McCoy's *Weed Smoker's Dream* (the album's closing track) inhabit a twenties' netherworld, Hopper and Rana's *Big Big Man* references a recently departed divisive character from the world stage, and Haigh's 2020 vocal on *Tell Liza 'bout Me* (Haigh/Rana) could have been a hit in 1920.

The rhythm section is convincing on small group Kansas City swing numbers with Littlefield in Freddie Green mode and the guitarist demonstrates his versatility playing a mean blues on his own composition *Ain't It Hard*.

The House of the Black Gardenia on stage, engaging an audience, is something to behold: Rana's

dead-eye stare, Hopper's detached indifference, the horns riffing and soloing as dancers, enticed by the irresistible rhythm, take to the floor. This debut recording goes some way in recreating the live gig experience. *The New Lowdown*, recorded in Thropton, rural Northumberland, is available in CD, digital download and limited edition vinyl format from the band's Bandcamp page.

## RUSSELL CORBETT



## TENEMENT JAZZ BAND

## TENEMENT JAZZ BAND GOES SOUTH

Self released 47:21

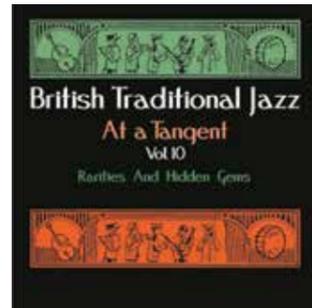
Formed in the early part of 2018, within six months the Tenement Jazz Band recorded an eight track, EP-length album titled *New Orleans Wiggle*. The Edinburgh based band made frequent raids south of the border armed with numerous copies of the album, selling many of them along the way. The young five piece outfit appealed to a young swing dance crowd and hardcore New Orleans jazz enthusiasts alike. A new album would surely follow, this time of long player dimensions.

The Tenements' new album duly materialised. *Tenement Jazz Band Goes South* comprises 12 tracks spanning a total playing time of some 47 minutes. Recorded live on the road at several unspecified locations during February and March this year prior to lockdown, *Goes South* will find favour with the more mature jazz fan who will have heard the material countless times down the years (*Milenburg Joys*, *Barataria*, *At a Georgia Camp Meeting* and *Wearry Blues*) and, what's more, cannot fail to be impressed with the musicianship of a band largely

comprising a younger generation. Four of the five Tenements are thirtysomethings and they are more than a match for a plethora of grizzled old jazzers treading the jazz club/pub circuit.

The Tenements dig into the music of the pioneers: concise solos, precise yet relaxed ensemble playing, trumpeter Charles 'Chuck' Deerness, a fine lead player flanked by mischievous trombonist Paddy Darley and recent recruit Steven Feast, reeds, ably supported by John Youngs (guitar and banjo) and string bassist Doug Kemp. It all adds up to an album which will delight the Tenement Jazz Band's loyal following and win the Edinburgh based outfit a host of new admirers.

## ANDREW LIDDLE



## VARIOUS ARTISTS

## BRITISH TRADITIONAL JAZZ AT A TANGENT VOL. 10

Lake Records LACD362: 77.45

This final volume of *Jazz at a Tangent* is subtitled 'Rarities and Hidden Gems' and lives up to its name. There are 23 tracks by 22 bands (Chris Barber sneaks in twice by making an extra appearance with Otilie Patterson) and only six have been issued previously. It's impossible in a review like this to cover all the material, but it's essential listening for anyone interested in British traditional jazz in the decades after the war – the actual time-span is 1944 to 1962.

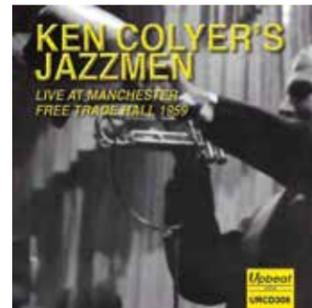
Things kick off with Freddie Mirfield and his Garbage Men in the days before they became my favourite comedy band – not great jazz, but fine work from Freddy Randall and an early appearance by the young clarinetist Johnny Dankworth.

Forgotten by me, Mike Daniels' Delta Jazzmen make a real impact with a spirited, but disciplined, *Stomp Off, Let's Go* from 1951 and four years later Roy Crimmins' nonchalant ease on trombone stands out on Alex Welsh's *Wild Man Blues* before John Barnes, still in Manchester, delivers a lovely poised trio version of *Blue Room*.

Unexpected pairings team George Chisholm with Kenny Ball in a 1958 all-star band, George Melly singing *Old Fashioned Love* with Acker Bilk's band (no verse – shame on you, George!) and Bruce Turner joining Sandy Brown in gloriously contrasted clarinet styles on *Blues for Bechet* – all of them excellent in different ways.

Two barely remembered bands from 1960 make us regret their comparative lack of recorded material: Dave Carey's swinging seven-piece and – a total surprise – Pete Ridge wowing the crowd at The Golden Slipper. And, finally, there's a fascinating glimpse of the Lyttelton band in transition, a 1957 *Tiger Rag* with Tony Coe's clarinet finding new ways to work through Nick La Rocca's ancient flagwaver.

## RON SIMPSON



## KEN COLYER'S JAZZMEN

## LIVE AT MANCHESTER FREE TRADE HALL 1959

Upbeat Jazz URCD306 65:45

Trumpeter and cornetist Ken Colyer devoted himself to performing the music of New Orleans. His first high profile engagement was with the Crane River Jazz Band in 1949.

There had been various incarnations of the Jazzmen, but this grouping is generally

considered to be the best and worked together until the early 1960s. Mac Duncan (trombone), Ian Wheeler (clarinet), Ray Foxley (piano), John Bastable (banjo), Ron Ward (bass) and Colin Bowden (drums) performed a collection of classic material including *Aunt Hagar's Blues*, *Muskrat Ramble*, and, a little unusually, *Peanut Vendor*.

Colyer's music was inspired by the likes of Bunk Johnson and George Lewis and musical expertise came second to the expression of an exuberant spirit and mistakes were seen as preferable to playing it straight. The release will be of interest to Colyer completists although it appears that it consists of material that has previously been released on the Dinamite Label. The recorded sound is adequate for the time period. An added bonus is the comprehensive CD booklet notes provided by Ray Foxley who provides personal insights into both the music and the circumstances surrounding its recording.

Due to ill health Colyer ceased bandleading in 1972 and concentrated on a solo career, working on into the 1980s; he died in 1988. It's gratifying to see that his music lives on more than 30 years after his death.

If you are a fan of classic New Orleans jazz you will find plenty to enjoy here.

## ALAN MUSSON



## DOWN FOR THE COUNT

## SWING INTO CHRISTMAS

Down For The Count Records: DFTC005 67:47

Down For The Count, the Basie-inspired swing outfit, comes in different sizes to suit

the occasion, this one being Christmas. In the spirit of seasonal amplitude, this is the full 'Concert Orchestra'. They have, moreover, fulfilled a long-held ambition, adding what Capitol Records in the 1950s was fond of calling a 'chordophonic chorus' - the 15-strong City String Ensemble, no less.

Together, they achieve a full and warm sound, lush and relaxed, swinging and swaying prettily across a varied seasonal programme, which unsurprisingly brings to mind a marriage of sweet Big Band and Nelson Riddle, performed in Capitol Studios, the ceremony conducted by, say, Gordon Jenkins. Mike Paul-Smith is a declared admirer of Riddle and some of the polished arrangements here are distinctly reminiscent of those he did for, among others, Sinatra and Nat King Cole.

*The Most Wonderful Time of the Year* gets us off on the sleigh ride in full Andy Williams' style, Callum Gillies's vocals augmented by a Hollywood choir. The tone is set for a very smooth ride through a winter wonderland,



Tenement Jazz Band

Photo by Merlin Daleman

waltzing all the way to the final chestnut roasting, *The Christmas Song*, which King Cole liked so much he recorded four times.

Jazz fans will warm to the poignant tenor of Alex Western-Smith, particularly on the most potent track, a marvellously

moody, broody *Sugar Rum Cherry*, the off-beat Ellington-Strayhorn reworking of Tchaikovsky's *Sugar Plum Fairy* party piece. The full-on brass in *Christmas in New Orleans* and some expressive trumpet solos throughout are most welcome.

This is a band, with a broad appeal, who to some extent move into new territory by featuring original arrangements - particularly for the four vocalists - rather than faithfully transcribing the classics.

ANDREW LIDDLE

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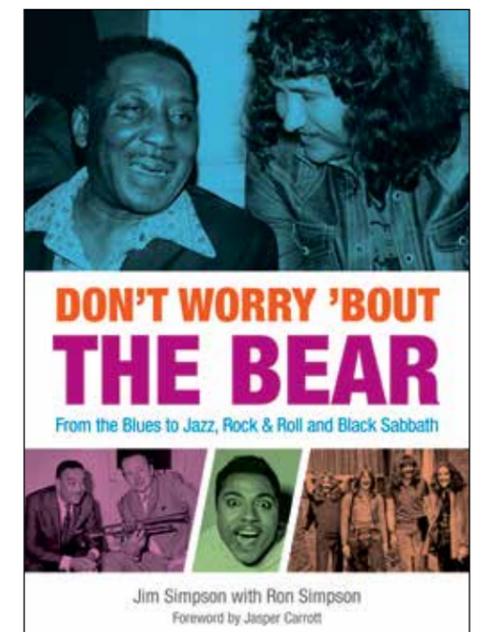
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# HENRY'S BLUESLETTER

## HENRY'S BLUESHOUSE

### THE BACK-STORY

In 1968 I rented the upstairs room at The Crown, a pub adjacent to Birmingham New Street Station, declared that Tuesdays Is Bluesdays and named the venture Henry's Blueshouse.

Henry was a particularly glamorous Afghan Hound of my acquaintance.

Henry's could never be accused of being smart, but the smallish room had a good stage and a terrific atmosphere. The man who wrote Elvis Presley's first hit, *That's Alright Now Mama*, Arthur Big Boy Crudup, performed in the early days, to be followed by Lightnin' Slim, Eddie Guitar Burns, Son House, Champion Jack Dupree and other American Blues legends. British bands included the emerging Status Quo, Rory Gallagher, Jethro Tull, Thin Lizzy – and a young Birmingham blues band called Earth. Their name changed to Black Sabbath, I became their manager, took them to their first two hit albums and first hit single and closed Henry's to go on the road with them.

After a brief break of some 50 years, we reopened Henry's, now at The Bulls Head, in March 2019 and things were going swimmingly, until COVID hit and we had to close a year later. To keep the pot boiling until we can re-open, we produced a weekly newsletter – on Tuesdays, of course. We've had fun digging back into those early Blues - it wouldn't be right not to share it.

JIM SIMPSON



## THE STOOP DOWN MAN

Chick Willis was the cousin of Chuck Willis who, in his short lifetime, achieved massive success through his records on Okeh and Atlantic, including Number Ones on the *Billboard* Rhythm & Blues chart for *C.C. Rider* in 1957 and *What am I Living For?* in 1958, the year he died during surgery at the peak of his career. Various described as 'The Sheikh of Shake' and 'The King of the Stroll', Chuck was Blues box office, hosting a weekly TV show in Atlanta where he introduced such guests as Ray Charles and Sam Cooke.

When his cousin, Chick Willis, born Robert Lee Willis in Cabaniss, Georgia, in 1934, finished his US military service in the early 1950s, he went on the road with Chuck, acting as tour manager and chauffeur, honing his guitar technique – and making contacts. He won a talent contest at The Magnolia Ballroom in Atlanta in 1956 which led to his first recording, the single *You're Mine* on Ebb Records. Chick's main guitar influence was Mississippi-born Guitar Slim who also influenced Buddy Guy, Albert Collins, Frank Zappa and Jimi Hendrix. Hendrix recorded Slim's *The Things I Used to Do*, as did Stevie Ray Vaughan. Coincidentally both Chick's influences, Chuck and Slim, had drink problems and both died at the age of 32.

After the death of Chuck Willis, Chick played with The King of the Slide Guitar, Elmore James, staying with him throughout the 1960s, and appeared in the movies, *Petey Wheatstraw* and *The Buddy Holly Story*. He recorded for Atco and other labels, enjoying a jukebox hit with *Stoop Down, Baby, Let Your Daddy See*, a song with lyrics of such dubious

taste that the single never made it onto any radio playlist – but still sold in excess of 3 million copies. Reflecting his years working a carnival show, luring passers-by to come in and see the entertainment, his single, *Mother Fuyer*, in the same year showed no improvement in keeping on the right side of respectable society!

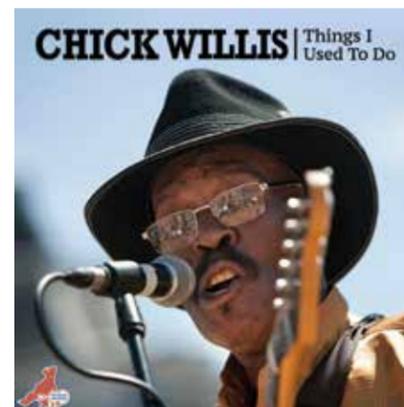
After recording for Ichiban Records throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Chick came over to the UK and featured at the Birmingham Jazz Festival where he became a star attraction. At the end of what turned out to be his last tour we took Chick into the Chipping Norton Recording Studio and over two sweaty August days cut the album, *Things I Used to Do*, the title remembering his early influence, Guitar Slim. Chick and the band were on fire, coming fresh from on-the-road gigs. Tony Ashton (responsible for one of the best ever singles, *Resurrection Shuffle* by Ashton, Gardner and Dyke) played piano and organ, Roger Inniss was on bass and Sticky Wicket on drums.

The album lay in the Big Bear vaults until this year when all music business ground to a halt thanks to COVID. This enabled us to sift through our unreleased recordings which led to the discovery of this blues gem. Initially released online, it is now receiving enthusiastic reviews.

Sadly Chick is no longer around to enjoy his success, having died on December 7th, 2013, in Forsyth, Georgia, not far from where he was born 79 years earlier.

## OUT NOW ON BIG BEAR RECORDS

### Chick Willis – Things I Used To Do



'A fabulous collection of blues and R&B that echoes the early Chicago scene...a totally unreserved recommendation'  
Graham Munn, *Blues in Britain*

'This album is no nonsense blues all the way, there is not a poor track'  
Norman Darwen, *Blues & Rhythm*

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## DETROIT BLACK BOTTOM

Black Bottom was a predominantly black neighbourhood in Detroit, Michigan. A lot of folk wrongly believe that it got its name from the African-American community that developed there in the 20th century, but the name was coined by early French settlers in recognition of the dark fertile soil found there.

By the early 1930s, The Black Bottom, along with the adjacent Paradise Valley, had become the hustling and bustling Detroit centre of black entertainment with nightclubs, theatres, blues and jazz bars, cabarets, restaurants and gambling joints, along with a high level of poverty and crime.

It had all started with cars. The prospect of paid employment inspired thousands of African Americans to leave the southern states and join the great migration north. Arriving in Detroit, they were confined

by racially discriminatory housing to neighbourhoods such as the Lower East Side's Hastings and St. Antoine Streets, names which were to become legends in the Blues lexicon.

Joe Von Battle operated the famous record store at 3530 Hastings that carried his name. Joe also recorded scores of bluesmen in his technically limited and makeshift studio at the back of his store, including John Lee Hooker, Jackie Wilson and a fourteen year old Aretha Franklin, while the majestic World Heavyweight Boxing Champion, Joe Louis, part-owned The Brown Bomber Chicken Shack on Hastings.

Artists such as Billie Holiday, Count Basie, Sam Cooke, Ella Fitzgerald and Duke Ellington appeared regularly in Paradise Valley while the Reverend C.L. Franklin, father of Aretha, established his New Bethel Baptist Church on Hastings. 'When I got to Detroit,

Hastings was the best street in town, opined Florida-born Arthur Phelps, better known as Blind Blake and sometimes as Blind Arthur.

The undisputed Boss of Detroit Blues was John Lee Hooker, who came from the fertile Blues territory of Clarksdale, Mississippi. His former sideman Eddie Guitar Burns and the wildly eccentric one man blues band Dr. Ross both came from that state, from Belzoni and Tunica respectively.

While John Lee Hooker was certainly the biggest name to emerge from the city, it would only be right to remember Big Maceo Merriweather, who was considered to be one of the greatest blues piano players of the 1940s. His tough, two-handed style influenced most blues pianists in the era following World War II, including Otis Spann, Johnny Jones and Eddie Boyd. Maceo's biggest hit was *Worried Life Blues*, now a standard in the repertoire of many blues piano players.

Birmingham's Big Bear Records developed a productive relationship with the blues fraternity of Detroit. The first Big Bear Eurotour was with singer, harmonica player and guitarist Eddie Burns who we toured several times during the 1970s, recording two feature albums *Bottle Up and Go* and *Detroit Blackbottom*. He also toured and recorded with our American Blues Legends '75 and appeared once at Henry's Blueshouse with Lightnin' Slim and Whispering Smith backed by The Shuffling Hungarians who were, in fact, an augmented version of Moseley's Tea & Symphony.

Doctor Ross The Harmonica Boss was another Big Bear regular, recording the album *Live at Montreux*, where one side of the vinyl album featured the only recording where he played with other musicians, in this case the Muddy Waters rhythm section of Lafayette Leake, Louis and David Myers and Freddy Below. He also recorded a solo studio album *Doctor*

Ross, *The Harmonica Boss* as well as touring and recording as part of American Blues Legends '74 and appearing on several Big Bear compilation albums, including *Don't Worry 'Bout The Bear*.

Other Hastings Street regulars who toured and recorded with Big Bear included the terrific pianist and singer Boogie Woogie Red, originally from Rayville, Louisiana, guitarist and singer Baby Boy Warren from Lake Providence, Louisiana and the enigmatic Washboard Willie who was born in Bullock County, Alabama in 1906 or in Columbus, Georgia in 1909. There is some confusion over this, but not over his real name which is William Paden Hensley.

The influence of the blues of Black Bottom on the development of an entire generation of Motown soul musicians is clear, but sadly the Hastings area was demolished in the 1960s and all that remains today is a Michigan Historical Site marker on what was the intersection of St. Antoine and Adams Avenue.

A combination of earlier race riots where US troops were deployed, politics, racial tension and inner-city housing issues provided the excuse to completely clear the area for redevelopment, destroying what had been one of American's most important centres of black urban culture.

JIM SIMPSON



Dr. Ross

Photo by Alan Johnson

## BOOK REVIEWS

### SITTIN' IN

JEFF GOLD

Harper Design, large format hardback, 978 0 06 291470 5, £30.00

£30 is not a giveaway price for a book, but it's terrific value for *Sittin' In*, a beautifully curated volume, though perhaps something of a niche subject. Jeff Gold's concept is simultaneously simple and ambitious, to record the jazz clubs of the 1940s and 1950s in major American cities via photographs, menus, flyers and other ephemera. As such he also

provides an oblique and partial history of jazz in this period.

Gold settles on a city, gives a fairly brief, but perceptive and well researched, account of its jazz life, then moves on to a few paragraphs in turn on each of its main clubs illustrated by well-chosen period photographs, the largest number of which are the souvenir photographs taken at the clubs and marketed in special folders. Many are of unknown club-goers, in their fashions and demeanour a glimpse into a lost world, some are mementoes of memorable nights such as fans sharing a table with Louis Armstrong and ever-smiling Velma Middleton at Joe's DeLuxe Club in Chicago.

A fair number picture jazz stars in action – Miles and Bird at the Three Deuces, for instance – and handbills offer mouth-watering programmes, notably a Birdland double page spread filled with such names as Dinah Washington, Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker and Count Basie. Menus are an unending fascination: what you could get for a dollar, even at classy joints!

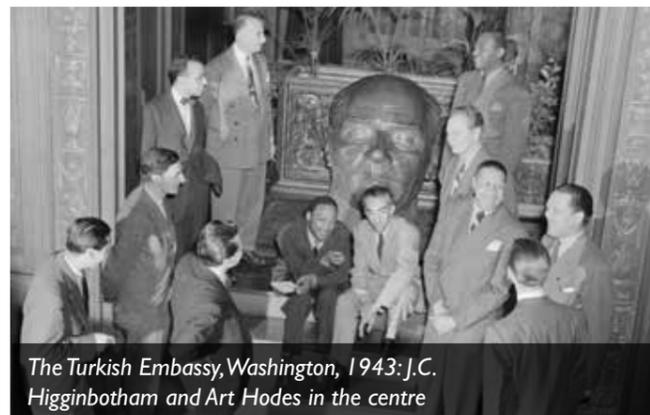
Accounts of cities and clubs are convincing factual accounts, but also with entertaining and revealing anecdotes: a fair number of the best Kansas City tales surface in two pages. The famous clubs are here, of course, but some delightful obscurities, too, my favourite the Turkish Embassy in Washington, DC, where Ahmet and Nesuhi Ertegun lived with their ambassador father in pre-Atlantic days. There they are in 1943 with Lester Young, Red Allen, J.C. Higginbotham, Art Hodes and many more.

Much is factual, but Gold's viewpoint is omnipresent, especially in the admirable insistence on identifying the stance of the club on racial integration. He convincingly argues the case for jazz clubs

being ahead of the curve on integration (borne out by some of the audience pics), but finds plenty of cases of blacks in the kitchen, as it were, providing entertainment for their so-called superiors. He always asks the question in a series of extended interviews with the likes of Sonny Rollins. Dan Morgenstern, Jewish, born in Germany in 1929, immigrating to the States in 1947, offers particularly shrewd insights on this, as on most things.

I have only one doubt about this superb book. Should New York take up 100 of 250 pages? The entries for Chicago and Kansas City, for instance, are disappointingly short. No doubt Jeff Gold would say, correctly, that their great days as jazz centres were in the 1930s. But the same is so of several New York clubs, notably the Cotton Club which closed in 1940 and gets a four-page spread – but it's still great to see the programme for the 1932 Cotton Club Parade with the Cab Calloway Orchestra, speciality acts from such as the Four Blazers and the Nicholas Brothers and songs from Ted Koehler and Harold Arlen.

RON SIMPSON



The Turkish Embassy, Washington, 1943: J.C. Higginbotham and Art Hodes in the centre

### PEGGY LEE: A CENTURY OF SONG

TISH ONEY

Roman & Littlefield hardback 978-1-5381-2847-3, £22.95

Released to coincide with the centenary of the singer's birth, this finely tuned appraisal of Peggy Lee's prolific career is totally absorbing. Her legacy to American popular music is presented here in such meticulous detail I found myself pausing to seek out certain tracks from my collection to pick out the little subtleties and inflections the author refers to!

Award winning singer, composer and arranger with a doctorate in jazz, Tish Oney's multi-talented credentials certainly add weight to this well researched study of an artist she genuinely admires. She examines Lee's invaluable apprenticeship with Benny Goodman, their chart topping

success with *Why Don't You Do Right?* and the subsequent appearance in the film *Stage Door Canteen* which established Lee as a solo recording artist.

Her successful songwriting partnership with husband, guitarist Dave Barbour, is well documented along with her impressive twenty-three year contract with Capitol Records. The early hits came thick and fast, *I Don't Know Enough About You*, *It's A Good Day* and the popular *Mañana* which apparently upset the Hispanic community offended by Lee's exaggerated portrayal of their character.

It even produced lawsuits claiming copyright infringement; all unproven and abandoned. Marital problems and a heavy work schedule eventually took their toll and the couple divorced in 1951.

Lee's golden era is studied in depth with CBS offering the

singer her own radio show presenting and performing with an impressive network of celebrity guests. A further series in tribute to American songwriters offered a platform to lesser known writers and Lee's own creative genius as a lyricist was by now in demand for film music, notably Duke Ellington's theme for *Anatomy of a Murder*, the Joan Crawford film *Johnny Guitar* and Disney's animated classic *Lady and the Tramp* with Lee's voice featured on *He's a Tramp* and in her menacing portrayal of the cats on *The Siamese Cat Song*.

On screen her appearance in *The Jazz Singer* was superseded in 1955 by her dramatic performance in *Pete Kelly's Blues* earning her an Oscar nomination. Her recording output alone was phenomenal, all catalogued here including the superb album *Black Coffee* produced on the Decca label and her collaborations with writing team Leiber & Stoller on

*I'm a Woman* and their Grammy Award winning *Is That All There Is?* orchestrated by Randy Newman and considered a masterpiece.

To summarise, Oney reminds us that Lee was a true pioneer, deftly navigating her way through a male dominated industry and not afraid to champion royalty rights for fellow songwriters. She set herself high standards, overseeing all aspects of studio production to achieve the best possible results and in live performance she directed the whole presentation, from timings and tempos to stage lighting.

In essence, she was a caring and spiritual woman as her family, friends and colleagues attest. The author's *Peggy Lee Project*, a musical show produced with guitarist John Chiodini, who worked with Lee and writes the foreword to this book, is certainly a fitting tribute.

VAL WISEMAN

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