



The NOTE



Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania • Winter / Spring 2008



ESU JAZZ MASTERS & MENTORS • HARRY LEAHEY • THE COPY CAT

The New Look of The NOTE

It has always been important to us to continuously improve the format and content of this publication. As *The NOTE* now approaches nearly 19 years in existence, we are happy to introduce to you a newly-designed magazine. We hope you will enjoy the dynamic changes and bold new look of the publication.

The intent is to continue to provide the same entertaining and enlightening columns, articles, features, letters and oral history interviews you have come to expect, with the hope that the new graphics, printing materials and reproduction will make for enhanced readability and an improved display of the Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection's vintage jazz photographs. – Editor.

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From the Collection . . .



Cover Photo (front): Al Cohn, aboard the S.S. Norway, Oct. 1985, by Hank O'Neil, donated by Al Cohn's sister, Sybil Levenson.



Centerfold Photo: Zoot Sims and Al Cohn, Brookfield (CT) Fire House, c. 1970s, by Joe Warwick, donated by Mr. Warwick.



Cover Photo (back): Woody Herman, Nat Pierce, Al Cohn, Flip Phillips, Peabody, MA c. 1983-84, by Herb Snitzer, donated by Mr. Snitzer.



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Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection

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The mission of the Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection is to stimulate, enrich, and support research, teaching, learning, and appreciation of all forms of jazz. The ACMJC is a distinctive archive built upon a unique and symbiotic relationship between the Pocono Mountains jazz community and East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania. With the support of a world-wide network of jazz advocates, the ACMJC seeks to promote the local and global history of jazz by making its resources available and useful to students, researchers, educators, musicians, historians, journalists and jazz enthusiasts of all kinds, and to preserve its holdings for future generations.

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David Coulter

The Obsessive Search

by Phil Woods

One of my favorite films is *Tous les Matins du Monde* [All the Mornings of the World] directed by Alain Corneau. Released in 1991, it is based on a novel by Pascal Quignard and depicts the life of the late 17th century viola da gamba virtuoso, Monsieur de Sainte Colombe, and his student, Marin Marais. The instrument was a precursor to the violoncello.

The film begins with Marin's audition for the master. Sainte Colombe is blunt: "You didn't play badly, your posture is good, you play with feeling, and your bow is deft. Your ornaments are clever and often charming." He pauses, then says, "But I heard no music!"

Despite this less than stellar start he agrees to school the young man. Not because of his skill, he says, but because of the sound of grief in the boy's speaking voice.

The film is narrated by French actor Gérard Depardieu who plays the student. The opening shot, an amazing close up, is held for six minutes. It focuses on the elderly Marin's powdered and bewigged head as he shuts down the noisy practicing of his students and tells them of the true genius of music, Sainte Colombe. The movie is chock full of the music of the period, composed by both men. At one point, the master asks the student to improvise some

variations on a popular tune of the day.

From the DVD's illuminating notes by Robert Horton:

Sainte Colombe lives a passionate and articulate life, but it happens almost entirely within his

music, not the day-to-day business of existence. Mariel [actor Jean-Pierre Mariel, who plays Colombe] must capture his obsessive search for the highest realm of music – not good music or great music, but the search for Music itself.

This is linked with his dead wife, the porcelain blond ghost who periodically sits with him. [A woman's head is carved at the top of Sainte Colombe's viola da gamba, and it's as though his wife's face is always peering over his shoulder.]

*The marriage of art and death is a long-standing favorite of French literature and movies, and *Tous les Matins* embraces this tradition: through a life of compromise and tragedy, Marin Marais must come to the realization that art is consecrated for the dead, or as a hedge against one's own death. "He viewed the world," says Marin of Sainte Colombe, "in the bright flame of the torch we light for the dead."*

In one of the final scenes, Marin returns to his teacher.

Colombe: *Who is there?*

Marin: *A man fleeing palaces, seeking music. What do you seek in music?*

Colombe: *I seek sorrows and tears.*

Marin: *I ask you for one last lesson?*

Colombe: *Music exists to say things that words cannot say, which is why it is not entirely human. You found out that music is not for kings?*

Marin: *I have found out it's for God.*

Colombe: *You are wrong. God can speak.*

Marin: *For the ear?*

Colombe: *Things I can't speak for are not for the ear.*

Marin: *For gold? For glory? For silence?*

Colombe: *Silence is only the opposite of language.*

Marin: *For rival musicians?*

Colombe: *No.*

Marin: *Love?*

Colombe: *No.*

Marin: *The sorrows of love?*

Colombe: *No.*

Marin: *Wantonness?*

Colombe: *No.*

Marin: *A wafer for the unknown?*

Colombe: *Not that either. What's a wafer? You can see it, taste it. It's nothing.*

Marin: *I give up! One must leave a drink for the dead?*

Colombe: *You are getting warmer.*

Marin: *A refreshment for those who have run out of words? For lost childhood? To muffle the hammering of the shoemakers? For the time before we were born, before we breathed or saw light?*

Colombe: *A moment ago you heard me sigh. Soon I'll die. I will only be missed by chickens and geese. But I will give you a few airs that can wake the dead. Let us begin. We need a drink. I will play a song none of my students had enough ear to hear. You will*

Continued on Page 28

A Note from the Collection Coordinator



More Jazz On The Radio!

by Bob Bush

Since September of last year, a lot of work has been completed on a project to inventory, label and add the growing number of donated jazz CDs to the Collection's shelves in Kemp Library. These discs have joined the thousands of classic vinyl records that are available for research and the enjoyment of students and the general public on the ACMJC's listening equipment whenever Kemp Library is open (which is normally seven days a week).

While processing these 650-plus CDs, it became readily apparent to me that the ACMJC sound inventory contains an outstanding variety of tasty jazz recordings. It has representation from all eras and all genres, from Cannonball Adderley to John Zorn, or as I prefer to say, from Al to Zoot and all the great jazz artists in between.

It got me to thinking that these excellent recordings deserve much more regular exposure. So, with the support of the folks who run the campus radio station, WESS 90.3 FM, and the indispensable assistance of Bill Hopkins, a 60-year veteran in numerous radio markets and formats and a member of the St. Louis Radio Hall of Fame, we have launched an exciting new program called *Jazz From A To Z*. The two of us have been co-hosting the show since the beginning of February – it's on every Wednesday from 10 a.m. to noon. And with Bill's patience, guidance and profes-

sional skills (not to mention that great radio voice!) to disguise my microphone jitters, I think the show is already a success.

But how could it miss! It showcases the music of the legendary Al Cohn – not just his wonderful saxophone playing but his many original compositions and arrangements. It also presents the swinging recordings of that beloved master musician, Zoot Sims. And it shines the spotlight on the recorded outputs of the legends of jazz, giving contemporary radio airplay to the many vintage jazz recordings in the Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection.

I hope you will tune into *Jazz From A to Z* if you are within reach of WESS 90.3 FM on Wednesday mornings. Please send me an email [alcohncollection@esu.edu] with feedback on the show or to make a tune request (if we have it in the Collection, you'll hear it!). If you live outside of the station's reach and have a computer with Internet access, try listening to us on the web at www.esu.edu/wess.

And if our Wednesday timeslot doesn't fit your listening schedule, WESS provides two excellent Saturday jazz options: tune in from 8 a.m. to noon for Steve Krawitz and his two long-running programs, *Alternating Currents* and *Jazz for the Common Man*, followed immediately by Bill Hopkins from noon to 6 p.m. with *The Feeling of Jazz*. By supporting these programs, you not only support ESU and the ACMJC, but you do your part to keep jazz alive on the radio! ☺

To Our Readers

As you may already know, the Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection is now under the official auspices of the ESU Office of University Advancement.

This alignment is a positive step for the ACMJC and will be instrumental in helping us sustain and enhance the Collection through fund raising initiatives. We appreciate those of you who have donated in the past, and your continued support is very much needed.

To learn more about ESU Advancement, find out about giving opportunities to the ESU Foundation, or to make an online donation to be directed to the Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection, visit the University Advancement website at: <http://advancement.esu.edu>.



Charles Perry Hebard

by Patrick Dorian

As I've introduced my students and the community to this semester's lineup of speakers for the ESU Jazz Masters Seminar, I've been especially excited about welcoming the new owners of the Deer Head Inn to East Stroudsburg University on March 19 to present their past memories, present activities, and future visions for this legendary jazz club of almost 60 years.

It got me to thinking about the jazz performance spaces that have come and gone in the Poconos over the years as the Deer Head forges on with the music uninterrupted. Talking to people like Bob Dorough, Bill Goodwin, Steve Gilmore, and Rick Chamberlain has proven to be a good start, with sources expanding as the musicians reminisce. Perhaps interested parties with strong memories of these artistic pockets [details, details, details!] could send them to me via the Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection so that I may include subsequent short missives.

But, for starters, here's what I remember and have learned from

Pocono Pockets of Jazz, Part One

my musician friends.

The Blue Note Inn was located on Route 611 just north of the town of Delaware Water Gap proper. In the 1950s it featured some well-known musicians, mostly in the "Trad" style. It continued to be an active music laboratory after Ann Davies took it over throughout the 1970s into the 1980s.

The Bottom o' the Fox on Main Street in Delaware Water Gap, now the Sycamore Grill, was mostly a Dixieland/Trad club when Tom Cullen owned it in the 1960s. Ed Joubert purchased it in 1974 and presented more contemporary styles up until his murder outside the place in late 1981.

For many years, I've heard about music activity in the 1960s and '70s on Main Street in Stroudsburg, especially in connection with the late Jay Cameron. He was a baritone saxophonist who performed from the late 1940s through the early 1960s with Dizzy Gillespie, Maynard Ferguson, Paul Winter, Woody Herman, and Slide Hampton. Jay was on the LP Cross Section: Saxes that included Bill Evans (piano) and Paul Chambers (bass) one month before they both joined Miles Davis.

Jay opened a music store in Stroudsburg called Mainline Music at 525 Main Street in 1961 or 1962, and it remained under that name until it closed in 1975. He also used to host jam sessions at the store from around midnight to 4 a.m.

One of his employees from late 1963 through 1973 was Tom

Pawlikowski. Tom then opened a new store on the same site under the moniker The Music Store, Inc., in May 1977. In November 2007 Tom moved the store from downtown Stroudsburg to a North Ninth Street location near the Stroud Mall. He has been a steadfast catalyst for my interest in this history.

Jay Cameron also operated a bar from 1972 to 1973 that presented live music. It was called the Back Door and was located on the north side of Main Street, between Seventh and Eighth streets, with the entrance in the back of a building off the alley. Tom Pawlikowski was a bartender there and frequent jam sessions were held. Steve Gilmore and Bill Goodwin were the bassist and drummer for many rock collaborations, including a band called Syzygy.

Bob Dorough auditioned there and was asked if he could play "the old songs." According to his interview in the Fall '07 issue of *The NOTE*, Bob played a few tunes and was hired right away. Bob said that subsequent occasional performances at the Back Door were the beginning of the resurgence of his singing/piano-playing career.

Let's start a dialogue about live jazz performances in the Poconos. We'll pick this up next time with Jay Cameron's subsequent mid-1970s jazz club called the Lone Pine. And please let me know of any additional information about the history of the regional Pocono jazz club scene, including any corrections to the above. ☺

Harry Leahey

Master Guitarist, Musician and Teacher

Harry Leahey

was a guitarist and guitar teacher who lived, taught and performed primarily in New Jersey. His career began in the early 1960s and continued until his death in 1990 at the age of 54.

Although he never achieved a high degree of fame, he played and recorded with Phil Woods, Gerry Mulligan, Al Cohn, Jack Six, Tal Farlow, Warren Vaché and numerous other well known jazz artists, all of whom held him in the highest esteem.

From 1978 to 1990, he performed with his own trio and in duo settings with various bass players. He recorded one album with his trio, one duo album (with Steve Gilmore), and one solo album.

This article, adapted from a master's thesis written by guitarist Flip Peters for the jazz studies graduate program at Rutgers University, provides a much-needed biography of this neglected artist, tracing his musical and professional development.



Harry Leahey, Delaware Water Gap, PA, c. 1985

Walter Bredel

by Philip M. (Flip) Peters

Preface

From 1968 to 1974 I studied guitar with Harry Leahey. From 1974 until his death in 1990, I studied with him intermittently and frequently went to hear him play.

Harry was my first guitar teacher. He took an 18-year-old, self-taught folk strummer and patiently guided him through the treacherous waters of modern jazz harmony and correct guitar technique. He revealed secrets to me that he had spent years uncovering. He was generous in the extreme with his time and his knowledge.

It is not unusual for someone to speak of his teacher, especially his first teacher, in superlative, even hyperbolic terms. But, in Harry's case, there is the recorded evidence: his recordings with Phil Woods, the concert at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania in 1986 with Al Cohn which was issued on CD, his own albums, and the informal re-

cordings done by students, fans, and fellow musicians.

There is agreement among those who played with him, those who studied with him, and those who heard him perform that he was a brilliant musician. And there is the list of professional musicians and educators who have put into their biographies "studied with the great jazz guitarist Harry Leahey."

Harry Leahey's playing, like that of certain jazz greats like Miles Davis, Stan Getz and Dave Brubeck, appealed to jazz fans as well as people who thought they didn't like jazz. Perhaps that's because his incredible technique and deep theoretical understanding of music were never an end unto themselves but rather a vehicle through which he expressed the feelings of a warm and gentle soul.

It has been a little more than 17 years since Harry Leahey died. For those of us who were privileged to have been close to him, the simple words by Phil Woods continue to ring true: "I miss him dearly."

Biography

Harry Leahey was born on September 1, 1935, in Plattsburgh, New York. His parents were Henry Leahey and Edith (Lamonde) Leahey. Henry Leahey, originally a resident of Perth Amboy, New Jersey, was stationed in the U.S. Army in Plattsburgh when he met Miss Lamonde. The historic Plattsburgh Barracks is located on the west side of Lake Champlain, about one mile from the village of Plattsburgh. Miss Lamonde was from Potsdam, New York, north of the Adirondack foothills in central St. Lawrence County. The Leaheys had four children. Harry's siblings were his two brothers, Michael and Patrick, and a sister, Edith (now Dillon).

Upon Henry Leahey's discharge from the army, the Leaheys moved first to Perth Amboy and then to Plainfield, New Jersey. The elder Leahey wanted Harry to be a professional prizefighter. Young Harry was athletically gifted, as photos of him playing baseball and other sports illustrate. As a small boy, Harry went to the YMCA every morning with his dad. There, he trained and became a mosquito-weight boxer who could take on anyone his own size and weight.

At the age of 13, Harry received his first guitar. He recounted the following in the liner notes of his 1989 recording, *Unaccompanied Guitar*:

"When I was 13 years old my mother and father placed a guitar in my hands and said, "Play." And I did! My uncle Al was a guitarist and I wanted to play like him. It was unconditional love from the start. I barely made it through high school because of all the time I spent with the instrument."

Leahey's first instrument was a Stella guitar. Stella was an inexpensive brand favored by such blues artists as Muddy Waters and Leadbelly, and folk and hillbilly artists such as Woody Guthrie. Soon he began to study at Sayer's Studio

in Plainfield with a teacher named Lou Melia.

It was here that Leahey met his life-long friend and musical associate, Tom Anthony, who was studying with Lou Melia's brother, John. Tom later performed with Harry in several groups and eventually became his brother-in-law. Leahey was an avid guitar student who practiced diligently. He would often play late into the night, hiding with his guitar under his bed covers.

Harry's friend, Edie Eustice, tells a story of Harry getting into trouble with his father with his practicing and his sense of humor. In the summer, while Mrs. Leahey was mowing the lawn, Harry would sit by the window practicing his scales. As his mother pushed the mower across the yard, Harry would follow her movements, going back and forth across the guitar neck, and arousing his father's ire.

Like many guitarists of that time, Melia taught a picking technique known as consecutive picking. In this type of picking, the guitarist employs alternating down and up strokes until two notes in a row require the pick to cross from one string to the next. At that point, the player uses two down strokes in a row. The movement is primarily from the wrist, which is loose and flexible. Arpeggios can be played with mostly down strokes. Fingerings are often arranged to allow many of these consecutive down strokes. The sound can be very legato but can lack definition as the attack is relatively light.

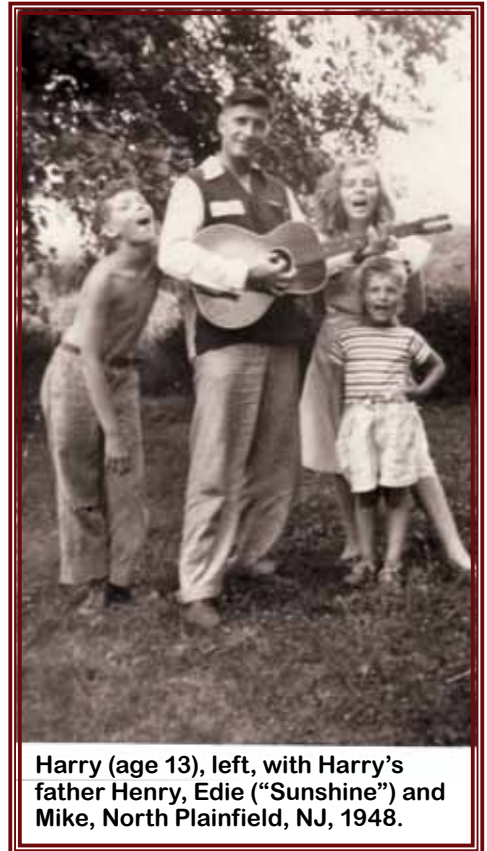
This older style of picking is in stark contrast to what would become one of the cornerstones of the formidable technique that Leahey would attain: strict alternate picking from the elbow with a stiff wrist.

After a few years with the Melia brothers, Harry and Tom began to study with renowned guitarist Harry Volpe. Volpe had been a studio musician and recording



Harry (age nine) and his sister, Edie, standing with parents Harry and Edith (holding Harry's baby brother, Mike), North Plainfield, NJ, 1944

Courtesy of Edie Eustace



Harry (age 13), left, with Harry's father Henry, Edie ("Sunshine") and Mike, North Plainfield, NJ, 1948.

Courtesy of Edie Eustace

artist since the 1920s. He had run a teaching studio in New York City on 48th Street for years and had taught such people as Johnny Smith, Joe Pass, and Sal Salvador. Little is known about Leahey's time with Volpe. The only thing Tom Anthony remembered for certain about the lessons was that Volpe also taught consecutive picking.

While still in his early teens, Leahey began performing in public with his sister, Edith, who went by the nickname "Sunshine." Sunshine sang and played the guitar and Harry played guitar. Leahey's first guitar idol was Les Paul, who had invented multi-track recording and various special effects including overdubbing and speeding up tracks. Paul and his wife, singer Mary Ford, had a string of hit recordings, including "How High The Moon," "Mockin' Bird Hill" and "Tiger Rag."

The Leaheys patterned themselves after the famous Les Paul and Mary Ford act. The young guitarist was able to master the repertoire, if not the speeded-up layers of guitars. Tom Anthony, who by that time had begun to play the bass, joined the group. They played in various theaters in Plainfield, and even appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show, then the most prestigious television variety show. They also appeared on the Ding Dong Show, a popular children's television show. Edie Eustice related Leahey's account of the Ed Sullivan appearance. While Harry was backstage, Sullivan saw the teenager with his guitar. He asked him if he would accompany another performer, Sara Conk. Harry agreed and made his big-time debut accompanying a yodeler! It wasn't until Harry and his sister performed a piece by Sergei Rachmaninoff that Sullivan realized what a serious musician the young guitarist was.

A neighbor of the Leaheys, a saxophone player by the name of Bill Pfeiffer, introduced Harry to a man who would have a profound impact on him, both professionally and personally. Pfeiffer was in the army with renowned guitarist Johnny Smith. Pfeiffer told Smith about his talented neighbor and asked Smith if he would teach him. At the time Smith, who was already established as a leading jazz and studio guitarist, did not have a teaching practice. As a favor to Pfeiffer, he agreed to take Leahey as a student. It was Johnny Smith who introduced Harry Leahey to alternate picking. Leahey, ever the conscientious student, adjusted to the new technique and mastered it. Smith, who was also an amateur pilot, used to fly from Long Island, New York where he lived to Hadley Airport in Plainfield. He would fly his young student to Long Island where the two of them would make a day of it.

After about six months of tutelage, Smith announced to Mr. and Mrs. Leahey that he had taught

Harry all he could about the guitar, but that he would be happy to teach him to fly a plane! Leahey, in 1968 during my second lesson with him, referred to those "Johnny Smith chords that no one can play." Harry then proceeded to play a beautiful chord melody solo using those "impossible" chords. The influence of Smith's characteristic piano-like voicings and moving inner lines can be heard in Leahey's solo recordings, such as "Some Other Time" from *Unaccompanied Guitar*.

Leahey attended North Plainfield High School from which he was graduated in 1953. At Christmas time of that year, pianist Bill Evans (another Plainfield resident) came home on leave from the service. While he was home, he and Leahey played together informally. No recordings are known to exist of this encounter. Tom Anthony recalled at least two more occasions when Leahey and Evans played together.

Harry Leahey and Tom Anthony practiced together every week, playing in the chicken coop in the Anthony family's yard. Tom recalled that the two young musicians played together once a week but after a while Harry began to show up more frequently. Tom then observed that Harry was paying more and more attention to his younger sister, Karen.

In their junior or senior year of high school, Leahey and Anthony met another musician who would profoundly influence them and with whom they would share many professional experiences. Drummer and singer Richie Moore was deeply into jazz and the music of performers like Frank Sinatra and Tony Bennett. Moore educated the impressionable young musicians about music beyond that of Les Paul and Mary Ford.

At the same time, Sunshine was becoming discouraged with music. Harry, who studied with great teachers and practiced constantly, was making great strides technically and was performing challenging music. In one of their theater performances, the siblings performed a specialty number, "Nola," the 1915 Felix Arndt novelty piano solo. The arrangement was supposed to have the two guitarists trading phrases, with Harry taking the first. But Sunshine was unable to keep up. It was events like this that led her to eventually leave the group, and for Harry and Tom to form a band with Richie Moore.

Moore, Leahey, Anthony, and pianist Romolo (Rom) Ferri became The Richie Moore Four sometime around 1951. The "Four" was a professional, rehearsed band complete with promotional photos. Plainfield, in the early 1950s, had a thriving nightclub business. Its main highway, Route 22, was a busy strip with many clubs. The Four played club gigs doing the popular songs of the day.

In addition to his skill as a performing drummer,



From left: Richie Moore, Romolo Ferri, Harry Fox, Harry Leahey, unknown location, c. 1956

Courtesy of Edie Eustace

Moore taught other area drummers including Ronnie Glick. Moore was also a talented singer who excelled at the Frank Sinatra material with which he had familiarized his young band mates. He was also a very entertaining showman. Rom Ferri recalled that Moore would announce the group as "Tom, Dick, Harry and [pause] Romolo?"

Plainfield at that time had two interesting characteristics: Its downtown area was a well-known central New Jersey shopping area – people would come from surrounding towns to shop there; and, it was a racially mixed town, with generally good relations between the races. Plainfield had two record stores – Brooks Record Shop on Watchung Avenue near East 4th Street, and Gregory's Music on Front Street. Gregory's dealt primarily with a white clientele while Brooks served African-American record buyers.

In about 1952, Leahey, who had been a patron of Gregory's, became friendly with Edie Linzer, an employee of the store. Edie, who is now Edie Eustice, recalled Leahey as a shy, soft-spoken jazz fan. She showed him a Johnny Smith record and asked him if he liked Smith. Leahey told her he had studied with Smith. When she didn't believe him, Harry invited her to come hear him perform, adding that he would do some Johnny Smith-style playing.

The two of them became good friends. Edie loaned Harry a 10-inch Django Reinhardt record. She doesn't recall if Leahey had ever heard Reinhardt before but she does remember that he loved the record, a collection of some of Reinhardt's 1940s recordings.

Two of the songs on it were "Manoir de Mes Rêves" and "Nuages," both Reinhardt compositions. In a short time, Leahey learned both songs and incorporated them into his repertoire. Edie recalled that whenever she would go into a club where Harry was performing, he would play "Nuages" for her as soon as he saw her.

He continued to perform both songs for the rest of his life. In fact, he recorded both with the Phil Woods Quintet in the late 1970s – "Nuages" as a solo vehicle on *Song for Sisyphus*, and "Manoir de Mes Rêves" with the full band doing his arrangement on *Live From The Showboat*.

Leahey didn't confine his musical studies to the guitar. In 1954 or '55, Leahey studied theory and harmony at the Manhattan School of Music (unfortunately, the exact dates are not available). At this time, the Manhattan School of Music did not yet have a jazz program. It was at the urging of Rom Ferri that Harry enrolled at Manhattan. However, he grew dissatisfied with this course of study and left after about one year. Harry chose instead at that point to pursue his dual career as a teacher and performer and to study music, both on his own and with private teachers.

Throughout the early 1950s, Harry Leahey and Richie Moore continued to work the local circuit. One of the clubs they worked was Dudley's in West Orange, New Jersey, where they played Dixieland with an augmented group.

In the summer of 1955, the group was playing at the Cabana Club on Eagle Rock Avenue, also in West

Orange. Stan Rubin's Dixieland band, The Tigertown Five, had been booked to play on the Grote Beer (Great Bear), a ship that was scheduled to sail from Hoboken, New Jersey, to Rotterdam, Holland. At the last minute, The Tigertown Five had to back out of the gig and Richie Moore was asked to fill in. Moore quickly put together a Dixieland band, mostly made up of musicians who had played the Dudley's gig with him.

Moore and the group took a big chance taking this job considering the only compensation they received for playing on the ship was their passage. Since they had been booked on such short notice, they also had no additional work lined up in Europe but they took the plunge anyway.

Upon arriving in Rotterdam, they debated whether to look for work in Paris or Copenhagen, and they decided on Paris. They played July 14th, Bastille Night, on the streets of Paris. This performance led to a gig at a club called Le Riverside near the Cathedral of Notre Dame.

It was at this club that they met expatriate clarinetist Albert Nicholas who would sit in regularly with the group. The Paris gig lasted through July, but now they needed another job to finish out the summer. Fortunately, pianist Rom Ferri's friend, Tony Camillo, was in the army and stationed in Frankfurt, Germany. Through him the group was able to get a booking at the Topper Club, an officers' club. The band members had to sneak onto the base and pretend that they were

authorized transients.

From 1960 to 1962, Leahey served in the United States Army. While in the army he played with Ira Sullivan. He also played saxophone in the army band.

Edie Eustice recalled Harry's account of how he learned the saxophone on short notice. The band needed a sax player. Leahey knew that, if he could play with the band, he would be traveling and performing for the officers. So he applied for the position, stating that he played the saxophone but did not own one. The director of the band got him one and Leahey then spent one day with the instrument. By that evening he had figured out how to play it enough to get into the band.

In the spring of 1960, Tom Anthony's younger sister, Karen, left home to join Harry at Fort Dix in New Jersey. The couple was married on May 4, 1960.

Harry Leahey taught guitar from an early age. Glenn Davis, who would become the drummer in Leahey's trio, recalled: "I think he was always teaching. Even when he was a kid, people told me that he used to teach. Richie Moore taught, too. There was a place I used to teach in Westfield, and that was one of the places I think Harry, you know, spent one day there and different places. But he was always teaching. He'd case load, like sixty-plus [hours] a week."

By the 1960s, Leahey had become well-established both as a teacher and player on the thriving



Harry Leahey, COTA Festival, Delaware Water Gap, PA, c. 1985

Walter Brede!



Phil Woods Quintet (L to R): Harry Leahey, Mike Melillo, Steve Gilmore, Bill Goodwin, Phil Woods, Brookfield (CT) Fire House, c. 1970s

Joe Warwick

New Jersey nightclub scene. Bassist Ronnie Naspo recalled working with Leahey, both of them as side musicians when still in their late teens or early twenties.

Naspo is a Montclair, New Jersey-based bassist whose performing credits include work with guitarists Bucky Pizzarelli and Vic Juris. He also served on the faculty in the jazz studies program at William Paterson State College (now William Paterson University). He talked about them being hired for commercial gigs that “didn’t turn out too commercial.” By that Naspo meant that he, Leahey, and the other musicians would invariably infuse their own jazz-oriented personalities into whatever music they played.

The earliest gig Naspo recalled was in Seaside Heights, New Jersey, at what he described as a “young people’s club” in the late 1950’s or early ‘60s. He spoke of five- and six-night-a-week steady gigs where he and Leahey would “occasionally wind up together.” He also stated that there were “lots of musicians” in the Plainfield area and frequent jam sessions, particularly in clubs on Route 22.

When I asked Naspo what he felt distinguished the young Leahey’s playing the most, he replied: “His eighth note swing feel. Even on the early gigs he had that good swing feel. You know, he played eighth note runs. You could tell it was Harry because the eighth notes had a certain feel. And I’ve always admired that about Harry. ... [It was] subtly different, but it’s that subtle difference that gave him that really infectious feeling that he had.”

That subtle difference was evident in Leahey’s later playing as well. For instance, in his solo on “Django’s Castle,” Leahey varied the eighth note values from straight to varying degrees of swing values over an even eighth note bossa nova rhythm section. He used this as an added dimension in the same way he used

dynamics and variety of timbre.

Leahey’s versatility was already apparent at this time. In addition to playing commercial gigs featuring the pop tunes of the day, and playing jazz at jam sessions, Leahey played Dixieland music.

“Harry did a Dixieland thing around South Orange,” said Naspo. “Bob Miller was in it. We would go down and hear them in the mid to late ‘50s. Dixieland was popular among young people.”

It was in the early 1960s that Leahey began several associations that would prove to be extremely important to him. It was then that he met bassist Roy Cumming and drummer Glenn Davis, with whom he would later perform as the Harry Leahey Trio.

Cumming and Davis both have impressive playing credentials. Cumming has performed with Teddy Wilson, Al Haig, Chick Corea, Al Cohn, Zoot Sims, Phil Woods, Booker Ervin, Johnny Hartman, Sarah Vaughan, Tony Williams, Roy Haynes, Phil Markowitz, and others. Davis is Marion McPartland’s long-time drummer and has performed with Stan Getz, Al Cohn, Zoot Sims, Phil Woods, Phil Markowitz, and others.

It was this association, as well as his work with pianist Mike Melillo, that would lead to Leahey becoming a member of the Phil Woods Quintet.

Melillo, the son of a bass player, had played piano from the age of five. He went to Arts High School in Newark, New Jersey. In 1962 he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in music composition from Rutgers University, also in Newark. From 1962 to 1964, he worked in the house trio at the Tap Room in Clifton, New Jersey, with bassist Vinnie Burke and drummer Eddie Gladden. It was with that trio that Melillo first accompanied Phil Woods. He then played with saxophonist Sonny Rollins from 1965 to 1967.

Melillo, Leahey, Cumming, and Davis came together as In Free Association in 1970. In 1973, Melillo

moved to the Pocono Mountain region of Pennsylvania where he, Woods, bassist Steve Gilmore, and drummer Bill Goodwin then formed the Phil Woods Quartet. Leahey's association with Melillo led directly to his being added to the Phil Woods Quartet, making it a quintet.

Woods had moved to France in 1968. That same year, he formed the European Rhythm Machine, a quartet which remained intact until 1972. After briefly leading an experimental electronic quartet in Los Angeles, Woods moved to Delaware Water Gap, Pennsylvania. In October 1973, he formed his quartet with Melillo, Gilmore, and Goodwin.

In a September 25, 2005 interview, Woods talked about adding Leahey to his band:

"Mike Melillo introduced me to Harry. [He] brought him over. When I first came back from Europe, we used to have jam sessions over at Mike's house. I was staying with Bill Goodwin at the time. And Steve Gilmore and Bill had been working together a lot, so we started jamming at Mike's house. He invited Harry over and that's how we eventually formed the Quintet from those jam sessions. [That was around] '74, '75, something like that. Mike, Bill, Steve, and I first started as a quartet. And then when we had the Showboat gig, that's when we added Harry because I had written a Brazilian suite. I wanted to have the guitar and I wanted to use the soprano and I thought the soprano and the guitar would work well. So that's how that all happened. The Showboat album was kind of a catalyst for adding guitar. And we used percussion, too, on that."

The album to which Woods refers, *Live From The Showboat*, recorded in November of 1976 and released

in 1977, won the group a Grammy award for best live jazz performance. Leahey considered this award the high point of his career.

The album also received a five-star review in *Down Beat* magazine. Writer Russell Shaw was positively effusive in his praise of the band and the album. He started by stating that he is rarely "moved to superlatives" and then proceeded to heap them on the album. He praised the audience at The Showboat and then compared the band, most favorably, to the European Rhythm Machine, stating that they were "glorying in wave after wave of musical triumph." He singled out Woods as "consummately masterful." He added some praise for the sidemen but confined his discussion of Leahey to the phrase "not forgetting the Django-ish guitar of Harry Leahey."

Regrettably, this comment did justice to neither Django Reinhardt nor Harry Leahey. However it was at least positive and no doubt well-intended.

Sadly, things were not entirely positive in Harry's life at this time. Leahey's wife, Karen, was in the early stages of the illness that would eventually take her life at the time that Phil Woods offered Harry the spot in the band. Their daughter, Deborah, recalled that her mother insisted, however, that Harry go on tour with the Quintet.

The 1970s was a busy time for Leahey. During the time period when he began his associations with Melillo and Woods, he maintained an extremely busy teaching schedule and continued to perform with local commercial groups. One night he would be playing bebop, the next night he would be playing a Carlos Santana solo – and both to perfection. It was during this time that he also began working regularly with



From left: Rick Chamberlain, unidentified, Mo Rolland, Phil Woods, Harry Leahey, Spencer Reed, Vic Juris, Roy Cumming, Glenn Davis, COTA Festival, Delaware Water Gap, PA, c. 1985.

Walter Breidel



From left: Harry Leahey, Glenn Davis, Roy Cumming, COTA Festival, Delaware Water Gap, PA, 1989

Walter Bredel

bassist Ronnie Naspo.

In an October 3, 2005, interview, Naspo recalled this period: "I think my main association with Harry started in the '70s. It was from a job I did with Harry that I met Bucky [Pizzarelli]. Harry and I, when we were playing as a duo, got a job at Gulliver's, [at] ... guitar night. It was our first guitar night there and we had prepared some stuff. ... We go and we set up ... I was a little uneasy. [Gulliver's was a] respected jazz club and I knew that a lot of guitar players came in to hear Harry. So we're just getting set up, we're on the stand. The end of the bar was directly in front of the bandstand, about six feet away. With just a few minutes [to go, we're] tuning up, whatever, getting things set up, and who comes in but Bucky Pizzarelli and Les Paul. And [they] sit right down in front! Les Paul was one of my heroes, and one of Harry's, too. So we did what we did. They were very cordial. They had to respect what Harry did, because he was such a wonderful player."

Comparing Harry's approach to teaching to the old school of guitar teaching, as taught by his first teacher, Mickey Vest, Naspo said: "The chord studies I got with Mickey were like Mel Bay, the barre chord book. But with Harry, I guess he got it from [his teacher Dennis] Sandole, the five different systems of chords, the sets. My jazz training with Mickey was we would play duets. He would play a chorus and then I would [pause] attempt. He said 'just keep listening and keep trying.' That was my jazz education. He didn't talk about the relationship of a specific type of scale to a specific type of chord. That's what jazz education was

at that point, when he was a young fellow – nothing. Listen to the records and try to copy them, figure it out, sort of, because he could play jazz. But, Lord knows how those guys learned it, strictly by ear. There were no methods."

The Gulliver's that Naspo referred to was Amos Kaune's club in West Paterson, New Jersey. In the early 1970s and into the early 1980s, Gulliver's was the biggest jazz club in northern New Jersey. Kaune's first club, the Clifton Tap Room, was where bassist Roy Cumming had first met pianist Mike Melillo. In 1970, Kaune started a Monday guitar night and Leahey was featured regularly.

Harry's growing reputation and his large number of students assured a busy night every time he appeared there. The night was so successful that it was written up in *Guitar Player* magazine. When interviewed for the article, Kaune singled out Leahey among the many guitarists who appeared there:

"In prior years, here and at the last place I owned, I had tremendous success with guitarists, and a lot of guitar players came to hear one another. On Mondays at my old place we used to feature recognized jazz people, but somehow we always did better with guitarists. We brought in Tal Farlow, Chuck Wayne, Jim Hall, Kenny Burrell, and Attila Zoller, among others. Because of that previous success, I brought Guitar Night to Gulliver's. We've had Pat Martino, Chuck Wayne, Joe Puma, Joe Cinderella, Skeeter Best, and some local players.

Continued on Page 29

Al Cohn - In His Own Words

Following is the transcript of a question and answer session in which Al Cohn talked about his early influences, playing with his partner Zoot, his feelings about jazz education, his favorite jazz musicians, and more. The session was held in New York City, c. 1984, prior to Al's concert with guitarist Joe Puma. It was moderated by acclaimed jazz writer and historian Ira Gitler, who generously donated the audio recording of the event to the ACMJC's Oral History archive.

Al Cohn [AC]: *[Interview already in progress when audio begins]* ... But I always kept playing even though it was very torturous at times because of not being in shape. I don't know if I did myself any good by making records and things like that and appearances when I really shouldn't have. But that's a lousy excuse, isn't it?

Ira Gitler [IG]: *[laughs]*

AC: Anyway, I did it because I didn't want to stop playing. And even though I wasn't doing myself any good career-wise, I stayed with it. Lately I've been recording quite a bit for Xanadu records and with some success. Things have gotten a lot better for jazz in general, I think, in the past, oh *[since the]* '70s – or the late '70s. And I've been doing a lot more clubs, traveling a lot more, and enjoying it a lot more. So, if there are any questions that you'd like to ask – like who was worst person I ever worked for? *[audience laughs]* ...

Audience Member [AM]: **When did the Zoot Sims - Al Cohn thing start? How long ago was that?**

AC: Well, we worked together on Woody Herman's band in 1948. I was always very attracted to his playing. I liked his playing a lot and he liked my playing. And after we left that band, there were a whole group of guys that were just not working too much, just hanging around New York. And *[we used to]* chip in our quarters, and in those days you could rent the studio for all night for about three, four, five bucks. So we'd all chip in and just blow

all night. This was regular; this was for months at a time. Every night we'd meet. And then, in the early '50s, we had the chance to do some recording together, and that sort of mushroomed into getting our own group. And we went on the road – I think that was 1955 or '56 – and then came the Half Note, in '59, I believe. *[To Ira]* Is that right, '59?

IG: Yeah, that's about right ... *[indiscernible]* '57 ...

AC: '57? I think we got there...

IG: You recorded in '57, I think, with Coral *[indiscernible]*.

AC: Anyway, through the '60s up until the club folded, we were there, oh, twenty weeks of the year or more, and four or five weeks at a time. We had a pretty good following in those days ... did great business and we still work together. As a matter of fact we're working together Tuesday in Boston at a concert. And we went to Japan recently. And we've been in Europe together, and South America. *[We've]* made a lot more recordings since those days. *[pause]* Anybody else? Or should I just keep rambling on? *[pause]* You know, I've got to go up Tuesday to Harvard and do this same sort of thing. I'm breaking in the act. *[audience laughs]*

AM: I think there will be a lot more live wires up there than here *[indiscernible]*.

AC: Well ... I don't know what to expect, I've never been *[to]* Harvard in my life. *[audience laughs]* Talking about

the writing again, I've been doing for the last 10 years the Tony Awards show, the orchestrations for the Tony Awards show. And more recently the Miss Universe show, and the Miss USA show. The Miss Teenage-, the Miss Teenage Slut *[audience laughs]* ... and, oh yeah, the daytime Emmy show. And that keeps me busy now for about three, four months a year. The rest of the time I'm going to be playing. Yes?

AM: As a musician, what do you like to play mostly? ... I like to hear ballads mostly but I want to know what your–

AC: You wouldn't like ballads all night long though.

AM: I guess not.

AC: You gotta mix 'em up, you know? I like to play fast *[audience laughs]*. I like to play blues a lot and standards. I guess I'm a middle-of-the-roader, *[long pause]* as you'll hear later when Joe Puma gets here. *[IG laughs]* Nobody's got any questions? Yes?

AM: [Did] you ever look into changing yourself in playing? Where you got fed up with [it] or [you were] frustrated because you weren't employed, [or] that you hated the music, and you'd been on the streets–

AC: I never felt that way, never felt that way. I've gotten frustrated, *[indiscernible]* you know, there were times when–

AM: You always played, though. You never felt that you wanted to put it on the shelf for a few years until you got [indiscernible] ...

AC: Never. No.

AM: You never felt frustrated with playing, you know, and discontinued [it] for a period of your life?

AC: Well, I did *[stop playing]* for a period of three months one time ... to seek employment and something else.

But there were extenuating circumstances, and it wasn't really my wish. Yes?

AM: ... When did you start listening to bop? ...

AC: That came pretty early in my life and I think it had a great influence. But, you know, it's a funny thing. When I was just starting as a teenager, my main influences were Lester Young and the Count Basie band. And other bands at that time, like Duke Ellington, I didn't get it, you know. ... It didn't reach me.

And then, afterwards, I started to understand what it was about. To me, the arrangements that Duke's band was playing, and the orchestrations, [were] much more interesting than what Basie was playing, which were so primitive and head arrangements, you know, they weren't even on paper; guys would make up riffs and put them together.

And old time music like [Louis] Armstrong, when I was a kid I thought that was really square, you know. Then later, really a lot later, that's when I began to pick up on Louis, and it was like a revelation. Somebody had a bunch of Armstrong records and they said, "You gotta hear this." And I said, "Oh man, you know? [audience laughs] ... and then I stayed at this guy's house listening to records all night long. I went home [and] it was like it completely opened up a new thing to me.

So, about the bop thing, yes – but you never stop widening and broadening. I hope I never do. You were talking about getting frustrated and going to put it down. I think that if you stay interested you should never feel that way, you know? You should always strive to broaden your scopeand I think I do, because I'll be walking along or in a car or something like that ... [and I'll] think about a different way of playing a certain progression ... something I had never done before. And all of



From left: Zoot Sims, Al Cohn, Steve Gilmore, Delaware Water Gap, PA, c. 1976-77

a sudden, I hear it and [pause] then I probably play it to death after that. [audience laughs]

AM: Are you writing for any big bands now?

AC: No, I haven't been writing for any big bands. The big bands today do a different kind of material than what I was doing. I like what they do but that's for different generations. Like Buddy's band and Woody's band. [I] don't feel that stuff is my thing. Although Woody [Herman] asked me to write for him about a year ago, and I told him that, and he said "Oh [indiscernible]," you know.

But I don't mean it from the standpoint that I'm a fogey or anything like that. It's just that I don't feel this music, honestly. And you can't make people believe in something if you don't believe in it

yourself.

So, you've got to remain true to what you—. I try to remain true to what my original idea [was] in getting into this thing in the first place was. But I still like jazz. A lot of guys object to the term jazz. I don't. They think it means a kind of put down. I don't feel that way. I'm proud to be a jazz musician. I think it's great. I think it's the greatest music in the world.

AM: Well, isn't Buddy Rich doing some things that are pretty much straight jazz? I think [of] something like "Groovin' High"?

AC: Well, I only hear the records. And they're all powerhouse records, you know. Buddy's band will always be Buddy. And he's sort of a phenomenon, a freak.

IG: What do you think about non-chordal playing, or playing without time signatures.

AC: Well, it doesn't get to me. ... It doesn't say anything to me. I did a thing with Jimmy Rowles where we had to judge different school bands, ensembles and small bands. And this one small group came on. They had a good reputation. We'd heard all about them, that they were supposed to be real hot. And they played this tune that went on for about 20 minutes with two chords.

And Jimmy ... was supposed to try to write constructive criticism. [So] Jimmy said, "Two chord tunes turn me off." [audience laughs] Isn't anybody going to help me now? I don't want to get into the funny stuff. [audience laughs]

IG: [indiscernible] ... Now to pursue that a little farther. You said that you're always listening, trying to broaden yourself. So, granted that you don't like a lot of the things that are being played today, what do you like and what have you heard that you might absorb into your own

Rick Chamberlain

Zoot and Al
Brookfield (CT) Fire House, c. 1970s

Photo by Joe Warwick





playing?

AC: ... Well, that's a good question because I really don't know the answer to that, you know. We use basically the same material that I always did ... and try to play them a little different. I remember somebody asking me once, "Haven't you played the same ... stuff that you did 30 years ago?" And I said, "No, it isn't the same, that's the good part about it." And [it] really isn't because I don't know ... if you've heard my old records and my new records, do they sound the same? Maybe you haven't heard them? [IG laughs] This talk can get you a little hung up, you know, because I [would] hate to listen to this back. [audience laughs] I may disagree with myself over everything I say.

AM: What do you think about rock 'n' roll?

AC: I like some rock 'n' roll, [the kind] that's played by musicians. I don't care for the groups too much.

AM: The singers?

AC: ... [pause] The singers don't say anything to me. You can't hear the lyrics. The lyrics are dumb anyway. I think disco is a good move, really, because it's played by musicians, professional musicians, very good ones, too. But groups that play rock 'n' roll, like the Rolling Stones, I don't know.

AM: What did you think about Elvis Presley when he was alive?

AC: Well, he should've lived but his music should've died. [audience laughs]

AM: Music, if I may use the term, is a very kind of spiritual thing, where if you're really feeling each other's vibrations, you can create that third thing that the audience participates in. But have you ever had the experience when you're working with musicians, or maybe just one other musician, where you're not really meshing with each other? ...

AC: Well, as a matter of fact, I've run into that quite a bit because I do ap-

pearances by myself working with local trios. For the past few years they've gotten a lot better, but I've run into situations where it [can] be very tough. And in that kind of situation, you just have to fall back on your professionalism and experience. It's all on your shoulders. It's a funny thing, sometimes you find that, or I've found that, you have to try harder so that sometimes you end up playing better because you've got all the responsibility. And it leaves you pretty exhausted at the end of the night. [IG laughs]

AM: Do you hope that your ... enthusiasm or your contagion will affect them and kind of loosen them up so that you start kind of doing it- [interrupted by AC]

AC: Well, you hope for the best. [IG laughs] You know, you run into guys that [are] not confident and they just can't do it. And sometimes you run into guys that could [play] but they're so nervous that they can't. And it's only for one night so you don't have the chance to work it out. You're in and out and that's that.

AM: A friend of mine wanted to take up jazz and wanted to get into sax. I can't remember the guy that he studied with, [he] was a very old man. And my friend was so tight and [indiscernible] that this old guy said, "Look, I'm just gonna play a motif. I'm just gonna toss it out and you try to send it back to me." And finally, after months of doing this, [with] incredible frustrations, something broke through in my friend. And he was like tossing the ball, you know. You'd start the motif and then-

AC: You mean this teacher had a saxophone, too, and he was playing on ideas and ...

AM: Yes

AC: Oh, [he] must've been a very hard teacher.

AM: And then ... something happened in the kid and he was able to go off on his own then, and then

they would jam together.

AC: The teacher had the right idea, I guess ... [he] must've been a very unusual teacher. I've never heard of anything like that. Most teachers don't even play. [IG laughs] You know?

IG: Do you teach, Al?

AC: No. Not yet anyway. [IG laughs] I'll tell you, teaching is a certain kind of talent. Not everybody can teach, [not] even the greatest players. They might not have the patience. It takes a lot of patience to sit with a kid, especially if you don't really think the kid has any potential. ... But I've spoken to teachers about that, and they say-, their rationale is, "Why should I discourage him?" [audience laughs]

I don't think that jazz actually can be taught. You can teach somebody the rudiments of music: chords, scales, progressions, and the technical things about the instrument itself. But after that, a fellow who wants to be a jazzman, he's got to work it out himself.

And it usually follows the same pattern. A guy starts off, like I did, being influenced by his favorites and trying to sound as much like them as possible. And then, if you've got any kind of originality, or any kind of statement to make, it'll come out eventually. ...

Coincidentally, I was talking about these stage bands today? Now they practice a few pieces of music for a whole term or a whole year and then get them down. So they sound real good. But you can't just throw anything in front of them and have them do like professional musicians.

Well, anyway, I was at a thing, when my son was going to high school and he was playing, and we went down to one of these regional contests or competitions. They all sound pretty good. They sound very much alike. They use the same material. But where they fall short is as soloists. There [are] never any interesting soloists.

Well, one band out of some small town

in Pennsylvania [had] a little kid about 13 or 14 years old. He was about that tall *[gestures]*. He started playing and he sounded like Harry Edison. And then I found out, well, his father was a jazz lover and had these records and he grew up listening to them. So he'd been exposed. None of the other kids ever heard anything like that, all they'd do is listen to the radio, I guess. *[pauses]*

Yes? *[pauses again]* No questions? *[IG laughs]* Yes?

AM: Now, let's get back to what's changed over the years. Like, well, what's really changed. If it's not the same old licks then what is it?

What's changed? How [have you] matured as a musician? How has your sensibility matured? *[pause]* **What is it that you hear on the new records—**

AC: Well, that's hard to say ... you mean what do I hear on the records or how have I changed?

AM: Yes, well, all of it, like what [indiscernible] are you bringing to perform these days that you weren't capable of bringing 25 years ago?

AC: Well, I just hope I'm doing it better, that's all. As far as the music that you hear, I don't think I'm competent to discuss what's going on now in music because I listen to the same people all the time. I have my favorites and I just think of it for myself, what I want to do, and not what's going on.

AM: Well, okay, here's what I mean by the question. If you listen to Lee Konitz over a period of 30 years, you see that what he's done is essentially take away superfluous music. And he's got right now something that is extremely elegant and economical *[indiscernible, people whispering]*.



Rick Chamberlain

From left: Zoot, Al, and Steve Gilmore, back room of Omega Natural Foods, Delaware Water Gap, PA, c. 1976-77

You'll see [indiscernible] it's the artistic statement of a real adult who is completely aware of what he's doing and what he wants to do with his music now.

So that's what I meant when I asked you the question. Have you taken away; have you added something; have you got a different sound; do you open up to different influences now than before? Once you were the avant-garde, you know. Now you're—

AC: I don't think I was ever avant-garde, there's always—

AM: To me, as a kid, you were.

AC: Yeah?

AM: Damn right! *[audience laughs]*

AC: Well, I don't think I ever was. I was, after all, playing blues and emulating Lester Young.

AM: That was the avant-garde, man. *[IG laughs]*

AC: Yeah, but that would be avant-garde in 1935. I came up in '45.

AM: Well, "Four Brothers" was certainly avant-garde, right?

AC: It's hard for me to conceive of that as avant-garde. ... Like even Bird when he came up, he was playing blues. He was playing the music related to Louis Armstrong. I mean he was playing that same kind of blues. Then things changed with free music, and I guess Coltrane had a big influence, but he was not an influence on me. I admire him very much as an instrumentalist *[pause]* but not his music. I always preferred Sonny Rollins.

AM: Excuse me. What do you mean by that, when you say you admired him as an instrumentalist?

AC: Well he was certainly a virtuoso instrumentalist.

IG: Technician

AC: A technician.

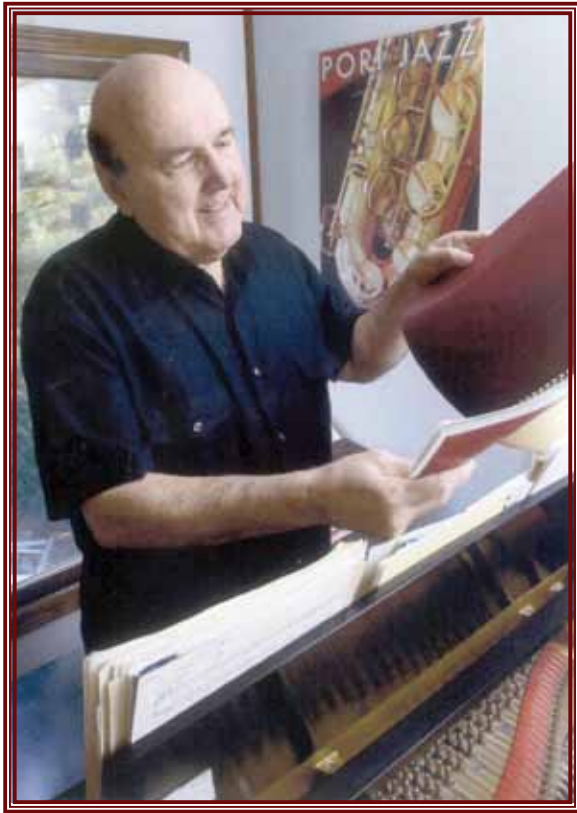
AM: Oh, I see.

AC: And he was a great player, no question about that. I'm not saying he wasn't. I'm just saying that, to me, it lacked a certain kind of *[pause]*

IG: Soul?

AC: Soul, yeah. It was worked out, you know, that's the way it sounded to me. He certainly influenced a whole generation of saxophone players. *[long pause]* But he [Rollins] was always my favorite, outside of Charlie Parker or Lester. *[tape ends]* ☺

The Copy Cat



Bob Bielik

Jack Reilly

Throughout much of the history of music, there often has been someone to reproduce the composer's musical notations so that others could replicate the sounds. But somewhere between the time when Bach would scribe his choral works on paper for a choir, and today's computer software packages that produce individual instrument parts with the click of a mouse, a unique artist emerged – the copyist.

So much more than someone who merely makes copies of a composer's original work, Jack Reilly believes the true copyist was a 20th Century phenomenon who had to intuitively understand the music he was going to copy – and bring a wealth of knowledge to the task. Reilly should know. As a composer of more than 300 jazz works, Reilly has often been on the receiving end of a copyist's talents, and that copyist for Jack has been Al Schoonmaker.

Reilly reflects on his personal experiences with his copyist, and shares a brief interview he conducted in October 2007 with Schoonmaker – his "unsung hero," his Copy Cat!

by Jack Reilly

The copyist is an absolute necessity, the sine qua non to the realization of the composer's dream. A 20th Century phenomenon who had to understand and intuit the music he was going to copy, the very best of them studied theory, counterpoint, transposition, score-reading, and piano. The copyist had to know the ranges and proper clefs of all the instruments of the modern orchestra, and play piano at the virtuoso level. Some have also been composers in their own right.

Yet the copyist has been a behind-the-scenes unsung hero of the musical world. Forget about public recognition – musicians don't even appreciate the copyist! Only the composer knows how important the copyist is to a successful performance of his works, let alone to

the composer's career as a whole.

Al Schoonmaker is my copyist, my unsung hero, who with his pen and ink paints my compositions onto score paper, readying them for performances. I use the metaphor "paints" because when he's completed the copying work, the score looks beautiful, as if it were screaming to be framed and hung on the wall of a museum, like a Renoir, for all the world to see and enjoy.

Al has mastered all the musical subjects mentioned above. At 88 years of age, he copied my most recent work, *Blue Sage Variations*, a piano work arranged for jazz trio which was premiered at Bargemusic in Brooklyn, New York, and performed throughout England and Wales last year.

Al's piano score for the work was so clean, clear, and easy to read that it was unnecessary to extract bass and drum parts for those concerts – the

bassists and drummers accompanying me at those concerts just followed the piano score!

For me, I consider Al's master works to be my largest works, *Chuang-Tzu Theme and Eight Variations for Orchestra* [1993], and *Orbitals* [2001], a concerto for piano, jazz trio and symphony orchestra. Al constructed a full orchestral conductor's score for each work and then extracted parts for each player. The piano part for *Orbitals* was left 98 percent in sketch form because I was the soloist and didn't have the time to notate a full piano score (besides, there are four improvised cadenzas for the piano soloist). This saved Al the stress of getting the parts ready for the rehearsals and performances. He had score and parts ready three months before the premiere.

Both of the above works were commissioned by the Keweenaw



Courtesy of Jack Reilly

“The Blue Sage” manuscript, a Jack Reilly composition that became a theme and five variations with improvisations in 2006. This was the last work that Al Schoonmaker copied for Jack before his retirement.

Symphony Orchestra, (Jeffrey Bell-Hanson, Music Director) and Michigan Tech University. Grants from “Meet the Composer” for the copying of parts went to Al, but it was never enough. He spent extra hours correcting proofs and saved even more time by his own proofreading of my score. He could spot notational errors in the score instantly.

Al has copied over 300 of my original jazz pieces. His knowledge of chord symbols gave me 100 percent confidence in his understanding of the chord progressions in my jazz works. He would check the key the song was written in and made sure the chord symbol didn’t mislead the performer. For example, he made suggestions like renaming a C-sharp Major 9th to a D-flat Major 9th. Al never lost his patience when trying to decipher my handwritten score. If he spotted an F touching

the E line on the staff, he could internally hear and figure out the correct pitch by analyzing the harmony so the chord was married to the pitch, and vice versa.

He would always write me comments at the end of each assignment, sometimes humorous but mostly encouraging me to compose more. He always insisted I go to his apartment to pick up the finished scores and parts because he refused to mail them. He feared their loss enroute to my home would be a disaster and he’d have to begin anew!

Many times he refused payment and always gave me what he called a “composer’s discount,” knowing that our lives as creative artists sometimes leaves us starving and late with rent payments.

Al is a humble man full of great stories about composers, musicians

and conductors. He has copied for all of the great 20th century composers: Leonard Bernstein, David Diamond, Aaron Copland, Elliott Carter, et al. His day begins at 5 a.m. with composing his own music until 8 a.m., followed by a short break for breakfast. Then from 9 a.m. until 7 p.m., he devotes himself to a variety of copying projects. Recent health problems have put the skids on his copying, but his indomitable spirit continues on. God has so blessed the world by giving us this human being, Al Schoonmaker, and I am especially blessed by knowing him. He is my unsung hero, a true copy cat! ☺

[Editor’s note: A live trio recording of The Blue Sage Variations concert in Halifax, England was released December 2007. Entitled The Jack Reilly Trio: Live at Dean Clough, this 2-CD set is available on the Unichrom label.]

Jack Reilly

Interviews Al Schoonmaker

Jack Reilly [JR]: Al, welcome to my office and thank you for your time. Would you give me some biographical data first?

Al Schoonmaker [AS]: I was born in Grand Forks, North Dakota, on May 1, 1919. After we moved to Fargo, I started piano lessons at the Concordia Conservatory with a Mrs. Dora Dyer in 1922. No, I wasn't a prodigy, but I loved the lessons and progressed quite rapidly with her, even at that early age!

Much later, 1934, I started orchestration with Stanley Avery at the MacPhail College [of Music]. I received grants for this from the WPA [Works Progress Administration], sponsored by the U.S. government during the Depression to help aspiring painters, musicians, and students pay the rent and so on.

I met Jackson Pollack during this time and, in spite of his later notoriety, I found him [to be] a regular guy and very passionate about his paintings. He was extremely talented, by my standards. This was an exciting period in American cultural history. And the swing era was just around the corner.

I then started touring for the Howard Smith Agency out of Omaha, Nebraska. Smith had 14 road bands, all 15-piece units. A few names that come to mind are Bill Trips, Oscar Stensgard, Carl Colley, Red Lee, and Ron Strickland. No big names here, but all were very good players. This was a great experience for me, still in my teens!

JR: Did you have any hobbies as a kid?

AS: I loved gymnastics and baseball. My aunts and uncles on my mother's side were all circus people. I understand that you wanted to be a professional clown. Is that true?

JR: Can't you tell? They don't call me "Krey the Clown" for nothing! ... [But] let's skip to your copying career. You worked for the Emile Charlap copying office.

AS: Yes. Ralph Burns and Billy Byers were still in New York at that time. Gary McFarland brought his charts to Emile's office. He [Charlap] had about 15 copyists working at one time. As word of my superior copying-hand became known – in all humility I say this – I received scores from [Igor] Stravinsky, [Béla] Bartók, [Leonard] Bernstein, [Virgil] Thompson, and [David] Diamond. Since the late '70s, I've been copying your music, Jack, and I'm very proud to have met you and to have become your friend. You're one of the great composers, Jack. I mean this sincerely...

JR: ... This interview is about you, not me! Was there any assignment or score that was very demanding?

AS: Yes! Leonard Bernstein's West Side Story! It took three and one-half years to finish, mainly because Lenny was touring six to eight months at a time. He was busy conducting, so composing had to wait for when he was back home at 57th Street's Osborne Apartments. He had a small studio there so he could compose but also practice the piano! He was a great pianist, too, you know.

JR: Yes, I know. An unusual talent. A triple threat, indeed. I liked his interpretation of Rhapsody in Blue and equally [liked] his Mozart concerti recordings, too.

AS: One time he wanted me to hear a song he had just finished for West Side Story. It turned out to be "Maria"! I was the first to hear that. I told him it was a hit. He smiled and said, "OK, kid, you may leave now. Here are more scores



Courtesy of Jack Reilly

Al Schoonmaker, Jack Reilly, 2007

to copy! Thanks for listening, but I don't need any of your comments!"

JR: You will be 89 on May 1st, Al. Can you tell me how many scores you've copied so far?

AS: Wow, are you kidding? Probably close to 5000, not counting yours! That's a ballpark figure, of course!

JR: Do you still work for Emile?

AS: No. I set up shop in my New York City apartment on 47th Street and have worked 100 percent of the time there since the late '80s. It's a tiny, one-room crib, but comfortable for me and close to the recording, theatre, and club scenes.

The copying I do now takes up most of my time these days, Jack. It's still very hectic. The arrangers are always late with the charts.

Al Cohn was never late. He could whip out a chart while eating breakfast! Yeah, I knew Al very well. What a talent! I used to catch him and Zoot at the Half Note all the time. They would even buy me drinks all night! Great jazz players. Al was a comedian, too!

In the '80s and '90s, I copied for [Frank] Sinatra, Tony Bennett, Roberta Flack, Cy Coleman, Sarah Vaughan, Paul Reiser and Frank Zappa. I loved them all. Great talents and great people. ...

Once when copying a Copland score, I used a period after the abbreviation pizz. for pizzicato. Copland was furious and insisted I delete all the periods. I said, "Maestro, that's an abbreviation mark for pizzicato!" He got more upset and threw me out the door with the score in hand and said, "Don't come back 'til you've finished deleting all the periods." I spent the whole day erasing dots!

Virgil Thompson used to pronounce my name, All. He said it sounded more European than Al. Al sounded too American to him. With regard to the cues in his scores, he said, "All, they're delicious! Where did you ever find them?" I said, "Maestro, they were written by you in your score!"

JR: I want to thank you, Al, for this brief but enlightening chat.

AS: My pleasure, Jack. ☺

Reflections on the Artistic Process

Part One

by David Liebman

Vincent Van Gogh, in a letter to his brother Theo, wrote:
"Great things are not done by impulse, but by a series of small things brought together. And great things are not something accidental, but are willed. What is drawing? How does one learn it? It is working through an invisible iron wall that seems to stand between what one feels and what one can do."

An artist is a person who attempts to be in touch with his/her inner self in order to communicate this information to others through their expertise in an abstract endeavor (i.e. an art). An artist's body of work is autobiographical and, at the same time, a means by which the artist communicates both individual and universal experiences that all people share.

There are technicians (craftsmen) and there are artists. The former are technically trained and have the expertise necessary to produce works in their particular field. For some, these works may be convincing as art.

But artists offer something more than just craftsmanship. They are aware of their role and need to express something of relevance about life through their art. From one perspective, the difference between art and craft can be compared to the difference between art and entertainment. Though great art can entertain, in the final result, entertainment is transitory while art is eternal. As well, meaningful art not only educates and raises consciousness but also challenges the recipient to be emotionally open to what is being offered. Art reveals one's inner self to both the artist and the receiver.

The artist should strive to be cultured and aware of mankind's eternal quest for freedom, beauty, and truth through the ages in all its manifestations, including artistic en-



Charles Perry Hebard

deavors, but also through observation of all aspects of the human condition. Understanding matters of philosophy, history, the spiritual world, psychology, the humanities, etc., while at the same time empathizing with humanity's successes and failures, all add to the reservoir of emotion and feeling that the artist calls upon when creating.

A central tenet of artistic creation is the dichotomy between the desire to be universal yet, at the same time, individual and unique (something that an artist is constantly working on). It is a polarity which as well mirrors the human condition. The artist is constantly striving towards expressing and integrating these two aspects to achieve a workable and intriguing balance. As Albert Einstein wrote: "Universality is a part of real greatness."

All human beings are linked together through the timeless, universal chain of his-

tory and events. The artist is an example to others of man's innate desire for freedom of expression through the ages. Once the artist has grasped the significance of this role, the next thought inevitably follows: that art should inspire people to better themselves and the world while serving as a means of perceiving the continuum of past, present and future.

Music is the most abstract and least concrete of the arts. Sound is intangible, offering the listener unending interpretative options. Bearing some commonalities with the field of mathematics, music finds expression in numbers and a symbolic language. One common element that music shares with certain other art forms is in the performance realm. Drama, ballet, even poetry at times, all have to be communicated in real time for the art to be realized. This concept of present time, trying not to be in the past or the future (which some refer to as "being there"), is an extraordinary aspect of performance and comes into play even more so for an improvising artist.

Art is a reflection of the varieties of people and cultures throughout the world. In music, there are differences in style, instruments, and content.

When one considers, for example, geography (Greek odd-metered rhythms, Brazilian sambas, German polkas) or ethnicity (Jewish cantorial prayers, Gregorian chants, Hindu ragas), the possibilities are limitless. Hopefully, these contextual differences which one's art naturally reflects do not obscure the universal qualities that all humans feel beyond culture, religion, and politics. The variety of styles and idioms available at any given moment of history serves to function as a transitory vehicle through which the artist expresses him or herself.

Much of the power of expression in a work of art is derived from its rhythm, which is omnipresent as a direct manifestation of the ebb and flow of life. Paintings, sculpture and poetry all have rhythmic characteristics

as do the more obvious fields of music, drama, and dance. In the final analysis, rhythm is what moves people emotionally since it is basic to the human condition. Capturing a meaningful rhythm at just the right moment is a serious artistic challenge, especially in the performing arts. Rhythm exerts a major influence on the principle of tension and release, which will be discussed in a future column.

Mastering an art form is only the beginning of the artistic process. Communicating one's art to the world-at-large completes the work. This "real world" process requires desire, courage, and discipline on the artist's part in order to bring one's artistic creations to the outside world. There exists a view that the value of an artistic creation depends upon its ability to communicate.

This notion implies that the bigger the audience in attendance, or the more enthusiastic the approval it receives, etc., the higher the value of the art. Though this is arguable and dependent upon many outside factors, it does raise the point that art should somehow communicate to the lay audience. The essential consideration here is that the "ivory tower" image of artists creating masterpieces merely for themselves or for some esoteric circle is not a positive one. Communication completes the artistic process and involves an intense effort towards that goal.

The primary challenge for the artist is to decide to whom (s)he wants to communicate and to what extent. Simply put, at what level of sophistication does the artist manifest their work? Can we compare the kind of pop art that surrounds us daily to the level of emotional depth addressed, for example, by Picasso's Spanish Civil War masterpiece, "Guernica"? An artist should be aware of whom they are creating for. It could be said that one's art implies a pre-destined audience and milieu upon its very creation. The artist has already made a choice by the nature of the work itself. ☺

[To be continued]



Garth Woods

Bob Dorough



Garth Woods

Richy Barz



Garth Woods

Bill Mays



Garth Woods

Mulgrew Miller, left, and Bill Goodwin.

Jazz at ESU: Mentors and Masters Inspire Students

The Spring 2008 ESU Jazz Masters Seminar (Volume VIII) kicked off on campus in January and delivered a variety of regional jazz professionals to interact with students and the Pocono community.

The seminar, which has been taught by Associate Professor of Music Patrick Dorian since he developed and launched the course in 2000, provides students the opportunity to study the lives, music, and career accomplishments of acclaimed jazz artists in an up-close and personal format.

Among the presenters who have appeared so far this semester include: singer/pianist Bob Dorough, who

delivered the keynote lecture; pianist Bill Mays, who presented "Mays at the Movies," a look at his extensive work composing for film soundtracks; touring musician, road manager, and booking agent Richy Barz; and the team of William Paterson University music educators and veteran performers, pianist Mulgrew Miller and drummer Bill Goodwin.

The Miller/Goodwin seminar was followed on the next evening by Concert XIV of the ESU Mentors Series, featuring a quartet comprised of WPU jazz faculty colleagues Miller, Goodwin, saxophonist David Demsey, and bassist Steve LaSpina.



David Demsey, left, and Bill Goodwin

Charles Perry Hebard



Mulgrew Miller

Charles Perry Hebard



From left, Mulgrew Miller, Steve LaSpina, David Demsey, Bill Goodwin

Charles Perry Hebard

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accompany me. [They play] I am proud to have been your teacher. Now, play your song – the one my daughter loved.

This DVD set contains a bonus disc with background, concerts and information on the history and music of the period. It is available, along with many of the best European films, from Koch Lorber Films [www.kochlorberfilms.com].

The French have a way of looking at art that is beguiling and informative. I traveled to Paris in February to do a gig at the renowned jazz club, Le Duc des Lombards. It is one of the world's oldest jazz clubs and it has reopened after a long absence [due to renovations]. I always look forward to going to Chez Flo for some *fruits des mer*, a steak & frits at Entrecote, and a promenade on the Left Bank for a crêpe. A groovable feast, as it were. *Vive la France!*

Also on the agenda this year: Portugal, Sicily, and Amsterdam. And good news from my Euro-man, Jordi Suñol, who tells me that the DVD we recorded at the Jazz in Marciac Festival, *Bird with Strings & More* with the Toulouse Conservatory Orchestra and guest altoist Jesse Davis, will soon be available. Rhythm section is Reggie Johnson, bass; Doug Sides, drums; Ben Aronov, piano. Jazz in Marciac plans to issue a whole series of its concerts and they have had the best jazz artists over the years.

It is one of the few, if not the only festival to present jazz neat. No smooth, no fusion. Marciac also has perhaps the world's best jazz museum. It is very high tech, with earphones to match the tour.

We love hearing from our readership. Johnny Mandel, Buddy DeFranco, and Joe Segal have recently been in touch telling us of their fondness for our efforts. Thanks guys! Joe is the owner of the world's oldest jazz club, the Jazz Showcase in Chicago, and has always presented pure straight-ahead jazz.

The club recently lost its lease and is in the process of relocating to the landmark Dearborn Street Station at Polk Street (between Dearborn and State). The target for the grand reopening is Winter 2008.

The following was gleaned from an article by Alex Mindlin in *The New York Times* on Dec. 31, 2007:

"Macintosh owners are far more likely than PC owners to pay for a music download, according to the NPD Group, a market research firm. In the third quarter of 2007, exactly half of Mac owners paid to download music at least once, while only 16 percent of PC owners did. The data was derived from an online panel of 4,915 people and weighted to reflect the United States' online population.

"In part, the disparity reflects the ways Apple Macintosh and PC owners use their computers: Mac owners are more likely to listen to music on their computers and to upload music to digital music players. The Mac is marketed as an entertainment machine, and music and video are tightly integrated into the operating system. And, of course, the iPod is an Apple product."

I don't exactly know what this means but thought it of some interest to those of us contemplating making our music available as a download.

And this excerpt from a *Wired* magazine article by David Byrne on the demise of the CD and its implications:

"This was the system that evolved over the past century to market the product, which is to say the container – vinyl, tape, or disc – that carried the music. [Calling the product music is like selling a shopping cart and calling it groceries.]

"But many things have changed in the past decade that reduces the value of these services to artists. Recording costs have declined to almost zero. Artists used to need the labels to bankroll their recordings. Most simply didn't have the \$15,000 [minimum] necessary to rent a professional studio and pay an engineer and a producer. For many artists, maybe even most, this is no longer the case. Now an album can be made on the same laptop you use to

check email.

"Manufacturing and distribution costs are approaching zero. There used to be a break-even point below which it was impractical to distribute a recording. With LPs and CDs, there were base manufacturing costs, printing costs, shipping, and so on. It paid – in fact, it was essential – to sell in volume, because that's how many of those costs got amortized. No more: Digital distribution is pretty much free. It's no cheaper per unit to distribute a million copies than a hundred."

So that's your story on that.

It seems we have the worst drivers on the East coast. Say what you will about California and the West coast, they know how to get on a freeway and how to make turns. They know that to get on an expressway, you have to rev up to traffic speed, then slip your vehicle into a slot – and have your turn signal on! Whatever you do, you should not stop unless there is a stop sign.

One of California's great gifts to American culture is the ability to turn right on a red light. But why do people wait in front of the intersection on a green light when they want to turn left? The correct and legal way is get out into the intersection, watch for the amber light, and then, when you know you won't get creamed, make your turn. Once again, with your turn signal blinking, [Isn't it amazing the number of people too damn lazy to use this handy, informative tool?] pull out as far as possible into the intersection in the event you are not the only person in the world. The guy behind you might want to turn too!

Don't you just love what singers nowadays have done to "The Star-Spangled Banner"? Man! They really put the grits and gravy on the old girl. Why, you wouldn't even know it was our national anthem! It just gets loaded with superfluous, pointless, needless, and mindless decorations.

Why don't they re-check Aretha and Ray if they must slide around in the musical mud? Occasionally, they screw up and sing the melody but not often. It really makes me proud to be an

American – none of that old traditional stuff for this new world. Yee-haw!! Kate Smith lives!

Phil Ramone's new book is must reading for anyone who loves music. It is called *Making Records: The Scenes Behind the Music*, written by Phil with Charles L. Granata [Hyperion]. I started reading it and didn't put it down until I finished it! An absolutely superb look at 50-plus years of making music, great music!

One of the new smooth-famous-rich jazz alto players told his drummer that he finally checked out Charlie Parker.

"Guess what? The man plays the same phrases I do but he plays them faster."

Wow! Humbling! Almost as stupid as Kenny G telling an interviewer that the reason they called Mr. Parker "Bird" was because he squeaked.

I am going for a walk and a talk

with myself. Man! We have come a long way since Monsieur de Sainte Colombe! Abiento!

P.S. A friendly reminder. As you know, even up is going up. *The NOTE* is one of the few remaining free music magazines, maybe the only one. Our postal costs are becoming a problem, especially due to a growing overseas demand. So please help us defray our expenses by contributing a little something. ☺

Happy Leahey

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"The one who stands out most in my mind, though, is Harry Leahey. Everyone who has heard him play agrees that he is the Johnny Smith of the '70s. They've all done quite well, even local guitarists like Jimmy DeAngelis and Pat Mahoney, who are two excellent players who just need breaks. The biggest Mondays were ones when we featured Pat Martino, Harry Leahey, Bucky Pizzarelli, and the combination of Chuck Wayne with Joe Puma."

In April 1973 Leahey was involved in Don Sebesky's *Giant Box* project. Sebesky, who along with Bob James was a house arranger for Creed Taylor's CTI label, had assembled an all-star cast for this ambitious project. This double LP featured such CTI stars as flutist Hubert Laws, trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, saxophonist Joe Farrell, and guitarist George Benson.

Leahey was heard, albeit faintly, on a medley of Igor Stravinsky's "Firebird" and John McLaughlin's "Birds Of Fire." For this recording project, the Yamaha Corporation provided Leahey with a custom-built 12-string guitar. The guitar is currently in the possession of James Leahey, Harry's eldest son and an excellent guitarist in his own right. Unfortunately, Leahey's work on this track was confined to section playing. In fact, the twelve-string guitar sound could easily be mistaken for a harpsichord.

Leahey told me that Sebesky had recorded a tribute to Wes Montgomery, another CTI artist, who died in 1968. Sadly, that track was not released. One can only speculate about the effect that a release of that performance might have had on Harry Leahey's career.

In 1974 Leahey began teaching guitar in the jazz studies program at William Paterson State College. He was one of the first adjunct professors in the jazz department. He continued to teach there until 1988.

Leahey also performed with pianist John Coates, Jr. He appeared on Coates' 1981 OmniSound LP, *Pocono Friends*. From 1974 to 1978 drummer Buddy Deppen-

schmidt led a band called Jazz Renaissance which, according to *The New Grove's Dictionary of Jazz*, "at various times included Coates, Richie Cole, Mike Melillo, and the guitarist Harry Leahey."

In the mid 1970s Leahey also performed with bassist Jack Six. The duo made several appearances at Sweet Basil in New York City. When guitarist John Scofield left Gerry Mulligan in 1976, Six recommended Leahey to Mulligan. Six recalls that Mulligan was "knocked out" by Leahey, who subsequently performed with Mulligan's band at five or six engagements. Deborah Leahey recalled seeing her father perform with Mulligan at Carnegie Hall but no documentation has surfaced as to the date of that concert.

Harry Leahey did perform at Carnegie Hall with the Phil Woods Quintet. As part of the Newport Jazz Festival, the Maynard Ferguson Orchestra and the Phil Woods Quintet shared the bill at a midnight concert on June 28, 1977. In 1978 Leahey left the Phil Woods Quintet.

Again, Woods: "Harry didn't stay with us that long. Harry was not a road rat. He made a couple of tours, but he actually was a family man and he preferred teaching. He preferred staying home and teaching. He didn't like those long days in the motel room watching CNN. That was not his bag. And I can dig it."

The May 19, 1978, issue of the central New Jersey newspaper, the *Courier-News*, ran a feature on Harry Leahey entitled "Guitar Teacher Harry Leahey Looks at His Performing as Just a Hobby," written by staff writer Kenneth Best.

Best referred to Leahey as "a musician who is most at home conveying his knowledge to students rather than performing on stage." He quoted Leahey as referring to live performing as "a hobby." According to Leahey in this article, he had been added to the group for the *Live From the Showboat* album at the request of producer Norman Schwartz and was originally "just supposed to do the album."

Harry's humility and respect for Phil Woods came out when he stated: "It took me a while to get used to playing with Phil. He had been someone that I had listened to for years. I had a hard time holding my pick." Of course, anyone who had ever seen Leahey perform could attest to the fact that he certainly had no trouble holding his pick!

The article goes on to describe the making of *Song for Sisyphus*, released in 1978 by Gryphon but listed in the article as a Century release. The album was recorded "direct-to-disk," meaning that the group had to play the entire set with no mistakes!

"We had to make three (disk) masters because each one can only produce a limited number of copies," Leahey said. "It took us 11 hours and there were many starts. The music is all the stuff we were playing on the road, but it was still difficult."

Deborah Leahey stated that her father did not enjoy recording, so this session must have been quite a chore for him. On this album he contributes a beautiful solo rendition of "Nuages" as well as burning solos on the title track and several others.

Although the article does not give an exact date to Leahey's departure from the Woods band, it states that "earlier this year [he] had to decide whether to stay on the road for the 200 days per year Woods required or return full-time to his students and his family." Leahey, of course, chose the latter. His explanation for his decision is a somewhat sad commentary on the musician's lot in the field of jazz performance. One must look at his statement in light of the fact that he was performing with a winner of the *Down Beat*, *Playboy*, and *Metro-nome* polls and with a Grammy Award-winning band.

"It was a really great year," Leahey said in the *Courier-News* article. "I think my playing improved and I learned more in that time than in all my years studying. But to survive playing jazz and trying to support a family is difficult. Being on the road all the time is not always a very good life. It takes tremendous energy. Most of the [jazz] money today is in the schools."

He went on to plug a gig he was holding down on Thursdays at a club called TJ's in Meyersville, New Jersey. Upon his return from the road, Leahey found the demand for his tutelage extremely high. "Now I'm teaching five days a week, sometimes 12 hours a day."

At the time of this article, he had recently recorded with Michel Legrand on the *Legrand Jazz* album, released in 1978 on the Gryphon label. After Leahey stopped touring with the Phil Woods Quintet, he resumed playing with his In Free Association band mates Cumming and Davis. It was this band that was at TJ's (although neither Davis nor Cumming remembered the name of the club.)

The 1980s began with great promise for Leahey. His association with Phil Woods, including his participation on a Grammy Award-winning LP, had given him greater name recognition.

As he had stated in the *Courier-News* article, he was now carrying a tremendous teaching load. In addition to his private students, he served on the jazz faculty at William Paterson. He was also playing a fair number of jazz gigs. Listings in the *New York Times* announced performances with his trio, with Ron Naspo, and as a soloist.

In March of 1981, Leahey was profiled in the *Newark Star-Ledger* newspaper. George Kanzler, the paper's jazz critic, stated that while Leahey's name doesn't appear in the *Encyclopedia of Jazz*, "the omission is an error on the part of the encyclopedia's editors, for Harry Leahey is a terrific jazz guitarist and the leader of one of the finest small combos in this area, as well as a near legendary guitar teacher who has influenced dozens of younger jazz and rock guitarists in New Jersey."

He then went on to praise a performance by Leahey's trio with a guest appearance by saxophonist Leo Johnson. He singled out a rendition of "Sweet and Lovely." Of note in this profile is the statement from Leahey that when he studied with Johnny Smith, Smith "liked me so much he never took a dime from me."

On June 30, 1981, Leahey performed at the sixth annual jazz picnic sponsored by the New Jersey Jazz Society and presented as part of the Kool Jazz Festival. He appeared as part of the Don Elliott Quintet, which also included pianist Derek Smith. A *New York Times* review called the set a "bright contrast to the dominant traditional tone of the day" and was noted for performances of "My Funny Valentine" and "Here's that Rainy Day."

He continued to be featured at Gulliver's, as well as other New Jersey venues such as the Plainfield Public Library; Seton Hall University (where on March 25, 1982, his trio split the bill with a duo of his brother-in-law, Tom Anthony, and his son, James Leahey, performing classical duets); William Paterson College; the William Carlos Williams Center in Rutherford; the Unitarian Fellowship in Morristown, and the Small World Jazz Café in Hoboken.

On March 18, 1984, Leahey gave a solo concert at the Oldwick Community Center which was recorded. It contained his versions of standard tunes, including "I Concentrate on You," "St. Louis Blues," "Stardust," "My Funny Valentine," "C Jam Blues," "Embraceable You," "You Stepped out of a Dream," "All the Things You Are," "Strings and Things," and "Satin Doll."

In these performances, Leahey displayed his mastery of the solo jazz guitar idiom. In his melody statements and improvised choruses he moved effortlessly

between block chords, single notes, octaves, melodies with chord accompaniments, and two- and three-part polyphony.

In "St. Louis Blues," he moved the melody seamlessly between registers, from the treble accompanied by lower chords to the bass with chords on the top, much as a pianist might. He opened "My Funny Valentine" with a classically influenced arrangement that took full advantage of open strings within rich chords. He then played a chorus of the melody as a waltz followed by an improvised chorus containing all the aforementioned elements. A modulation up a whole step led into the out chorus with a tag in 3/4 time.

Although the influences of Wes Montgomery, Barney Kessel, Joe Pass, and Johnny Smith were evident, Leahey never imitated. Even while playing within the tradition of these great players, he always maintained his own unique identity. In both the melody and improvised choruses of "C Jam Blues," he turned the guitar into a miniature big band.

Between 1984 and 1986, in addition to leading the Harry Leahey Trio, performing solo, and performing with Ronnie Naspo, Leahey performed with a trio consisting of himself, organist Dave Braham and drummer Ronnie Glick

Glick, a Plainfield native, had moved back to North Plainfield, New Jersey. Within two weeks of having moved there, he noticed a sign outside of Jones Chateau, a local club, advertising live organ trio jazz. He went into the club and found that he knew the club's owner, Willie Jones, from the Newark jazz club scene. Glick had worked for Jones when he was the manager of the Cadillac club. The two of them struck up a conversation. Jones knew who Harry Leahey was and Glick told him that he could bring an organ trio into the club. Jones booked the trio for a steady Tuesday night. After about a year, he added Thursday nights, too.

The group continued at the club for about three years, including a sudden and disturbing interruption in 1985 when Leahey suffered a heart attack. During his recuperation, guitarists Vinnie Corrao, Bob DeVos, and others subbed for him. Harry's quick recovery allowed him to return to the gig after only a few weeks.

During the trio's extended gig at Jones Chateau, musicians – both local and well-known – would stop by to hear the trio. Fortunately, a small number of unsued recordings exist of this group. In these recordings, one can hear an extremely cohesive and swinging group. All three musicians contributed equally to the overall sound and demonstrated their abilities both as ensemble players and as true virtuosi in the jazz idiom. Leahey was featured on "Body and Soul." He proved in this performance that his harmonic, melodic and rhythmic masteries of the jazz guitar were second to none.

During this time period the group also performed regularly at O'Connor's Inn on Amwell Road in Som-

erset, New Jersey. In addition to trio gigs, the group also hosted a guest artist series. The headliners who appeared with the group were Al Cohn (who did two evenings with the trio), David (Fathead) Newman, and Lou Donaldson.

Again, fortunately, a recording survives of the Donaldson performance. Performing tunes such as Charlie Parker's "Billie's Bounce," the four musicians didn't sound like a local house rhythm section performing behind a "star," but rather like four peers, four masters of jazz. Another venue where Leahey performed in the 1980s was The Cornerstone in Metuchen, New Jersey, where he played as a duo, both with Ronnie Naspo and with cornetist Warren Vaché.

On November 8, 1987, Karen Leahey succumbed to a long illness. This was the second blow to a man for whom the future had looked so bright just a few short years earlier.

On April 24, 1988, Leahey participated with pianist Derek Smith's sextet in a concert presented by the New Jersey Jazz Society at the Hunterdon Hills Playhouse in Hampton, New Jersey. The group also included trumpeter Randy Sandke, saxophonist Harry Allen, bassist John Goldsby, and drummer Chuck Riggs.

Afterwards, Harry went to visit his old friend Edie Eustice. After spending the evening together, Harry told Edie that he would call her and he left. But the next day, he went to the Veteran's Administration Hospital in Watchung, New Jersey, where he was diagnosed with stage-four cancer.

Four days later, Edie asked her friend, singer Rosemary Conti, if she had seen Harry. Rosemary told her that Harry was still in the hospital recovering from surgery. According to Edie, Leahey began to study macrobiotic cooking as a way to help him fight his illness but it was Edie and Harry's mother who actually did the cooking.

Harry Leahey touched many people's lives and there were several benefits held to raise money to help defray his medical expenses. On June 5, 1988, a marathon benefit concert was held at the Strand Music Mall in Hackettstown, New Jersey. Among the participants were Phil Woods, pianist Barry Miles and guitarist Vic Juris. On July 11, 1988, there was a benefit concert at Gulliver's, which had moved to Lincoln Park, New Jersey. Among the performers were guitarists Tal Farlow and Vic Juris, saxophonists Bennie Wallace, Harry Allen and Tom Hamilton, clarinetist Kenny Davern, pianists Keith MacDonald, Morris Nanton and Rio Clemente, singers Grover Kemple and Kit Moran, and others.

Harry Leahey had expressed a hope that he would be able to play right up to the end. Between his diagnosis in 1988 and his death in 1990, he performed regularly at Trumpets in Montclair, at Café D'Angelico, also in Montclair, and at numerous other venues, including Zanzibar in New York City.

Harry Leahey

During this time period, he frequently performed in a duo setting with bassists Gary Mazzaroppi and Rick Crane as well as with his trio. He was the first-call sub for Tal Farlow, whose base of activity was at the New Jersey shore. He also got together with veteran jazz guitarist Chuck Wayne for informal sessions.

On September 15, 1989, he performed at the Watchung Arts Center in Watchung, New Jersey. On June 8, 1990, he performed there again in a duo with Gary Mazzaroppi. Readers of the June 1990 Watchung Arts Center newsletter were advised to make reservations for this performance.

"When Harry Leahey picks up his guitar," the newsletter stated, "the packed hall goes quiet. His nimble fingers dance over the strings in seemingly effortless sweeps. Yet the sound that emerges is lively, circling around the melody as he improvises his own interpretations of recognizable tunes. At the end of the evening, the crowd is reluctant to let him go."

On June 24, 1990, Harry participated in George Wein's JVC Jazz Festival, performing in the Super Jazz Picnic at Waterloo Village, Stanhope, New Jersey. Leahey shared the bill with such players as Flip Phillips, Dave McKenna, Jake Hanna, Kenny Davern, Frank Vignola, Randy Sandke, Ken Peplowski, Buck Clayton, and others. On Monday, July 16, 1990, Leahey made his last appearance with In Free Association, at Trumpets.

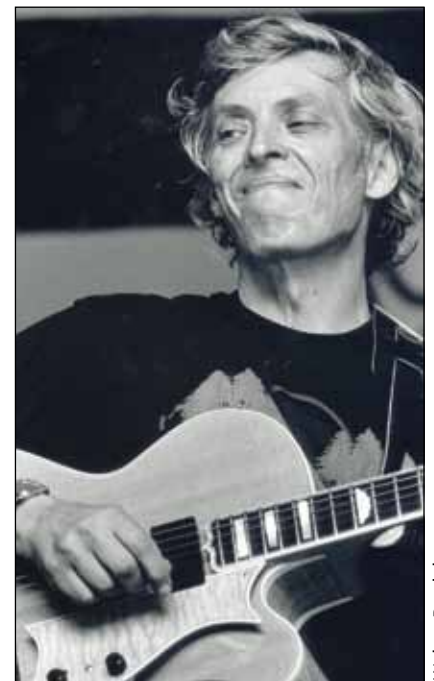
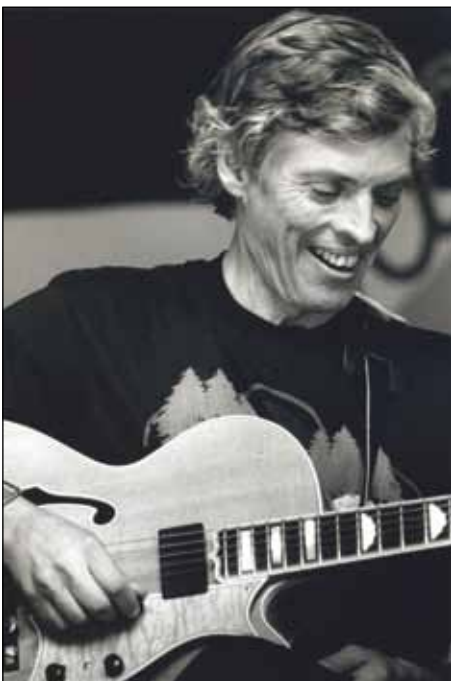
On Saturday, July 28, 1990, he performed at Café D'Angelico with Gary Mazzaroppi, who said: "His playing was brilliant despite a fluid retention problem that made him swollen and uncomfortable. It was impossible for Harry to ever sound bad."

The following day Leahey entered Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital in New Brunswick, New Jersey. On Sunday August 12, 1990, Harry Leahey died.

Although he received very little critical notoriety, fellow musicians were unanimous in their praises for Harry Leahey.

"Harry was a master," said Glenn Davis. "The most complete guitarist I ever heard," said Vinnie Corrao. "I was flabbergasted by his playing," said Warren Vaché. "He was the top of the heap. He was the best guitar player that I had ever played with and I played with every [one]," said Phil Woods. "I don't think there'll ever be another Harry Leahey," said Jack Six. "He was a great guitarist and a very beautiful man," said Leo Johnson.

Over the course of a 30-year career as New Jersey's premier guitar teacher, Harry Leahey taught thousands of students, many of whom went on to successful careers. Among his former students are such accomplished musicians as Vic Juris, Bob DeVos, Jon Herington, Warren Vaché, Jack Six, Walt Bibinger, Larry Barbee, Chuck Loeb, Jeff Mironov, Donovan Mixon, and Tom Kozić. ☺



Walter Breidel

Harry Leahey, 1989

Readers, Please Take Note

Library Alive Concert Series:

The Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection has partnered with the Delaware Water Gap Celebration of the Arts organization (COTA) and the Sherman Theater in Stroudsburg, PA to establish a concert series to regularly perform the Collection's inventory of vintage jazz sheet music. *The Library Alive* concert series was launched on April 13 with a concert by Phil Woods and the COTA Festival Orchestra showcasing the music of Al Cohn. Proceeds from the concert benefited the ACMJC and the COTA Fund for Young Musicians for COTA CampJazz [www.cotacampjazz.org]. A second *Library Alive* concert is planned at the Sherman Theater [www.shermantheater.com] in the fall.

Mark Your Calendars:

In a related effort to publicly perform music from the Collection, there will be several other opportunities this year to hear "sounds from the archive." For starters, the ESU Jazz Ensemble, under the direction of Jim Daniels, has been rehearsing two Al Cohn compositions for its annual spring concert on Sunday April 27 at 7 p.m. in ESU's Cohen Recital Hall. For more info, call 570-422-3483 or visit www.esu.edu. Also, Phil Woods and the COTA Festival Orchestra will perform classic Al Cohn charts at two popular regional jazz festivals this summer: the Scranton Jazz Festival, which is slated for Aug. 1-3 [www.pajazzalliance.com], and the Delaware Water Gap Celebration of the Arts Festival, which will be held Sept. 5-7 [www.cotajazz.org].

CDs Hit The Shelves:

Thanks to the yeoman efforts of work-study student Jon Erb, more than 650 classic jazz CDs have been inventoried, labeled and added to the ACMJC's music shelves in Kemp Library – with more to come. Students, musicians and jazz fans alike are invited to visit the Collection to listen to the ACMJC's recordings on the adjacent listening equipment. For Kemp Library's hours of operation, call 570-422-3465 or visit www.esu.edu/library.

Oral History Inventory Expands:

We were delighted in February for the opportunity to record an oral history interview with legendary jazz performer, film composer, arranger, and producer Johnny Mandel. The taped conversation has been proudly entered into the ACMJC Oral History inventory for the benefit of future generations of scholars, historians, researchers and jazz enthusiasts. Thanks, Johnny, for taking the time to share your wonderful recollections with us!

The ACMJC Is On the Air:

If you are within earshot of WESS 90.3 FM, the campus radio station of East Stroudsburg University, don't forget to tune in every Wednesday from 10 a.m. until Noon for *Jazz From A to Z*. Co-hosted by Bill Hopkins and Bob Bush, the program regularly features the music of Al and Zoot plus the recordings of all the other great jazz artists represented in the Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection. And if you live outside of the Pocono area of Pennsylvania, try listening on the web at www.esu.edu/wess.

Mailbag

The NOTE - Fall 2007 is a winner, from Herb Snitzer's front-cover Basie to his back-cover Monk. The Dorrough stuff is fascinating and Phil's session descriptions are priceless. One correction, however: Rudy Van Gelder's first studio was built into his parent's living room, and it was not in Englewood but in Hackensack. That's why Monk's piece was so-titled.

And now for a real nit-pick: the baritone saxophonist in the Kenton centerfold is Jack Nimitz, not Nimetz. Second however – what a great issue!

Ira Gitler, New York City

Regretfully, I must have missed the boat in trying to describe Al Cohn's "Ellingtonia" approach. "Miking" had nothing to do with it. He simply divided the sections into "mixed" instruments rather than sax, trumpet and 'bone divisions.

For example: Section A: 1 sax, 2 bones, 1 trumpet

Section B: 2 saxes, 1 bone, 2 trumpets

Section C: 1 sax, 1 bone, 1 trumpet

Then, when a "normal" type of breakdown took place, the result had a texture that suggested Duke Ellington's approach.

Again, my best and I look forward to subsequent issues of *The NOTE*.

Judd Woldin, New York City

[Editor's note: The word "miking" in Judd's previous Mailbag letter was an editing mistake. The NOTE regrets the error.]

I'd like to mention something about Al Cohn that gives a peek into his musical thinking and intellection in the area of composing. There is a progression called a deceptive, or interrupted, cadence; it most often goes from the chord on the fifth step to that on the sixth (a minor chord); in pop tunes it is often varied as: II7-III7-VI. This adds a nice touch to routine

vamp (A) sections in standard pop tunes – and most of the instrumental pieces to be mentioned here. Al recorded "Suddenly It's Spring," which starts right off with this, which is rather unusual. Al composed pieces which laid out this progression beginning a bar with each chord lasting a half bar basically in a different part of the (A) section in: "Medicine Man," by Herbie Steward (who is the only sax on this); "Battleground" by Five Brothers (where it starts right off but differently); "Willie the Weeper" and "For Adults Only" which were both with Miles Davis; "So Far, So Good" under his own name, and "El's Bells" by Elliot Lawrence. A different wrinkle in the use of this is in "Jazz Lullaby" by Lawrence and "Mama Flossie" by Al. Al placed this progression at a different spot in almost every piece. I believe that Al plays on all of these and has solos on most, if not all.

Bob Zieff, Carlisle, Pa.

P.S. I enjoy reading Phil's thoughts and about his travels, along with the interviews and other types of articles. Phil's mention of the meeting of Michel Legrand and Manny Albam reminded me of something I had almost forgotten. Manny and I were in the army together. When we met, he had recently had a machine gun blow up in his hand while in training (he had bits of it in his hand). But he got back to playing baritone sax in bands.

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Readers, we love hearing from you! Just make sure you mark somewhere on your correspondence that it is intended as a "Mailbag" letter (so we know that it's not a personal note), and include your name, city and state/country. Send it to: Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection – Kemp Library, 200 Prospect St., East Stroudsburg, PA 18301. If you send your letter via email, put "Mailbag" in the subject line. Our email address is: alcohncollection@esu.edu. Please note that due to space limitations, those letters selected for publication may be edited.

Contributors & Acknowledgements

For additional information about contributors to this issue of *The NOTE*, you can visit their websites:

Patrick Dorian – www.esu.edu/~pdorian

David Liebman – www.davidliebman.com

Phil Woods – www.philwoods.com

Special thanks to:

Philip M. (Flip) Peters for allowing us the opportunity to publish a portion of his Rutgers University master's thesis on guitarist/teacher Harry Leahey; Edie Eustice and Walter Bredel, for contributing a selection of excellent photos to accompany the Harry Leahey article; Ira Gitler, for donating the audio recording of the Al Cohn question and answer session from the mid '80s; Rick Chamberlain, for donating the vintage photos that accompany the Al Cohn transcript; Jack Reilly, for his heartfelt tribute article and interview of Al Schoonmaker, Jack's favorite copyist; Joe Warwick and Herb Snitzer, respectively, for their wonderful centerfold and back cover photos; and, photographers Garth Woods and Charles Perry Hebard, for capturing jazz history-in-the-making at the ESU Jazz Masters Seminar and Mentors Concert.

About the Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection

Long-time readers of *The NOTE* are no doubt very familiar with the history and makeup of the ACMJC. However, we're delighted to be adding new recipients to our mailing list on a regular basis. So, for those of you who may be just getting acquainted with us, here's a bit of general background information to let you know about this valuable ESU educational resource.

The Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection was established in 1988 to honor the life and legacy of "Mr. Music," Al Cohn – saxophonist, arranger, composer and Pocono neighbor. The collection is located on the ground level of ESU's Kemp Library and consists of donated jazz recordings, books, periodicals, oral histories, sheet music, art, photographs, memorabilia and ephemera. All styles and eras of jazz are represented in the Collection, with a special emphasis on the preservation and documentation of Al Cohn's music, his long-time association with Zoot Sims, and the contributions of the many jazz musicians considered to be influences, colleagues, disciples, admirers and friends of Al.

There are also several special collections within the ACMJC. The Pocono Jazz Heritage Collection maintains the history of the fertile jazz community here in the Pocono Mountains, through recordings, documents, photographs and a complete set of videos from the ESU Jazz Masters Seminar and Mentor Concert Series. The thousands of exceptional recordings in the Coover Gazdar Collection reflect the life-long love of jazz of this avid record collector and dis-

cographer. The Eddie Safranski Collection contains personal materials from the acclaimed bassist who played with the Charlie Barnet and Stan Kenton orchestras in the 1940s and worked as a music director for NBC in the 1950s and 1960s.

Materials in the collections are available year-round to students, researchers, musicians, journalists, educators and jazz enthusiasts, and are used as part of the ACMJC's outreach activities, such as the publication and world-wide distribution of *The NOTE* three times per year.

The ACMJC Needs Your Support!

Donations to the ACMJC are gratefully accepted and help to sustain the Collection and *The NOTE*. Corporate matching gifts are very welcome too! Please make all checks payable to "ESU Foundation – ACMJC" and mail them to:

ACMJC – Kemp Library
East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania
200 Prospect St.
East Stroudsburg, PA 18301-2999

To donate materials, please call the Collection Coordinator at 570-422-3828 or send email to alcohncollection@esu.edu. And to all those who have so generously contributed to the ACMJC in the past, please accept our heartfelt thanks!

For more information, visit the ACMJC website at www.esu.edu/alcohncollection.





Photo by Herb Snitzer

Woody Herman, Nat Pierce, Al Cohn, Flip Phillips, Peabody, MA c. 1983-84