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ISSUE 170 SPRING 2022

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CATHERINE RUSSELL, eminent jazz singer, daughter of Luis Russell and Carline Ray, talks of her parents and her approach to jazz singing on pages 16-17.

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UPFRONT

BLUES FOR UKRAINE

Jazz and blues fans, no less than anyone else, have found other matters, even Covid, put in proportion by the television reports from Ukraine. The sight of disfigured human bodies gives rise quite naturally to those 'Something must be done' moments. The problem is – what?

The obvious thing is to raise money. As Henry's Bluesletter tells us, that's exactly what Henry's Blueshouse, in association with Velvet Music Rooms, did. A 4 ½ hour spectacular brought together three blues bands and countless soloists, auctioned off everything from an oil painting of Buddy Guy to a cigar box guitar and raised £3,825.

Doubtless this is only one of many such events in the UK, but it provided a salutary lesson in media attitudes, with local newspapers and regional television not interested. Raising money by staging concerts of the music you love may not be the most heroic response to events in Ukraine, but it's all we have.

Digby Fairweather

Photo by
Merlin Daleman

NEW CLUB FOR SOUTHEND

A new nightclub Jazz at the Sands is opening in Southend on the last Thursday of every month. On April 28 to the resident Rat-Pack Rhythm Section of Tim Huskisson, Roger Curphey and Alan Clarke, Digby Fairweather is adding himself, Julian Marc Stringle and Dominic Ashworth, plus various unspecified guests. The following month, May 26, sees a Tribute to Eddie Condon, with Digby joined by Robert Fowler and Chris Gower.

Digby writes about the club, 'There's been a huge amount of interest in the new club and I've already had requests from some fantastic musicians – British and American – to come and play, so we won't be short of stars. I'm also delighted that my partner in this project is Philip Miller. I've known Philip for years as a very good friend. He's the CEO of Stockvale Enterprises which, amongst other things, operates the marvellous Adventure Island complex on Southend sea front, as well as Radio Essex and the Sands Restaurant which played host to Prince Charles and his

wife Camilla on the day that Southend was formally granted City status – and I found out that Charles is a big fan of the Dutch Swing College Band. Philip's been a constant supporter to the Jazz Centre UK ever since we opened, attending our celebrations and concerts and advertising our events on his radio station – and by the way his daughter's a fine jazz singer. So she'll be singing at the club whenever she has a rest from her West End shows!' www.digbyfairweather.com

ELIANE ELIAS SCOOPS GRAMMY

Eliane Elias picked up the Grammy for Best Latin Jazz CD for her *Mirror, Mirror* on Candid Records. The CD features duets with the late Chick Corea and Chucho Valdes. Elias is due for a European tour in July, but sadly it consists only of Madrid (7) and Aarhus (10).

PETER KING'S SAXOPHONES AUCTIONED OFF

Four saxophones owned by Peter King, together with a handwritten notebook of sets lists and his Musicians' Union membership card, fetched a total of £12,595 when auctioned by Gardiner Houlgate of Corsham, Wiltshire, in March. The sum raised was in accord with the auctioneer's estimate of £10-12,000.

WILMSLOW RESUMES

Good news for Wilmslow jazz fans! Tuesday Jazz and Swing resumes at Wilmslow Conservative Club after a hiatus. Now it is scheduled for every month on the fourth Tuesday night. The Grand Relaunch sees Phil Shotton

and the Kaleidoscope Big Band in occupation on April 26, followed by Mike Hall's eight-piece Boplicity (May 24), the Phil Shotton Quartet (June 28) and Greg Abate and Dave Newton (July 26).

www.grahambrookjazz.co.uk

SATURDAYS IN SOUTHEND

The Jazz Centre UK offers a regular Saturday programme of a film at 12, followed by a live session. Especially notable is April 23, a Louis Armstrong Celebration Day, with a talk by Digby Fairweather (replacing the film) preceding a performance by Enrico Tomasso and the Tim Huskisson Trio. Other live sessions in April include Alan Barnes and Dave Newton (16) and Lily Dior paying tribute to Sarah Vaughan (30). Among a series of live performances filmed, other films include 'Round Midnight (May 7), Just Friends (June 4) and A Great Day in Harlem (June 11).

www.thejazzcentreuk.co.uk

A FURTHER STRETCH FOR THE ELASTIC BAND

Founded by Dick Laurie and led by him until his death in 2020, the Elastic Band has just returned to life with a series of informal monthly gigs at the Norbiton pub in Kingston. Sessions begin at 12 on Sundays, with free admission – 'but tips are welcome!' Jim Trimmer advertises 'Free admission, cheerful jazz, good food, children welcome, easy parking, plentiful public transport.' The band for the first gig on March 27 included Enrico Tomasso and Paul Sealey. **Tel.: 020 8549 8170 (Norbiton) 07889 049094 (Jim Trimmer)**

CONCORDE CLUB

The Concorde Club in Eastleigh, Hants., has a fine Wednesday evening programme, with Jivin' Miss Daisy, an eight-piece led by bassist Simon Thorpe, on April 27. Following on from that are Ray Gelato and Enric Peidre Quintet (May 4), the TJ Johnson Band (11), Digby Fairweather's Half Dozen (18), Pasadena Roof Orchestra (25), the Jive Aces (Thursday June 9) and Georgie Fame and Sons (22). The Sunday night traditional jazz night is filled by the Savannah Jazz Band (April 24), John Maddocks Jazzmen (May 8), Gambit Jazzmen (15), Solent City Jazz with Cuff Billett (22) and the Golden Eagle Jazz Band (29). In addition Shirley Morgan, Paul Francis and John Hibbert entertain in the Moldy Fig on April 26 and May 24.

www.theconcordeclub.com

PIZZA EXPRESS

The Pizza Express Jazz Club in Soho offers, among others, the Leo Richardson Quartet (April 21), the Gary Crosby Sextet (22), Larry Goldings/Peter

Bernstein/Bill Stewart (24-25), the Joel Frahm Trio (27), Jeremy Sassoon and Friends (30), Eric Marienthal and Paul Jackson Jr. (May 5-8) and the Rick Margitza Quartet with Bruce Barth (13-14). Meanwhile, in Chelsea, the Pheasantry has Ma Bessie (April 24), Paul Ryan and Jamie Safir (29), Earl Okin at 75 (30), Emma Smith and Jamie Safir (May 6) and Polly Gibbons (7).

www.pizzaexpress.com

JAZZ AT THE STABLES

The Stables at Wavendon offers a daytime jazz session in the Mancini Forum on April 24 with Alan Barnes and Dave Newton. As well as all the courses in Saxophone from Scratch and Blues Guitar, the evening programme offers a fair sprinkling of jazz: Hot Club of Cowtown (April 29), Billie Holiday at Carnegie Hall with Vimala Rowe (May 8), Tord Gustavsen (17) and the Georgie Fame Trio (June 21), plus Emma Smith and Jamie Safir in Stage 2 on April 30. www.stables.org



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JAZZ AT LUNCHTIMES

The North East seems to specialise in lunchtime gigs, very often on a monthly basis. Newcastle Lit and Phil has monthly lunchtime sessions with the Lewis Watson Quartet (April 22), the Andrea Vicari Trio (May 20), Ruth Lambert Quartet (June 17) and the Dean Stockdale Quartet – Celebrating Oscar (July 15).

The Gala Theatre, Durham, offers Riviera Effect (April 29), Alice Grace Quartet (May 27), Abbie Finn's Finntet (June 24) and Northern Monkey Brass

Band (July 15). Darlington New Orleans Jazz Club, back in St. Augustine's Church Hall, features Jeff Barnhart's Mr Men (May 7) and Spats Langham's Hot Fingers with Emily Campbell (July 2) and Bishop Auckland Town Hall has the Gerry Richardson Trio (May 13), the Francis Tulip Quartet (June 17) and the Alex Clarke Quartet (July 8).
www.litandphil.org.uk
www.galadurham.co.uk
www.darlingtonjazz.co.uk
bishopaucklandtownhall.org.uk

RONNIE SCOTT'S

Ronnie Scott's in London, in a six-week spell of mainly one-nighters, offers such attractions

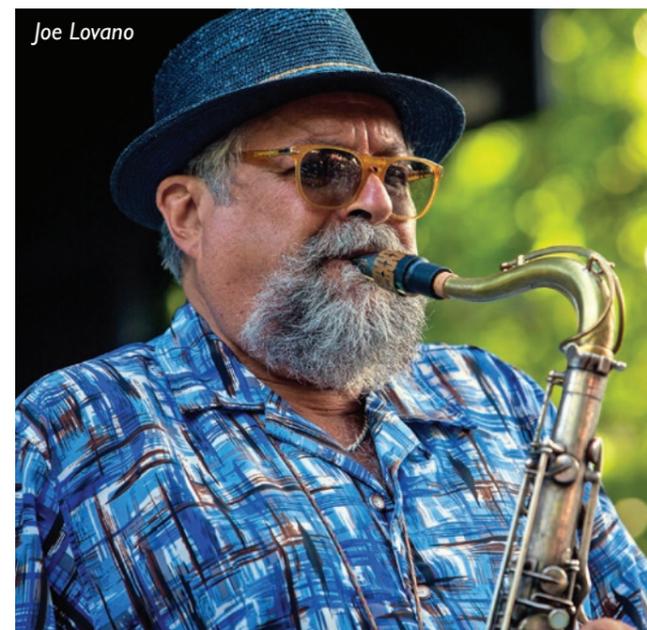
as Dee Dee Bridgewater (April 18), Fergus McCreadie (19), Omar Puente Cuban Sextet (May 5), Cyrille Aimee (16), Joe Lovano Trio (19-20) and Donny McCaslin (23) before settling down to Stacey Kent (June 9-15). After Jon Cleary's Absolute Monster Gentlemen (June 27-30), Lee Ritenour and Dave Grusin introduce a month of mostly American visitors.
www.ronniescotts.co.uk

DARTINGTON SUMMER SCHOOL

The Dartington Summer School runs from July 23 to August 20, with such distinguished figures as Sian Edwards and the Brodsky Quartet. The fourth week of the course introduces jazz to the programme. Pianist/composer Peter Edwards deals with the specifically jazz elements, but there is also a course on free improvisation with Café OTO and, intriguingly, a celebration of electronics pioneer Delia Derbyshire's visit to Dartington 60 years ago in a new course by John Matthias.
www.dartington.org

KING PLEASURE IN EUROPE

King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys are scheduled to appear at the City of Derry Jazz and Big Band Festival on April 30 and May 1, to be followed up by gigs at Meslay-du-Maine, France (May 27), Riverboat Jazz Festival, Denmark (June 24-25) and Umbria Jazz Festival, Italy (July 11-13). Home bookings for June and July include the Stephen



Joe Lovano

Joseph Theatre, Scarborough (June 11), Oakleigh Lodge Social Club (18), East Riding Theatre, Beverley (July 22), Ashcroft Arts Centre, Fareham (23), WOMAD (29) and Y Not Festival near Matlock (31).
 Tel.: 0121 454 7020

JAZZLEEDS PROGRAMME

JazzLeeds' programme at Seven Arts focuses on Thursday evenings and Sunday lunch-times, with the Conservatoire Jazz Collection holding sway on April 17 and 24, a selection of the best of the bands from Leeds Conservatoire. Joel Frahm Trio is featured on April 28, followed by the Hugh Pascall Quartet (May 1), Trish Clowes and My Iris (5), Leeds University Big Band (8), Jazz Main (15), Mingus Profile Sextet (19) and Os Caras (22). Then, after a break for the JazzLeeds Jazz Festival, normal service resumes with the June Jazz Café on June 19.
www.jazzleeds.org.uk

INTERNATIONAL JAZZ PARTY IS ON!

After being forced to cancel for two years running, Mike Durham's International Classic Jazz Party is scheduled for November 4-6 at the Village Hotel, Newcastle. The mix is the same as ever, with a cast of top-class talent from the UK, the USA, Europe and beyond playing a series of themed programmes featuring the jazz of the 1920s and 1930s.
www.whitleybayjazzfest.com

UPCOMING EVENTS



Trish Clowes

Guest of the Brian Rudland Band for their monthly Friday lunch-time sessions on the Tattershall Castle on the Victoria Embankment is Ron Drake (May 6).
 Tel. 0207 839 6548 (ext. 1)

The Newcastle Jazz Co-op at the Globe has a programme of Binker Golding-John Edwards-Steve Noble (April 24), Arun Ghosh (30), House

of the Black Gardenia (May 1), Ben Haskins Quartet (8), Trish Clowes with My Iris (15), Panharmonia (22), Sue Ferris-Steve Summers Quartet (29) and Michael Moore-John Pope-Johnny Hunter (June 5).
www.theglobenewcastle.bar

London's Latin music festival La Linea runs from April 21 to May 2, with Roberto Fonseca topping the bill. Also performing, among many others, are Ana Tijoux, Sara Correia and Lina joining forces with Raul Refree in a new approach to Amalia Rodrigues' iconic repertoire.
www.comono.co.uk

London's 606 Club has a fine programme including Georgina Jackson (April 23), Andy Panayi (26), Oxley/Meier Guitar Project (27), Tony Kofi on International Jazz Day (30), Art Themen's Thanes and Villeins (May 4) and Dana Gillespie and the London Blues Band (8).
www.606club.co.uk

Scarborough's Jazz at the Cask features Jim Birkett (April 20) and the Dave Clegg Six (27).
www.scarboroughjazz.co.uk



Tony Kofi

EFG London Jazz Festival is celebrating its 30th birthday this November, so, to celebrate, has announced a long weekend of concerts in June. The Summer series runs from June 22-25 at the Barbican and headlines Herbie Hancock, Marisa Monte, the Brad Mehldau Trio and SF Jazz with Gretchen Parlato and Chris Potter.

The Customs House Big Band plays the Exchange, North Shields on May 20 and St. Cuthbert's Centre, Crook, Co. Durham on June 17, the same date as the Darlington Big Band plays the Traveller's Rest at Darlington.

Wessex Continental Travel team up with the Panama Jazz Band to offer 5/6 day holidays in Brittany, Asturias and Cantabria. The mix is beachside hotels, interesting excursions during the day and jazz in the evening.
www.wessexcontinental.co.uk

Appearing at the Sage Gateshead are Roberto Fonseca (April 22), Hot Club du Nord (June 10) and ARQ (June 18).
www.sagegateshead.com

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 "Catherine Russell is the current queen of jazz vocalists in full glorious form on her eighth album as a leader" **The Syncopated Times**

EARLY DAYS

JOHN MARTIN has retired from reviewing for *Jazz Rag*. One of the very first batch of reviewers to be recruited for the magazine, he has served with wit and breadth of knowledge since then. We invited him to look back on his career. In this article he concentrates on his early days.



John with Paul Desmond

I first discovered jazz when I was about 16. Two records hooked me, *How High the Moon* by Les Paul and Mary Ford and *Hors d'Oeuvres* by the Sid Phillips band. Odd choice, as Kenny Ball was the trumpet player with that band, and I was later destined to be manager and agent for Kenny's band for 14 years until I retired.

I had some pals who were ahead of me as jazz fans. They were into King Oliver and Louis so I quickly attached myself to them and became quite addicted. At that time 1950, the British record companies each issued only one jazz record a month and that could be anything. I remember ordering a Louis record and being offered instead a Ronnie Scott opus by my local record shop. These crumbs from the large pop table were released under embarrassing titles, *Racial* or *Sepia* or some other objectionable name to obscure that the music was performed by black musicians. It was a different time!

I became so keen on what little jazz that was available on record that I formed a jazz club in my home town, Falkirk, with our own premises, and started to book the few local bands that were around; eventually, moving on to larger concerts with more well known Scottish bands. Our first big booking was the Clyde Valley Stompers at the local Town Hall. I, also, started to write my own record reviews as a hobby. The *Melody Maker* was the only music paper available at that time and the local paper shop kept

one for me each week. I was the only customer ordering.

By now, my jazz appreciation was increasing, taking in Stan Kenton, Basie, Ted Heath, Woody Herman, Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker and British swing players like Kenny Baker. I was encouraged by a friend, who was totally immersed in modern jazz, especially trumpet players. He idolised Dizzy Gillespie and so I graduated to Dizzy Gillespie and, naturally to Charlie Parker, a long, difficult journey but finally a revelatory one.

Meanwhile, a new jazz publication had come into being, *Jazz News*, which was 'the official publication of the National Jazz Federation', an organisation headed up by Harold Pendleton, an accountant from Lancashire who, also, had the 'jazz bug'. Pendleton had moved to London and opened the Marquee Jazz Club underneath a cinema in Oxford Street. The Marquee was, later, to emerge as a legendary international jazz and blues venue. He was, also, making a tentative venture into concert promotions. I believe that the MJQ may have been his first important concert tour. By the way, in those days, we enthusiasts were not known as jazz fans. The national press found a better description. We were to be known from that point as 'jazz fiends' and it was painfully hard to even start a club because of the strong, almost hysterical opposition from local

authorities and the police. It is ironic that, later, because of the adoption of jazz by university students as their favourite music, especially traditional jazz, and its consequent acceptance by the public, jazz became almost respectable. Thank God it didn't.

Jazz News was looking for correspondents from all over the U.K. So I quickly applied and covered the Stirlingshire county of Scotland, conscientiously, submitting as much news as I could in that limited area. I was surprised to receive a letter from the Editor informing me that their associated company, the NJF was promoting the MJQ tour and that Harold Pendleton would be pleased to meet me if I was attending the MJQ's Glasgow show. I met Pendleton ('please call me Harold') backstage at the concert and, after a friendly chat, he told me if I was ever to move to London, to come and see him at his office in Soho Square.

As it happened, I was looking to move to London. I was working in a bank at that time but wanted a move to London. I applied to the bank and got it

First stop. Soho Square.

I found an organization running on a shoestring with four of a staff, two of them working on *Jazz News* as Editor and

Assistant Editor and a secretary and receptionist. Pendleton had started *Jazz News* as a three-monthly newsletter detailing NJF activities, but it had developed a wider range in newspaper form of six pages. The most recent idea was to have a 'Gossip/Reporter at Large' column titled 'John Merrydown'.

I was asked if I would be willing to tackle that. Does a one-legged duck swim in a circle? Of course, I would. I was now working at the bank in Threadneedle Street in The City of London, during the day and searching for stories in the evenings. As talking to jazz musicians, at that time, involved lubricating them with alcohol, the question of expenses arose (no discussion of payment) so it was agreed that I would have £1.00 (old money) to cover that exigency—to be fair, this was 1958.

After about six months of 'Merrydowning' and contributing, also, to *Jazz Journal* and other jazz publications, I wrote an article for the paper on Jamaican altoist, Joe Harriott, which I am still proud of today. As a result Pendleton asked if I would consider becoming full time editor of *Jazz News*. This was a problem as the paper already had an editor, namely, Brian Harvey. However, this was solved, in a way, by appointing Brian as Advertising Director. Whenever anyone asked Pendleton for



John with Johnny Dankworth

a raise, they were given an impressive new title in lieu.

Of course, this meant that I had to give up my bank job, no great loss, I felt, but it did mean relinquishing my pension rights and other benefits. To be working full time on my favourite pastime was too much to turn down so I jumped at the offer. Little did I know what was ahead of me.

I, literally, knew nothing about producing a newspaper. I could barely type and being editor of *Jazz News* was not just a question of sitting at a desk and editing copy. There were no contributors as there was no money to pay them. I was on the equivalent of what was my bank salary at that time. My 'Assistant Editor' who was there when I arrived, was a cheerful young man called Ian McLean who played good jazz piano, helped out generally and rolled his own cigarettes.

Fortunately, with deadlines of three months, I had the opportunity to learn on the job which involved choosing the headlines, selecting fonts and typefaces, finding and selecting

and cropping photographs, interviewing musicians, collecting news, by personally visiting various news sources, reviewing records, gigs and concerts and, not least of all, writing articles under various pseudonyms to create the impression that we had more contributors than we really had.

After a few issues, Pendleton felt that a fortnightly paper would be a better means of publicizing NJF's activities, so now, we had to produce a lot more articles, features and news to fill that commitment. Then, after a few more months, Harold had another brilliant idea, that it would be even better to produce a weekly instead of a fortnightly because the fortnightly was causing confusion as to which weeks it was issued so *Jazz News* was now to become a tabloid instead of its previous incarnation as a broadsheet. He explained his brilliant idea by pointing out that the amount of paper used would be exactly the same. The only difference would be that we now had to produce 24 pages instead of 12. Weekly! Nothing could convince him that a broadsheet

layout could not be compressed into a tabloid size and that the new paper would require almost double the content and each page would have to have a specific identity.

So, within a few short months, *Jazz News* had gone from a 6 page Quarterly newsletter to a 12 page weekly.

I certainly had not signed up for this, but I had burned my boats behind me, so I was forced to accept the decision.

Now began probably the most exhausting period of my life. All the activity was now compressed into five days. The itinerary ran as follows: Mondays, travel to printers to edit the paper 'on the stone' (this was pre-digital); Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, interview and write up interviews, write articles—in the evenings, review gigs and concerts; Friday, collect news and lay out 24 pages for onward passage to printers involving a trip to Liverpool Street station, with, often, another gig or concert review in the evening. As many concerts took place on

Saturdays in London, these took care of Saturday evenings. The record reviews were impossible to fit in on a normal week so these had to be done on week-ends, usually Sundays.

This schedule was, obviously, unsustainable over a long period and the answer I found was alcohol. Not a good antidote, but an effective booster over the short term.

In the meantime, Pendleton was pursuing his constant search for a cheaper printer and, finally, found one that was willing at a very cheap price. Unfortunately, this was a Fascist newspaper titled *The New Daily*. I was horrified, as it was opposed to all my political convictions, but what could I do? The compositors were non-union and the proof readers were Cypriots and not too conversant with English language. I found myself sending back pages with around 27 mis-spellings, only to have them returned with only some of the 27 errors corrected, but another 10 additional errors in other parts of the pages. It became a nightmare and I started to look around for another job.

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DILL JONES

PETER VACHER continues our series on the jazz greats of a former era.



JAZZ AT THE PROMS, Albert Hall, 1952 - Dill Jones, Jimmy Deuchar, Tony Kinsey, Jack Fallon, Ronnie Scott, Tony Crombie, Jimmy Skidmore, Lennie Bush, Tommy Whittle

For a period in the 1940s and 1950s, pianist Dill Jones was everywhere. Seemingly ubiquitous on the London scene, he moved readily between styles, capable of going from stride to bebop without apparently turning a hair. A modernist and a mainstay, all at once, you could say. And then he wasn't. Over here, I mean. Jones had moved permanently to New York in 1961 and never looked back.

The idea of swapping continents seems to have germinated when Dill was a ship-board musician on the SS *Queen Mary*, and encountered the finest American jazz musicians on 52nd Street during stop-overs in New York. In a 1983 *Jazz Journal* article, writer Sally Ann Worsfold concluded, 'He fell in love with the city and could see the writing on the wall for jazz musicians in the

UK when rock began to usurp everything' and in the same feature piece, Jones was quoted as saying, 'The time was ripe to make my bid as a valid jazz musician in the States - there seemed greater possibilities to learn and less restricted outlines for my music. From the start I was accepted on equal terms by American musicians, no patronising attitudes at all.'

Dillwyn 'Dill' Owen Paton Jones's journey to the promised land of jazz started in Wales, in fact, where he was born on 19 August 1923 at Sunny Side, Newcastle Emlyn, the son of John Islwyn Paton Jones, a bank manager, and his wife Lavinia. Their son inherited his musical inclinations from both parents; his father was an accomplished tenor singer and his mother a gifted pianist. He began pianos

lessons at the age of ten. 'Choral music and church singing were part of my background and moved me profoundly as a very young child - the feeling of "hwyl" predominant in Welsh music is akin to what black Americans call soul and I think this influenced my jazz playing,' he told Worsfold. His classic middle class upbringing was furthered when his father became the manager of Lloyds Bank in Llandovery and Dill attended the town's prestigious college as a day boy. Here he first heard jazz records, said to have been by Fats Waller and Nat Gonella but, 'It was Muggsy Spanier's 1939 version of *Dippermouth Blues* and Sidney Bechet's *Shake It And Break It* that made me realise this was the music I would follow and listen to all my life,' he said. Unsurprisingly, his first job after leaving the college was in a bank; he played local dance jobs in the evenings. Called up for war-time service in the Royal Navy from April 1942 to April 1946, he played wherever and whenever he could during periods in the Far East and Ceylon (where he sat in with ex-Ellington saxophonist Rudy Jackson's band) and appeared on broadcasts by the British Forces Network (duetting with fellow conscript, pianist Lennie Felix) also taking note of local pianist Bill Cole while stationed in Portsmouth. After demob, he resumed work as a bank clerk briefly, moving to London to enrol at the Trinity College of Music to study piano and organ, all the while visiting London's clubs and taking local gigs, eventually turning fully professional in 1947.

Such was his facility and doubtless, his enthusiasm, that he was soon caught up in a dazzling array of London-based jazz associations, first with veteran trumpeter Duncan Whyte and drummer Carlo Krahrmer and then seemingly, with every other significant British jazz musician of the day. An especial mark of approval came with his inclusion in altoist Derek Neville's all-British band that appeared at the 10-day Festival International du Jazz in France, better identified as the first-ever Nice Jazz Festival.

Humphrey Lyttelton, another band member, remembered it as 'a scratch band collected together for the occasion under the leadership of saxophonist Derek Neville. Carlo Krahrmer was on drums. We were an oddly assorted lot, musically - Jimmy Skidmore on tenor-saxophone, Bobbie Mickleburgh on trombone, Dill Jones at the piano, Bert Howard, bass, and Derek Neville playing every reed instrument from baritone saxophone to clarinet. Our tastes ranged from ultra-modern to revivalist jazz. We flew to Nice, in a state of delirious excitement, on one crisply cold day in February 1948.'

With Louis Armstrong and his then All-Stars as the principal Nice attraction - that's Bigard, Teagarden, Hines, Shaw and Catlett - plus other such luminaries as Sammy Price, Rex Stewart, Sandy Williams, Baby Dodds, and Mezz Mezzrow on hand, these jazz legends often jamming with the Brits at informal sessions, can it be any wonder that ecstatic delirium prevailed? 'Hearing Louis was



an overwhelming experience reducing me to tears of happiness. Another musician at Nice who impressed me greatly was the unique Sammy Price, a superb blues pianist in my book,' Jones affirmed. It is worth noting that Dill, Humph, Mickleburgh, Howard and Krahrmer had already recorded a number of (unissued) Spanier-style sides under Krahrmer's leadership for the Esquire label (part-owned by the drummer) as early as January 1946 so their coming together for Nice may not have been quite as random as Humph seemed to suggest.

By October 1948, Dill had joined the progressive Vic Lewis orchestra as band pianist, staying for a year, busy with broadcasts and recording, even as he felt constrained by the limited opportunities to solo in a big band setting. Even so, the presence of the Lewis band at the 1949 Paris Jazz Festival provided another cathartic moment when Dill 'heard Charlie Parker's electrifying performance at Salle Pleyel', adding that he spoke to Parker later in New York, saying, 'He was one of the most astonishing people I have ever met in my life.'

Footloose again, he moved swiftly through a whole series of bands, seemingly bridging the gap between 'trad' and 'modern', encouraging George Melly to observe that 'The elfish Dill, who could play in both idioms, did his

best to act as a kind of United Nations advocate of peace between the factions.' In Dill's view, his main influences including Louis Armstrong, Lester Young, Earl Hines, Al Haig, Teddy Wilson and Joe Sullivan among others, meant 'I could remain impervious to all that prevalent bebop v revivalist nonsense which was so immature and stupid. I knew that I had to get in there and swing!'

From 1950 for a year, he was a ship's musician on board the *Queen Mary* contracted by Cunard Lines as part of what was popularly called 'Geraldo's Navy', docking in New York every two weeks and immersing himself in the Big Apple's throbbing jazz life. Bruce Turner was a fellow band-mate, as were bassist Peter Ind and the drummer Kenny Harris. When Dill joined the group, 'We now had a formidable line-up with which to foist even more jazz upon the passengers in tourist class,' reported Turner. 'I studied briefly with Lennie Tristano during those early NY trips, along with Peter and (pianist) Ronnie Ball. I learned a lot, but frankly it seemed a cultish thing and I'm not that sort of guy,' Dill told Worsfold.

Impervious or not, Dill seemed to cast his vote for the modernists when he joined Tony Kinsey's trio in 1953, having already toured Iceland for two weeks with the 'Vic Ash Six Man Group', this despite its including the very feminine singer Judy Johnson. In a

recent conversation, the 94-year-old Kinsey remembered Dill as 'a very clever musician and a very good player. I wouldn't have asked him to join the trio if he wasn't. He was not with me very long.' Long enough to record with Kinsey's trio, often with Tommy Whittle on tenor, and to take part in a while array of sessions by British modernists and all-star groups, these often given such portmanteau labels as Music In The Making, Jazz Today Unit, *Melody Maker's* Modern Group (he had been voted top pianist in the MM poll four times), Jazz From London, and yes, even Jazz At The Philharmonic. When Dill moved over to Whittle's group permanently a year later, the band's drummer Eddie Taylor, now 93, recalled their two-week engagement at a Paris club called Le Chameleon (in exchange for Sidney Bechet). 'We went over to Paris. The band was Tommy Whittle's, with Keith Christie, Jimmy Deuchar, Dill, Jack Fallon (who did all the driving), and me. This was a two-week residency. Don Byas used to come in to sit in as did a US bassist named Lloyd Thompson. Dill didn't get on with him at all. As I say, Dill's main thing was swing. He'd say, "Let's have some swing," in that Welsh accent. I enjoyed playing with him.'

In between times, Dill seems to have been up for any and every musical challenge, recording and working with as disparate a range of players as Annie Ross, Joe Harriott (touring in Germany), Kenny Graham, Alex Welsh, Bruce Turner, Kenny Baker and Wally Fawkes, not to overlook bluesman Big Bill Broonzy. No wonder Dave Gelly (in his book *An Unholy Row*) commented: 'He was one of the few jazz musicians, then or at any other time, to seem equally at home in any style. He also shared with John Dankworth the rare distinction of having studied music formally to diploma level.'

A one-off highlight during this busy period came with his 4-day participation in the accompanying group supporting Louis Armstrong for the special benefit concert badged as *An Evening For Hungary* at the Royal Festival Hall in London on 18 December 1956, alongside the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. The band comprised Dill, George Chisholm, Sid Phillips,

Lennie Bush and Jack Parnell, much being made in the press of the 'odd couple' relationship between Louis and the RPO conductor Norman Del Mar. Thereafter Dill led his own trio, freelanced or toured, appeared with his All-Stars in the 1960 movie *Blue Tunes* and made two short films with his group, and was included in photographers Duffy's photo spread in *Vogue* magazine in October 1961 in an article entitled *Evening Looks and All That Jazz* along with Ronnie Scott, Tubby Hayes and Humph et al. He was with trumpeter Bert Courtney's Sextet in 1961 and hosted a live weekly evening TV series back in his homeland entitled *Here Today* for Television West and Wales in Cardiff, leading Vic Ash on clarinet, Courtney, trombonist Keith Christie, Bill Sutcliffe, bass, and drummer Benny Goodman. 'All we had to do was accompany guest artists and play one jazz number a week,' said Ash.

Having decamped permanently to the United States in October 1961, for the next twenty years or so, Dill Jones seems never to have been short of work or out of favour with his American bandstand employers. Nor for that matter was he tempted back into the fast-moving waters of modernism, staying firmly in the jazz mainstream or its Condon-esque equivalent. Trumpeter Yank Lawson was his first bandleader, then came cornetist Jimmy McPartland. Dill also worked in Macy's Music department while his union card was sorted, and taking lessons from the old stride master Luckey Roberts. He picked up playing jobs with swing-era players like Max Kaminsky and Sol Yaged before joining drum star Gene Krupa's popular quartet (and occasional big band).

An especially fruitful association came with the JJP Quartet which had originally been fronted by Earl Hines. When Hines moved on in 1969, Dill moved in, staying for four years alongside tenor-saxophonist Budd Johnson, bassist Bill Pemberton and drummer Oliver Jackson. 'I got the Johns Manville Corporation to sponsor us. We were the "JJP Quartet" (Jackson, Pemberton, Johnson and Jones). We made some albums, too. For about four years, we went to schools and gave performances (not clinics)



Geoff Love Band 1951



Clyde Bernhardt and his Harlem Blues Band at Pizza Express, 1977
Photo by Sylvia Pitcher

JPJ Quartet at Ljubljana Jazz Festival, 1971, with guests Hal Singer and Benny Bailey.



playing all the places where they had Johns Manville plants. We made a movie out of it, too. We had our own jet aircraft. We'd go out twice a year with it. Play a month or six weeks of schools and then come back in the spring and do another month and a half,' Jackson told writer Chip Deffaa.'

In between times, Dill was with Roy Eldridge's Quartet in 1968, Ruby Braff at the Half Note in New York in 1972, Vic Dickenson in 1974 and at the Manassas Festival in 1983, also participating in a plethora of recording sessions and albums with these players and others. He returned often to perform in the UK, recording here in 1972, toured with the Harlem Blues and Jazz Band in Europe 1976-77-78, also appearing in 1978 at the Welsh Jazz Festival, before visiting Australia in 1981 for the Australian Jazz Convention where he recorded, and then worked regularly with the Countsmen, featuring Dicky Wells and Earle Warren. Already unwell, he underwent surgery for throat cancer in London; his recuperation at a hospital in Wales seemed to be going well and he returned to his home in Port Washington NY, seeking to resume his career but in vain. He died in the Calvary Hospital in the Bronx on 22 June 1984. He was 60.

A memorial service for him was held four days later at the jazz church, St Peter's, in New York and he was invested posthumously as a member of the Gorsedd at the National Eisteddfod of Wales at Lampeter; the citation reading 'one of the leading jazz pianists of the world'. As such, Dill Jones may not have warranted an entry in Leonard Feather's *Encyclopaedia of Jazz* but I suspect he might have been rather more touched to receive this accolade in his native land.

Michael Steinman, the always erudite American commentator, summed up Dill's musical values and demeanour in these thoughtful words: 'His stylistic range was broad and authentic – he could play the best two-handed style but also be sweetly ruminative, and his musical intelligence was not limited to any one period. And in our one person-to-person meeting, he showed himself as unaffectedly funny, gentle-spirited, articulate, and full of feeling. A rare man, not only at the piano. He left us far too soon.'

Acknowledgements

Dill Jones's words are from 'That hwyf feeling' – Dill Jones talking to Sally-Ann Worsfold [Jazz Journal International, Vol 36 No 3, March 1983].

Jazz Greats Aristocrats of the Music World by Warren A. Vaché [The Scarecrow Press, Lanham MD, 1999] Chapter 21 A Descant on Dillwyn pp175-181

Dill Jones Discography Compiled by David Griffiths [Eurojazz Discos N.46 3rd edition August 2013] published by Gerard Bielderma [Nijenhuisaan 153, 8043WB ZWOLLE, Netherlands] details some 83 sessions and includes a list of Dill's compositions.

Also consulted *The Dictionary of Welsh Biography*; *Who's Who of British Jazz* by John Chilton Second edition [Continuum, 2004].

Recommended Recording

Davenport Blues – Dill Jones Plays Bix, Jones And A Few Others – Chiaroscuro Records CR (D) 112 [2004]

Photos courtesy of the Peter Vacher Collection

47 YEARS OF TIMELESS

RON SIMPSON looks back on half a century of jazz promotion and record production by WIM AND RIA WIGT.

Last year the first in the Music on Vinyl series on Timeless Records was issued – Pharoah Sanders' *Africa*. The series was inaugurated to commemorate 45 years of Timeless the previous year. The husband and wife team of Wim and Ria Wigt, still going strong, had decided something special was needed to mark the anniversary – and, after all, by now, they are celebrating more than 50 years in the music business.

Wim started out as a student at the University in Wageningen. He organised for the students concerts in the local theatre and several clubs and small festivals, classical music, pop and jazz concerts. He soon became very active and started out with different acts in different festivals in Holland, Germany and France.

He was asked by Jean Luc Ponty to be his tour organiser. Soon others asked. For instance, Gato Barbieri called from Brazil and USA. At first Wim worked on his own and got assistance from his friends. But soon his own favourite music – jazz – was getting most of his attention. At University he met Ria. They both started out first working with flutist Chris Hinze and soon started to work in their own company.

Wim's first major achievement was to see that, back in 1972, many top level jazz musicians were only performing in a few big cities and then going home. Wim was the first networker to start out bringing over all modern jazz musicians, so far only heard on radio and LP. So in every country in Europe – all Scandinavian countries, Germany, France, Italy, Benelux,

'We organised tours all over Europe with a majority in Germany and Scandinavia and the

and many more – he formed a circuit of jazz places where his tours could stop by. This way many artists in New York, Chicago, San Francisco could tour for 3 to 5 weeks for the Wigt family.

He invited them to come for a period of time, they agreed and from that moment onwards they only had to sit in a plane or a bus and perform. Often Wim had 10 US bands on tour at the same moment, all organised in a 24/7 business by the two of them with efficient tour managers' assistance.

Wim remembers: 'We used to have an office in Paris, France, in Italy. In Spain we introduced our concerts and created a new concert scene after difficult political times. We even did concerts in Eastern Germany, Yugoslavia and Poland and concerts in other continents. We are talking about musicians like, among others, Stan Getz, Dizzy Gillespie, Art Blakey, Chet Baker, Lionel Hampton, Cedar Walton, McCoy Tyner, Machito, Tony Williams, Bill Evans and so many more. 98% of all names in modern jazz came through our activities on tour in Europe.'

Wim had done a few concerts with Chris Barber in his early days, so they soon started out to bring Chris to the Dutch theatres, filling many houses. A bit later the Mr Acker Bilk and Kenny Ball Bands were added as well as Monty Sunshine, Terry Lightfoot, Pasadena Roof Orchestra and many others:

'We organised tours all over Europe with a majority in Germany and Scandinavia and the



Benelux countries, always trying to bring the music further to more audiences and developing bigger fan bases for the artists involved. We were so happy to be able to bring English jazz all over the continent.'

The Netherlands is celebrated for its jazz festivals, above all North Sea Jazz, and inevitably the Wights got involved. Wim started out with local festivals in the Netherlands and Germany. Soon they were bringing many jazz musicians to Paul Acket who started the North Sea Jazz Festival. They worked with any festival in Europe from the start. In fact, in all western European countries they had the capacity to deliver the line up for a full festival.

Henk-Peter, their son, remarks proudly, 'There is hardly any festival who was not filled with their music in the seventies until the nineties and beyond.'

At this stage there was still one missing element, recordings. When Wim and Ria sought help from record companies for publicity or asked them to record a musician, so they could send around their music, they often were turned down. So finally Ria and Wim started Timeless Records. 'Timeless', as Wim always said, 'this music we want to present is eternal - timeless.'

'So we were so fortunate to have many super artists on Timeless Records performing. Next to *Eastern Rebellion* with Cedar Walton you find Chet Baker, Tommy Flanagan, Lionel Hampton, Machito, Art Blakey, Archie Shepp, Bill Evans, Joanne Brackeen and many others giving their best. Also we met young men and women, who needed a record to develop their careers. So we helped them to conquer the world this way.

Their records were available at concerts so the audiences could take their music home. This was a big target in the early times of the label. Especially for artists in traditional jazz we enabled them to have their records always on time at their concerts. Chris Barber and many others were happy to see that Wim and Ria were helping out on their extensive tours.'

Acclaim soon followed for Timeless Records. *Eastern Rebellion* was called the best bebop record of the 1970s, the George Adams-Don Pullen band (a band put together by Wim) was cited as the best record of the 1980s. Chet Baker's work and Tommy Flanagan's recordings got enthusiastically received all over the world. Machito was brought back to concerts by Wim and got the Grammy Award. Art Blakey's *Album of the Year*, the first of five by Blakey on Timeless, was Wynton Marsalis and his brother's entrance to the world.

One of Art's records was the basis of the first hip hop song of all times - rewarded with a Grammy Award!

Many British fans will know of Ria and Wim's work with a rather different musician, Chris Barber. Wim did his first concert in 1968 with the Barber Jazz and Blues Band and from then onwards the relationship developed. From 1989 to 2019 they worked on a daily basis together.

'We feel this was for both sides a really big joy. The Chris Barber Band as one of the trad jazz bands performing was always a great pleasure to work with. This worked both ways. Chris enjoyed calling every day to discuss new developments, new ideas, practical points. All to make it possible that he could enjoy his music and we

enabled that all over Europe Chris and the band could be heard. This way we were bringing the total of his concerts to at least 200 or sometimes 250 concerts a year.

'We worked together on his recordings and released around 25-30 albums. Much to the great satisfaction of his fans. Chris lived for and in music!

'Together with him we developed a great plan to enable music from the first recordings onwards to be put and remastered for CD releases. Enabling fans all over the world to hear the jazz music from when it started. Together with great experts in jazz we were able to develop the historical Timeless line called CBC Collection. With all the knowledge of these artists in text and beautiful paintings on the front covers.'

Henk-Peter expands on Wim and Ria's devotion to great jazz:

'Wim and Ria love great musicians, who live with their music to the full. Who started and ended the day with music in their heads. This was very rewarding to work with them. They made possible we could bring top level jazz. Of course there were the regular difficulties. But it was such a pleasure to be able to work with these great people. For instance Cedar Walton's band with George Coleman or Clifford Jordan - *Eastern Rebellion* - was one of Wim's great highlights. We would walk in a club and we would hear their super music playing.'

If you look on the Wights' website, you will find that most of the attractions offered are tribute bands. Is this a sign of changes in the musical landscape?



Dizzy Gillespie with Ria and Wim

'We did several tours in earlier days with good musicians in tribute bands and were asked to develop their tours. This gradually became more and more the music that was requested by the theatres and so this was increased much more. Only the very best artists bringing this repertoire were toured.'

For all that, ABBA Gold, Still Collins and the Cavern Beatles must be a less than enthralling prospect after Cedar Walton, Art Blakey and Pharoah Sanders, but such is the demand these days – and this leads naturally to the burning question. How has the industry changed in the last 50 years? Henk-Peter explains:

'When Wim and Ria started out they were one of the first to work so heavily in jazz. They were very much praised and appreciated for bringing such beautiful bands. Everybody loved what they did and contracts were almost not needed in those very early days. Now music has been developed in so many ways that you have to be very versatile to bring your music to the people. Furthermore, we still enjoy bringing music and bands all over the world. This has not changed. With our knowledge and experience we are able to do this.

'Wim and Ria work day and night for music they love. They enjoy working this way with people like them to develop it to the full. They both are in their seventies and can't stop. It is such a rewarding experience for them!

'Wim and Ria have met so many great people all over the world. They were able to learn and work with them. This is the best for a long life!'

JAZZ AND BLUES FESTIVALS (TO JULY)

The British jazz festival scene is returning to normal, so *Jazz Rag* resumes its guide to what to expect.

RIBBLE VALLEY JAZZ AND BLUES FESTIVAL

APRIL 29-MAY 2

Centred on Clitheroe, and with the Grand Theatre as a main base for its 45 gigs, the Ribble Valley festival boasts a line-up of Georgia Cecile, the Alison Rayner Quartet, KOG Kweku of Ghana, the Arthur Geldard Quartet, the Northern Jazz Orchestra, Women in Jazz and Clitheroe Royal Grammar School Swing Band. www.rvjazzfestival.co.uk



Alison Rayner

BUXTON INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

JULY 7-24

Placing jazz centre-stage, the Buxton Festival begins with a Jazz Weekend (7-10), artists of the calibre of the Jay Phelps Quartet, Ian Shaw and Guy Barker, The Impossible Gentlemen, Xhosa Cole and Clare Teal featured in a programme centred on the Palace Hotel, with excursions to the Pavilion Arts Centre and the Opera House. From then on jazz still figures pretty large, with further concerts by the likes of NYJO and the Nigel Price Organ Trio with Vassilis Xenopoulos featured on both weekends. www.buxtonfestival.co.uk



Clare Teal

SWANAGE JAZZ FESTIVAL

JULY 8-10

The return of Swanage Jazz Festival brings a plethora of jazz acts in six venues. Sampling the already announced programme gives us the Nigel Price Quartet with *Wes Reimagined*, Alex Clarke and Xhosa Cole with their quartets, Adam Glasser's *South Africa and Beyond*, Alan Barnes Octet, Simon Spillett Quartet and Big Band and Art Themen's New Directions Quartet, plus in the Mainstream and Traditional camp the likes of Tad Newton's Jazz Friends, Ma Bessie's Blues Troupe and, most poignantly, the Little Devils in a Tribute to Keith Nichols. www.swanagejazzfestival.co.uk



Simon Spillett

Photo by Merlin Daleman

WARNER JAZZ BREAKS

APRIL 22-25

Pete Lay's Jazz Breaks offer accommodation plus jazz from his own Gambit Jazzmen, Black Cat Jazz, John Maddocks Jazzmen, Savannah Jazz Band, Sussex Jazz Kings and Louisiana Rhythm Kings. www.warnerleisurehotels.co.uk

CHELTHENHAM JAZZ FESTIVAL

APRIL 27-MAY 2

With guest curator Gregory Porter the Cheltenham Festival is full of big names in jazz. A brief sample of the programme includes Liane Carroll, Denny Ilett, Zoe Rahman, Imelda May with Ronnie Scott's Big Band, Laura Jurd, Jamie Cullum and, in a series of late night shows, Kansas Smitty's. www.cheltenhamfestivals.org/jazz

DARLINGTON JAZZ FESTIVAL

APRIL 28-30

The Durham Alumni Big Band is scheduled to be joined by a guest star and Darlington native, Matt Roberts, returns as usual to his home town with an all-star quintet.

CITY OF DERRY JAZZ AND BIG BAND FESTIVAL

APRIL 29-MAY 2

A packed programme is headlined by Imelda May, the Linley Hamilton Quintet, NYJO and the Roy Ingram Trio, with the likes of the Jive Aces, King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys and Ricky Cool and the In Crowd among the supporting cast. www.cityofderryjazzfestival.com

FESTIVAL OF VINTAGE NORTH

APRIL 30-MAY 1

Not strictly a jazz festival, but FOV North offers everything from free dance lessons to sales of 30s-60s

goods to a background of two stages and DJs. Taking the stand at York Racecourse, alongside the George Formby impersonator, are the Swing Commanders, Lana-May and her Hot Jazz Trio and Ashley's Midnight Blues. www.festivalofvintage.co.uk

HEXHAM JAZZ FESTIVAL

MAY 13-15

In the splendid setting of Hexham Abbey, the festival includes Joe Harrop, Paul Edis and Graeme Wilson, the Abbie Finn Trio, the Hot Club du Nord, Dean Stockdale and James Kitchman and Bruno Heinen. www.hexhamabbey.org.uk

SWALEDALE FESTIVAL

MAY 28-JUNE 11

Among the many classical concerts the Swaledale Festival

includes appearances by Acoustic Triangle and Antonio Forcione, plus a showing of the film, *A Great Day in Harlem*. www.swalefest.org

LEEDS JAZZ FESTIVAL

JUNE 1-12

JazzLeeds branches out over the city in addition to the Seven Arts gigs, with performances at the Wardrobe, the Howard Assembly Room and the Victoria Centre. Bands so far booked include Bird Migration, Issie Barrett's Interchange and Reciprocity. www.jazzleeds.org.uk

JAZZ JURASSICA

JUNE 2-5

Lyme Regis begins four days of jazz with the Dorset Youth Jazz Orchestra on Thursday afternoon, with the programme centring on the Marine Theatre

BIRMINGHAM, SANDWELL AND WESTSIDE JAZZ FESTIVAL

JULY 15-24

As usual the Birmingham, Sandwell and Westside Jazz Festival features 200-plus mostly free events in the City and surrounding areas, with jitterbug sessions, photographic project and cigar box guitar workshops taking their place alongside performances. Already booked in are the Hitman Blues Band from the States, the Cinelli Brothers, Alan Barnes, Dave Newton, Alex Clarke, the Billy Thompson Trio, Tipitina, Chickenbone John, Roy Forbes and his Texas Rumble, the Nitecrawlers, Martin Burch Band, the Shakedown Brothers, Swing Café, Big Jim and the Alabama Boogie Boys and the Chase Jazzmen. www.birminghamjazzfestival.com



Hitman Blues Band

Photo by Laurence Harvey

SCARBOROUGH JAZZ FESTIVAL

SEPTEMBER 23-25

Scarborough's festival is notable for having the North Sea breaking on the shore adjacent to the Spa complex and for featuring the throwaway compering of Alan Barnes – and for the quality of the largely British jazz on offer. This year, among the dozen or so ticketed events are Alan Barnes and Dave Newton, Ben Crosland's Solway Stories, Dennis Rollins' Funky Funk, Iain Ballamy and Stian Carstensen, Martin Taylor and Ulf Wakenius, the Shirley Smart Trio and the Simon Spillett Big Band – not forgetting the informal Fringe events. www.scarboroughspa.co.uk



Alan Barnes

Photo by Merlin Daleman

VENTURE AWAY JAZZ WEEKENDS

BLACKPOOL: SEPTEMBER 16-19

BOURNEMOUTH: OCTOBER 7-10

TORQUAY: NOVEMBER 4-7

Autumn is the time for Venture Away Music Weekends to bring out their jazz programme, beginning with Blackpool's Jazz and Lights in September. Apart from the delights of a seaside weekend – and, in Blackpool's case, the illuminations – the festivals offer five bands. At Blackpool the line-up is Baby Jools and the Jazzoholics, the Savannah Jazz Band, Chicago Teddy Bears Society Jazz Band, Sarah Spencer's Transatlantic Jazz Band and the Sussex Jazz Kings. The other festivals offer a similar programme, with Baby Jools a permanent fixture. www.ventureawaymusicweekends.co.uk



Savannah Jazz Band

and taking in such names as the James Taylor Quartet, Sarah-Jane Morris, Tom Seals and the Docklands Latin Orchestra – plus street food and a still-to-be-announced free jazz programme. www.jazzjurassica.co.uk

A sample of the musicians appearing this year comes up with Gary Bartz, the Ezra Collective, Sister Sledge, Jon Cleary, Fergus McCreadie and Joe Stilgoe and the Entertainers. www.lovesupremefestival.com

UPTON JAZZ FESTIVAL

JUNE 25-26

The programme offers a fine selection of music, mostly (but not entirely) of the traditional style. A quick sample of the bands and musicians appearing comes up with the Hot Club du Nord, Tenement Jazz Band, Martin Litton's Red Hot Peppers, Craig Milverton Trio, Slide by Slide, John Hallam and the Savannah Jazz Band. www.uptonjazz.co.uk

LOVE SUPREME JAZZ FESTIVAL

JULY 1-3

A major outdoor event at Glynde Place, Love Supreme headlines this year with Gregory Porter and Erykah Badu, making her only appearance in this country.

WIGAN INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL

JULY 7-10

Two major jazz acts headline the Wigan Festival this year: the Simon Spillett Big Band and Claire Martin and Dave Newton. Also featured in evening concerts are Camille Thurman with the Darrell Green Quartet and the Louis Dowdeswell Big Band. Daytime concerts feature the likes of the Wigan Youth Jazz Orchestra and the intriguingly named Really Awful Orchestra. www.wiganjazzfest.co.uk

BURTON AGNES JAZZ FESTIVAL

JULY 8-10

Always a popular event, in the grounds of a Tudor manor house,

the Burton Agnes festival offers accommodation to campers and caravanners. www.burtonagnes.com/Jazz_Festival

MOSTLY JAZZ, FUNK & SOUL FESTIVAL

JULY 8-10

The popular festival in Moseley Park features, among many others, the Specials, the Fat Back Band, Earth Wind and Fire Experience, Julie Dexter Band and Jazzlines Ensemble. www.mostlyjazz.co.uk

HULL JAZZ FESTIVAL

JULY 12-16

The jazz festival takes over Hull Truck Theatre for nine concerts, including B.D. Lenz, Alina Bzhezinskio with Hip Harp Trio, Don Vappie and Jazz Creole, plus an afternoon of three premieres. www.hulljazzfestival.co.uk

EDINBURGH JAZZ AND BLUES FESTIVAL

JULY 15-24

This year's Edinburgh Jazz Festival begins with two headline acts in the first two evenings, with

BUDE JAZZ FESTIVAL

AUGUST 30-SEPTEMBER 2

After last year's cancellation, Bude Jazz Festival returns this year, with a profusion of mostly traditional bands in the delightful surroundings of the Cornish Riviera. A brief sampling of the bill gives us Frog and Henry, the Craig Milverton Trio in Oscar Peterson tribute mode and backing the likes of John Hallam and Martin Dale, Jeff Barnhart's International Swing Quartet, the Pedigree Jazz Band, Nick Ward's Jelly Roll Quartet, Jake Leg's Jug Band and the Swing Commanders. www.budejazzfestival.info



Craig Milverton

Jools Holland's Rhythm and Blues Orchestra with Eddi Reader, and Curtis Stigers.

www.edinburghjazzfestival.com

RYEDALE TRAD JAZZ FESTIVAL

JULY 23-29

Nightly concerts in Pickering Methodist Church feature such bands as the Washington Whirligig, the Pedigree Jazz Band, Old Green River Band and the Eagle Jazz Band. www.ryedalejazz.com

KIRKCUDBRIGHT JAZZ FESTIVAL

JUNE 9-12

Kirkcudbright makes much of its setting, the artists' town on the Solway Firth, so it's no surprise to find one of its main features Dine A-Round, book in advance meals at local restaurants, with attendant jazz, of course. Headliners this year are the Kirkcudbright International All Stars, with such bands as The Big Easy, Harmony Hounds, Savannah Jazz Band and Jake Leg's Jug Band in support. The Festival Church Service features the Wholly Orchestra. www.kirkcudbrightjazzfestival.co.uk



Jake Leg's Jug Band

Photo by Karl Newton

GOOD VIBES

RON SIMPSON finds out about singer CATHERINE RUSSELL

What connection is there between a Panamanian bandleader whose mainly New Orleans-based band backed Louis Armstrong in the 1930s and a singer who has emerged as one of the finest jazz singers in the last 15 years? Or, for that matter, between that same singer and a member of the International Sweethearts of Rhythm? Well, when the musicians in question are Luis Russell, Carline Ray and Catherine Russell, the connection is pretty close!

Luis and Carline married in 1956, long after the years with Armstrong and the International Sweethearts, but, though his career was winding down then, she carried on working until her death in 2013 at the age of 88. As a singer/guitarist Carline covered a wide range of music, from back up vocals for Patti Page and Bobby Darin through performing for Leonard Bernstein to - what especially appeals to *Jazz Rag* readers - recording with Mary Lou Williams. Most interesting of all she made her debut as a lead singer in the year of her death on an album produced by Catherine.

What intrigued me about Catherine is that, though her father died when she was very young, she has obviously inherited his musical genes, so that was my first question, 'What influence did he have on you?'

'My dad passed when I was 7 years old, but I knew him well and remember him vividly. He was a sharp dresser, even at

home. His pants were creased and his shirts were always starched. His recorded music was some of the first music I ever heard. It immediately made me happy, because it sounded like the musicians were having fun playing the arrangements and I danced to the music. His music was spirited and it swung! I believe he's had a big influence on me since I've become a bandleader myself. He was very organised and prepared, which are things I always aspire to. From what others have said about him, he was a nice person. I believe in 'good vibes', they lay the foundation for making good music in a band.

'My mother had an exceptional 60+ year career. Her practical advice was always great, although we were on different career paths outside of both being freelance artists. She was always there supporting me, coming to my gigs. But my career development took more twists and turns. She always knew what she wanted to do and was single-minded about that. My career path was more one-thing-led-to-another without a real plan. So I would say she just watched my "career" unfold, and was relieved when I actually started paying my bills through music. She really had no idea what I was doing to get ahead in the business, but she was proud and supportive of me.'

Catherine Russell's career has been - to say the least - unusual: up to 2006 she worked as a backing singer for the likes of Levon Helm, Jackson Browne,



Paul Simon, David Bowie and Steely Dan. Then in 2006 she made her first solo album - and since then her career has taken off. So how was it working for these musical greats?

'First of all, I was a fan of the music of all these iconic artists years before I got to work with them. And let's not forget Rosanne Cash and Cyndi Lauper in this list of great artists. It's thrilling to get to work with these artists and make them feel like they can count on me to take care of the backing vocals and harmonies so they can relax and do their show. To perform with them while they do all their timeless hits for the people? Wow! Their audiences are so happy to hear their songs.



And not that many people get these opportunities, so I value them and have learned SO much about the inner workings of what it takes to create music and run a business at the same time. I'll say that each of these artists has (and had) respect for every musician they worked with and it was really a musical collaboration. When I worked with Mr Bowie, we were all in a band, and we operated as a band even though all that great music was his. The music became ours, and we created it as such. I still work with Rosanne Cash and Cyndi Lauper from time to time. And I am proud to say I am still harmonizing as a backing singer with Steely Dan! Truly beautiful and ever-challenging music.'



Photos by Sandrine Lee

Before 2006 Catherine had never appeared as the main attraction, so which singers influenced her when she finally embarked on a solo career?

'I'm influenced by many singers. I saw Etta James perform many times over 30 years. I used to go to see Alberta Hunter when she made her comeback in the 1970s. My mom played bass with Ruth Brown for several years, so I saw Ms. Brown perform many times. I also loved the singers who worked with James Brown: Marva Whitney, Lyn Collins, Bobby Brown. I love Otis Redding, Wilson Pickett, Sam Cooke. I've seen Betty Carter in person, Eartha Kitt, Frank Sinatra, Carmen McRae, Nancy Wilson, Tony Bennett. I also worked briefly with Dolly Parton on a promotional tour. I love Patsy Cline, George Jones, Ray Charles.....the list goes on. My "style" is mainly in the category of jazz and blues.

'I think it's mainly about confidence. I feel better now emotionally, which has helped me to be more present. I can mix styles in a song. If I feel like one line is more bluesy according to the lyric, then I express it that way. It all depends on the story one is telling with the song, and how one feels in the moment.

'My favourite CD is the one I have just recorded! Sometimes I'll hear a song I recorded a long

time ago and say to myself, "Oh! That's not bad!" But it's the most recent recording that makes me happy because I am pleased that it's actually a finished product.

'It's very important to me to work with good swinging musicians. We understand each other musically and can swing together easily. So little has to be discussed. It's all about the music and where we feel it collectively. There's nothing like a good "pocket".'

Catherine's date-sheet is pretty full, but the UK can look forward to a visit before long. One of the unexpected consequences of Covid was that, back in 2020, Catherine was working on visiting the UK. Sadly Covid struck and that was shelved, but two years later we are back on her agenda:

'We are busy touring in the U.S. to promote the new album. I will tour with Steely Dan in the summer, then my band goes right back to touring in the U.S. We are working on touring overseas as soon as we can!! We're coming to see you! We had people from the UK at a few of our recent shows, asking when we will get over there. So we are working on that!'

In the meantime Dot Time Records keep us up to date. See the review of *Send for Me* on page 30.

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THE JAZZ SURVIVORS

by SCOTT YANOW

The last two years have resulted in many top jazz artists passing away and receiving well-deserved tributes. However it is long overdue for the jazz world to pay attention to the great veterans who are still with us, all of whom deserve to be celebrated while they are still able to enjoy the applause. Each of the 55 musicians who are featured in this article (all alive as of this writing) will be at least 90 as of July 1, 2022. All have made major contributions to the legacy of jazz. A few are still active and should be seen whenever they come to town while some of the others have not been heard from in quite some time. They are listed in order of their age with a brief summary. My apologies to any that I have missed.

Louise Tobin – singer (103 – 11/11/18) The only living jazz artist who recorded before 1940, Louise Tobin sang with Benny Goodman in 1939, was Mrs. Harry James before Betty Grable, and had a long and happy marriage to clarinetist Peanuts Hucko. She is the last of the surviving big band singers of the swing era.

Ray Anthony – trumpeter-bandleader (100 – 1/20/22) The last living member of the original Glenn Miller Orchestra, Anthony led his own big bands from 1946 on, did his best to keep swing popular in the 1950s, and appeared in several movies.

AK Salim – arranger (99 – 7/28/22) Originally an alto-saxophonist who worked as early as 1936, a jaw injury in 1943

resulted in AK Salim becoming a fulltime arranger, writing for Count Basie, Lucky Millinder, Cab Calloway, Jimmy Lunceford, Tito Puente and Dizzy Gillespie among others. He led five albums of his own during 1957-58 and 1965.

Ray Sherman – pianist (99 – 4/15/23) A superb pianist, Sherman was a major part of the Los Angeles Dixieland scene in the 1950s, appearing on a countless number of jazz and studio dates.

Phil Nimmons – clarinetist, composer, leader (99 – 6/3/23) While he first recorded in 1949 with a quintet, he is best known for leading and writing for Nimmons 'N Nine, an excellent modern jazz group in Toronto that was most active in the 1960s.

Tino Contreras – drummer (98 – 4/3/24) A pioneering jazz drummer from Mexico, Contreras had his own band by the time he was 19, worked with the Luis Alcaraz Orchestra and other major groups in the 1950s, and led many albums of his own up until recent times. In 1954 he was part of what is considered the first jazz record made in Mexico.

Marshall Allen – alto-saxophonist (98 – 5/25/24) A member of Sun Ra's Arkestra since the mid-1950s and the leader of that ensemble for the past 15 plus years, Allen started out in bop but has been a leading avant-gardist for much of his long career.

Terry Gibbs – vibraphonist (97 – 10/13/24) One of the greatest vibraphonists of all

time, the lovable Gibbs always played and talked fast, performing exciting bebop ever since his days in Woody Herman's Second Herd. Since he is on a radio broadcast (playing classical music) in the 1930s, if someone would talk Gibbs into making one more recording, he would be the only musician ever to have recorded in ten different decades.

Roy Haynes – drummer (97 – 3/13/25) From Luis Russell, the Charlie Parker Quintet and Sarah Vaughan to the John Coltrane Quartet (as the main sub for Elvin Jones), Chick Corea and Pat Metheny not to mention his own groups, Haynes has worked with just about everyone in modern jazz of the past 75 years.

Dave Bailey – drummer (96 – 2/22/26) Bailey, who worked with Sonny Stitt, Lou Donaldson, Clark Terry and Lee Konitz among others, is best known for his association with Gerry Mulligan's groups during 1955-66.

Joe Negri - guitar (95 – 6/10/26) A fine jazz guitarist and an educator, Negri was part of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* television series for nearly 40 years.

Tony Bennett – singer (95 – 8/3/26) Although never really a jazz singer since he does not improvise much, Bennett surrounded himself with jazz musicians throughout his career and always stood up for musical quality. In addition, no one wore better suits.

Lou Donaldson – alto-saxophonist (95 – 11/1/26) A bluesy bebopper with a witty musical personality, Donaldson was a star for the Blue Note label by the mid-1950s.

Dick Hyman – pianist (95 – 3/8/27) While Hyman can play in virtually any style and is a skilled composer, he is a true master of stride and swing piano.

George Freeman – guitarist (95 – 4/10/27) Part of the Chicago jazz scene since the late 1940s, the still-active Freeman worked with Charlie Parker, Gene Ammons, Richard 'Groove'

Holmes, Jimmy McGriff, his older brother Von Freeman, and with his own soul jazz groups.

Barbara Dane – singer (95 – 5/2/27) A versatile singer best-known as a social activist and for her work in folk music and blues, Dane also performed with Louis Armstrong and utilized such sidemen as Earl Hines, Benny Carter, Don Ewell, and Wellman Braud on her recordings of early jazz.

Bill Holman – arranger, composer, leader, tenor-saxophonist (95 – 5/21/27) His arrangements for Stan Kenton in the 1950s put him on the map and Holman (also a fine tenor player) has not stopped writing since including for his longtime big band.

Doc Severinsen – trumpeter, bandleader (94 – 7/7/27) Nationally famous due to his nightly appearances as the bandleader on Johnny Carson's *Tonight* show, Severinsen was on many studio sessions and was always a technically dazzling trumpeter.

Martial Solal – pianist (94 – 8/23/27) Solal started in bebop, recorded an excellent album with Sidney Bechet, and was a very original improviser for over 65 years.

Cleo Laine – singer (94 – 10/28/27) The British vocalist always had a remarkable range, both in octaves and the number of idioms in which she sang.

Ted Brown – tenor-saxophonist (94 – 12/1/27) Inspired by Lennie Tristano, Lee Konitz and Warne Marsh, Ted Brown still plays adventurous solos with a cool and attractive tone.

Bill Crow – bassist (94 – 12/27/27) He worked with Gerry Mulligan (part of the time alongside Dave Bailey), Stan Getz, Zoot Sims, Bob Brookmeyer, Clark Terry, Benny Goodman and many others. As an author, Crow wrote his memoirs (*From Birdland To Broadway*) and the often-hilarious *Jazz Anecdotes*.

Dick Nash – trombonist (94 – 1/26/28) A top-notch jazz trombonist who also worked extensively in the studios, his brother and son were/are major saxophonists named Ted Nash.

Harry Sheppard – vibraphonist (94 – 4/1/28) Sheppard, who worked with Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young, Billie Holiday, Benny Goodman, and his own groups, is still active today.

Marilyn Maye – singer (94 – 4/10/28) While much of her career was spent outside of jazz as a cabaret singer and actress, Ms. Maye could always sing jazz, as she showed during 76 appearances on the Johnny Carson's *Tonight* show.

Gene DiNovi – pianist (93 – 5/26/28) A fine bop pianist based in Canada since the late 1960s, he worked with everyone from Benny Goodman to Boyd Raeburn, Lester Young to Ruby Braff and many singers.

Vi Redd – alto-saxophonist, singer (93 – 9/20/28) She never recorded enough (just two very good albums as a leader and a few guest appearances), but Redd was a very talented altoist who mixed together bebop and the blues.

Sheila Jordan – singer (93 – 11/18/28) Directly inspired by her mentor Charlie Parker, she pioneered the voice-bass duo, made many rewarding recordings, and is a beloved and very encouraging educator.

Frank Tiberi – tenor and alto-saxophonist (93 – 12/4/28) Tiberi was not only a member of the Woody Herman Orchestra during much of 1970-87 but he eventually took over the big band after Herman's passing.

Benny Golson – tenor-saxophonist, composer, arranger (93 – 1/25/29) Golson helped Art Blakey with the Jazz Messengers, co-led the Jazztet with Art Farmer, wrote such jazz standards as *Killer Joe*, *Whisper Not*, *I Remember Clifford*, *Along Came Betty* and *Blues March*, and has performed rewarding tenor solos for over 65 years.

Ed Reed – singer (93 – 2/2/29) Definitely a late bloomer, Reed overcame many personal problems to become a very good jazz vocalist while in his late seventies.

Eiji Kitamura – clarinetist (93 – 4/8/29) An excellent swing clarinetist from Japan, Kitamura recorded for Concord and was a regular at the Monterey Jazz Festival for years.

Gene Cipriano – tenor-saxophonist and every possible reed instrument (92 – 7/6/29) The swing tenor, who worked with Tony Pastor (1946), Claude Thornhill, Tex Beneke, and Tommy Dorsey, has been a very prolific studio musician since the 1950s.

Ronnie Lang – alto-saxophonist (92 – 7/24/29) Lang is best-known for his periods with Les Brown's Band Of Renown (1949-50 and 1953-56) and the Dave Pell Octet.

Betty Bryant – pianist-singer (92 – 11/2/29) A delightful singer and a swinging pianist, Betty Bryant has come into her own during the past 15 years.

Toshiko Akiyoshi – pianist, arranger, composer, bandleader (92 – 12/12/29) As a Bud Powell-inspired pianist and leader of her own big band, Akiyoshi has made a strong mark on the jazz world.

Johnny Varro – pianist (92 – 1/11/30) A superior swing pianist, Varro worked with such notables as Phil Napoleon, Pee Wee Erwin, Eddie Condon, Eddie Miller, and Ed Polcer, also leading his *Swing 7*.

Marty Grosz – guitarist, singer (92 – 2/28/30) Whether playing chordal solos on his acoustic guitar, singing like Fats Waller, or ad-libbing hilarious monologues, Marty Grosz was always a joy to see perform, specializing in swing tunes and obscurities from the pre-bop years.

Richard Davis – bassist (92 – 4/15/30) Technically skilled enough to be in classical orchestras, the versatile Davis worked with Sarah Vaughan, Eric Dolphy, Jaki Byard, Andrew Hill, Elvin Jones, the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra, and even Bruce Springsteen and Igor Stravinsky.

Sam Noto – trumpeter (92 – 4/17/30) A bebop soloist with Stan Kenton, Count Basie, Rob McConnell, and many all-star combos.

Bob Havens – trombonist (92 – 5/3/30) While he was a longtime member of the Lawrence Welk Show (1960-82), Havens is best known in jazz for being a very talented Dixieland trombonist.

Ahmad Jamal – pianist (91 – 7/2/30) Leader of his own trio since at least 1951 and one whose 'less is more' approach influenced Miles Davis, Jamal has been a consistently creative musical force for 70 years.

Helen Merrill – singer (91-7/21/30) From the start of her career, virtually every recording by this creative yet accessible jazz vocalist has had a purpose and memorable moments.

Sonny Rollins – tenor-saxophonist (91 – 9/7/30) Simply one of the greatest of all jazz improvisers. Forced to retire from playing after 2012 due to respiratory problems, Sonny Rollins is still missed.

Nancy Harrow – singer (91 – 10/3/30) The jazz vocalist has recorded many underrated gems whether they were standards, her own originals, or tunes taken from unusual sources.

David Amram – French horn, piano, pennywhistle, flute (91 – 11/17/30) A true Renaissance man, throughout his career Amram gave one the impression that he could enthusiastically jam with musicians from any culture. In addition to his jazz work, he wrote film scores, was involved in the Jazz & Poetry movement, composed classical works, and led a wide variety of fascinating recordings.

Dizzy Reece – trumpeter (91 – 1/5/31) One of the major trumpeters in the UK during the 1950s, Reece moved to the US in 1959 and, despite periods of obscurity, was always a powerful hard-bop oriented soloist.

John Pisano – guitar (91 – 2/6/31) An excellent soloist, Pisano was most prized for his skills as an accompanist and for his work with other guitarists including Joe Pass.

Plas Johnson – tenor (90 – 7/21/31) Whether it was bop, New Orleans-flavored r&b or movies (including *The Pink Panther Theme*), Johnson could always be counted on to deliver.



Kenny Burrell – guitar (90 – 7/31/31) A major bop, swing and soul jazz guitarist, Burrell has also been an important music educator for many decades. He was Duke Ellington's favourite guitarist.

Willie Ruff – bass, French horn (90 – 9/1/31) Half of the Mitchell-Ruff duo with pianist Dwiki Mitchell, he was equally skilled on his two instruments.

Dusko Goykovich – trumpeter (90 – 10/14/31) Born in Yugoslavia, Goykovich was in many big bands (including Boland-Clarke) and an excellent bop soloist.

Lilian Terry – singer (90 – 12/15/31) Born in Egypt and based in Europe, she has always been proud to have recorded with Dizzy Gillespie.

Redd Holt – drums (90 – 5/16/32) Part of the most famous version of the Ramsey Lewis Trio and Young-Holt Unlimited.

Lalo Schifrin – pianist-arranger-composer (90 – 6/21/32) A great jazz pianist but an even better writer with over 100 film scores in addition to his rewarding *Jazz Meets The Symphony* series.

While the jazz life can be rough and has resulted in many casualties, it is also true that the music keeps one young. Each of the musicians mentioned in this piece deserve to be celebrated and applauded for what they have accomplished, and for surviving it all.

Scott Yanow can be reached for liner notes, bios, press releases and other interesting assignments at scottyanowjazz@yahoo.com.



Marshall Allen

THE HITMAN BLUES BAND

Scheduled for several appearances at the Birmingham, Sandwell and Westside Jazz Festival this year as part of a UK tour are The Hitman Blues Band from New York. RON SIMPSON put the questions to their leader, RUSSELL 'HITMAN' ALEXANDER.



It was a father and son thing, really. Russell Alexander was especially delighted to play Henry's Blueshouse on his UK tour late last year because his father, drummer/vibraphonist Ray Alexander, had been for some years a regular in the Birmingham Jazz Festival. So I plunged in at the deep end with the question, 'Why isn't Ray Alexander famous?' It was not an original question, having been asked initially by Scott Yanow:

'Dad used to refer to it - somewhat tongue in cheek - as "the Alexander curse". But it's the nature of the business. I'm just finishing reading Jim Simpson's book, *Don't Worry 'bout the Bear*, and one of the many things it drives home is that talent, drive, dedication and even luck just aren't enough. It takes a whole machine to get well known and sometimes even then it doesn't work out. I wish Dad had known how respected he really was. Even now I get messages from people who studied with him or were fans and recall him with great appreciation and fondness. He wasn't a bitter man, but he did express disappointment at times that it seemed he was always fighting to just get a gig. To me he was a great inspiration.

'I set up a Wikipedia page about him a few years ago ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ray_Alexander_\(musician\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ray_Alexander_(musician))), which has a bunch of information.

Dad started off as a drummer when he was teenager, after forming a harmonica band with neighborhood kids. One of them went on to become famous as an actor - Brian Keith, who got a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. I guess the harmonica didn't work out, but the drums sure did. He played with Claude Thornhill, Bobby Byrne, the Dorsey Brothers, Stan Getz, Joe Venuti, Mel Torme, Johnny Smith, Chubby Jackson and many others. He had a natural sense of rhythm, and word got around about him. But he loved hearing other players, too. He told me about seeing Buddy Rich at the Paramount at one point, where Rich played with one hand (he had broken the other and couldn't use it), and marvelled that he could play better with one hand than most drummers could with both. That was the thing about Dad - he was always appreciative of other musicians, and never stingy in his praise. He didn't give in to jealousy or pride. He told me, "There will always be someone better than you, and someone not as good. You're only in competition with yourself." Plus, he showed me that I could learn from everyone, even someone who might not be as technically proficient.

'He played on a lot of recordings, but often the side musicians weren't credited. He didn't even get album credit for *Beauty and the Beat* until much later. He played percussion on Martin Denny's

Quiet Village, but it's hard to find out what else he was on. I wish I had asked him more about that.

'I founded Nerus records and publishing, but in his name. I kept bugging him to record an album under his own name, and one night in 1983, my friend Doug Tow told me the engineer at the studio he was working at, David Barnes, had gotten one of the new-fangled DAT recorders. Would I be interested in them coming to one of Dad's gigs and recording it live? HELL, YES! So they showed up at Eddie Condon's and that became the first release, *Cloud Patterns*. It featured Dad, the incredible Albert Daley who passed at only 45 years old, renowned bari saxist Pepper Adams, Harvie Swartz (who played with just about anyone you can name), and Ray Mosca on drums, whose discography is a who's who of jazz. No rehearsals, just jazz pros captured in a wonderful performance. Dad released *Rain In June* in 1992, and then it wasn't until 2000 that I released my first album under my own name, titled *Blooztown* and featuring two cuts with Dad on it. Little did I know that only two years later, he would be gone. I'm grateful that I got him on that album, even if only for two songs.'

When Russell started out, for some years he worked with all kinds of bands. I asked him about these, not expecting to have



heard of any of them. It came as something of a surprise to come across Lester Lanin!

'At around 16, I started doing "club dates". At first I worked with regular wedding bands, then started freelancing with "society" bands - Lester Lanin, Peter Duchin, the Harrington Brothers, Roger Stanley, and many others. There were never any rehearsals, you just showed up and were expected to know every song ever written between 1910 and whatever year it was. A good deal of the time, the handleaders wouldn't even call out the names of the songs, never mind the keys. It was great training for me, although I got my ass kicked (musically) pretty badly at times. Plus, I was expected to play bass and guitar because these expensive society bands didn't want to hire both - and, they wouldn't pay for a PA, so I had to sing through my amp (yes, the same amp I was playing through). We're talking about gigs for the top 1% at that time, super-secret private clubs, quadrilles, cotillions, coming out parties, royal balls (yup, in New York City), etc. I also played with Hassidic bands, I was with a Greek band for over a year, a salsa band for over a year, a five piece authentic swing band, a Portuguese band, and more that I can't remember right now. And through all of that, I was fronting my own progressive rock band (and then a new wave band), plus working as a sideman for rock bands, blues bands, funk bands, jazz groups, etc..

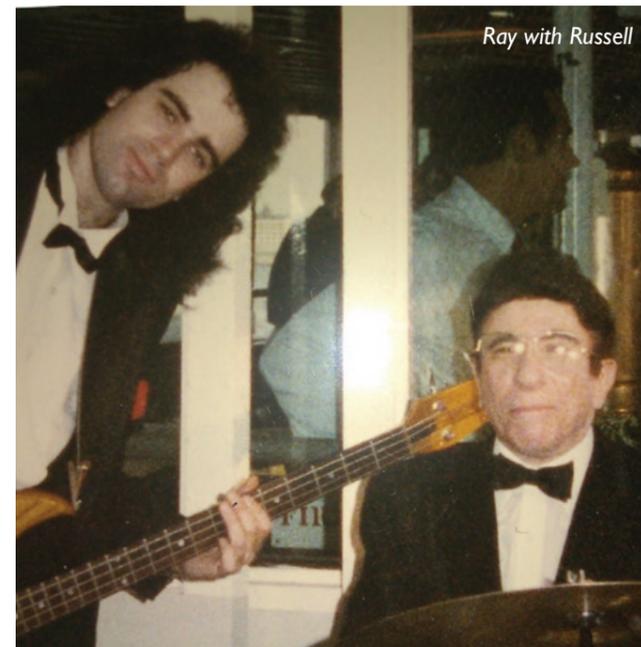
Just a whole lot of stuff, and it was great training. A lot of that world doesn't exist anymore.

'I started the Hitman Blues Band in about 1989, mainly as a cover band. It was just a trio or a quartet, with guitar, bass, drums and either a sax or keyboard - sometimes both, as a quintet. We played all over New York City, especially in Brooklyn in a strip of clubs by the Verazanno Bridge. Plus downtown in the Village, and I did a bunch of gigs at an illegal after hours club in Alphabet City, when it was so bad even the cops wouldn't come out of their cars while driving through. That gig started at 2am and ended around 7 or 8 am. Eventually, I started throwing in more originals in our sets, and after we recorded the first couple of albums I went to mainly original sets lists. But it was still a quartet for the most part. It wasn't until we recorded *Miss Catherine* on the album *Pale Rider*, where I needed to add horns to give it the right sounds, that I had one of those forehead smacking moments. I thought "You idiot. You've spent literally decades playing with bands with huge horn sections, 15 or 20

pieces. ADD SOME HORNS TO THE DAMN BAND!" So the next album, *Blues Enough*, featured horns and backup singers. Now, almost everything I write for the band has horns and backup vocals in mind. I can still go out and play almost everything as a quartet, or a trio, or for a good deal of the songs even as a duo or a solo, but in my head I hear the horns and backup vocals.'

Anyone who has heard the Hitman Blues Band will recognise that it is not orthodox blues - songs like *Not My Circus, Not My Monkey*, for instance, are full of humour - so how does Russell define the music?

'We call it Modern Blues (my daughter suggested "Alt Blues"). It's a combination of every style I've played, but the basis is always blues. That can be limiting in a way - the blues is like a haiku. There are rules about chord structure, overall arrangements, melody jumps, etc. You have to work within those parameters as much as possible, but still keep it as original as possible. And, of course, you can't always make that work! There's going to be



some stuff that will make you say "Oh, I've heard this before". But you want the listener to be able to relate to the songs on both a lyrical and groove level. You want it to catch their ears, and that means a degree of familiarity. Pretty much everyone has developed their favourite song stash by the age of 18, which is

why everyone thinks the music they grew up with was the best. They associate it with important life events, mainly as a teenager, when you're at your most vulnerable and getting blasted from all sides with experiences and emotions. Most people aren't open to new music as they get older, although there are notable

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exceptions. But even those exceptions don't have the same emotional impact as the songs they grew up with. So I'm trying to bridge all of that, while keeping to the blues, and not constantly redoing what was done perfectly 20 or 30 or 50 years ago. I'm not often successful, but every once in a while I think it works, and I keep trying.'

Talking to Russell points to the many similarities between the American and the British scene - and a few differences. For instance, remarkably, despite their 30-plus years in the business and seven albums, the Hitman Blues Band can't get a New York agent. How can that be?

'It's very hard to get an agent if you're not a tribute band or, at the least, a cover band. I'm certainly not going back to playing weddings - I did enough of that. I'll do private parties, but only with the understanding that it's blues - not "classic rock", not Top 20, not disco, not dance R&B, not rap, not hiphop, not trance or EDM or whatever. I have done a number of reggae and Caribbean gigs over the years, but I've cut out most of that unless it's for some friend who needs me in the band for a gig. Getting gigs all comes back to what it's always been: a venue is not a charity. It's not a patron of the arts. It's a business. The business is selling

liquor and/or seats. Can we bring in enough people to make it worth their while to open the doors, turn on the lights, hire staff, etc.? If we can't guarantee X number of people, we can't work. In the old days, the venue itself brought in people, because the audience knew whoever they were seeing was going to be great and they would have a good time. But now, thanks to the pandemic, a lot of clubs have shut down permanently (which makes me wonder what happened to all the money they got to keep them going...) The ones that are left are super-cautious about who gets booked, and when. Even a great act with a following may

not draw in a landlocked club in July, when everyone is going to the beaches or out of town. A band needs an agent who believes in them, is willing to go to bat for them and work their connections. There aren't many agents like that anymore, at least not that we've found. It's much easier to be booking a DJ, where they don't even spin records anymore - just set up a set list and push "play" on a Mac. Or an EDM act, where it's almost as planned out and automated. So blues acts can still draw to an extent, but lots of things have to line up. Joe Bonamassa can fill a 1500 seat theatre, and Derek Trucks can fill a 3000 seat theatre, but lesser known artists will have trouble filling a 300 seat room.

'I tell my people to take as much work as they can get. I'm very lucky in that my people will give me first choice - if I have a gig, they'll do it. However, if they have already booked the date with another band, I insist they honour that. My Dad taught me that once you book a gig, you never cancel unless you're too sick to get there, even if another offer pays more. As a musician, all you have is your word. You're talented? So what. There are hundreds of talented musicians in your area. If you can't be counted on, what good is that? That's why I'm going to be using some UK musicians on this tour - some of my people already have commitments for July.

'We do better in the UK with gigs for one reason - my agent, Derek White. If I had someone like him in the US, we'd be playing everywhere. Derek is not only our agent, he and his wife Ali are great friends, more like family, and big supporters of the band. Plus, Derek is himself a talented bassist. People like that are hard to find. Plus we have wonderful friends here like Rod Ireland who sells our merch at shows, and Graham & Ali Richmond who provide a place to stay when we play in Scotland, plus all the amazing journalists and photographers - plus fans who drive great distances to see our shows. In a country where petrol is over \$9 a gallon, that means the world to us.'

TINA MAY 1961-2022

BRUCE ADAMS remembers his friend and neighbour.



On March 26th my wife Thel and I lost a lovely friend. The little Bedfordshire town where I live has become well known in the business for the number of jazz musicians who have chosen to live here. Arnie Somogyi was already here when we moved in, as was Karen Sharp. Although they've both moved on, I now have as near neighbours Alan Barnes, Karen Street and her husband Andy Tweed, Nick Smart and Helen Mayhew, and bassists Ollie Hayhurst and Dave Whitford. Tina moved here about six years ago and

immediately became our mother hen, organising parties and murder mystery nights. She was then joined by her partner Simon Spillett and everything seemed perfect.

Only the day before Tina's illness became apparent Alan Barnes and I were talking about the really nice idyllic social scene with like-minded people. Little did we know that would be turned on its head the following day.

One of Tina's strengths was getting people involved in things they'd no idea they would enjoy. Before I realised it, she had me in a pub quiz team. Then came French soirees with wall to wall Piaf and Trenet. The next thing was a Murder Mystery Night where the evening started with Tina's champagne cocktails that were loaded with Calvados. They could have solved the current petrol shortage. By the time Tina had finished dispensing the cocktails we were all incapable of coherent thought or speech. My lasting memory of the evening was of Alan Barnes trying to explain the

clues to a Japanese lady who'd given up trying to understand my English and Countess Bogoff (Lee Gibson) trying unsuccessfully to straighten her glasses on her nose.

When we moved in to our current house (two minutes' walk from Tina's) we had a large undeveloped garden. Sensing that I was clueless re gardening, she enlisted the help of her friend Sue. I have this memory of my wife, Tina and Sue digging my garden while I made the tea. Looking at the changes she helped bring about are a lovely memory.

Tina had a very strong social conscience on what was right and wrong politically, and an innate sense of fairness and compassion. She would march and protest at the drop of a hat about something she felt strongly about and wouldn't sit on the fence.

As everyone who worked with her knew, Tina was the consummate professional. It didn't matter if was the Festival Hall or a pub in Brittany. Nobody was ever short changed. She wouldn't have known

how to. I had a little gig in Brittany with guitarist Tony Marshall. I asked Tina who was visiting us at the time would she like to sing a couple of numbers. Needless to say she obliged. She arrived dressed and made up to work, sang most of the night, in English and French, stole the show and the whole audience fell in love with her. She had class by the bucketload, but was never big time.

When Tina's illness took hold it was all very sudden and unexpected. Although the prognosis was devastating, Tina fought bravely and with dignity. For her children Ben and Gemma and her partner Simon it will have been a nightmare. Ben and Gemma lost a wonderful mother and Simon his soulmate. We were privileged, along with other friends of Tina's, to be able to help with hospital visits which she bore with incredible patience and fortitude. Throughout all this, she never stopped being Tina, someone who undoubtedly burned too brightly to burn as long as she should have, and will be missed by an awful lot of people.

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I GET A KICK OUT OF..

GRAHAM ESSON of Fibonacci Guitars answers the questions.



What track or album turned you on to jazz?

Jeff Beck - *Wired*. His technique and writing capabilities are unique, this was a really ground breaking album.

What was the first jazz gig you went to?

First Jazz gig would have been Stanley Clarke mid '80's. In Long Beach California alongside the *Queen Mary!*

What is your favourite jazz album and why?

Difficult one as there are several. Top three would have to be *Heavy Weather* - Weather Report, *School Days* - Stanley Clarke, *Trio, Live* - Pat Metheny

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

Probably Stanley Clarke in the mid 80's. As an aspiring bass player at that time, he completely blew me away and inspired me.

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

I would have to say Martin Taylor solo performance at Ronnie Scott's, London. Completely commanded the stage with an incredible performance and musicianship.

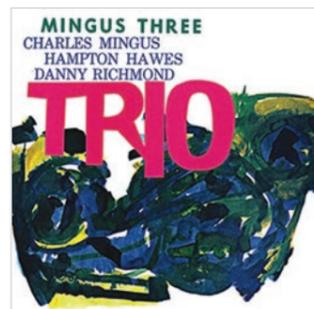
What's your favourite jazz release (new or reissue) from the last 12 months?

Definitely Nigel Price's *Wes Reimagined*. Nigel is an incredible talent and puts 110% into everything he does. This is a beautiful album and respectful to the man himself.

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

Jaco Pastorius - sadly no longer with us. I could have learned so much from him in the same room for an hour. An awesome player.

Graham Esson is currently preoccupied with the launch of the Martin Taylor LOLA guitar at a price of £3,999.00. Further information on www.fibonacciguitars.com



MINGUS THREE TRIO

Jubilee JCD 1054: 2 CDs, 37.33/37.43

In 1957 Hampton Hawes, then pretty much at the start of his career, took the piano chair for the *Mingus Three* album, the only time he was to record with Charles Mingus. Listening to the album 65 years later is to regret this: the teamwork between the members of the trio (inevitably, Dannie Richmond was on drums) is exemplary.

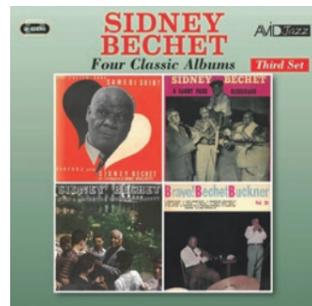
Hawes begins in rather over-flamboyant mood, with his opening fanfare to *Yesterdays*, but by the time he supplies fills to the Mingus solo he has settled

down. The second track, *Back Home Blues*, takes him back to the gospel and blues of his youth, a Mingus solo setting the mood, and *Hamp's New Blues* finds Hawes in exhilarating form, Richmond also supplying fierce breaks. Hawes' playing always carries a great freshness which complements Mingus' expansive solo work on songs such as *I Can't Get Started*.

It's a pleasure to revisit *Mingus Three*, but Jubilee has a surprise in store. Recently outtakes have come to light and a second CD is made up of alternative takes or partial takes. Outtakes of the two blues tracks are here (*Back Home Blues* incomplete), but interestingly enough there are two tracks of an untitled blues – Sy Johnson's note identifies the first take as 'a trio in search of a plan' which seems to me unnecessarily harsh. Quite possibly Hawes and Mingus were working towards one of the blues tracks on the original album. Other outtakes that add something to the album versions are an eight-minute *I Can't Get Started* and a joyous *Summertime*. One track that doesn't appear among the outtakes is *Laura*, but the trio had said all they wanted

about that in the ravishing version on the album.

RON SIMPSON



SIDNEY BECHET

FOUR CLASSIC ALBUMS – THIRD SET

Avid Jazz AMSC1407 2 CDs 76.23 / 78.31

This is Avid's third selection of past albums from Bechet's ample discography. Much like the earlier compilations, two of these French Vogue album feature Bechet as the star soloist with his preferred French revivalist band of the day. *Que Faites-Vous Samedi Soir?* from 1955, teams the imperious soprano master with Andre Reweliotty's very competent band, an alignment repeated in a 1957 session which is largely focussed on Bechet's own compositions, of which there were surprisingly many.

Of possibly more import is the invigorating session from May 1956 made with the visiting Sammy Price band, this sparked by Freddie Moore's drumming and Pops Foster's bass, Bechet alongside Emmett Berry on trumpet, trombonist George Stevenson and clarinetist Herb Hall. The eight tracks work well, Bechet in among the ensemble rather than dominating every bar. The highly experienced Berry sounds good, full of vim and the lesser-known Stevenson scores well too, the overall effect like a well-organised jam session, Price ensuring swing. Great to have, with Berry easily Bechet's equal in solo creativity.

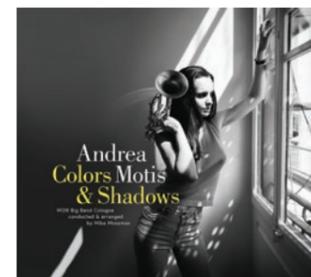
Another trumpeter uncowed by Bechet was the Californian Teddy Buckner, in Paris in 1958 for the Jazz Festival and recorded here with top French sidemen, US expatriate Kansas Fields on drums. Their ten tracks range from the blues to a clutch of Bechet's originals, the ensemble on *Weary Blues* nicely cohesive, Bechet the first to solo, Buckner assertive if a tad florid ahead of two-way fours, Fields driving hard. *Ain't Misbehavin* is more relaxed, pianist Eddie Bernard soloing ably throughout even if trombonist Christian Guerin gets fewer chances to shine.

PETER VACHER



Sidney Bechet

*Note: Avid's Sammy Price collection (AMSC1078) also has the Bechet-Price band session included here..



ANDREA MOTIS

COLORS & SHADOWS

Jazzline D 77099 63:54

At the age of 26 Andrea Motis has amassed a back catalogue many musicians take decades to achieve. Several recordings in her teens with the Sant Andreu Jazz Band followed by major label releases have made the composer-trumpeter-vocalist from Barcelona something of a veteran on the European jazz scene. *Colors & Shadows* is Motis' 2021 collaboration with Germany's renowned WDR Big Band. Motis composed six of the album's ten tracks, all of which were arranged and conducted by Mike Mossman. The album's largely upbeat, Latin to bossa nova selections showcase Motis the singer (seven of ten tracks) alongside her trumpet playing. Three tracks from earlier albums resurface here, described by the WDR Big Band's executive producer Arnd Richter as being 'refitted' by Mossman. The arrangements are uniformly excellent, affording time and space to the band's soloists and sections to shine. Motis' swinging *Save the Orangutan* emerges as a highlight, the composer eschewing the spotlight in favour of sparkling

solos from fellow trumpeter Andy Haderer, Ludwig Nuss (trombone), Paul Heller (tenor sax) and drummer Hans Dekker. The album's lightly-textured material is handled with ease by the heavyweight WDR ensemble and Motis cannot be other than satisfied with the finished product.

RUSSELL CORBETT

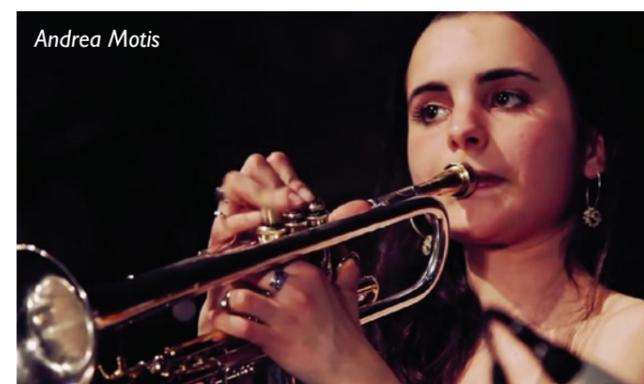


JOY ELLIS

PEACEFUL PLACE

Oti-O 007 39.13

London-based Guildhall graduate Ellis is probably best known as a singer and appears regularly in the metropolis's better clubs and tours internationally. Here, though, for her third album, she confines herself purely to her piano playing, the seven pieces all hers. She says in a brief note that they represent 'some reflections on a difficult year', well, maybe so, but it's their intrinsic worth as frameworks for improvisation that compels attention here. The title track is almost rhapsodic at first, Henrik Jensen's bass an essential second voice, the dashing harmonic ideas and clarity in the piano work a common factor to all these performances. If there a sense that Keith Jarrett is the prime influence here then so be it, for Ellis has something of the great man's heart-on-a-sleeve



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approach to emotion and the technique to carry it off. *Day of Rest* is more oblique, the bass counterpoint still present, as Ellis opens up in near-boppish fashion, rolling tremolos and all, Jensen and drummer Adam Osmianski soloing carefully. *Eat, Sleep, Relax* is hardly somnolent either, the improvisation suggesting a rather more restless spirit than the title might suggest. *Losing* is certainly thoughtful in shape and extrapolation, Jensen's part again significant. *Silver Linings* is more richly chorded, its middle passage like a balm, drum patterns spot-on, this applying to *Cascades* as well, another piece with a recurrent motif, as is *Begin Again* with its emphatic, bell-like shapes. All in all, a joy to hear. The recorded sound is superb, as is the music.

PETER VACHER



TONE OF VOICE ORCHESTRA

TONE OF VOICE ORCHESTRA

Stunt STUCD 22012: 45.45

This remarkable CD has its origins in 2017 when jazz saxophonist Fredrik Lundin

was offered the opportunity to present something new at Club 5e in Copenhagen. In association with singer-songwriter Trinelise Vaering, he put together a band consisting of four female singers, hurdy gurdy/bagpipes/cittern, violin, saxophones/flute, double bass and two percussionists!

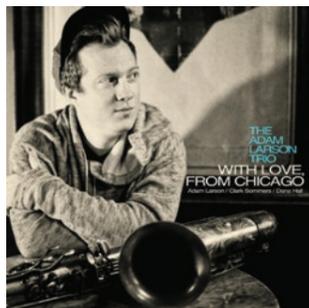
The opener, *He Loves Her For It*, begins with the sound of bagpipes before the rhythm checks in and the voices begin the song, culminating in the repetition of the title plus 'And she lets him have it.' In this it's typical. Songs are all originals by Lundin and Vaering which no doubt gives them the confidence to treat them just how they want: *I'm Gonna Let it Go* fills 4 1/2 minutes with that repeated phrase!

The rhythm, with two percussionists and Christian Mohr Levisen alternating between hurdy gurdy and cittern, hints at the folksy, the medieval, even the Arabian at times. So what has this got to do with jazz? Lundin's solos are clearly out of the drawer marked 'jazz', but generally it's just a matter of enjoying music that defies categories. *Lovey-Doveyin'*, for instance, is a glorious celebration of Sunday ('we made sure/We stocked up on love') and *Typecast* is the tale of the woman who dreams of being someone else - 'always someone other than myself.'

The pointed lyrics are supported by a wonderfully energetic band, with solo parts

being subsumed into a striking whole and vocal parts that depend mainly on the successful fusion of four voices, though Vaering has her moment on *Barking up the Wrong Tree* and Maria Kynne excels on the spare lyrics of *Heartless*.

RON SIMPSON



ADAM LARSON TRIO

WITH LOVE FROM CHICAGO

Outside in Music OiM 2207: 58.48

Adam Larson is an accomplished tenor saxist and on this album is joined by Clark Sommers on bass and Dana Hall on drums, both equally accomplished, but the overall effect is less than the sum of the parts. The opening track, *Angolan Babysitter*, a catchy original by Larson, gives hope of something more exciting. Hall, freed from any time-keeping duty, pursues his own path while Larson contributes an edgy sax sound and leads us back from time to time to the original melody. It all ends, pleasingly, in a tight drum solo.

The tracks consist of four originals by Sommers, three by Larson and three by other people, and through a sequence of three tracks by Sommers I have to confess to a steady diminution in interest: the same features are in place, Larson as assured as ever, Hall ever-industrious, but the overall effect reduced.

To my surprise J. Russel Robinson's *Portrait of Jennie* brought a major change, Larson's ballad playing as delicate as one could wish, bass and drums clearly supportive. The absence of another melody instrument is certainly felt, but this is a highly attractive track. Larson follows up with some more finely melodic playing on his composition for his wife, *Tierney's Song*, and it all ends up with another quick-fire workout, *Firestarter*.

I'm always embarrassed at my ignorance of the American scene and I had never heard of Chicago-based Larson, though this, apparently, is his sixth CD. I can't pretend that it's one I'll play very often, but his is a name worth looking out for.

RON SIMPSON



BOB JAMES TRIO

FEEL LIKE MAKING LIVE

Evosound: EVSA834M 82.00

Bob James, now an octogenarian, plays jazz keyboard with undiminished virtuosity after sixty years as a recording artist. Six of his own compositions remind us of his talent as composer and arranger. In his newest release, the Missouri-born musician returns to the piano trio format, with which he began his professional career in 1963.

The first studio album (available in several formats) for four years reunites himself on electric piano with acoustic bassist Michael Palazzolo and drummer Billy Kilson, last heard together in 2018 on the acclaimed album *Espresso*. Once again he records in the studio, but on this occasion we are spared the tricky technological interpositions, overdubs and edits, and simply hear the trio letting it go, flow, positively glow, as live in a club.

The material is hardly new, however, for the most part with a feel of the smooth funk-jazz '70s and in some ways might be thought a visitation of his greatest hits. The title track combines Eugene McDaniels's *Feel Like Making Love*, a number one hit for soul singer, Roberta Flack, in 1974, with James's own deep composition *Night Crawler*. James recorded the former in the same year on the album *One* and had a minor hit. The latter features a tremendous bass solo.

The album begins with the self-penned *Angela*, best remembered as the central theme for the long-running TV series, *Taxi*. Elton John's self-aggrandising *Rocket Man* is better for the jazz groove and for the first time ever this critic appreciates its melody. James faithfully reprises his contribution to a 1986 Grammy-winning album, with Marcus Miller's *Maputo*.

Also included are Erroll Garner's immortal *Misty*, Toni Hatch's *Downtown*, a pop hit in this country for Petula Clark - and a lively assortment of James's popular compositions, including *Westchester Lady*, *Topside*, *Nautilus* and *Avalabop*, all of which have been extensively covered by other artists.

This is Bob James pared down to the roots, smooth even without the lush strings and mellow horns, not unrecognisable from his work a lifetime ago, discovered recently in *Once Upon A Time: The Lost 1965 New York Studio Sessions*.

ANDREW LIDDLE



MISHA TSIGANOV

MISHA'S WISHES

CrissCross Jazz 1409 66.45

Russian pianist/leader Tsiganov is a new to me, even if his companions aren't. Given that these comprise his fellow-countrymen Alex Sipiagin on trumpet and Boris Kozlov on bass, plus tenorist Seamus Blake and drummer Donald Edwards, these four all associated and often on view with the renowned Mingus Big Band, the portents are clearly good. And so it turns out.

Tsiganov, Leningrad-born, emigrated to the US in 1991 (as did Sipiagin) and this is his

third album for the esteemed CrissCross label. Tsiganov says he likes to take a standard and 'arrange it to the highest level', this evident on Gershwin's *Strike Up The Band* given a quirky going-over harmonically and rhythmically with Blake careering through the 'totally crazy chords' at the end. Otherwise seven of the ten pieces offered are composed by the pianist and speak of a clear commitment to interesting complexity, often with repeated motifs in the hard bop manner, Sipiagin in wonderfully fluent form. His solo on *Fire Horse* is among the most liberating of any I've heard by him; this original shaped by the kind of onward surge that Blake's Messengers would have appreciated. Other pieces show Blake as another who seldom holds back, always happy to take on whatever challenges are dished out to him, never prolix but invariably apposite in his commentaries. Tsiganov is no mere passenger in all this, playing with crucial post-bop fluency, never short of ideas. This is valuable music by any criterion.

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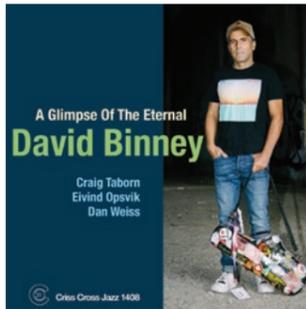
LYNNE ARRIALE TRIO

THE LIGHTS ARE ALWAYS ON

Challenge Records CR73532 44:00

Lynne Arriale's latest trio album reunites her with bassist Jasper Somsen and drummer EJ Strickland. All ten tracks were written and recorded by pianist Arriale at a time of political turmoil in America and the ongoing global pandemic. The titles reference the struggle for democracy, saluting those who sought, and continue to seek, accountability and truth. The album's liner notes offer concise explanations of the track titles. The first track, *March On*, celebrates the activists who march against racism, sexism, and repression... These extraordinary people made time in their busy lives to oppose injustice. It is noticeable several tracks fade out, perhaps suggesting Arriale considers various issues are yet to be resolved. *Honor* (dedicated to Lt. Colonel Alexander Vindman) honours the bravery of a serving military officer in making a statement to the House of Representatives, a decision which would end his career. Bassist Somsen's concise, considered solo statement on the track should be heard in context. *Walk in My Shoes* (dedicated to John Lewis) is in praise of Congressman John Lewis, one of the towering figures of the civil rights movement. The track's McCoy Tyner-esque approach is one of optimism, yet it too fades out, suggesting there is still much to be done. It is possible to listen to the album without being aware of Arriale's thought process, enjoying the music for what it is. Having read Lawrence K Abrams' notes listening to *The Lights Are Always On* makes for a somewhat different listening experience.

RUSSELL CORBETT



DAVE BINNEY QUARTET

A GLIMPSE OF THE ETERNAL

Criss Cross Jazz: 1408CD 56:51

This fine album from David Binney's quartet features sensitive and inventive solos from himself, on alto, and long-time collaborator Craig Taborn, on piano. In the unflappable rhythm section are regulars, Eivind Opsvik, richly-toned on bass, and Dan Weiss, undemonstrative on drums.

This, Binney's tenth for the Dutch-based Criss Cross label, showcases five of his own compositions, mostly fine-spun pieces like the opening track *Our Place* which, hauntingly impressionistic, remains in the mind long after the record is back in its case. The exception, the well-named *Vibe Changer*, catches us unaware, is waspishly atonal, jagged, spasmodically repetitive.

Maintaining the relaxed mood are two from Vince Mendoza's repertoire of haunting ballads, the brooding *Ambivalence* and *Cat and the Moon*, tonally pallid yet somehow warm hearted. *Blue Sky* from Jan Garbarek's dreamily-intense album of the same name, released in 1979, captures in a beautiful melody a feeling of quiet infinitude. By contrast, the halting rhythms and rippling chords of Ralph Towner's minor-key *Nightfall* are slightly unsettling.

We go out with a lush take on the Harry Warren standard *I Had the Craziest Dream*, the melody nicely adorned and swinging but not out of keeping with the pervasively wistful mood.

Binney describes the whole as 'a straight-ahead ballads record', completely different from anything he has ever done, 'chilled out [with] an honest and pleasant vibe, nothing too complicated or intense.' It is a fitting tribute to

Gerry Teekens, who founded the progressive Criss Cross in 1981, ran it until his death in October 2019. 'Maybe I should finally do that ballads record in honour of your father,' Binney told Teekens' son who was attempting to revive the label.

Certainly this is a graceful recording and the abstracted romanticism and quiet meditations of the title track alone would make a fitting tribute.

ANDREW LIDDLE



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THAT'S THE WAY TO LIVE!

UBUNTU UBU0094 52:35

This quartet's idea is to revisit bop and hard bop classics and give them a new lift and my, how they succeed. Tenorist/co-leader Dave O'Higgins is busy these days as a member of Darius Brubeck's group or in a two-tenor line-up with his wife Judith. Here he's fronting pianist Graham Harvey, bassist Jeremy Brown, and drummer Josh Morrison, this latter trio often lined up together in support of singer Stacey Kent. O'Higgins kicks off *I Wish I Knew*, with gusto, Harvey answering in kind. This pianist often likes to take an eclectic look at the material, as on *Chlo-E*, where he interpolates block-chorded passages into his neat bop lines, bass and drums just right. Their *That's What You're Gonna Get* is righteous in Blue Note fashion whereas *Mesa* by Brown is more sinuous, the tenor in relaxed mode. I liked *Tropical Paradise* by O'Higgins where the tenorist is at his determined best, tonally strong and assertive, Harvey and company like a chasing pack. Players of this calibre seldom disappoint and these don't. Consider

More Than You Know taken slow with a commendable opening cadenza from O'Higgins, his improvisation marched by Harvey's thoughtful response, O'Higgins having fun with a closing motif. Pleasingly varied, yes, but hugely rewarding, too.

PETER VACHER



THE ALEXANDER BRYSON TRIO

THE ALEXANDER BRYSON TRIO

Hard Bop Records HBR33013 52:34

Alexander Bryson has embraced the classic piano trio format with his debut recording for Hard Bop Records. Now in his mid-thirties, Bryson honed his craft during an extended period in New York studying and working with some of the Big Apple's finest jazz musicians. Relocating to London, Bryson teamed up with bassist Jeremy Brown and drummer Matt Fishwick to record a straight ahead, swinging selection of numbers ranging from Lee Morgan's *Mogie* to Neal Hefti's *Li'l Darlin'*. From the down beat, Bryson, aided and abetted by Brown and Fishwick, comes out swinging. Dizzy Gillespie's *Con Alma* (endearingly credited to John Birks 'Dizzy' Gillespie) is a fine example of the art of the swinging jazz piano trio. And again on *In the Still of the Night* Bryson's swinging trio breezes through Cole Porter's enduring composition, Brown immaculate, similarly Fishwick, the latter contributing a succinct solo. A blues never goes amiss and Avery Parrish's *After Hours* is a highlight of an album of highlights.

Recorded in 2019, mixed and mastered by Andrew Cleynert and released in 2021, the CD comprises eight tracks spanning some fifty two minutes' playing time. There isn't an original

composition in sight, perhaps we'll get to hear Bryson the composer further on down the road. The Alexander Bryson Trio isn't attempting to reinvent the jazz wheel and the album is all the better for it.

RUSSELL CORBETT



ALMA NAIDU

ALMA

Leopard D 77096

Alma Naidu is a new name to me, and I suspect to most readers. So, here's some background. Naidu is a singer, composer and lyricist based in Munich and has been described as 'one of the most promising

singers on the German scene'. She has received praise for her 'delicate, wonderfully clear voice with absolutely perfect intonation'. That about sums things up.

The album is produced by renowned jazz drummer and ACT recording artist Wolfgang Haffner. Naidu's jazz credentials include having studied with Norma Winstone, which is evident in her delivery. This is an impeccably produced and presented collection of twelve mostly original compositions. A middle-of-the-road album of smooth jazz stylings of appeal to the most open-minded of listeners. Jazz credibility is provided by a guest appearance from trombonist Nils Landgren. Elsewhere, Lars Danielson plays cello and Christopher Dell contributes vibes. One track has a nice feature for Sting's guitarist Dominic Miller.

The folksy, *Walberla* with accompaniment by two bass guitarists is interesting, as is the inclusion of Billy Joel's *And So It Goes* with simple piano accompaniment.

I'm writing this as I'm listening late at night and the music fits the night-time mood perfectly. If you enjoy the music of Beady Belle, then you will certainly enjoy this. This is an album of charm and well worth investigating with easy listening is your kind of thing.

ALAN MUSSON



WALTER SMITH III AND MATTHEW STEVENS

IN COMMON III

Whirlwind Recordings WR 4783: 55:16

This is a most unusual album, one that frankly puzzles me. Walter Smith and Matthew

Stevens have brought out three albums under the *In Common* banner in the last four years, each featuring a different rhythm team to go with their sax and guitar. For *In Common III* the choice fell on Dave Holland, Terri Lyne Carrington and – it seems to me, a focus for much of the strangeness – Kris Davis.

The second track, *Loping*, sets up a recognisable style, Carrington's drumming crisp and polished behind chords from the front line. The last track, the fifteenth on the album, *Miserere*, is a lovely piece, with a wonderfully airy acoustic to it, but between the two it's difficult to foresee what Smith, Stevens and their cohorts are likely to get up to next.

Track three, *Oliver*, for instance, gives us bizarre fragments of sound before subsiding into a long decrescendo; two tracks later, the 'lop-sided ostinato' on *Orange Crush*, as the lead sheet puts it, is overpowering; the odd whirrs of electronic sound on *Lite* again put us on the edge. In between there is some excellent stuff: *After*, with its slow delicate sax building to a climax over

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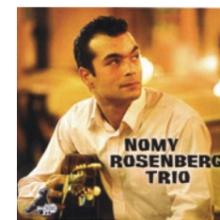
Howard McCrary Moments Like This



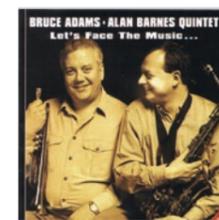
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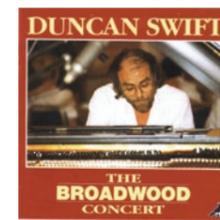
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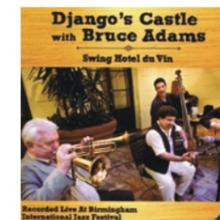
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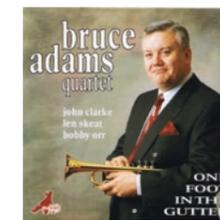
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spare guitar and busy drums, or *Reds*, more straightforward, with a fine solo from Holland.

Smith registers as a fine player, at his best on ballads, and the whole thing is geared to giving opportunities to one or another of the guys in the band, but to me it doesn't gel. The recorded quality, by the way, is excellent.

RON SIMPSON



EWAN BLEACH QUARTET

EWAN THE NIGHT 'N THE MUSIC

www.ewanbleach.com

They say that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. The sincerity in saxophonist Ewan

Bleach's music is never in doubt. Bleach is a London-based session musician who plays clarinet, saxophone, and piano. He also finds time to teach and compose. As with many session musicians, he is something of a man for all seasons, as he is involved in projects of new music, and other music genres including afrobeat and traditional Turkish music. He has featured on a plethora of albums reflecting his wide interests. However, Bleach's real joy is the early styles of jazz, ragtime, blues, and swing.

This is Bleach's debut album under his own name and consists of nine ballads which pay 'tribute to the poetic side of jazz improvisation and the rich melodic compositions of the old songwriters'. The saxophonist draws inspiration from two fellow saxophonists from a bygone era – Sidney Bechet and Lester Young. The album contains a rendition of *Si Tu Vois Ma Mere* alongside classics such as *Body and Soul*, *Memories of You* and *Prelude to A Kiss*.

Over the course of the album Bleach employs soprano, alto and

tenor saxophones and clarinet and is accompanied by Colin Good on piano, and Jim Ydstie on bass. Guitarist Martin Wheatley makes an appearance on one track, whilst otherwise the guitar chair is occupied by John Kelly.

Bleach makes a point of 'seeking an authenticity in his improvisations and an appreciation of the "now"' and this is certainly 'mellow and soothing' music.

ALAN MUSSON



GABOR BOLLA QUARTET

ON THE MOVE

Stunt STUCD 21092: 60.20

Hungarians Gabor Bella (tenor saxophone) and Robert Lakatos (piano), Swedish bassist Daniel Franck and American drummer Billy Drummond have come together in Copenhagen, once again exemplifying its situation as a jazz melting-pot. *On the Move* gives all every chance to shine, a refreshingly old-fashioned album with no tricks, just a fine mix of straight-ahead jazz.

Bolla from the start is totally relaxed and assured in his improvisations on *Monkey Donkey*, one of four originals and repeated (alternative take) as the final track, but it's *Love is Love* that ratchets up the excitement, fervent piano solo before a gloriously delicate drum solo. The organisation of the album also makes its mark with Billy Strayhorn's *Chelsea Bridge*, Bolla's restrained ballad playing cooling the mood in a meditative version before Bolla switches to soprano for a wild *Blue Tarif*. J.J. Johnson's *Lament* receives a suitably solemn treatment before Ellis Marsalis' exultantly swinging bebop *Swingin' at the Haven*.

The musicians all dovetail beautifully. Lakatos, given the

chance, inclines to the 'too many notes' school of pianism, but his solos can be breathtaking. Drummond brings years of experience to the party, often unobtrusive, but driving hard at times. Franck clearly belongs to the Scandinavian school of double bassists, seizing on his chances for solos and is technically solid throughout. As for Gabor Bolla the variety of his playing makes a great impression: poised and expressive, fierce and dynamic, his expressed regard for Sonny Rollins in no doubt. An excellent album!

RON SIMPSON



CATHERINE RUSSELL

SEND FOR ME

Dot Time DT9107 47.17

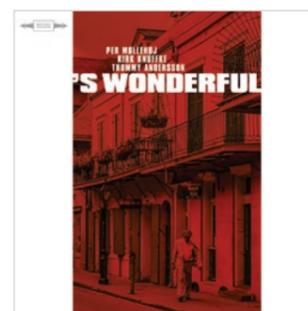
Readers may already know Miss Russell's background but for those who don't this established African American vocalist is the daughter of late bandleader Luis Russell and bassist Carline Ray or as the note puts it, 'Catherine was born into jazz royalty.' Remarkably, this is her eighth 'name' album and as usual, she is accompanied by a cross-section of New York's neo-mainstreamers, most notably trumpeter Jon-Erik Kellso and pianist Mark Shane, the band charts set up to evoke 1930s small group swing.

As usual, Ms Russell opts for a theme; this time it's 'romance', each of these thirteen songs offering a variation on this most timeless of human desires. Her approach varies from *Did I Remember*, where her behind-the-beat phrasing suggests an awareness of Billie Holiday whereas *Send For Me* favours a groovy r&b style with Matt Munisteri excelling on guitar. Elsewhere she takes *Blue and Sentimental* quite slowly, allowing her bluesy vibrato to carry the load. About *Sticks and Stones* which came from a 1937 recording

by trumpeter Red Allen, who of course had worked with her father's band, Russell says, 'Red Allen makes me smile. He loves to swing and his vocal is uplifting.' Hers, too, as Kellso opens, the tempo up and swinging, Russell romping vocally, John Allred vibrant on trombone, Shane striding, this track underlining her gift for rhythm singing. She follows with *Million Dollar Smile*, more relaxed, the tempo eased, her vocal warmth and insouciant, relaxed phrasing pleasingly evident.

It's good to hear Russell handling such an intriguing range of songs, none overlong, each studded with cheery solos from her musicians. It remains a mystery why she has yet to appear in Britain.

PETER VACHER



PER MOLLEHOJ/ KIRK KNUFFKE/ THOMMY ANDERSSON

'SWONDERFUL

Stunt STUCD 21102: 40.49

This is an engaging album by three accomplished musicians, no overdubs, no edits, mostly one or two takes. Cornetist Kirk Knuffke and bassist Thommy Andersson, apparently, go back a long way and Stunt Records proposed recording as a trio with acoustic guitarist Per Mollehoj.

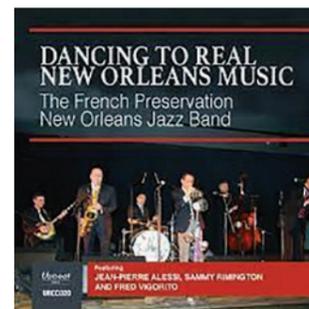
At the outset we have *Beale Street Blues*, Knuffke singing in lazily understated fashion, before following up with *Elisabeth Town*, his own composition about a town in New York, basically a one-chord blues with two interludes. This, in a way, is typical of the album which consists of four songs from the 1930s or earlier, two Knuffke pieces and three by Mollenoj, which tend to employ off-beat features. *Just Squeeze Me* and *'Swonderful* form a delightful pair of tracks, short (six minutes

in total), with all three enjoying themselves. The title track is particularly appealing, light, feisty, with Knuffke in exuberant mood, Mollehoj intersecting neatly with him and Andersson leaving plenty of room.

Mollehoj is, if anything, the star of the trio, unfussy, fleet, full of ideas, always attentive to what Knuffke is doing. Knuffke is similarly uncomplicated, especially impressive in his warmer, more restrained moments. As for Andersson, his occasional solo is fine, but generally he is the anchor for the improvisations of the other two.

First Draft is, to me at any rate, the most enjoyable of the originals, Mollehoj building on the song *I'm Confessin'*. After that Knuffke gives his vocal chops another airing on *St. Louis Blues*, Mollehoj filling in expertly, and another Mollehoj original, *A Brother and A Sister*, rounds off a very pleasing, unpretentious CD.

RON SIMPSON



THE FRENCH PRESERVATION NEW ORLEANS JAZZ BAND

DANCING TO REAL NEW ORLEANS MUSIC

Upbeat: URCD320 65:31

Upbeat continues to re-release the back catalogue of Jazz Crusade, the revivalist label which gave a great boost to a largely unknown band from Lyon, bringing out two hot volumes of *New Orleans To Lyon*, in 2005, quickly followed by couple more of *Jumpin' In Irigny*.

This recording, from the same period band, features the inspirational leader, Jean-Pierre Alessi and regular stalwarts, Henry Lemaire, banjo, and Vincent Hurel, at the traps. Alessi's tenor always captures

the Manny Paul bounce and energy that we associate with Kid Thomas bands. A couple of foreign stars of the idiom, our own Sammy Rimington, on clarinet and alto, and the versatile ever-vigorous Fred Vigorito, cornet, complete the line-up.

They play familiar New Orleans material, mostly ballads and spirituals, plus a couple from outside the canon. Sammy is in customarily fine form on *Burgundy Street Blues*, calling to mind his original inspiration, George Lewis, whose theme tune it was. On just *A Closer Walk With Thee*, he movingly reprises his solo with Kid Thomas' great December Band.

Calcutta, a beautiful tune now little remembered, though once a number one American hit for Heino Gaze, brings sweet clarinet and pulsing tenor together thrillingly. The gentle Nat King Cole hit *Pretend* is given some Kid Thomas fire and brimstone treatment by Vigorito.

Victory Walk is Joe Avery's Blues minus trombone. This explosive 12-bar set of riffs and chords at the heart of most early Rock-n-Roll recordings seems to be taking us out. But that honour is reserved for *Walking With The King*, Sammy taking a rare vocal.

This band now enjoys an international following and this release will no doubt prove popular.

ANDREW LIDDLE



BRUCE ADAMS & CRAIG MILVERTON

KEEPIN' OUT OF MISCHIEF NOW

Self-produced, 51:08

Better late than never! In their liner-note Bruce and Craig tell us that 'this album should have

been recorded eighteen months earlier but had to be postponed due to the pandemic.' There's no doubt that that eighteen month hiatus (from which we're just starting to recover) was, for many musicians, damaging to inspiration and (especially for trumpet-players) the chops. But it's a tribute to both players here that they seem to have sailed through the Covid crisis calm and fully equipped to carry on. The content of their previous album *Golden Moments* (2016) was neatly summated in the title of its opening track *Pure Imagination* and this second excursion bears all the same hallmarks; exquisite repertorial choices ranging from Tom Delaney's *Jazz Me Blues* to Willard Robison's *Old Folks* (plus a definitive statement of the Heindorf-Cahn chef-d'oeuvre *Pete Kelly's Blues*); unflinching technical command plus the kind of comprehensive knowledge of the classic jazz vocabulary that has so far (however inevitably) escaped the attention of some younger players. On this set the iron-lipped Adams confines himself to his long-model cornet (join the club, old friend!); an instrument which permits him to ramble around in low-register explorations recalling Ruby Braff while occasionally unleashing the odd super-G as a reminder that you are in the presence of a trumpet heavyweight. To these creations Milverton (as you would expect) provides the perfect framework based broadly in the all-music vocabulary of Oscar Peterson; striding out cheerfully on the title track while elsewhere (as on *Little Girl Blue*) straying reflectively into the musical environs of Bill Evans. All in all an album to love and for those who appreciate fine CD design a treat in itself courtesy of Derek Lawton. Don't miss this one.

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BOOK REVIEWS

PLAYING JAZZ IN SOCIALIST VIETNAM: QUYEN VAN MINH AND JAZZ IN HA NOI

STAN BH TAN-TANGBAU AND QUYEN VAN MINH

University Press of Mississippi, paperback, 978 1 4968 3634 2, £21.56

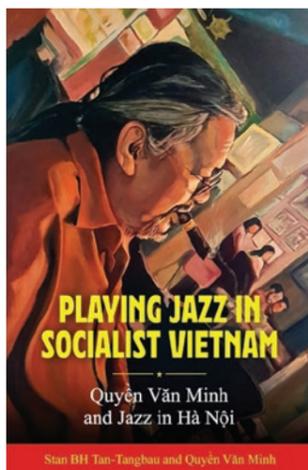
IT WON'T SOUND THE SAME AGAIN... GREAT JAZZ NEVER DOES

JIM PHILIP WITH TREVOR BANNISTER

Springdale Publishing, hardback, 978 0 9564353 1 6, £15.00

These two very different books have more in common than one might at first suspect. Both present an unusual view of the jazz world, each of them covers a life which is hardly the conventional one for a jazzman and, sadly, neither of them is as fascinating as I expected it to be.

Playing Jazz in Socialist Vietnam is the inspiring story of Quyen Van Minh and his struggle to find jazz a foothold in the music world of Vietnam. It begins with Minh hearing 'mesmerising music' on the radio – Willis Conover on Voice of America – and resolving to play like that and goes on to chart his career through various song and dance troupes until finally, in 1988 and 1989, he introduced the Vietnamese audience to jazz in televised concerts from Ha Noi Opera House and then went on to found his jazz club where, despite



several moves through enforced closures, he continues to play. Often he shares the stand with his son, who trained at Berklee and now runs the club.

The picture of life in a socialist state is always fascinating: the ration cards of earlier days, the strict controls over pay, the presence of documents for everything, the state permission for foreign travel. In spite of all that, I received an impression of a life in which a fair amount of control rested with the individual, Minh's building himself a shelter on the roof of his parents' building to live and practise in, for instance.

For all this, the book is disappointing. The structure consists of long extracts from Minh broken up by explanatory passages by Stan BH Tan-Tangbau who also contributes a few background chapters. This method results in repeated references to the same events (notably the concerts of 1988, 1989 and 1994) and the inclusion of references to unimportant details. Tan-Tangbau is so concerned to reveal the quality of Minh that he lists off the tracks on his major CDs. In between the chapters on Minh's life he adds an introduction to Vietnamese history and culture and surveys of jazz in Eastern Europe and Asia, both detailed, but rather impersonal.

Minh emerges as someone whose attitude to jazz is very different from those of us in the West. He is concerned to have jazz accepted in the mainstream of music, though he didn't particularly enjoy working at the conservatoire (from which he has now retired). He is very much a Vietnamese, trying to find a way to present Vietnamese music in a jazz setting. Before the concerts he prepared a three-way programme – classical music, Vietnamese music and jazz which he billed as 'international music' – and he composed special pieces for the jazz section that echoed Vietnamese life.

There are plenty of illustrations – photographs, posters, CD sleeves – but they are not well reproduced. The scholarly apparatus of a biography is well in evidence, with notes on source material, etc., and a large bibliography.

Overall, then, the book failed to involve me in the way that I had hoped for, but it certainly serves as a telling introduction to 'the godfather of Vietnamese jazz'.

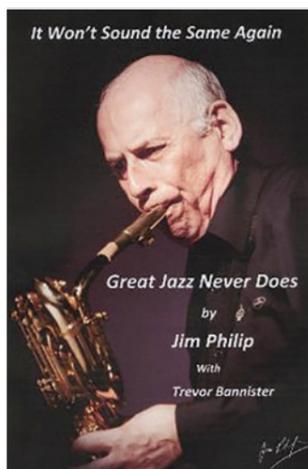
On the other hand, *It Won't Sound the Same Again...* tells the story of Jim Philip who, in 1969, was nominated as 'Talent Deserving of Wider Recognition' in the Downbeat poll, retired at the age of 30 in 1972 and, in recent years, has returned to big band playing.

The problem here lies in the amount of space devoted to jazz and how much interest the average jazz fan will find in accounts of board room wrangling in computer firms, write-ups of assorted rugby matches and stories of his grandchildren's achievements in rugby, cricket, rowing and netball.

The first 54 pages are the most interesting, though Philip's approach to his schooldays is marked by a tendency to write only about those things that held his attention: i.e. jazz, athletics and rugby! His account of his school career consists of a report of his athletics success in an athletics meeting with Aberdeen Grammar School, a brief summary of his rugby career and his Games master's reaction to his dropping out of rugby.

No matter, this first section is full of interest. The Jim Moir Band, seasons in the pit at His Majesty's Theatre in Aberdeen, the Jim Phillip Big 8 could all have benefited from more detail, but there's plenty to enjoy here and at the age of 23 it's off to Brighton and Jim Philip's brief career on the national stage. He joined Neil Ardley's New Jazz Orchestra, played with Maynard Ferguson and then with the Bobby Lamb/Ray Premru Big Band. Interesting anecdotes surface about gigging at Ronnie Scott's Old Place, a chance meeting with Maynard years afterwards and playing with a breathless Tubby Hayes shortly before his death.

The story of *Atlantic Bridge* is one that deserves telling in more detail. The group grew out of the London Jazz Four and Philip's account suggests depths to the group's breaking up that he doesn't wish to explore.



He hints at dissatisfaction with his bandmates ('The entire rhythm section made the "Child Song" album with Henry Lowther; a move which I felt compromised our identity'), he suggests the need for backing tapes was a problem and he casually mentions the career opening for him at Management Dynamics, but soon enough the band was playing its last gig without officially disbanding. Jim Philip himself seems to have been reconciled to it – as 'the ultimate semi-professional'.

Towards the end of the book Jim takes a job at George Dawkes music store and begins playing again with various big bands, notably the BBO – the Berks, Bucks and Oxon. The reissue of the *Atlantic Bridge* album prompts a spell of reflection: 'I remain firmly convinced that no other group offered a similar product.'

The illustrations to the book are numerous and always interesting: the Michael Garrick Sextet, flyers for Ronnie Scott's, Bobby Lamb with a drum spectacular with Louie Bellson, Kenny Clare and Buddy Rich, montages for the London Jazz Four and *Atlantic Bridge*. A pity that, for the most part, they are small in size.

RON SIMPSON

LIVE REVIEWS

ART THEMEN

WEST RUISLIP JAZZ CLUB FEBRUARY 2ND, 2022

Only jazz can do this. Take four musicians who have never actually played together as a band and then shove them in a room and see what happens.

Rockers try, and even blues players, but it's not the same. The difference is that jazz musicians approach gigs as vehicles for collective composition in the moment, not just opportunities to show off their virtuosity.

Club proprietor Tony Jameson is a master of the alchemy that makes for great sessions. Then again, even he had not bargained for the time-travelling, spirit-conjuring sorcery that these four magi produced.

There were times when the back room of Ruislip Conservative Club felt like the Café Bohemia in 1955.

That said, when Art Themen is around, you're never going to be far from the more out-there

explorations of Eric Dolphy or John Coltrane – the kind that would have bemused most of the denizens of those hard-bop era clubs.

He didn't push things too far, but he certainly didn't let his eclectic tastes be contained by the abiding spirit of the session.

Riding the wave of harmony and rhythmic freedom that his bandmates generated there were moments when he found things to say within the changes that few other musicians would have discovered.

In the second set, during the ballad *You Don't Know What Love Is*, he brought his solo to an end with a little flourish that was a complete composition in itself. It was almost an afterthought – he was strolling to the side of the performance area as he played it – but it was a moment of breathless elegance.

Crucially, it also set the space for a solo by Pete Billington on piano that fascinated and stilled the audience in wonderment at just how good jazz can be, even on a chilly February night in Ruislip.

CLARK TRACEY, DAVE GREEN, ALAN BARNES, MARK ARMSTRONG, SEAN FYFE

RUISLIP JAZZ CLUB, MARCH 3RD, 2022

Jazz hits you hot and cold. Fire and ice. Soft and brittle. It never knows what it's going to be.

Tonight in Ruislip there's no time to think about it anyway, you've just got to get on with it. Tony Jameson's done that thing again where he phones random musicians and says, 'Come blow, play your thing, see what happens.'

They've met, they've played together before, but not these five together all at once. So this is new no matter what. Clark Tracey, drumming aristocracy; Alan Barnes, wily, wise explorer; Mark Armstrong, schooled and untamed; Sean Fyfe, the young one. Oh, and Dave Green. Thank God!

There's that first fascinating bit where they don't know what's going to happen and they play it

safe. Safeish. They go for *Teef*, Sonny Red's tribute to Yusef Lateef. It doesn't take long, you can feel the trust building with every bar and things beginning to gel.

He's famous, Clark Tracey, but you could be forgiven for wondering why, he doesn't do much, does he, just grooves along. But that's why it works, why it comes together so fast and without effort, he lays down a carpet of rhythm that asserts the identity of the band for the night, opens the way for the soloists to cut loose. Dave Green does that too. They do it together.

Mark Armstrong does cut loose; he's unhinged from the outset, blowing long, rippling runs and pushing into the higher register, red faced and askew. Breathe, man, surely even jazz trumpet isn't worth this. Then again, maybe it is.

Next up is *Alexander the Great*, an Armstrong original drawn from the changes for *On Green Dolphin Street*. It has that change of pace that shifts you through the gears like the Monaco race track, now weaving, now swinging at full throttle. Then something happens at the end: nudged by Armstrong,

Throughout, Billington's elegantly articulated solos were fluent and absorbing for everyone except, you might have thought, for him. He exudes a kind of scholarly detachment that belies the fire and colour that flows from him, notably on the Bobby Wellins' arrangement of *Mad About The Boy*. He plays with a clarity that lets the music breathe.

Alec Dankworth presents a similarly studious appearance. Watching him, you could be forgiven for thinking that he has never met a bass before and is exploring one for the first time. That is, until you hear what he is playing. The swing and melodic pulse he generates brings an energy and assurance that keeps everything fresh.

Andy Ball on drums drove things with an understated aggression that only become truly apparent during his solos. They were filled with invention and tonal variation and at times it was edge-of-the-seat stuff.

Perhaps the most fully realised example of the spirit and character of the evening came in Dexter Gordon's *Hi-Fly*. It

included a passage in which Alec Dankworth and Art Themen drifted together in an unaccompanied dialogue that could have been twice as long without losing its grip.

There was a hard edge to Art's sound that was no less sultry for its brassiness and made you long for a cigarette, or at least a fug of smoke to complement the rawness of the mood. The fact that it was only the third number of the set, with the musicians still finding their collective voice, only added to the intrigue and the thrill of it all.

By the time we got to Sonny Rollins' classic *Doxy*, which the band turned into a tour de force of gospelly soul, we knew we'd seen something special.

Raw at times, and with that engaging informality that makes the audience part of the session, not just spectators, it was a reminder that jazz is a unique language. When it is articulated as fluently as it was by these four players, it speaks directly to your soul.

STUART MAXWELL

Armstrong channels his inner Cootie Williams, blowing a deft one-note wah solo that again takes him to the roseate edge.

Set two opens with Armstrong's *The Man From Del Monte*, which gives Clark Tracey the chance to show off a bit. He doesn't, of course, he just delivers a solo of exquisite taste over a precisely feathered bass drum before flinging the band back into the changes, punctuating them with Blakey-esque bombs that are about as intrusive as he gets.

We get Dizzy Gillespie's *Sure Nuff* and Hoagy Carmichael's *Stardust* – baritone and flugelhorn dropping deep into the harmony – and Tad Dameron's *Hot House*. When it's all over there's an unreal sense of surprise in the room, did that just happen? How can that happen in Ruislip on a Wednesday night?

Best not to think about it too much. Just be glad it happened at all.

STUART MAXWELL

HENRY'S BLUESLETTER

BLUES FOR UKRAINE

April 3 saw Velvet Music Rooms in Broad Street, Birmingham, packed with 200 blues fans for a Henry's Blueshouse special, Blues for Ukraine. The performance featured three bands, The Nitecrawlers, the Shakedown Brothers and the Martin Burch Band, as well as guest musicians Chickenbone John, Ricky Cool, Roy Forbes, John Price, Mick Hopkins, Mickey Barker, Chris Bowden and Darren Mather for an almighty blues jam that ran for more than four hours. Not only did all the bands and musicians give their services free, so did photographer Karl Newton, film crew Studio 57 and Fair Deal Music.

Other Birmingham musicians showed support by donating items to be auctioned or raffled, including: an oil-painting of Buddy Guy by Mark

Skirving, aka King Pleasure, an autographed snare drum by Roy Adams of the Climax Blues Band, a signed pair of drumsticks from Bev Bevan, a photograph of Buddy Guy signed by all the evening's participants and a cigar box guitar in Ukrainian colours made by, and played by, Chickenbone John.

When all the dust had settled, it was announced that £3,825 had been raised for the Disasters Emergency Committee Ukraine Appeal, which hopefully will continue to edge its way upwards.

All in all a remarkable evening of music and a huge display of generosity by the terrific audience at Henry's Blueshouse, a blues community getting together in support of a country fighting against tyranny.



Roy Forbes



The Nitecrawlers

PHOTOS KARL NEWTON

HENRY'S BLUESHOUSE AT VELVET MUSIC ROOMS

APRIL 19TH JAMES OLIVER BAND
 APRIL 26TH LOL GOODMAN BAND
 MAY 3RD THE SHAKEDOWN BROTHERS
 MAY 10TH CHICKENBONE JOHN & RICKY COOL
 MAY 17TH MELVIN HANCOX BAND
 MAY 24TH BOB WILSON & HONEYBOY HICKLING
 MAY 31ST CHICK WREN'S ROLLIN' RIVER BAND

Admission Free. Doors 7pm.
 Blues Talkin' 7.15pm. Band 8pm.
 Velvet Music Rooms, 200 Broad Street, Birmingham, B15 1SU
 For more information contact Jim Simpson
 on 0121 454 7020 or jim@bigbearmusic.com

HENRY'S BOTANICAL BLUESHOUSE AT BIRMINGHAM BOTANICAL GARDENS

APRIL 17TH BIG JIM & THE ALABAMA BOOGIE BOYS
 APRIL 18TH LOL GOODMAN BAND
 APRIL 24TH THE NITECRAWLERS
 MAY 1ST THE BLACK & BLUES BAND
 MAY 2ND MELVIN HANCOX BAND
 MAY 8TH THE CATFISH KINGS
 MAY 15TH THE SHAKEDOWN BROTHERS
 MAY 22ND THE SHUFFLEPACK
 MAY 29TH CHICK WREN'S ROLLIN' RIVER BAND

Admission £6.75 per adult, free entry for children under 5.
 Gardens open from 10am. Band 2-4pm.
 Birmingham Botanical Gardens, Westbourne Rd, Birmingham B15 3TR
 Tickets available at: <https://www.birminghambotanicalgardens.org.uk/day-ticket/>
 For more information contact Jim Simpson
 on 0121 454 7020 or jim@bigbearmusic.com



Shakedown Brothers

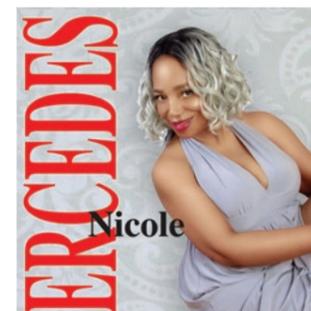


Chickenbone John & Ricky Cool



Martin Burch Band & Chris Bowden

MERCEDES NICOLE



CONSTELLATIONS

Own label, no issue number; 54:07
 (www.mercedesnicolejazz.com)

It is sometimes forgotten that there have been times when some forms of blues and jazz have been very close – but Seattle,

Washington-based singer Mercedes remembers. She sings both, and does so convincingly. She harks back to the days of sophisticated songstresses with a cool, controlled approach to her vocals – she heard jazz and blues from her father's record collection, and Dinah Washington, 'The Queen Of The Blues', was obviously a big influence. Mercedes covers two of her songs, the sultry *Rich Man Blues* (excellent piano) and the ballad *This Bitter Earth*, the latter accompanied by just piano and violin.

But the lady is not a 'cocktail blues' revivalist. Take a listen to her versions of *The Thrill Is Gone* (most closely associated with BB King) and T-Bone Walker's *Stormy Monday Blues*, which avoid the gospel techniques usually employed these days, and are instead given a classy, jazzy, lingering treatment whilst respecting the blues roots. Then there is Big Jay McNeely's ballad blues, *There Is Something On Your Mind*, with a sensual vocal and some fine organ playing by Jake Sele.

Nor is she rooted in the past. She's already shown she has a good ear for a song, and again does so

with an emotion-steeped version of Bonnie Raitt's *I Can't Make You Love Me*. She can write her own material too – try the bluesy *Your Love* with excellent guitar work by Jerry Wirkkala. In fact, the accompanists get their own instrumental showcase – and deservedly so too – with the gospel-ish *Turn Me On*. There's not a track here less than very worthwhile listening.

Yes, I was impressed – very impressed. This kind of classy music comes along all too infrequently these days. It would be good to see Mercedes over on this side of the pond.

NORMAN DARWEN