JazzWax

Marc Myers blogs daily on jazz legends and legendary jazz recordings

« February 2009 | Main | April 2009 »

March 2009

March 31, 2009

JazzWax Mindblowers (Vol. 5)

If you're new to this blog, you should know that at the tail end of each quarter I provide a roundup of my favorite quotes from JazzWax interviews posted over the past three months. Between January and March 2009, I interviewed Jimmy Cobb, Sandie Shaw, Buddy De Franco, David Soyer, Helen Merrill, Phil Woods, Hal McKusick, Billy Joel, Chico Hamilton, Carol Sloane and Simone, Nina Simone's daughter. If you're looking for Volumes 1-4 in this series, you'll find them by typing "Top Mindblowers" into the search engine in the upper right-hand corner of this page.

So, without further delay, here are the past quarter's gems:

British pop singer Sandie Shaw on why there were so many "girl" singers in the U.K. in the early 1960s: In the 1960s, the American scene was still stuck in the 1950s. The U.K. had an amazing free creative environment and a huge establishment to kick against. We had a class war to fight and sexual equality to define within the new liberalism over here. Our male and female audiences directly related to all the musical output and were really ready for change.

Drummer Jimmy Cobb on Dinah Washington: "Dinah had a cruel streak. Probably because she was brought up around Gladys Hampton, Lionel's wife and the person who ran Hamp's business side. Gladys used to buy Dinah nice things to wear on stage but at the end of the week she'd take it out of her pay. Most of the time it was stuff Dinah couldn't afford. So Dinah would do the same thing to the girls who worked for her."

Jimmy Cobb on what he learned from Washington: "Feelings. Dinah was a Baptist. When I heard that Baptist sound, it took me over. I wasn't used to hearing that. It would make the hairs stand up on my arms and neck, where people are singing and shouting in church. That struck me right away. She taught me to put the passion into what I was doing."

Jimmy Cobb on being hired in 1958 by Miles Davis for his sextet: "Philly Joe Jones was starting to come late to Miles' jobs. Cannonball Adderley was especially worried because he needed the job. He was living in [his brother] Nat's apartment in New York and couldn't stand not to have a gig, you know? When Cannon saw that Philly wasn't showing up, he wasn't sure if Miles was going to keep the thing going. So he told Miles about me. When Joe didn't show one night, I sat in... Then I played on the *On Green Dolphin Street* session, and Miles dug what I did on there."

Jimmy Cobb on Miles Davis' quirky personality: "One time

JazzWax Interviews

Miles said he wished I could swing like Wynton [Kelly]. I looked at

him and said, 'I sure wish you could, too, Miles.' Miles gave me a look, but we were pretty good friends. He knew I was always there when we played. That was Miles' thing. He was always watching to see what you were going to bring. Miles was a funny little guy. He was always busting in your face to see what your reaction would be." [Photo: Herb Snitzer]

Jimmy Cobb on how Davis' wound up credited with songs he didn't write: "Funny things used to happen in the studio. We'd be in a recording session, and the engineer would say, 'What song was that, Miles?' Miles would tell him, and the guy would write it down and credit Miles. A bunch of songs were attributed to Miles that way."

Jimmy Cobb on Bill Evans and *Kind of Blue:* "Bill Evans had a bigger hand in writing many of those songs than most people realize. The feeling was very close to the way Bill played piano. Bill kind of got Miles into that groove."

Jimmy Cobb on Miles Davis and Sonny Stitt during their 1960 European tour: "Miles didn't want Sonny to play tenor on the tour. Miles said, 'Man, I'm going to step on that tenor.' Sonny would get all upset and say, 'Oh, man, Miles.' That was Miles' way of letting Sonny know how he felt. Sonny took the tenor anyway."

Jimmy Cobb on his famed metronome-like cymbal playing that opens *Someday My Prince Will Come:* "That was my idea. I thought I had made a mistake by hitting the

cymbal too high up and too hard. I thought the engineer might not have been able to control it [with the levels]. But during the playback, everyone liked it just as it was."

Buddy De Franco on Miles Davis and the Metronome All-Stars of 1948-49: "Miles was an up-and-coming guy at that point, a smart alec. He had a way of playing and got very popular, becoming one of the biggest names in jazz and pop music. But next to Dizzy and Fats that day, he was a weak third. He was not that super a trumpet player yet."

Buddy De Franco on Artie Shaw: "Artie's bop band in 1949 was a mistake. Artie underestimated the idea of playing bop. He tried, but it didn't come off. He didn't spend enough time learning bop. Artie didn't really care that much. He was interested in too many other things—you know, writing, politics and other things that took his interest away. The idea of a band was a good idea to Artie until it got boring."

Buddy De Franco on what Charlie Parker said to him when Buddy asked Bird why he didn't play the clarinet: "He was very kind. He said, 'Because you play it' [*laughs*]."

Cellist David Soyer, who played in the string section on Billie Holiday's *Lady in Satin* with his wife harpist Janet Putnam, on the 1958 session: "I remember Billie didn't want the guys in the band to hear the playbacks because she didn't think she sounded good. But we all went into the booth after to

hear them anyway. She sounded pretty damn good to me."

Singer Helen Merrill on her very first club performance, with Bud Powell on piano: "After I started singing, Bud stopped playing, turned around, looked at me with the biggest grin on his face and then continued to play. It was a huge compliment and a complete surprise. I wasn't professional yet, but when Bud did that, it gave me so much confidence. He was so sweet."

Helen Merrill on her famed 1954 recording for Mercury with trumpeter Clifford Brown: "We didn't talk much at those sessions. We just smiled at each other a lot. What we had to say to each other was unspoken. It came through the music, and you can still hear that unspoken conversation on there today."

Helen Merrill on seeing the cover of the album for the first time: "I cried. I didn't think I looked like that when I sang. But I did. As a woman, I thought I was prettier. I don't mean that in a vain way. It's just that you have a certain vision of how you look, and when that image is different, you feel sort of vulnerable."

Helen Merrill on *Dream of You*, her 1956 album arranged by Gil Evans: "It was my idea to use Gil. He was so gifted. I had remembered his beautiful music for Claude Thornhill, and I thought his music would be beautiful to sing against. When I mentioned Gil's

JazzWax Mentions

BBC
Jazz Session
L.A. Times
USA Today
Wall St. Journal

JazzWax Liner Notes

Joe Alterman: Piano Tracks (Vol. 1)

Carol Sloane: We'll Meet Again

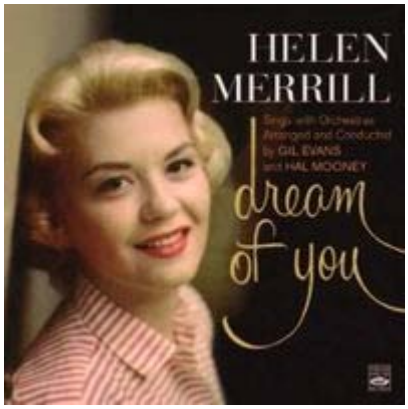
Benny Golson: Best of Benny Golson

Teddy Charles: Complete Tentet

Grant Stewart: Young at Heart

Recent Posts

Interview: Sammy Nestico



name to [EmArcy head] Bob Shad, I thought Bob was going to have a heart attack. At first Bob said, 'No' because Gil was famous for keeping orchestras overtime, and studio time and musicians were very expensive. Eventually Bob gave in."

Helen Merrill on Miles Davis: "[In the early and mid-1950s] Miles used to love my sound and always came to hear me sing. We were dear friends. He told me he loved my whisper sounds. That's a technique I used by getting up real close to the microphone. I'd sing almost in a whisper, which created a very intimate sound. I developed this by listening to my voice and trying different things with the mikes."

Helen Merrill on Bill Evans: "Bill called me the night Miles had asked him to join his sextet in 1958. Bill said, 'Helen, do you really think I'm good enough? Do you think I'm good enough to play with Miles?' [*laughs*]. I said of course. Bill knew he was great but needed the encouragement. I was very touched by what he asked me, and I knew exactly how he felt. It was a big move for him. Even when you know you can do something, you want to hear it from someone who feels the way you do, someone who understands what you're going through inside."

Phil Woods on words of encouragement from Charlie Parker: I came into Arthur's Tavern [in 1953] and there was the great Charlie Parker—playing the baritone sax. It belonged to Larry Rivers, the painter. Parker knew me. He knew all the kids who were coming up. I

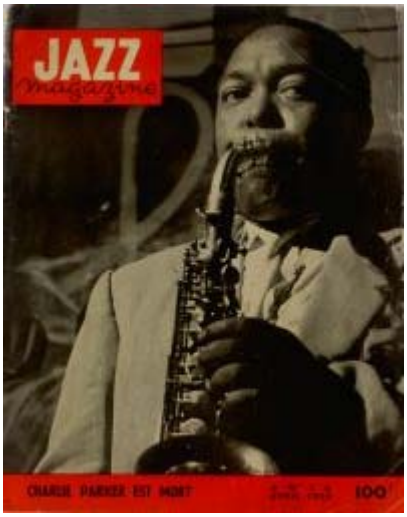
Archives

JazzWax Picks

Nat Adderley: That's Right!

Dameronia: Look, Stop & Listen

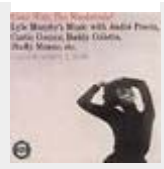
Ithamara Koorax: Bim Bom



said, 'Mr. Parker, perhaps you'd like to play my alto?' He said, 'Phil, that would be great. This baritone's kicking my butt.' So I ran back across the street to the Nut Club and grabbed the alto sax that I hated. I came back and handed my horn to Bird, and he played *Long Ago and Far Away.* As I'm listening to him play my horn, I'm realizing there's nothing wrong with it [*laughs*]. Nothing was wrong with the reed, nothing was wrong with the mouthpiece—even the strap sounded good. Then Parker says to me, 'Now you play.' I said to myself, 'My God.' So I did. I played a chorus for him. When I was done, Bird leaned over and said, 'Sounds real good, Phil.' This time I levitated over Seventh Avenue to the Nut Club. And when I got back on the bandstand there, I played the shit out of *Harlem Nocturne*. That's when I stopped complaining and started practicing." [Image of *Jazz* magazine courtesy of Bird Lives]

Phil Woods on his famous solo on Billy Joel's *Just the Way You Are:* "People come up to me all the time to ask me about that. My favorite was the young saxophonist who came up to me on some gig I was playing and said, 'Are you the guy on the Billy Joel record?' I said, 'Yes I am.' He said, 'Have you done anything on your own.' [*laughs*] I said, 'A couple of things.' "

Billy Joel on jazz: "Jazz takes a good amount of technical expertise to get it right. You need a great deal of study and discipline. A lot of people


Lyle Murphy: Gone with the Woodwinds!

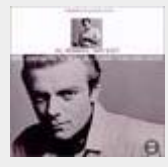

Woody Herman: Columbia Recordings (1945 - 1947)


John Coltrane: Side Steps


Art Farmer: Aztec Suite

: Machito at the Crescendo

Tom Talbert: Bix, Duke, Fats


Don Sleet: All Members

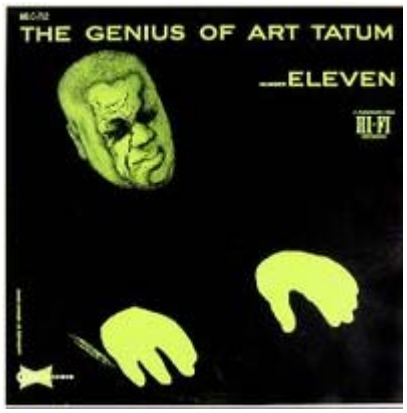

Lennie Niehaus: Quintets and Strings


Stan Kenton: Stage Door Swings

Marty Sheller: Why Deny

in rock and pop don't necessarily have that kind of background, and they don't have that well-developed a technique."

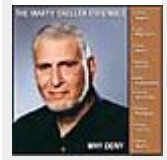
Billy Joel on Art Tatum: "Tatum would play runs with his left hand and just throw them away. You know, like you'd hear it once and you'd never hear it again. I'd find myself sitting there going, 'Please do that again.' I couldn't hear what the hell that was that Tatum did, so I'd have to lift up the needle and go back, you know."



Billy Joel on playing rock in stadiums: "It's a blast. It's fun to make that noise. We manipulate sound. Rockers are kind of magicians and wizards. We take soundsand play with them, you know, and then we put it out there and do magic to people with it, and it gets this big response. [*pause*] And chicks dig it. [*laughs*] It's this great power. But I have a lot of respect for jazz musicians. That's hard in a completely different way."

Billy Joel on why he didn't become a jazz musician: "I'm familiar with a lot of good jazz. I listened to it all through my teenage years. And I still do to this day. I love jazz. I wanted to be a jazz guy. I just didn't. I don't have the chops."

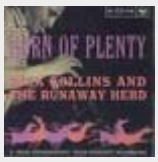
Chico Hamilton on the Gerry Mulligan Quartet of 1952: "Gerry didn't want me to use my bass drum. And that's when we went to war [*laughs*]. I finally went out and got myself a tom-tom instead, a small bass drum, and converted it into a bass drum. Gerry didn't want any bass drum at all. But I told him I needed something there for my right foot, to keep my rhythm. My timing



[Eddie Palmieri: Azucar Pa' Ti]

[Bill Perkins: On Stage]

[John Lewis: Grand Encounter]



[Dick Collins & Runaway Herd: Horn of Plenty]

[Lennie Tristano: Intuition]

[Blue Mitchell Sextet: Blue Soul]

[Hal McKusick: Triple Exposure]

[Dave Pell: Jazz For Dancing and Listening]

[Don Fagerquist: Portrait of a Great Jazz Artist]

[Four Brothers: The Four Brothers:

depended on it. I'm still using a smaller bass drum today."

Chico Hamilton on his music for and appearance in the 1957 film *Sweet Smell of Success:* "The actor Martin Milner, who played the guitarist and the quintet's bandleader in the movie, he didn't know how to play guitar. So what happened was Milner put his left hand behind him and John Pisano, my guitar player, put his hand on the strings. It looked like Milner was playing the guitar, the way Jimmy Wong [Howe] shot it [*laughs*]."

Chico Hamilton on why he's underappreciated: "I don't know. Maybe because I've always seen the drums as a melodic instrument, not a percussive one. I developed a touch. It may not have been as loud, but it's mine."

Saxophonist Hal McKusick on arranger George Handy and the Boyd Raeburn Orchestra: "When we were on tour in San Francisco in 1945, the Palace Hotel didn't like the fact that we had a broadcast there each night at around dinnertime. We played straight out for the radio audience, which rattled the staff and guests. To up the ante, [Johnny] Mandel and [George] Handy [pictured] dyed their hair green, which scared the staff and patrons. But the two of them didn't care. The band's vocalist David Allyn practiced singing in an

Together Again!

James Moody: Moody 4A

Meredith d'Ambrosio: Love Is Not a Game

Don Friedman: Circle Waltz

Scott LaFaro: Pieces of Jade

Chet Baker + Art Pepper: Playboys

Cyrus Chestnut: Spirit

Endurance
Heath Brothers: Endurance

Med Flory: Go West Young Med

Lockjaw Davis: Fox and the Hounds + Lock, the

abandoned tomb in the graveyard. He liked the sound there."

Carol Sloane on Oscar Peterson: "Oscar would watch my set at the Village Vanguard [in 1961] from a dark banquette off to the side. Each time he would ask out loud for me to sing Kurt Weill's *My Ship.* I'd jazz up the song, and when I'd finish I'd look at Oscar for his reaction. Each time I sang it, Oscar was expressionless. For a week he'd shout out the same request, and each time I'd work harder to make a jazz impression. And each time I'd get the same stony reaction. I finally grew exhausted trying to embellish the song. So one night I just sang it straight. When I finished, Oscar was grinning and applauding. I finally got Oscar's message: A great song doesn't need to be jazzed up. You just have to sing it straight. I've carried Oscar's lesson with me ever since."

Carol Sloane on Barbra Streisand: The first time I met her I was singing at the Village Vanguard in 1961. One of the waiters came up to me to tell me that there was a young girl in the back who looked kind of weird. He said she doesn't have a purse and she's wearing a T-shirt and her hair is long and stringy. The waiter asked if I wanted to see this girl or should he tell her I'm not available. I went to the back of the club and there was this ordinary looking girl. She [introduced herself and] said to me, 'How do you do that?' 'Do what? You mean singing?' I asked. 'Yeah, how do you sing like that?' She said she was just starting out."

Carol Sloane on performing with Ben Webster in 1963 in Rhode Island: "I listened to every note Ben played. As a singer, I couldn't believe how great he

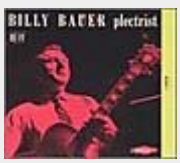
Fox

Benny Golson Art Farmer: The Complete Mercury Jazztet Sessions

Bill Holman: Gerry Mulligan Songbook

Kenton-Holman: Contemporary Concepts

Jo Stafford: Broadway Revisited



Billy Bauer: Plectrist

Claude Thornhill: Plays Gil Evans + Gerry Mulligan

Chris Connor: He Loves Me, He Loves Me Not

Herbie Nichols: Love, Gloom, Cash, Love

Lionel Hampton: Jazz Flamenco

Herbie Mann: Just

sounded. After the set, he smiled at me. That was enough. He smiled. Then he went straight to the bar."

Carol Sloane on watching the Beatles perform from the dugout at Shea Stadium in 1965 and hearing the mass hysteria: "As a jazz singer, I was nauseous. I could see the writing on the wall with the Beatles. The kids had been drifting away from jazz for years. But by this concert in 1965, they were completely gone, and I knew they were never coming back. You could see it. You could hear it."

Carol Sloane on her stormy relationship with pianist Jimmy Rowles: "It was a tough period for me. I was in my early 40s and had begun questioning everything about my career and my ability. Jimmy was a legendary pianist, the guy who had accompanied everyone. In the beginning he made me feel great. But little by little, things got worse and worse... It got so bad that I tried to take my own life."

Carol Sloane on Ella Fitzgerald's performance anxiety: "[Ella] was pacing and wringing her hands backstage and saying, 'I'm so nervous I'm so nervous.' I said, 'God, Ella, don't worry, Jimmy [Rowles] will never let you down. You've got nothing to worry about.' She said, 'I know.' She had had Tommy [Flanagan] playing for her for over 15 years. So all of a sudden, she had a new guy at the keyboard. They had rehearsed together, but she still was behaving as though the world was going to come to an end."

Wailin'

Red Mitchell: Presenting Red Mitchell

Sonny Clark: Leapin' and Lopin'

Sonny Rollins: Alfie

Machito: Kenya: Afro-Cuban Jazz

Yusef Lateef: The Golden Flute

Yusef Lateef: Into Something

Mundell Lowe: Satan in High Heels

Bill Evans: Live in Paris 1965

Frank Sinatra: A Swingin' Affair!

This Here

Carol Sloane on her own stage anxiety: "I was always nervous about performing. To the point of being ill. It was awful... I used to have performance-anxiety dreams. I'd go to sleep and have nightmares about having to go out and sing. It can't be helped. It's something deep in your brain. "

Singer Simone on what she misses most about her mother Nina Simone: "I miss her hand rubbing my head. I miss her touch."

Posted by Marc Myers at 08:30 AM | Permalink | Comments (0) | TrackBack (0)
Technorati Tags: Billy Joel, Buddy De Franco, Carol Sloane, Chico Hamilton, David Soyer, Hal McKusick, Helen Merrill, Jimmy Cobb, Phil Woods, Sandie Shaw, Simone

March 30, 2009

Hank Garland: Jazz Winds

Country musicians have a long history of teaming with jazz and blues artists to produce hip music. Western swing was an outgrowth of jazz. The same goes for rockabilly and the early Sun Records' sound. One of the finest examples of this twang-and-hang hybrid is *Jazz Winds from a New Direction*. Recorded in August 1960, the session was led by Hank Garland, one of Nashville's top country studio musicians at the time who recorded with Elvis Presley and other country-rock artists in the late 1950s. *Jazz Winds* teamed Garland with Gary Burton on vibes, Joe Benjamin on bass and Joe Morello on drums.


Is: Bobby Timmons

Nat King Cole: Just One of Those Things/Let's Face the Music

Bill Evans: Complete Village Vanguard Recordings, 1961

Sonny Rollins: Sound of Sonny


Teddy Wilson: The Noble Art of Teddy Wilson


Jackie Paris: The Song Is Paris

Clifford Brown: Complete Metronome & Vogue Master Takes

Doug and Jean Carn: Infant Eyes

Artie Shaw + Danny Bank: Artistry of Artie Shaw 1949

Tadd Dameron + Cecil Payne: Fontainebleau

Miles

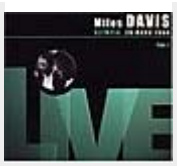
How did this configuration come to be? Garland's professional relationship with Burton actually began a month earlier, on July 4, 1960, after rowdy spectators at the Newport Jazz Festival caused the cancellation of the event's remaining performances. One of those planned events included Garland and other Nashville artists who enjoyed playing jazz.

So RCA executive Ben Rosner quickly rented a mansion, and on the afternoon of July 4th, the group billed as the Nashville All-Stars recorded seven tracks. The band featured Boots Randolph (alto sax), Gary Burton (vibes) [pictured], Floyd Cramer (piano), Hank Garland and Chet Atkins (guitars), Brenton Banks (violin), Bob Moore (bass) and Buddy Harman (drums).

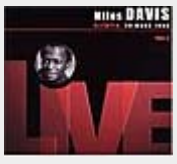
The album was released as *After the Riot at Newport* and featured a cover illustrated by Jim Flora and liner notes by Newport Jazz Festival founder and producer George Wein. Here's what George wrote:

"The music on this disc is what transpired on that sunny Monday afternoon [of July 4th]. Incidentally, but importantly, two selections in the album were composed for the occasion. Chet Atkins penned *Nashville to Newport,* and Boots Randolph with Hank Garland extemporized *Riot-Chous* the night before the session—right after the big riot.

"To me, the highlights of the album are the wonderful violin of Brenton Banks, the swinging guitar



Davis: Olympia 20 Mars 1960, Pt. 1



Miles Davis: Olympia 20 Mars 1960, Pt. 2

David Amram: Manchurian Candidate

Zoot Sims: Zoot Sims Plays Tenor & 4 Altos

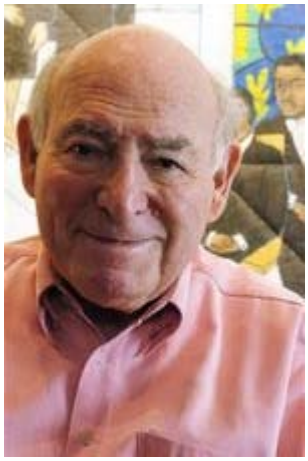
Joe Wilder: Wilder 'n' Wilder

Kenny Dorham/David Amram: Blue Spring

Oscar Pettiford: Complete 1956 & 1957 Big Band Studio Recordings

Joe Timer & THE Orchestra: Willis Conover's House of Sounds Presents THE Orchestra

of Hank Garland, and the brilliant work of a 17-year old vibraphonist from Princeton, Indiana, Gary Burton, whom you will be sure to hear a lot in the future." [Pictured: George Wein]



A month later, on August 23d, Garland went into Columbia's Nashville studio with Burton, Joe Benjamin and Joe Morello and recorded *Jazz Winds from a New Direction.* Six days later the same group recorded *Subtle Swing*.

In early 1961, Garland picked up where he left off in the Nashville studios with Presley and other country and early rock artists. But in September, Garland was in a near-fatal auto accident near Nashville that left him in a coma for a week. When he emerged, he had suffered severe brain damage. His wife helped him learn to walk, talk and regain partial guitar-playing ability. But except for an occasional appearance, Garland remained retired, passing away in 2004. [Pictured: Presley and Hank Garland]

Jazz Winds and the other albums mentioned above show the early jazz promise of Hank Garland, just before his flame was tragically snuffed out. They also demonstrate George Wein's gift for dismissing naysayers and bringing together artists of different stripes to create beautiful music. Had Garland survived, there surely would have


[Cannonball Adderley/Art Farmer: Alabama Concerto]


[Lambert, Hendricks & Bavan: Live at Basin Street East]

[David Amram: Jazz Portrait]

[Frank Wess: Wess Point: The Commodore Recordings]


[Hal McKusick: Hal McKusick Quartet]

[Teddy Charles Tentet: Teddy Charles Tentet]


[Teddy Charles with Jimmy Raney: New Directions]

[Teddy Charles: Coolin']

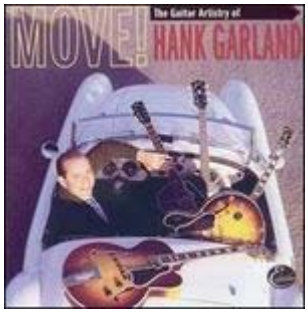
[Sarah Vaughan: After Hours at the London House]

Videos

[Art Van Damme]
[Ben Webster]
[Bill Evans]
[Billie Holiday]
[Bob Brookmeyer]
[Bobby Timmons]
[Cannbl. Adderley]
[Carmen McRae #1]

been all types of jazz-country fusion efforts throughout the 1960s and beyond. Garland could swing. Just ask Gary Burton.

JazzWax tracks: You can buy Hank Garland's jazz albums individually, but you'll pay a fortune since most are out of print. Or you can buy the two-CD set, *Move: The Guitar Artistry of Hank Garland,* which includes selections from four of Garland's jazz-country recordings: *After the Riot, Jazz Winds from a New Direction, Velvet Guitar* and *Subtle Swing*. You'll find the CD and samples **here.**



A special thanks to Kurt Kolstad for introducing me to Garland and *Jazz Winds.*

JazzWax clip: Here's a clip of country guitarists Eddy Arnold and Hank Garland in the mid-1950s. Pay particular attention to Garland's jazz chords on the *Hank Garland Stomp...*

Posted by Marc Myers at 07:51 AM | Permalink | Comments (1) | TrackBack (0)
Technorati Tags: Chet Atkins, Eddy Arnold, Elvis Presley, Gary Burton, George Wein, Hank Garland, Joe Morello

March 29, 2009

Carmen McRae #2
Charleston
Charlie Parker
Chet Baker
Chico O'Farrill
Claus Ogerman
Coleman Hawkins
Count Basie
Dinah Washington
Dizzy Gillespie
Earl Hines
Eddie Palmieri
Gerry Mulligan
Gene Krupa
Geo. Shearing
Jack Teagarden
Jackie McLean
Jackie Paris
Jammin' the Blues
June Christy #1
June Christy #2
Lee Morgan
Lockjaw Davis
Louie Bellson
Maynard Ferguson
Max Roach
Miles Davis #1
Miles Davis #2
Mundell Lowe #1
Mundell Lowe #2
Oscar Pettiford
Paul Desmond
Pepper Adams
Phineas Newborn
Sarah Vaughan
Sonny Rollins
Sound of Jazz
Stan Kenton
Teddy Wilson
Terry Gibbs
Wes Montgomery
Woody Herman
Yolande Bavan
Yusef Lateef

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Doug Ramsey
Jazz Video Guy
Nate Chinen
Jazz.com
JazzSession
Cab Calloway
A Blog Supreme
David B. Johnson
Gregory Bell
Jan Stevens
Ed Leimbacher
Howard Mandel
Jazz Lives
JerryJazzMusician
Ian Carey
Latin Jazz Corner
Lost + Sound
MuleWalk/JazzTalk
My2CentsWorth
New Orleans News
Ray De Felitta
Ricky Riccardi
Russ Neff
Steve Cerra
Vinson Valega
Von Babasin

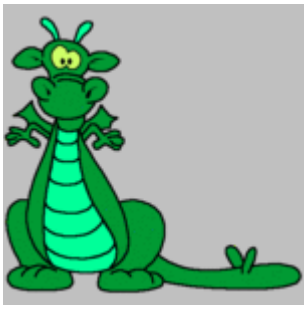
Artist Sites

Sunday Wax Bits

The future of live jazz. I have no idea whether anyone has conducted an in-depth study of jazz-club attendance and live-jazz revenue trends over the past five years. I suppose it's safe to assume that if the newspaper business and CD industry are drowning, the effort to put warm bodies in seats at clubs concerts and festivals can't be far behind. [Photo of girl transfixed by jazz by Bob Willoughby, 1951]

The deck certainly is stacked against concert producers, club owners and musicians alike. Real estate leases remain prohibitively high, insurance premiums are up, the comforts of home are increasingly seductive, discretionary income is tight, the jazz legend pool is shrinking, and the promotional dollars needed to spread the word never seems to be enough.

And that's the good news. The bigger dragon here is technology.



Dramatic shifts occur every time this beast swishes its tail. Have you noticed that virtually everything you can hold in your hands these days is disappearing? Gizmo screens have become so clear and Internet bandwidth so wide that increasing amounts of our culture are being consumed through pixels and digital bites.

Dig this: Music downloads now represent the only slice of the record business that's growing. Amazon's Kindle has rendered books (the kind with spines and dust jackets) almost meaningless. Movie downloads have already begun to overcome DVDs. And once wall-sized computer screens are developed and affordable, it's easy to

Art Blakey
Art Pepper
Arturo O'Farrill
Benny Carter
Bill Evans
Brooks Tegler
Bud Shank
Charles Mingus
Chet Baker
Clifford Brown
David Amram
Frank Wess
Grant Stewart
Jackie Paris
Louie Bellson
Nelson Riddle
Pharoah Sanders
Roberto Magris
Sal Mosca
Sonny Rollins
Teddy Charles
Tessa Souter
Warne Marsh
Yolande Bavan

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imagine that we'll be able to download Caribbean and European travel experiences without leaving home.

Back to jazz. You don't have to be a Facebook founder to know

that the CD's days are numbered and that live music is under fire. Let's face it, going out to clubs isn't as easy as it used to be. You have to get it together, arrive early to win a favorable seat, pay a fortune for admission, fork over more for small drinks and then travel home early before your chin hits your chest. Personally, I don't know how people went clubbing all week long in the 1940s and 1950s. Didn't they have to get up early for work the next day? Or hadn't jobs been invented yet? [Photo by Dave E. Scherman, 1942, for *Life*]

It's anyone's guess how many clubs and festivals will exist five or ten years from now or how many musicians will be able to afford to play jazz at a high enough level to leave an impression. Let's assume the number will be less than now. After all, the trend is clear and it's entirely possible that live jazz will go the way of the manual transmission and TV antennas. The challenge for jazz producers, club owners and musicians will be to find a way to make money using the Web to keep live jazz ticking. Newspapers stubbornly ignored the digital trend for years and learned a terrible lesson the hard way.

Paul Slaughter. I've long been a fan of photographer Paul Slaughter's work. Over the past year, Paul has graciously allowed me to use his photos (with credit, of course) to illustrate JazzWax posts. Paul has captured a large number of the jazz greats. So I asked if he

would select one of his favorite images and tell JazzWax readers a little about how the photo came to be:

"The Saturday afternoon before Sonny's Sunday night

concert in Santa Fe in July of 2007, A.B. Spellman, a retired Deputy Chair of National Endowment of the Arts, interviewed Sonny before an audience at the Lensic Theater, an old movie house renovated into a beautiful legit theater. A.B. got the Jazz Master's Program going at NEA, and Sonny had received an NEA Jazz Masters Award in 1983.

"After A.B.'s interview, I gave Sonny a photo I took of him in 1971 at the Monterey Jazz Festival.

"The next day I was hoping for a dressing room photo of Sonny, so I brought him photos of his interview with A.B. Upon arrival at the Lensic, I heard Sonny playing his horn in his dressing room. When there was a lull in Sonny's playing I knocked on his door. He said, "Come in." There was Sonny dressed in a red shirt, blue pants, wearing a process cap and holding his tenor sax. What a terrific image I thought.

"I gave Sonny the photos I had brought with me. He politely thanked me. I asked if I could take his photo with his horn. He replied, "I always think part my soul is being captured

when I am photographed." I replied, "No, Sonny, this will merely be a reflection of your soul." He smiled warmly and allowed me to take one photograph. The split-second result is the image you see above."

You can learn more about Paul at his site **here.** His current exhibition, *People of Our Times,* featuring celebrities and jazz greats, is at the Verve Gallery of Photography in Santa Fe, N.M., until May 2.

Doug Ramsey. Last week, author, jazz critic and **Rifftides** blogger DougRamsey featured two wonderful YouTube clips featuring singer Sue Raney [pictured]. One is of Raney singing Henry Mancini's *Dreamsville* in 2008. The other is a campy Scopitone from the mid-1960s of Raney singing *Before the Rain*. Scopitone was an early video jukebox featurng 16mm film loops and soundtracks.

Carol Sloane. After viewing Bret Primack's video interview of me, legendary singer Carol Sloane sent along the following e-mail:

"Like you, I, too, listened faithfully to Al 'Jazzbo' Collins [pictured] when the signal from WNEW-NY became crystal clear as soon as other FM stations in Rhode Island shut down for the night. I found him and Harrison [the Tasmanian Owl] in The Purple Grotto quite by accident one night when I was spinning the dial and should have been asleep.

"Of course, I was hooked. I even sent a fan letter written on the diagonal (to be arty and to insure he would be obliged to read it) in purple ink. Well, hell: I was 13 or 14 years old at the time. Never mind: it worked. One night I turned on the program and he was reading my letter on the air!!!

"Fortunately I had the opportunity to tell him many years

later how thrilling that moment had been for me, and that I recorded *My One And Only Love* with him in mind because it was his theme song.

For more on Al "Jazzbo" Collins, go **here.** To view Carol's blog, SloanView, go **here**.

CD discovery of the week. Back in 2006, Swiss trumpeter Peter Scharli and Brazilian vocalist Ithamara Koorax came together in Zurich to record a beautiful album called *Obrigado*, *Dom Um Romao*. The result is a tender tribute to Brazilian percussionist Dom Um Romao. ("Obrigado" is Portuguese for "thank you.")

Romao had introduced Scharli to Ithamara, who became so excited by the sound of Scharli's trumpet that she agreed to record and tour Europe with both artists. But before the tour began, Romao died at age 82. So Scharli and Ithamara decided to dedicate the CD to him.

On the album, Scharli [pictured] and Ithamara perform a series of duets, with Ithamara singing in Portuguese on 8 of the 10 tracks. On two tracks (*Love for Sale* and *I Fall in Love Too Easily*), Ithamara sings in English. But perhaps the most fascinating songs feature Ithamara singing vocalese in Portuguese. On *Vocaliste* and *Miniature IV,* she uses Swingle Single-like tones to match Scharli's trumpet tones, note for note. The result is quite fascinating as the pair come together or joust in counterpoint.

Ithamara's voice throughout is passionate, and her phrasing is soft and caressing. Scharli's trumpet is pinpoint sharp without being too strong or loud. Joining Ithamara [pictured] and Scharli are Markus Stalder on guitar and Thomas Durst on bass. Romao plays berimbao on one track, *Manha de Carnaval.*

You can sample tracks **here,** where you'll also find the imported CD.

Oddball album cover of the week. Released in 1959 on Cub Records and arranged by Sammy Lowe, *Take Off in Sound* was singer Marla Smith's only known recording. It's unclear why Smith is pictured with an American Airlines 707 jet, since the songs are rather land-locked (*Speak Low, Boy on the Beach, Wild Fire,* etc.). What's even more puzzling is the art direction: Here, Smith is depicted either as a ghost serenading mid-flight passengers. Or she just detached herself from the tail and is singing while trying to fly. Either way, Smith's up at 35,000 feet, surfing the heavens in an evening gown. And even though Smith seems to have only a cloud for support, she had the good fashion sense to extend her left leg for the photographer (who must have broken free from the tail moments before her).

Posted by Marc Myers at 08:15 AM | Permalink | Comments (7) | TrackBack (0)

March 27, 2009

Interview: Lisa Simone

One of the most exciting new singers I've heard in some time is Lisa Simone, daughter of one of America's most impassioned vocalists, Nina Simone. Known simply as Simone, the 46-year-old artist has just released her first full-length album, a stunning tribute to her mother. Rather than simply mimic Nina's style and outrage, Simone has produced an updated interpretation of her mother's catalog complete with vocal power, range and tenderness. Simone's album, *Simone on Simone,* is earthy and gutsy, but it's also unmistakably a daughter's message to her late mother.

From the album's opening duet, *Music for Lovers,* which Lisa sang with Nina live in Ireland, to the album's closing song, *Feeling Good,* this 14-track CD is packed with gospel belters, big band swingers and soulful ballads. The arrangements for the 19-piece band were nimbly handled by Ken Moyer, and they support Lisa's all-in vocal style perfectly without being overbearing or tissue-thin.

A Broadway veteran since the mid-1990s, Simone has sustaining chops that allow her voice to hit the farthest corners of any room. She also has full command of her mother's challenging material, which twists and turns in places while vocals are delivered at full throttle.

Classic Nina Simone songs on this CD include *Gal From Joe's, Go to Hell, Keeper of the Flame* and a rousing version of Billy Taylor's *I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free*. One of my favorites

is *I Hold No Grudge,* which Nina recorded in 1966 with a huge orchestra and chorus arranged and conducted by Hal Mooney. Moyer's expansive chart for Lisa is just as soft and dramatic. What makes this track so special is Simone's poetic telling of the song's lyric, building to a final, rousing held note.

When I received a copy of *Simone on Simone* a couple of weeks ago, I put it on with some trepidation. An ardent fan of **Nina Simone,** I was fearful that Simone would either go too far or not far enough in her tribute. Instead, I was blown away. Simone has re-energized her mother's material with loving sensitivity and a fresh uplifting spirit.

After listening to the album several times, I gave Simone a call to chat about the album and her experience growing up as Nina Simone's daughter:

> **JazzWax:** How did it feel to have a mother who was so deeply committed to music?
> **Lisa Simone:** It was normal for me. My mother was already committed to music and social issues before I was born. She
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> 
>
> often had to struggle to split her love equally between art and me, which wasn't always easy. Our relationship certainly had its challenges. But now that I'm older and can reflect back on those days, I realize I witnessed a lot of history. I can look back and appreciate my time with her, whether standing in the wings watching her on stage or watching her write *To Be Young Gifted and Black* in 1969.
>
> **JW:** Were you always tugging at her?
> **LS:** I never felt I had enough of my mom. I just had to deal with it. You take what you can get. Now when I look back, I have a finer understanding of my mom. And I'm able to get

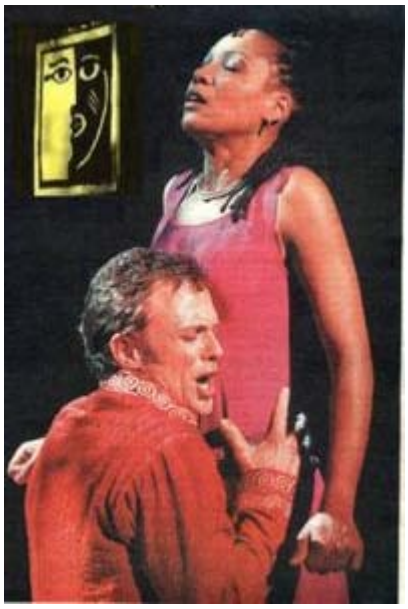
that extra piece I missed out on.

JW: Were you and your mom close?
LS: Yes, but at times the world got in the way.

JW: Were you close with your father, Andy Stroud?
LS: I am now. When my parents were together, up until 1972, that's when I saw my dad a lot. When my parents divorced, my life changed. It flipped completely. There weren't a lot of terms in those days to describe what kids went through when parents divorced. I didn't see a lot of my dad after that year. My parents didn't really get along after their split. When they did see each other, they didn't get a whole lot accomplished. [Pictured: Nina Simone and husband Andy Stroud]

JW: What do you miss most about your mom?
LS: I miss her hand rubbing my head. I miss her touch.

JW: Did you study singing.
LS: No. The most instruction I've had was just before appearing on stage in the Broadway production of *Aida* in 2001. When I saw what the show demanded, I realized I needed a vocal coach. My coach taught me a great deal, primarily that singing didn't have to hurt. I had been singing through my throat. My coach taught me to sing through my diaphragm, which shifts the power source and prevents you from damaging your voice or burning out.



JW: You've been in few other major Broadway productions.
LS: Yes. I was in the original cast of *Rent* in 1996. Then I

toured with the production for a year and a half. Before *Rent* I was in a touring production of *Jesus Christ Superstar.*

JW: What did your mother teach you about singing?
LS: All she said to me was, “Honey, you don’t have to work so hard.”

JW: What did she mean?
LS: At the time my mother had come to a few of my shows in Los Angeles, when I was performing at various clubs there. Her style and mine were very different.

JW: How so?
LS: I’m the one who jumps around the room like Daffy Duck. I get so energized. Whereas Mommy, because of all the years of practicing and rehearsing and performing, she had already settled into singing on cruise control. She wanted me to know that I could be just as effective as a singer on cruise control. By urging me to relax and pace my performances, my mother felt I would avoid wearing myself out. Of course, I learned all of that before I was on Broadway. And I learned even more when I did eight performances a week on stage.

JW: What did your mother teach you about life? Or were you sheltered in her shadow?
LS: [*Laughs*] You didn't wilt in Nina’s presence. You never would have recovered from that. A lot of what I learned was by watching and listening. It’s amazing what children pick up that way. I didn’t wilt in her presence but I did learn how to feel the air shift around me and about timing—when to speak and when not to.

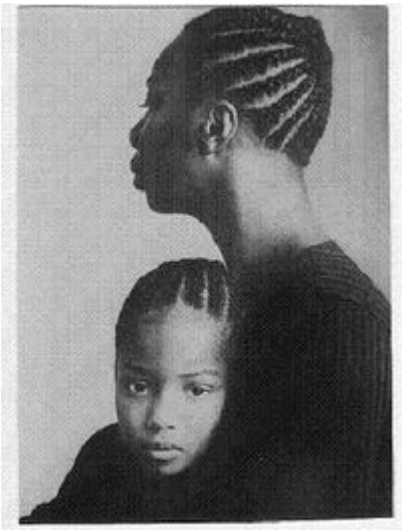
JW: Were you honest with your mother?
LS: I learned later on in our relationship that I needed to clearly communicate what I needed from her so I could get positive reinforcement during our conversations and visits. My mom was so commanding and so accustomed to being the one dictating the conversation, that to have someone like me come around and not want anything from her, just her love, was almost alien to her.

JW: Did she adjust to meet those needs?
LS: It was hard for her. For mom to make that shift was like the grinding of gears. I had to let her know in no uncertain terms that I loved her very much but that it hurt when she said certain things and did certain things. I also said that I would appreciate her taking certain things, like my needs, into consideration. [Pictured: Lisa Simone playing for mother Nina]

JW: What happened?
LS: She started to do that, and our relationship was at a wonderful point when she passed away in 2003.

JW: As a child, understanding your mother's needs and honoring them required enormous maturity.
LS: I was grown up before I was an adult. When you're an only child and you're globetrotting all over the place with your mother, you find yourself growing in ways that you wouldn't have in other circumstances.

JW: Was it tough traveling so much?



LS: You make the best of your environment. Books for me became my world.

JW: *I Hold No Grudge* has been wonderfully updated.
LS: Thank you! They're all special. My mother said we were both griots, which are West African storytellers. She said we both had an ability to make our audiences feel what we're singing about. It's just something that I seem to have, and I have no idea where it came from. I've found that singing for me is also a way of getting certain emotions out. Most people know that when I've had a bad day, they're going to get an even better show since I'm going to take any blow up and turn it into something beautiful.

JW: Is this album a message to your mom?
LS: I like that question. Yes, it is. Now that I've been traveling on tour, I tend to talk more about my life with my mother. It has been a celebration of my legacy and my mother's accomplishments, her message and her music. Not only have I learned to face this part of my life but I've embraced it. This is not only about my mother but also my way of presenting myself to the world.

JW: What do you think Nina would say about your album?
LS: I think there would be a big smile on her face, and she'd listen to it over and over again.

JazzWax tracks: Simone on Simone is available as a download at iTunes and Amazon or as a CD **here**. For Simone's tour information and to hear clips from her new album, you can visit her site **here**.

JazzWax clips: Here's a YouTube clip interview with Simone on her new CD...

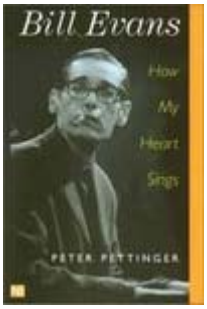
Once you hear Simone's new version of *I Hold No Grudge,* listen to Nina's original version from 1966...

Posted by Marc Myers at 08:03 AM | Permalink | Comments (2) | TrackBack (0)
Technorati Tags: Andy Stroud, Lisa Simone, Nina Simone, Simone

March 26, 2009

Bill Evans at Town Hall

Of pianist Bill Evans' many live albums, *At Town Hall ... Vol. 1* has always been among his most delicate and elegant. Evans' playing is taut and graceful, with lovely long improvisational lines and a snappy, fluid attack on the keyboard. The mix of standards and two originals—one was a suite in memory of his' father, who died just three days earlier—also were neatly selected and assembled.



For those who share my love of this album, here's a list of little-known facts about the recording taken from Peter Pettinger's *How My Heart Sings*, a Bill Evans' discography, and quotes from sources I spoke to yesterday afternoon. I also have a rare treat for you at the bottom:

- Despite playing New York club dates for 10 years, the Town Hall recording on February 21, 1966 was Evans' first New York concert appearance.
- Evans played the first half of the Town Hall concert with just bassist Chuck Israels and drummer Arnie Wise, and the second half with an orchestra.
- According to Tom Lord's *Jazz Discography,* the orchestra segment was arranged and conducted by Al Cohn [pictured] and featured Ernie Royal, Clark
  Terry and Bill Berry (trumpets),

Bob Brookmeyer, Quentin Jackson and Bill Watrous (trombone), Bob Northern (French horn), Jerry Dodgion, George Marge, Eddie Daniels, Frank Petrovsky and Marvin Holladay (reeds), Evans (piano), Chuck Israels (bass) and Grady Tate (drums).

- The orchestra performed four Al Cohn-arranged tunes: *Willow Weep for Me* and *What Kind of Fool Am I* as well as Evans' originals *Funkallero* and *Waltz for Debby*.
- Verve never released *Volume 2*, which was to have featured the orchestral material and three trio tracks that didn't fit on the first LP. Yesterday I asked Jan Stevens of The Bill Evans Web Pages what became of the band tracks. Jan says Evans was intensely displeased with the result:

  "Al Cohn did a strange thing. The orchestral material was set up so the band played one of Cohn's arrangements followed by Bill playing a solo interlude between songs. In this regard, the four songs were

  meant to be a kind of suite, with Bill's piano bridging the gaps. But Helen Keane told me in the early 1980s that Bill was extremely unhappy with the result. She said the tracks would never come out, no matter what. So far, they've never been commercially issued. What's more, they have never appeared on a bootleg, which leads me to think Verve may have purged the masters immediately on Keane's or Evans' insistence." [Photo of Helen Keane and Bill Evans by Phil Bray, courtesy of **BillEvans.nl** in the Netherlands]
- Although Creed Taylor's name and signature were used by Verve on the LP jacket, Creed told me yesterday that Helen alone produced the concert and that he wasn't there and

had nothing to do with the event or the album's production.

- Gene Lees, the legendary jazz writer and close friend of Evans, said yesterday he couldn't remember the concert and didn't know specifically why the orchestral material wasn't issued or what happened to the tracks.
- The concert was Chuck Israels' last recorded appearance as a regular member of the Bill Evans Trio.
- Note-for-note piano transcriptions of the six songs recorded at Town Hall were recently issued as *Bill Evans at Town Hall: Piano Transcriptions and Performance Notes* by Pascal Wetzel. You'll find it **here.**

And now for the treat I promised you above. Thanks to the generosity of JazzWax reader Kurt Kolstad, who attended the Town Hall concert in 1966, here's the program sheet, front and back, including Gene Lees' tribute essay. Kurt says the song selections did not appear in the program and were announced from the stage (click on the image to enlarge):

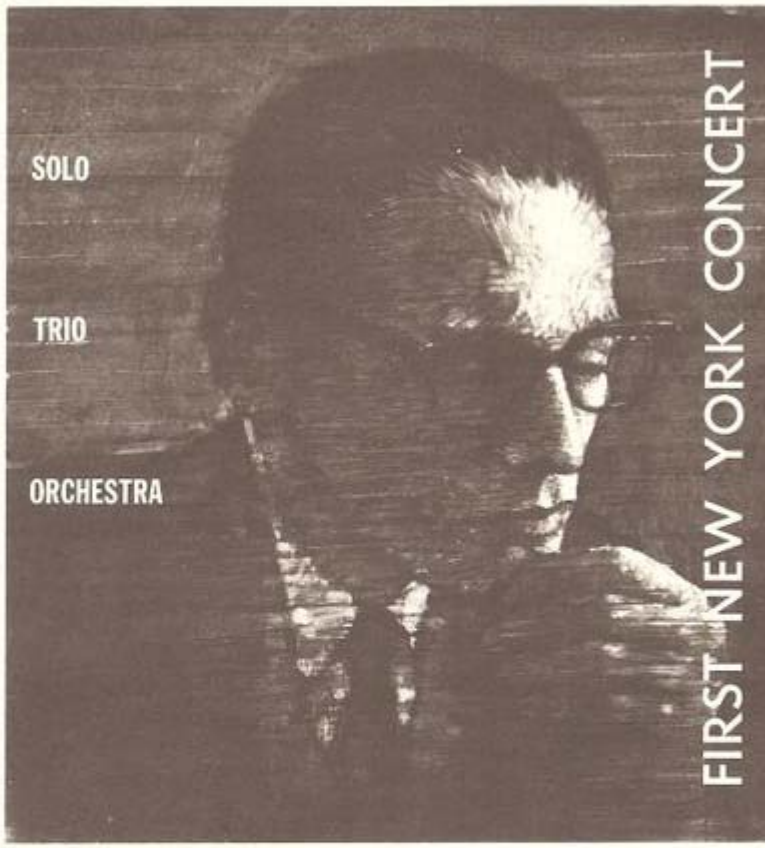
HELEN KEANE PRESENTS

BILL EVANS

BILL EVANS

BILL EVANS

"Bill Evans is the most influential stylist in Jazz Piano."—*Ralph Gleason, San Francisco Chronicle*

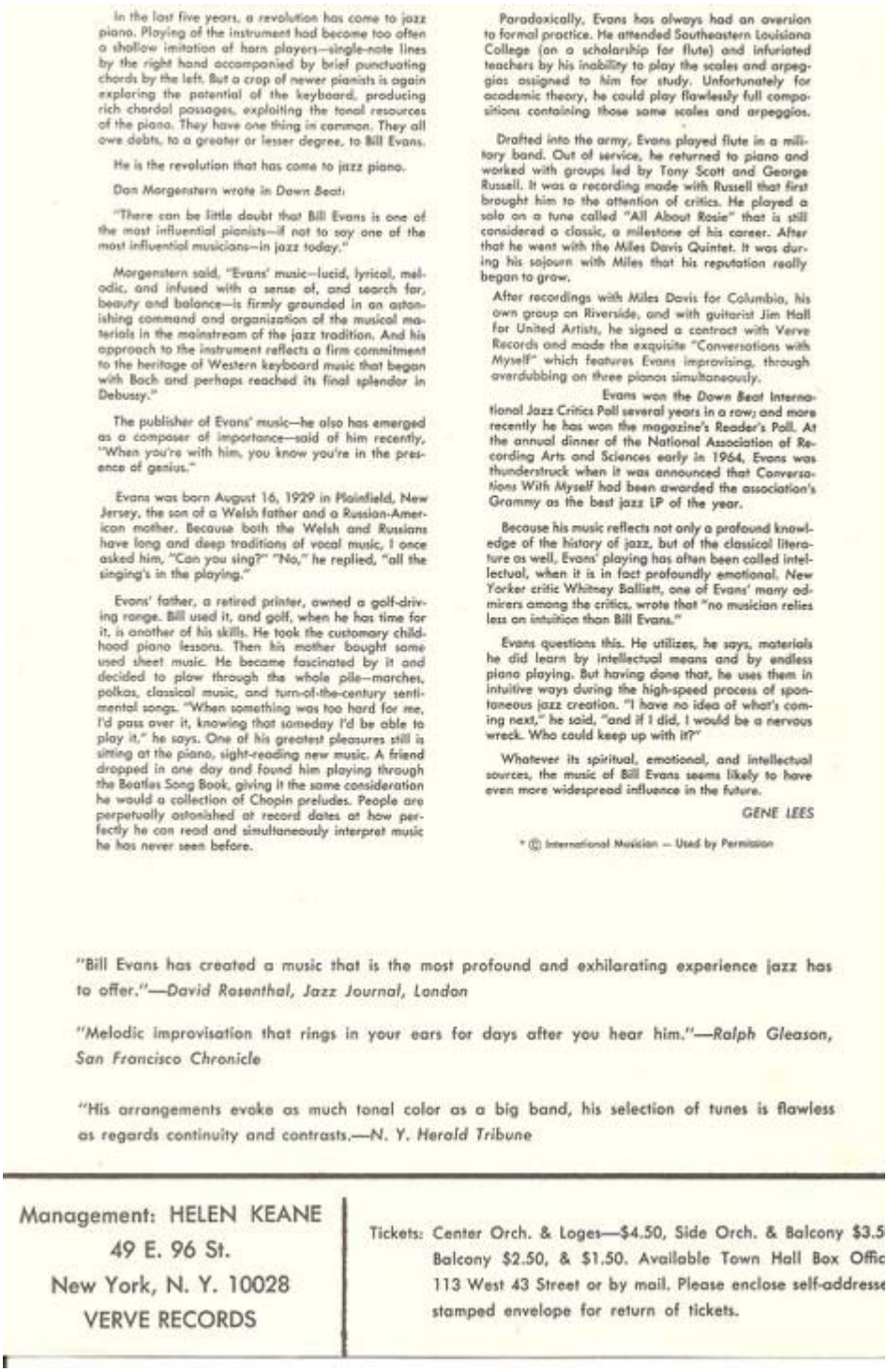


"His harmonic attack, rhythmic sense and lyrical line are unparalleled in jazz today."—*Robert Salmaggi, New York Herald Tribune*

"It is an index of Evans' skills and emotional depth that a surfeit of his work is difficult to imagine."—*Nat Hentoff, Hi-Fi Stereo Review*

TOWN HALL

MONDAY EVENING
AT 8:30 P.M.
FEBRUARY 21st, 196(



In the last five years, a revolution has come to jazz piano. Playing of the instrument had become too often a shallow imitation of horn players—single-note lines by the right hand accompanied by brief punctuating chords by the left. But a crop of newer pianists is again exploring the potential of the keyboard, producing rich chordal passages, exploiting the tonal resources of the piano. They have one thing in common. They all owe debts, to a greater or lesser degree, to Bill Evans.

He is the revolution that has come to jazz piano.

Dan Morgenstern wrote in *Down Beat*:

"There can be little doubt that Bill Evans is one of the most influential pianists—if not to say one of the most influential musicians—in jazz today."

Morgenstern said, "Evans' music—lucid, lyrical, melodic, and infused with a sense of, and search for, beauty and balance—is firmly grounded in an astonishing command and organization of the musical materials in the mainstream of the jazz tradition. And his approach to the instrument reflects a firm commitment to the heritage of Western keyboard music that began with Bach and perhaps reached its final splendor in Debussy."

The publisher of Evans' music—he also has emerged as a composer of importance—said of him recently, "When you're with him, you know you're in the presence of genius."

Evans was born August 16, 1929 in Plainfield, New Jersey, the son of a Welsh father and a Russian-American mother. Because both the Welsh and Russians have long and deep traditions of vocal music, I once asked him, "Can you sing?" "No," he replied, "all the singing's in the playing."

Evans' father, a retired printer, owned a golf-driving range. Bill used it, and golf, when he has time for it, is another of his skills. He took the customary childhood piano lessons. Then his mother bought some used sheet music. He became fascinated by it and decided to plow through the whole pile—marches, polkas, classical music, and turn-of-the-century sentimental songs. "When something was too hard for me, I'd pass over it, knowing that someday I'd be able to play it," he says. One of his greatest pleasures still is sitting at the piano, sight-reading new music. A friend dropped in one day and found him playing through the Beatles Song Book, giving it the same consideration he would a collection of Chopin preludes. People are perpetually astonished at record dates at how perfectly he can read and simultaneously interpret music he has never seen before.

Paradoxically, Evans has always had an aversion to formal practice. He attended Southeastern Louisiana College (on a scholarship for flute) and infuriated teachers by his inability to play the scales and arpeggios assigned to him for study. Unfortunately for academic theory, he could play flawlessly full compositions containing those same scales and arpeggios.

Drafted into the army, Evans played flute in a military band. Out of service, he returned to piano and worked with groups led by Tony Scott and George Russell. It was a recording made with Russell that first brought him to the attention of critics. He played a solo on a tune called "All About Rosie" that is still considered a classic, a milestone of his career. After that he went with the Miles Davis Quintet. It was during his sojourn with Miles that his reputation really began to grow.

After recordings with Miles Davis for Columbia, his own group on Riverside, and with guitarist Jim Hall for United Artists, he signed a contract with Verve Records and made the exquisite "Conversations with Myself" which features Evans improvising, through overdubbing on three pianos simultaneously.

Evans won the *Down Beat* International Jazz Critics Poll several years in a row; and more recently he has won the magazine's Reader's Poll. At the annual dinner of the National Association of Recording Arts and Sciences early in 1964, Evans was thunderstruck when it was announced that Conversations With Myself had been awarded the association's Grammy as the best jazz LP of the year.

Because his music reflects not only a profound knowledge of the history of jazz, but of the classical literature as well, Evans' playing has often been called intellectual, when it is in fact profoundly emotional. *New Yorker* critic Whitney Balliett, one of Evans' many admirers among the critics, wrote that "no musician relies less on intuition than Bill Evans."

Evans questions this. He utilizes, he says, materials he did learn by intellectual means and by endless piano playing. But having done that, he uses them in intuitive ways during the high-speed process of spontaneous jazz creation. "I have no idea of what's coming next," he said, "and if I did, I would be a nervous wreck. Who could keep up with it?"

Whatever its spiritual, emotional, and intellectual sources, the music of Bill Evans seems likely to have even more widespread influence in the future.

GENE LEES

* © International Musician — Used by Permission

"Bill Evans has created a music that is the most profound and exhilarating experience jazz has to offer."—*David Rosenthal, Jazz Journal, London*

"Melodic improvisation that rings in your ears for days after you hear him."—*Ralph Gleason, San Francisco Chronicle*

"His arrangements evoke as much tonal color as a big band, his selection of tunes is flawless as regards continuity and contrasts.—*N. Y. Herald Tribune*

Management: HELEN KEANE
49 E. 96 St.
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VERVE RECORDS

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Balcony $2.50, & $1.50. Available Town Hall Box Offic
113 West 43 Street or by mail. Please enclose self-addresse
stamped envelope for return of tickets.

Posted by Marc Myers at 07:50 AM | Permalink | Comments (5) | TrackBack (0)
Technorati Tags: Al Cohn, Bill Evans, Creed Taylor, Gene Lees, Helen Keane, Jan Stevens

March 25, 2009

Artie Shaw's Last Dance Band

By mid-1945, Artie Shaw was facing two creative crises. With the sudden proliferation of small record labels, RCA began pressuring the bandleader for *Frenesi*-sized hits.

Then Roy Eldridge, the band's jazz trumpeter, wanted out. Frustrated in his role as a mere section player, Eldridge sought more solo time and found Shaw's band tedious and stifling. Even Shaw could read the writing on the wall: the band he had assembled in the fall of 1944 was likely reaching its peak and nearing an end.

But the band's final months were its most exciting. By mid-August, bookings for the band were drying up on the West Coast, and little was lined up for the fall. Then, at month's end, Shaw was asked by the military to appear at several bases and hospitals in

Southern California. Sponsored by Coca-Cola, Shaw's performances were recorded by the Armed Forces Radio Service as part of its Spotlight Band Show for airplay at military installations overseas. Between September and November 1945, Shaw's 17-piece band performed at six different facilities.

All of these recordings have just been issued on *Artie Shaw: The Complete 1945 Spotlight Band Broadcasts* (Hep Records). The double-CD set is quite remarkable for several reasons: Up until now, there hasn't been a comprehensive package of *Spotlight* appearances by this Shaw band. And even though Eldridge is heard soloing only on *Little Jazz* and two of this set's

Gramercy Five tracks, you still get quite an earful from a powerhouse trumpet section comprised of Stan Fishelson, George Schwartz, Bernie Glow and Eldridge. When Eldridge left the band in mid-September 1945 to form his own band, he was replaced by Ray Linn, who was no slouch. Though this band was primarily Shaw's last ensemble dance band, there were standouts among its ranks, including tenor saxophonist Herbie Steward, pianist Dodo Marmarosa and a 22-year-old Barney Kessel.

The fidelity of this *Spotlight* set is marvelous and somewhat miraculous. All of the tracks are clean and bright. No matter how high I cranked up the volume on my system, Shaw kept sounding better and better. In addition, there's virtually no surface noise. The more I listened to the set, the more I realized how great this short period was for the clarinetist. His playing was fluid and warm, and his flare for musical tension and release on these tracks was superb.

Among the must-hear tracks is a punchy reworking of Lennie Hayton's [pictured] arrangement of *I Can't Get Started,* featuring a fine solo by trumpeter Linn. *Can't You Read Between the Lines* features an ice-blue Shaw solo at medium tempo. There's also a hopping *S'Wonderful* arranged by Ray Conniff with terrific solos by Shaw and Steward. Best of all, though, is a stunning reed-heavy *Night and Day* and a rip-roaring *Let's Walk.*

The 1944-45 Shaw band was something of a swing-era holdout. By this point more muscular and adventurous bands led by Stan Kenton, Woody Herman and Boyd Raeburn were gaining ground. Despite clinging to the past, Shaw's 1945 band was a well-oiled group that Leonard Feather said exhibited "a refreshing lack of bad taste and bombast."

In October 1945, Shaw married Ava Gardner and about a month later folded the band. He also decided not to renew his RCA Victor contract. Newlywed Shaw wanted a break, but the honeymoon didn't last long. By early 1946, Shaw was assembling and rehearsing a 40-piece orchestra complete with woodwinds and strings. He soon signed with Musicraft Records and by April finally was able to achieve his vision of a moodier, more Impressionistic sound. He also tapped into the arranging skills of Lennie Hayton, Sonny Burke and Dick Jones. Joined on tracks by Mel Torme and the Mel-Tones, Shaw in 1946 would lead one of his most ambitious and romantic bands.

But just prior to this supersized venture, Shaw fronted his final dance band, and the results as evidenced by this *Spotlight* set continue to hold up well. [Photo of Ava Gardner and Artie Shaw in 1945, Corbis]

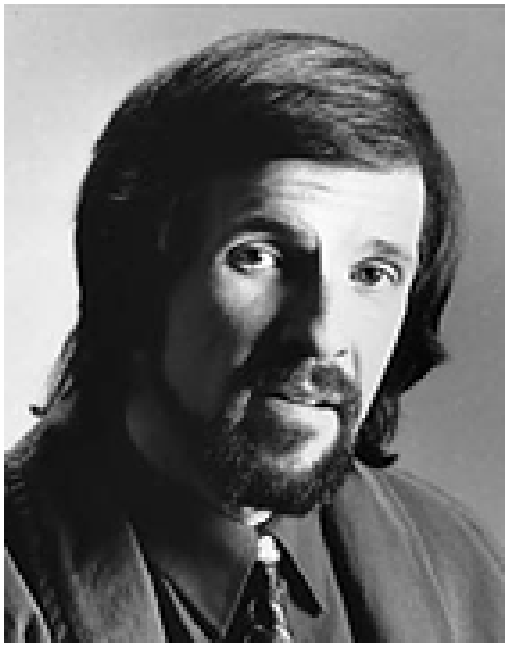
JazzWax tracks: *Artie Shaw: The Complete 1945 Spotlight Band Broadcasts* is available as a download at iTunes or on CD **here**. The album includes fine, detailed notes by Alastair Robertson, owner of Hep Records.

Posted by Marc Myers at 08:31 AM | Permalink | Comments (4) | TrackBack (0)
Technorati Tags: Alastair Robertson, Artie Shaw, Ava Gardner, Roy Eldgridge

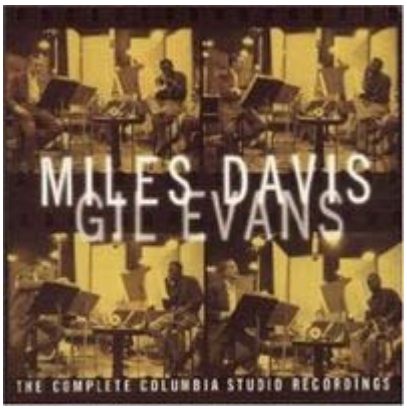
March 24, 2009

Sittin' in with Bill Kirchner

Early yesterday morning I took the subway down to 14th Street and walked east to the campus of the New School University. I was on my way to sit in on Bill Kirchner's Jazz History class. Some weeks ago Bill had invited me to attend whenever I wished, and I specifically chose to hear him talk about Miles Davis.



In addition to being a terrific teacher (his students adore him), Bill is a renowned saxophonist and arranger, journalist and author. He recorded five albums as a leader plus others as a sideman, including one with singer Chris Connor. He edited the *Oxford Companion to Jazz* and *A Miles Davis Reader.* Bill also is a prolific writer of album liner notes, co-winning the 1996 "Best Album Notes" Grammy for *Miles Davis and Gil Evans: The Complete Columbia Studio Recordings* (CD box/Sony).



Bill's two-hour class took his 40 students through Miles Davis' bio and recordings, complete with 13 prime audio examples. The sound system in the New School's fifth floor "performance space" is sensational. Each digital recording was vivid and exciting and rich with warm sonic detail. In between tracks, Bill filled in the blanks with authoritative notes:

"*Walkin'* is credited to Richard Carpenter but it was really

written by Jimmy Mundy and first appeared as *Gravy* by Gene Ammons in 1950" ... "I had an opportunity to study the original score for *Porgy and Bess* and was surprised to see that arranger Gil Evans used three bass clarinets" ... "On *Porgy and Bess,* trumpeter Ernie Royal was able to hit only a double high B-flat rather than the double high D that Gil had written for him. But as they say, that's good enough for jazz."

Bill also employed one of the shrewdest techniques for extinguishing rare instances of classroom chatter. Rather than say "shhh" or "Come on folks," he simply turned up the music, letting Miles do the schoolmarming. Pretty effective trick.

Best of all, Bill handed out a song sheet complete with personnel for the Miles Davis tracks he played. I've listed the songs below, along with the albums on which they appear. For me, the high points were *Walkin'*, *If I Were a Bell* (it was great to hear those classics with eyes closed in front of a big sound system) and a live version of *Human Nature.* All are available at iTunes and Amazon:

***1. Milestones* (1947)** — *Classic Years of Miles Davis*

***2. Israel* (1949)** — *Complete Birth of the Cool*

***3. Rifftide* (1949)** — live in Paris, *From Cool to Bop*

***4. Walkin'* (1954)** — *Miles Davis All Stars*

***5. If I Were a Bell* (1956)** — *Relaxin' with the Miles Davis Quintet*

***6. Milestones* (1958)** — *Milestones*

***7. There's a Boat That's Leaving Soon for New York* (1958)** — *Porgy and Bess*

***8. Flamenco Sketches* (1959)** — *Kind of*

Blue

***9. Oleo* (1961)** — *In Person Friday and Saturday Nights at the Black Hawk*

***10. My Funny Valentine* (1964)** — *Miles Davis in Concert: My Funny Valentine*

***11. Masqualero* (1967)** — *Sorcerer*

***12. Directions* (1969)** — *Festival de Juan Pins*

***13. Human Nature* (1988)** — *Live Around the World*

JazzWax clip: Here's Miles in 1985 performing *Human Nature* in Montreal. As with *If I Were a Bell* and *Someday My Prince Will Come,* Davis took this 1982 Michael Jackson pop hit (written by Steve Porcaro and John Bettis), and turned into a funky metallic work of art...

Posted by Marc Myers at 07:58 AM | Permalink | Comments (2) | TrackBack (0)
Technorati Tags: Bill Kirchner, Miles Davis

March 23, 2009

Bret Primack Interviews Mr. JazzWax

I frequently receive e-mails from curious readers asking what I look like. In some cases, these e-mails have come from the jazz legends I've interviewed by phone. Up until now, I've avoided posting my photo or focusing on me. I've said from the start that this blog is about the music and the legends I interview, not about me. No one cares about the messenger, and rightly so.

Bret Primack had a slightly different take.

Bret—also known as the Jazz Video Guy—is a pioneer of the jazz video interview. An NYU Film School graduate and former *Down Beat* editor and writer, Bret's series of groundbreaking interviews last year with producer Orrin Keepnews for Concord Records continue to captivate thousands of viewers daily. The same goes for his on-camera conversations with jazz legends such as Sonny Rollins and his work in support of CD releases by Mosaic and Blue Note. Bret works hard and is a cutting edge player in the jazz history and communication space online.

Bret also has been one of JazzWax's biggest fans from this blog's earliest days. While Bret has viewed my passion for anonymity as noble, he also has insisted that JazzWax readers have earned the right to see and hear from the person who has been posting six days a week over the past year and a half. I gave in.

So recently I met Bret during one of his swings through New York. Bret had set up his video equipment at a friend's apartment uptown and was interviewing jazz legends in a marathon session over several days. In between one of these sets, Bret had an hour or so and asked if he could interview me on-camera. Since I'm a big believer in exposing yourself to the same process you inflict on others, I had to agree. A taste of my own interview medicine, so to speak.

Bret posted the result today at his blog and on YouTube. I hope you enjoy it. Now excuse me while I retreat back into my shell...

Posted by Marc Myers at 07:36 AM | Permalink | Comments (2) | TrackBack (0)
Technorati Tags: Bret Primack, Marc Myers

March 22, 2009

Sunday Wax Bits

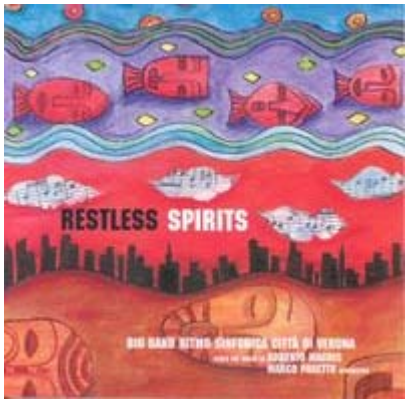
JazzWax with Marc Myers. Tonight, at 10 pm (EDT), I'll be on the air again with the last of my three radio shows on **Jazz.FM91,** Canada's leading jazz radio station. ***What to do:*** Simply return here at 10 p.m. tonight and click the square "Listen Live" button in the right-hand column. If that doesn't work, go to **www.Jazz.fm** and click on "listen live" at the top of the station's home page. Try to stay up even for a small piece of it. The show is going to be hot and rare.

Carol Sloane. Thank you readers for all of your lovely e-mails regarding my interview series last week with singer Carol Sloane.

The beauty of Carol, in addition to her warm, honey-roasted voice, is her blunt honesty. Ever-graceful, Carol was completely open with me during our conversations, touching on subjects that many of us would have papered over. So thank you, Carol, for being so candid and for sharing all sides of your career, both the ups and the downs.

Honesty allows readers and listeners to fully understand jazz artists and the struggles they endure to create the music we love so much. Artists are by definition enigmas. Only through such conversations can we gain an inkling of what makes them tick. When I thanked Carol last week for her openness, she said in typical Carol Sloane fashion, "Of course. That's me. I don't know any other way." I, for one, am wildly grateful.

CD discovery of the week. Released late last year, *Restless Spirits* is a highly addictive big band recording featuring the music of Roberto Magris. The album was recorded by the Big Band Ritmo Sinfonica Citta di Verona under the direction of Marco Pasetto.



What makes *Restless Spirits* so exciting are the Pasetto arrangements that frame the soloists rather than compete with them. The distinctly European orchestral sound on this CD works beautifully behind the cool tenderness of Roberto on Fender Rhodes electric piano and fire of solo trumpeter Massimo Greco.

This isn't your typical contemporary big band album. The orchestra has a sultry marching band sound in places, which keeps your foot moving. Best of all, the score never stops working to catch your attention, gently shaking your shoulder rather than poking you in the chest or cracking you across the face.

Restless Sprits' tracks flow effortlessly from one to the next. You

put on the CD and you listen from start to finish. Each composition has a different mood, and each has its own rhythmic hook. Roberto Magris [pictured] is a strong writer and player from Trieste, Italy. His robust compositions transfer neatly to a supersized canvas and never lose their personality. His attack on the electric piano is both collaborative and lone wolf as he weaves in and out of these standout orchestrations.

For more on the Big Band Ritmo-Sinfonica Città di Verona, go **here.** You'll find *Restless Spirits* on CD **here** at a European site. (I'm not sure why it's unavailable at Amazon or other major U.S. retailers.) To read my interview with Roberto last year, go **here**.

Oddball album cover of the week. I have not heard*Here Comes Carole Creveling,* which is available on CD only from Japan. The LP was recorded

in Los Angeles in 1956 and featured vocalist Creveling on her sole album release backed by the Bill Baker Quartet. I'm not quite sure how the record company landed on this design, but as you can see, there must have been a team of five or more frantic art directors. And the exchanges among them must have gone something like this: "Have her walk along the beach. No, too static—have her stroll on the boardwalk. No, no—put her in the surf. Good, good, in the surf. Perfect. But wait—make it look like she just walked in from the deep, so it works with the title. Wait—the record buyer won't be able to see her face with the blue tint we're using. Don't worry, just create a white circle around her head, like a spotlight. That should do it."

Posted by Marc Myers at 07:43 AM | Permalink | Comments (4) | TrackBack (0)
Technorati Tags: Carol Sloane, Carole Crevelling, Roberto Magris

March 20, 2009

Interview: Carol Sloane (Part 5)

Few jazz singers had as tough a time coming up through the ranks as Carol Sloane. Most singers who are top of mind emerged when jazz *was* America's pop music and plenty of opportunities existed for vocalists to record and connect with the public. But just as Carol's career began to flower in the early 1960s, jazz singing as a genre suffered several devastating blows. By 1965, jazz was rapidly being replaced by new forms of popular music, and female jazz vocalists found themselves dwarfed by a new

generation of female rock vocalists. [Photo by Eric Stephen Jacobs]

That's where Carol's pain comes from. When she sings on

albums, especially on ballads, you hear sorrow, depth and meaning. Unlike many jazz vocalists, Carol's dues and blues originate in the creative setbacks she suffered at the hands of shifting music tastes, club closings, self-doubt, watching rock acts succeed beyond their wildest dreams, dysfunctional personal relationships, and a haunted sense of purpose.

In Part 5 of my interview with Carol, the legendary singer talks about learning to become an interpreter of songs, meeting Ella Fitzgerald for the first time, struggling with stage fright, the tenor saxophonists who have her sound, and why record companies were in such a hurry to throw jazz under the bus in the early 1960s.

JazzWax: So pianist Jimmy Rowles, through his playing, taught you a great deal about your voice.
Carol Sloane: Yes, that's right. And I didn't even realize it at the time. I had always admired Jimmy's playing but the more I listened to him play behind me, the more it became clear that having a beautiful voice wasn't the top priority. Blossom Dearie [pictured] is a perfect example. She had a tiny voice. Lady Day didn't have a beautiful voice toward the end of her life. But it was extraordinary. She'd sing, and you'd be so moved. You'd listen to her and start to cry. Sarah also had a wonderful instrument.

JW: Did you ever meet Sarah?
CS: I never did, and I hated that I missed meeting her in person. We spoke on the phone once. My mother liked to crochet. She made hundreds of these bootie things that

you'd put over socks in the winter to stay warm. I had at least 50 pairs. Jimmy had given a pair to Sarah, and when she called to thank me, we spoke about them and other things. She was lovely.

JW: Did you meet Ella?
CS: Yes, in the early 1960s. Ella was always accused of not being able to read a lyric. Well, bull-lone-y. I went to see her, and she could go very deep on a song. I'll never forget it. I was in Washington, D.C., in the early 1960s to hear her sing. Oscar Peterson suggested I go. Everyone was there. Oscar was there with his trio. Ella had her trio. And the Duke Ellington Orchestra was there. That was the concert.

JW: Where were you?
CS: I was sitting in a small area for the musicians. Not backstage but in an area off to the side.

JW: Who was there?
CS: I was sitting with Johnny Hodges [pictured] and some of the guys from the Ellington band. They had all come out from behind the stage to hear Ella. That impressed me terribly. Musicians when I was coming up had a certain disdain for singers and jazz singers. Phil Woods was a champion but he hated girl singers. And I totally understand why.

JW: Why did jazz musicians feel this way?
CS: Too many singers thought they were so hip and cool. But in truth, they were such bores, mostly because they were all style and technique rather than emotional commitment. Many vocalists couldn't make it even though they thought they could.

JW: So you're sitting with the Ellington band?
CS: Yes. Here were these great musicians who could have been backstage having a smoke or drinking a pop. Instead they were

sitting out front listening to a singer. Ella sang, *How Long Has This Been Going On.* By the time she finished, we were all weeping. That's because she was interpreting, not just singing.

JW: Did you get to meet Ella?
CS: Yes. Afterward, Oscar introduced me to her backstage.

She said to me [*imitating Ella's speaking voice perfectly*], "Ohhh, I've heard of you. You're the one they say sounds like me." [*laughs*] Holy cow, I almost fainted.

JW: What did you say to her?
CS: I said, "Well, they tell me that but I don't think I do." Ella smiled, looked at me for a moment and said, "That's OK. I'm glad." She was so sweet. Eventually I got to travel with her when Jimmy [Rowles] played piano for her.

JW: Ella had terrible stage fright, didn't she?
CS: Yes, most singers do. Ella had her demons. The first night Jimmy [Rowles] played for her was in Atlantic City. I went down and was backstage with her. This was a big jazz concert, with Dizzy [Gillespie] and others. She was pacing back and forth. I was standing beside her as she prepared to be introduced to go on stage.

JW: What was she doing?
CS: She was pacing and wringing her hands and saying,

"I'm so nervous I'm so nervous." I said, "God, Ella, don't worry, Jimmy will never let you down. You've got nothing to worry about." She said, "I know." She had had Tommy [Flanagan] playing for her for over 15 years. So all of a sudden, she had a new guy at the keyboard. They had rehearsed together, but she still was behaving as though the world was going to come to an end.

JW: Are singers nervous because they're afraid of forgetting the words to songs?
CS: No, but that happens, too. It's mostly stage fright. As for forgetting words, it happens to everyone, even Ella. She famously forgot the words to *Mack the Knife*—but who can remember the words to that thing anyway?

JW: How do you remember all those lyrics?
CS: It's very simple, my dear. When we're singing a song, it's the only song in the world. There are no other songs. That's the only song there is. By thinking that way, it's very hard to forget the words because you've blocked everything else out.

JW: That's it?
CS: You choose songs because you love them. Have I forgotten lyrics? Of course. Maybe you're tired or distracted by something or someone in the audience.

JW: What do you when you forget lyrics?
CS: If you're lucky, it happens at the very top of a song. In

which case you can stop and start again. Carmen did it once at a concert being recorded live in Japan. She stopped everybody and said. "Don't put that on the tape." I actually have that tape. The album that was issued, of course, doesn't have that glitch, where she lost her way at the beginning of a verse.

JW: Does it happen with you?
CS: Every now and again. It shouldn't happen often, though. If it does, you either have to refocus your brain and get back

to where you're supposed to be and concentrate and do your job—or you give yourself a cheat sheet. I don't ever record without all of the lyrics in front of me, even if it's a song that I know.

JW: In the past, were you nervous before going out on stage?
CS: Always. Are you kidding? To the point of being ill. Not any more. No.

JW: Most people don't realize how much pressure performers and entertainers are under and the stage anxiety they suffer.
CS: It's awful. I used to have performance anxiety dreams. I'd go to sleep and have nightmares about having to go out and sing. It can't be helped. It's something deep in your brain.

JW: What do you do to deal with it?
CS: You smile, straighten up your posture and, even if you're terrified, you tell yourself that you'll eventually calm down and relax a bit. And you do—once you start singing.

JW: Which jazz musician comes closest to capturing your sound?
CS: That's an interesting question. It's always a saxophone that I feel most compatible with. I think players like Frank Wess [pictured] or Eric Alexander. I love the tenor. I feel most comfortable with it. That's where my voice is. When I warm up, I put on Luciano Pavarotti records and sing with him. That's my range.

JW: If you close your eyes, which song means the most to you?
CS: *Little Girl Blue.* That a cappella moment at Newport in

1961 was amazing. Also, it's a song that I've been singing for a long time. Gildo [Mahones, the pianist] said in a hushed voice to me on stage that afternoon, "I don't know the verse." I said, "That's OK. Just give me a chord and I'll sing it. You'll know when I get to the chorus." I was just a dumb kid [*laughs*]. I did that just because I did it. I wasn't showing off.

JW: But that's still pretty gutsy stuff to do on stage.
CS: It wasn't gutsy to me, you see. I said to myself, "I'll be OK as long as I can hear my own voice. I'll use my own voice to keep me in tune."

JW: What's coming next from Carol Sloane?
CS: I'm working on the theme for a new album, because *Dearest Duke* [pictured] turned out to be such a pleasure. It's such a lovely album. I had serious thoughts about doing *Dearest Bing.* But the more I get into the material, the more disappointed I am.

JW: Why?
CS: It doesn't have a lot of muscle. I like songs with muscle —like *Spring Is Here, Autumn in New York* and so on. Also, many of Bing's songs were meant for a man to sing to a woman, which is another obstacle for me. I'm now turning to another theme, which isn't a tribute to anybody. I wish I could tell you about it, but if I did and you printed it, all the singers would jump on it.

JW: When you were coming up, did you ever wish you had been born five years earlier?
CS: I sure did. Many times I've wondered about that. Chris [Connor], June [Christy, pictured], Anita [O'Day]—all of the women who came out of the bands were established and set, career-wise, by the time the 1960s rolled around. Just when I was making a positive impression on the

music world, the whole scene changed.

JW: What was the big inhibitor?

CS: The Beatles. They changed everything for me and others. Not them personally, but how their instant success changed the marketplace and record companies and tastes.

JW: What was the group's staggering success like from your perspective at the time?

CS: They couldn't get arrested. When Brian Epstein, their manager, came over to the U.S. and tried to sell them, all the record companies said, "Beatles? What's a Beatle?" They all passed. Brian had to beg Alan Livingston, the president of Capitol Records, three times. Finally Alan gave them a shot. Then they became huge so fast that they scared all of the other record executives to death. The top guys all realized they had made a terrible, terrible mistake not signing them.

JW: So the American record industry's oversight had a backlash?

CS: Enormous. All the top executives told their a&r guys, "Sign up any act that walks through the door and looks like the Beatles." Most of these executives had no clue about why kids were responding to this music the way they were. All they knew is that they missed the boat and had to make

up for lost time.

JW: How did this affect jazz?
CS: The big impact was that the American songbook, as we had known it, went into limbo and no longer had the same value.

JW: You've been an amazing survivor over time.
CS: My career has slowed down somewhat lately. It's

wonderful to listen to the young women today who are getting the work and recognition. It's interesting to see what direction they're going to go in. The music business is so different today than when I was coming up. It's also interesting to see what record companies are telling us are jazz singers. It's a far cry from what I thought a jazz singer was.

JW: Why is that?
CS: Because most record companies don't know what jazz is anymore. They're all run by kids who don't know.

JW: What's your favorite Carol Sloane album?
CS: I have two. One is *Love you Madly* [pictured], with Art Farmer and Clifford Jordan. Sir Richard Rodney Bennett's arrangements are above superb. But I screwed up on there, mistakes only I can hear [*laughs*]. I think I was trying too hard. And *Dearest Duke,* of course. Which has the fewest mistakes.

Posted by Marc Myers at 08:18 AM | Permalink | Comments (2) | TrackBack (0)
Technorati Tags: Anita O'Day, Blossom Dearie, Carol Sloane, Chris Connor, Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, June Christy, Sarah Vaughan

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