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UPFRONT

Normally we would be looking forward to a packed year of jazz festivals: Southport would just have finished and the road to the Mike Durham Classic Jazz Party in November would be filled with a shedload of goodies. This pleasant prospect has, of course, been obscured by the perverse refusal of COVID-19 to go away.

As we write in February, the situation is complex for festival organisers who have to balance out the current illegality of such events with the determination not to miss another year if at all possible – and infection rates are falling, though nobody knows when a safe point will be reached.

So this magazine covers a variety of responses, from the optimistic hope that a festival *might* make it in April to the confidence (with fingers crossed) that Autumn events will go ahead. But Bude Jazz Festival (scheduled for August 31) is probably correct, if a little downbeat, to state on its website that it *might* go ahead and the decision is out of the organisers' hands. Most of the summer festivals are rather more positive, giving definite dates, but detailed programmes usually have to wait until the clouds clear.

A SUMMER'S JAZZ

Last year Birmingham, Sandwell and Westside Jazz Festival went ahead as probably the only jazz festival to operate in the last 10 months of 2020. A combination of boldness, flexible planning and the good fortune to land on a time of relatively mild restrictions meant that a reduced-scale festival, predominantly live, went ahead for ten days in October. Now Birmingham finds itself in the same position as the majority of this year's summer festivals. Surely a date in July gives enough

time for the virus to subside sufficiently for at least a socially distanced festival to operate, but what form will it be allowed to take? And how do you arrange it when many of the partner businesses (pubs, restaurants, etc.) are not even open at the moment? So we can say that the Birmingham, Sandwell and Westside Jazz Festival (www.birminghamjazzfestival.com) will run from July 16 to 25, but for the moment that is all we can say.

WARNER JAZZ BREAKS STILL ON

In the present situation it's probably best to be positive, but prepared for change. That is exactly the position of Pete Lay, drummer/leader of the Gambit Jazzmen and organiser of the Warner Holidays weekend events featuring traditional jazz bands.

The norm is to have three a year, with five or six bands and sessions throughout the day broken up by meal-times. Warners have an ambitious programme of events of all different sorts of music and, much to their credit, are clearly determined not to cancel unless absolutely necessary. So the Jazz Break at Norton Grange Coastal Village (April 23-26) is scheduled to occur as usual, with the Gambit Jazzmen joined by Black Cat Jazz, John Maddocks' Jazzmen, the Savannah Jazz Band and the Sussex Jazz Kings.

If fingers are crossed for Norton Grange, so they are for Gunton Hall, Lowestoft (September 10-

13), but for a different reason. Pete Lay is hoping for a near-to-normal weekend, with folks back dancing! Dancing or not, they have an impressive line-up of bands joining the Gambit Jazzmen. The Tenement Jazz Band makes the long trip from Edinburgh and is joined by festival favourites Baby Jools and the Jazzoholics, the New Orleans Jazz Bandits, Andrew Hall's Memories of New Orleans and the Golden Eagle Jazz Band. www.warnerleisurehotels.co.uk

VENTURING BOLDLY

It's good to see that Venture Away Music Weekends are programming jazz and rock & roll breaks for this year, though wisely saving them for later in the year when, hopefully, some semblance of normality has returned.

Both jazz weekends are billed as farewell appearances by the very popular festival band New Orleans Heat. On September 17-20 the Jazz and Lights Festival at the Savoy, Blackpool, features them alongside the Savannah

At the time of writing many festivals are in the same position. Jazz Jurassica (www.jazzjurassica.co.uk) will run at Lyme Regis from May 28-31. Kirkcudbright Jazz Festival (www.kirkcudbrightjazzfestival.co.uk) has announced the dates June 10-13 and hopes to repeat most of the programme from the 2020 cancellation. Swanage Jazz Festival (www.swanagejazzfestival.co.uk) takes its usual weekend this year

July 9-11. The same weekend the Burton Agnes Jazz Festival (www.burtonagnes.com) returns, with the programme as yet not announced.

The Isle of Wight Jazz Weekend (www.iwjazzweekend.co.uk) is in a slightly different position, having decided to move from June to September this year and yet to confirm the exact dates in September.



Liane Carroll

Jazz Band, Richard Leach's Street Band, the Eagle Jazz Band and Baby Jools and the Jazzaholics. November 8-11 sees the last two meeting up with New Orleans Heat, the Dart Valley Stompers and John Shillito's Riviera Ramblers in Torquay. www.ventureawaymusicweekends.co.uk

RYE GOES AHEAD

The Rye International Jazz and Blues Festival is unusual in that it features a series of big name

concerts throughout the year rather than a time-specific event. Not all the concerts are aimed at the jazz audience, but the opener certainly is: Ian Shaw and Liane Carroll at St. Mary in the Castle on April 30. Later concerts include Macy Gray in the De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea (June 20) and Incognito in St. Mary's Church (August 28). www.ryejazz.com

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Gambit Jazzmen

WHITLEY BAY 2021

At the time of writing this, the home page of the Mike Durham Classic Jazz Party strikes a sad note, focusing on the death of Keith Nichols, the epitome of the classic jazz musician and a regular and very popular performer at Whitley Bay billed to appear again this year.

Thereafter the site is drenched in positivity. Last year the Festival delayed cancellation as long as possible, but eventually had to accept the impossibility of going ahead in the time of COVID, so November 5-7, 2021, will see the programme planned for 2020 finally take place.

The settled format for the Mike Durham Classic Jazz Party probably makes it unique in the world of jazz festivals. 30-plus of the top musicians in the style from all over the world gather in the Village Hotel, Newcastle, for three long days (plus a pre-festival concert the day before), each day filled with music from midday to the early hours, with one substantial break for food. Apart from a late-night jam session, the programme consists of single-set themed concerts researched, prepared and arranged by one or another of the musicians and played mostly by select small groups – though there are exceptions in the occasional monster aggregation!

The line-up for November 2021 currently numbers 33 musicians from eight countries: the United Kingdom, the United States, Norway, France, Germany, Australia, Italy and Sweden. The trumpeters on view give a pretty good indication of the quality of the roster: Enrico Tomasso, Duke Heitger, Andy Schumm, Malo Mazurie, Torstein Kubben and Mike Davis.

The concert themes are always an enterprising mix of the popular and the obscure. This year, for instance, a programme of Henry 'Red' Allen 1929-1935 is bound to be a delight, but the eye is taken even more by some of the less familiar choices. It's good to see the great Argentinian guitarist Oscar Aleman being commemorated and for ingenious programming *A Battle of Jazz* and *Far Away from Home* take some beating. The 'battle' is sub-titled 'Fletcher Henderson v. The Missourians', presumably a reconstruction of some confrontation between Henderson's band and the one-time resident band at the Cotton Club, later Cab Calloway's backing band. *Far Away from Home* deals with the music of two groundbreaking figures in jazz and musical theatre. Noble Sissle was one of James Reese Europe's Hellfighters in World War One before co-writing with Eubie Blake the highly influential



Julian Joseph

SEPTEMBER IN SCARBOROUGH

The 18th Scarborough Jazz Festival resumes the tradition, so rudely interrupted by the virus both last year and in the attempted re-scheduling for February, by returning to the splendid Spa Complex on September 24-26. The programme is the usual enterprising mix of newcomers and known favourites.

Newcomers this year are the Fergus McCreddie Trio, Elftet, an 11-piece led by vibist Johnny Mansfield, Djanco with Andy Aitchison, and violinist John Pearce, in a duo with Scarborough favourite Dave Newton. The inevitable and always welcome appearance by the Alan Barnes Octet (with *Jazz Portraits*) is there on the final evening and a sample of the rest of the programme comes up with such names as the Nikki Iles Jazz



Keith Nichols (front left) with Spats and His Rhythm Boys

musical, *Shuffle Along*. Pianist Sam Wooding was one of early jazz's great world travellers, employing such top players as Tommy Ladnier and Gene Sedric and putting Russia on his touring schedule in the 1920s. And, as that afore-mentioned monster aggregation, 27 musicians will cram on stage to pay tribute to Paul Whiteman's Symphonic Jazz!

So the Classic Jazz Party excels at looking back to the past – which makes it doubly creditable that it also looks forward to the future with considerable success. In 2019 the festival inaugurated its Young Talent Award, given in the first instance to a 23-year-old Texan, Colin Hancock. For this year's award musicians in the classic jazz style who are aged between 18 and 23 are invited to submit a covering letter and a recording to patti_durham@btinternet.com by June 30th. The winner will receive a bursary of

£1,000 plus privileged access to the 2021 Classic Jazz Party.

But what of 2020? There will be two winners of the Young Talent Award at the Village Hotel in November, with this year's choice joined by the 2020 winner, just announced as Curtis Volp from London. He plays guitar and banjo and has toured Europe and recorded with the Alex Mendham Orchestra. He has depped for his tutor, Martin Wheatley, in the Vitality 5 at festivals in Europe, and recently recorded an album with multi-instrumentalist, Michael McQuaid, the title, *Duets for No Reason at All*, echoing a whimsical title on a trio recording by Bix Beiderbecke, Frankie Trumbauer and one of Curtis' main influences, Eddie Lang. He also cites Teddy Bunn and Lonnie Johnson, so it's not difficult to work out where he's coming from! www.whitleybayjazzfest.com

Orchestra, Julian Joseph and the Jean Toussaint Allstar 6tet. www.scarboroughspa.co.uk/event/scarborough-jazz

MIXED NEWS FROM UPTON

Upton-on-Severn is one of those towns that seems to be a magnet for a variety of festivals, but not this year. The Folk (April) and Blues (July) Festivals have already cancelled, but the good news is that the celebrated Jazz Festival is still scheduled for June 25-27, though Upton Jazz Festival is one of many in the summer months unable for the time being to announce more than the dates. www.uptonjazz.co.uk

LOVE SUPREME TICKETS GOING FAST

The Love Supreme Festival at Glynde Place, Sussex, has an impressive line-up of international stars for July 2-4

and ticket sales apparently show the British public's optimism that things will be returning to normal by then. The Isley Brothers, Sister Sledge, Candy Staton, Brand New Heavies and Nubya Garcia are among the bill-toppers. www.lovesupremefestival.com

MOSTLY GOOD NEWS

The Mostly Jazz, Funk and Soul Festival in Moseley Park, Birmingham, has proceeded with confidence in fixing a full bill for July 9-11. Headliners include Neneh Cherry, Martha Reeves and the Vandellas, the Fatback Band, Kenneth Whalum, Julie Dexter and Alicia Gardener Trejo. Tickets are on sale, with appropriate provision for cancellation on rescheduling. www.mostlyjazz.co.uk

HEADLINERS FIXED FOR EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Jazz Festival (July 16-25) has not yet announced its programme, but two headliners from the aborted 2020 festival have been rescheduled. Tickets are currently on sale for the Jools Holland Rhythm and Blues Orchestra (16) and Curtis Stigers (17).

www.edinburghjazzfestival.com

NANTWICH POSTPONEMENTS

The noble efforts of Nantwich Jazz, Blues and Music Festival to keep faith with purchasers of

tickets for the 2020 Festival and to avoid two years of cancellations have produced a rather confusing situation. It had been hoped to carry forward headliners for 2020 to 2021, but at the moment only Sari Schorr (April 2) and Noasis (5) are scheduled. Support events for the Festival (April 1-5) need the participation of currently closed venues. However, the remaining headline acts from 2020, including Ruby Turner and Big Country, are now booked in for 2022!

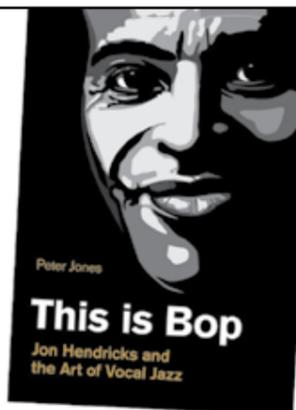
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Clare Teal

LEO GREEN ON LINE

Leo Green has launched a 24-hour internet radio station (WWW.LGRADIO.ONLINE), a subscription service without commercials. Given his known musical tastes, it's not surprising that jazz figures within the programme's themed programmes. *In the Groove* is a purely jazz programme, while *In the Mood* concentrates on the Great American Songbook, with the likes of Nat 'King' Cole, Louis Armstrong, Peggy Lee, Dinah Washington and Ella Fitzgerald together with some less jazz-inclined singers. Listeners of a certain generation will be delighted to have the chance to hear archive recordings of Leo's much missed father, Benny Green.

CONCORDE PLANS

Eastleigh's Concorde Club is ready to leap into action as soon as restrictions are lifted, with Paul Jones and Mike D'Abo scheduled for April 29 and Naturally 7 for May 16. The pace of jazz events quickens in Summer, with the Jive Aces on June 26 closely followed by Curtis Stigers (July 1) and Clare Teal and her Sextet (7).

www.theconcordeclub.com

STABLES LOOKING AHEAD

Clearly the Stables at Wavendon has no certainty of when it can reopen, but it has a positive policy geared to swinging into action the moment it all becomes possible. As we write, the second week in March seems to be the time when the Stables hopes to move from postponing shows to re-staging previous postponements. On March 11 the Jazz Dynamos' Sunday lunch-time appearance has been moved from the Mancini Forum to the Jim Marshall Auditorium in the interests of social distancing and more jazz-related events follow. Todd Gordon Sings Sinatra in Stage Two on April 13, the Clark Tracey Sextet plays the Mancini Forum on April 18 and Charlie Chaplin meets Fats Waller in pianist John Lenehan's *The Roaring Twenties* in the Jim Marshall Auditorium on the afternoon of May 2.

www.stables.org

BILLIE HOLIDAY MOVIE

According to the planned schedule the film, *The United States vs Billie Holiday*, should have been hitting the cinemas about now. Instead it is available on Sky Cinema. Though director



Clark Tracey

Lee Daniels and Andra Day, who plays Billie, hold Diana Ross' performance in high esteem, they are emphatic that this is not *Lady Sings the Blues*. According to Daniels, 'this is not a biopic, but a moment of time with a woman standing up to the country.'

Essentially the story is of Harry J. Anslinger, long-time Head of the FBI's Narcotics Agency and his obsessive pursuit of Billie Holiday. As a fervent anti-narcotics campaigner and an extreme racist, he found the perfect target in Billie and her song *Strange Fruit*. In Johann Hari's recent book on the worldwide war on drugs, he pinpointed the story of Jimmy Fletcher, the African American agent assigned to get close to Billie – and the story of their relationship is also central to the film as it plots the path to the death of Billie Holiday, handcuffed to her hospital bed, guarded by FBI agents.

AMBITIOUS PROGRAMME AT JAZZLEEDS

JazzLeeds' *Jazz Reset* programme at Seven Arts takes the bold step of scheduling near-enough weekly concerts on Thursday evenings from April 8 onwards. Highly appropriately the first band up is

one that made a notable effort to keep touring in Autumn/Winter 2020: the Nigel Price Quartet with Vasilis Xenopoulos. They are followed by About Time, a sextet led by Malcolm Strachan (April 15), the Clark Tracey Sextet (22), Josephine Dawes' Satori (May 6), Adrian Knowles with Spirit of 59 (13), Liam Noble/Seb Rochford/Tom Herbert (20), Ian Shaw with Iain Ballamy and Jamie Safir (27), Byron Wallen with Four Corners (June 17) and Andrew McCormack solo and trio (24).

www.jazzleeds.org.uk

JAZZ IN PERUGIA

The line-up for the Umbria Jazz Festival (July 9-18) includes main events in the Arena Santa Giuliana with such big names as Tom Jones, Wynton Marsalis and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, Branford Marsalis, Redman-Mehldau-McBride-Blade and Jamie Cullum.

www.umbriajazz.it/en

NORTH SEA DETAILS TO FOLLOW

North Sea Jazz Festival (July 9-11) has to date only given details of three big-name, not strictly jazz concerts (by John Legend, Lionel Richie and Alicia Keys), but the full programme will follow in April.

www.northseajazz.com/en

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I GET A KICK OUT OF...

British Jazz Award-winning pianist CRAIG MILVERTON answers the questions

What track or album turned you on to jazz?

It was a tape my dad had of Neville Dickie's boogie woogie recording. I loved his version of *Bad Penny Blues* - so exciting for a 7 year old!

What was the first jazz gig you went to?

I went to The Drury Lane Theatre with Trevor Walker when I was 11. He was an older neighbour and big jazz fan and it was a boogie woogie concert with several stars of that genre including Sammy Price and Memphis Slim. That got me seriously hooked.

What is your favourite jazz album and why?

Stan Getz and The Oscar Peterson Trio from 1957. It swings so hard, with exceptional solos from everyone and Stan Getz is astonishing, particularly his stop choruses on *Three Little Words*. I must have played it 20 times straight off.

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

I've seen many great concerts but I think seeing the great pianist Gene Harris in Germany when I was touring with The Terry Lightfoot Band was a particular highlight. They did an amazing medium shuffle version of *Georgia* and I looked across at the band and everyone was grinning. So in the pocket and a stellar lineup, with Jim Mullen, Andy Cleynert and Martin Drew. Wow!

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

Two come to mind, and both at The Ashburton Art Centre. Firstly, The Nigel Price Quintet with Vasilis Xenopoulos, Ross Stanley and Joel Barford. They have a Hammond in situ there and I got to sit in with them jamming a blues with two Hammonds being put through some serious abuse! What an

awesome band, almost telepathic in their interplay.

Liane Carroll and Roger Carey were the other world-class act and she is simply stunning alongside her brilliant hubby; I can't praise them enough. So blessed to have this venue in Devon.

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

I've recently purchased Ella Fitzgerald's *Piano Duets* and she just confirms to me why she's my favourite jazz vocalist. A selection of some of the finest pianists too, but in particular Ellis Larkins blows me away.

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

I've always been a massive Oscar Peterson fan from when I first heard him as a 13 year old watching his BBC shows, so he



would be first choice for me. He had it all, and I would ask him, 'Can I have your hands?'

Head to page 29 for our review of Nostalgia, Craig Milverton's new album recorded with Tricotism. It's available to order from Bandcamp, along with the recent digital album from ZZ Bop also featuring Craig.

THAT'S THE NOISE!

ROGER COTTERRELL reminds us of an unjustly forgotten talent.

How many jazz listeners know Shake Keane's music now? How many even know his name?

There is a loyal minority (and not just jazz people but also lovers of Caribbean music traditions, as well as of poetry), but there should be many more. There are those of us who fondly remember the music of altoist Joe Harriott's brilliant quintet, in which Shake was an absolutely essential part. The iconic quintet albums of the 1960s, *Free Form, Abstract, Movement* and *High Spirits*, can still be heard, reissued on CD. Shake's wonderful trumpet and flugelhorn, powerful and crystal clear, is an indispensable voice on all of them.

Keane was Joe Harriott's other musical half – rather like Paul Desmond to Dave Brubeck, or Billy Strayhorn to Duke Ellington. The Harriott quintet's bassist Coleridge Goode used to say that Shake was the musical partner 'Joe had waited for all his life.' Keane was one of the best modern jazz trumpeters working in Britain, and even better as a flugelhornist – probably the best jazz flugelhorn player in Europe (equally with Kenny Wheeler) with his burnished, warm tone, soaring phrases and precise technique at any tempo.

He arrived in London in 1952 from his native St. Vincent, aiming to study Literature at London University and make ends meet by playing music in whatever contexts he could find. He was an ambitious poet too with a grandly poetic real name – Ellsworth McGranahan Keane. He got his nickname (short for 'Shakespeare') because of his love of literature. Over the years he published books of strong, often funny, sometimes bitter poetry. Now they are mainly hard to find. But as regards music, crucially, from 1960 until 1965 he was Harriott's right-hand man.

The tragedy is that the recognition he needed and deserved did not come strongly enough. Regular work with Harriott did not bring enough financial reward, and the work became more sporadic as the



Shake Keane (c) with the Joe Harriott Quintet

quintet's pioneering free form music alienated some listeners. He needed to make money. Shake made lightweight Caribbean-styled recordings, and albums of pop tunes over which his horns soared sometimes brightly, often half-heartedly.

It's difficult to know what he thought of those commercial efforts. One was called *That's the Noise*. When I asked Coleridge Goode, who knew Shake very well, about the title, he laughed and said, 'When he heard music he liked that's what he would bellow out: "Yeah, that's the noise!"' Keane was a big man in every way: six feet four and huge. If he hugged you, Coleridge used to say, he smothered you. He had strong, sometimes volatile emotions; he was warm, exuberant, ironic and sharply observant, as can be heard in his poetry.

Why isn't he better recognised? Neither the artistic triumphs with Harriott nor the money from all the commercial albums was enough. Keane had decided by 1965 that he could not make the kind of living he wanted in Britain. He accepted a well-paid job in Germany as featured jazz soloist with Kurt Edelhagen's orchestra. He never returned to re-settle in Britain. Eventually he went back to St. Vincent, then moved to the States in 1981. But he had no green card so could only scuffle for years working sporadically as a jobbing musician.

Ultimately he developed links in Norway, which is where he died in 1997, aged 70.

Keane's really prominent musical career in Britain lasted only about five years. The excellent jazz recordings he made, especially with Harriott, but some with pianist-composer Michael Garrick and a few under his own name, are superb testimony to his imagination and originality as a jazz musician. For Shake, undoubtedly it was jazz that was 'the noise' he best loved, although he could function well in many musical contexts. But it is our inestimable loss that this country could not give him the opportunities he felt he needed to flourish as an artist and to be sufficiently financially recognised at the same time.

Plenty of jazz musicians face this dilemma, of course. But being black almost certainly didn't help, just as it didn't help Harriott. And they both wanted to make new music, a radical challenge for many listeners, creating sounds that were different from anything heard before. Together, they tried in Harriott's quintet to invent a new approach to jazz, a free form music developed almost contemporaneously with Ornette Coleman's innovations in America, but entirely independently of Coleman.

In fact, Harriott's free form, or as he called it, 'abstract' music worked on very different

principles from Coleman's. For one thing it incorporated the piano as a harmony instrument (which Coleman had discarded) and it was more varied in important ways than Coleman's jazz: it allowed the musicians to use orthodox harmony and rhythms as well as free form elements, in whatever combination seemed appropriate to the performance.

Will Shake eventually get the wide recognition he deserves? Perhaps his saga will end like that of his musical soulmate Harriott. After the altoist's tragic death in 1973, he seemed to become a forgotten man. But a biography of Joe (along with one of Coleridge Goode) helped encourage the reissue of most of Harriott's recordings on CD. Now he has his rightful place among the British jazz greats.

Maybe something similar will happen for Shake Keane. Philip Nanton, a St. Vincent poet and writer living in Barbados, has just written the first biography of Keane. Titled *Riff: The Shake Keane Story*, it was published by Papillote Press <https://papillotepress.co.uk/section/books/> this January. I have just ordered my copy and don't doubt that it will be a good read, spreading the word about the turbulent life and fine music of this talented man who graced Britain's shores for a brief time and left us a marvellous musical legacy.

JAZZ RAG *Hep Specials*

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KEITH NICHOLS

Remembered by PATTI DURHAM

Keith Nichols died on January 21. I don't need to tell you he was one of the world's finest exponents of ragtime, stride and other early jazz piano styles. He was also an accomplished performer on soprano saxophone, trombone and accordion! As a band leader Keith was a mentor to many aspiring musicians and an all-round musical catalyst. He made legions of fans all over the world, including here in the north east of England.

Dave Kerr, a graphic designer by profession and life-long Geordie jazz enthusiast, co-founded, with Steve Andrews, the Savannah Syncopators in the early 1970s. It was around this time that Dave first met Keith who was in Durham to play a concert of piano duets with Neville Dickie at the Redhills Hotel. They met again when Keith returned to the region as one of four pianists booked to play a Jazz North East 'History of Jazz Piano' concert. Dave discovered that Keith was booked into a hotel just a couple of streets away from his flat. Keith had learned about Dave's new player piano and at the end of the evening they shared a taxi back to Dave's place. Keith played what amounted to a free player piano concert until a neighbour (in his underpants!) complained about the 'noise'. Their friendship led to Keith, on more than one occasion, guesting with the Savannah Syncopators. One memorable occasion occurred on a cold winter's night at Washington Arts Centre. During the concert snow began to fall. At the end of the evening Keith and the band were effectively snowed in. The bar remained open as they waited for a snowplough to arrive and Keith sat down at the piano once again to entertain everyone! Dave and the Syncopators would subsequently meet up with Keith and one of his many bands at festivals at home and abroad including Breda in Holland, Edinburgh and Keswick.

In 1983 Mike and I returned to Tyneside after living and working abroad for several years (in Japan Mike played trumpet in local jazz

bands, later forming his own band, the Kobe Stompers). During this time Mike kept in touch with the British jazz scene thanks to corresponding regularly with Norman Field at Neovox. Settling down to life in Newcastle, Mike began to check out the local jazz scene and on forming his own band, the West Jesmond Rhythm Kings seemed the obvious name – after all, we lived in the suburb of West Jesmond! The WJRKs quickly established a reputation on the local scene playing pub residencies and building a repertoire. As the band's reputation grew, jazz club and festival bookings followed. It was around this time that Mike began to think about inviting some of the leading musicians he admired to come up to Newcastle to play as guests with the band. Keith was one of those musicians and he returned frequently to work with the WJRKs. Local jazz fans loved Keith's trombone duets with Bob King, his duels on reeds with Derek Fleck, Fats Waller sets and occasional novelty numbers, all performed in his own inimitable style. Highlights were many, not least Keith's wonderful repertoire of stomps, ragtime beauties and finger-busting numbers like *Viper Drag* and *When Mariuchi Does the Hoochie Coochie*, complete with the hokey Italian accent and hip-thrusting dances!

Fast forward to the early 1990s when Mike became involved in organising the annual Whitley Bay Jazz Festival. Keith first appeared at the festival in 1993 as a guest of the West Jesmond Rhythm Kings. The festival grew in terms of ambition and financial support and Keith rarely missed a year. In between sets Mike bounced ideas off Keith and this eventually led to the formation of Spats and his Rhythm Boys. They talked often about lovely old tunes that nobody else played, including a couple Bing Crosby had sung, and other neglected gems sung by crooners like Russ Colombo, Johnnie Marvin, Nick Lucas, Rudy Vallee and Ike Edwards. Keith suggested an interesting show could be put together, Mike took up the challenge and the band was born.

Fast forward again, this time to the 2006 festival. By this time Mike was working with larger venues across Tyneside, including the recently opened Norman Foster-designed Sage Gateshead concert hall venue at which Keith acted as MD to an ambitious curtain raiser concert titled *Gershwin & the King of Jazz*. He reworked Paul Whiteman's arrangements for a hand-picked band of international early jazz specialists working alongside the region's renowned Northern Sinfonia chamber orchestra. Pianist Wayne Marshall and members of the Halle were drafted in to perform *Rhapsody in Blue* to a 1700 capacity audience. At the time Keith described how it was when the jazz musicians met up at rehearsals with their classically trained counterparts. It was like dogs sniffing round each other, initially wary, but ultimately respectful.

By the end of the decade Mike began to think about changing both the format and scheduling of the festival. This involved booking individual musicians rather than bands, putting them together in various combinations to play themed concerts, often dream projects suggested by the musicians themselves, hence the Classic Jazz Party was born. Mike realised additional jazz brain power would be required to organise the kind of event he had in mind, so Keith got the call! The plan was to present a varied programme ranging from duos and trios through to twelve piece and larger ensembles, covering the classic jazz era, broadly 1920-1935. Sets featuring the music of well-loved favourites such as Louis, Jelly and Duke together with the music of often neglected bands and musicians would become the established format - Mike's original idea. Like-minded musicians from Europe, America and beyond were booked to appear, all specialists in playing early jazz styles. The first Classic Jazz Party was scheduled for November 2011. The initial planning meeting took place in January of that year to coincide with Keith's annual appearance with Dave Kerr's New Century Ragtime Orchestra at Caedmon

Hall in Gateshead. The meeting took place at our home in Newcastle. 32 musicians were booked and concert themes finalised. Sitting round the dining room table, it was quite a task to ensure musicians would be in the right place at the right time throughout the weekend.

I've been looking back at some of the concerts over the weekend of the first Party. McKinney's Cotton Pickers, Valaida Snow, John Kirby, the Rhythmic Eight, Bix, Benny Moten and a Hot Club set – that was for starters, plus Armstrong, Ellington, King Oliver and Clarence Williams. It was quite a programme. In the words of one fan. One of the best weekends of my life! Sitting in that room listening to the finest classic jazz in the world, I kept asking myself. 'Is this a dream?' Mike and Keith were already planning for 2012 before this first Party had finished... Red Nichols? Chick Webb? The Missourians? Jimmie Noone? Jack Teagarden? Benny Carter? Lovie Austin's Blues Serenaders? Red McKenzie? Eddie Lang and Lonnie Johnson? Andy Kirk? Charlie Johnson? There was a veritable treasure trove of classic jazz to be revisited.

Mike died suddenly in March 2013. Luckily, though, he and Keith had already discussed the programme for the next festival. Keith immediately assured me that we should continue with the event as planned. Subsequent festivals have been a major success, thanks to the efforts of a dedicated team. Frans Sjoström, Claus Jacobi and Michael McQuaid all came on board with Keith, and Jonathan Holmes has added invaluable IT expertise, along with youthful enthusiasm for the music. I will always cherish Keith's unstinting support after Mike died. I know Jazz Party regulars will have their own memories and stories of Keith on stage at the Village Hotel, his wonderful musicianship and his inexhaustible supply of jokes, often at the expense of his fellow musicians, and occasionally himself!

EFFORTLESS MASTERY

BRUCE ADAMS considers the legacy of EDDIE BLAIR.



The passing of Eddie Blair on Boxing Day made me evaluate his contribution to music from the early 1950's onwards.

Eddie's musical education was forged playing in Glasgow dance halls. Glasgow had more dance halls per square mile than any city on the planet. Before he came to London, Eddie had probably amassed ten years invaluable experience of working six nights

a week, playing every style of popular music.

This was going to come in useful.

I found the range of Eddie's achievements quite astounding. From arriving on the London scene as a replacement for Jimmy Deuchar with the John Dankworth Seven, itself no mean achievement, Eddie moved to the Ted Heath Band in 1954. When

the Heath band wound up regular concerts, it coincided with the expansion of the London session scene. Players like Eddie, Ronnie Hughes, Bobby Pratt and Roy Willox, to name just a few, were ideally situated to take their place in the many studio and TV sessions. Every light entertainment show had a band, even *The Sooty Show*.

It was the golden age for the best players.

Eddie thrived in this environment. He had a chameleon-like ability to blend seamlessly with his musical surroundings. Apart from his Dankworth and Heath tenures, he covered just about everything from George Chisholm's Gentlemen of Jazz to Joe Harriott and John Mayer's *Indo Jazz Suite*. He played the beautiful flugel solo on Bill Conti's *Take Me Home* from the Bond film, *For Your Eyes Only*. He featured on Johnny Keating's All Stars album alongside Bob Efford and on

the album *Johnny Keating plus 27 Men*. I actually had the privilege of playing Eddie's pad when this band made a rare appearance about 20 years ago. Eddie had retired by then, but Ronnie Hughes and Stan Reynolds were there from the original lineup. It wasn't an easy pad, but, when Eddie played, it sounded easy. The mark of a great player.

To quote Andre Previn, 'the two best places to do studio work were Los Angeles and London.'

Because of players like Eddie Blair, Derek Watkins, Tony Fisher, John Barclay, Derek Healy and Maurice Murphy and their ability to come up with the goods time after time, Hollywood came to London.

Sadly, because of the anonymity of studio work, a lot of Eddie's playing will go uncredited, but most of us will have heard and enjoyed his playing. He was most definitely the trumpeter's trumpeter.



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OUT OF TIME

DAVE BRUBECK's celebrated album, *Time Out*, is in the news again with a fascinating new perspective on such classics as *Take Five* and *Blue Rondo a la Turk*. RON SIMPSON investigates the story behind *Time OutTakes*, the first release on Brubeck Editions.

In December 2020 Dave Brubeck (who died in 2012) would have been 100 years old. Many celebrations were planned for his centenary year, though live performances inevitably fell victim to the coronavirus outbreak. However, two books on Dave Brubeck saw the light of day during the year: *Dave Brubeck: A Life in Time* by Philip Clark (reviewed in *Jazz Rag* 161) and *Dave Brubeck's Time Out* by Stephen Crist. Both of these writers, researching in the Brubeck archive, came across hitherto unknown outtakes from the ground-breaking 1959 album, *Time Out*. The Brubeck family has become deeply involved in the ensuing project, but Dave's pianist son Darius is emphatic that the credit goes to the academics, one in the UK and one in the States, for getting it all moving.

Family identity is crucial to the Brubecks. The detailed and helpful liner notes to *Time OutTakes* feature commentaries by no fewer than five Brubeck siblings, Darius, Chris, Dan, Cathy and Matt, and Darius' and Chris' wives are also involved in the project. Over the years Dave's musical collaboration with his sons was considerable. In the late 1970s, after the death of alto saxist Paul Desmond, the New Dave Brubeck Quartet included Darius on electric keyboard (as he wryly remarks, expecting a venue to come up with two grand pianos would have been a bit much), Chris on bass and trombone and Dan on drums. Chris and Dan also featured in other later versions of the quartet.

In the USA, the Brubeck Brothers Quartet with Chris and Dan Brubeck, Chuck Lamb (piano) and Mike DeMicco (guitar) has released five CDs and toured extensively for 20 years. In recent years the major musical output from the family in the UK has been Brubecks Play Brubeck, a quartet with Darius, Chris and Dan joined by Dave O'Higgins. Formed in 2010 to

celebrate Dave's 90th birthday and launched at Ronnie Scott's to coincide with the release of the Clint Eastwood/BBC movie, *In His Own Sweet Way*, the Brubecks' Quartet was still going strong when the world stopped early last year. A tour of Hong Kong was cancelled, but the band completed UK and European dates before Chris and Dan flew back home. Almost immediately all three brothers went down with coronavirus. Chris suffered a mild attack, but Darius in London and Dan in Vancouver were far more seriously affected. Darius was informed on admission to hospital that he had a 50-50 chance of survival and before he came out on the right side of the equation he endured 36 days in hospital, 25 of them in intensive care, and underwent a tracheotomy. Dan's case was equally dangerous.

Fortunately all have now recovered – apparently Dan has even been able to play a few gigs – and the *Time OutTakes* project proceeded unaffected. The obvious question to put to Darius and Chris is, 'Why is *Time Out* such a seminal album?'. Darius reckons, 'It's kind of circular – you don't realise what is going to be a hit album until it becomes one. To some extent it was the right thing at the right time.' However, he has no doubt that the album owes much to Dave's creative vision, not only in the concepts and the inspired use of different time signatures, but in the conviction that it would work, despite opposition from the record company, Columbia. They didn't want an album of originals in all sorts of weird times ('Why don't you play tunes from *My Fair Lady*?'). Darius' sardonic summary of their attitude), refused to finance the project properly or give it any initial hype and surrendered rights to Brubeck himself – his life and career were transformed.

Chris agrees with the 'right thing/right time' theory, but takes a more cosmic view:

'When a record comes along that's the right music with the right people at the right time, then that was destined to happen.'

It's the most important record in Brubeck's career, but is it Darius' and Chris' favourite album by their father? Darius is noncommittal:

'It's a matter of horses for courses. It all depends on the mood I'm in. I love the solo piano albums – perfect when I want to relax.'

Chris similarly holds to the view that he loves *Time Out*, but plenty else from the Brubeck oeuvre, too, including *Time Further Out*, which includes *It's a Raggy Waltz* which is generally regarded as a classic alongside the likes of *Take Five* and *Blue Rondo*. However, Chris clearly has a particular regard for *Bravo Brubeck*, the 1967 live session on a tour of Mexico with two Mexican musicians interacting with the quartet and introducing a new element from a different tradition into their improvisations.

Time OutTakes has different versions of the first five tracks from the original album, with one mis-spelling corrected. *Kathy's Waltz* is now, rightly, *Cathy's Waltz*. The error having been the fault of the record company, Cathy Brubeck for a time delighted in referring to Columbia Records. No alternative takes were available for *Pick Up Sticks* and *Everybody's Jumpin'* as they were achieved in single takes. Instead there are three 'new' tracks. *Watusi Jam* is an improvised trio performance (no Paul Desmond) which developed into *Pick Up Sticks* and the final track consists of banter between the band members, but the one I found most interesting is *I'm in a Dancing Mood*. It's a fine performance, with delightful interplay between different time signatures, and Columbia wanted standards, so why was it cut from the original album?

'Dave made a last-minute artistic decision,' says Darius. 'He realised he had an album of strong originals, so he decided it wouldn't fit in with that context.'

So how do the tracks on *Time OutTakes* differ from the versions we all know? Are they sufficiently different to justify this album on other grounds than just curiosity? Darius immediately turns to the iconic drum figure on *Take Five* (which he claims everyone can recognise in three seconds!) which is still recognisable, but tantalisingly different. In fact the full collection of outtakes, from which the album tracks have been taken, shows Joe Morello gradually evolving the familiar version. Chris similarly dwells on the variations in playing *5/4* that Morello went through, as he found unexpected difficulties with the rhythm, but also points out that these outtakes reveal that the famous piano vamp on *Take Five* was not a preconceived decision, but Dave's response to Joe and Eugene Wright 'drifting', to use Chris' word. So what was originally intended to hold the performance together became one of the most instantly recognisable musical phrases in jazz.

The track that shows most variation is *Blue Rondo a la Turk*, considerably longer than on *Time Out* with more improvised blues choruses added. Darius explains why he thinks it was not chosen for the original album:

'When there is a choice of takes most record producers will go for the shortest and, in the case of a new composition, the most polished in presenting something new.'

It seems logical to want to make clear the form of a new composition, but, from the perspective of over 60 years later, I much prefer the freer performance on the outtakes album. Darius agrees because of what he calls 'the integration of the head and the solos'.

Chris shares the view that the blues choruses are more interconnected with the rondo theme in this version.

Interestingly this preference is by no means unanimous in the Brubeck circle of family and friends. That, of course, is one of the joys of an album such as this, comparing versions of the same number, not on any objective ranking of quality, but on grounds of taste and context. Maybe the version of *Blue Rondo* which sounds so fresh and alive in 2021 would have made less impression on the listeners in 1959. Overall, it's fair to say that *Time OutTakes* sounds less studied than *Time Out* – as Darius puts it, more like the quartet in concert on the road.

Perhaps the most unusual feature on the album is the last track, billed as *Band Banter*, 4 ½ minutes of experiments, fluffs, changed decisions, comments and jokes. Obviously it helps to show how performances evolved: for me personally the biggest revelation of the outtakes album is that the Brubeck method was much less academic than I had imagined. For Chris, however, a particular pleasure is the 'fly on the wall' element of giving a real sense of what the musicians were like. There was, he says, a 'great friendship' within the group and it's good to enjoy again Paul Desmond's sardonic sense of humour and Brubeck's positivity as cheerleader for the quartet.

This friendship extended beyond the quartet to the next generation of family members. In the liner notes this theme recurs, with Chris going so far as to say that Gene Wright referred to him as his godson. It was a sad coincidence that the bassist died in the last days of 2020 at the age of 97. Chris identified him as a big influence:

'Though I play an electric fretless bass and he played an upright bass, I learned a lot from him, knowing what works and knowing what to expect. The bass in a sense is the most restricted instrument in the quartet or, to put it another way, the most supportive, what Gene called "holding the fort".'

When Gene Wright joined the quartet in 1958, it had more than musical significance. Even as late

as the mid-20th century, racially integrated groups were subject to considerable prejudice. The attempts of bookers and college authorities to cancel tours over an African American bassist, and Brubeck's successful refusal to be cowed, are now well known, and Chris told a nice story about the Reagan-Gorbachev summit in Moscow in 1988. By this time Chris was playing bass in the group, but, when Reagan invited them to join him in Moscow, Dave moved his son to trombone and brought back Gene Wright – and Chris is convinced that this was, at least partly, to wave the flag for integration, to make an impact in Russia.

Sadly Chris has no idea whether Eugene Wright heard *Time OutTakes*. He had been moved to a care home in the last two years and contact with the outside world was reduced by COVID-19. Chris sent him several copies to hear and to share, but was he well enough to play it and enjoy it? Who knows?

Time OutTakes provides Brubeck Editions with a fine first release, one that is as likely to appeal to new listeners as much as to Dave Brubeck aficionados who can look forward to a joyous time comparing versions and arguing over preferences. But what next? Is this a one-off or are Brubeck

Editions planning a whole series of hidden gems from 70 years of music? Darius Brubeck is cautious:

'We're testing the water with this. Without doubt *Time OutTakes* is the flagship recording, a great place to start. But we're only just learning to be in business – we've spent all our lives making music and leaving the business to other people. We're not attempting to take everything on ourselves. Verve has released *Lullabies*, a 2010 solo album which Dave Brubeck recorded while on vacation in Florida – he was reluctant to do it at first, but agreed to do just one take of each song!'

Chris calls this last solo piano recording of Dave's a beautiful and heartfelt example of Dave's musical wisdom and sensitivity.

The degree of family commitment to *Time OutTakes* is remarkable and has resulted in an immaculate production. What is certain is that there is no shortage of material for future Brubeck Editions releases. Chris makes the point that, though his father's deal with Columbia was not perfect, it had one extremely welcome feature: he kept control of his material. So now the family has access to the Columbia archives

and nothing stands in the way of future albums of outtakes and alternative takes. The Brubecks, who shared the stage with Dave for thousands of concerts, will be involved with all new Brubeck Editions releases every step of the way – from track selection to remixing and liner notes. And, says Chris, worldwide recordings of Dave Brubeck continue to surface. Recently, he received a communication from Australia from the son of an engineer on local radio who had taped the quartet in action. Meanwhile Darius points particularly to good quality live tapings of many European concerts.

It looks as if all those Brubeck completists out there will need to clear space on their shelves in the coming years.

www.davebrubeck.com



(l-r) Paul Desmond, Joe Morello, Eugene Wright, Dave Brubeck

FOR BRIAN LEMON...

DIGBY FAIRWEATHER explores the talents and personality of another great musician from a golden age of British jazz.



(l-r) Brian Lemon (centre, with Val Wiseman) and the Lady Sings the Blues band: (l-r) Jim Douglas, Len Skeat, Al Gay, Roy Williams, Digby Fairweather, Eddie Taylor

In the cool, cool cool of the lackadaisical lockdown Winter evenings when everybody in the jazz world is busy doing nothing (much), I pour myself a large brandy and think about our dear friend, the great jazz pianist Brian Lemon.

Brian loved brandy, and if you offered him a drink at whatever bar you'd conspired to belly-up, it would be his choice. 'Brandy, dear boy!' was his regular amicable return, eyes widening in the semi-slow motion that governed much of his body language and verbal mannerisms. 'but I'll leave the size to your discretion!' This for me regularly prompted the order of a double measure, but on one occasion (so I hear) his great friend and playing partner cornettist Warren Vache bought him a full pint of Courvoisier; a gesture which, no doubt, made those eyes open even wider, with the brief snort of appreciative laughter which greeted any such gesture.

I first became aware of Brian in the middle 1960s when it was plain that he was regularly at the centre of the music I loved best, the style that still hovers uncomfortably under the name of 'Dixieland' or maybe 'Swing'. Able equally to work with American masters such as so-called 'modernist' Milt Jackson (Brian held to himself the term 'master' as a supreme accolade), he somehow seemed to revert most happily to the kind of musical company that included fellow UK masters like Kenny Baker, George

Chisholm, Sandy Brown, Danny Moss and Dave Shepherd. One central connection was the red-hot cornetist Freddy Randall who, from the 1950s, had been one of my own formative jazz influences and loves on Parlophone records. Brian had come down from his hometown of Nottingham at just twenty years old to work with Freddy's band in 1956 and was regularly there when Randall chose, from time to time, to revisit the jazz scene; most notably in 1971/2 when it was Brian who crafted two exquisite albums for his old friend. The first of them, *Freddy Randall and his Famous Jazz Band*, recorded for the budget-label Rediffusion in 1971, framed him perfectly with simple but touching arrangements of both standards and decidedly non-Dixieland tunes like *Never No Lament* and *Gone with the Wind* amid stellar company including Dave Shepherd and Pete Strange. And one year later came the Randall-Shepherd All Stars, similarly recorded in-studio for Alan Bates' Black Lion label where, with Shepherd, Danny Moss, Dave Hewitt, Kenny Baldock and John Richardson, Brian's piano and pen provided more perfect settings including, as a final track, *River stay 'way from my door*. This headlong Dixieland fantasy dropped a choreographed quote from *Riverboat Shuffle* into the tune's bridge and a triumphant re-setting of *Old Father Thames* at the end and there was love in every note.

I first met Brian one Friday evening in (I think) 1973 at

the long-forgotten Dixieland pub-cum-cathedral The Mitre, south of the Blackwall Tunnel in East London. Monty Sunshine had pulled out of his gig and landlord Charlie, at six hours' notice, had given me Monty's considerable fee (around £36.00!) to put in a band of my own. Booking the great clarinetist Henry Mackenzie (from Ted Heath's orchestra) Sandy Brown sideman Tony Milliner, bassist Ron Russell – and Brian Lemon – may not have pleased Charlie who was used to a banjo and 'strict' Traditional music. But he paid up and that night I got to know Brian for the first time; he accepted a taxi-ride to Bromley-By-Bow station (to pick up the Central line back to his Ealing flat) and we talked, amongst other things about the great Tommy McQuater, his near neighbour. 'Tommy is a master,' he said gravely; the first – but not the last – time I would hear the word.

From then on I worked with Brian whenever I could and it was easy as we moved in many of the same circles; amongst them the great Alex Welsh Band #2 (when Alex was ill), Dave Shepherd's Sextet, Ron Russell's fine band and later, from 1987, Big Bear's jubilant celebration of Billie Holiday called *Lady Sings the Blues* starring Val Wiseman. So, as the years went by, I got to know – and rejoice in – my new friend as both man and musician. Slow of speech, admirably reluctant to offer criticism of fellow-players, and gently aristocratic

in conversation ('dear boy' was a favourite appellation), Brian's company was unleavened delight. I began to recognise and enjoy his trademark mannerisms (among them a measured raising of the right arm and forefinger to signify approval) and Alan Barnes remembers more. 'He would often introduce himself as "Lord Lemon of Ealing", usually followed by "I'm very rich, you know." I always thought that this fooled nobody until we were both playing in New York with Charlie Watts' Tentet. In a bar across the road I asked for a "large Brandy for Lord Lemon" and the staff were genuinely impressed. We had free drinks all night and the evening ended in us being photographed with a Korean rock band!'

Brian's supreme musical talents as much as his slow charming personal *mien* also made him an easy target for women admirers and there were plenty of them after his first marriage had come to an end. But sometimes, in his earlier years, these could also – however reprehensibly – be brief marriages of convenience. On one occasion after a late job at Dean Street's Pizza Express the indefatigable Dave Shepherd (who also held down a day job in Central London) had offered to run Brian home to Ealing before driving back east with me, and the three of us were joined by a female fan whose most beauteous days were far behind her. Brian followed her into her flat nonetheless while Dave and I waited in the car for a full half-hour. When Brian emerged to be greeted by our incredulous protestations Brian looked grave again. 'She runs a night-club, you know,' he said.

What Brian hardly ever talked about were his supreme pianistic abilities and in our conversations such references always turned up as incidental parentheses rather than exclamation points. One such was a tour with Benny Goodman's all-British band in the early 1970s. 'I was in the dressing-room,' said Brian. 'when the manager came in and said "Mr Goodman wants to see

you." I thought: am I in trouble? But when I went to see Benny he just said, "I thought you might fancy playing *Poor Butterfly*? So we played it as a duo!' Much later on he would record and tour internationally with Charlie Watts' bebop quintet. The leisurely recording sessions, unceasing flow of money and queues around every club and concert hall were all an eye-opener to Brian; he became close friends with Watts and regularly attended Rolling Stones concerts as a result. 'One day,' he told me, 'I was back in the hospitality area with Mick and Keith Richards who always brought his Dad to the concerts. Charlie saw Mr Richards at the bar, asked him if he'd like a drink and Mr Richards ordered a double brandy. Charlie said, "Be careful, Mr. Richards! Too many of those and you could end up looking like your son!"'

Such tales were told – again – in considered slow motion, eyebrows gently raised at the punch line to reveal wide humorous eyes. And Alan Barnes remembers more of them: notably at more than thirty recording sessions organized by Brian's longterm champion John Bune for his Zephyr label. 'Brian had a long drawn out way of telling a joke in the studio. He'd start telling one to Roy Williams and then perhaps Allan Ganley would walk in half way through. "Allan, you would enjoy this; I'm going to ask Roy's permission to start again!" We'd get nearly to the end and Dave Green would come in. "Dave you would enjoy this, I'm going to ask Roy and Allan's permission..." – and so on.' The albums, nonetheless are some of the best British (and American) jazz on record, but quite definitely on Brian's musical terms. Alan Barnes again. 'One time Andy Panayi had been asked to arrange Weather Report's *Birdland*. He responded with a superb chart, but it was not a tune that interested Brian. "Record that at the end,"

he said. When the time came the piano part had disappeared. I had a sudden memory of noticing a small fragment of manuscript floating in the toilet bowl of the studio!'

Like all of us Brian revered Roy Williams' playing. And once (on a distinguished jam session to celebrate the life of the late Don Lusher at London's Cadogan Hall in, I think, 2006) he explained the combination of Roy's gifts that had turned him into a player for the world stage. 'When Roy plays,' said Brian, 'the music settles.' Exactly right.

Later on in his career Brian and I worked together in the package show called *The Best of British Jazz* featuring Lusher and Roy Willox and previously led by the late great Kenny Baker. Despite the starry company this was never my most comfortable playing period. Replacing Baker was a tough job for any trumpeter, and his show had been a finely designed and fully routinized affair; similar at the time to my own Half Dozen on which I had lavished arrangements and most of my own private musical dreams. Sans Baker's musical choreography, however, the group disassembled into a none-too-remarkable jam session format using only a set of tired jazz standards, regularly trotted out for re-rehearsal before the show. This puzzled me until, one evening, Brian came to my rescue. 'Digby,' he said to me quietly, 'it's not a jazz band. You have to realize that. They can all play jazz – but that's all.' The dismal results were plain on our one and only recording at Abbey Road where the faults audibly stood out and nothing worked. By now too, Brian was drinking very heavily indeed and – to make matters worse – he was to fall out with our (admittedly prissy) producer who encouraged us, at one point, to 'put more energy into it!' Brian's

blunt response led to the request by our producer that he be dismissed from the session half way through and his replacement was Brian Dee. Indeed the now decidedly mis-named BOBJ would be one of his final career stages, and for some reason our late shows at the great Concorde Club down at Eastleigh proved a milestone to his final nemesis. On two concerts at least we found ourselves pianoless after he would leave the stage unable to complete the session. And on the second time (so I was told) his heart had briefly arrested and he was only saved by his final faithful and loving partner Susan Lord who looked after him until the end.

When did Brian's decline begin? I believe it was after his beloved mother died in Nottingham; the chance came to buy her (and his) old home at advantageous cost and Brian took out a mortgage. Then, very sadly, the deal fell through but Brian kept the loan, buying a new grand piano, cigarettes and more brandy. As his jazz work gradually declined over the years, debts and rent became harder to pay, drinking accelerated and in the last years

chronic osteoarthritis fused his fingers together, forcing him, in the end, to play (what was still very convincing) 'one finger piano' with his right hand. After his career was over Brian came to hear me in Kent with my quartet and with Ron Russell's band, lifting his pint with both hands, and at last he was in a wheelchair. But we carried on corresponding, notably when we found a treasure trove of jazz reissues on a budget label. I sent several down to his last home with Susan in Bexhill but the last of them – a double album of Art Tatum solos – arrived too late.

I'm sorry, Brian. I wish there was more space here to tell everyone about your generosity (the sending of tapes of great jazz music to share with friends); the intense late-night conversations across the Pizza Express tables with friends to discuss those jazz 'masters' like Louis, Teagarden and Prez; the fun and the laughter – and of course the music-making too. All we can (all) say is 'thank you'.

With special thanks to Alan Barnes.

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Val Wiseman has her own memories of Brian from his time with *Lady Sings the Blues*, her Billie Holiday tribute.

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

THE STATE OF SONG

RON SIMPSON wonders what American states governments have against jazz.

What makes New Jersey unique? Well, it's the only one of the United States not to have a state song. What went wrong, one wonders? Didn't Hoboken's finest, Frank Sinatra, produce anything up to standard? Or surely Newark's Rutgers University's Jazz Archive could have suggested something!

Seriously, it's quite impressive to find how many official state songs draw on country or folk or popular music. John Denver figures twice: *Rocky Mountain High* (Colorado) and *Take Me Home Country Roads* (West Virginia). Kentucky has a great pairing, Stephen Foster's *My Old Kentucky Home* and the state's bluegrass song, Bill Monroe's classic *Blue Moon of Kentucky*. Ohio comes up with *Hang On, Sloopy*, Woody Guthrie figures for Washington State, his son Arlo for Massachusetts. Some states take these things very seriously. New Mexico's long list includes a state song in Spanish, as it should, but also a bi-lingual one (for those who are not sure what they identify as?). Tennessee wins numerically with 10 state songs and also qualitatively with the beautiful *Tennessee Waltz* (Felice and Boudleaux Bryant also on its list). Oklahoma, of course, plumped for the obvious!

But where is the jazz? Louisiana could surely have found room for Joe Darenbourg, though the state's choice is beyond reproach, *You Are My Sunshine*, a terrific song reputedly written by a future Governor of the state, Jimmie Davis. Where are *Indiana, I'm Coming Virginia* and *Pennsylvania 65000* (sorry, that's a phone number)? Is *Mississippi*

Mud disqualified by being about the river, rather than the state?

At this point Indignant of Atlanta will be about to pen a furious letter to the effect that his state has a state song written by Hoagy Carmichael at the prompting of Frank Trumbauer and first recorded by Hoagy with Bix Beiderbecke. *Georgia* even gave its name to a band in the 1930s led by Britain's first major jazz star, Nat Gonella's Georgians, following his hit recording of the song with Lew Stone's band. Pretty impressive jazz credentials, but it is specifically the version by Ray Charles (born in Georgia) of the song by Indiana-born Hoagy Carmichael that has been adopted by the state – a great version, but still the jazz tally stands at nil!

There is, however, one tune intermittently popular as a jazz vehicle which has a claim to being, in some ways, the most bizarre of state songs. If you take a stroll through Youtube, you'll find no shortage of versions of *Maryland My Maryland* by traditional jazz bands of various levels of competence. The jazz-inflected multi-strain version works very well, though clearly it was not originally a jazz piece. What is intriguing is that the same sturdy melody does service for at least three very different pieces, the other two the German carol *O Tannenbaum* and the Communist anthem *The Red Flag*.

In an idle moment I decided to find out which of these is the original. The answer, not surprisingly, is none of them. More surprisingly, the tune dates

back to 1615, a Latin hymn by Melchior Franck called *Lauriger Horatius*, but the real surprise comes with the words of *Maryland My Maryland*.

In 1861 Maryland, poised between North and South, was debating whether to secede from the Union. In the end the state remained loyal, but there was plenty of pro-Southern sentiment there and, when Northern troops marched through Baltimore, riots took place with some fatalities. Immediately a Confederate sympathiser, James Ryder Randall, penned a longish poem calling on Maryland to rally to the Southern cause and soon Randall's words and Franck's melody proved made for each other.

The words are fair enough, I suppose, when written with war imminent by a man who lost a close friend in the Baltimore riots, but it's incredible that Maryland adopted it as the official state song in 1939 with words unchanged. These words describe Abraham Lincoln as a tyrant, a despot and a vandal, refer to 'Northern scum' and use the phrase, *sic semper tyrannis*, that four years later Marylander John Wilkes Booth shouted when he assassinated Lincoln. Let's face it, Lincoln is the last person to be vilified: even the former President, Donald Trump, not a man to deflect honour from himself, conceded that Lincoln might have done more for African Americans than he had!

At various times between 1974 and 2019 Maryland's General Assembly considered motions to replace the song or modify the words, but nothing

changed. When Covid-19 closed proceedings, the General Assembly was about to examine it again. It amazes me that, at a time when a Confederate flag in the Capitol shocks the nation and moves against statues of Confederate generals are not uncommon, just over the state line from the District of Columbia proud Marylanders have official state backing for singing about Lincoln as a tyrant!

There is a problem with songs of the Old South, but Florida modified the lyrics of *Old Folks at Home* and Virginia retired *Carry Me Back to Old Virginny* in 1997 – too much about 'this old darkey' and 'old massa', definitely out of touch with today's attitudes, but to my mind a sentimental song written by a black man, James A. Bland, in 1879 is less offensive than one calling for armed insurrection to preserve a slave society. How can Maryland continue to recognise it?

Mind you, *Maryland My Maryland* is a rousing tune and I guess that's what Kid Ory latched onto in 1945 when his Creole Jazz Band recorded it – so rousing, in fact, that it also serves for *Michigan My Michigan*, *Florida My Florida* and *The Song of Iowa*!

Incidentally, if you're ever in the American overseas territory of the Northern Mariana Islands, you'd better brush up on the words of *Gi Talo Gi Halom Tasi*!

Jazz Rag would be delighted to hear from any readers with suggestions for suitable jazz tunes for state songs – or, indeed, to tell us they've found a jazz version of *Gi Talo Gi Halom Tasi*.



Ray Charles



Nat Gonella

JEFF CLAYTON AND OTHERS

PETER VACHER pays tribute to one of jazz's great all-rounders.

We're gradually getting used to a new kind of jazz musician these days. Where once session musicians in London more or less held their noses as they took on some trivial jingle or pop accompaniment job, in effect taking the money and running, and then made for the Bull's Head in Barnes to assuage their guilt and play some 'proper' jazz, today's players seem altogether less pompous or purist in their musical dispositions.

It's telling to consider the impact of someone like the late pianist and educator Keith Nichols (who died on 21 January) on today's RAM students. As Richard Pite put it in his Nichols obituary for *London Jazz News*, 'Keith introduced many young [RAM] players to a treasure trove that they had, in many cases, never explored or heard before.... in the UK today there are many young players who are well versed in all the various periods and styles.' This was illustrated recently for me on hearing the Ronnie Scott's All-Stars tackling *Just A Closer Walk With Thee* as an exemplar of New Orleans jazz, on a festival live-stream. Listening to trumpeter Freddie Gavita, an RAM graduate, playing the stately melody carefully but with feeling, and then to further reflect on his mastery of the bebop lexicon in Alex Webb's band or to hark back to his contemporary quartet handling modal originals, is to recognize the relevance of Pite's words. Gavita can do it all. And excel. Across the styles and across the genres, with no hint of parody or disparagement.

Which, somewhat long-windedly, brings me to another open-minded all-rounder, the exceptional Los Angeles-based US alto saxophonist Jeff Clayton who succumbed to kidney cancer in his home town on December 16. He was 65. Thomas Owens in the *New Grove Dictionary of Jazz* described Jeff as 'one of the finest alto saxophone soloists of his generation', lauding his tone, intonation and technique. He might have added that Jeff played all the saxophones, all the clarinets, all the flutes and other assorted woodwinds too. Having

him heard him live and also on record, I can only concur with Grove's assessment: Clayton was the real deal.

For all that, it's hard to cite Jeff without mentioning John, that's to say his bassist brother John Clayton, his elder by some years and arguably the more prominent of the two, known for his six-year period with Count Basie and celebrated now as a composer and arranger. Unsurprisingly perhaps, the brothers Clayton formed a big band with drummer Jeff Hamilton as their co-partner back in 1985, and it may be that the activities and multiple recordings of the Clayton-Hamilton Orchestra are Jeff Clayton's most considerable legacy. Their quintet, founded in 1977, is also noteworthy, even more so once John's talented son, pianist Gerald Clayton, joined them.

Jeff was born in Venice, California, on 16 February 1955, one of a family of seven, and grew up in LA, where his mother was a pianist, organist and church choir director, who encouraged her sons to pursue music. If Cannonball Adderley was Jeff's first inspiration, his teenage inclinations were also fuelled by a diet of gospel music, Motown and soul. When I met him for an interview in November 1993 while he was here on a short solo tour, he was keen to praise his first clarinet teacher, the much-respected multi-reedman Bill Green (who has since died) in these terms, 'He's a very upbeat, positive man who plays just about every woodwind on the face of the earth. I would pass by his studio after a gig of mine and the lights would be on at 2.00am. I'd stop and he'd run to the door and open it with a piccolo in his hand and he'd say, "Jeff, I've been practising that note for an hour and it sounds good, doesn't it?"'

When Clayton enrolled at California State University - Northridge in 1973, he opted to concentrate on clarinet, before adding oboe and cor anglais, doubtless influenced by Green, and was then lured by Stevie Wonder in 1976 to join his band,

staying for three years. This was followed by a multiplicity of other touring and recording jobs with acts like Willie Bobo, Earth, Wind & Fire, Kenny Rogers, The Temptations, Patti Labelle, Gladys Knight and the Pips, 'Always on the road, moving around and in the studio cutting albums,' he said.

'Then disco came in and I did that. I saw myself as a studio musician which was great at the time, but after doing it for a while it has its limitations.' Working as what commentator Michael J. West called 'a journeyman reeds player', he handled studio assignments for Madonna (a Grammy nomination), Natalie Cole and Whitney Houston, Tony Bennett too, and was on call to work with Ray Charles, Ella Fitzgerald, Lena Horne, Lionel Hampton and sundry local big bands whenever needed. That is until 'the studio jobs no longer rang my bell as a musician and I looked to jazz in my search for a new frontier.'

This took him to the Basie Orchestra from 1984 to 1986, alongside brother John, first under the boss himself and then Thad Jones, and to tour and record with Frank Sinatra in 1987 and travel across the world in first class style with the all-star Philip Morris Super Band in the early 1990s, appearing unforgettably at the Albert Hall in London in October 1991 with BB King and Dianne Reeves. Add to this a heavy commitment to teaching – he was made an adjunct professor at UCLA in 1998.

I recall him as a vital and energetic soloist, with an engaging personality, his playing still infused with something of Adderley's fervency, but here's what LA's top writer Kirk Silsbee said of Jeff: 'He can charm you with a ballad, take you into the alley with a blues, pin your ears back on a bopper, and do it all with an unassuming virtuosity.' A sad loss, for sure.



Peter Vacher Collection

THE JAZZ CLASS OF 1921

by Scott Yanow



Humphrey Lyttelton

In 1921, the destructive flu epidemic of 1918-19 was receding into history and would rarely be written about again until the recent one. The Roaring Twenties were underway and the era would soon be dubbed 'The Jazz Age'.

While King Oliver, Jelly Roll Morton, Bessie Smith, Sidney Bechet and Louis Armstrong were all active, like most African-American jazz artists, they had yet to make their recording debut and had to wait until 1923. In fact, despite the great popularity of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band back in 1917, there was a lot less jazz recorded in 1921 than one might expect. Mamie Smith was riding high from the unexpected success of *Crazy Blues*, leading to the beginning of the blues craze that resulted in scores of female singers getting a chance to make a session or two.

Otherwise, among those who recorded in 1921 were Paul Whiteman, the Happy Six, the Piccadilly Four, Ted Lewis, the Benson Orchestra of Chicago, Jack Hylton, Eubie Blake, Ladd's Black Aces (a fine white group with trumpeter Phil Napoleon), Johnny Dunn, and, most importantly, pianist James P. Johnson who waxed his first version of *Carolina Shout*.

However, all of that is quite irrelevant since this article celebrates the centennial of the jazz greats who happened to be born in 1921, none of whom had anything to do with the jazz scene of the 1920s. They were old enough to be part of the last years of the swing era before having to make the choice whether to become part of the modern jazz/bebop scene of the mid-to-late 1940s or become a more traditional player.

Many made their biggest impact in the 1950s and some made it into the 21st century, although sadly none are still with us. Incidentally singer Louise Tobin (born in 1918 and now 102) has the distinction of being the only jazz artist to record before 1940 (in 1939 with Benny Goodman) who is still alive.

The 30-piece Class Of 1921 Big Band consists of four trumpeters, two trombonists, the master of the french horn, five saxophonists and a clarinetist, five guitarists, three pianists, two bassists, two drummers, a percussionist, two singers, an arranger, and a genial host who could play piano when called upon.

So with apologies to those who did not make it (most notably pianists Tony Aless and Marty Napoleon), here is the Jazz Class of 2021.

Humphrey Lyttelton (1921-2008) – Arguably the United Kingdom's most important trumpeter-bandleader starting in the late 1940s, Lyttelton had the premier classic jazz band of the early 1950s, angering some of his fans by switching to mainstream swing later in the decade but always retaining the ability to play early jazz through his many decades of performing. He was also a noted broadcaster, cartoonist, calligrapher, and the host of the radio game show *I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue*.

Freddy Randall (1921-1999) – A top British Dixieland and trad/jazz trumpeter in the 1950s, Randall survived a lung problem that knocked him out of action during 1959-63, making a full comeback and many rewarding recordings.

John Anderson (1921-1974) – A fine West Coast jazz trumpeter who is largely forgotten today, Anderson worked with Stan Kenton, Count Basie (1959-60), Buddy Collette, and Benny Carter in addition to appearing on many early R&B records.

Ernie Royal (1921-1983) – A superb lead trumpeter, Royal was also an inventive if infrequent soloist. He worked with nearly every significant big band of the 1950s and '60s and was a valuable studio musician for decades.

Jimmy Henderson (1921-1998) – The trombone section of the 1921 band is a bit weak in the solo department. Jimmy Henderson was a valuable section player who worked with the big bands of Hal McIntyre, Jimmy Dorsey, Tommy Dorsey and even Lawrence Welk before

leading his own orchestra during 1960-75 and the Glenn Miller ghost band in the 1970s.

Warren Covington (1921-1999) – Another big band trombonist, Covington worked with Les Brown and Gene Krupa. During 1957-61 he led the first Tommy Dorsey ghost band, having a million-seller with *Tea For Two Cha Cha*.

Julius Watkins (1921-1977) – Among the very first jazz French horn soloists, Watkins was a virtuoso who recorded with everyone from Babs Gonzales and Thelonious Monk to John Coltrane, Freddie Hubbard, Charles Mingus and Gil Evans. He co-led the Les Jazz Modes with Charlie Rouse (1956-59) and toured with the Quincy Jones Big Band (1959-61).

Tony Scott (1921-2007) – A bebop clarinetist with a cool tone (check out his playing in 1950 with Sarah Vaughan on *Ain't Misbehavin'*), Scott had a more laidback style than Buddy DeFranco. Always going his own way, after appearing on many rewarding recordings in the 1950s, he left both jazz and the US to become a world traveller who played folk music from other cultures, occasionally reappearing in the jazz world.

Buddy Collette (1921-2010) – A Los Angeles-based reed master who was a pioneering jazz flautist and could play any reed (in the 1921 band he is on alto and flute), Collette was an original member of the Chico Hamilton Quintet and appeared on a countless number of studio sessions.



Julius Watkins



Wardell Gray

Norris Turney (1921-2001) – While Turney was in the Billy Eckstine Orchestra as early as 1945, he found his greatest fame as Jimmy Hamilton's successor with the Duke Ellington Orchestra (1969-73), playing alto, flute and tenor.

Wardell Gray (1921-1955) – Everyone loved Gray's swinging tenor playing including such employers as Benny Goodman, Count Basie, Charlie Parker and Benny Carter. Annie Ross made his *Twisted* solo famous and Gray's tenor battles with Dexter Gordon (including *The Chase*) are still legendary.

Hans Koller (1921-2003) – The Austrian tenor-saxophonist was based in Germany during his prime years, holding his own with top American players in the 1950s and '60s including Dizzy Gillespie, Lee Konitz, Benny Goodman, Wes Montgomery and Oscar Pettiford, also performing with Stan Kenton's orchestra.

Jimmy Giuffre (1921-2008) – Originally a bebopper who composed *Four Brothers* and was a member of the Lighthouse All Stars, Giuffre (on baritone with the 1921 band but also skilled on clarinet and tenor) formed the Jimmy Giuffre 3 in 1957. They had a hit with *The Train and the River*, became a pianoless and bassless trio with Jim Hall and Bob Brookmeyer, and eventually evolved into a thoughtful free jazz group with Paul Bley and Steve Swallow. Giuffre never played it safe.

George Barnes (1921-1977) – Five guitarists is a bit excessive, even in a big band, but none of these five should be left out. Barnes, who played an electrified guitar as early as 1931, was the first electric guitarist to record, on March 1, 1938. He was a solid swing player throughout his long and busy career.

Tal Farlow (1921-98) – When it came to playing uptempo bebop, few guitarists could sound as relaxed, fluent and flawless as Farlow, even at raging tempos. A brilliant soloist in the 1950s, in the next decade Farlow adopted a much lower profile, preferring to work as a sign painter and a part-time player in New Jersey before returning more regularly to the jazz scene.

Mary Osborne (1921-92) – Highly rated in the 1940s when she displayed the ability to play both bop and swing (and, unknown to many, also recorded as a singer), Osborne spent many years semi-retired in Bakersfield, but impressed every listener during her occasional returns and all-too-rare recordings.

Herb Ellis (1921-2010) – While he was part of the popular Soft Winds in the late 1940s, toured with Ella Fitzgerald, and recorded worthy albums of his own, Ellis will always be most famous as the guitarist with the Oscar Peterson Trio of 1953-58.

Bill DeArango (1921-2005) – DeArango created a stir during 1945-47 when his adventurous guitar playing was quite original and even avant-garde, standing apart from that of his contemporaries; check out his small-group session with Dizzy Gillespie from 1946. DeArango cut short any chance of fame by moving permanently to Cleveland in 1947 where he taught guitar and ran a music store.

Erroll Garner (1921-1977) – The lovable pianist (influenced by Art Tatum and Earl Hines) always had his own sound and rarely looked at the piano when he played, letting the music run through him. He was popular for decades simply by playing in his own distinctive style.

Billy Taylor (1921-2010) – Jazz has never had a better spokesman than the distinguished yet down-to-earth Taylor, but one should never overlook his versatile and always swinging piano playing.

John Bunch (1921-2010) – Bunch was so consistent during his 55 year career that he was often taken for granted, but the swing pianist was loved by older artists (Woody Herman, Gene Krupa, Rex Stewart, Buddy Rich, and Benny Goodman) and the later generation of swing greats (Warren Vache, Scott Hamilton, and Howard Alden) alike.

Harry Babasin (1921-88) – A solid West Coast jazz bassist who later ran the Jazz Chronicles label, Babasin was also jazz's first cello soloist, recording solos with Dodo Marmarosa back in 1947.

Monk Montgomery (1921-82) – Wes' older brother, Monk Montgomery was the first electric bassist to record. Amazingly, he did not even start on the string bass until he was 30, switching to electric bass the following year and recording with Art Farmer in 1953. He toured with Lionel Hampton, was a co-leader of the Mastersounds with his brother pianist-vibist Buddy Montgomery, and worked with many groups in the Los Angeles area.

Chico Hamilton (1921-2013) – Drummer with the original Gerry Mulligan pianoless quartet, Hamilton led his own innovative cool jazz group, the Chico Hamilton Quintet, which featured cellist Fred Katz and such reed players as Buddy Collette, Paul Horn, Eric Dolphy and Charles Lloyd. A subtle and inventive drummer, Hamilton led groups into his nineties.

Johnny Otis (1921-2012) – While best-known for his work in rhythm and blues as a bandleader, talent scout and record producer, Otis was also a fine jazz drummer and vibraphonist who loved Count Basie's band. In the mid-1940s, Otis recorded with Illinois Jacquet and Lester Young and his own bands often utilized jazz musicians.

Candido (1921-2020) – The masterful Cuban percussionist

(who missed his 100th birthday by 5 1/2 months) was the first to tune his congas and he pioneered the use of several congas; before that, percussionists only used one at a time. In his long career he worked with such notables as Machito, Dizzy Gillespie, Billy Taylor, Stan Kenton, Gene Ammons, Erroll Garner, Randy Weston, and Jane Bunnett.

Chico O'Farrill (1921-2001) – From Cuba and originally a trumpeter, O'Farrill moved to the U.S. in 1948, arranged for Benny Goodman, Stan Kenton, Machito (*The Afro-Cuban Jazz Suite*), Art Farmer, Count Basie, and Clark Terry, and led his own big band during 1995-2001.

Jon Hendricks (1921-2017) – The genius of vocalese, Hendricks' abilities as a lyricist (often writing lyrics to recorded solos) and a scat-singer, along with his personality and general philosophy, made him one of the hippest people in the world. Famous for being in Lambert, Hendricks and Ross during 1957-63, Hendricks had a long and successful solo career during his last five decades.

Connie Haines (1921-2008) – While not a jazz vocalist, Connie Haines sang swing songs well with Harry James and Tommy Dorsey and had a busy solo career as a middle-of-the-road pop singer.

Steve Allen (1921-2000) – Famous as a talk show host (including the original *Tonight Show*) and ad-libbing comedian, Allen always loved jazz and featured jazz musicians on his shows, including Terry Gibbs (who was often his bandleader), Art Tatum, Lester Young and Miles Davis. Allen also played pretty decent piano, recorded occasional jazz albums, and wrote over 8,500 songs (only *This Could Be the Start of Something Big* caught on). He would definitely love being the leader and emcee of the 1921 Big Band.

Scott Yanow, who was not born in 1921, has enjoyed an infinite number of jazz recordings made since that time. He can be reached for liner notes, bios, press releases and other interesting assignments at scottyanowjazz@yahoo.com.

CD REVIEWS



DON RENDELL/IAN CARR QUINTET

BBC JAZZ CLUB 1965-66

Rhythm and Blues Records
RANDB 064 79:52

First off, I have to declare an interest in this release, having penned its booklet notes. That said (or rather written), I have nothing else vested here save an urge to tell fans of this band – which has attracted a near-cult following in recent years – to go and buy this album.

Comprising material originally broadcast by the BBC in 1965 (*It's Jazz*) and 1966 (*Jazz Club*), some of it familiar from the group's contemporary Columbia albums, much of it, however, previously obscure, it documents the Rubicon-crossing that was pianist Colin Purbrook's replacement by Michael Garrick.

The earlier band was still somewhat stymied by the fashions and rules of hard bop and consequently their tracks have a Jazz Messengers/Horace Silver/Fifties Miles vibe to them.

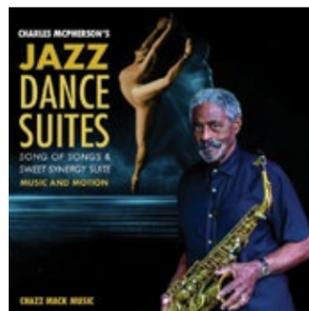
Garrick's entry into the quintet in early 1965 heralded a more general change of direction; with his wild inventions, a loose rhythm section of Dave Green and Trevor Tomkins echoing Ron Carter and Tony Williams, and both the veteran Rendell and the younger Carr playing with increasing abandon, this created a new brand of home-grown post-bop, one as likely to draw on literary inspiration as it was jazz trends.

The two 1966 shows heard here are vital stuff; hard driving themes like *Hot Rod* and *Torrent* contrasting with more pastoral-sounding pieces (Carr's

pretty *Les Neiges d'Antan*), the latter revealing how a unit originally patterned on jazz convention actually found its feet through embracing more personal interests.

An essential (and generously-timed) side-bar to the main action of the Rendell/Carr studio discs, then. Oh, and if you do get a moment to read those sleeve notes...

SIMON SPILLETT



CHARLES MCPHERSON

JAZZ DANCE SUITES

Chazz Mack Music 68:04

In December 2019 Charles McPherson went into New Jersey's Van Gelder Studios to record music written for the ballet. The alto saxophonist's bebop lineage is well known, his work for ballet perhaps less so. *Jazz Dance Suites* comprises three sections - two dance suites and one composition from a suite with protest music at its heart.

Song of Songs, McPherson's third suite written for the San Diego Ballet, opens the album. Comprising eight tracks, the work is inspired by the Old Testament book of *Song of Solomon*. The composer is at pains to point out that it isn't a musical representation of the text, instead it is a collection of impressions. The suite opens with *Love Dance* and its musical themes recur throughout its 29 minutes' playing time.

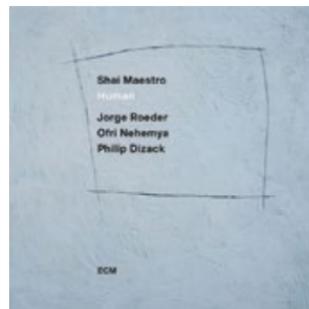
Reflection on an Election is McPherson's response to the outcome of the 2016 US presidential election. At just over six minutes, the composition stylistically draws on Johnny Hodges and McPherson's one time employer Charles Mingus. One can safely assume

the composer is delighted at the outcome of the recent US election!

Sweet Synergy Suite, McPherson's first work composed for the San Diego Ballet, closes the album. This is McPherson at his best. Spanning 33 minutes, its six tracks embrace bop, swing, small group improvisation and top flight solos from McPherson, trumpeter Terrell Stafford and pianists Jeb Patton and Randy Porter.

It shouldn't be forgotten that the music heard on this album was commissioned by a dance company. As it happens, the composer's daughter, Camille, is a dancer with San Diego Ballet. On the CD cover a justly proud Charles McPherson has written the words: inspired by & dedicated to Camille McPherson.

RUSSELL CORBETT



SHAI MAESTRO

HUMAN

ECM 2688 089 0670 56:18

In 2018 Israeli pianist Shai Maestro recorded a first trio album for ECM. This follow up CD, recorded pre-pandemic in February last year in the south of France, features his regular bass and drums bandmates Jorge Roeder and Ofri Nehemya.

The trio, augmented by New York based trumpeter Philip Dizack, interprets ten of Maestro's compositions alongside an inventive take on Ellington's *In a Sentimental Mood*. Sensitivity and subtlety are hallmarks of

Maestro's playing and his fellow musicians respond empathetically.

The title track *Human* and *Hank and Charlie* (dedicated to Hank Jones and Charlie Haden), bristling with gospel and spiritual

overtones, are high points across some 56 minutes' worth of material.

RUSSELL CORBETT



THE ROYAL BOPSTERS

PARTY OF FOUR

Motema MTM 0372: 58.42

It's not difficult to tell where the Royal Bopsters are coming from. Their first album featured guest appearances from five of their inspirations: Mark Murphy, Bob Dorough, Jon Hendricks, Annie Ross and Sheila Jordan. You're looking at high quality harmony singing, ingenious vocalese and scat delivered with precision and apparent ease, challenging arrangements and (at times) an exuberant sense of fun.

Sadly *Party of Four* is the final album for Holli Ross, the Bopsters' well-respected alto singer, who died in 2020: the album was recorded between 2017 and 2019. Appropriately enough the opener, *But Not for Me*, features her additional lyrics to Ira Gershwin's classic original. Exploding into the glorious verse at the start, the Bopsters go on to base their solos on a Chet Baker recording. Through the album all four singers are part of the creative process. Amy London and Dylan Pramuk also contribute lyrics, the sparky arrangements are nearly all by Pramuk and Pete McGuinness.

The album ends as it begins, with an uptempo high octane take on a classic song, *My Shining Hour*, but there's plenty of variety en route. Pramuk's beautiful ballad, *How I Love You*, is a wonderful fusion of the unlikely: an adaptation of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's sonnet and a vocalese on Dexter Gordon's solo on *I Love You For Sentimental Reasons*. Ross's version of Tito Puente's *Cuando te Vea* is a wild mambo with terrific work in the engine

room from guest musicians Christian McBride and Steve Kroon. The spirit of Lambert, Hendricks and Ross keeps watch over the Basie-like *Rusty Dusty Blues*. Two of the guests from the first album return, both ending in laughter: Sheila Jordan and, in one of his last recordings, witty as ever, Bob Dorough. And it would be unreasonable not to mention the excellent accompanying trio: Steve Schmidt, Cameron Brown and Steve Williams.

RON SIMPSON



JOHN HELLIWELL

EVER OPEN DOOR

Challenge Records 73:50

Saxophonist John Helliwell is perhaps best known for his work with pop-rock band Supertramp. A post-WWII Yorkshire childhood brought piano and recorder lessons, but it wasn't until Helliwell spent his savings on a clarinet that the die was cast.

In his early teens the future rock musician performed with Todmorden Symphony Orchestra. In 1973, now playing tenor saxophone, Helliwell joined Supertramp. Ten of millions of album sales later, 2020 saw the release of a solo recording project, *Ever Open Door*.

The principal voices are Helliwell, tenor saxophone and clarinet, and John Ellis, Hammond organ, accompanied by the Singh String Quartet. Twelve compositions, described by Helliwell as 'tear-jerkers', plus two bonus tracks run to a playing time of almost seventy four minutes.

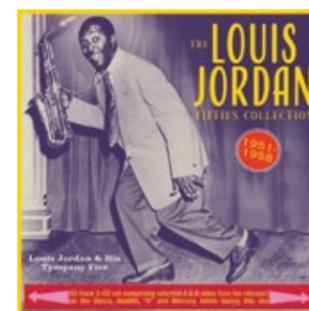
The instrumentation could, perhaps, suggest a blowing session. Cannonball Adderley and Sonny Rollins are stated favourites of a youthful Helliwell. However, if there is such a beast

as the typical *Jazz Rag* reader, the jazz content will be considered to be minimal.

If Everyone Was Listening, written by Supertramp's Roger Hodgson, opens the recording. Other numbers are credited to Peter Gabriel and another Supertramp colleague, Mark Hart.

Fran Landesman's *The Ballad of the Sad Young Men* and Victor Young's *Father O'Shea* make the cut as the album's two bonus tracks but the inclusion of George Butterworth's setting of AE Housman's *The Lads in Their Hundreds* reaffirms the view that this Challenge Records' CD will be of considerably more interest to the classical/folk aficionado than the 52nd Street/Frith Street jazz fan.

RUSSELL CORBETT

LOUIS JORDAN
THE FIFTIES COLLECTION
1951-58Acrobat ADDCD3353 2 CDs
71.44 / 71.48

Following the success of the West End show *Five Guys Named Moe*, there was a rash of Jordan reissues; after all, the interest aroused by his music in that show made it a given. Now comes this new compilation, a double-CD special from the enterprising Acrobat people. This time the premise is to look beyond Jordan's 1940s hits and to see what he was up to in the following decade. As is their wont, there is a substantial booklet essay by label producer Paul Watts and it follows on a pair of earlier Acrobat releases covering Jordan's hit-making years.

In effect, Jordan had run out of hits at the onset of the 1950s, but that certainly didn't reduce his appeal or diminish his desire to tour. Or record. Jordan-wise, there's everything here, comedy

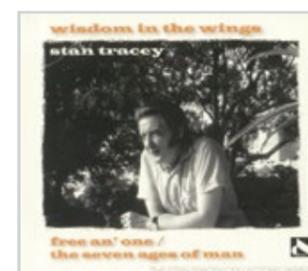


The Royal Bopsters

numbers using West Indian patois, ballads sung in Billy Eckstine style, a whole raft of stirring big band tracks, much in the manner of Buddy Johnson with Wild Bill Davis on organ, Jordan's buzzy alto popping in-out, strong blues vocals, where he phrases like a lighter-toned Jimmy Rushing, novelties, and swingy, down-home combo R&B.

With 52 tracks spread over the two CDs, assembled in chronological order, this provides a fascinating picture of the ever-hopeful Jordan chasing the public's attention by releasing singles, first on Decca, then Aladdin, as he tries to stay in tune with the vagaries of popular taste. Thoroughly recommended to those who want to know what came after *Choo Choo Ch-Boogie* (which he revives here with a 1956 studio band) and the rest.

PETER VACHER



STAN TRACEY

WISDOM IN THE WINGS

RSJ114 2 CDs 46.13/36.69

He was like no-one else. The aptly named Godfather of British Jazz was shamefully neglected during his life, spending many years as house pianist at Ronnie

Scott's where his unique talents were not always appreciated, especially financially. Although the sax colossus Sonny Rollins did once ask the audience, 'Do you know how good this guy is?'

This 2 for 1 CD places the pianist in two different settings, quartet and big band. They are re-issues from 50 years ago when they were first released. Ronnie Scott might have said, 'not released - escaped'. Stan had the misfortune of seeing his albums withdrawn, very shortly after release, record companies citing 'lack of interest'.

Stan was a musician very far ahead of his time, too quirky for the popular taste, although his fellow musicians always held him the highest regard. He, unhesitatingly, named Monk and Ellington as his influences and clung tenaciously to these sources for his inspiration.

What impacts immediately on listening to these tracks, is the huge energy his groups projected - sheets of sound comes to mind. *The Free in One* session features alto saxist Peter King, a player of galactic powers and, together with Stan, one of the great, though undervalued, names in jazz (I almost wrote British Jazz but that is too limiting). It would be hard to find anything more passionate than the *Free in One* track.

These albums were recorded after Tracey had given up his Scott residency - the long late night bus journeys were too much - and after a few years of enforced obscurity. When he returned to active involvement with a head full of new ideas, he hadn't been idle.

The quartet tracks are fierce and confrontational. King is in his most explosive form and the muscular drumming of Brian Spring drives the session sets an uncompromising pace, but it is Stan's angular phrasing and unorthodox chords that are the dominant features.

The Seven Ages of Man, a Shakespearian theme, but with scores that have no particular affinity to that title, is a stage where the pianist was free to air his ideas in a big band setting where his compositional skills could be given full rein. They are dynamic and challenging and as quirky as the man himself.

As with the quartet tracks, all eight compositions are Tracey originals and he had the luxury of being able to cherry pick his own musicians who were familiar and empathetic to his concepts. That must have pleased him.

The band was a mixture of 'old heads' and 'up and comers' of that time, and it tackles the complex arrangements with verve although the dense scores must have taxed even the most accomplished players. Yet Tracey's writing was never too divorced from the mainstream of jazz and although free jazz floats in and out of the music, the arrangements never fail to swing. My favourites are *Wisdom in the Wings* and *Panto, Panto*, but only by a short head.

Although, he never received his full share of recognition from

the wider jazz community, he was acknowledged elsewhere with the awards of an O.B.E. and a C.B.E, although, I think, Stan would have preferred more recognition and more tangible rewards.

A Classic. Get it.

JOHN MARTIN



DEXTER GORDON

MONTMARTRE 1964

Storyville 1018410 56.29

Copenhagen's Jazzhus Montmartre was tenorist Gordon's regular home-from-home in Denmark and he played there often during his 14-year European sojourn. Storyville's sessions emanate from a lengthy residency in July 1964; the first four tracks from a live tele-cast, the remaining three titles from a radio broadcast. They are new to release and are issued by arrangement with the Gordon Estate.

Gordon was backed throughout this Montmartre gig by pianist

Tete Montoliu, bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen and drummer Alex Riel, these three clearly well-versed in Gordon's ways, their obvious cohesion and ease in each other's company an example of 'how good it sounds when musicians get to play together every night' in the words of bassist Bo Stief's booklet note.

The first thing to say is that this is Gordon on form, relaxed, playful almost, even vocalizing rather wanly on *Big Fat Butterfly* before he opens up as if it's the easiest thing in the world. He makes the often cheesy *Misty* into a ballad delight, his improvisation unrolling fluently, the sound nicely rounded, the note placements exact.

The 18-year-old Ørsted Pedersen is a wonder to behold, soloing ably on *King Neptune* and then putting down the kind of swinging line on *Butterfly* that would have had Ray Brown beaming broadly. Montoliu is similarly pleasing, comping ably and then soloing with the sort of keyboard dash that lifts the spirits, most notably on the 10-minute reading of Bonfa's *Manha de Carnival*. Gordon does well on the more animated *Loose Walk*, Ørsted Pedersen magnificent in support, and on his own *Cheese Cake*, a regular part of his repertoire.

PETER VACHER



BENNY GOODMAN

SMALL BANDS COLLECTION 1935-45

Acrobat Music ACTRCD9103 3 CDs 73:50/71:11/74:18

The great swing bands of the 1930s and 40s featured celebrated soloists in spaces for extemporisation 'written' into the full band arrangements. But performances by small groups were totally improvised by the

musicians involved. It is here we look and find the most jazz-infused performances in the whole of the swing canon.

Benny Goodman's Trio, with Teddy Wilson on piano and Gene Krupa on drums, was formed in July 1935, as legend has it after the great man and Wilson discovered, at Mildred Bailey's house, the joy of jamming together (her son on drums). The Quartet, with Lionel Hampton on vibes, came together in late 1936 at a time when no one could compare with Goodman's mesmeric genius and fame as the King of Swing.

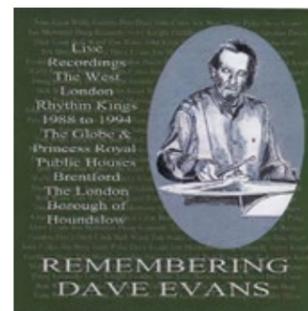
Acrobat's three-box set comprises 71 peerless tracks released on the RCA-Victor, Columbia and Okeh labels in Swing's great heyday of 1935-45. Here we find wonderfully creative performances from Cootie Williams, Count Basie, Slam Stewart, John Kirby, Fletcher Henderson and Red Norvo, to list some of the stellar names that Benny attracted and inspired as his groups grew in size.

Incidentally, during the two years, from 1939 to 1941, that Charlie Christian was a member of the sextet, he legitimised the electric guitar as a jazz instrument. History was being made in so many ways; music fit for a thousand years being recorded while the Third Reich was crumbling.

These small group recordings represent to most discerning judges Benny's best work. They provide the priceless opportunity to hear his virtuosic clarinet in joyously unrestrained mood, swinging around the beautiful and exciting melodies of the day, adding quotes, trading breaks, ripping it up.

Benny famously defined swing as 'free speech in music', where the soloist is at liberty 'to play a chorus in the way he feels it'. What joyous life-affirming swinging music he and his liberated star-studded line-ups throw off with apparent ease - without any of the bebop over-complexities (and anxieties) he would temporarily find just around the corner, in different company.

ANDREW LIDDLE



WEST LONDON RHYTHM KINGS

REMEMBERING DAVE EVANS

Own label: 77.10

From 1988 to 1995 trumpeter John Keen led the West London Rhythm Kings in weekly sessions in two Brentford pubs. The 14 tracks on this album come from seven different sessions, each with a different line-up, the only common factor being drummer Dave Evans who is commemorated in the title and John Keen's note.

The music is robust, frequently exciting, in a sort of non-doctrinaire New Orleans style, straightforwardly direct, unskilful sometimes, but never unskilful. Keen's note sums up the mix of ambition and modesty when he comments on 'reaching for high notes and, with Dave's urging, often finding them.' There's plenty of evidence of Dave's urging in the later choruses of such numbers as *Snake Rag* and an exhilarating closer, *Royal Garden Blues*, which also benefits from the addition of Freddie Shaw's cornet to Keen's lead.

The band, for the most part, is the standard six-piece, with banjo and no piano, with frequent appearances by clarinetist Tony Pike, trombonist Pete Dyer, banjoist Doug Kennedy and bassist Terry Knight. Keen himself is excellent, a powerful lead who is prepared to take risks, and the band is at its best on uptempo numbers, solos generally short, ensembles building momentum over Dave Evans' driving drumming.

Various luminaries feature on a single session each. Wally Fawkes is there on three tracks from the earliest session, making his mark especially in some quirky dynamic contrasts in an edge-of-the-seat

Snake Rag. John Mortimer evokes the spirit of Dickie Wells on *I'm Confessing* and piles up chorus after chorus of blues harmonica on *Bula Bula*, while John Barnes switches to alto sax for some elaborate obbligatos on *The Gipsy*.

RON SIMPSON



CHAMPION FULTON

BIRDSONG

Self-released CR003 66.38

If ever an album was needed to lighten our way out of the gloom, Champion Fulton's *Birdsong* ticks all the boxes. Released in 2020 to mark Charlie Parker's centennial, this is a refreshing tribute from an artist more than familiar with the music.

The offspring of jazz-loving parents, Fulton was born in Oklahoma to the sounds of *Charlie Parker with Strings* played on cassette tape by her father, jazz trumpeter and educator Stephen Fulton. Her potential was shaped in childhood by family friends such as Clark Terry and Major Holley and later rewarded in *Downbeat* as Rising Star and voted by readers of *Hot House Magazine* Pianist and Vocalist of 2019.

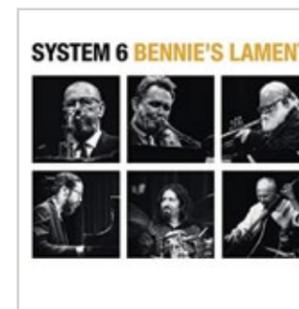
Here, Fulton applies her considerable skills as pianist and vocalist in equal measure with an exemplary rhythm team: Hide Tanaka on bass and Fukushi Tainaka on drums, complemented by tenor star Scott Hamilton and father Stephen Fulton on flugelhorn.

Opening in waltz time *Just Friends* heads an eclectic mix of straight-ahead swingers, ballads and Parker-inspired themes, notably *Yardbird Suite* and *Quasimodo*, and there's an impressive *All God's Children Got Rhythm* with Fulton's creative rhythm section firing on all

cylinders. Fulton's vocals, finely tuned and versatile, bring depth and sensitivity to ballads *This Is Always* and *My Old Flame* and groove in a style reminiscent of Anita O'Day on *Star Eyes* and *If I Should Lose You* without losing her own individuality.

Closing on Parker's composition *Bluebird* with some fine solos from Hamilton and Fulton senior, the overall concept works brilliantly throughout. Warmly recommended.

VAL WISEMAN



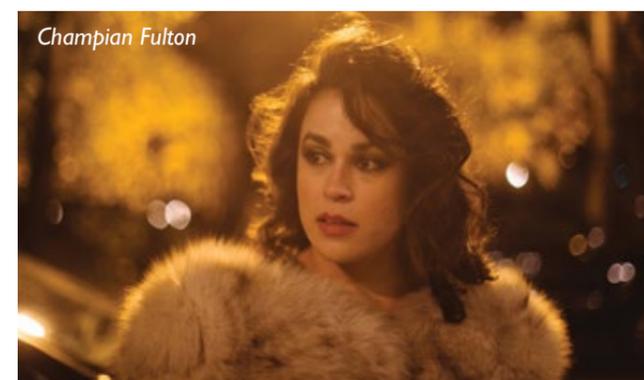
SYSTEM 6

BENNIE'S LAMENT

Skipper Productions SPI034 79.01

Anyone who was fortunate enough to catch the various Clatworthy groups in their annual visits to the UK knows Benn Clatworthy is not a man to stand still. The Londoner who emigrated to America in the early 1980s on the advice of his mentor and teacher, Ronnie Scott, has now become a permanent fixture on the Los Angeles scene.

The tenorist, originally strongly influenced by Coltrane, (and who isn't nowadays?) has absorbed Trane's influence, moved on, and found his own voice and vision based on hard bop with splashes of the avant-garde and free jazz



thrown in. It is a stimulating mix. *The Decider*, the opening track, presages what is a fuel-charged set.

This is his latest group recorded in Pasadena last year and contains the best of local Californian musicians. At the age of 65, Clatworthy demonstrates that his creative juices haven't dried up.

The music is aggressive, questioning and dynamic. Nine of the eleven titles are Clatworthy compositions and the tightly-knit group pays them due respect with fine performances and commitment. His writing skills display a wide and varied range of influences but his basic credo remains hard bop with some Clatworthy tweaks. There is, also, a nod to Ellington's alter ego, Billy Strayhorn on *In Strayhorn's Bag*.

This is not a musician in the twilight of his career. This is music in progress as it always has been with Clatworthy.

JOHN MARTIN



GEORGIA MANCIO & ALAN BROADBENT

QUIET IS THE STAR

Roomspin Records 40.14

This is the long-anticipated follow-up to *Songbook*, the lauded 2017 release by this transatlantic duo, also on Roomspin. As before,



Mancio is both lyricist and vocal performer, while the US-based Broadbent partners her brilliantly as pianist and co-composer, this time minus the support of bass and drums, doubtless due to the exigencies of lockdown, this seamless juxtaposition masking their enforced separation. So, no prospective touring or live opportunities beckoning, unlike their earlier association.

Mancio calls these latest pieces 'beautiful, meaningful songs' and she's right, but it's the shared understanding between the two artists that makes these performances so rewarding. If Mancio's vocal sound is

essentially pure, unhistrionic, sometimes pristine, often yearning, it's the rich variety of the highly-experienced Broadbent's keyboard commentaries and compositional shapes that also impresses.

There are moments on *When You're Gone From Me*, an evocation of loss, that are simply lovely, Broadbent's keyboard touch and mastery of harmonic variation quite magical.

All My Life is similarly lyrical, Mancio again in command as Broadbent helps to shape and direct the outcome. Each song merits attention, invariably

thoughtful, often poignant, certainly elegiac. The effect is both intimate yet irresistible, Mancio's lyrics telling their own tales as Broadbent edits and varies their rhythmic geometry.

Mancio rightly commends Andy Cleynert's production. Interestingly, the duo have now published a book of their songs, with lyrics and lead sheets, mustering 33 in all. For now, this exquisite yet potent series of reflections on the human condition is too good to miss.

PETER VACHER



WOLFGANG LACKERSCHMID/ CHET BAKER

QUINTET SESSIONS 1979

Dot Time Legends DT 8018: 44.52

There is certainly no shortage of releases and re-releases of Chet Baker recordings in various parts of Europe with a miscellany of groups, but *Quintet Sessions 1979* is somewhat different. The clue is in the billing: Wolfgang Lackerschmid and Chet Baker. This was vibes player Lackerschmid's project and Chet, in fine form, is required to do more (or sometimes less) than reprise his customary bruised lyricism.

The remastered Dot Time release adds one alternative track and one rehearsal track to the original album on Lackerschmid's Sandra label. As Lackerschmid tells it, he and Chet had already made a duo album and wished to include guitarist Larry Coryell on a trio album, then Chet's agent insisted on adding a rhythm section, so Buster Williams and Tony Williams joined the group in Stuttgart for the recording.

Chet is at his most typical in a beautifully poised ballad treatment of *Here's that Rainy Day*, but the trumpeter doesn't dominate proceedings. Of six tracks on the original album, five are originals, one by each of the band members, except that Larry Coryell contributes two, Chet none. On the opener, *Mr. Biko*, composer Tony Williams sets the mood and, though Chet comes in with a nicely economical solo, the most striking solo voice is the ever-articulate Coryell. Coryell's own compositions are central to the album, *The Latin One* faded out after the guitarist changed his mind, but still containing some lovely playing, and *Rue Gregoire*

du Tour (represented also by a rehearsal) the most memorable of the originals and the one that gives most scope to Chet's distinctive gifts.

RON SIMPSON



CHRIS HOPKINS/ JAZZ KANGAROOS

CHRIS HOPKINS MEETS THE JAZZ KANGAROOS LIVE! VOL. 1

Echoes of Swing Productions EOSP 4512 2: 54.10

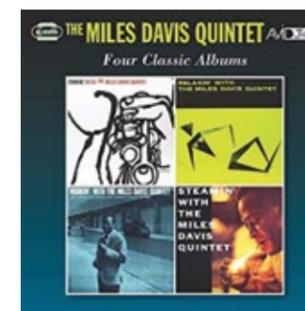
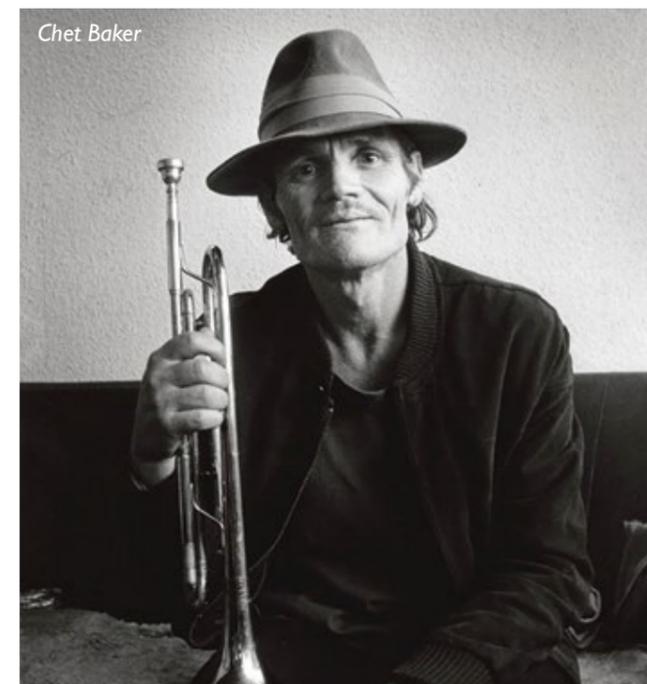
No envelopes were pushed in the making of this album, but the result is pure delight throughout. American multi-instrumentalist Chris Hopkins, based in Germany, here plays piano in the company of an Australian trio on a live session from Hattingen in 2019. The opening *Can't We Be Friends?* sets the tone: unpretentiously swinging from the start, full of inventive and melodic solos and an easy collegiality between first-class musicians.

Throughout the album Hopkins never loses his sense of melody, even when he turns on the after-burners. George Washington's violin playing is school of Stuff Smith and he also sings amiably, phrasing with impeccable regard to the words. David Blenkorn's guitar and Mark Elton's bass provide the necessary rhythmic lift and both solo impressively, Blenkorn's fine blues choruses on Oscar Pettiford's *Blues in the Closet* a highlight.

The material is superbly chosen, mostly a set of wonderful songs of a certain vintage including several under-performed gems. Irving Berlin's *Russian Lullaby* moves from Bachian violin introduction to the seldom-heard lyrics to incendiary solos from Hopkins and Washington. *When Lights are Low* is as atmospheric as it should be and the largely vocal *A Hundred Years from Today* laconically affecting. More familiar numbers include a dreamy *Moonlight in Vermont* and a hard-hitting departure from the Songbook material on Django's *Swing 42*.

This is the perfect 'live' recording. Sound quality is good, the performance has an immediate freshness and, best of all, there is a palpable sense of enjoyment between players and audience – which inevitably spreads to the CD listener. Roll on, Volume 2!

RON SIMPSON



MILES DAVIS QUINTET

FOUR CLASSIC ALBUMS

Avid Jazz AMSC 1376 69:48/82:28

I've lost count of the amount of times I've reviewed reissues of this music, which has, over the past decade or so, emerged on all manner of labels in all kinds of 'treatments'. Whatever you may think of this, yet another release, you can't argue with the subtitle; *Cookin'*, *Relaxin'*, *Workin'* and *Steamin'* are indeed Four Classic Albums. Iconic ones too.

Their back story is the stuff of legend; clearing his contract with Prestige Records (after signing to the major label Columbia), over two days in the spring and autumn of 1956, Davis famously taped enough material for four albums, in effect capturing studio-made equivalents of his nightclub sets of the time. The results are as stunning as they are candid. There are fluffs, false starts, snatches of dialogue between the trumpeter and producer Bob Weinstock, even the odd Coltrane reed squeak.

But there is magic too, in the danceable tempos, Davis' patented muted ballad entreaties and, overall, in hearing how a band, then regarded as alarmingly disparate in its make-up, actually created a blueprint for so much jazz that came after it.

Bop, Broadway and blues, whether a composition by Richard Rodgers or Sonny Rollins, up-tempo or down, the music on these four albums is essential listening. And in its many riches, it's almost impossible to pick a single set that is 'better' than its stablemates.

However, perhaps *Relaxin'* just gets the nod, if only for the delicious groove Paul Chambers

sets beneath *It Could Happen To You*.

Fortunately, with this issue you can hear the lot for the price of a couple of high street chain coffees.

I'll leave the reader to work out which will be of more lasting stimulation.

Classic in every way.

SIMON SPILLET



FÉLIX HUNOT

FÉLIX HUNOT AND THE JAZZ MUSKETEERS

Self-released 47:30

Malo Mazurié was in need of a guitarist for a gig in La Rochelle. The trumpeter was recommended Félix Hunot. That first meeting brought together the four musicians heard on this album, Hunot's debut recording as a bandleader. The Jazz Musketeers' shared love of the repertoire and Belgian beers helped cement friendships and they perform together as and when their busy schedules allow.

Music, not least jazz, knows no geographical boundaries, hence two Frenchmen (Mazurié and Hunot), David Lukács from Belgium (clarinet and tenor sax) and Hungarian bass saxophonist Attila Korb demonstrate their individual and collective abilities on this self-released album. Of 14 tracks all but Korb's *Adrian's Dream* will be more than familiar to the listener.

From *Ostrich Walk* to Hunot's solo banjo piece *Memories of You* to a terrific ensemble take on *Tiger Rag*, the four musketeers exude enthusiasm and no little expertise in revisiting Jazz Age numbers. In addition to playing guitar and banjo Hunot handles most of the vocal duties and the album's one oddity is the

Upbeat recordings SPRING RELEASES 2021

URCD303
THE FRENCH PRESERVATION NEW ORLEANS JAZZ BAND
A Tribute to Captain John Handy
FEATURING JP Alessi playing John Handy's Alto Saxophone

URCD310
MUGGSY SPANIER
EXTREME RARITIES THE JUKE BOX SESSIONS plus Bonus tracks

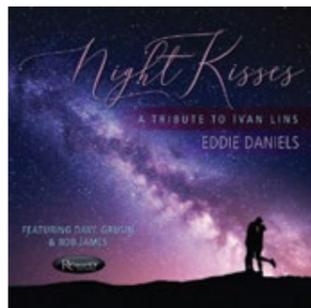
URCD309
NEW ORLEANS LEGENDS from the Jazz Crusade Archives

URCD292
KID THOMAS VALENTINE BAND
Jamming at Pub Profeten, Uppsala, Sweden Nov 9th 1971

Our CDs are available from all good record shops via RSK, from Amazon and www.upbeatmailorder.co.uk For full catalogue please call 0843 658 0856 or Email admin@upbeat.co.uk

bandleader's solo guitar *Ballad Medley R. Wagner*, comprising 3 minutes 37 seconds of *Tristan und Isolde*, *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*. Hunot's self-released album is available from Bandcamp.

RUSSELL CORBETT



EDDIE DANIELS

NIGHT KISSES: A TRIBUTE TO IVAN LINS

Resonance Records RCD- 1031 73.32

Eddie Daniels offers his second tribute to Brazilian songwriters with this valentine to Ivan Lins - the first salute was *Heart of Brazil* spotlighting the songs of Egberto Gismonti.

Ivan Lins is one of Brazil's most prolific popular songwriters, highly regarded in his own country but almost unknown outside of it. Although his songs have been recorded by Barbra Streisand, Sarah Vaughan, Michael Buble, Jane Monheit and others, he remains known only to an elite few.



Oscar Peterson

This is not the cheery shuffle of the Bossa Nova made so popular by Stan Getz and Astrud Gilberto back in the 60s. This is Brazil's other psyche. This is music reflecting pain and sorrow and loss... and beauty.

Keeping in mind that Lins writes songs where the words are as important as the music, Daniels studied the lyrics closely with the purpose of keeping them in the forefront of his mind when playing. He, also, wisely, chose the flute, instead of his more familiar clarinet, from his armoury of reeds, as the best instrument to express the inherent pathos in Lins' compositions.

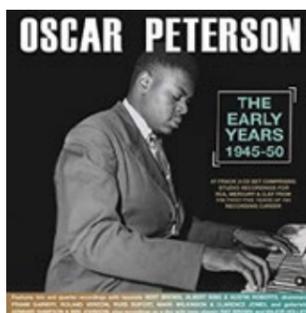
The group instrumentation is modest: four rotating pianists, Josh Nelson, Kuno Schmid, Ashmis, Dave Grusin and Bob James, all of whom contribute arrangements. Kevin Axt on bass and Mauricio Zottarelli on drums supply the rhythm and The Harlem Quartet, a string group, add a quasi-classical tonality.

There are 13 songs on display, all beautiful and reflecting that special seductiveness that we associate with the country and the Latin temperament. Lins names *Velas Icada* as his personal favourite but you are sure to find others from this classy album.

The liner notes allude to Lins' many film scores and the music, in parts, has a cinematic ambience suggesting the lush, sprawling landscapes of Brazil.

Some may question whether this jazz or world music. Some will just enjoy it.

JOHN MARTIN



OSCAR PETERSON

THE EARLY YEARS 1945-50

Acrobat Music ADDCD3356 2 CDs 72:02/71:37

The Canadian-born colossus of the keyboard was a mere 20 in 1945 when he cut the first of the tracks on this totally captivating two-CD Acrobat release, announcing to the wider world that 'I got rhythm'.

Actually, Oscar Peterson, who received classical piano lessons from the age of six (some from a Hungarian concert pianist taught by a pupil of Franz Liszt), was already no stranger to local fame. In his late teens he had his own weekly spot on a Montreal radio station and was a star performer in the Johnny Holmes Orchestra.

These 47 tracks, taken from several recording sessions in the company of different personnel, are of their time, the late 1940s, in more ways than one. About the standard 78 length of three minutes, they reflect the influence of such as Art Tatum, Teddy Wilson, Nat 'King' Cole.

Like Tatum, in particular, he had the two-handed bravura technique of the classical maestro - and the ability to transform melody and inject spontaneous variations across any tempo. It's tempting to think the jazz element owes something to the lessons he received at the age of twelve from Louis Hooper who had been part of the Harlem scene in the 1920s.

He is also playing standards of the day, often tender ballads given the swing treatment. But then, as the frantic *Oscar's Boogie*

demonstrates, he was equally a master of one of the crazes of the time, barrelhouse.

There are those who feel that Peterson's later performances and recordings - particularly, perhaps, after Tatum's death in 1956 - would often demonstrate virtuosity for its own sake, the melody, drowned in floods of arpeggios, drenched in floods of cascading intros and codas, totally lost in a brouhaha of swing, stride, boogie and ragtime breakneck extemporisations.

These early relatively simple, tuneful, reflectively rhythmic recordings may win them over.

ANDREW LIDDLE



DAVE BRUBECK QUARTET

TIME OUTTAKES

Brubeck Editions BECD 2020901: 44.10

The first in what is planned to be a series of Dave Brubeck albums on Brubeck Editions, *Time Outtakes* takes us back to probably the most famous and influential album by the Dave Brubeck Quartet, *Time Out*, in 1959. Five of eight tracks are outtakes of numbers on the original album. My feeling is that they will delight both listeners who have spent their lifetimes hearing *Time Out* and those who are new to this music. The performances make an impact in their own right and have enough differences from the original album to fascinate Brubeck completists.

The excellent booklet, full of short articles by the Brubeck family, makes the point that, on the original release, Columbia selected the takes which were most perfect, that had the fewest mistakes. I can't say that mistakes leap out on *Outtakes*, quite the

JAZZ ON BIG BEAR RECORDS

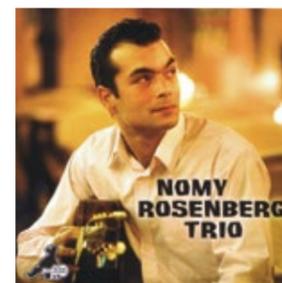
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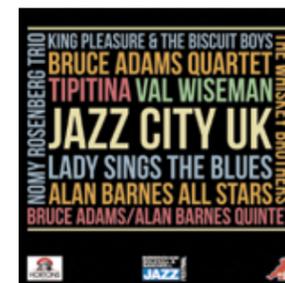
Six top British jazz musicians and the remarkable Val Wiseman interpret Billie Holiday repertoire



Nomy Rosenberg

Nomy Rosenberg Trio

Gypsy guitar genius from Holland - classic Django at its best



Various Artists

Jazz City UK Volume 1

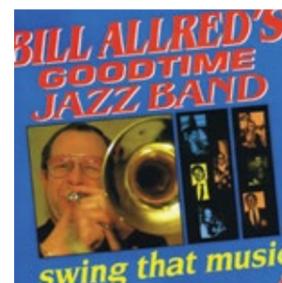
"Don't miss this album, it contains more aesthetic vitamins than Holland & Barratts" - Digby Fairweather



Various Artists

Jazz City UK Volume 2

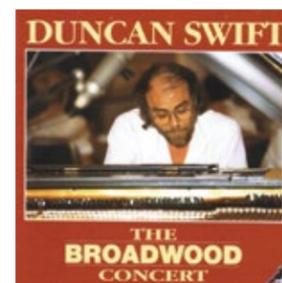
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Ronnie Scott Quartet

opposite, but the whole mood is freer. *Blue Rondo a la Turk* sets the tone, two minutes longer than the *Time Out* take, with extra blues choruses, grabbing the attention with its joyful energy from the start, fresh-sounding and exploratory. On *Take Five* the drum figure at the start is quite different and Joe Morello's long solo more uninhibited. The other three repeated numbers all have treatments that are arguably better than on the original album, with *Three to Get Ready* a particular delight: a charming gentle melody with alternating 3/4 and 4/4, bent by Paul Desmond, deconstructed by Brubeck, then brought back, sweetly unchanged, at the end.

Then there are the three 'new' tracks. *I'm in a Dancing Mood* can only have been cut to make the album consist totally of originals, because it has similar charms to *Three to Get Ready*, the shifting time signatures returning us, after assorted adventures, to an almost dainty statement of the theme. The newly named *Watusi Jam* is Brubeck's *Waiting for Benny* – it's what you do when the horn player's not there, in this case an extended drum solo with piano improvising phrases and developing snatches of melody. The final track will get a mixed reaction: a mixture of takes cut short, advice and banter between the musicians will not please all, but I'm sure the Brubecks included it to emphasise the friendship and collegiality within the group – and why not?

RON SIMPSON



RONNIE SCOTT QUARTET

BBC JAZZ CLUB 1964-1966

Rhythm & Blues Records
RANDB063 76:00

It's commonplace to see the release of archival recordings celebrating the wonderful British jazz produced during the 1960s. These may be reissues of long-deleted classic recordings or, increasingly, material from the personal collections of both fans and musicians, often live recordings, sometimes of dubious sound quality.

With this release we are guaranteed, at least to some extent, superior audio quality,

as two of the three sessions are culled from the BBC archives. The remaining session comes from Manchester's Free Trade Hall.

There are three slightly different versions of the Scott Quartet here, but all including the unique talents of Stan Tracey on piano. Opening with a set from 1965, the quartet is completed by Rick Laird on bass and Ronnie Stephenson at the drums. The material consists of three tunes, which although not really standards, nevertheless were becoming staples of the jazz repertoire.

The remaining two sets substitute Freddie Logan and Malcolm Cecil on bass and Bill Eyden and Jackie Dougan at the drums and consist of mostly relatively familiar tunes, all very well played. There is an added bonus of a couple of vocals from Mark Murphy on the second BBC session.

Scott's mastery of the ballad format is evidenced time and again throughout the album, up-tempo exceptions being *Close Your Eyes* and *Avalon* both of which are quite magnificent.

CHRIS HOPKINS COMPETITION

Many thanks to Chris Hopkins of Echoes of Swing for providing TWO copies of his delightful CD with the Jazz Kangaroos for *Jazz Rag* readers. Just answer the following questions and send to jazzrag@bigbearmusic.com by **March 26th, 2021**.

1. The band Echoes of Swing last year released an album recorded at Schloss Elmau. Chris Hopkins plays piano on this new release, but what instrument did he play on the Echoes of Swing recording?
2. One of several inspired choices of songs on the Hopkins/Kangaroos CD is *A Hundred Years from Today*. Which great jazz singer/trombonist is always associated with the song which he recorded several times between 1933 and 1963, shortly before his death?

The whole package is topped off with a 14 page essay from our own Simon Spillett. Spillett's writing is as indispensable as the music itself.

All-in-all a worthwhile addition to the Ronnie Scott discography.

ALAN MUSSON



AVISHAI COHEN

BIG VICIOUS

ECM 2680 0836025: 46.55

To clear up some of the mysteries around what remains, for me, a perplexing album. This is Avishai Cohen the trumpeter; not Avishai Cohen the bassist; *Big Vicious* is the album title, but also his band, back in Israel after working in New York City; Rejoicer, listed as co-composer on several of the tracks, is a Tel Aviv-based record producer, though this album was produced by Manfred Eicher in France.

A line-up of trumpet (also synthesiser), two guitars, one doubling bass, and two drummers, one also looking after sampling, might suggest a more rhythmic approach than we get. Cohen's own composition, *King Kutner*, with namesake Aviv Cohen's drumming to the fore, might pitch us more towards rock, but typically – especially on the tracks credited to Big Vicious and Rejoicer – ambient sound swirls around Cohen's trumpet, though guitarist Uzi Ramirez

also contributes some delicately poised solos.

Avishai Cohen is beyond doubt an excellent trumpeter, with his own style (though with a nod to Miles Davis). Seldom leaving the upper register, he plays with sensitivity, precision and great purity of tone, slowly unfolding melody in long notes.

However, though the creation of atmosphere is impeccable, I personally would enjoy more momentum. I find the Big Vicious approach most effective where there is a strongly appealing melody, as in the two non-originals, Massive Attack's *Teardrop* and Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* (totally unexpected, but beautifully done).

RON SIMPSON



MILES DAVIS

THE COLLECTION 1945-48:
BEFORE THE COOLAcrobat ADDC3363 72.24 /
70.23

Here's another of Acrobat's double-CD tutorials, just right for these dreary lockdown days. If the Miles Davis story is among the most comprehensively chronicled in all of jazz, with volume after volume of analysis, it's nonetheless salutary to be reminded of his beginnings.

These are Davis's apprentice years, mostly spent in the uplifting company of Charlie Parker. Much is made of Davis's limited capabilities at this point and it's fair to say that if his range was modest and his attack quite stilted, the opening *Billie's Bounce* and *Now's the Time*, by CP's Ree-Boppers are taken at a tempo suited to Davis's capabilities. Even so, it's possible to hear Davis testing himself harmonically, always probing for the distinctive resolution.

In effect, Davis plays back-up to Parker on 45 out of these 49 tracks, mostly prized from the Savoy and Dial catalogues and originally issued under Parker's name, the main exception being an agreeable session by Coleman Hawkins, with Davis in the background. If there are magic moments throughout this collection, and there are many, it must be said that it is from Parker himself that they mainly emanate.

Interesting too to hear Parker playing tenor on the August 1947 session, Davis more sure-footed. By the *Birth of the Cool* sessions, Davis had found his direction, but here he's feeling his way. Good booklet too, ideal for that lockdown study.

PETER VACHER



THE JAKE LEG JUG BAND

GOODBYE BOOZE

Green Bullet Records GB2001
34:10

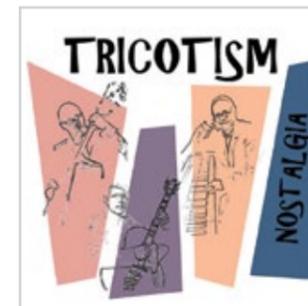
The Jake Leg Jug Band formed in 2012. Bandleader Duncan Wilcox hoped it would still be around in 2020, one hundred years on from the implementation of the Volstead Act which ushered in the era of Prohibition across the United States.

The band is indeed still around, although, thanks to the pandemic, opportunities to commemorate the events of a century ago have been all but non-existent. *Goodbye Booze* is a jolly jaunt through 11 tunes in just over 34 minutes making this recording more EP than CD.

Wilcox (vocals and double bass) leads a core five piece band, variously clarinet, piano, trombone, violin, washboard and backing vocals. Neil Hulse (vocals, guitar and spoons) transcribed

and arranged the material ranging from Clayton McMichen's *Prohibition Blues* to Lowe Stokes' *Prohibition is a Failure*. The former is a light-hearted romp from 1919 anticipating the coming alcohol ban which includes the line 'If you drink the bootleg 'shine, you'll sure have an achin' head', the latter from 1930 predicting an end to a much-derided episode in American history. *Goodbye Booze* is likely to appeal to the fan of Americana as much as, if not more than, the jazz fan.

RUSSELL CORBETT



TRICOTISM

NOSTALGIA

Nervy CD002 72.22

This is a three-way encounter between guitarist Nigel Price, bassist Sandy Suchodolski and pianist Craig Milverton in a fast-moving programme of bebop staples and standard songs. They say they were inspired by the 'great Peterson/Pass/Brown Trio'.

That may be so, but what they have produced soon transcends any need for comparisons as they settle into creative overdrive. Each jousts with the others, Milverton lively in OP fashion, Price up for it all, combative as ever, as Suchodolski supports and solos on equal terms with the others.

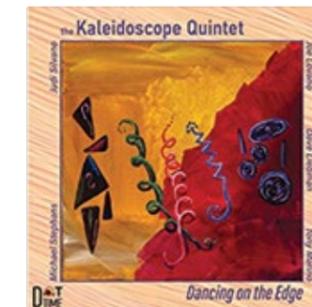
Definitely a case of all for one and one for all, with quick-thinking evident on the title track, a neat piece by Fats Navarro. Here Milverton is expansive, using the locked-hands technique and building nicely, Price running with the ball, piano alongside and Suchodolski walking purposefully.

Gershwin's *The Man I Love* is like a master class in interplay, each player sculpting his own pathway through these time-honoured

harmonies. There are no fumbles here, no longeurs, just ten varied tracks marked by empathy, coloured by inspiration and showing an abiding desire to find new things to say.

All of which is exemplified on the exhilarating *Superjet* by Tadd Dameron, no quarter asked, none given, at the album's end.

PETER VACHER



THE KALEIDOSCOPE QUINTET

DANCING ON THE EDGE

Dot Time DT9097 62:44

The Deer Head Inn up in the Pocono Mountains lays claim to being America's oldest, continuously-running jazz venue. *Dancing on the Edge* was recorded at the Pennsylvania venue in November 2013.

Why it has taken so long for the album to see the light of day is something of a mystery. Joe Lovano and Dave Liebman were the star attractions and this live recording captures them in blistering form.

Drummer Michael Stephens assembled the quintet to perform at a book launch event. Bassist Tony Marino was on the gig, as was Lovano's partner, vocalist Judi Silvano, supplying highwire wordless vocals on a couple of tracks. Five tracks (two written by Lovano, two by Liebman, plus the standard *There is no Greater Love*) run to just over the hour mark.

A Lovano-Liebman double-flute intro to *Topsy Turvy* opens the set and, as the principals draw applause from a supportive audience, they switch to tenor sax and alto sax respectively to lock horns on Lovano's muscular composition. *Day and Night*, Dave Liebman's fifteen minute plus

contrafact of Cole Porter's *Night and Day*, hears the band in full flight with Marino's propulsive bass lines to the fore.

Lovano's *Blackwell's Message*, saluting Ed Blackwell, weighs in at 18 minutes. Drummer Blackwell, known for his work with Ornette Coleman, recorded an album with Lovano shortly before his death in 1992.

This Deer Head Inn performance is a fitting tribute. Liebman's *Get Me Back to the Apple* closes a most enjoyable album.

The title of the final selection begs the question: after the gig did Brooklyn-born Liebman drive the 75 miles or so to New York City? Answers on a postcard.

RUSSELL CORBETT



YOKO MIWA TRIO

SONGS OF JOY

Ubuntu Music UBU0057 70:53

Yoko Miwa applied to Berklee College of Music on a whim. To her surprise she was offered a scholarship.

In the late nineties the classically-trained pianist left Japan for Boston, Massachusetts. More than two decades later she is still there, not as a student, rather as an associate professor!

Songs of Joy is Miwa's ninth album. It features her regular trio partners Will Slater, bass, and drummer Scott Goulding. Now signed to Ubuntu Music, Miwa says of the new recording: 'The one emotion that unites all the songs is one of JOY.'

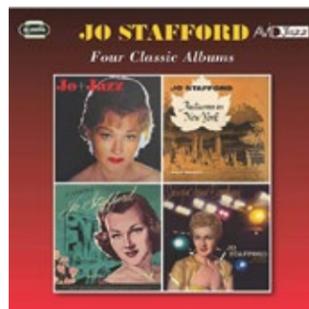
The 11 tracks are largely upbeat, opening and closing with two unlikely selections: Richie Havens' *Freedom* and Anne Bredon's *Babe I'm Gonna Leave You*. In between, Billy Preston's *Song of Joy*, Duke Jordan's *No Problem* and

Thelonius Monk's *Think of One* sit comfortably alongside five of Miwa's original compositions.

In recent times artists have released singles from albums. The assumption is the demand is there and Miwa followed the trend by releasing *Largo Desolato* several weeks in advance of the album launch. During the pandemic Miwa set herself the task of composing every day. *Songs of Joy* is the result of her endeavours.

Miwa plays the songs without trying to impress. Similarly, Slater and Goulding let the music speak for itself on a fine piano trio album.

RUSSELL CORBETT



JO STAFFORD

FOUR CLASSIC ALBUMS

Avid Jazz AMSC1372 2 CDs 68.00/76.54

Many years ago I heard the song *Paris in the Spring* sung deliberately off pitch with razor sharp accuracy! It was from the comedy album Jo Stafford recorded in 1960 with husband, bandleader Paul Weston, using the pseudonyms *Jonathan and Darlene Edwards in Paris*. Theirs was a successful partnership and much of their work during the 1950s features in this compilation.

Stafford spent her formative years with vocal group the Pied Pipers in Tommy Dorsey's band. She claimed she developed breathing and voice control from close study of Dorsey's trombone technique, but it was the purity of her voice and sensitive interpretation of lyrics that brought her popular acclaim. The earlier albums *Jo Stafford* and *Autumn in New York* define these qualities and I was struck by the uncanny similarities to Ella

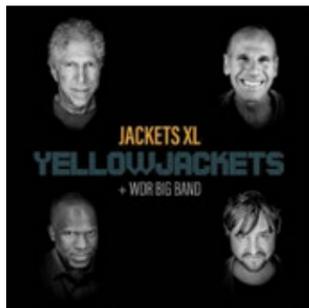
Fitzgerald's delivery, particularly on *Sunday Kind of Love* and *Sometimes I'm Happy*.

The album *Swingin' Down Broadway* has a much freer approach with Weston ditching the strings and providing excellent big band arrangements. These suited Stafford's innate sense of harmony and rhythm, best demonstrated on *Love For Sale* and *How High The Moon* and Billy May's arrangement of *I Got it Bad*.

But it's the final album *Jo+Jazz* directed by Johnny Mandel in Los Angeles in 1960 where Stafford excels. With Ellington-inspired arrangements, who better than Johnny Hodges and Ray Nance adding zest to *Just Squeeze Me* or Ben Webster complementing Stafford's impeccable interpretation of *Midnight Sun*?

There are solid swingers *S'posin'* and *I've Got The World On A String* with sumptuous solos from Webster and Conte Candoli, a sensual reading of Sy Oliver's *Dream Of You* with muted brass sustains and a bluesy Hodges-led *Day Dream*. Overall, Stafford proves she was equally at home in a jazz environment both as a vocalist and musician.

VAL WISEMAN



YELLOWJACKETS & WDR BIG BAND

JACKETS XL

Mack Avenue MAC1175 69:23

The common denominator here is saxophonist Bob Mintzer. In 1990 he became a member of Yellowjackets, a quartet which has enjoyed an almost four-decade history, and 2016 saw him take the helm as director of the German big band which has enjoyed a seven-plus-decade career. A release combining the talents of both groups sounds an

exciting prospect indeed.

This is the twenty-fifth album from the Yellowjackets and is a celebratory affair. Together the two groups reimagine a selection of familiar Yellowjacket tunes dressed up in exciting new big band arrangements.

The repertoire focusses on fan favourites including the gospel flavoured *Revelation*. Mintzer arranged seven of the ten tunes and Vince Mendoza who also has a long history with the WDR Big Band provided two arrangements. Band-member Russell Ferrante contributed an arrangement of his own *Coherence*.

Combining more structured arrangements with the freer feel of the quartet comes with challenges too, yet the combination works very well. Standout tracks include the crisp and swinging *Downtown*, the funky Dewey where the electronics are allowed free range, *The Red Sea* with Mintzer's EWI strongly featured and the delightful *Coherence*. The aforementioned *Revelation* is an ideal set closer and is a joyous celebration of all that is good in this music.

This as a nicely produced album and is a pleasure from start to end. My only slight quibble is that to these aging eyes, some of the text on the back of the CD cover is a little difficult to read. Get this album - it will brighten these dark winter days.

ALAN MUSSON

BOOK REVIEW

THIS IS BOP: JON HENDRICKS AND THE ART OF VOCAL JAZZ

PETER JONES

Equinox Publishing, hardback, 9 781 781 798744, £25.00

Jon Hendricks, the great master of vocalese lyrics, first recorded in 1953 at the age of 32. The last premiere of new work by him, though he was too ill to actively participate, was given early in the year of his death, 2017. That's a long career to summarise, made more difficult by Hendricks' unreliability as a chronicler of his life, especially dates, and the fact that the highpoint came so early, the 1957 recording of *Sing a Song of Basie*, by Lambert, Hendricks and Ross. Thereafter, despite being recognised as a unique talent and touring the world successfully, to some extent he was always trying to get 'back on top'.

Peter Jones takes an interesting approach to the problem. The main text is comparatively short, 166 pages, and is a straightforward narrative, bolstered by meticulous use of quotations from family, associates and written sources, with a fair amount of helpful comment, but essentially chronological. However, the book goes on for about 100 pages: index, notes, discography, but also three significant appendices.

Jon Hendricks was born in a small town in Ohio, the son of a preacher who was known for galvanising his congregation and thus was sent to failing churches and moved on when he'd revived them. The family finally settled for a few years in Toledo when Jon was 11. There he had the decided advantage of having the Tatum's as neighbours and young Arthur gave him a grounding in his concept of melody and harmony - Hendricks always claimed he wasn't a singer, but someone who used his voice as an instrument.

Following this came war service and an incident so remarkable that it has been the subject of two film documentaries, one French, one German. Hendricks



was one of a number of black soldiers on the end of some barbaric racism from white soldiers in Epernay. His response showed his independence of mind and leadership qualities as well as his tendency to go a little too far. To simplify the story, he led four other soldiers in deserting, taking stolen supplies with them, and, having holed up in a commandeered hotel, was eventually captured and served 11 months in a military prison in Marseille. Jones' narrative method in this chapter is totally different from the rest of the book, vivid and dramatic and full of invented dialogue.

In jazz terms the most telling part of the book is the story of recording *Sing a Song of Basie*. I hadn't realised how desperate Lambert and Hendricks were at this time, Hendricks moving into Lambert's apartment, Lambert devising ingenious ways to shoplift food. The saga that followed involved disastrous rehearsals with a 12-piece choir who just didn't get it and cost all ABC-Paramount's advance, the discovery of Annie Ross and of overdubbing, months of all-night sessions with Creed Taylor in the studio's dead time - and, ultimately, triumph.

Nothing else in the narrative quite matches that excitement: LHR continued until 1962, then broke up with the pressure of

constant touring and developing addictions. After a time of trying replacements for Annie Ross (Yolande Bavan the best known), Hendricks worked largely with family-centred groups. New projects included his stage musical *The Evolution of the Blues*, a success in its own terms, but a frustration in that it never reached Broadway.

Jones recounts tours and recording sessions efficiently, but of particular interest is the increasingly contradictory figure that Hendricks cuts. Jones records without labouring the point, clearly admiring his subject intensely without concealing his faults. A man of principle and a leader enormously popular with his musicians, he often engaged in petty financial chicanery, such as his regular habit of not renaming the jazz pieces he added lyrics to so that the royalties for the earlier instrumental version also came to him. A devoted family

man, he had no compunction in shipping his young children off to assorted relatives when his first wife left him. His impetuosity must have made life with him alarming at times, but his second marriage, to Judith, was an extraordinarily happy partnership.

His method of lyric writing was probably unique. He always refused to learn music on the basis that all that was needed was to listen - and he took this to its logical conclusion with his writing. He would listen, often for days, to the piece he was setting, then finally take paper and write the lyric in one flow, seldom needing to make a correction. His methods and beliefs are developed in appendices on vocalese and scat, his lyrics and his philosophy (often wise and generous, occasionally batty), a fitting end to the book.

RON SIMPSON

JON HENDRICKS COMPETITION

Equinox Publishing is generously providing TWO copies of *This is Bop: Jon Hendricks and the Art of Vocal Jazz for Jazz Rag* readers. Answer the following questions and email to jazzrag@bigbearmusic.com by **March 26th, 2021**.

1. One of Hendricks' best known albums is *Freddie Freeloader*. Who originally composed the title track?
2. On the famous *Sing a Song of Basie* album, Lambert Hendricks and Ross used the Count Basie rhythm section minus Basie himself. Who replaced him?

HENRY'S BLUESLETTER

MASTERS OF BLUES

Back in the 1980s Saydisc Records in Gloucestershire embarked on the ambitious task of collecting together original 78s to document the early days of blues, ragtime, hokum and gospel music that were classified as Race Records, that is, recordings by black performers aimed specifically at black audiences. Many of the race labels were in fact subsidiaries of major record companies which had spotted the opportunity to develop an additional market. In the early and mid-1920s the record industry was fighting off the challenge of radio, then came the dark days of the Depression when the record industry suffered like everyone else – the yearly figures for record sales plummeted from 100 million in 1929 to just 6 million in 1932.

The heroes of the time were the talent scouts who went through the Southern states searching out the often raw and primitive talent who had almost certainly never considered the prospect of going into a recording studio, although it should be noted

that many of the recordings were made on location, in hotel lobbies, bars or at musicians' homes.

The musicians who got to record were often singing for nickels on street corners or entertaining in bars or at picnics, but the music that was recorded formed the backbone of the later Urban Blues, Rhythm and Blues and Rock and Roll and was the root of much popular music for very nearly the next 100 years.

Saydisc boss Gef Lucena already had form where the blues was concerned, with his influential 1968 album, *Blues Like Showers of Rain*, featuring musicians at the heart of the emerging UK country blues movement, such people as Ian Anderson, Jo-Ann Kelly, Dave Kelly, and the Missouri Compromise.

Gef fondly refers to that time as Blues from the Avon Delta, the album being recorded in Bristol on Sunday afternoons before performances at Ian Anderson's Folk Blues Bristol and West club.

Noted Austrian collector Johnny Parth was tasked with locating the original 78s which he did through his Europe-wide network of contacts. The remastered recordings culminated in the Saydisc Matchbox Bluesmaster series of 42 LP albums of blues music originally recorded between 1924 and 1934, with a few tracks from 1950. The series was ground-breaking, exposing the work of largely unknown blues performers, work which otherwise might have been permanently lost.

Last summer, taking the opportunity to investigate the dark corners of the Saydisc archive, they stumbled across all the test pressings for the 1980s Bluesmaster releases in pristine condition. Nimbus archivist Hans Klement was put in charge of restoration and remastering and the result is a series of seven releases on CD and online, each consisting of six CDs with the original 1980s liner notes by one of the most respected of all UK blues writers, Paul Oliver.

Competitively priced at £29.99 for each six-CD boxset, the first two sets are now on release. Three more sets will see the light of day during 2021, with the remaining two set for Spring and Summer next year.

The first two sets include nine CDs featuring one musician or band: Buddy Boy Hawkins, Bo Weavil Jackson, Peg Leg Howell and Texas Alexander on M5ESET 1, Skip James, Coley Jones & the Dallas String Band, Leroy Carr, Tommie Bradley/James Cole and Charlie Lincoln on M5ESET 2. The remaining three CDs are compilations of the work of various bluesmen, many of whom recorded only the handful of tracks included here. In fact the Bluesmaster series gives a comprehensive picture of the recording careers of most of the performers.

Walter 'Buddy Boy' Hawkins, for instance, is so obscure the almost nothing is known of his life except for the 12 tracks he recorded from 1927 to 1929, tracks so rare that the originals sell for between \$500 and \$1500. His default position tends to an intense, somewhat monotone vocal delivery at dirge-like tempos backed by accomplished guitar work, but on some of the later tracks there's a jaunty vaudeville feeling, with sprightly ragtime guitar on *Raggin' the Blues* and *A Rag Blues*, hints of a double act on *Snatch It and Grab It* and a bizarre pseudo-vent act on *Voice Throwin' Blues*. Paul Oliver surmises that it's likely that Hawkins was an entertainer on a medicine show – I'll go along with that!

Obscure doesn't necessarily mean lacking in influence. A CD of Ragtime Blues Guitar includes William Moore, whose songs have been covered by a host of later performers including Stefan Grossman and even The Notting Hillbillies, and Blind Willie Walker, described by Josh White as the best guitarist he ever heard ('like Art Tatum') and reputed to be the composer of songs attributed to Reverend Gary Davis – for all that, Walker's issued recordings consist of two takes of one song and one take of another. Moore is a most engaging performer, with his ragtime dance rhythms on his guitar, laconic spoken blues and drolly catchy songs such as *Ragtime Millionaire*. Walker is something else, a darkly brooding *Dupree Blues* followed by guitar pyrotechnics on two takes of *South Carolina Rag*.

A hefty proportion of the tracks in the first set feature a single singer/guitarist, but the second set takes us into the world of string and jug bands. Coley Jones is a one-man variety bill, delivering droll monologues to his own guitar

accompaniment, duetting with Bobbie Cadillac ('a Dallas woman of some reputation', according to Paul Oliver) and heading up the Dallas String Band with his mandolin – an exhilarating *Dallas Rag* a highlight. Jones also connects with the mainstream music scene with show tunes such as Ford Dabney's *Shine* and scatting on *Sugar Blues*. James Cole's violin features in a number of bright little groups with guitarist Tommie Bradley, washboards, jugs and kazoos in attendance – there's no lack of variety in the collection!

Many of the singers here lived their lives in parallel with better known names – Charley Lincoln or Hicks, brother of Barbecue Bob, was so derailed by his brother's early death that he ended his days in prison in Cairo, Georgia, for murder – but three of the biggest names in country blues have a CD apiece – and they don't disappoint. Leroy Carr is heard on 1928 sessions with his long-time musical partner, subtle guitarist Scrapper Blackwell. Carr's singing and piano playing have a sophistication and control that clearly point the way to a later generation of performers. Though he sticks to the basic 12-bar blues (or 8 bars, as in the case of his iconic *How Long, How Long Blues*, repeated several times in this collection), he is anything but primitive. After his

comeback in the 1960s Skip James needs no introduction to blues fans. Here we have 18 tracks from 1931, his high-pitched, often plaintive singing accompanied either by his guitar or his distinctive brand of barrelhouse piano. A few of the tracks suffer from the poor sound quality of the originals (surprisingly rare on these albums) but the impact is undiminished. Texas Alexander was so prolific compared to many of the others that this is just Volume 1: Volumes 2 and 3 come later in the Bluesmaster series. Paul Oliver stresses that Alexander's titles were 'blues of the most rural kind', yet he often worked with surprisingly sophisticated accompanists: here mostly the great Lonnie Johnson (consistently brilliant) and, on four tracks, jazz pianist Eddie Heywood. Oliver claims Alexander and Heywood were ill-matched, but it doesn't really show – and it's an unexpected treat to find *Mama, I Heard You Brought it Right Back Home* sounding like *Old Fashioned Love*.

Such is the range of this collection that it's impossible to cover all the performers, so, with apologies to those we omitted, let's give one of them, New Orleans singer/guitarist Rabbit Brown, the last word: 'I done seen better days, but I'm putting up with these.'

A fair summary of the blues!

Billy The Kid Emerson



Read more of Henry's Blues Profiles on Henry's Blueshouse weekly online Bluesletter - to subscribe free of charge email admin@bigbearmusic.com

HENRY'S BLUES PROFILES BILLY 'THE KID' EMERSON

For a man known for taking every opportunity to cuss out his fellow musicians – and anyone else who would pay heed – for the merest hint of profanity, an off-colour comment about a lady or for taking a few too many sips of the old 'shine, Billy The Kid Emerson did write some slightly outrageous – though excellent – lyrics.

He was responsible for composing and recording more than a few songs that you would have thought were, at best, somewhat indiscreet. The fact that all the guys referred to him as 'The Preacher' and that he did finally become a man of the Church – The Reverend William Robert Emerson – make it all the more curious that he would sing, with conviction, such lyrics as 'My gal is Red hot, your girl 'aint doodly squat' – his song *Red Hot*. Then there's one of my favourite blues lyrics, *Buzzard Luck*, which starts off inoffensively enough, 'ain't nothin' in my pockets but the bottom, that's more than I can say for my shoes' before going into 'I left my little home in Texas, spent three years in Illinois, and when I got home I was disgusted, I had a month old baby boy. She took me to court, the judge said boy you're stuck, and man that's nothing but buzzard luck'. That was from his brilliant *Buzzard Luck* which we recorded for the Big Bear Records *American Blues Legends '79* album.

By no means all of Billy the Kid's recorded output was near the knuckle, and he did record some fine songs. Check out *Every Woman I Know – Is Crazy 'Bout An Automobile*. Born in Tarpon Springs in Florida, he learned piano in church, joined the U.S. Navy in 1943, received an athletic scholarship at Florida A & M University but quit to enlist in the United States Air Force during the Korean War in 1952. Stationed in Greenville, Mississippi he joined Ike Turner's Kings of Rhythm which led to him signing to Sam Phillips' Sun Records, where Ike was a talent scout. His first of many Sun singles *No Teasing Around* was released in 1954. Billy The Kid's song *When it Rains* was later recorded by Elvis Presley and his *Red Hot* became a hit for Billy Lee Riley and for Bob Luman.

He relocated to Chicago, signing to Vee Jay. His *Every Woman I Know* was covered by Sam The Sham and The Pharaohs and later by Ry Cooder. He moved to Chess Records, known to that town's bluesmen as Cadillac Records, and had his songs recorded by Buddy Guy, Junior Wells, Willie Mabon and Wynonie Harris.

The late 1970s saw Billy dedicate himself to religion, composing Gospel songs before, taking of the Baptist church in Oak View, Illinois, a Chicago suburb. Ultimately in 2012 he returned home to Florida to found his own Holy Praise Apostolic Church of Jesus where he preaches fire and brimstone, angrily refuses to talk about Elvis, Sun Records and The Blues and was reported to be 'as prickly as a crown of thorns' by The *Tampa Bay Times*.

I would like to think that the last album by Eddie C. Campbell, a constant butt of Billy The Kid's criticism on that *American Blues Legends '79* tour, is in no way any reference to his tormentor. The title of Eddie's 2012 album, which was nominated for a Blues Music Award, was *Spider Eating Preacher*.

JIM SIMPSON

BOOK REVIEW

HEART FULL OF RHYTHM

RICKY RICCARDI

Oxford University Press, hardback, 978 0 19 091411 0, £26.99

Ricky Riccardi, Director of Research Collections at the Louis Armstrong House Museum and Armstrong obsessive, is probably the world's top authority on the great man in terms of charting and placing his career. Without any particular axe to grind, he is also refreshingly free of musical snobbery and is happy to celebrate Louis as an entertainer rather than purely a jazzman.

Riccardi's first Armstrong book, *What a Wonderful World*, by its very title told us that he respected the sort of thing the jazz mafia sneers at. This was aimed at re-focussing attention on the All Stars years – 1948 onwards. Since then he has realised that the real 'uncharted territory' is the middle years, the time between the Hot Five/Seven and the All Stars when Armstrong became a major star, mostly fronting big bands, some mediocre, many stunningly good, and then began to slide out of fashion. As someone who loves those warmly authoritative vocal and instrumental statements of classy popular songs (from *Ain't Misbehavin'* onwards), I found it a joy to share Riccardi's enthusiasm, though his defence of some

of the more outre Armstrong offerings, Hawaiian guitars and all, is not always convincing!

First and foremost *Heart Full of Rhythm* is a meticulously researched and chronologically arranged account of the years from 1929 to 1947, though the final chapter carries the addition 'and beyond' and an Epilogue gives a brief summary of Armstrong's final years. If Riccardi tells you something, you have to believe it: 50 pages of notes confirm his research and he constantly quotes from contemporary sources, often absorbing them into his own text, resulting in an occasional clunkiness of style balanced by an overwhelming sense of authenticity.

Riccardi's narrative is full of sharp insights. From our perspective we too often see Armstrong's career in terms of recordings (hence the over-emphasis on the admittedly wonderful Hot Five tracks), but in the 1930s Louis was a huge star in vaudeville and was making his way in films (highly praised as a comedian) – Riccardi's Prologue has him breaking box office records at Harlem's Apollo Theatre.

The book makes clear the changes and developments in Armstrong's style in the 1930s, from the exciting (and excitable) high note innovator of the early years through severe lip trouble into the more mature, broadly melodic, artist – though still with plenty of fire when needed. He also works his way

steadily through Armstrong's managerial shifts: from Tommy Rockwell to Johnny Collins (who acted like a gangster, but wasn't one) to Joe Glaser (who was, but who suited Louis).

Oddly a book filled with Armstrong's sunny personality and Riccardi's unquenchable enthusiasm quite often inspired anger in me, for two main reasons: racism and the critics, sometimes combined together. The 1931 tour of the South will do as an exemplar of racism on the road. Mary Collins (white) was acting as tour manager and had hired a de luxe bus to take the band to Little Rock. Changing buses at Memphis landed the band, handcuffed, in jail, subjected to violent threats, for such offences as letting a black man sit by a white woman and refusing to change to a much inferior bus. After they had finally been released on Johnny Collins' intervention, the band played Little Rock, then returned for gigs in Memphis, only to find the first five rows of seats at the Midnight Ramble taken up by wildly applauding policemen! With Armstrong there's always a funny side, even to such barbaric events: when his valet, Sherman Cook, revealed in jail that he had 'a great big joint all neatly wrapped' and they could be in worse trouble, he and Armstrong immediately smoked the evidence.

Riccardi effectively disposes of the accusations of Louis being an Uncle Tom, always an absurd idea, by showing that his humour

was the same with black friends as with white audiences, even in private, with his joke books: he liked some corny old minstrel gags, it's true, but that's no crime and in performance his exuberance carried everything. A further irritation comes from the critics who believed either that everything after the Hot Five was worthless commercialism or that the 1940s Armstrong was hopelessly out of date – of course, opinion is free, but the sense of superiority and, sometimes, casual racism infuriate. Leonard Feather, eminent though he was, has never struck me as a man of any generosity of spirit and Riccardi's accounts of him alternately penning spiteful reviews and buddying up to Armstrong (who apparently liked him) or insinuating his own piano playing and anaemic blues compositions onto record dates confirmed my prejudices.

Heart Full of Rhythm is not perfect – the photographs, interesting in themselves, are dully reproduced and the index looks great until you try to use it – but it is indispensable for anyone looking to confirm Louis Armstrong's greatness as jazz musician and entertainer.

RON SIMPSON



COMPETITION WINNERS

Well done to everyone who responded to our competition in issue 163 with the correct answers.

The song that Louis sang to a horse in *Going Places* was *Jeepers Creepers*, while the Panamanian pianist was Luis Russell.

Out of the entries we received, we're pleased to say that Roy Yates and Colin Middlebrough now have a copy of *Heart Full of Rhythm* on the way to them.

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