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CHICKENBONE JOHN

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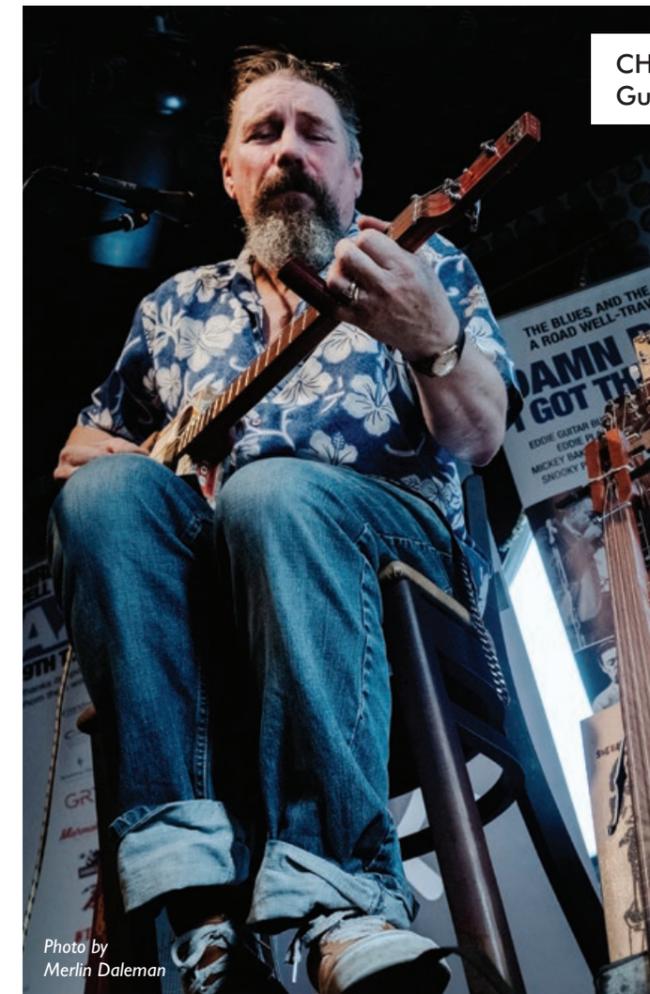


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CHICKENBONE JOHN, The Godfather of the Cigar Box Guitar, featured in HENRY'S BLUESLETTER (pages 32-33)

FIND US ON FACEBOOK

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

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UPFRONT

Decca Records recently proudly announced that an auction would be held on July 6 to raise funds for Decca Bursary. So far, so estimable! Decca Bursary has already supported many schools and individuals in making their way in music.

However, jazz fans – ever-ready to take note of real or imagined prejudice against jazz, probably because so often it is real – were shocked to find that such items as 11 original test pressings of Tubby Hayes albums were to be auctioned off to help fund 'young artists overcoming difficulties when entering the classical world'. Jazz sold off to fund classical music (which gets much more funding anyway), ran the cry!

Actually, it's not as simple as that. Other items are classically-based or related to no particular style of music (a day in Universal Studios, for instance), but the simple question remains: it is admirable to fund struggling young classical musicians, but why only classical? Jazz musicians have at least as many difficulties to overcome and are equally valuable to the music community.

NEWS

FESTIVAL DOUBLE FOR NEWCASTLE

In the space of six weeks Newcastle-on-Tyne boasts two jazz festivals. The Newcastle Jazz Festival (August 13-15) has Jay Phelps and Dennis Rollins as headliners, while the Newcastle Festival of Jazz and Improvised Music (September 30-October 3) features such names as Fergus McCreadie, Zoe Rahman and Pat Thomas.

www.newcastlejazzfestival.co.uk
www.newcastlefestivalofjazzandimprovisedmusic.com

REVIEW OF JAZZ IN ENGLAND

Following a delay caused by – what else – the Covid pandemic, the All Party Jazz Appreciation Group launched a Review of Jazz in England on May 28. The review is being undertaken by APPJAG's secretary, Chris Hodgkins, and an expert advisory panel. The deadline for responding to this review has been extended to August 1 and details, briefing papers and questionnaires can be found on www.appjag.org/review-of-jazz-in-england.

JAZZ AT THE SPA

Where once Max Jaffa ruled supreme in the Palm Court, Scarborough Spa, is now host to the always excellent Scarborough Jazz Festival every September – not quite every September, of course, as 2020 was inevitably postponed, with much of the programme transferred to September 24-26, 2021. Newcomers to Scarborough include pianist Fergus McCreadie, violinist John Pearce (in duo with Dave Newton) and gypsy jazz group Django. Old favourites

return of course, with Alan Barnes resuming his Lancashire comedian role as MC as well as closing the Festival with his Octet playing *Jazz Portraits*. A mere three days packs in a host of top groups and musicians: Hans Koller's Bird Migration Big Band (not likely to be a conventional Charlie Parker at 100 tribute), Tony Kofi's Portrait of Cannonball, Zoe Gilby, Nikki Iles' Jazz Orchestra, the Julian Joseph Trio and many more. www.scarboroughspa.co.uk/event/scarborough-jazz-festival-september-2021

VENTURING AWAY TO JAZZ

Venture Away Music Weekends have two tempting jazz programmes on offer this year, both three nights in top-class seaside hotels with five traditional jazz bands. Blackpool Jazz and Lights at the Savoy Hotel (September 17-20) features New Orleans Heat, Baby Jools and the Jazzaholics, the Eagle Jazz Band and the Savannah Jazz Band, while the first three bands return for the Torquay Jazz Weekend (November 5-8), together with the Dart Valley Stompers and the Riviera Ramblers Hot Rhythm Band. www.ventureawaymusicweekends.co.uk

RETURN OF HERTS FEST

The 10th Herts Jazz Festival has been able to retain much of the line-up from last year's cancelled festival and comes back stronger than ever. The festival at South Mill Arts in Bishops Stortford has a full-length concert each of three evenings, headlined by the Darius Brubeck Quartet (October 15), Liane Carroll (16) and the Simon Spillett Big Band (17). Saturday and Sunday daytimes are stuffed with an



Jay Phelps

excellent programme of top British bands and musicians in single-set concerts, with such names as Dave Newton, Art Themen, Gilad Atzmon, Nikki Iles/Stan Sulzmann and John Etheridge with Vasilis Xenopoulos.

www.hertsjazzfestival.co.uk

VARIED PROGRAMME AT RONNIE'S

In the absence of imported talent, Ronnie Scott's has put together an excellent programme of top British players, with more one- and two-nighters than usual and fewer week runs. Apart from performances by the various house bands, a sampling of the next two months' calendar comes up with the James Taylor Quartet (July 12-14), Liane Carroll (17-18), James Pearson with a portrait of Dudley Moore (21), John Etheridge's Sweet Chorus (22), Alex Garnett's London Supersax Project (30), Polly Gibbons (August 4), James Copus (5), Laurence Cottle with the Music of Jaco Pistorius (6), Omar Puente Cuban Sextet (13), Jim Mullen's Volunteers (16), Martin Taylor (17) and Adrian Cox and his Quartet (22). www.ronniescotts.co.uk

ONWARD AND UPWARD AT TEIGNMOUTH – IN 2022!

The popular West Country event, the Teignmouth Jazz Festival, has fallen victim to the pandemic in a slightly different way. This year's festival has been cancelled not because of social distancing regulations, but because the main venue has been converted into flats during lockdown and because the festival is, unaccountably, not eligible for the recovery fund. The organisers are currently negotiating a deal with the local Yacht Club which, if successful, will make it, in the words of the organisers, 'the swankiest jazz club in the region worthy of the icons of 40s New York and Chicago'. So, with funds built up again and a classy new venue, Teignmouth 2022 promises much!

EFG LONDON FESTIVAL GOES AHEAD!

The EFG London Jazz Festival returns on November 12 to 20. Already arranged for the festival are the regular opener, Jazz Voice, at the Royal Festival Hall, and a programme including Dave Holland and John Scofield



Simon Spillett

Photo by
Merlin Daleman

(Cadogan Hall), Vijay Iyer/Linda May Han Oh/Tyshawn Sorey, London Sinfonietta and Laura Jurd and Nu Civilisation Orchestra (all Queen Elizabeth Hall), Cleveland Watkiss and Django Bates and the Average White Band (both Royal Festival Hall) and Kandace Springs (Alexandra Palace Theatre). www.efglondonjazzfestival.org.uk

SLIGHT DELAY AT TJCUK

The Jazz Centre UK had announced that it would reopen on June 26 with new exhibits. The look and feel of its Walkthrough History of Jazz is re-modelled and new exhibits celebrate British jazz artists and the history of the 100 Club, also also the subject of a new book edited by Digby Fairweather. Unfortunately, reopening has been delayed for possibly a month. The good news is that the jazz centre will have a splendid new floor after work on the plumbing of its home at the Beecroft Art Gallery, Southend-on-Sea. www.thejazzcentreak.co.uk

CONCORDE CLUB JAZZ

Wednesday is again the chosen day for jazz at the Concorde Club, Eastleigh, with the Ben Holder Quartet (July 14), the John Maddocks Jazzmen (21) and Bix, Bunny & Billy with Enrico Tomasso (28). Yolanda Brown (29) appears on a special Thursday evening concert. August is given over to traditional jazz, with the Solent City Jazzmen (11), the Sussex Jazz Kings (18) and John Maddocks Jazzmen (25),

plus an extra Sunday lunch with The Golden Eagle Jazz Band (29). Already booked for September are the Scott Hamilton Quartet (1), Georgie Fame & Sons (8) and the Swing Unlimited Big Band (29), with Louisa Revolta's Celebration of Ella Fitzgerald (6) and Martin Taylor and Ulf Wakenius (20) lined up for October, plus another Thursday night special with King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys (7). www.theconcordeclub.com

WHITLEY BAY CLASSICS

Mike Durham's International Classic Jazz Party, aka the Whitley Bay Jazz Festival, has been providing classic jazz on Tyneside since 1990. This year's festival, at the Village Hotel, Silverlink North on North Tyneside on November 5-7, is somewhat overshadowed by the sad death of popular Festival stalwart Keith Nichols, but the programme will serve as a suitable tribute to a fine pianist with a keen appreciation of classic jazz. The Jazz Party assembles over 30 international soloists in a packed programme of themed single-set concerts. It's difficult to do justice to the Whitley Bay line-up, but the reeds alone consist of Brits Richard Exall and David Horniblow alongside Germany's Claus Jacobi, Australia's Michael McQuaid, Norway's Lars Frost, France's Jean-Francois Bonnel and Italy's Mauro Porro. As for the concert themes, again too numerous to list, there are tributes, among many others, to Henry 'Red' Allen, Muggsy Spanier,

Jimmie Noone, King Oliver, Bing Crosby, Sam Wooding, Red Nichols, Oscar Aleman and Fletcher Henderson. www.whitleybayjazzfest.com

SEPTEMBER IN THE PARK

Jazz festivals have taken many different approaches to dealing with the Covid pandemic and for Bristol Jazz and Blues Festival the admirable solution has been to follow several individual events with a September Festival in Lakota Gardens on September

2-5. Four days of top-class jazz includes an album launch with the Jazz Defenders and three or four nicely contrasted high-quality acts each of the four days. Sampling the bill comes up with Liane Carroll, Adrian Cox, Pee Wee Ellis/Ian Shaw, Dennis Rollins' Funky Funk and the Electric Lady Big Band. www.bristoljazzandbluesfest.com

KIRKCUDBRIGHT JAZZ

Among different stratagems adopted by jazz festivals to make sure they can still operate, the 23rd Kirkcudbright Jazz Festival opted for a four-month postponement. So the good news is that this celebration of Trad, New Orleans, Dixieland and Swing Jazz on the beautiful Solway Firth will go ahead on October 14-17, with The Big Easy and The Red Hot Rhythmakers among bands already announced. www.kirkcudbrightjazzfestival.co.uk

CROWDFUNDING MARSDEN

The popular and well-established festival at Marsden in the Pennines is faced with additional expenses in the wake of Covid. To ensure the festival goes ahead in October, the Festival needs £10,000 which it hopes to raise by crowdfunding. www.crowdfunder.co.uk/help-bring-marsden-jazz-festival-back-in-2021

Darius Brubeck



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UPCOMING EVENTS

The upcoming programme for the Stables, Wavendon, takes a healthy swing towards jazz in August and September. After Ronnie Scott's All Star Band (August 7), Clare Teal (21) and the Darius Brubeck Quartet (25) complete the month's programme. The Pasadena Roof Orchestra (8) kick off the September programme, followed by Ma Bessie and her Blues Troupe (15), Shakatak (18), Joanna Eden and Enrico Tomasso with an Ella and Louis tribute (19 – 11.30 am) and Eduardo Niebla (19). www.stables.org

With Festival cancellations continuing and foreign bookings impossible for the moment, King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys are still managing to get back on the road. Upcoming dates includes The Powder Monkey, Gosport (August 14), Twinwood Festival (27), 45 Live, Kidderminster (29), Astor Theatre, Deal (September 11), Aberystwyth Arts Centre (October 6), The Concorde Club, Eastleigh (7) and The Regal Theatre, Tenbury Wells (29). www.bigbearmusic.com

October is the month for jazz and jazz-related events at the Sage Gateshead: Jamie Cullum (2), Nikki Iles Jazz Orchestra (9), Triptych with visual artist Lisa Delarney (16), Michael Feinstein (22) and GoGo Penguin (23) www.sagegateshead.com

The 17-month hiatus in the monthly Friday lunch-time sessions of the Brian Rutland Band at the Tattershall Castle on the Thames comes to an end on September 3. Guest star is Alan Barnes.

Jazz North's Back to Live scheme works with northern venues to bring musicians back to audiences. The activities involve rehearsals, photoshoots and development sessions, plus performing for a live audience. The launch of the project was in Morecambe and Birkenhead in early June and the next event is at the Crescent, York, with Jemma Freese and SogoRock on July 17 and 18. www.jazznorth.org



Jamie Cullum

Playing the music of Art Tatum is not easy at the best of times, but twice in one day! The Joe Webb Trio are the brave musicians on August 20: at the Lit and Phil in Newcastle (1.00 pm) and Saltburn Arts (7.30 pm). Saltburn Arts also hosts Abbie Finn's Finntet on September 3.

North East theatres hosting jazz events include the Gala Theatre, Durham – Zoe Gilby Quartet, August 27, 1.00 pm, and Gosforth Civic Theatre – Martin Taylor and Martin Simpson, October 7.

Graham Brook's Tuesday Night Jazz at Wilmslow Conservative Club resumes in August, with, as usual, many of the sessions featuring a top-class saxist with an excellent rhythm section, often led by Andrzej Baranek. Liam Byrne starts the ball rolling (with guitarist Tony Ormesher also on board) on August 3 and Alan Barnes (17), Frank Griffith (31) and Alex Clarke (September 7) follow suit. Exceptions are the Lucy Lockwood Quartet (10) and singer Sheila Waterfield (24). www.grahambrookjazz.co.uk

EXTRA DAYS FOR COVID

It's an interesting question: at a time when all music festivals are finding it difficult to operate at full capacity because of Covid restrictions, why should a jazz festival suddenly decide to add seven days to its programme? In the end it's all quite logical, if still a little strange!

The Birmingham, Sandwell and Westside Jazz Festival has settled into a successful and popular format: 10 days mid-late July, well over 200 events, the vast majority free, in nearly 100 different venues, a shrewd eye for young European groups who soon become Festival favourites, a programme that takes in jitterbug classes, photography projects, harmonica workshops, ukulele sessions and much else.

This year's festival scheduled for July 16 to 25 was bound to have some differences from usual. The Continental connection was broken, possibly by Brexit, certainly temporarily by Covid, so there was no place for Spain's Potato Head Jazz Band or The Jim Dandies from Italy, for instance, or the regular appearance of a group from Lithuania. The Festival depends on the involvement of countless bars, pubs and restaurants, and that number was certain to reduce: sadly the pandemic has driven many hospitality venues out of business and others were wary of committing at this time. Occasional novelties such as Barber Shop Quartets were ruled out – that's an awful lot of people close together singing loudly!

However, within these limits, a festival that was recognisably typical of Birmingham emerged: 135 events may be much less than 2019's 235, but it's still a lot of festival. Jitterbugging, playing harmonicas and ukuleles,

sketching and taking photographs were still on the agenda. Then the date for relaxing lockdown moved from June 21 to July 19, cutting across the first weekend of the Festival. Now there's no objection to having a jazz event with social distancing – one or two jazzers, such as Miles Davis, even practised it – but bar owners hoping for a big turn-out were not always keen on the idea.

So that's when the first 17-day Birmingham Jazz Festival was created. Some of the events of the first weekend were moved to July 30-August 1 and the Monday-Thursday of July 26-29 became part of the Festival, though with few events.

So, even if 30-event days are not on the menu, the 37th Birmingham, Sandwell and Westside Festival (July 16-August 1) has plenty to offer. Regular favourites such as Festival Patron Digby Fairweather, Art Themen, Bruce Adams, Alan Barnes, Tipitina, Alex Clarke, Roy Forbes, Simon Spillett, The Whiskey Brothers and The Shufflepack (among many others) return, together with some notable first-timers.

The award-winning Cajun and Zydeco band, The Cajun Roosters, The Old Jelly Rollers, with the vibrant music of New Orleans, and Old Baby Mackerel's traditional bluegrass are all making their Birmingham Festival debuts, as is the classic jazz pianist Martin Litton, appearing

with Janice Day. Occasional visitors in the past, Spats Langham's Hot Fingers is another group guaranteed to blow the Covid blues away!

And nearly all the off-beat events are in place, together with an unprecedented number of Book Signings and Meet the Author sessions, with Digby's book on the 100 Club top of the list.



Spats Langham's Hot Fingers

I GET A KICK OUT OF...

LIZ BIDDLE, of the popular and successful Upbeat label, answers the questions...



What track or album turned you on to jazz?

Actually it wasn't a track as such, it was at the start of my days at Upbeat Management when I was managing The Temperance Seven. As their manager, I tried hard to get them an album deal with a major label and eventually decided to branch out on my own – and record them myself – with a lot of help from Ted Taylor of Porcupine Studios – and Upbeat Recordings was born – March 1989 – last century!!

What was the first jazz gig you went to?

I was very much into classical music in my youth and I guess the first gig, after launching The Temperance Seven's album, was to see Terry Lightfoot and his band.

What is your favourite jazz album and why?

Having produced over 200 albums, that is such a difficult question to answer as when I'm in the middle of a release, it's always my favourite one at the time!

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

I think I would have to say most memorable rather than best – and that was going to see Humph with the wonderful John Griffith – at the Bull at Barnes – and when Humph finished the first set he said, 'I didn't know the trumpet was so hard to play!' Wonderful man and much missed!

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

Nothing 'live' of course due to Covid, but I have been looking at T J Johnson's Zoom events – I just love his playing – and he's really worked hard during the lockdowns to keep on bringing his music to his many fans.

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

It has to be a choice of two – our release of *The Dynamic Valaida Snow* – such fab music and what a sassy lady! And also the Ron Russell and Digby Fairweather double album we released earlier this year – *The Ron Russell Legacy* – such lovely music and I do so love working with Digs.

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

I think it would have to be two –

Louis and Lil Armstrong. Louis had such an amazing upbringing and I do think Lil is much underrated – I'd just like to have a drink and just chill with them and learn more about their lives first-hand.

How is Upbeat faring in these difficult times?

Even though I am being told that the audience is dwindling, Upbeat Mail Order continues to thrive and our customers continue to be loyal and grow in numbers – which is terrific. Long may it last.

The photograph is the one from my Upbeat Recordings Facebook Page with me and the first day I met my dog of a lifetime – Jasmine – Jas for short – my beautiful German Shepherd Cross that I rescued from Spain. Sadly I had to say goodbye last November but she will always be my mascot.



Old Baby Mackerel

CD2 Sam Donahue & The Navy Band Vol.1: Convoy
Sam Donahue directs The Band of the U. S. Navy Liberation Forces on these historic V-Disc and live performances including rare alternates from 1945. Titles: Convoy, Deep Night, I've Found A New Baby, Moten Swing, Homeward Bound, Lonesome Nights, Saxophone Sam, Without A Song, Bugle Call Rag plus 10 more CD2 MCPS Licence 32325 0013A 6/7/94

CD5 Sam Donahue & The Navy Band Vol.2: LST Party
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CD25 Sam Donahue & His Orchestra Hollywood Hop
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CD71 Sam Donahue Orchestra Take Five Studio & transcription performances from 1945-47.
Titles: Song Of The Seabees, Drunken Sailor, Farewell to Grog, Maid of Amsterdam, Dinah, Gypsy Sweetheart, Moten Swing, Take Five, Convoy, Just The Other Day Plus 14 more. CD71 MCPS Licence 12741041A 23/10/02

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JAZZ IN LOCKDOWN

So how was it for you? In the hope that the current hints of returning normality will be continued, we invited various musicians to reflect on the last 15 months:



Bruce Adams

Photo by Merlin Daleman

Bruce Adams:

Due to prophetic powers handed down to me by my Irish great grandmother or my Welsh great grannie – the jury's out on who was the best with the tea leaves – I initially decided, as the gigs haemorrhaged from my diary, to be positive and treat this blip as a sabbatical. I reckoned we'd be in for a tough year so I could practise a lot of things I felt I should do better. Having worked for 58 years up to the beginning of lockdown, I'd seen just about everything. If this had happened to me 20 years earlier, things could have been a lot worse for me, like it has for so many of my friends and colleagues. I'm comparatively lucky.

A big down side for me was missing hanging out with my musical pals. Where I live, I have Alan Barnes, Tina May, Simon Spillett, Karen Street and Ollie Hayhurst as neighbours.

The fact that the damage done will probably take years to repair must be a daunting prospect for

younger jazz players who haven't even got a healthy commercial sector to seek refuge in, or the likelihood of good work in the EU which I was fortunate to have for many years prior to Brexit. I have musician friends in France who were given immediate substantial help and continue to receive it. In the U.K. this type of support is unlikely, and will undoubtedly lead to the loss of some fine talent.

Some promoters, through being sheer bloody minded, have managed to produce gigs out of a hat. For that we're eternally grateful. We're looking at a different world, I just hope it's one that we can build on. We certainly need it.

Mark Skirving (King Pleasure & The Biscuit Boys):

At the opening of 2020 things seemed to be on a positive upturn and with plenty of work in the diary I was looking forward to a busy year and getting back in the black. Well!

It's been a tough struggle, but a big thanks goes to the MU, PRS and PPL who really helped out in the early days of lockdown, together with a handful of oil painting commissions that came my way. Luckily, I had the luxury of my family, our continued good health, a lovely garden and plenty of glorious weather. Lockdown gave me chance to take stock, really appreciate the importance of all those things and endless creative time to write a new album and a book of what's best described as poetic fumbblings.

I've missed live music, the camaraderie of my band mates and the friends we make at gigs. Like Superman, I can't wait to slip back into the blue suit and fly high once again.

Digby Fairweather:

Despite the restrictions, lockdown hasn't been all bad for me. For one thing it enabled me to finish our newest Jazz Centre UK project celebrating the 100 Club and produce our book about its history called *Ace of Clubs*. There was also some time for a bit of artistic self-assessment – if that doesn't sound too pious! – and although the chops got wobbly they'll be back in fighting condition by summer!

Roan Kearsley-Lawson:

My music work, and those of many others I gave work to, has been decimated by the pandemic. Unfortunately these difficulties will remain until social distancing and audience caps are removed. I certainly cannot afford to run

any gigs until normality returns. In the meantime payments from the government and the likes of the Arts Council and PRS are a lifeline for the industry. The reality is many lives have been lost, many more grieved and the sacrifice we musicians have made was necessary, and the only course for a loving society. My hope is the world when it opens up will recognise this sacrifice and happily return the love. My fellow musicians that remain at the other end, with our skills and faculties mostly intact, live in hope, we await our campaign medals and pay rises with great anticipation!

During lockdown Roan seized the opportunity of creating a rather unusual album...

If you need to observe social distancing, what better than making an album where you play all the instruments and act as recording engineer. Roan Kearsley-Lawson's contribution to lockdown culture is an assured and consistently enjoyable album, Mostly Me, available digitally on 144 Records (43.40). It's mostly, not completely, him because the last tune was written for him by the late Duncan Lamont, so the quartet swings out to Roan's Groove on the final track.

Roan is best known as a fine vibes player, but admits to multi-instrumentalism on his website: he mentions piano and percussion and they more than stand up to scrutiny on the album, some evocative piano solos particularly. He can certainly add double bass on this evidence, far more than just time-keeping,

with, appropriately enough, his longest and most satisfying solo on Morgan's Manor, dedicated to bassist Paul Morgan.

Roan's six compositions are genuinely melodic, nicely contrasted and, rather charmingly, mostly related to friends in the business, promoters and suchlike – one way of maintaining human contact in February 2021. Roan's musicianship is shown in the way he makes Latin Exchange – a kind of African-Caribbean number – sound just right on vibes, piano, bass and drums, though I rather fancy hearing it in its original form for orchestral timpani, baritone sax and guitar!

www.roankearsleylawson.co.uk/144records-shop

R.S.

Alan Barnes:

Finding myself with more free time than I've had for years, I decided to put together *Copperfield*, a new suite for my octet based on the Dickens novel. The book and my band both feature larger than life characters so it was a real pleasure to write. Mark Nightingale checked over the scores via Zoom in a series of calls that amounted to a full course in composition and arranging. I learnt a lot and we have a new bookable 2-hour show. Just got to get the band to agree to dress up in Victorian clothes now.

Tom Hill:

I think many of us in the musical community used lockdown to re-boot. I missed live gigs terribly, but got onto a site where I was able to take some video lessons from one of the top jazz double bassists in the world. He kindly picked my playing apart and really gave me some motivation that I think has kicked me up a level in performance and concept of the bass's role in jazz. I've seen many amazing examples of how other musicians have turned the lemons of lockdown into lemonade – if you gotta play then you're gonna play!

Claire Martin:

During lockdown I decided I would try and develop my skills as a studio producer and started a production company with the brilliant trombonist and studio owner Chris Traves. Chris and

I work really well together and he has a brilliant set up in his attic in his house in South East London. I'm proud to say that our new company Soup to Nuts Productions has produced two albums so far since launching: Jenny Green's *Always and Forever* and Wilma Baan's debut *So Nice*. We have another three albums lined up for the rest of this year and we are currently writing some ambient meditation music for a friend who will come and record her spoken word meditations over the top. It's been really interesting and I've learnt so much from Chris. It was a natural progression for me as I do have a lot of studio experience and I am really keen to help all singers really make the most of their studio time, which can be quite stressful unless well organised. As a Virgo, I live for organisation so it's working well!

<https://souptonutsproductions/>

Clark Tracey:

I was lucky enough to have a teaching job throughout the lockdown, so that helped financially. I also had half a dozen well paid live streams, but of course none of this has provided a decent income. I started a quiz show called *Jazz Lockdown* on YouTube based on *Jazz Score*, raising some money for charity and the musicians taking part. Lockdown gave me the opportunity to concentrate on the Resteamed Records label, dedicated to my father, releasing two double CDs and revamping the website. In addition I have been transferring his old manuscripts onto freshly printed scores and making them available for purchase and performance.

Art Themen:

I've been able to keep busy with two recordings, one with Dave Green, Dave Barry and Gareth Williams, the other with Pete Whittaker and George Double – Thane and the Villeins. This resulted in two BBC radio broadcasts and a flurry of gigs for the trio starting last summer which were stopped short by COVID. I took part in Ronnie Scott's anniversary celebrations and played a single gig in Norway before the latest lockdown confined me to a handful of Zoom gigs including one with John Etheridge at the 606 Club.



Claire Martin

Enrico Tomasso:

I initiated a weekly livestream at the start of lockdown. The main benefit for me was getting the horn out every week to play alongside pre-recorded accompaniments that I organised every week with many talented pianists and guitarists from over the world.

However, an unforeseen positive was a formation of an online community of people looking forward each week not only to checking out the music, but to chatting to each other via the Facebook comment feature. I am still hearing new comments from people saying how the show was a ray of light during bleak times.



Roan Kearsley-Lawson



Mark Skirving

Photo by Merlin Daleman



Art Themen

Photo by Merlin Daleman

CROSSING THE OCEAN

RON SIMPSON discovers the background to *Atlantico*, the recently released album on Fremaux et Associes by celebrated guitarist FAPY LAFERTIN with his New Quartet.



Probably the main growth area in jazz over the last two or three decades has been in Hot Club jazz, gypsy or Django-style jazz or whatever you want to call it. Many groups all over the world express their allegiance in names which incorporate one of the words 'Django', 'Gypsy' or 'Manouche' or begin 'Hot Club de...' It would be fair to say that most of these groups are skilled and their music is attractive, but, while some develop individual approaches to the music, others can be seen as frankly derivative.

So what does the man long ago described as the true heir of Django Reinhardt think about being forever linked to the great man? Fapy Lafertin, born in Courtrai, Belgium, in 1950, a guitarist from the age of five, is happy to be associated with the name of Django, but has a warning for those who think that Django's legacy is simple:

'That was said of me a while back now, but I am still flattered. I would hope by this they don't just mean that I play Django's music very well. The music that Django expressed had many influences from all directions, he soaked up music from many cultures, not just jazz from America. You can hear as many musical characteristics clearly coming from the East in his music as you can from Louis

comfortably in any camp. Not jazzy enough for jazz, not gypsy enough to be world music. Which is probably why for years it seemed to be performed as much in folk clubs as in jazz venues.'

Fapy Lafertin's career has been a matter of expanding horizons, both geographically and stylistically. He played many instruments as a child before concentrating on the guitar and, like many Sinti Manouche musicians, began in a family band with his father on violin and his brother on rhythm guitar. His first experience playing the Hot Club style of jazz was in the band of violinist Piotti Limberger. Fapy became known outside Belgium in the 1970s with the band Waso, playing a big part in the revival of interest in music in the Django tradition. The next stage in his career involved forming his own quintet in the Netherlands with such musicians as saxist Rudi Brink and violinist Tim Kliphuis. Meanwhile he was playing as a solo with top American artists, including such different guitarists as Al Casey and Charlie Byrd as well as Benny Waters, Milt Hinton, Scott Hamilton and many others. At the Glasgow Jazz Festival he even formed a direct link to Django himself by playing with Stephane Grappelli.

Later he worked and recorded with a British group Lejazz, with violinist Steve Elsworth and

Dave Kelbie as second guitar, which recorded two highly acclaimed albums in the mid-1990s. Meanwhile, however, he was writing new songs in Romani with Bamboula Ferret which led to the release of the album *Ou Welto Risella (The World is Turning)* in 2011. At the same time he was developing an intense interest in Portuguese *fado* and Brazilian *choro* and beginning to play a 12-string Portuguese *guitarra* alongside his trademark Maccaferri.

Asked about the major influences on his own music, Fapy rather apologetically identifies them as 'musicians and composers I haven't played with', adding instantly, 'Of course I mean no disrespect to the incredible musicians I've been lucky enough to work with.' Inevitably Django is one of the major influences; the others may surprise anyone who associates Fapy Lafertin solely with gypsy jazz. Carlos Peredes was a Portuguese guitar virtuoso; Pedro Caldeira Cabral, also a guitarist, is an expert in early Iberian music; Amalia Rodrigues was a celebrated *fado* singer and actress; Jacob do Bandolim was a Brazilian composer and mandolinist whose evocative *Vibracoes* is to be heard on Fapy's current CD, *Atlantico*.

The album, recorded in Tintigny in Southern Belgium in 2017, is called *Atlantico* for a reason:



'The title is a suggestion that the album is a collection of material influenced by musics both from here in Europe and in the Americas, separated only by an ocean, but connected in many ways.' Fapy had earlier brought up the concept of 'world music', a term that can sometimes be applied very loosely, but there's no doubt that the press release that labels *Atlantico* as 'Jazz' and 'World Music' has got it right on both counts.

The group on the album is billed as the Fapy Lafertin New Quartet. Why new, I wondered? Of course it is new in the sense that it's his current band, but generally a musician would have a special reason for using the word 'new', something different from his previous groups:

'The main characteristic of this band is the wide range of interests of the musicians, wildly differing musical background and training, but with a great musical respect for each other.'

An early influence on violinist Alexandre Tripodi was Tcha Limberger with whom he plays in Les Violons de Bruxelles, a group which also includes the solitary guitar of Renaud Dardenne who, having studied jazz guitar, is now also much involved in the music of Greece and South America. After guesting with Les Violons, Fapy conceived the idea of forming a trio with Alexandre and Renaud. In fact it came to be a quartet, with drummer/pianist/bassist Cedric Raymond joining on double bass. He strengthens the Brazilian element, working regularly in Belgium with Greg Houben, trumpeter and Brazilophile. The Portuguese/Brazilian element on the album is plain to see, but the quartet is as much at home crossing the North Atlantic and swinging through classics of the Great American Songbook.

The involvement of the other three members of the quartet on the album is total. Each contributes an original, all rather ambitious, atmospheric pieces, with Cedric Raymond taking us in yet another direction with *The Baltic*. Finally Raymond, who is also a sound engineer, took care of mixing while Tripodi looked after post-production.

The choice of material on *Atlantico* is attractively varied, with songs from Brazil, France and Hungary, three classic standards by Rodgers and Hart, Cole Porter and Richard Whiting and seven originals, four of them by Fapy himself. His compositions don't fall into any predictable category. If the spirit of the Hot Club hovers over *Carnation*, *Plachterida* clearly draws on Portuguese/Brazilian tradition. What all his compositions have in common is a subtle melodic gift. Asked about his inspiration, Fapy puts the emphasis back on the musicians:

'Some compositions you write and they wait for the right combination of musicians to perform them. Others come about naturally in respect to being around a certain combination of musicians. It's no different from performing standards. One wouldn't introduce *My Romance* into a set of musicians who didn't have poetic expression.'

'Melody is everything to me. And rhythm is everything to me. I'm known for writing strong melodies, but I don't think I could write a good melody without an understanding of rhythm, I mean the inherent rhythm on which a strong melody could sit. Albums that fail for me all have a characteristic of having rhythm as an afterthought.'

Listening to *Atlantico*, it's obvious that Fapy's words about being described as the true heir to Django Reinhardt are true in every respect. Being the true heir to Django doesn't mean adopting a Hot Club style and playing *Nuages* and *Minor Swing* every night. Of course it implies an influence on guitar style and technique and a certain approach to rhythm and melody, but most of all it involves creativity and an openness to other musics.

Fapy's delight in his 'new' quartet is equally obvious. Most interviews these days end with a question about what plans are afoot now that (hopefully) a more normal music scene is returning. Fapy's reply takes the prize for simplicity and honesty:

'I plan to play. With this quartet, hopefully.'

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BENNY MEETS DIZZY MEETS THE DUKE

RON SIMPSON sets the scene for an amiable interrogation of British jazz's Mr. Versatility, PETE LONG.

Pete Long's musical career began orthodoxly enough with study at the Royal London College of Music and membership of the National Youth Jazz Orchestra. Then he decided to join a rumba band on the *Queen Elizabeth II*. As the years have passed, he has been ever more difficult to pin down, with a multi-instrumentalist's ticket into studio work and long stints arranging for Jools Holland and, currently, Ronnie Scott's.

Ask any jazz fan and the chances are they will identify Pete Long with repertory projects, re-creating the music of jazz greats, but which jazz greats? Benny Goodman? Duke Ellington? Dizzy Gillespie? And, recently, he has cast his net even wider, with his re-working of Gustav Holst's *The Planets*. But this doesn't cover the range of Pete's work, even though I think he has abandoned rumba bands. I will never forget going to hear a Greek improvising harp player at the Half Note in Athens and finding that she was sharing the stage with one Pete Long!

So how does he see a career which, at the least, could be called interesting?

RS: You seem to have been a multi-instrumentalist from the start. Is this accurate? And why this need to keep adding instruments to your roster?

PL: I started, as many kids do, on the recorder at primary school. I got right up everyone's nose with it, playing *London's Burning* morning, noon and night. When I got to secondary school, we had a fife and drum band which I joined on fife. A fife is a small wooden piccolo thing. I really liked playing the marches on it, and I was envious of my mates at school who would get to leave regular classes to have a music lesson. I really fancied the idea of legitimately walking around the school while everyone else was stuck in classes. I feel this affinity with standing out of the mainstream is something shared by a lot of musicians. With all this in mind, I started to have lessons at school on the concert flute. At

about the same time I fell madly in love with the sound of Glenn Miller's band. My flute teacher was an old school dance band musician who trebled on flute, clarinet and saxophone. I wanted to have a slice of *In The Mood* really badly, so I changed to sax. I was listening to a lot of big band music at the time, and so between that and the example of my teacher, I knew from the get go that a working sax player needed the flute and clarinet to get on. About a year into this, I discovered the Benny Goodman concert from Carnegie Hall in 1938, and this really hastened my entry into the clarinet world. By the time I left school, I was reasonably proficient at all three. So I guess that I've always been a trebler, or as you put it, a multi-instrumentalist.

If you are a commercial trebler, you will end up with a lot of instruments. You will be expected to own and play all four saxes, the clarinet and bass clarinet, and the piccolo, flute and alto flute. In the States, you can be called to play the oboe, cor anglais and bassoon too. I had a lucky break on the oboe – I got to play the intro on *Handbags And Gladrags* by the Stereophonics. In royalty terms, it's the gift that keeps on giving! Needing access to all the various hooters can ignite a collecting urge. During

the lockdown, I have attempted to add the trombone, trumpet, guitar and bass to my repertoire. I can now play, with varying degrees of success, all the parts in the big band in my home studio. I could only really do a gig on the reed instruments at the moment, but give it time!

RS: Is there any instrument which you feel to be your main one?

PL: In my head, I'm a trumpeter. In reality, I have to make do on the clarinet. I'll play the sax or flute if someone asks.

RS: Could you tell me something about what we might pompously call your career trajectory? Has it been a matter of deliberate changes of direction or going where the work is or a combination of the two?

PL: Again, in my head, I've always been a jazzier. In the real world, I've felt a need commercially to turn my hand to other things, plus it's fun to play all the different hooters. I also like living in houses with carpets and food in them. Often, a jazzier's wages won't run to this. The fact that I'm perceived to be playing more jazz of late has been mainly market forces. Also, don't

forget that when I started out in the mid 80's, commercial work involved a lot more jazz content than it does now. For example, there would be the odd standard to play on a function gig, and on the ships we'd work with bona fide jazz artists such as Elaine Delmar and the Clark Brothers.

RS: Your repertory/tribute bands - Ellington, Goodman, Couriers.... - what started you on this? Which was first?

PL: I like making Airfix models. I've always liked the process of fashioning a replica, and as a kid I used to put Ellington albums on in my room and wonder what it would be like to hear that music in the flesh. I also got deeply into the history of the swing and early bop eras. I started the Echoes Of Ellington in the early 1990's when I realised that there were some musicians around who could emulate the crucial distinctive sounds of the original sidemen, and so it was worth a punt to see if it would be possible to get hold of and play some Ellington scores in the flesh. I was also working on a show in the West End, which gave me the necessary financial grunt to throw the money at it that it needed. The Goodman thing came about much later and very differently. In the early days of the big band

at Ronnie's, the brief was to put on a tribute concert every show. As I'd amassed the music for my own study, I realised that I could put on the 1938 Carnegie Hall concert. The agent Robert Masters got hold of this and put it out on the road. This was all in 2006, when such a tour was still just about feasible. The Couriers was formed specifically for a gig at 'The Old Place', a basement venue opened by Ronnie's in the summer of 2019 to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the club. I'm good mates with Simon Spillett, so we got it together with the house trio for that job.

RS: What do you think it is about your personality/abilities that makes you so successful in these re-creations?

PL: I'm patient, I don't mind being told what to do and I love old records!

RS: Which ones are currently active? When I say 'currently', I mean either up to March 2020 or looking for bookings now.

PL: Hard to say. It's getting more and more diffuse. The Benny band will probably pick up the odd bit of work playing at Lindy Hop events, though even that is becoming diluted with maybe a set playing the music of the Old Testament Basie band. The Echoes Of Ellington has got one job in the book, doing my *Planets Suite*. I'd really like to have a couple of gigs in for the big Dizzy Gillespie project I got together, Gillespiana. Any takers out there?

RS: How does your own personality/style survive being placed in all these different jazz contexts? Do you consciously imitate Goodman, for instance? When Pete Long plays as Pete Long, what does it sound like?

PL: On the clarinet, left to my own devices, I sound like a cheap version of Buddy De Franco. When I'm on the BG show, I'll play certain things with a nod in the direction of his vibrato, to set the scene. Benny's harmonic language is a lifetime's study in itself, so I'm happy to just not fall over the changes! If I'm in a bebop setting, I'll use a different harmonic language and tonal

palette. Broadly, the further back in the history of the music I find myself, the more the improvisational curve becomes rooted in percussiveness, rhythm, timbre and melody.

I mainly personalise the gigs with my link material. I feel that a gig is created by the band and the audience in equal part, and so the duty of the bandleader is to transmit the energy generated to the musicians onto the audience, and then hopefully they will reflect that energy back, so that the whole show gains a spiralling momentum. Or, in other words, I have to gee everyone in the room up.

RS: What is the value of these re-creations?

PL: The big point is that they are fun. A lot of jazz is a great deal of fun. Benny Green (the writer) made the point that at least superficially, you can make yourself sound like a genius. More specifically, I feel that a very tangible value in re-creating old stuff is if it a written piece of work. It is of huge value to hear, say, a Fletcher Henderson composition alive in the air of the room around you. You will hear colours and nuance which a recording may easily mask. Doing the necessary research and practice will also colour your own playing. You'll be speaking in a richer version of your own dialect.

RS: Choosing the right musicians for these re-creations can't be easy. I guess Jazz at the Phil might be particularly difficult.

PL: Jazz At The Phil is quite easy to fix- it's more of a briefing than anything else. On a standard, all solos three choruses long, no outside language, riffs in support every third chorus and do something really exciting in your last sixteen bars. The drummer is to play largely a no fills groove and there will be one bass solo in the gig. As long as you can find musicians who will adhere to that, you've got a show. In other fields, you've just got to keep your ears open on gigs. There's a young trumpeter call James Davison who I heard at a NYJO rehearsal playing a load of Clark Terry licks. I had a gig coming up doing Ellington's *Such Sweet Thunder*, in which Clark's Puckish

playing is pivotal. I was able to book James for the show, and that whole end of the set came to life because of his talents.

RS: What is your connection with Ronnie Scott's?

PL: My job there is to arrange and direct the concerts given by the Jazz Orchestra. Like a lot of others, I get the odd job in there as a sideman too.

RS: You have such a huge variety of projects. Which ones, past or present, are you particularly proud of?

PL: To misquote Duke Ellington, my next one. I guess the one I had most invested in personally was *The Jazz Planets*. It took me a year to write and has always gone down a storm. Clive Davis kindly gave us 'Must Have Jazz CD of 2018' in the *Times* for it, too. Jazz is a funny business. So far I think we've sold 350-odd copies. Look out, The Beatles!

RS: And any specific projects lined up for the future?

PL: I was commissioned to write a suite of pieces as a follow up to *The Planets* on *Swan Lake* for

the Deal Festival. Being in 2020, that's a project still in the can. I also have two big band albums recorded awaiting release, one with Georgina Jackson and the other with Louise Cookman. This latter one will actually be getting an outing at the Herne Bay Jazz Festival this year, as long as we all get let out to play.

RS: Finally, how was lockdown? I can't imagine you stayed idle, but Ronnie Scott's and large-scale concerts were ruled out. Any little duo gigs outside or streamed? Or did you find something completely different?

PL: I got away with the lockdown in some ways as I was about to buy a house and had a deposit in the bank. I took the view that if the enforced sabbatical was going to erode all that dough, I'd really need to make it count. I've therefore been able to really concentrate on learning some instruments I'm interested in, and have settled down to quite a bit of writing. The flip side is that I'll probably not be able to buy a house for a bit!

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50 JAZZ VIBRAPHONISTS

By SCOTT YANOW

It has long been said that Lionel Hampton, who was originally a drummer, was the first jazz vibraphonist, playing it briefly on Louis Armstrong's recordings of *Memories Of You* (16/10/30) and *Shine* (9/3/31), but was he really first? He may have been the earliest to take a significant jazz vibes solo, but Rudy Starita in England can be heard playing vibes on records by Bert Firman and with his brother Ray Starita's Ambassador Band as early as 1926. Other drummers who hit occasional notes on the vibes before Hampton include Harold McDonald (Paul Whiteman's November 18, 1927 recording of *Washboard Blues*), Bob Conselman (with a Benny Goodman small group on January 23, 1928), Chauncey Morehouse, Vic Berton, Stan King, Benny Washington, and Paul Barbarin. In fact, Barbarin was the first to play vibes on Louis Armstrong's recordings: *Rockin' Chair* (13/12/29) and more prominently on *Song Of The Islands* (24/1/30). In addition, the great bass saxophonist Adrian Rollini begin doubling on vibes while with Fred Elizalde's band in England in late 1928 although none of his brief breaks at that point can really qualify as solos.

While Rollini recorded on vibes as a soloist now and then during 1931-35, there can be little doubt that Lionel Hampton's rise to prominence with Benny Goodman in 1936 was the first major step in the vibraphone being accepted as a jazz instrument rather than a novelty. The vibes really picked up steam in jazz of the 1940s and '50s and scores of talented players

have emerged since then. If one had to list the seven who were innovators on the instrument, I would name Hampton, Red Norvo, Terry Gibbs, Milt Jackson, Cal Tjader, Bobby Hutcherson, and Gary Burton. In this article there is room to briefly mention 50 and I have listed them in order of their birth dates (other than placing Hampton first). I extend my apologies to the 100 other talented vibraphonists who could have easily been included on this list.

Lionel Hampton (1908-2002) The pioneer of the jazz vibes, after coming to fame with the Benny Goodman Quartet, Hampton led big bands for 60 years and never failed to be a real crowd pleaser, always climaxing performances with a stirring version of *Flying Home*.

Adrian Rollini (1903-1956) The master of the bass saxophone in the 1920s, Rollini gradually switched to vibes in the 1930s where his trio with guitar and bass featured an easy-listening style that was Hampton's only real competition until the next decade.

Red Norvo (1908-1999) A masterful jazz xylophonist, Norvo switched to the vibes in 1943 where his cool tone, relaxed but speedy lines, and swinging but quiet style offered a contrast to Hampton.

Joe Roland (1920-2009) After working with the George Shearing Quintet and Artie Shaw's Gramercy Five in the 1950s, Roland settled in Miami where he was a major part of the local jazz scene.



Roy Ayers



Lionel Hampton

Marjorie Hyams (1920-2012) Hyams worked with Woody Herman's First Herd and the original version of the George Shearing Quintet, settling in Chicago in 1950 and having a lower profile for the next 20 years before retiring.

Milt Jackson (1923-1999) 'Bags' (along with Terry Gibbs) was the first bebop vibraphonist and the biggest influence on post-1950 players, performing with all of the modern jazz greats, as a member of the Modern Jazz Quartet for decades, and on his own bop, blues and ballads sessions.

Tito Puente (1923-2000) While timbales was his main instrument, the 'king of Latin jazz' was also a skilled and enthusiastic vibraphone player, inspired by Lionel Hampton.

Terry Gibbs (1924-) A brilliant bop soloist since the mid-1940s, the very energetic Terry Gibbs (who talks almost as fast as he plays) always played exciting solos.

Cal Tjader (1925-1982) A fine bop player, Tjader's greatest legacy is for his work in Afro-Cuban (or Latin) jazz where he made the vibes sound like a natural part of the music starting in the 1950s.

Fats Sadi (1927-2009) An excellent bop vibist from Belgium, Sadi worked with Bobby Jaspar, Don Byas, Django Reinhardt, Martial Solal, and the Kenny Clarke/Francy Boland Big Band.

Lem Winchester (1928-61) One of five great vibraphonists born in 1928, were it not for a gun accident, Winchester (who had recently chosen music over being a policeman) had

the potential to build on the innovations of Milt Jackson.

Harry Sheppard (1928-) In the 1950s he was part of the New York mainstream scene, working with Red Allen, Ben Webster, Roy Eldridge and many others. Sheppard has evolved with the times and is still performing today at age 93.

Teddy Charles (1928-2012) One of the top bop-oriented vibraphonists of the 1950s, in later years Charles was often off the scene, preferring to be at sea as captain of his own boat.

Walt Dickerson (1928-2008) An adventurous player who used Andrew Hill and Sun Ra as sidemen on some of his records, Dickerson could also play chamber jazz and melodic music in his own voice.

Peter Appleyard (1928-2013) Although born in England, Appleyard spent virtually his entire career performing in Toronto (other than tours with Benny Goodman) where he was thought of as the Canadian Lionel Hampton.

Buddy Montgomery (1930-2009) Wes' younger brother and an excellent pianist, Montgomery's vibes were heard with the Mastersounds and many of his own rewarding albums.

Eddie Costa (1930-1962) As both a vibraphonist and a pianist, Costa appeared on over 100 records in an eight year period before his tragic death in a car crash.

Emil Richards (1932-2019) A studio vibraphonist and

percussionist who was adept at playing jazz and Latin music, Richards was on a countless number of sessions during his 65 year career.

Johnny Lytle (1932-1995) After switching to vibes from drums in the late 1950s, Lytle became a masterful hard bop player who led a couple dozen of his own albums during 1960-92.

Victor Feldman (1934-1987) He first became known as a drummer and his piano and percussion work was never short of brilliant, but Feldman was also a very skilled vibraphonist who could have made his living from just playing that instrument.

Karl Berger (1935-) He made his recording debut with Don Cherry, founded and ran the Creative Music Studio in Woodstock, New York, and has worked with the who's who of avant-garde jazz.

Gunter Hampel (1937-) Having the unusual double of vibes and bass clarinet, Hampel has been a major and prolific force in the European avant-garde since the 1960s; he was married to singer Jeanne Lee.

Dave Pike (1938-2015) From Herbie Mann to avant-garde explorations, rock, funky grooves and straight-ahead swinging, Pike was always one of the most stimulating of vibraphonists.

Mike Mainieri (1938-) Discovered by Buddy Rich, Mainieri was a member of Steps Ahead and always uplifted sessions, whether they were bop or fusion.

Roy Ayers (1940-) A talented hard bop player in the 1960s, Ayers had great commercial success after he switched to funk, r&b and disco in the '70s.

Bobby Hutcherson (1941-2016) In the 1960s, Hutcherson often took the place of the piano in avant-garde jazz groups on Blue Note. He co-led a notable group with tenor-saxophonist Harold Land, mostly played hard bop and modal jazz in later years, and is still one of the major influences on modern jazz vibraphonists.

Gary Burton (1943-) Burton's mastery of his four-mallet technique allowed

him to improvise remarkable unaccompanied solos although he mostly played with his own groups, units that through the years helped introduce guitarists Larry Coryell, John Scofield, Pat Metheny and others. His duet projects with pianists Chick Corea and Makoto Ozone were also quite memorable.

David Friedman (1944-) In addition to working with Dave Samuels in the two-vibraphone group Double Image, Friedman's associations include Wayne Shorter, Hubert Laws, Horace Silver, and Chet Baker.

Bobby Naughton (1944-) Mostly associated with the avant-garde for whom he provided a mellow contrast, Naughton has worked with Anthony Braxton, Leo Smith, and Roscoe Mitchell.

Khan Jamal (1946-) While he has performed with such adventurous players as Billy Bang, Charles Tyler and Ronald Shannon Jackson (in the Decoding Society), Jamal has always been a flexible improviser, ranging from freer explorations to post bop and bluesy fusion.

Dave Samuels (1948-2019) While he teamed up with David Friedman in Double Image and was the founder of the Caribbean Jazz Project (which matched him with the steel drums of Andy Narell and Paquito D'Rivera), Samuels gained his greatest fame during his decade with Spyro Gyra.

Jay Hoggard (1954-) He came to fame in the 1970s for his work with avant-garde jazz giants, but Hoggard since displayed plenty of versatility, showing that he can play swing too.

Steve Nelson (1954-) Whether working with Dave Holland, Kenny Barron or Mulgrew Miller, Nelson has been such a reliable vibraphonist that his consistent excellence tends to be taken for granted.

Ed Saindon (ca. 1954-) In addition to leading albums of his own, this modern jazz vibraphonist has worked and recorded with Dave Liebman, Kenny Werner, Ken Peplowski, Warren Vache, Fred Hersch, John Scofield and many others.

Steve Hobbs (1956-) After touring with Art Van Damme, Spike Robinson, Tom Harrell and others, Hobbs became a leader, heading his own hard bop groups and seven albums including a tribute to Bobby Hutcherson.

Mark Sherman (1957-) A classical and studio keyboardist and percussionist, Sherman emerged as a top-notch vibraphonist in the late 1980s and has since led a series of swinging session including a duet album with pianist Kenny Barron.

Hendrik Meurkens (1957-) Equally skilled as a vibraphonist and a jazz harmonica player, Meurkens is a master at both bebop and Brazilian music.

Chuck Redd (1958-) After a long period with the Charlie Byrd Trio (doubling on drums), Redd has since become one of the most in-demand swing-oriented vibraphonists.

Bill Ware (1959-) Ware is best known for his playing with the Jazz Passengers (starting in 1987), Groove Collective, and his own group Vibes.

Joe Locke (1959-) Always an excellent improviser most inspired by Milt Jackson and Bobby Hutcherson, the underrated Locke has led at least 28 albums of his own since 1983.

Bryan Carrott (1959-) From Muhal Richard Abrams, Henry Threadgill and Dave Douglas, to David 'Fathead' Newman and the Lounge Lizards, the versatile Carrott is a welcome addition to any bandstand.

Orphy Robinson (1960-) The talented British vibraphonist worked early on with Courtney Pine, the Jazz Warriors and Andy Sheppard, and in a countless number of groups since then.



Orphy Robinson

John Cocuzzi (1964-) A regular at jazz parties and with small swing groups, Cocuzzi is also a top-notch pianist.

Stefan Harris (1973-) The leader of the newer generation of vibraphonists who rose to prominence after Bobby Hutcherson and Gary Burton, Harris has yet to record an album that is not worthy of one's attention.

Nick Mancini (ca. 1974-) A major force in the current Los Angeles jazz scene Mancini, who has worked with Arturo Sandoval, Peter Erskine, Poncho Sanchez, and Kamasi Washington, is always in great demand.

Jason Marsalis (1977-) Originally exclusively a drummer, the youngest of the Marsalis brothers has been a modern and swinging vibraphonist since 2009.

Warren Wolf (1979-) He gained attention while touring with Christian McBride, worked with Bobby Watson and the SF Jazz Collective, and has since been recognized as one of today's vibes giants.

Lolly Allen (birthdate unknown) A fine Los Angeles-based straight ahead vibraphonist who is up-and-coming, Ms. Allen has worked with Bob Mintzer, Maria Schneider, and Plas Johnson among others.

Joel Ross (1995-) One of the most exciting of today's young jazz vibraphonists, Joel Ross has the potential to set the standard for the future of his instrument.

Scott Yanow has written 11 books on jazz, mostly recently *The Jazz Singers* and *The Great Jazz Guitarists*, plus innumerable reviews and liner notes. He can be reached for interesting assignments on scottyanowjazz@yahoo.com.

BIG TOURS AND STRONG OPINIONS

In these days of slim pickings in the jazz world (even before COVID) guitarist NIGEL PRICE stands out for his full datesheet and frank opinions. He took very little prompting to share his views.

The road to the organ trio (or quartet)...

I came up through rock and funk. I was born in '69, so for me there was an inexhaustible supply of amazing guitarists to emulate and the most accomplished and celebrated players were invariably based in rock. There was always something about that music that didn't sit particularly well with me, though, and by the late eighties I was actually kind of repulsed by the outfits, the permed hair and the general symbolism of rock which to my mind had moved into something pretty tasteless.

I guess I was looking for a kind of 'exit strategy' and that was made

really easy with the discovery of fusion via guitarists like Jeff Beck, John McLaughlin and Al Di Meola, for instance. Suddenly I found myself in a different department of the record shops!

As I got older I followed the same kind of sensibilities, style and 'cool' over glitz and glam, so it wasn't very long before I bumped into the giants of the jazz guitar world - Wes Montgomery, Joe Pass, Barney Kessel, Tal Farlow, etc. It was a gradual transition. I remember thinking that it was a 'rabbit hole' that I thought I might pop down for a while, but I never actually made it out. There is just so much to love down there.

It was pragmatic too. I wanted to become a professional musician and I got to thinking that, if I could learn enough standards and raise my improvisation game, then I could potentially go and work without the constraints of being 'in a band'. It worked out and I guess I'm still guided by the same thinking as I was 30 years ago.

When I heard Jimmy Smith (through Wes and Kenny Burrell), Jimmy McGriff, Don Patterson and Charles Kynard (through Joe Pass) and a host of others, I got quite excited at the thought that I could create such a huge sound with a very small band. I also went to see Jack McDuff at the Jazz Cafe back in the early 90's which had a profound effect on me. I remember standing above his head and looking down on the huge Hammond organ and he whipped up a frenzy!

I met the incredible drummer Matt Home just at the point that he moved to London in the early 2000's. We hit it off at once and we soon began exploring possibilities, eventually finding Pete Whittaker, an amazing organist who also had a real live A100 Hammond organ. The die was cast and we threw ourselves into gigging. I found that I had a talent when it came to organising tours and before we knew it we were working all over the UK almost relentlessly.

A popular trio is always going to be of interest to promoters because, frankly, it's not going to be as expensive as a larger band and perhaps that's partly why we've managed to travel as much as we have.

So, although I never really intended to end up in this kind of musical setting, I have learned how to survive and indeed thrive within it. I wouldn't change anything.

The present trio (quartet?)....

Ross Stanley is a unique and absolutely jaw-droppingly amazing musician. Everybody wants to play with Ross and as a result he's the busiest guy I've ever met.

He's been playing in my band for about six years and it's always an absolute pleasure to have him there. I bring all the material to the table, explain what can't be put across on the page and he just gets it. Immediately. Every time.

I find having a saxophonist to double the melodies gives the writing real clout. It galvanises the themes and brings a real sense of cohesion. Of course, Vasilis (Xenopoulos) is a dazzling improviser who always plays for the music with a total understanding of what it is that we're trying to achieve.

Sometimes Alex Garnett is in the chair and we have had Brandon Allen, too. I think the key is to allow each player as much space as they need and I don't tell anybody how to play.

Some promoters think the trio won't be enough which is partly why there's saxophone involved a lot of the time, but an organ trio can often be a more powerful, undiluted message. If we're playing as a trio I will generally shy away from some of my compositions that have more 'lines' in them and will instead opt for the pieces that have more syncopation and 'hits' for the rhythm section. It's all about putting across that feeling of togetherness.

Those 50 date tours....

It hasn't always been like this. The first couple of tours I tried to organise never got off the ground because there just wasn't the interest. Promoters don't really want to take a gamble when there's not a lot of money about so it's been a very gradual process. 6 dates, 12 dates, then 24, then 32, then 40. All the way up to 56 dates in 2016. I had organised a 60 date tour for 2020 so I was absolutely inconsolable when that was wiped out by Covid. I guess I'm just tenacious - also I don't see that there's any option.

Being a predominantly 'live' player I, like so many others, have struggled over the last year. I don't mind admitting that I

hit an all-time low about three months into this thing, with the realisation that it really wasn't going away any time soon.

I guess at some point I just stopped feeling sorry for myself and opted to try and make the best out of the hand I'd been dealt. I won't pretend that I just 'snapped out of it', but I gradually picked myself up and, amongst other things, got into creating an online subscription based service (through 'Patreon'). That's something that I'd been planning for some years, but had never managed to find the time to do.

So, it's there now and, although it'll never make me rich, it has most definitely (and only just) kept the wolf from the door - and it's been a good way to stay in touch with other humans...

How to bring the crowds back...

Jazz needs to be allowed to be jazz.

I think some of the louder voices in the jazz media could really help the scene by openly accepting that straightahead jazz is allowed to exist on its own terms. Without question. On reading some of today's magazines you could be fooled into thinking that it died a couple of decades ago, but lets me tell you, there is an army of young players out there who are swinging their asses off! They just need an outlet. And by the way, just because it's swinging it doesn't mean it can't be inventive.

There seems to be a keenness in certain quarters to snub 'grass roots' jazz. It's as if there's this fictitious online world that's surrounded by hype and seems to have no end of cash thrown at it. Then there's the real world, in which loads of genuine jazz players are getting out there and actually playing in front of actual jazz fans. This scene is surviving on a shoestring at the moment and I'd like to see our rich heritage not only receiving greater acknowledgement and respect, but also greater funding.

There's most definitely a disconnect between the two worlds and I think that's putting off many prospective younger fans, if not musicians. A 5 year old could tell you that some of the music we're being expected to

allow into the category of jazz is not...jazz. Genre bending is fine, but I think there's a limit.

I know for a fact there's a very large percentage of jazz musicians who feel the same as I do, but we're a nice bunch and we wouldn't dream of 'calling out' any particular artists in the same way that those very same artists are happy to pour scorn on those who have gone before.

It's important to recognise that 'cutting edge' or perhaps just 'contemporary' jazz is a vein that is ultimately fed by the arteries of the existing jazz scene. You can't have one without the other. 'Left field' can't exist in isolation. It has to be left of something!

The ideal venue...

I like it 'up close and personal'. I love to get around and play for people who know what they're listening to. People who have respect and genuine enthusiasm for the legacy of the music. People who understand the reference points.

I'd be happier to play in front of a dozen people who 'get it', rather than hundreds of people who don't. To that end, I don't actually mind where I play. Some of the best gigs I've been involved in have been in community centres, pubs, golf clubs etc.

New CD, Wes Reimagined...

Wes Reimagined seemed like a natural progression.

I've found that promoters and the wider audience like to get an idea of what you're all about with a reference point and that's often ended up with my music being described as being similar to that of Wes. It's something to hang your hat on, I suppose!

Audiences began to expect the odd Wes track, so I thought this might be a good way of making everybody happy. This way we get to keep the Wes material, but there's never a feeling that it's a straight up regurgitation. I don't see the point of literally trying to recreate something that's gone before and with this body of work it feels like a win/win situation.

I took the feels of many of my favourite records and tried to match each one up with a

suitable Wes composition. Some of these could have perhaps easily been written this way. For me, the tracks that felt most immediately natural after going through the mincer were *Far Wes*, from a slow swing to a brisk waltz; *Twisted Blues*, from a swing to a boogaloo feel (specifically from George Benson's *Benson's Rider*) and perhaps most surprisingly, *So Do It!*, from a chirpy swinger to a down tempo, brooding bolero! It's not actually as weird as it sounds. I got the idea for the feel from Kenny Burrell's *I'm a fool to want you* from *A night at the Village Vanguard*.

The core trio of myself, Ross Stanley and wonder kid Joel Barford on drums, is joined of course by dear Vasilis Xenopoulos. I wanted too to reference Cannonball Adderley's huge influence on Wes' career and I'd been bumping into Tony Kofi quite a lot in the previous couple of years. He's an even bigger fan of Cannonball than I am! We finally got to play together in 2019 and it immediately became clear that we were both kindred spirits so when the opportunity arose to record with him I called him straight up.

I wanted to make the Latin tunes as authentic as possible so getting a percussionist involved was an absolute necessity. I met the legend and enigma that is Snowboy when I was with JTQ so he was my natural choice. It's a real honour to have him on the album.

And then there's the icing on the cake. I wrestled a little with the idea of bringing in strings, but I am so pleased that I bit the bullet and made the call to the great arranger and trombonist Callum Au, who wrote three arrangements that are nothing short of stunning. Through him and the wonderful playing of the Phonograph Effect strings the record has most definitely been elevated to another level.

Fibonacci and Nigel...

Martin Taylor called me up! That's a nice phone call to get, and no mistake. He told me about Fibonacci. He's been working with him and Graham Esson (the boss) they decided to ask me if I'd like to endorse the guitars.

At the time, Fibonacci didn't have anything in their product range that fitted my criteria for a guitar, so I told Graham I was really flattered but that I'd have to decline. To my surprise he asked me what I was looking for. Exactly what I wanted. To the millimetre! He just said in his soft Glaswegian accent, 'I think we can do that,' and, well, to cut a long story short, we did it!

In short, it's a full width 17" wide body, 2 1/2" deep with a full 25.07" (637mm) scale length. It looks traditional, but the neck join is at the 15th fret which allows easier access to the 'dusty end'! It's a beauty!

My previous guitar was a D'Angelico 'New Yorker' and it led me to thinking about the name of this new model. I actually put up a Facebook post asking if might be a good idea to call a guitar 'The Londoner' and of course all the Londoners fell about laughing and suggested other names like 'The Cockney', 'The Geezer' and 'The Eastender', but it seemed that anyone who wasn't from the 'Big Smoke' thought it was a great idea! So that's what we called it - and I get a share of the profit for every 'Londoner' sold which is very generous.

I'm in the enviable position of living quite close to the Fibonacci HQ so Graham often asks me to go over and record the new guitars. Every one seems to sing.

Acoustically they're really quite breath-taking, but I should also mention that I went on a pilgrimage to find the perfect pickup. I wanted to find 'that' sound. Not just find it but find out too what actual components need to be used to reproduce it within a pickup. This took an extraordinarily long time and it finally led me to a workshop in a quiet backwater of Gipsy Hill in South London in which a remarkable man called Jon Dickinson works. We worked together to find what we considered to be the perfect combination of pole pieces, magnets, winds of wire, capacitors etc and somehow he managed to make it all fit in one slim floating pick up. It's a real achievement.

A jazz player might never need to look any further!



REMEMBERING FREDDY RANDALL

Continuing our profiles of British musicians of a certain vintage with international reputations, we meet the man we exchanged for Louis Armstrong. DIGBY FAIRWEATHER recalls FREDDY RANDALL, born 100 years ago.

It was the 1950s Parlophones that began it for me. The vivid blue and white record label proudly announcing its 'Super Rhythm Style' series always promised something worth hearing – including anything British from Humphrey Lyttelton to the Saints Jazz Band. But, if it was a Freddy Randall SRS 78 recording that turned up in my local junk-store run by Harry Strauss, it was buy-or-bust. Place it on the high-speed carousel and you (and me) were in for a three minute joy ride of premier-league Dixieland, comparable - to all but the most refined ears - to anything by Muggsy Spanier, Bob Crosby, or Eddie Condon. As the American cornetist-turned-trumpeter/author (and my great friend) Richard 'Dick' Sudhalter would write of Freddy in 1972; there had always been 'a hard-core of jazz followers in Britain who feel he is the only British trumpet/cornet man to have properly absorbed the musical and spiritual essence of white Chicago jazz.'

Back then Freddy played the kind of punchy no-nonsense hot cornet lead most comparable to Spanier (a later reissue of his work on Dormouse was actually titled, with respect to Muggsy, his own 'Great Sixteen') and he knew how to pick the musicians that could match him too. From 1948 to 1957 they included (amongst others) clarinetists Bruce Turner, Archie Semple and Dave Shepherd; trombonists Norman Cave and Roy Crimmins; reedworkers Betty Smith and Al Gay, the (much underrated) pianist Harry Smith and drummer Lennie Hastings who, after a flirtation with post-war bebop told me 'I joined Freddy in 1950 – back to sanity!' Randall's band was a university of excellence and when in July 1955 he recorded *My Tiny Band is Chosen* (what a title!) Gay, the two Smiths and a new young drummer, Stan Bourke, were all present. Stan and pianist Brian Lemon – both of them lifelong Randall fans - had joined him on the very same day that year,

though Brian's predecessor, Harry Smith, actually played on the recording.

Freddy's musical Pentagon since the later 1940s had been Cooks Ferry Inn in Edmonton, North London; packed to heaving capacity with hundreds of Randall fans and fellow musicians, all wondering at his huge brassy sound, exuberant technique and effortless creativity. Back in those days you were either a Humphrey Lyttelton or a Freddy fan and a definite rivalry existed between Chicago-style Randall and his then-Revivalist counterpart who, as Sudhalter observed, 'sank his roots in the black jazz mainstream.' So dynamic was Randall's music that the BBC installed permanent lines into Cooks Ferry Inn to relay live broadcasts and the fearless cornetist took it all in his stride. 'When the light went on,' he told me, 'I just let rip and everything was fine.' In the days when a great trumpet or cornet-player was just as seductive as any rock star is today Freddy had female fans hanging on his every note, and one of his many lovers was Hollywood legend Ava Gardner who had fallen for Freddy and his horn. One less lucky visitor to Cooks Ferry was cornetist Rex Stewart, the former star of Duke Ellington's band, who had somehow arrived one day and risked a sit-in. Freddy cut him to shreds.

In the 1970s when I started playing with Lennie Hastings and Dave Shepherd in East London venues Freddy Randall was a hard act to follow. By then (after two returns) he was harder to find or hear in or out of his home territory. But there were greying denizens of the jazz scene who still remembered his kingly presence and I realized that in order to make any impression at all on any of them I would have my work cut out. Not only was I devoid of Randall's monumental discography, but I had no place in the North East London hive of Dixieland activity which thrived there after the war, much as



George Webb's New Orleans style flourished in the South. There were tales-a-plenty of the legend that was Randall and one I remember was told to me by a follower of over thirty years. 'We were out walking,' he said, 'and all of a sudden we heard this amazing trumpet coming from inside a wartime pill-box. We peered inside and there was Freddy blowing his horn. He was unbelievable.'

The 80 or so recordings that Freddy made between 1948-56, first for his own Cleveland label, then for Parlophone, are marvellous creations; two examples are the atmospheric *Dark Night Blues* with his unique (almost sexy) half-valve implications, and the ingenious *Professor Jazz* which features his stylish singing in a UK classroom recreation of Condon's courtroom-based Dixieland sketch *We Called it Music*. Such records as these (and most of his others) could have taken him away from Britain forever.

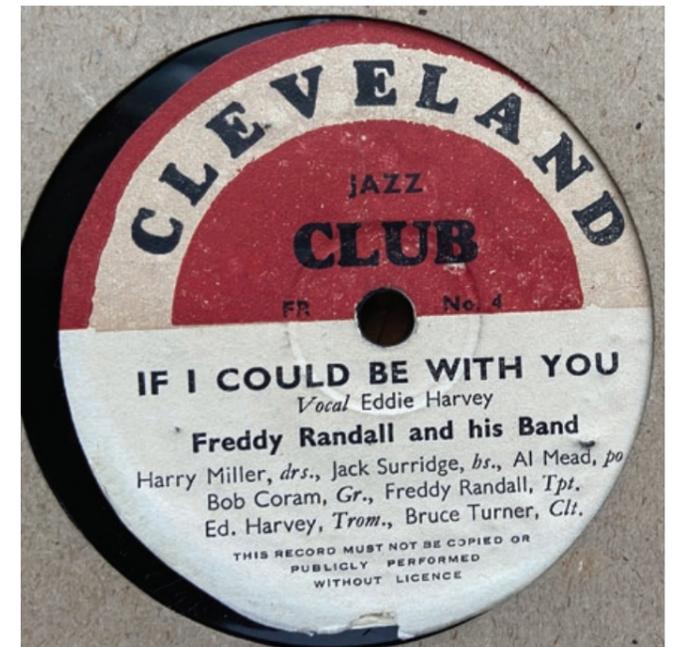
In 1956 Freddy's band was part of a Musicians' Union exchange that took him to the USA (in return for Louis Armstrong's All Stars' first visit to Britain) to play at the bottom of the bill on a rock-and-roll package show starring the Platters and Bill Haley's Comets. His playing was good enough to attract the attention of Armstrong's manager Joe Glaser who invited him to stay in America, but like Alex Welsh (who was invited to join Jack Teagarden's band a couple of years later) Freddy turned Glaser down. There's no doubt that he could have made it, though. Elsewhere Sudhalter wrote of him: 'You could have set him down on the stand at Condon's and he would have fit right in.' But in 1958 lung-strain took over and for three years Freddy ran a hotel in Brighton.

Sudhalter again in *Jazz Journal*, April 1972: 'Any day now Freddy Randall should begin to tire of his self-enforced "retirement" and turn up, cornet in hand, ready

to blow. He's done it before, they say, and he'll probably do it again. The only question is when.' Masquerading again under his critic's *nom-de-plume* of 'Art Napoleon' Sudhalter was, as ever, on the money. Freddy had only turned up briefly in the dying days of the Trad Boom, notably for BBC *Jazz Club* in 1963; then re-appeared for a two-cornet album with true kindred Wild Bill Davison for Black Lion in 1965. So then it seemed retirement had returned; that is until May 1971 when an album called 'Freddy Randall and his Famous Jazz Band' came along and refocused my musical thinking forever. Its one and only flaw was the shameful mis-spelling of his name as 'Freddie' on the cover (it happened to Humphrey Lyttelton too!), but apart from that I thought the record was perfect. I found it, one magic day, in the packed shelves of Dobell's Record Shop down at 77 Charing Cross Road and it would be a definitive turning point in my own career; a final confirmation that 'Dixieland' music (if you wanted to call it that) could, at its best, be fine art, and an art worth pursuing, maybe for life. So how come? Well first, there was the incomparable musical company that Freddy was keeping; Dave Shepherd, Pete Strange, Brian Lemon, Jim Douglas, Arthur Watts and Lennie Hastings. Then the crafted (but never over-intrusive) arrangements by Brian Lemon of tunes as unexpectedly diverse (at least within the genre) as *Gone with the Wind* and *Never no Lament*. And above all there was the newly-fragile playing of Randall himself ('he only had a week to get his chops in shape', Brian told me later); no longer the knockout Spanier-punches he had once delivered but newly florid fluffy-edged declamations occasionally recalling the sentimentality of Harry James and which, as Sudhalter said, 'blended tough-mindedness with near maudlin sentimentality into a music whose qualities complemented each other, rather than clashed.' Once again Dick had it exactly right. And the musicians who had created this pearl of a budget-label album were very much around London; I wanted to hear them – and I wanted to join them.

Very soon after came a new flurry of Randall celebrations.

Trumpeter Mick Potts (a fine player and like me a Randall devotee) was chairman of the Robert Todd Group, a Carlisle firm of wool manufacturers, and together in mid-1972 they sponsored an album (and Northern tour) for what they would call 'Britain's Greatest Jazz Band' co-featuring Freddy with George Chisholm, Dave Shepherd, Brian Lemon, Kenny Baldoock and John Richardson. Heavy on solo features for an all-star aggregation, the album nonetheless left no doubt that Freddy was back and ready to blow, and this was the band that (with Chisholm replaced by Dave Hewitt and the addition of tenor-saxophonist Danny Moss) would turn into the Randall-Shepherd All Stars only four months later. This time its champion was Alan Bates (still faithfully supporting all the musicians on Britain's traditional-to-swing roster via his Black Lion label) and Alan recorded Randall's band twice; once at R.G. Jones Studios in Wimbledon at Christmas 1972 and six months later live at the Montreux Jazz Festival in 1973. The live album is flawed here and there by clams and over-exuberant ensemble work ('I never liked that one', Freddy told me), but the studio session, once again graced by Brian Lemon's arrangements transcribed from Freddy's instructions, is as good as perfect. Trombonist Hewitt is an outstanding replacement for Chisholm, particularly on a version of *What's New* where his solo entry is a head-turner of which Dickie Wells would have been proud. And Shepherd's clarinet is as limpidly irresistible as ever; he was one of the few players who (despite a private preference for Randall's one-time Spanier fundamentals) could perfectly complement his old partner's newly multi-noted lead. But once again it's Freddy's playing (as Dave told me later) on a leaky cornet, overdue for an overhaul, whose raffish extravagantly decorated lead commands the attention. Even the odd goof (a wildly exuberant break into his solo on *A Big Butter and Egg Man* is topped by a 'doesn't matter' clinker) does nothing to dispel either his confidence or the joy of the music. But thereafter – beyond one more self-led session in 1977 organised by his one-time pianist Stan Butcher for



the Alamo label (and bizarrely titled *Something Blown/Something Blew*), plus a 1985 collaboration with saxophonist Benny Waters (organized by his great admirer and champion Dave Bennett) - there was, to my knowledge, no more Randall on record.

Once Freddy was around East London again in the early 1970s I tracked him down whenever I could. One session at the Chestnut Tree pub in Leytonstone with Al Gay, trombonist Pete Hodge and Lennie on drums was a night to remember. But I also heard him, remarkably, sitting in apparently quite happily with a function-band at an old roadhouse in Loughton one Sunday lunchtime. There

were rumours too that he also played on the Isle of Dogs with a banjo-led trio. In retrospect, Freddy was, something of a jazz will'o'the'wisp. But as man, as well as player, he was a fascinating original too. Not everyone knows that most of Bruce Turner's legendary verbal trademarks (starting with his universal appellation of 'Dad' for everyone including his daughters!) came from Freddy. He was (so Dave Shepherd told me) a gifted writer of detective short stories, none of them ever in print to my knowledge. Then there was his unique vocabulary: 'uzzacumgrol'i' (frequently shortened to 'uzza') for anything distasteful and (one of my favourites, however unjustifiable!) 'Shepton Mallet!'





for anything embarrassing or untoward. On a visit, not so long ago, the late Stan Bourke gave me a short thesaurus of such unique vocabularic creations and I must look for the tape. The eccentricities happened in action too. 'One night,' Stan told me, 'Freddy wanted me to do

my drum feature on a concert but I had terrible flu and said, "Oh Fred! Not tonight please!". But when it came to the concert Freddy said, "Go on, do it – and I'll make it up to you!" So I did it somehow. But when I met Freddy for the pick-up next day and wondered about a tip he'd

bought me three shirts instead! I've no idea why!'. There were other occasional anomalies too. At one point Lennie Hastings (whose drum-solo with Randall was called *Battle of Hastings*) had left the band and Derek Hogg had briefly stepped in. His leader decided to re-title the feature *Battle of Hogg* instead.

But my favourite story of all is when one visionary BBC producer decided to record him with a full string section. 'As long as there's a rehearsal,' said Freddy (who couldn't read music) and it was agreed that they would meet at 2pm at the tennis club opposite Warwick Avenue studios for the purpose. When they met his producer said: 'We're ready for you, Mr Randall.' 'How about the rehearsal?' queried the worried guest. 'Don't worry,' his host responded. 'We've been rehearsing the strings all morning – and they're note-perfect!' Freddy played the session to perfection; somewhere there must be a tape and I wish I had it now.

Sometime in the late 1980s, I interviewed him for the National

Sound Archive's *British Oral Jazz History* and wish I could remember more about what we talked about. But rumour has it that the NSA may make the interview public soon. All I remember now among a handful of bullet-points (one was his admiration for the young Kenny Ball) was the way he looked at me; the hint of a sly up-and-down personal assessment as our conversation went on. But the very last time I saw him was close to tragic. In 1993 he had moved to Teignmouth in Devon and on one occasion during the town's jazz festival his old friend, trombonist Jackie Free, had invited me to join him on a visit to Freddy's house. By this time, in his later seventies, my hero was old with gapped teeth and bedraggled uncut hair. He briefly greeted us, but seemed then to wander, once again, into a private world of his own. The word was that he was suffering from both Parkinson's disease and senile dementia; a cruel duo. Freddy Randall died on 18 May 1999 at 79. There should be a book, not an article, about him but at least we have the records.

CD REVIEWS



LOUIS ARMSTRONG

COMPLETE COLUMBIA AND RCA VICTOR STUDIO SESSIONS 1946-1966

Mosaic MD7-270: 7 CDs, 77.24/81.05/79.22/76.40/77.58/75.58/71.37

Mosaic's collection of 7 CDs worth of Louis Armstrong is in a class of its own as a historical document as well as providing some wonderful music. The accompanying booklet (more like a book) contains insightful commentary from the omniscient Ricky Riccardi and stunning photographs from the Louis Armstrong House Museum. The music is not entirely what you'd expect, either: it's the complete Columbia and RCA Victor studio sessions, so no Town Hall concert, for instance, but there are unexpected discoveries and rehearsals and unused takes that show Armstrong at work. As a limited edition with impeccable sound, it's genuinely unique.

The CDs are arranged thematically, not chronologically, with CDs 1 and 2 concentrating on singles across the whole time range, 1946-1966. CD1 begins with the 1946 Esquire All-American Award-winners, one of those all-star sessions that's superb, but not quite as superb as the list of names –

Leonard Feather's monstrous ego forcing his own songs forward doesn't help and he has a habit throughout this CD of pushing his own songs (under pseudonyms) and even sliding into the piano chair.

CD1 mainly covers the transit from big band to All Stars. The 1946 big band was not particularly distinguished, but Armstrong is perfectly at home with a nine brass-five saxes set-up, the band sounds anything but tired and there is the treat of hearing *Back o' Town Blues* done with typical panache, but with electric guitar breaks from Elmer Warner. But the tide was turning and the film of *New Orleans* was the catalyst for two small band sessions, with such delights as Louis' take on *Do You Know What it Means to Miss New Orleans* and another blast at *Mahogany Hall Stomp*, both reuniting Louis with the burry trombone of Kid Ory. Finally there are the All Stars in 1947, the line-up not quite finalised, but Louis and Jack Teagarden duetting on *Jack Armstrong Blues* and *Rockin' Chair* – magic!

CD2 is dominated by a bright idea of George Avakian's. Convinced that the Moritat from *The Threepenny Opera* would make a successful jazz single, he eventually landed on Louis Armstrong to perform Turk Murphy's arrangement as *Mack the Knife*. Here we have the hit single, the B side, *Back o' Town Blues*, and a version of *Mack with Knife* with Louis and Lotte Lenya: similar arrangement, but less swinging vocally and decidedly more sinister. However, the CD also includes fragments of rehearsals, phrases Avakian recorded as inserts and, most interestingly, Louis patiently trying to teach Lenya the rudiments of jazz phrasing. Also on CD2 are a late session with *Cabaret* and *Canal Street Blues*, a

couple of pseudo-spirituals nicely delivered and two lovely tracks with the All Stars' two great trombonists. The first studio session of the regular All Stars line-up begins with Louis and Tea in relaxed, but swinging, vein on *A Song is Born*, and 'Taint What You Do finds Trummy Young and Louis in blazing form.

CDs 3 and 4 are devoted to one classic album, *Louis Armstrong Plays W.C. Handy* (1954). The whole thing sounds gloriously spontaneous, but all of CD4 and three tracks of CD3 are devoted to alternative takes, discussions and inserts, demonstrating how cleverly George Avakian knitted the whole thing together. Taken with Riccardi's detailed and loving notes it's possible to re-create the feel of the sessions.

The first 11 tracks are the original LP as Avakian planned it – and the first reaction not far off 70 years later is how fresh and exciting it sounds. Louis is in magnificent form, but not in the broadly melodic, almost stately vein he could do so well – he goes for everything – and gets it! *St. Louis Blues* kicks us off with a dynamic near-nine minutes, the opening *habanera* succeeded by a chunky, and punchy, mid-tempo. Other highlights include a more relaxed mid-tempo for *Loveless Love* and a storming *Chantez-Les Bas*.

I always thought Trummy the ideal Armstrong trombonist and he certainly sounds it here, roaring through 'hold-that-phone' solos (*Long Gone* – tremendous!), biting into his entries with the attack of Louis himself, taking a secondary supporting role with great skill. On the other hand, at the time I thought Barrett Deems' drumming too rowdy, but now I love his sheer drive, especially achieving lift-off for Louis and Trummy in the closing ensembles. Barney Bigard makes a less positive impact (one or two of Riccardi's more barbed comments are about his attitude), but is far too good a player not to contribute memorable moments.

Velma Middleton is another to come out of this better than I remembered. I recalled a lovable entertainer whose singing was no great shakes. She emerges well from the Handy album and also the follow-up, *Satch Plays Fats*. Of course she does a knockabout

duet with Louis on *All That Meat and No Potatoes*, but she also sings pretty for the people on *Honeysuckle Rose*.

Put together possibly the two greatest joy-bringers in the history of jazz and the result's a guaranteed winner, but it's not just fun. Louis was the man who first made *Black and Blue* into a powerful racial statement and it's lost none of its power, supplemented by Trummy's subtle obbligato. In 1929 *Ain't Misbehavin'* made Louis' name on Broadway (and he made the song a huge hit) and it's a spectacular conclusion to the original album, Louis climbing up over Deems' insistent drums to a 'can't follow that' climax.

That's halfway through CD5, then follow the takes that Avakian worked his trickery on. The second half of CD6 is then given over to an album that too few of us really know about, *The Real Ambassadors*, the songs from an ambitious stage show by Dave and Lola Brubeck that never got off the ground. Carmen McRae and Lambert, Hendricks and Ross add to the vocals, the All Stars and the Brubeck Quartet share musical duties and the story is an attack on racism and a celebration of the power of music.

The tale of Satchmo being mistaken for the real ambassador to an African state (of course, jazz is the real ambassador!) gives rise to love songs for McRae and Louis – the Brubecks even indulging in some Gershwin-esque verses and both singers in great form – some witty satire (nice horseplay with Trummy), LHR as crowd scenes giving a tongue-twisting and stratospheric welcome to Satch, a remarkably intense pseudo-spiritual, *They Say I Look Like God*, and, finally, a triumph scene with an explosion of high Fs from Louis.

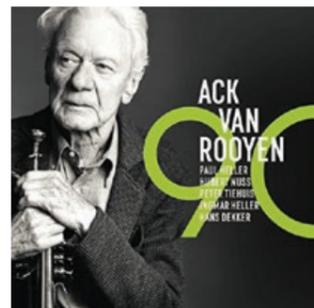
Away from the projected stage show, it's a bit disjointed (Riccardi fills the gaps), but there's some wonderful stuff – unusual, too! CD7 has one or two numbers omitted from the original LP alongside alternative takes. Strangely omitted was the number that first turned Louis onto the project, *Lonesome*, here in three different versions.

RON SIMPSON



Courtesy of Louis Armstrong House Museum

CD REVIEWS



ACK VAN ROOYEN

90

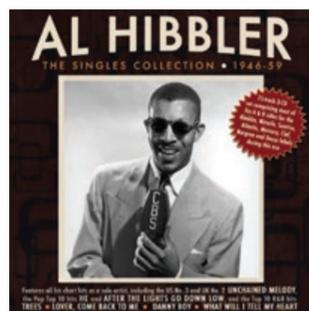
Jazzline D 77083 44:30

1930 (January 1) born The Hague; 1950 graduated from the Royal Conservatory (The Hague); 1957 lived in Paris, working with his then neighbours Kenny Clarke and Bud Powell; 1960s relocated to Germany; 1980 returned to his homeland. This is but a bullet point summary of a life in jazz. The title of Ack van Rooyen's latest album - 90 - says it all, the trumpet/flugelhorn veteran can justifiably claim to have 'been there, done that'. For this milestone recording

the Dutchman assembled a sextet comprising two fellow countrymen - guitarist Peter Tiehuis and drummer Hans Dekker - and three associates from Germany - tenor saxophonist Paul Heller, pianist Hubert Nuss and bassist Ingmar Heller. Van Rooyen is equally at home in a small group setting or working in the brass section of a big band. On this date it's flugelhorn all the way. Seven of the album's nine tracks were arranged by close confidant Paul Heller, who also rearranged Peter Herbolzheimer's original arrangement of *Pra Dizer Adeus*. Kenny Wheeler's *Canter No.1* opens the set. Van Rooyen and Wheeler were friends from their days working together in the United Jazz + Rock Ensemble. Van Rooyen's laid back, unhurried approach, respecting the melody is very much 'old school', no one on this recording is trying to reinvent the jazz wheel and it's all the better for it. Heller contributes two compositions - *Brush it Up* features, unsurprisingly, Hans Dekker, and *The Hague Shuffle* is dedicated to his nonagenarian friend. In 1947 on a visit to New York, Ack van Rooyen and his brother Jerry

visited the Three Deuces. They heard Erroll Garner, Stan Getz, JJ Johnson and Fats Navarro. Perhaps it was then that the die was cast, 90 is an album of few surprises, after all, the man has 'been there, done that'.

RUSSELL CORBETT



AL HIBBLER

THE SINGLES COLLECTION 1946-59

Acrobat ACTRCD9107 3 CDs 73:02/ 71:36/71:10

Al Hibbler's distinctive voice, deep toned with a rich vibrato, certainly impressed Duke Ellington who hired him in 1943. Stylistically, he seemed better suited to the jazz environment as many of these tracks demonstrate, but Hibbler's transition to the middle ground of popular music produced some notable entries in the R&B and pop music charts which are featured in this collection.

Although contracted to perform with Ellington, Hibbler was free to record on other labels and these earlier tracks on the first CD are impressive. *I Got It Bad And That Ain't Good*, recorded with Harry Carney's All-Stars in 1946, heads an eclectic range of material; from the poignant *Solitude*, a richly layered *Summertime* courtesy of Mercer Ellington's Orchestra, to the unfamiliar *Trees* with Billy Strayhorn's Orchestra which reached No.2 in the R&B charts. There's a nicely paced *Hey Baby* and Hibbler's scat exchanges on *It Don't Mean A Thing* with solos from Ray Nance and Ben Webster are a sheer delight. In contrast *Danny Boy* made No.9 in the R&B charts in 1950 whilst Hibbler produced more winning tracks with Billy Strayhorn's terrific arrangements and incredible line-ups.

Opening with *Old Folks*, the second CD features some memorable productions. Hibbler's *There Is No Greater Love* and the swinger *It Must Be True* directed by Johnny Hodges are outstanding. Moving on from Ellington, he joined the stable of top jazz artists managed by Norman Granz. The pairing with the Basie Band was inspired. All the familiar riffs are there on *Sent For You Yesterday* and *Goin' To Chicago* with Hibbler very much at home in Rushing's chair! I loved the collaborations with Leroy Lovett's Orchestra; *I Let A Song Go Out Of My Heart* and *I'm Just A Lucky So And So* worked a treat. Less so *Unchained Melody*, which entered the US charts and positioned at No.2 in the UK. Pitched in a higher register, Hibbler's vocals sound surprisingly strained.

The material on the third CD was mostly recorded with the Jack Pleis Orchestra and released by Decca for the commercial market. Stand outs for me are the edgy *After The Lights Go Down Low* which made No.10 in the US charts; *Because Of You*, an affectionate tribute to Louis and the jazz-influenced *Love Me Long* with Sy Oliver, giving full rein to Hibbler's unique vocal style.

VAL WISEMAN



MARTIAL SOLAL

COMING YESTERDAY - LIVE AT SALLE GAVEAU 2019

Challenge CR735 16 66.17

The Algerian pianist Martial Solal, the doyen of modern jazz in France, opens his booklet note with this definitive statement: 'When I walked onto the stage on January 23, 2019, I did not know that I would decide not to play piano anymore after this concert, more than seventy years after my debut.' Thus ended an

exceptional playing career, Solal explaining that the practice regime needed to maintain the highest possible performance standard was no longer attractive to him. He's in his 94th year now and I hope he's enjoying his richly deserved retirement, having gifted us this remarkable solo valedictory statement.

Solal chose to explore, not to say demolish, an eclectic range of standard songs, plus a pair of originals, and an Ellingtonian medley in characteristically thoughtful yet distinctive fashion, even subjecting *Happy Birthday* to a pretty searching examination. Take *I Can't Get Started* or *Tea For Two*, melodic fragments glimpsed in passing, the harmonies revised, the keyboard like a playground, chorded figures giving way to seismic rhythmic turbulence. Even so, there is throughout a clarity of intention even if the outcomes often seem mysterious and surprising. Dismiss any doubts about waning powers, for Solal remained a master manipulator whose energy and creativity on this occasion belied his age or any apparent disinterest in continuing to perform. He makes me think of Stan Tracey, another idiosyncratic player who seldom compromised and was only ever himself. Just odd that his final recital is on a Dutch label and not a French one.

PETER VACHER



BOB MINTZER & WDR BIG BAND COLOGNE

SOUNDSCAPES

Jazzline D 77082 67:50

Throughout Bob Mintzer's association with the WDR Big Band the American's primary focus has been to present the band at its best, either in showcase concert performances or working alongside high profile guest artists. Now, after six years as the WDR's

chief conductor, it's time for the composer-arranger-conductor to step into the spotlight.

Soundscapes, comprising ten of Mintzer's compositions across a generous playing time of almost sixty eight minutes, features the long standing member of the Yellowjackets on tenor saxophone and EWI. The opening track, *A Reprieve*, a brand new original, features Mintzer on the latter instrument with Paul Heller soloing on tenor sax. The American-German pairing joust again on *Whack*, its slow groove expertly handled by the ensemble. *Herky Jerky* is a swinger featuring Johan Hörlén's alto sax and Ruud Breuls' trumpet solo.

VM (Mintzer's homage to Vince Mendoza) closes the album. Alto saxophonist Karolina Strassmayer stretches out on the mid-tempo number with Breuls stepping out from the trumpet section once more. The soloists on *Soundscapes* are first rate and the ensemble work is of the highest standard.

RUSSELL CORBETT



BEN CROSLAND QUINTET

SOLWAY STORIES

Jazz Cat JCCD 118 73.38

Although a new name to me, the Yorkshire bass-guitarist Crosland has had a busy career leading groups and collaborating with many of the best names on the British jazz scene, all this while earning a crust as a barrister in the courts of West Yorkshire. Not a career summation that I ever thought I would write in a jazz album review.

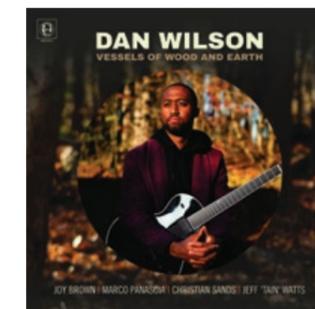
Jazz Cat is his own label and all twelve pieces on *Solway Stories* are composed and arranged by him. In his note, Crosland recalls a road trip to the Solway Firth area of Scotland with his

mother back in 1988. Having been captivated by the location and tickled by its place names, he decided to write a set of evocative pieces, listed the references, put the list away and only recently re-found it and finally set about writing these pieces, in part as a dedication to his late mother.

Trumpeter Steve Waterman and pianist Steve Lodder are regular Crosland associates and to them he's added guitarist Chris Allard and drummer Dylan Howe. The result is a hugely enjoyable album, the sheer delight of these players to be back playing creative music pleasingly evident. Crosland's pieces are all programmatic - his notes explain each concept - Crosland's superbly mobile bass-guitar lines ensuring swing, the quintet's relaxed but finely integrated playing a standout. *Driving North* is all about momentum, the sense of the open road, Howe and Crosland propulsive and Allard given the driver's role, Waterman's trumpet sweetening the ensemble. Lively but easy to enjoy. Much the same goes for *Beeswing*, trumpet and guitar combining on another catchy theme, Waterman building a thoughtful solo. If the overall

mood veers towards fusion at times, each theme is distinctive, the voicings clever and the solo playing is tip-top.

PETER VACHER



DAN WILSON

VESSELS OF WOOD AND EARTH

Brother Mister/Mack Avenue BRO 4001: 67.17

I really must stop trying to make sense of what musicians write about their albums. Quoting Scripture in support, Grammy-nominated guitarist Dan Wilson claims that he wants to 'feature instruments that are commonly associated with accompaniment.' Personally I doubt if Wes Montgomery or Oscar Peterson saw things that way!

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But it's a fine album and he's a terrific guitarist – roughly speaking, school of Wes. Essentially the album features Christian Sands on piano (occasionally organ and synthesiser), Marco Panascia (bass) and drummer Jeff 'Tain' Watts. Joy Brown invests three songs with her individual style – not my highlight of the album – and producer Christian McBride takes up his bass for two duets which very definitely are.

The Rhythm Section makes for a high octane start, dynamic solos from Wilson and Sands over Watts' explosive drumming. At first I feared that the album might be a touch unrelenting, but the title track (at track 4) introduces a more thoughtful edge and then we can sit back and enjoy Wilson's crisply articulate, endlessly resourceful playing and the powerful commitment of the quartet. After more brilliance all round on *Who Shot John* we have beautifully delicate introductions to *After the Rain* and *Cry Me a River* and a bluesy feel to *Juneteenth*.

And then the two duets, a total joy, McBride unobtrusively supportive of Wilson's elaboration of the twists and turns of Pat Metheny's James, then soloing with poise and wit, then finally the two of them loping along happily on the grand old country song, *Born to Lose*.

RON SIMPSON



RON RUSSELL

THE RON RUSSELL LEGACY

Upbeat URCD 2CDs, 64.27/80.83.

This is an interesting oddity and a justified tribute to one of the lesser names in British traditional jazz, bassist Ron Russell. After a long and productive career involving stints with the Joe Daniels, Monty Sunshine and

Alan Elsdon bands, Russell has been on a one-man crusade, as an inveterate organiser of bands (all of which he leads) to keep his favourite music alive. His favoured music is the Dixieland/Chicago kind made famous by Eddie Condon and chums in the Thirties and Forties, and Russell has been successful – in a quiet way – at both the organising and the performance of it.

The personnel continuously rotated over his long career, members leaving and arriving, but, always of a high quality. This group is, probably, the best of them all, featuring some of the cream of our home-grown players, Digby Fairweather, Dave Jones, Pete Strange, Keith Ingham, Brian Lemon, John Richardson, Collin Bates, Randolph Colville and Tony Allen.

Upbeat has done the band a long overdue service by putting these sessions, from the Seventies, on record, and catching the bandleader's distinctive take on the Windy City style. As you would expect from the members present, the music is spontaneous, enthusiastic, raw in patches, but always virile and always swinging.

The repertoire is a welcome mix of lesser known tunes (*Happy Go Lucky You*, *Shine on your Shoes*, *Ida*, *Sweet as Apple Cider*, *Girl of my Dreams*) and revived evergreens. Incongruously, there are, also, seven Christmas songs out of a total of 36 tracks (perhaps included to make up the numbers) which, personally, I could have done without, but the band breeze through those with the requisite air of jollity.

Digby and Keith are the two most featured players, Digby playing a strong, flamboyant lead, occasionally letting his natural exuberance spill over a little. Keith is the cohesive anchor, the most noticeably adventurous, but there are other superb solos from Pete Strange and Dave Jones which remind us just how good they were.

Digby, in his sleeve notes, warmly, suggests that the band could be regarded as second only to the legendary Alex Welsh unit. However, the music here is that of the jam session, of musicians letting off steam and enjoying

themselves, whereas the Welsh band was a tightly organised, well rehearsed and stable group. But this band does generate the same vibe creating the same kind of performances that, later, had traditionally-inclined musicians astonished that they were being paid for what they would have done for nothing – don't tell the promoters.

Sadly, Dave Jones, Pete Strange, Brian Lemon, Collin Bates, Randolph Colville and Tony Allen have all passed on, but the Ron Russell bands continue on, in various forms, spreading the Gospel.

This is a valuable slice of the lesser known history of British Dixieland and Upbeat Records are to be congratulated on capturing not only this band, but this moment in time

JOHN MARTIN



STAN TRACEY

FROM STAN, WITH LOVE

Resteamed Record RSJ115 2 CDs 42.58/39.12

This double disc set will delight fans of 'classic' British jazz and, in particular, its headliner, pianist/composer Stan Tracey. Bringing



together two albums made during the late 1960s – originally issued on the Columbia label but long out of print – it rather refutes the legend that Tracey was a spent force after his six year stint as house pianist at Ronnie Scott's ended in 1966. Indeed, heard in both quartet and big band settings, his musical world seems as pin-sharp as ever.

The small band – *With Love From Jazz* – with then regular collaborator saxophonist Bobby Wellins was the follow up to the earlier *Under Milk Wood*, this time with the theme being variations on love. If it doesn't quite match the majesty of its predecessor there are still some magical moments, not least of which are the two ballads, *Sweet Used To Be* and *Amoroso*, *Only More So*, on which Wellins' tender tenor makes the ideal voice for Tracey's sardonic vision of romance. The opener, *Everywhere Derrière* (the pianist's paean to the mini-skirt) is more hard-hitting, with both the leader and Wellins really digging in.

The second disc – *We Love You Madly* – was recorded to commemorate Duke Ellington's 70th birthday in 1969 and, as such, is centred around Tracey's scores of Ellingtonia of various vintages from *Blues With A Feeling* to *Lay By*. Much of the album's kudos rests on the guest soloists – saxophonists Joe Harriott, Don Rendell and Tony Coe, trumpeter Ian Carr and – maybe to the surprise of some – clarinettist Acker Bilk, who all but steals the show on *Creole Love Call*. The booklet notes reveal that these choices were not Tracey's but those of producer Denis Preston, to whom each man was

then signed. Accordingly, there's sometimes a shotgun wedding feel to these cameos (Carr is just plain stiff on *I'm Beginning to See The Light*) but Joe Harriott's visceral *In A Sentimental Mood* is a keeper. Tracey's scores fairly glow in the newly remastered sound too. Recommended.

SIMON SPILLETT



FAPY LAFERTIN NEW QUARTET

ATLANTICO

Fremeaux FA 8576: 57.40

The brilliant Belgian guitarist Fapy Lafertin was one of the earliest followers of Django Reinhardt – and is still possibly the best – but

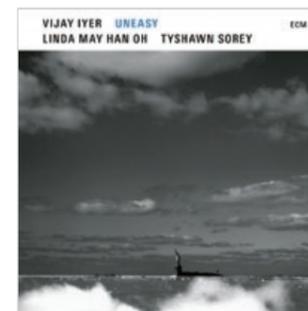
in his case 'follower' certainly doesn't mean 'imitator'. *Atlanticco*, recorded in 2017, proves the point. There are no numbers associated with the Hot Club, with four originals from the other members of his New Quartet – violinist Alexandre Tripoli, bassist Cedric Raymond and guitarist Renaud Dardenne – but, more importantly, the whole feel of the album is summed up by the internationalism of the title.

In fact the album begins far from the Atlantic, with the evocative *Toronto emlek* by the Hungarian violinist Sandor Jaroka, but it's not long before Fapy switches to the 12-string Portuguese *guitarra* for the wistful *Vibrações* by Brazilian mandolin player Jacob do Bandolim, Tripodi wearing his heart on his sleeve in his violin solo. In contrast the glorious Rodgers and Hart song, *My Romance*, sets an unsentimentally bright tempo, guitar and violin soloing expressively. Another standard, *It's Alright with Me*, boasts an arrangement full of contrasts, from the gently elaborate introduction on

guitarra into straightahead swinging violin.

Of Lafertin's own compositions *Carnation*, a medium-tempo swinger, is the nearest to the Django style, but the brief and tempestuous *Cinzano* takes us to the world of Brazilian dance and *Plachterida*, with superb guitar work, though described in the notes as 'Lusitanian', sounds to me as though it comes from the same melodic bag as the tangos of the great Argentinian Astor Piazzolla. All three compositions by band members fall into the lyrical/melancholy category, delivered with subtlety and delicacy, and the common factor of an excellent album is the regard for melody. Lafertin is a virtuoso musician who never uses his virtuosity just for its own sake.

RON SIMPSON



VIJAY IYER/LINDA MAY HAN OH/TYSHAWN SOREY

UNEASY

ECM 2692: 72.13

According to the *New York Times*, pianist Vijay Iyer is 'a social conscience,....historical thinker and multi-cultural gateway'. Iyer himself gives a social/historical purpose to his new CD, recorded in December 2019: it is about our reaction to these 'cataclysmic times', but also the soothing, healing power of music. I'm generally not very good at picking up the hidden cultural themes in instrumental music and this is no exception: despite tracks called *Uneasy* (suitably edgy), *Agury* and *Entrustment* all it means to me is that it's a very good, serious and often surprisingly melodic piano trio album.

I have more faith in another claim for the album, that it links more into the tradition of jazz than other Iyer albums, not

in any derivative sense, but in such tracks as *Night and Day*, clipped statement of the theme, expansive piano improvisation, smart solos for bass and drums.

Most of the tracks are Vijay Iyer compositions. The opener, *Children of Flint*, is deep in typical ECM territory, delicate dialogue for piano and bass. I had read much about Linda May Han Oh, but never heard her, and I see what all the fuss is about, her work both rich and delicate. Tyshawn Sorey is as crisp and incisive a drummer as you wish for and a major factor in connecting the music to the great tradition.

The most appealing of Iyer's compositions is the wandering and wistful *Touba*, co-composed with Mike Ladd, and I much enjoyed the piano tintinnabulations, dance rhythms and compulsive repetition of the trio's version of Geri Allen's *Drummer's Song*. This was apparently Iyer's regular trio at the time, but the billing of them by their own names correctly suggests the individuality of the music-making.

RON SIMPSON



JIMMY WITHERSPOON

LIVE IN LONDON 1966

Rhythm And Blues Records RANDB066 75.58

Arkansas-born blues singer Witherspoon became familiar to British audiences over several visits; he was even given life-saving cancer therapy while he was here. In a career that had its ups and downs, he found success in London, teaming with the best of our contemporary players as in the opening set recorded at the BBC with pianist Harry South's Trio and sparked by Phil Seamen on drums with Peter King on tenor.

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Jimmy Witherspoon

They open with one of his signature songs *Kansas City* taken at quite a clip, Spoon sounding earthy yet astringent and utterly resolute. Always more than just a bluesman, he could undertake a ballad like *If There Wasn't Any You* with total aplomb, before reverting to older favourites like *Sweet Lotus Blossom* and *Roll 'Em Pete*, the lyrics always given their proper weight, even if he had sung them endlessly often.

The essential meat of this exceptional compilation is in the dozen tracks recorded with ace tenorist Dick Morrissey and South's men at the Bulls Head in Barnes and previously issued as a Fontana LP. Just to hear them together on *I Gotta Girl*, Morrissey firing on every cylinder, Seamen driving hard, Witherspoon rampant, is to glimpse just what made this combination so potent when heard live. Witherspoon was a blues superstar, yet adept at fitting into a great variety of settings, with a vast discography behind him, while always remaining himself, lusty-voiced, declamatory, a vital presence on any jazz bandstand. Spoon and Morrissey at one on the blues. Hard to better. Comprehensive notes by Simon Spillett are the icing on the cake. Get this.

PETER VACHER



DOWN FOR THE COUNT CONCERT ORCHESTRA

AT THE COLD STORES

Down for the Count Records DFTC 007: 45.50

The Down for the Count Swing Orchestra (or Concert Orchestra or whatever format they happen to be in) is a wonderfully versatile organisation. Back in September I reviewed the band for a theatre website at a concert at Huddersfield originally scheduled for an 11-piece in March which took place in the false dawn after the first lockdown. The band, reduced to six by social distancing, gave great value.

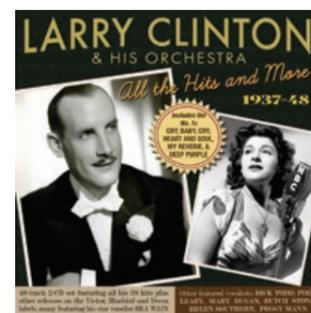
At the Cold Stores, recorded in January and September 2020, presents the Concert Orchestra in much fuller format: 12 instrumentalists, three singers

and a string section from the City String Ensemble. This is a highly accomplished album, very successful in fulfilling its intention, but it's also *Down for the Count* at its least jazzy.

Leader Mike Paul-Smith deserts the piano stool to conduct a tribute to Capitol Studios in the 1950s and 1960s, often reproducing the arrangements of the great Nelson Riddle and the rest. Paul-Smith is evidently a devotee of Nat 'King' Cole, but, whereas the Huddersfield concert majored on the likes of *Sweet Lorraine* and *Errant Boy for Rhythm*, here we have *Mona Lisa*, *Nature Boy* and *When I Fall in Love* – all good songs (well, maybe not *Nature Boy*), but the jazz content is severely diluted: excellent soloists such as Alex Western-King on tenor sax seize on limited opportunities.

Make no mistake, it's a very good album, impeccably played and produced. It's just hard to see a straight version of *Secret Love* appealing to the jazz public. Highlights for me included a delicious *Mr. Bojangles*, Callum Gillies' relaxed vocal underpinned by Sam Ainslie's delicate guitar, and great re-creations of Nelson Riddle on *I've Got You Under My Skin* (George Simmonds with the Milt Bernhardt trombone solo) and Gordon Jenkins on *Stardust* (perfect string sound).

RON SIMPSON



LARRY CLINTON AND HIS ORCHESTRA

ALL THE HITS AND MORE, 1937-48

ADD CD 3382 2 CDs, 71:33/71:14

We are, indeed, indebted to Acrobat for their continued release of the 'sweet' music of the swing period, now often neglected,

especially by Jazz fans. Born in 1909, Larry Clinton briefly led one of the best of such bands and had a succession of big hits.

He cut his teeth playing trumpet in the band of Paul Whiteman's long-time arranger, Ferde Grofé, from whom he learned much about the music business, before becoming arranger for, among others, the Dorseys and Bunny Berigan, eventually forming his own band.

Clinton's outfit might not have been the best or most distinctive, but it had immense popular appeal and, greatly in its favour, it boasted Bea Wain, one of the finest of the many fine female vocalists of the day. Most of the tracks here are from his golden years, 1937-39, when the vast majority of the 40 or so major *Billboard* hits featured her luscious voice and impeccable phrasing. Clinton's greatest claim to fame, perhaps – and that of Bea Wain – is being the first to record *Deep Purple* and *Heart and Soul*, both of which standards are credited with having occupied the number one position. These and the rest of his hits are on this splendid 2-CD collection.

Bea Wain left in 1939 to pursue a solo career and in 1941 Clinton disbanded in order to join the United States Army Air Forces, as a pilot. He returned briefly after the war but without making a mark on the new musical landscape.

ANDREW LIDDLE



LORNE LOFSKY

THIS SONG IS NEW

Modica Music MM 0028: 42.54

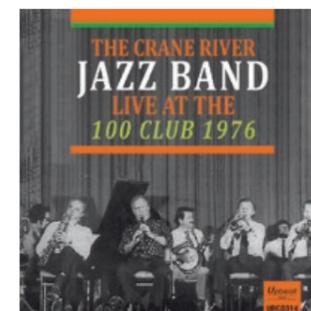
This is Lorne Lofsky's first studio album in nearly 25 years and, according to James Hale's liner note, it wasn't originally intended for commercial release. This rather suggests that Lofsky,

despite his eminence in his native Canada and his work with Oscar Peterson, Joey DeFrancesco and many others, is not the sort of chap to draw attention to himself.

So it proves. This is a pleasing album, but has an undeniably self-effacing element to it. All Lofsky's comments show him antipathetic to anything flashy or tricky: this is a straightforward 'get-together with friends', musicians who have worked with him for years, and second takes are not encouraged.

Five of the seven tracks are originals, Lofsky, not a prolific writer, having produced them in what he calls a 'mini-binge'. They tend to be thoughtful and subtle, rather than instantly memorable, with the title track and *Evans from Lennie* (multiple puns involving Bill Evans, Lennie Tristano and *Pennies from Heaven*) the most slyly attractive. Lofsky's guitar work is always a delight, straightahead, but lyrical, with a lovely ringing tone and almost pianistic voicings. The quartet operates very much as a unit, with the empathy of long association, Kirk MacDonald's supple, if rather thin-toned, tenor sax blending perfectly with Lofsky's guitar. Kieran Owers' attentive bass and Barry Romberg's crisp drumming complete the picture.

RON SIMPSON



THE CRANE RIVER JAZZ BAND

LIVE AT THE 100 CLUB, 1976

Upbeat URCD314 73:04

No finer British traditional jazz band emerged from the New Orleans Revival of the late 1940s than that Ken Colyer put together in 1948, which by the following summer was firmly ensconced at the White Hart, in Cranford, on the banks of the eponymous River Crane.



Lorne Lofsky

Photo by Don Vickery

Colyer left temporarily in 1951 to join the Christie Brothers Stompers, a couple of years before his famous pilgrimage to the land of dreams, and the band continued with Sonny Morris as leader until its demise in 1957.

Happily, they reformed in 1972 and, though never quite reaching their former heights, were still a formidable outfit, retaining their old drive and exuberance. This private recording made at the famous 100 Club, on Oxford Street, in 1976, now re-released by Upbeat, found them at their uninhibited best.

Ken Colyer, cornet, and Sonny Morris, trumpet, demonstrate they are simply the best that this country has to offer of two-horn pairings in the rugged idiom, both unfussy and direct, swapping the lead, each a willing foil to the other, alternating registers, bouncing off each other through multiple choruses, mounting in intensity.

There are fine solos throughout, especially from clarinetist, Monty Sunshine, an original member before joining Chris Barber in 1954, and wonderful ensemble playing driven by Colin Bowden's definitively New Orleans' drumming. Still with the band are stalwarts of the rhythm section, Ben Marshall, banjo, and Julian Davis, bass. In the absence of Pat Hawes, on piano, Ray Smith adds Jelly Roll sophistications. With John Goddard on board,

the original trombonist, John R.T. Davies, plays alto.

It's traditional fare, a familiar Colyer programme of spirituals, pops, marches and a rag. Some of the tracks stretch beyond the ten-minute mark, but without ever running out of steam. Quite the reverse, in fact.

ANDREW LIDDLE



PINHEIRO - INEKE - CAVALLI

TURN OUT THE STARS - THE MUSIC OF BILL EVANS

Challenge Records CR73523 46:30

The trio of Portuguese guitarist Ricardo Pinheiro, Italian bassist Massimo Cavalli and Dutch drummer Eric Ineke is a regular working unit. *Turn Out the Stars* is the pan-European trio's second album released by Challenge Records (*Triplicity*, a 2017 recording, is available on the Dutch label's Daybreak

imprint). Seven tracks – five of them composed by the album's principal subject, Bill Evans – are approached with the utmost sensitivity without sacrificing the musicians' interpretation of the familiar melodies. Evans' *Turn Out the Stars* segueing into *Time Remembered* spanning more than ten minutes of the album's total playing time is, perhaps, the highpoint of the trio's collective improvisation. *Very Early* is bright, if not sprightly, with Pinheiro's clean lines and lightness of touch suggesting a Jim Hall influence, perhaps Bill Frisell. Two non-Bill Evans' tracks open and close the recording, in each case originating from the worlds of stage and/or screen: *You Must Believe in Spring* (something of a modern day standard, Michel Legrand's composition formed part of the film score for *The Young Girls of Rochefort*, earning the Frenchman an Academy Award nomination) and Leonard Bernstein's *Some Other Time*, famously from *On the Town*. Bassist Cavalli, long-since resident in Portugal, and drummer Ineke, a fixture on the Dutch jazz scene, evidently share Pinheiro's love of the material heard on the CD. If simplicity with a touch of quiet sophistication is your idea of jazz, *Turn Out the Stars - The Music of Bill Evans* will make a worthy addition to your collection.

RUSSELL CORBETT



RED NICHOLS & HIS FIVE PENNIES

THE RED NICHOLS COLLECTION, 1926-32

Acrobat ACQCD7153 4 CDs, 67:09/68:03/70:36/70:29

Red Nichols was one of the finest white cornet players - with a glorious ringing tone reminiscent of Bix Beiderbecke's - to emerge during the 1920s. Born in 1905, in Utah, he began playing and studying his instrument at an early age, achieving a great technical mastery.

During 1926-32, the period covered by this splendid collection from Acrobat, Nichols made numerous wonderful recordings with the Five Pennies, and what were often its off-shoots, the Charleston Chasers, the Arkansas Travelers, the Red Heads, the Louisiana Rhythm Kings, the Wabash Dance Orchestra, the Alabama Red Peppers, and Red and Miff's Stompers.

The collective personnel of the varying line-ups reads like a Who's Who of white jazz greats of the time and we begin to appreciate something of his creative energy and ability to put bands together and arrange, organise and inspire some of the greatest recordings ever made.

Miff Mole's trombone features on most tracks in 1927-28, arguably the finest - and we often have no difficulty aurally identifying at various times such as Glenn Miller, Jack Teagarden, Tommy Dorsey and Will Bradley, on trombone; clarinetists, Pee Wee Russell, Benny Goodman, Jimmy Dorsey and Frank Teschemacher; tenor-saxophonists, Bud Freeman, Eddie Miller, Babe Russin.

On guitar we hear Eddie Lang, Dick McDonough, Carl Kress,

and Eddie Condon, on piano, Lennie Hayton, Joe Sullivan, Rube Bloom, and Roy Bary; the swinging violinist Joe Venuti; Joe Tarto on tuba; drummers Gene Krupa, Chauncey Morehouse, Stan King, Dave Tough, Ray Bauduc, and Ray McKinley; and trumpeters Manny Klein, Charlie Teagarden and Wingy Manone. Adrian Rollini always announces himself on bass sax and no one has a more distinctive vocal sound than Red Mackenzie.

After 1932, Nichols was very much less prolific, apparently making no jazz recordings at all in 1933. In 1944, beyond the scope of this collection, he made a comeback and the popular biopic in the following decade brought further late fame - but it is safe to say we have the best of a glorious oeuvre on this 93-track, 4-CD collection.

Classic tracks, beautiful tunes abound, heat is generated, the mood is vibrant. It's the quintessential Jazz Age.

ANDREW LIDDLE



VALAIDA SNOW

SWING IS THE THING

Upbeat URCD 312: 76.29

There are at least two good reasons for getting hold of this fascinating CD. One, of course, is the music, but the other is the remarkable story of Valaida Snow, documented both through the recordings and through Mike Pointon's excellent liner notes.

I realised that my early impressions of Valaida, gained from my father, were accurate, but far from complete. My image of a star trumpeter who blazed through the UK jazz scene in the mid-late 1930s, in company with other non-Brits such as the Belgian Johnny Claes and American reedman Danny Polo,



was fine as far as it went, but Valaida went much further.

Her recording career represented here took her from the 1933 Earl Hines Orchestra to the boundaries of rock'n'roll on Chess Records in 1953, three years before her death. Rather than a jazz trumpeter, she was a consummate cabaret and theatre performer as trumpeter, singer and dancer: a fair number of tracks here are singing only; her dancing is, sadly, unrepresented! Then there was a colourful life, made even more colourful in her re-telling: arrest and imprisonment by the Nazis in Copenhagen for 10 weeks in 1942, followed by an orderly return to the States, turned into a dramatic escape after two years in a concentration camp.

16 of 26 tracks feature Valaida with some fine British groups between 1935 and 1937 - nice solos from the likes of Buddy Featherstonehaugh and Freddy Gardner. Her assured trumpet playing has the inevitable Armstrong influence, but with some neat muted playing. Her singing is difficult to classify: from heart-on-sleeve torch songs to tearing fearlessly into high-tempo swingers, via, at times, a nicely nonchalant take-it-or-leave-it delivery when she thins out her rich contralto to something more like Rose Murphy. Her reading of *I Can't Give You* is beautifully controlled and justifies its inclusion though incomplete, and the most fun is had romping through *Nagasaki*, *I Got Rhythm*

and *Tiger Rag* with an unnamed eight-piece including Johnny Claes.

The final nine tracks are widely spaced between 1939 and 1953, from Stockholm to Chicago. Two tracks with Winstrup Olesen's Swingband find her in fine form before the Nazis took offence at her colour and 'degenerate music' and a 1946 recording in L.A. of a song with the unlikely title of *Patience & Fortitude*, accompanied by accordion, guitar and bass, proves unexpectedly attractive.

RON SIMPSON



LARRY CORYELL

LARRY CORYELL'S LAST SWING WITH IRELAND: THE LAST STUDIO RECORDINGS OF LARRY CORYELL

Angel Air Records SJPCD 641 46.03

When Larry Coryell took his guitar into the Hellfire Studios in Dublin in May 2016 there was no indication that he would be dead three months later of a heart attack. He was there to play at the Sugar Club and took

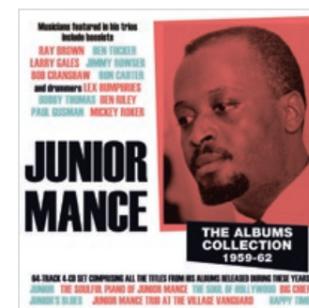


advantage of his visit to lay down six tracks with his preferred Irish musicians Dave Redmond on bass and Kevin Brady on drums.

So often the word 'Last' strikes an ominous note and has us reviewers listening for signs of deterioration in the performances of the artists involved. Happily, there is no waning of power in this short set of six songs and we get the guitarist displaying a whole spectrum of the unique input he brought to jazz with his forging of jazz fusion back at the beginning of his 50 year career in the 1960s. He really was a guitarist for all seasons as he ranges through two brilliantly acoustic and introspective readings of *In a Sentimental Mood* and *Morning of Carnival*, with a fine solo by Redmond on the former.

Parker's *Relaxin' at the Camarillo* finds him back to electric and his bop base and little snatches of rock, classical and country thrown in, followed by a rousing *Someday My Prince Will Come* wrapped around the Miles Davis arrangement. The last two numbers, *The Last Peavey* and *376* are heavily rooted in the blues. All in all, this is a masterclass of Coryell's astonishing versatility. Redmond and Brady are more than an ideal support with Brady's intricate brush work a pleasant reminder of how effective this can be.

JOHN MARTIN



JUNIOR MANCE

THE ALBUMS COLLECTION 1959-62

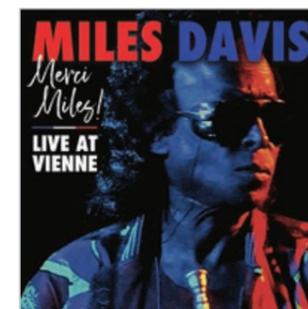
Acrobat Music ACQCD 7154 4 CDs 73.26/73.10/69.58/69.44

Everything you need to know about pianist Junior Mance is revealed barely a few tracks into this jam-packed collection. On Benny Golson's *Whisper Not* he unfurls an improvisation light yet funky in touch in which the melody keeps peeking through and the blues are never very far away.

Cut from the same stylistic cloth as generational peers Ray Bryant, Bobby Timmons, Wynton Kelly and Red Garland, Mance was a first-class exponent of the bop to blues style popular at the dawn of the 1960s and this anthology, which generously includes seven albums made for the Verve, Riverside and Jazzland labels between 1959 and 1962, captures him at his peak. Mostly these are gentle on the ear trio sets, full of danceable soul-jazz and

choice ballads. The best of the lot is probably *Junior Mance Trio Live at the Village Vanguard* taped in 1961, a session which, while it never tops Bill Evans' seminal records made at the same venue that year, is nevertheless great fun, enlivened considerably by two compositions borrowed from Mance's then bosses, saxophonists Johnny Griffin (*63rd Street Theme*) and Eddie 'Lockjaw' Davis (*Bingo Domingo*). *Junior's Blues* is another hot one, finding the leader celebrating his roots in themes by Thelonious Monk, Duke Ellington and, surprisingly, Meade Lux Lewis. The only set departing from the piano-bass-drums format is *The Soul of Hollywood* on which Mance sparkles through a programme of film themes (everything from *Exodus* to *Spellbound*) in the company of a large ensemble arranged by Melba Liston. While these are consistently good recordings, there is a danger that their concentration on the trio line-up makes them a tad monotonous. That said, it's all fine jazz and in very good sound. The only reservation? The rear inlay graphics which are a mess of unnecessary duplication. For all piano buffs.

SIMON SPILLET



MILES DAVIS

MERCI MILES! - LIVE AT VIENNE 1991

Warner Records/Rhino R2 653962/603497844616: 2 CDs, 53.40/24.57

Miles Davis' career was never predictable and, at this live concert in France only months before his death, he avoids any hint of his past successes: the tunes include two Prince songs, two by Miles' former bassist Marcus Miller and Cyndi Lauper's *Time after Time*. His sextet of much younger musicians contained only one who has had an orthodox

jazz career, saxist Kenny Garrett, and featured Foley on what is variously described as 'lead bass' and 'piccolo bass', tuned an octave higher to take the role of a solo guitar, though with an otherworldly timbre. *Merci Miles* is beautifully packaged, with a detailed and personal note from Ashley Kahn, and makes available for the first time an exciting, yet oddly relaxed, session that merited roars of approval from the Vienne audience. It's oversimplifying to refer to Miles' music at this time as 'funk' - that's in there, but so is much else.

The album is front-loaded, with three superb tracks to begin with. *Hannibal* and *Human Nature* (34 minutes between them) both build to tremendous climaxes, seem to have the momentum to go on for ever, then hit the buffers with explosive force. On the former the exchanges between Miles' surprisingly muscular open trumpet and Garrett's intense soprano sax up the ante over Ricky Wellman's powerhouse drumming. *Human Nature* is even better, a sunny Caribbean opening changing gear constantly, with Garrett introducing a Middle Eastern feel and topping a wildly cacophonous finale. Then for contrast Miles, muted, is at his most delicate on *Time After Time*.

These three tracks are well over half the album's length and the remainder has more straight funk, with a highlight being Deron Johnson's great work on keyboards on Prince's *Jailbait*. A word, too, for Richard Patterson on bass, creating a mighty pulse alongside Ricky Wellman.

RON SIMPSON



'PRACTISE, MAN, PRACTISE...'

RON SIMPSON gives a personal view of the role of Carnegie Hall in the history (and pre-history) of jazz.

It's the subject of one of the oldest and best jazz jokes. A passer-by comes up to a jazz musician and asks, 'How do I get to Carnegie Hall?' I guess all *Jazz Rag* readers can join in the chorus of 'Practise, man, practise!'. It gets attributed to plenty of classical musicians, but to me it always feels like a jazz joke, though I leave others to argue whether it was Dizzy Gillespie or Clark Terry or just some guy on the corner with shades and a saxophone case.

I was prompted to start thinking about Carnegie Hall by the showing of James Erskine's documentary, *Billie*, on television. Billie Holiday actually played Carnegie Hall many times, including two concerts as late as 1956, but it's the 1948 concert that always comes to mind when Lady Day at Carnegie Hall is mentioned. It's a story of triumph in adversity and one full of irony.

Having been at the peak of her popularity in 1947, Billie was arrested for possession of narcotics and spent nearly a year in Alderson Prison Camp, West Virginia. When she came out, she was persuaded by her manager to stage a comeback concert at Carnegie Hall. A record 2,700 tickets were sold in advance, crowds were proverbially round the block and Billie Holiday was back. The irony is that Carnegie Hall was one of the few places in New York where she could have performed: her drugs bust had cost her her cabaret card.

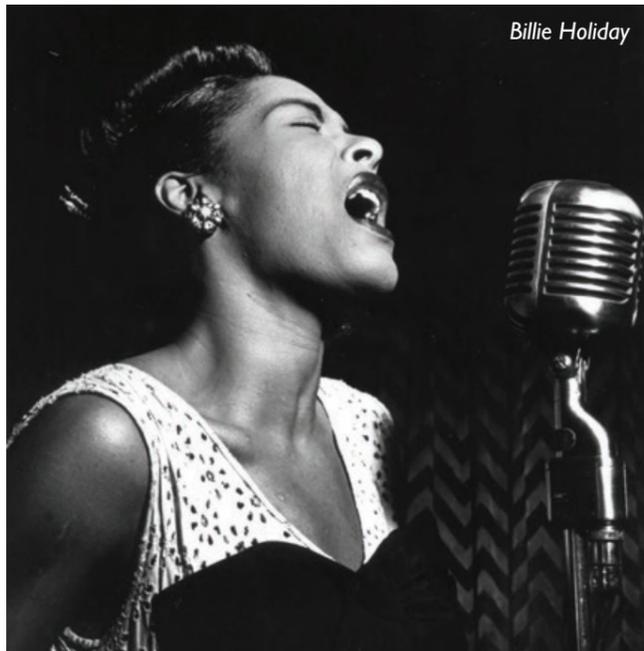
That set me wondering about Carnegie Hall's place in the Establishment and its attitude to outsiders, especially African-Americans. It's shocking for us to realise the degree of snobbery that prevailed in New York society of the Gilded Age when Carnegie Hall was founded, initially as the Music Hall, on 57th Street in 1891. Judging from the records, from its earliest days the Carnegie family which owned the Hall until 1935 seems to have been more liberal than most of 'The 400', the social elite whose number was supposedly

dictated by the size of Mrs. Astor's ballroom!

Andrew Carnegie was one of the mind-bogglingly rich new industrialists, but he was a philanthropist rather than a would-be socialite. In the UK his generosity provided for vast numbers of libraries and at least one less glamorous Carnegie Hall – in his hometown of Dunfermline.

Of course, Carnegie Hall was a bastion of the musical establishment from the start – the New York Philharmonic moved in for a 70-year stay in 1892 – but attitudes to colour seem to have been tolerant. As early as 1892 the African American opera singer Sissieretta Jones, known as 'The Black Patti' (though she preferred Madame Jones!), sang there. In the 1920s Paul Robeson (who added left-wing opinions to the sin of being black) and Marian Anderson appeared.

The pre-jazz history of Carnegie Hall includes two notable events for the jazz world. In 1912 one of the most interesting figures in what we might call proto-jazz appeared there with his band. James Reese Europe had surprising success in breaking down racial barriers (acting as bandleader for popular white dance duo Irene and Vernon Castle), but he was also a pioneer for black music and a huge influence on such people as Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake who called him 'the Martin Luther King of music.' In 1910 he founded the Clef Club for black musicians and it was the Clef Club Orchestra that played Carnegie Hall in 1912 to raise money for the Colored Music Settlement School, playing a programme of music by black composers. Lieutenant James Europe went on to lead the 'Hellfighters' in the last year of World War One, inspiring black American troops with *Memphis Blues* alongside *The Star-Spangled Banner*. A final reminder of Jim Europe comes in the opening sequence of the 1943 film, *Stormy*



Weather, with Bill Robinson and Dooley Wilson coming home as all-conquering Hellfighters. Sadly Europe didn't long survive the Great War: not the Spanish flu, but a disturbed drummer who wounded him fatally with a pen-knife.

Even more relevant to the future history of jazz, in an oblique sort of a way, was the 1921 production of *The Open Door*. Described as 'a Negro pageant with music', it was 'built up around the spirituals and folk songs of the race and showed symbolically its development from jungle dance and barbaric ritual through slavery and oppression to the present day when the door is open to education and larger opportunity.' So far as I can tell, this was not a Carnegie Hall one-off, but touring from the University of Atlanta, with 200 African Americans presenting a rather optimistic view of the state of affairs in Georgia. I can only wonder if the young Edward Kennedy Ellington saw the show. His own take on the topic, *Black, Brown and Beige*, premiered at Carnegie Hall in 1943.

By the time of that 1943 concert the floodgates had opened for jazz at Carnegie Hall, Ellington's orchestra playing four successive years, for instance. Perhaps surprisingly, the first of

Paul Whiteman's attempts to reconcile jazz and the classics, *Experiments in Modern Music*, took place in Aeolian Hall in 1924, not Carnegie Hall. However remote some of it was from jazz, it produced one unclassifiable masterpiece, *Rhapsody in Blue*. However, later concerts in the series found their home on 57th Street. The eighth was held on Christmas Day 1938, with guest spots for Louis Armstrong (only singing) and Artie Shaw, but that was overshadowed by the two concerts in the same year that, for many of us, define Jazz at Carnegie Hall.

On January 16th, Benny Goodman came to Carnegie Hall in one of those occasions that still seem present today: bandleaders put together shows based on it, record companies re-master and re-package. We all carry our own mental version of it in our heads: in mine, Martha Tilton and Ziggy Elman bring the house down with *And the Angels Sing* even though in reality it wasn't performed until 1939.

It was a concert by a fine band on top form, but some other points are worth noting. Goodman had a touch of the Paul Whiteman in his programming: just as the so-called 'King of Jazz' played *Livery Stable Blues* to illustrate where

his sophisticated music had come from, the 'King of Swing' essayed, less parodically, the Original Dixieland Jazz Band's *Sensation Rag*, following it up with *I'm Coming Virginia*. Clearly he wanted to represent all jazz in what has been termed, rather patronisingly, 'jazz's coming out party to the world of "respectable" music.' For all that, it's the Goodman band's abandoning good taste to thrilling effect on *Sing Sing Sing* that we all remember from Carnegie Hall '38.

That ambition to represent all jazz was probably behind the generous decision to share the spotlight with a number of the stars from the Count Basie and Duke Ellington Orchestras, including Basie himself. This served to heighten the impression made by the presence in the small groups of Lionel Hampton and Teddy Wilson: this was an integrated concert when such things were a rarity.

Then there is the presence of John Hammond, *eminence grise* of the 1930s Goodman band and just the sort of fellow the original founders of the

Music Hall thought they were catering for – a Vanderbilt on his mother's side, that's the same Vanderbilts who were waiting at the club as a couple of swells, Astaire and Garland, struggled their way up the avenue. And John Hammond actually set up the second memorable concert in 1938, two days before Whiteman's extravaganza.

From Spirituals to Swing placed the black cultural experience centre stage and was even dedicated to the memory of Bessie Smith who had been killed the previous year in a car crash in Clarksdale, Mississippi, and had supposedly been refused admission to a white hospital with her life-threatening injuries. *From Spirituals to Swing* was many things: it was long, it was wildly disparate and it was so popular a second concert was added on Christmas Eve. It was also political. In the absence of any commercial sponsorship, the Communist Party of American put up the funds. These were the people the egregious Joseph McCarthy set about black-listing just over a decade later – remember, it wasn't just about

present activity: the 'Have you ever been...?' question – though I trust encouraging African Americans to play jazz in Carnegie Hall was not a specific crime, even to the senator from Wisconsin!

There was also still the anthropological element: how do we get from the jungle to Harlem? The concert included African tribal music from the H.E. Tracey Expedition (that word, 'expedition', is telling), but it's easy to forget the earnest, and possibly misguided, scholarship with the Basie Band in blazing form. The programme included, among others, spirituals from the Golden Gate Quartet and Mitchell's Christian Singers, blues from Sonny Terry and Big Bill Broonzy and small group jazz from the Kansas City Six (Basie-ites minus Basie) and, on the second show, the Benny Goodman Sextet. The concert also had a great deal to do with the fashion for boogie woogie in multiple combinations, with Meade Lux Lewis, Albert Ammons and Pete Johnson all fighting their corners.

So that was it, jazz was in! An interesting example of the integration of jazz and classical came in 1946 when Woody Herman played Stravinsky's *Ebony Concerto*, written especially for him, at Carnegie Hall, but generally the Hall did orthodox jazz concerts – and folk concerts and, increasingly, rock performances. 1947 introduced the Hall to bebop (Dizzy, Bird and Ella) and in the same year Louis Armstrong appeared under his own name (and played trumpet this time). In the 1950s you might be wondering which would have shocked the Gilded Age elite more, Bill Haley and his Comets or Thelonious Monk and John Coltrane. When the New York Philharmonic absconded to Lincoln Center in 1962 and left Carnegie Hall without a resident orchestra, it was open season on bookings: many great concerts, but not remarkable occasions like Billie Holiday in 1948, Benny Goodman in 1938 or – the one I would have found most fascinating – Jim Europe in 1912.

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HENRY'S BLUESLETTER

MATCHBOX BLUESMASTER SERIES - VOL 4

STUART MAXWELL potters down some blues and gospel byways

Albums like this six-disc set are strange artefacts. They are literally collectors' items, put together as little archives of recordings from times gone by. If you had asked Peg Leg Howell to put together a collection of his own work, would he have chosen these songs, presented in this order? Would Julius Daniels be happy to have his music presented with so much muffling surface noise? Mind you, we can probably assume he would be glad to have his music memorialised at all.

This is not to question for a moment the wisdom of putting compilations like this together. At the raw level it is simply a joy to hear recordings like these. Sweet-toned, intense voices, dancing fiddles, deft and swinging guitar-picking which still stands honourably next to the virtuosity of modern emulators, even though today's players are better served by the technology that preserves their music.

Still, you bring a lot of your own romantic notions to a collection like this. Although some of the recordings are

good for their age, others, like Texas Alexander's *Rolling Mill Blues*, are distinctly less so. We're told they are from rare original 78s, but the fact is that some are most effective simply as entries in an archive.

This is where the mythology of the blues comes from, the disembodied voices warbling from our speakers, evoking a time and a land we can never know. It is to this wistful idea of how things were that these collections speak.

The disc of sanctified jug bands is a case in point. Are many people really going to sit and listen to these recordings the way they might to *Kind Of Blue*, *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, or Mozart's Requiem? When DOES one listen to music like this, except in church, or if one is deeply sanctified oneself? For most of us, it is interesting as a historical artefact, giving an insight into the relationship between blues and gospel music. The possible presence of Will Shade, one of the first recorded harmonica players, adds a bit of spice, but it might not be him, of course. Romantic and quaint as they are, we are reminded by Paul Oliver's sleeve notes that they may have been recorded solely as gimmicks, cashing in on religious fervour and the popularity of jug bands. Simon Cowell comes from a long tradition - it's always been a music business, with the emphasis on the second word.

You can bring a music critic's ear to these recordings if you insist. You can admire the technical virtuosity of Eddie Anthony, or the swagger of Bessie Mae Smith (if not always her intonation). But what are your frames of reference? By whose rules do you judge these performances? Blues, country and gospel are definitively about the

moment and the person in that moment; if you fix them to some template or other they wither and die. Could Robert Johnson, "The King of the Delta Blues Singers" have turned in a performance like Peg Leg Howell's intense and intricate *Sadie Lee*, in that studio, on that day? He could not and there would be no point in his trying.

Similarly, an academic like Paul Oliver might delight in tracing influences, or working out who stole which lyric from whom, or speculating about the travels of the performers from hints in the songs or their instrumental styles.

In the end, you can only judge these sessions by how they make you feel. And given that, for this critic at least, performances like *Doin' Wrong* and *Furniture Man* deliver a kick in the guts even at a distance of nigh on a hundred years, and through a barrage of noise that might qualify them as avant garde experiments, you can thank Saydisc Records for making sure they don't get lost before their time.



Texas Alexander

CIGAR BOX GUITAR

Brooks Williams is an outstanding, finger-picking, rootsy blues guitar man from Statesboro, Georgia. He is a regular and extremely popular performer at the Birmingham, Sandwell & Westside Jazz Festival where he has built an impressive following, singing the blues to his own backing on acoustic and resonator guitars.

To my surprise and delight, some years ago now, he finished his set with three songs where he played a cigar box guitar, not a common sight.

Offstage, we talked about his cigar box guitar, and I said that I thought it brilliant, that some tiny American company is still producing these primitive blues guitars. This seemed to amuse Brooks, who told me that actually, these cigar box guitars are made in Smethwick, Birmingham.

I made contact with the man concerned, a certain Chickenbone John and we have now worked together for some years. John doesn't just make these mini-masterpieces, he is also a tremendous blues singer and cigar box guitarist who has become a strong draw at Henry's Blueshouse and a regular at the Jazz Festival.

John always did have a passion for building guitars. He built his first when he was just fourteen, and for a while spent his time buying old timey guitars, repairing and selling them. Then he read somewhere that B.B. King and Lightnin' Hopkins had both made their own first guitars out of a cigar box and a broom handle, which got John thinking.

He did a little research and made himself a 3 string fretless cigar box guitar. He says that to his amazement, it worked and was actually playable and particularly suited to a slide player like himself. His next step was to take his home-made guitar to open mics and jam sessions, then he built another, sold it and repeated the process until he suddenly found himself organising a Cigar Box Festival, Boxstock, at the centre of a whole new home-grown phenomenon, starring in an acclaimed BBC film *Cigar Box Blues* and folk now referring to him as The Godfather of The Cigar Box Guitar.

John is now building resonator and oil can guitars alongside the cigar boxes, teaching people how to make and play them, and playing gigs as a solo, in a duo with Harmonica Dave and with his band, Chickenbone Blues.

Both Brooks Williams and Chickenbone John are set to appear at *The 37th Birmingham, Sandwell and Westside Jazz Festival*. Brooks will feature at *Theatre Square, Solihull (13:00)* and *Blackheath Library (19:30)* on Friday 16th July, while Chickenbone John is delivering a *Cigar Box Guitar Workshop (16:00)* at *Henry's Blueshouse* at *The Bulls Head (Tuesday 20th July)*, performing with *Harmonica player Tony Stokes (21:15)* at *The Night Owl (Thursday 22nd July)*, with *Harmonica Dave (13:00)* at *Birmingham Rag Market* and at *The Wellington (20:00)* on Saturday 31st July.

Admission is free to all of these shows.

JIM SIMPSON

HENRY'S BLUES PROFILES THE QUEEN OF WHITE TRASH CAJUN

Although it is commonplace to comment, when a band is really rocking, that they are cooking, it must be extremely rare for this activity to actually involve food, heat and the appropriate utensils onstage. In fact, in the more than 7000 performances over the 37 years of the Birmingham, Sandwell & Westside Jazz Festival, I can only recall it happening on one occasion and that was when the singer who rejoiced in the nickname, The Queen of White Trash Cajun, came to town.

In 2011 Sarah Savoy and the Francadians featured in the Jazz Festival at Star City. Sarah was born into the legendary Cajun family of accordionist Marc and singer/guitarist Ann Savoy, whose home town, Eunice, Louisiana, is deep in Cajun territory. Although Sarah grew up surrounded by their music, as a youngster she became infatuated with punk, purple hair and all that goes with that.

However, as a part of an important Cajun dynasty she still found herself getting involved in various group, singing and playing guitar and accordion and appearing with her mother's famous all-female groups, The Magnolia Sisters. She studied Russian at University in Lafayette before eventually going to Moscow to continue studying the work of her favourite writer, Dostoyevski. Graduating, she stayed in Moscow, taking a job in marketing.

When she was invited to perform at a Cajun festival in France, Sarah rediscovered her roots and decided to stay in France, performed regularly with Cajun musicians and eventually formed her band, The Francadians, with Louisiana and European musicians. The band included bass player Manolo Gonzales, whom she married.

But back to things culinary. On arrival in Birmingham, she sent the somewhat bemused festival staff on an errand to fulfil her wish-list of cooking paraphernalia that she insisted were central to her performance and which she proceeded to set up centre stage. Come showtime, Sarah announced that she was going to deliver a programme of down-home Louisiana Cajun while preparing a meal of gumbo and jambalaya with which she would feed the audience during intermission - which indeed she did, with everyone dutifully lining up with their cardboard plates and plastic forks.

The bizarre circumstances in no way detracted from what was a really terrific performance, it was almost like witnessing an early Elvis. Sarah Savoy, clearly relishing every moment, was captivating and the band were really cooking - what else?

JIM SIMPSON



Photo by Merlin Daleman

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 BLUESHOUSE ON THE ROAD



24th September 7pm (Studio)
Big Jim & The Alabama Boogie Boys £5

22nd October 7pm (Studio)
The Shufflepack £5

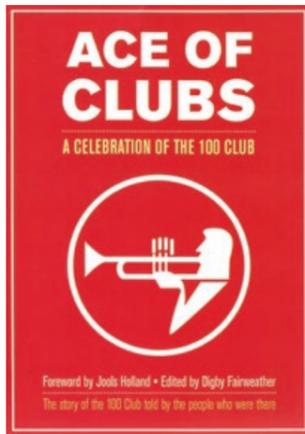
19th November 7:30pm (Theatre)
Ain't Nothin' But The Blues

Tipitina
The Whiskey Brothers
Chickenbone John with Harmonica Dave £12

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Theatre Square
Touchwood
Homer Road
Solihull
B91 3RG

Phone: 0121 704 6962
Email: thecoretheatre@solihull.gov.uk
Tickets available from www.thecoretheatresolihull.co.uk

BOOK REVIEW



ACE OF CLUBS: A CELEBRATION OF THE 100 CLUB

EDITED BY DIGBY FAIRWEATHER, FOREWORD BY JOOLS HOLLAND

Brewin Books, paperback, 978 1 85858 728 8: £12.95

Ace of Clubs is not a formal history; there are no linking narratives and at times Digby Fairweather seems to assume a background knowledge in his readers. It makes no attempt at a balanced structure, being in two parts, *Early Days* and *Later Years*, with *Early Days* occupying the first 100 of its 120 pages. Much of *Later Years* covers non-jazz events and this is unashamedly a jazz book.

And why not? It's backed by National Lottery funding on behalf of The Jazz Centre UK. The book consists of reminiscences of the club ranging in length from a couple of pages to a single sentence. Frequent contributors are long-time 100 Club owner Roger Horton, his brother and early associate David and his son Jeff who took over the club, and any number of jazz notables such as Mike Pointon, Wally Fawkes and Digby himself. There are occasional interjections from those no longer with us, culled by Digby from interviews or books: Humph, George Melly, Jim Godbolt and so on.

The connection between jazz and 100 Oxford Street began in 1942 when the Feldman Swing Club opened its doors at the

weekend in what during the week was Mack's Restaurant, remembered by David Horton as 'as dreadful an eatery as you would find'. The jazz wasn't too dreadful, though: the opening night band included Kenny Baker, Jimmy Skidmore and, of course, the child prodigy Victor Feldman. The book includes a flyer for a jam session at the Feldman Club, complete with solemn explanation, 'What is a Jam Session?', the line-up a mix of loved ones (Skid, Dankworth, Kathy Stobart, Coleridge Goode, etc.) and forgotten ones – who remembers Hamish Menzies, 'the British Fats Waller'?

In the 1950s 100 Oxford Street was famously the Humphrey Lyttelton Club, but it was not until Ted Morton took it on as the Jazzshows Jazz Club that it became a seven nights-a-week jazz venue. From him the succession led straight to the Hortons. Initially things prospered mightily, but an anecdote from Hugh Rainey graphically points up the collapse of the Trad Boom. He was with Bob Wallis' Storyville Jazzmen in 1963, so popular that they were booked in for the Palladium Summer Season, admittedly low on the bill. The season ran until December when they emerged from the Palladium to find the Beatles had happened and 35 major jazz clubs had closed. In 1964 the band broke up for lack of work.

As years passed, blues, soul and, in its day, punk took their place in the 100 Club, but it's always the jazz that takes centre stage in Digby's book. The financial crises of the last decade are dealt with fairly briefly and the book ends on the sunny uplands of recognition as a major cultural venue and support from the City Council.

The book is full of illustrations, many in colour, some of memorable occasions such as Louis Armstrong visiting the club in 1956, some print ephemera (a bill for 1979 with a great two-month line-up of jazz, blues, soul and folk), some downright bizarre such as the letter from Philip Larkin agonising over whether he should respond to a request for enlightenment from a student whose

trombone playing he admired (Campbell Burnap!). Most of the illustrations, however, are informal photographs of musicians, often at the club in various stages of relaxation!

For a club that was dry for many years, alcohol seems to have played a considerable part in the 100 Club story. Frank Parr, Merseysippi and Mick Mulligan stalwart, county standard cricketer and heroic drunk, features largely, measuring his length (as 'Fallabout Francis') everywhere from a bar full of glasses to the middle of Belsize Park Road (and then going to sleep) or getting struck by lightning as a cricket umpire and carrying on regardless. No one will be surprised that there are some choice George Melly stories, too, and the iconoclastic pianist/trombonist Bert Murray figures

as the man who got banned for shouting out 'Wrong!' to Barney Kessel's chord selection.

It would be wrong, however, to imply that *Ace of Clubs* is just a fun read. It is a fun read, but with plenty of serious insights. Chris Barber, for instance, figures across several pages, but rather than comic anecdotes we have assessments of his unique role in British jazz. But the tone remains light, aided by Digby's skilful knitting together of the reminiscences, sometimes into something resembling a conversational chat of the 'Do you remember when...?' variety.

RON SIMPSON



Digby Fairweather

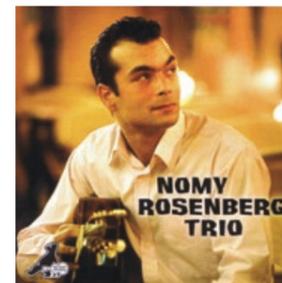
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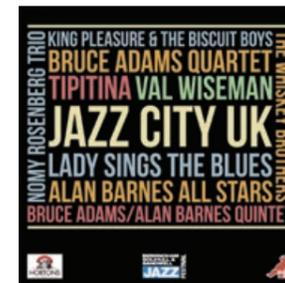
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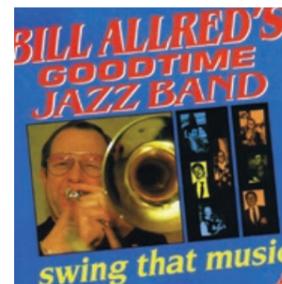
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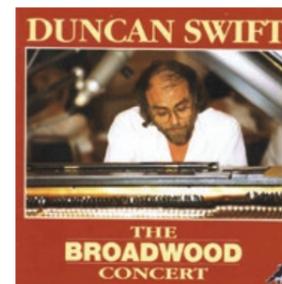
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