



The NOTE



Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania • Winter/Spring 2009



AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHNNY MANDEL • KIM PARKER & RED MITCHELL • JOHN WILLIAMS

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From the Collection . . .



Cover Photo (front): Trombonist Jim Daniels, performing with the COTA Festival Orchestra at Library Alive Concert II, Sherman Theater, Stroudsburg, PA, November 10, 2008, by Charles Perry Hebard.



Centerfold Photo: Legendary bassists Milt Hinton, left, and Ray Brown, Denver, CO, September 1, 1991, by Jane Eddy, donated by Ms. Eddy.



Cover Photo (back): Al Cohn performing in the Elliot Lawrence Orchestra, with Al Porcino shown in background, location and photographer unknown, 1952, donated by Tom Riley.



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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

by Phil Woods

Yes we can!
To quote the new Prez: "Thinking about the diversity of our culture and inviting jazz musicians, and classical musicians, and poetry readings into the White House so that once again we appreciate this incredible tapestry that's America, you know, that, I think, is going to be incredibly important, particularly because we're going through hard times."

I do a lot of work at DePaul University in Chicago and Dan Dufford is their pianist. He also gives lessons to both Obama girls. Considering how busy the Obama family was in January, it was amazing, to say nothing of very thoughtful of them, that they sent Dan and his wife a personal invitation to attend the inauguration ceremony. They were on the lawn of the White House!

I worked with the DePaul band in February and Jim McNeely did a chart on one of my tunes, "A Child's Blues." This tune was composed for the Ramblerny Jazz Camp in the '60s. The sax section at Ramblerny included Roger Rosenberg, baritone sax on *The Children's Suite* on Jazzed Media [now available from philwoods.com through Lady Jill], Richie Cole on alto and Mike Brecker on tenor. Also, a little kid by the name of Rick Chamberlain on trombone. Rick contracted the

Yes We Can!

Children's Suite band for the recording and the Sherman Theater TV show soon to be a DVD. Jim McNeely has been involved in writing and arranging for quite a few big band projects since the 1990s.

As noted in the jazz website *All About Jazz* [www.allaboutjazz.com], he was recently appointed artist-in-residence with the Hessian Radio Big Band in Frankfurt, Germany, following intensive collaborations with the Danish Radio Jazz Orchestra, the Metropole Orchestra (Netherlands), the West German Radio (WDR) Big Band and the Stockholm Jazz Orchestra.

A new administration, and a New Year, and the Phil Woods Quintet proudly announces that we have a new piano player. Bill Mays has been helping us out for years when Bill Charlap was unavailable but now he is the official pianist. Welcome aboard, Bill! Gigs are a little light but I remember when Jim McNeely joined the band and all we had gig-wise were a Local 802 wedding for Carl Gianelli and a benefit for the Red Cross. That year we were voted the Number 1 jazz group! It's tough at the top!

Recently from *The New York Times*: "A call for President-elect Barack Obama to give the arts and humanities a cabinet-level post – perhaps even create a secretary of culture – is gaining momentum. By yesterday, 76,000 people had signed an online petition, started by two New York musicians who were inspired by producer Quincy Jones. In a radio interview in Novem-

ber, Jones said the country needed a minister of culture, like France, Germany or Finland has. And he said he would 'beg' Obama to establish the post."

I just spoke with Quincy and he is working hard to form a board to help select the best person for the job. He wants my input and I will be delighted to be a part of this important mission.

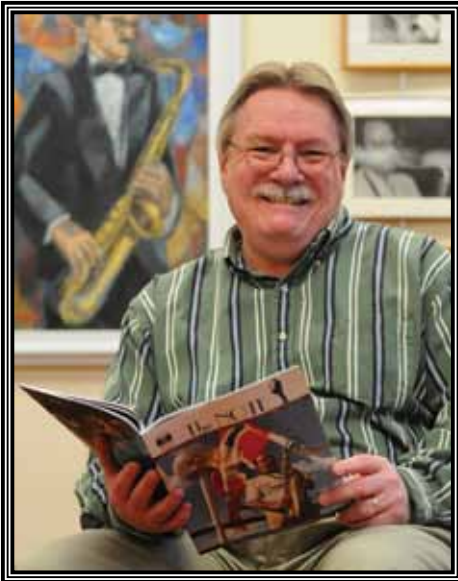
Quincy also told me that bassist Buddy Catlett is not doing well at all. In addition to Buddy and Q, Clark Terry, Joe Harris and I are the only remaining members of Quincy's 1959 band. And Q, Charlie Persip, Benny Golson and I are the last members of the 1956 Dizzy band.

More bad news: Johnny Griffin, David "Fathead" Newman, Hank Crawford and Joe Lopes (who played with Q's '61 edition) have all died. On top of losing Freddy Hubbard and my old Juilliard guru, Hal Stein, it is all very hard to bear.

I heard from Barbara Lopes before and after my dear friend Joe's death. Joe and I were kids together back in Springfield, MA, before we played on Quincy's band. He also played with Supersax and contracted many dates in Los Angeles. He broke his back two years ago and had been in excruciating pain ever since. Barbara was in desperate financial straits but due to the generosity of the gang she is doing better. I am hoping that some more of you can help her. She can be reached at the following address:

Barbara Lopes
18235 Cantara St.
Reseda, CA 91335

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Charles Perry Hebard

A Heart-Warming Display of Generosity

by Bob Bush

The recent response to the first-ever ACMJC fundraising appeal has been extremely gratifying. Thanks so much to those of you who have sent donations to help

keep the ACMJC and *The NOTE* afloat! Your generous gifts are much needed to ensure that the Collection remains a viable academic resource for ESU students and that *The NOTE* continues to serve its mission as a primary educational outreach vehicle, showcasing such historically significant ACMJC holdings as the oral history interviews and vintage jazz photographs. Of course, I fully realize that some of you sent money just to make sure that *Phil in the Gap* continues to arrive in your mailbox on a regular basis! Actually, I can't think of a much better reason to make an annual donation.

Although ESU provides financial support for some of the ongoing expenses of *The NOTE* and the ACMJC, special collections at all universities are typically dependent on external funding for their ongoing maintenance and growth. That's why your generous gifts to the Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection are so appreciated. Donation revenues are used to pay for the ever-escalating printing costs for the three annual editions of *The NOTE*. If there is money left in the coffers after that, we use it to buy essential preservation materials for the recordings, music manuscripts, photos, books, and other historic holdings of the Collection. In the past, we've also used donation money to buy much-needed shelving, storage cabinets, and to upgrade the listening and viewing equipment in the ACMJC area in Kemp Library.

There are many different reasons for giving; certainly, it is a personal decision to lend your hard-earned financial support to the ACMJC. Some people donate to honor the memory of Al Cohn and his many musical cohorts, who left us with so much wonderful jazz to enjoy. Others want to ensure that jazz history is preserved for educating today's students and future generations. Many readers of *The NOTE* send gifts to show their appreciation for the columns, articles, interviews and photographs that bring them enjoyment, perhaps an occasional chuckle, and often conjure warm memories of past jazz experiences.

Although we will never be able to continue this project without monetary gifts, there are other important ways to support the ACMJC. For starters, we depend on readers like you to spread the word about *The NOTE* so that we can continually expand our mailing list with recipients who may eventually become donors. Also, our growing inventory of vintage jazz artifacts depends on donations of materials from our supporters. Sometimes, jazz collectors plan ahead by adding the ACMJC as a codicil to their will. We also appreciate people who volunteer their time to help out here at the library with various Collection tasks and special projects. And we definitely need audiences for our WESS radio programs and the expanding number of jazz performances, especially the Library Alive concerts and other ESU Jazz Synergy Series events.

So, just remember: it's never too late to donate! To those of you who have recently responded to our 2008 appeal letter, as well as the many others who have donated to the ACMJC in the past, thank you for your thoughtfulness and generosity. And those of you who have enjoyed receiving *The NOTE* but have not yet made a contribution, please consider sending us a small donation to help us preserve jazz history and honor America's classical music. ☺



Charles Perry Hebard

by Patrick Dorian

A few things to acknowledge before we ramble up Route 209 ... Congratulations to Matt Vashlishan and Davey Lantz IV, two former COTA Cats who have come up through our local Pocono jazz conduit and have just been recognized internationally as recipients of a 2009 ASCAP Foundation Young Jazz Composer Award.

Matt is a 26-year-old graduate assistant pursuing his doctorate at the Frost School of Music of the University of Miami. Davey is 17, a high school senior, and has plans to enter a jazz studies program at one of the fine music schools in the nation.

The ASCAP juried national competition provides significant cash awards to the winners as well as recognition during the annual ASCAP Jazz Wall of Fame ceremony at Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York City on June 16.

David "Fathead" Newman and Freddie Hubbard will be remembered fondly by ESU students and our community. We have great memories of their lectures and performances on campus; Fathead in February 2006 and Freddie in April 1992.

Plaudits & Pocono Pockets

Pocono Pockets of Jazz: Part Four

Paul Rostock's first steady gig in the Poconos was in the summer of 1975 at Fernwood resort, after which he would stop by at Werry's Pub, and Paul recalls that Werry's was *happening!*

That's where he first met Jerry Harris, Rick Chamberlain (1975 was Rick's first Werry's "landing"), Bud Nealy, Wolfgang Knittel, drummer Butch Tucker, and Nancy and Spencer Reed. This is the same performance space where Denny Carrig, now co-owner of the Deer Head Inn, used to hear the ubiquitous Mr. Harris with Eric Doney.

One of the bartenders at Werry's was Ruth Lucie. She lent house drummer Bud Nealy a Johnny "Guitar" Watson 1976 LP entitled *Ain't That a Bitch*. Intensive research has exposed the possibility that "Guitar" in this case might have been pronounced "GUI-tah." Perhaps further research could be a catalyst for a multi-million dollar congressional grant, so write your congressperson today!

Bud passed the LP around to a specific cadre of musicians who listened intently, leading to the formation of the important Pocono-based ensemble, Asparagus Sunshine. The title track from Watson's LP was central to one of Asparagus Sunshine's legends. The band was performing it at an assembly program for the young students at the Catholic elementary school in Canadensis, PA and didn't recognize the potential inappropriateness of verbalizing the contents of this song to the children. Perhaps they

were caught off-guard because it was too early in the day, or chalk it up to the un-politically correct late '70s.

The Murray family has owned and operated the Hillside Inn, just north of Marshall's Creek, for several decades. A pioneering American entity, this resort hosted African-American families (and all families) for many decades, especially the decades when inclusion might not have been encouraged at other properties.

More information about the Hillside may be accessed by listening to an interesting 25-minute interview broadcast on National Public Radio at www.npr.org. Simply enter "Sammy Davis, Jr.'s 'Music, Money, Madness'" into the "search NPR" box.

The Murray patriarch, "The Judge," and the matriarch, "Momma," along with their son, "Sonny," established a legacy of kindness and ebullience of the highest order. When I would invite jazz dignitaries to share their history with the ESU community and then perform formal concerts with the University Jazz Ensemble, the highlights of their Pocono experience were engaging our students and staying at the Hillside.

Momma would make her Hawaiian chicken and ribs (SHHHH! Secret recipe! Not even Freddie Hubbard could get the well-protected culinary info while having second and third helpings at midnight in April 1992) and the finest of breakfasts. Our honored guests included Clark Terry (three times), Al Grey, Freddie Hubbard, Benny Carter, Jimmy Heath, Robin Eubanks, Stanley Turrentine, Steve Turre and Benny Golson.

Continued on Page 34

From the ACMJC Oral History Project: An Interview with Johnny Mandel

Johnny Mandel decided early in his career that he wanted to write all kinds of music for all kinds of situations. This passionate focus on “doing everything” has resulted in a lifetime of remarkable projects involving jazz big bands, television programs, Las Vegas shows and night club acts, Hollywood films, studio recording sessions and much more.

Born in New York City in 1925, one day before the birth of Al Cohn, Johnny was a musical prodigy who learned many instruments and began writing arrangements in his early teens. He played trumpet and later trombone in a host of legendary big bands, including those of Henry Jerome, Joe Venuti, Boyd Raeburn, Jimmy Dorsey, Georgie Auld, Buddy Rich, Alvin Rey, Chubby Jackson, Elliot Lawrence and Count Basie.

His charts for Woody Herman, Artie Shaw and Basie in the late forties and fifties brought him prominence as an arranger. He continued over the course of a long musical career to contribute classic arrangements to countless jazz and popular musicians and singers, including such acclaimed artists as Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, Barbra Streisand, Vic Damone and Shirley Horn.

Johnny eventually gave up playing in favor of arranging, his true love, and settled in southern California in the mid-fifties to pursue a full-time career writing music. Although he says initially he had no interest in writing “songs,” his film compositions “Emily” and “The Shadow of Your Smile” have become American standards, and his “Theme from M*A*S*H” has become instantly familiar to generations of television viewers world-wide. He is admired by his peers as a master craftsman and a creative catalyst in a wide array of musical settings.

In this interview conducted on February 12, 2008, Johnny speaks with Bob Bush via telephone from his home in Malibu, California about his long and successful career as a performer, arranger, composer and conductor.

Bob Bush [BB]: For the record, I should say that today is Tuesday, February the 12th, 2008. My name is Bob Bush, and I am in my office in Kemp Library at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania. I'm very honored to have Johnny Mandel with me on the telephone from his home in Malibu, California. We are about to tape an oral history interview for the Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection. So, Johnny, thanks again very much for suggesting that we do this.

Johnny Mandel [JM]: Oh, yes.

BB: This is going to be fun. I want to see how far back I can get you, in your memory banks, to recall some of the wonderful things that you've done over your long and distinguished career.

JM: Oh, god. I don't know. ... *[both laugh]* Believe me, some of them were not so wonderful.

BB: [laughs] Well, we'll skip over those, how about that?

JM: Okay.

BB: I'd love to go all the way back to your childhood in Brooklyn if we could. You were born on [interrupted] ...

JM: Oh, I wasn't from Brooklyn ... I was born in Manhattan, on 85th and West End.

BB: Well, I'm glad to [correct] that right off the bat. ... You were born on November the 23rd, 1925? Is that correct?

JM: Indeed. Yes, I was, the day before Al [Cohn].

BB: Can you talk about what it was like back in those days? Tell me a little bit about your family and growing up in New York.

JM: Well, my mother was a frustrated opera singer who never was allowed to go on the stage. [My parents] came from Chicago, originally, and moved to New York. My father was a “cloak and suiter,” ... as they called them. ... He made women's clothes, junior miss and women's as it was known. He started in Chicago and they relocated to New York in 1920. My sister was born first, Audre [pronounced same as Audrey]. She was six years older than I was. She was born in 1919, in Chicago. So New York, I guess in those days, was a marvelous town to live in. The Depression hit us pretty hard in 1929. My dad really didn't do too well after that in New York and decided to retire because it was just costing him more to stay in business.

BB: How big was your family at the time?

JM: Oh, just the two children and my mother and father. A lot of the family had stayed in Chicago and all. But not our family, we moved. They decided to go to California. My dad had gone out there on a visit and loved it. So we moved to ... Los Angeles which was a very nice place in 1934. I don't really like it anymore now. It's gotten just like New York and I've realized I never liked New York. It was noisy and crowded, Los Angeles was. Have you ever been to California?

BB: A couple of times, yes. It's a great place to go on vacation.

JM: It was wonderful and we had a house. It used to be an apartment in New York. I just never liked the city. It was very noisy then. There were els [elevated trains] on every street. I was only seven when I left New York and came to California.

It was a very bucolic place, LA, because there were only two industries back then. There was oil, which was mainly ... in Pasadena, and the movies. There were no manufacturing defense plants or any of that kind of stuff, aerospace. All that came later after World War II. World War II changed Los Angeles and it was never the same after that.

But, you know, I don't even like it now because it's just like New York. There are so many people here. It takes forever to drive somewhere. I've lived in Malibu now since '72 and even that's gotten like it. There are too many cars on the road because everybody wants to live here.

BB: Well, this is interesting for me because I thought for sure that you had spent a lot more time on the East Coast.

JM: Well, I did because my father passed on in 1937. He loved California but my mother always hated it. She liked to party. She was a real flapper girl, a good-looking redhead. She moved my sister and me back to New York in 1938.

And all of a sudden I had to go away to boarding schools. ... Boys were really a rarity in my family. My mother had no idea what to do with what was then like a 12-year-old boy who knew he wanted to be a musician by then. I think [practically] the same day my dad died, I met a cousin I'd never knew existed who was a drummer with Harry Reser and his Clicquot Club Eskimos.

BB: What was your cousin's name?

JM: Mel Rosenbach. He became like a surrogate father to me. I asked him, "What do you do when you're not out here with the family?" He said, "I'm a drummer," and he told me what he did. He played the drums for this band.

In those days, ... if they had a radio show [gig], they named [the band] after whoever was sponsoring the show. Clicquot Club was a big soft drink at that time. I don't really think it's still made anymore. So, it was Harry Reser and his Clicquot Club Eskimos. And I said, "You do this all the time?" And he said, "Yeah." I said, "Is it fun?" [BB laughs] I was 11, you know? And he said, "Yeah, it sure is."

I grew up with my ear glued to the radio like most school kids did in those days. You'd hear bands coming from everywhere because I don't think the networks had been organized in 1930. The swing craze had hit in '35 and I grew up with my ear glued to the radio. I'd hear bands from everywhere: Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey, this and that, and I'd hear songs and I'd listen to that, you know?



Johnny Mandel on trombone with Al Cohn in foreground, Elliot Lawrence Orchestra, NYC, 1952.

From the ACMJC archive

It's funny what happened because I'd hear a song ...all the bands had to play the same songs – the ones that were on *Your Hit Parade*. It seemed like the whole business was really dictated to by publishers. The big thing ... was to get their songs plugged on the radio. Unlike today, where everybody writes their own material, the bands all had to play the songs that were on *Your Hit Parade*, more or less. So, you'd get to hear one band play something. They'd play a song – some of the songs were pretty bad.

But, I'm laying there listening to the radio, and I'd listen to it all night sometimes because there'd be one band after another. And I'd be in bed and I'd say, "Gee, that's a lousy song. Why do they keep playing it all the time?" [Then] another band would come on and play the same song, because they all had to play those same songs, and I said "Geez, I didn't like that song. How come [now] it sounds good?"

Then another band would come on and play the same song and it was rotten. I said, "Wait a minute. There's something missing here." It took about three weeks before the light bulb went on over my head. I said, "It's not the song, it's the band. Somebody writes the music for that band that makes that song sound good or sound awful. What kind of a person does that?"

Johnny Mandel

And then, I realized. [Somebody told me] it was called an arranger. ... Well, nobody knew who an arranger was in 1938, '39. People thought an arranger was probably somebody who moved chairs around. *[BB laughs]* So I said, "That's what I'd like to do. I want to do that. I want to be an arranger." And I [also] wanted to play something in the band. So, I took up the trumpet, and I was fixed on that from then on. That was gonna be it.

BB: Which of those bands that you listened to late at night really turned you on the most?

JM: Well, in those days, it would be somebody like Benny Goodman, or a Tommy Dorsey band. I hated the Mickey Mouse bands. You know, Blue Baron and Guy Lombardo and all those bands. Sammy Kaye. There were a bunch of them came out of Chicago which was sort of a corn belt in those days. Like Dick Jurgens. The "Mickey" bands, basically. Eddie Howard. I didn't like those bands at all.

Or, there were polka bands like Lawrence Welk, big deal there. I thought some of them were pretty funny. Glenn Miller was just getting started then and I kind of liked that band because they made the songs sound good. But I wasn't interested in writing songs. There were no books around for arranging at that time, except an old Frank Skinner book that was done in the twenties and by then it was kind of archaic.

I would listen to the other bands – like Van Alexander [who] had a big recording band then. He had done "A-Tisket A-Tasket." He was writing for Chick Webb and ... he wrote that song, and with Ella Fitzgerald it became a big hit in '39. I read *Down Beat* and *Metronome* and I found out who all these people were. Those were my bibles; I just read those constantly [to] get the names. I'd wanted to know who did what by then.

BB: When you were listening to the radio at night, were you in boarding school at that time?

JM: Yes. ...

BB: What was that about? I mean, could you describe what that was like?

JM: I really hated that school. It was a place called [the Irving School]. It was founded by Washington Irving and it was very anti-Semitic. I didn't know about all that at the time.

BB: Where was it located?

JM: Up in Tarrytown [New York]. It had a beautiful campus. I think my mother found it in *Vogue* magazine [in] a listing of schools. ... They realized I was hopeless. I just purely had my head in the clouds. I wasn't interested in any of the sports or any of that stuff. I was just there because I was put there. At any rate, I stayed there for about four or five years.

Finally, I just said, "I'm not going there anymore." I went to the New York Military Academy then, and that was great because I had a band scholarship, like all the Brown family. Les Brown graduated Phi Beta Kappa from there in 1932. Warren Brown, the middle brother, was there. And Stumpy was there. Warren had become a big publisher by then. Stumpy

was there with me. He was a class above me. We were in ... the marching band; I was playing trumpet still.

Meanwhile, when I was at the other school, at Irving, I saw an ad in *Down Beat* that said Van Alexander was accepting students and I hit on my mother hard. I started studying with Van. That was in 1942. I was about 16 or 17, something like that. But I wanted to do it, that was it – I didn't want to do anything else. I wanted to do that and I started writing. Van realized that I was very fixed, that [writing music] was what I wanted to do. I met him up at his apartment, which was up on 106th Street or something. He had a big recording band at that time; he was on Bluebird records. And I said, "Oh my god, this is the thing. This is the real deal." And he was convinced that what I wanted to do is what he did. I wanted him to show me what you do and how you do it.

BB: Had you written any arrangements up to that point?

JM: I didn't even know how to begin. I remember we had met at the front door and I had just come into the place, into his apartment. He marched right across the room to a closet and I saw there was a whole lot of music in there.

He reached up on the top and pulled out what looked like a bunch of yellow paper. He brought it over to me and opened it up. I said, "What's that?" He said, "This is a score, and if you look at it you can see ..." It was eight-bar paper and it was a dance band layout. He said, "... these are the saxophones, and these are the trumpets and the trombones. This is a snapshot of what everybody's doing in the band for eight bars."

I looked at it and I said, "Everybody's [playing] in different keys." I could tell that, you know. And he said, "Yeah, well the instruments ..." and he started telling me about transposition. He taught me everything practically in fifteen minutes that I know now. And it was really interesting because he said, "This is what they're doing ..." and he said, "... this is what it looks like."

It was a song called "Hooray for Spinach." *[BB laughs]* It was a Harry Warren song, not a bad song, out of one of his movies he was doing for Fox at that time [*Naughty But Nice*, 1939]. And he said, "Now, what you want to do is see what this sounds like when you're looking at it."

So, he unwraps his latest Bluebird record, he has a little wind up phonograph right there, and he puts the song on. He says, "Now, you're going to play the record and you're going to hear what it sounds like, and we're going to turn the pages and I'll show you what it looks like."

My eyes were just falling out of my head. I was just looking at this, and we went through the song. It got to the vocal, which in those days was always in the middle. The band would play and then the singer. There was a girl singer there, Phyllis Kenny, I think. She sang the song, and then they'd have the out chorus, then the band would play again, and that'd be the end of the record, like a three-minute experience.

So, we went through it and I said, "How come you changed keys there ... in the middle?" He said, "That's the key the girl sings in." I said, "Girls sing in keys?" I didn't know! *[BB laughs]* Besides, it was an all-boys school, unfortunately.

So, we went through it and he ... explained where all the



Courtesy of Johnny Mandel

Boyd Raeburn Orchestra, c. 1945. (From left) front row: David Allyn (voc), Barbara Jane (voc), Stuart Anderson (ts), Leonard Green (as), Hal McKusick (as), Frank Socolow (ts), Hy Mandel (bs), Boyd Raeburn; middle row: George Handy (p, not shown), Joe Berisi (b), Jack Carmen (tb), Johnny Mandel (tb), Rodney Roberts (tb); back row: Irv Kluger (d), Alan Jeffreys (tp), Carl Berg (tp), Dale Pierce (tp), Tommy Allison (tp).

transpositions [were] and why the trombones were written up so high, which was stupid. They shouldn't have been written up there. They should have written them like tenor saxophone parts where it's in the staff. He said, "Well, that's just the way it was always done."

You know, I never did like that excuse for anything. But, at any rate, he said, "Now ... you hear what it sounds like and you see what it looks like. What you've got to do is relate those two to where eventually ... when you've done this a lot, you can look at a score and ... can read it and hear in your head ... what it sounds like. Or, you can listen to something and think about what it would look like if you wrote it down. When you can get those two things together, you'll have it made because what you're learning to do is see with your ears and hear with your eyes. ... You can think of something and then [know] how you write it down. That takes a long time and you just have to do it. You have to keep at it. And what I want you to do is go home and write something."

He gave me a big pad of eight-bar paper. "Now, you go home and start writing. Figure it out on the piano and then write it out for the instruments." And what he did was, he threw me in the water and yelled "Swim!!!" ... Because there was no other way to learn this and there weren't any books either. [He would eventually write] ... one of the first really good books called *First Arrangement*, but he hadn't written it yet. He wrote that maybe a couple of years later. It was a great help to a lot of other people [who] were starting out.

I stayed with him for a few years when I was not at school. I'd write, and not only that, but I'd take things off of records. I'd learned to copy an arrangement down from listening to it. [I] figured out what the trumpet player, the second

trumpet, and the third trumpet, and all that stuff was, and also to tear apart stocks.

At that time, everybody had stock arrangements. The publishers made stock arrangements by Jack Mason and ... guys like that who worked for the publishers. I'd spread the parts out on the floor and make a score out of it. These were written so that if somebody didn't show up it still would sound decent.

That's the way stocks were written. You could play them with a trumpet, a couple of trumpets, a trumpet and two saxophones. It wouldn't sound very good but at least all the notes would kind of be covered. It was called "collapsible writing." I've shared that experience with a lot of guys. I'll bet Al probably did it.

At any rate, ... I knew that I wanted to play an instrument when I started off here, when I was like 11 or 12, so I played the trumpet. There was a guy named Jackie Eagle who was a trumpet student with me, [at] Charles Colin [Music Studio] . A lot of guys studied there that I got to know: Stan Fishelson, and Bernie Glow, and Shorty Rogers who was Miltie Rajonsky. These guys all went to Charlie Colin.

Jack Eagle and I became friendly and he said, "You know, I'm playing in a non-union band." We were all 14, 15, 16 at that time. And he said, "There's this guy, Al Cohn, who's a marvelous arranger. Why don't you come down to a rehearsal?" And I came down to a rehearsal; that's when I met Al and heard quite a few of his arrangements.

There were some guys there that I got to know later on, like Nat Peck [who] was a trombone player. Nat became a very good trombone player and he went overseas with Glenn Miller's Air Force orchestra and never came back [from Eu-

rope]. He's lived in England ever since, and he was in France for a long time. He does most of the contracting there, in London. ...

I was listening to Al's tunes then and his arrangements and I stole a few ideas. By then, I was going to New York Military Academy where I had a dance band there myself.

BB: You know, what's remarkable is how young all of you were and how into it you all were.

JM: Sure. Well, it was a different world then. Al was a great player then. But the emphasis was on writing and I got a little bugged with him because he seemed to be having such a wonderful time. He was entertaining at the piano with everybody, and I was always kind of a loner. I said, "How's this guy so good and he's having the time of his life there with all the guys?" He had them laughing. ... When I met Al Cohn, he was with Paul Allen's band, and Jack Eagle was the lead trumpet player.

I ran into Al again after I started working. The minute I got out of school in 19—, ... well no, wait a minute. I didn't run into Al but I kept hearing about him all these times. We went through a whole bunch of bands that were sort of like farm teams for the big bands. I was with Joe Venuti during my summer break between my junior and senior years. I went on the road with Joe Venuti which was [interrupted] ...

BB: Well, that must have been quite an experience for a young man.

JM: It was a baptism of fire.

BB: Tell me something more about that. That had to be memorable.

JM: Yes, it was. I had a thing where I could never stand hearing incomplete chords. You know, if [we] were playing arrangements that were written for more people than we had. That used to drive me nuts. So, when I wasn't playing my part, I'd be filling in the missing notes on other people's parts, [BB laughs] and wearing my lip out doing it. [BB laughs] Joe finally said, "Just play your part, kid." He couldn't have cared less. He never liked having a big band anyway. But everybody had to have one then.

BB: Before you got with him, did you play any of those Catskill resort hotels or any of that?

JM: Yes, I did. The year before I went to the Catskills, that's true. I played in Hurleyville and Loch Sheldrake and places like that. [They] were really kind of the bottom of the barrel, you know. They were kind of ratty places.

BB: But that's where the jobs were, so it was easy for kids to go get work up there?

JM: That's where jobs were for the summer, that's where they were. I don't know if Al worked any of those but I did. I ran into Stan Fishelson up there at the Ambassador Hotel. I went to school with a guy whose parents owned the place and they prevailed on Stan to let me sit in and play. There was only one trumpet and it was Stan, and he just didn't like the idea at all.

I just sort of improvised a second part, and that was the end of that. I became very good friends with Stan later on when I was in the bands, you know, but ...

BB: At this point, were you more focused on playing than on arranging, or was it a combination of both?

JM: No, it was always a combination of both. But I always wanted to play. I was a jazz trumpet player and my idol was not Harry James, like everyone else, but Bunny Berigan. That was my guy. Bunny Berigan and Roy Eldridge and guys like that. I was never into being a lead trumpet player. I really wasn't a very good trumpet player, but [good] enough so that I could hold up my end in the bands.

BB: Now, I know you gravitated from the trumpet to the trombone.

JM: I switched because I got into the professional bands and realized I had a lot of bad habits and played out of tune. I didn't play good relative pitch on the horn. I picked up the trombone when I was in school and discovered I could really play it much better without even having studied it. And I could play high because I had trumpet chops. So they made me a lead trombone player then whether I was ready or not.

BB: Did you play trombone in Joe Venuti's band?

JM: No. I was a trumpet player, and after I graduated I went to Billie Rogers' band. She was a girl trumpet player who had been with Woody Herman – the first, probably. Woody would hire women and nobody else would. She was a good player. As a matter of fact, in that band back in the early forties, when they'd be working in theaters, usually the guys would either be all blown out in the trumpets – he had four trumpets – or so drunk they couldn't play. By the fifth show, if you're playing four or five shows, she'd be playing lead and all the other stuff by then. [Both laugh] So, I was in her band, and I decided I was going to just give up the trumpet and start with the trombone, and that worked right away. So, I became a trombone player from then on.

BB: You were in Henry Jerome's big band, right?

JM: That was right after that. I was in Henry's band, yes.

BB: Can you talk to me about some of the people that you met in that band?

JM: Well, my old friend Jack Eagle was in it, playing first trumpet. Henry played third trumpet. And we had Normie Faye, and, of course, Al. I had never been in a band with Al, by the way, up until then.

BB: Was that just by coincidence or by design?

JM: No, by coincidence. ... He was in bands a lot of times before I was because he was pretty advanced. He was a good player from the very beginning and he was writing for them. He was in Georgie Auld's band before I was. I came in later. And luckily he had left arrangements there. It was always a pleasure to play his music. It was so easy to play.

BB: Did musicians hop around to bands a lot in those days?

JM: Sure. We did [it] because of the money, but I'd move out of bands more just because I got to know the music and

started getting bored with it and wanted to play in another band. Sometimes the band would not work and so another band would need somebody and I'd hop over to that. A lot of guys did that. ...

Well, at any rate, I was in Henry's band and that was an interesting band. The two tenor players were Lenny Garment and Alan Greenspan. [BB laughs] ... I'm still in contact with [Lenny]. He was Nixon's lawyer at one time. He was a good lawyer and he wasn't a Republican. ... Al Greenspan was not much of a musician. He wasn't a good tenor player particularly, he was alright. But they were studying; they were into books all the time.

BB: And about how old were they at that time?

JM: Oh, they had to have been 17, 18, 19, 20 – in that area.

BB: Were they enrolled in college someplace and playing on the side?

JM: Yes. One was at NYU and the other one was studying at Columbia. I can't remember which was which, but one was into economics and the other one was into law. They were working nights and studying during the daytime. I don't know when they slept. [BB laughs] Al was always very much into books. He was very much the same guy then as he is now, really sincere. When he talked to you, it was you he was talking to, you know? He was very quiet whereas Lenny was much more extroverted. He swung with the guys more.

BB: Do you stay in contact with Leonard Garment a little bit more than you do Alan Greenspan?

JM: Yes. I spoke to Alan recently though. He's the same guy now as he was then. He's a great guy. I've been reading his newest book.

BB: Does he still have his horn?

JM: I think the clarinet was really his passion rather than the saxophone. He does actually, but he plays chamber music and that kind of thing. And I think Lenny's sort of the same thing but Lenny's very involved with trying to establish the jazz museum in Harlem, which is quite overdue. I lectured up there a couple of months ago. He does it with Loren Schoenberg.

BB: Well, maybe we'll be lucky enough to get them back on the mailing list for The NOTE one of these days.

JM: You should. You should. I think they'd both be interested in it. Heck, I'm surprised they're not on that list.

BB: They were at one time.



Johnny Mandel standing to play a bass trumpet solo, with Ollie Wilson on Johnny's left and Al Cohn in the foreground, Elliot Lawrence Orchestra, NYC, 1952.

Courtesy of Johnny Mandel

JM: Well, Lenny would certainly have kept it up, and probably Alan, too.

BB: Well, did you play with Jimmy Dorsey ... before any of this stuff?

JM: I sure did.

BB: I thought I saw in a discography ... very early on in your career you may have recorded with him.

JM: Yes. Well, let's see. After Henry Jerome, I ended up going with Boyd Raeburn. That was a wonderful experience.

BB: Oh, tell me a little bit about that.

JM: Well, let's see. By then, Henry's band kept getting better. Gene DiNovi had come into the band playing piano. He was about 17. Tiny Kahn hadn't yet started in the band, and I think Ellis Tolan was the drummer. But, eventually, Stan Levey came in and particularly Tiny

Kahn, but that was after I left.

I had gone to Boyd Raeburn by then and that was a wonderful experience. During all those years that I was studying with Van, he would call me every time he was going to rehearse his band or if he was opening at Roseland or something. I ended up playing with a lot of the guys that he had had early. You know, like Lenny Green, who was the lead alto player, and Frankie Socolow.

Quite a few of the guys that Van used were with me in Boyd Raeburn's band. That was a wonderful job. By then, I had switched to trombone, when I was with Henry, right after I left Billie Rogers. I was able to play high so I became the first trombone player with Boyd Raeburn. That band really caught fire. We had George Handy, and I was writing for the band. I wrote a lot for Billie Rogers at the time, too. I was just feeling my way. I didn't really know what I was doing. I don't know if I do yet.

BB: [laughs] Aw, you don't have to be modest at this point.

JM: But it seemed like I was doing very well on the trombone, so much so that I got a job with Jimmy Dorsey. I was playing first trombone in a book that was originally written for Tommy Dorsey. So you can imagine there was a lot to do. But I could play high and I took Buddy Morrow's place, or Moe Zudekoff as his name was then. So, within my first year of trombone playing, I was playing first trombone with all these bands. Then, after that, Buddy Rich, his first band.

BB: This was all in about the middle of the forties right?

Johnny Mandel

JM: Yes, like 1945, '46, '47, about that time.

BB: Well, you've got to have some memories about playing in Buddy's band.

JM: Oh god, several ... I played in three [of his] bands, different ones. I was fired from the first one. ...

BB: What did you do?

JM: Well, I was playing an awful lot of clams, and I was a bebopper. At that time, he hated bebop. He hated everything it represented. There was that big schism in the business. And he couldn't stand the fact that he used to be "the man" and now Max Roach was. Later on, he came around and embraced [bebop]. But, at first, when I was there, he liked Benny Goodman. He liked swing, the 4/4, which I ended up liking better than bebop anyway. I got bored with bebop pretty quickly. I don't know, I got tired of it. ... And you know, there is only one Charlie Parker and only one Dizzy Gillespie. But, so many of the great players came out of that.

At any [rate], let's see. Boyd Raeburn was sort of breaking up and then I went to Jimmy Dorsey's band. That was like going back 20 years, almost. Jimmy's band really had a bunch of guys in it that were swing musicians, and I was the bebopper and kind of a rebel. ... It wasn't a happy place to be. Jimmy was great. I never had the chance to work with Tommy but he would've hated me too at that time, just like Buddy Rich did. Buddy changed but ... I don't think [Tommy] ever did as far as liking anything further along than swing.

But he was probably the best band leader ever. What he did as a band leader was incredible. I would never have wanted to be in that band, though. But, oh boy, what a band to stand in front of and listen to! The big band era really ended at the end of 1946 when nobody was coming to the ballrooms anymore. All the old jitterbuggers were buying houses and getting married and having babies and paying baby sitters. We were playing to empty ballrooms. In 1946, almost every big band leader – Benny Goodman, both Dorseys, Charlie Barnet – they all gave up their bands because they were playing to empty ballrooms.

So, from Benny Goodman's breakout in 1935 at the Palomar [Ballroom] until the end of '46, the big Swing Era only lasted 11 years. ... I mean, sure, a lot of bands went on from there: Ellington and Basie. I was with Basie when he reorganized.

BB: Well, you were with other bands before that even, weren't you? I mean Georgie Auld and ...

JM: Yes.

BB: ... Alvino Rey.

JM: That's right. I was with Georgie and I was with Alvino.

BB: Was Al Cohn also in those bands?

JM: Al had been in Georgie's band before I was. That was another one of the bands where he was there first. And then he went to Woody Herman after that.

BB: When did you first hook up with Zoot?

JM: About the same time. ... I hooked up with Zoot when I started writing for Woody's band in '49, for the Four Brothers band. Oh, I fell in love with him immediately but then everyone did. [laughs] You know, Zoot was something else. He was like a farmer, Zoot was. Bill Holman's like an old farmer at this point.

BB: You're saying that affectionately, what do you mean?

JM: I mean, they're not like your typical jazz musician at all. If you look at Zoot and get to know him, he's like Americana.

BB: They just don't fit the stereotype.

JM: [Zoot didn't] fit the stereotype at all. I mean, he was as different from Al as you could be. And yet, they were both the best. They gravitated towards each other because one had what the other one didn't. Although I think they both were complete. I met Zoot mostly when we started working with small bands. Red Rodney had had us both in the same band. But I [really] got to know Zoot with the Four Brothers band, and Stan Getz, of course, too.

BB: Back in the mid-forties, when you were playing with Alvino Rey and Georgie Auld and Jimmy Dorsey and Buddy Rich, was your mindset at that point that this is really what I want, this is going to be my life's goal, ... to be a performing jazz musician?

JM: No. ... Alvino's band broke up right after 1946 also. And I wanted to get off the road and study. I just needed to stop for a while and see if I could fill in a lot of the gaps. So I tried to get into Manhattan School of Music, which was up on 106th Street in those days. They wouldn't let me in even though I'd been on the road for three or four years with bands. They didn't want to let me in because I didn't have a thesis and ... they didn't like jazz music there. I just told them that I was going to camp on the front steps until they let me in then. [BB laughs]

After a couple of days, to get rid of me, they let me in. And then I discovered Dick Katz was there and quite a few other people. Russ Savakus was there – a good bass player, very good. It turns out they ended up having a lot of jazz people [eventually], but [back] then they didn't. This was very early in that game. It was way before they moved onto the old Juilliard campus.

BB: So this wasn't an official jazz school, I guess?

JM: Oh no, never. But the time I spent there, which was most of '47, I had Bach and Beethoven ... coming out of my ears all the time and I started really appreciating them. I had to analyze those symphonies.

Vittorio Giannini was sort of "the man" there as far as teaching composition. There were too many "don'ts" and I didn't like that part of it. But I liked being exposed to the classical music. We had to get through the classical period in order to be able to get to Bartok and to Stravinsky and to Debussy and Ravel.

I stayed there for a while but, for some reason, I don't

know, I was never much of an academic guy. And pretty soon Buddy Rich beckoned again. By then, he had changed the band and I started writing for him again. I wrote for the first band but mostly ballads. ... This was 1947 and '48.

BB: Now, did you go back and perform with Buddy or just write for the band?

JM: Yes, I went back and played bass trumpet in the trumpet section instead of being his lead trombone player. Al was just leaving the band as I came in. That was when he went to Woody. It wasn't after ... Georgie Auld but after Buddy Rich.

Al left a nice bunch of arrangements with us. I was with Buddy Rich ... through '47 and for the first nine months of '48. I decided I wanted to live in California, but I wanted to get my card here because it was a really big deal to transfer from the New York local, or any other local, into Los Angeles.

They made it rough. They didn't want people coming in and taking the studio jobs, which were the plum jobs. Guys were coming in off the road and putting in their transfer and then leaving town with a band again, and they didn't want anymore of that. So, they'd send goons around to make sure you were living where you said you were, that kind of stuff.

And so, hell, I was a shipping clerk downtown for a while, and I worked as a soda jerk. For the first three months you couldn't do anything, you couldn't work as a musician. You couldn't do casuals for the first three months even; you had to do something else. But they didn't say anything about writing so I started writing for Woody. I wrote "Not Really the Blues" and a bunch of those things while I was waiting out my card.

BB: Were you not performing at all at that point and just writing?

JM: Yes. ... But I'd go around jamming at different places just to keep the blowing up. There was more activity then. After the first three months, you could work casuals but you couldn't leave town and you still couldn't work a steady job. I went right back to New York as soon as I got my six months in and got my card. I knew I'd be coming back; I wasn't done with New York yet.

BB: Now, you had gone to the West Coast, I know, because you felt gravitated toward [it] ...

JM: Oh, yeah.

BB: ... and wanted to live there. But were you also seeing the writing on the wall in terms of the big bands and opportunities?

JM: Yes. By then I decided I wanted to do everything. I wanted to write all kinds of music. I never thought about the movies but I just wanted to do everything. Big bands were a thing of the past and I guess what I was doing was starting to branch out and write for acts and things. The same kinds of things Al did or had to do, especially after he got a family, you know.

BB: What were some of the non-jazz jobs that you can remember?

JM: Well, it started off with writing for singers and writing for acts. You know, people were doing acts and going into night clubs and they needed to do a show.

Oh, wait a minute, before that ... let's see, it was '49 when

I left LA. The first thing I did was when I came back to New York was to join Chubby Jackson's band that was up in Bop City, which was where the old Hurricane was ... You know, Bop City was a very happening place for a minute. *[BB laughs]*

That was a good band, with Tiny Kahn, and Ray Turner, and Frankie Socolow. Who else did we have? We had Chubby, of course. Tiny Kahn was writing good charts by then. He was a wonderful musician. So, the minute I hit New York again, I was playing bass trumpet in that band.

BB: Were these mostly gigs in New York or did you go out on the road with the band?

JM: These were in New York. The band didn't last very long. We had Al Porcino – it was just a great band. Then about that same time I got a job at one of the last radio stations to ever have a band. That was WMGM, up at 711 Fifth Avenue. It was the first time I'd ever had any kind of studio experience.

BB: Before this time, all of the radio stations had orchestras on staff, right?

JM: Well, yes, but it wasn't like the old days where the orchestras were kept there and played on sustaining radio shows that had no sponsor. At one time, they filled; they had to play a lot of music.

From the Depression on, when people couldn't go out, the radio had become big. The networks were formed in the mid-to late-twenties, and people couldn't afford to go out and dance. They'd get free entertainment at home from the radio. Almost all the guys who were in the bands with Paul Whiteman, people like that, were now playing in radio studios: Artie Shaw, Benny Goodman, you name it, the Dorseys. That was where their gigs were.

The record business was in the toilet, as well as dance bands, because people had no money. As the [years] went along, the radio activity lessened somewhat because the record business was coming back and bands were becoming a thing again. [The musicians] kept their staff jobs but it was radio shows they were playing, like Jack Benny and Eddie Cantor and Fred Allen and all those people. WMGM had this bunch of guys ... and I went to work there.

It was interesting because I had to write a certain amount of arrangements a week. There were some good musicians there: Chauncey Welch was there, and Bernie Glow was there for a while. We used to do things like the MGM Theater of the Air, because it was owned by MGM.

The MGM radio shows were, like, the Lux Radio Theater. They were funny. You hear them on CBS sometimes, late. They were like all these dramatic shows that were radio shows. I can't think of the names. ... I started doing these things, working to the clock. We'd have mysteries and then some famous star would come through, under contract to MGM, either that or they were plugging in tandem with a picture they had just made.

They were doing these dramatic shows and you'd see guys in the studio there physically making the [sound effects of] horses' hoofs and the [sound of] gun shots and all that stuff, *[BB laughs]* which was very funny. You know, "John, put down that gun!" and then "Peeeoow" [makes a gun shot noise] and so forth. I was writing music for that by the clock.

Johnny Mandel

BB: Now, did all of the advice that Van Alexander gave you in your early days come into play when you were working with the MGM Theater of the Air?

JM: Well, we weren't into dramatic music. I was trying to write for big bands then, but sure, it all came in. I mean, by then I decided I wanted to do everything only because the original impetus, big bands, was over. I had learned to write music and I was interested in doing everything. I wasn't thinking about the movies. That isn't why I wanted to get into music at all. I wasn't even thinking of that.

But I learned to write dramatic shows. I remember I was in the middle of writing something. [It was] New Year 's Eve 1950 and I'd work at night. I'd come up there by myself and write. And some guys came up and interrupted me. [They] said, "Alright, you're going to stop this and come down and have a drink with us because we're about to ring in 1950." And I said "Oh sh**." *[BB laughs]*

And thus began one of the worst eras of music, to start with. By then, though, I'd gotten back into playing again, too. No, wait a minute. This was before that. I got a job doing *Your Show of Shows* when it was first starting. They were the Admiral shows [*The Admiral Broadway Revue*] and then it became *The Sid Caesar Show*. ... Irwin Kostel was "the man" there. He was doing all the writing.

All of a sudden I found myself in the middle of the biggest show on television. And I didn't even own a television set, and didn't care about it. *[BB laughs]* ... This was a totally mind-blowing experience because I'd never been interested in writing for the theater even though my family was very interested in shows and Broadway. I always thought it was totally square and didn't want to do it. But I found myself right in the middle of it because we were doing *Your Show of Shows* and we were doing things in 1950 and '51 that couldn't be done.

But we didn't know any better. We were doing 90 minutes a week. What it amounted to was, like, starting on Monday morning and by Saturday night putting on a full-length Broadway show that lasted 90 minutes with no intermission. And nobody told us you couldn't do this. We had Sid and Imogene Coca and Carl Reiner and all the people [who] became very famous.

BB: Weren't there also some writers on that show that later on became famous?

JM: Well, sure. Mel Brooks, for one. He and I became very friendly. We liked to hang because he was like a musician. In fact, I think he was a drummer once.

BB: Was Woody Allen a writer on that show?

JM: Not then. He came on later along with quite a few others [e.g. Neil Simon, Larry Gelbart]. No, we had Mel Brooks and Mel Tolkin and Lucille Kallen and people like that. And we'd turn out 200 pages of music a week.

BB: And you were writing for comedy, which has got to be a lot different than writing for anything else, I would think.

JM: Well that, yeah. We started writing to sight cues because it was really like a combination of old Broadway musicals of the Rodgers and Hart variety, or Gershwin. For instance, we'd do a production number that would start off in the traditional way with the boy and the girl singing, like Bill Hayes and Judy Johnson, who had been Betty Barney.

That was her name originally when she was with Les Brown. She got with Sammy Kaye and he always changed the names of his girl singers for some reason. He said, "It'll bring you luck. I like to have names [where] the first initial of each name is the same." She said, "Well, Betty Barney – both of them start with a B." He said, "Well, I want to do Judy Johnson and, believe me, all kinds of good things will happen for you."

Well, they did. She became famous as Judy Johnson at that time. *[BB laughs]* Everybody on the show became famous, you know, except the musicians.

But I got my first taste of really big-time network practices there. We had to turn out a ridiculous amount of music. For instance, you'd start a production number, like a Broadway number. Say you're going to do "There's A Small Hotel," for instance. They did a lot of Rodgers and Hart. We'd have like eight singers, you know, a chorus. You'd have a bunch of dancers and we had a choreographer who would do all the choreography. It would be like an eight-minute production number.

You'd do, say, a duet of Judy Johnson and Bill Hayes which would last a couple of choruses; then, they'd go into a dance section that would last maybe five or six minutes; and then they'd reprise the song at the end. That's the way they did them in movies, too.

BB: Were you writing for a full orchestra at that point, too?

JM: Well, it was basically a big band, say like five brass and four saxophones, later five saxophones that played all the doubles. So, you were writing for flutes and oboes and bassoons and all that stuff. But also these numbers would last nine minutes.

And we'd do a couple of those a week plus a cut-down opera. We'd have an opera singer like ... James Milton or ... Robert Merrill, and Marguerite Piazza. They'd cut down an opera for that – we had to fill an hour and a half of show! ... We'd have all the music by [late on Friday]. We'd have a rehearsal on Friday and then they'd do the blocking [for the cameras] early Saturday. Then we'd have a dress rehearsal, like around noon. ... There was no recording back then, you know. You couldn't record on film in those days. They didn't have tape, it was just kinescopes.

So, you'd do [a show] for the East Coast at seven or eight o'clock eastern time, and then a couple hours later you'd do one for the West Coast.

BB: I never thought of that.

JM: Yeah. Oh, sure. Up until they were able to video tape, you always had to do that.

BB: And this was live television so anything could happen, right?

JM: It was live television and we didn't know, any of us, what we were doing. The boom microphones would get into the picture [BB laughs] and sets would fall down. This is while you were on the air. This happened ... all the time. I'd be watching the show from the control room and you can't imagine. Everybody was doing things for the first time and you didn't know they couldn't be done. We had to do 39 weeks a year because you couldn't do repeats. So, you can imagine the kind of shape everybody was in.

BB: Oh boy, talk about stress.

JM: Ooooh! Yeah. But nobody told you – nobody knew. It was ... new for everyone.

BB: Well, what a learning situation that must have been though, huh?

JM: Oh my god, for everyone involved including the engineers; all the technical people who were trying to translate stage practices to television. Which didn't work. Nothing worked. It all had to be re-invented because none of the techniques [used] in theaters worked on TV. Plus, you're capturing live performances. It was like doing an original cast album and doing the show at the same time, and everybody's watching ... [both laugh] ... Believe me, everybody involved with the show was very ready for the funny farm by the end of the year.

BB: Well, ... I was rummaging around in the collection and I found an album called **Bird at the Apollo** ...

JM: Ohhh, you did, huh?

BB: ... which was a performance that looks like it was dated August the 17th, 1950. ... You were listed on the back of this album as being part of the Stan Getz band ...

JM: That's right.

BB: ... on bass trumpet.

JM: Along with Zoot and, let's see, Stan Getz, Zoot, Gerry Mulligan, Don Lanphere [who, along with Al Porcino, recorded the concert off speakers in the dressing room].

BB: And some other folks that you've mentioned in the past: Stan Fishelson, and Al Porcino ...

JM: That's right. And Sweets [Harry "Sweets" Edison].

BB: ... and Roy Haynes on drums.

JM: Roy Haynes, and Billy Taylor on piano.

BB: Do you remember this gig?

JM: Sure I remember it, are you kidding? With Charlie Parker and strings, and with Sarah Vaughan, you bet I remember it. [BB laughs] What a team.

BB: That must have been some magical night.

JM: Well, every day. We did a week there.

BB: Oh, that I didn't know.

JM: Oh, sure. It was a whole week.



Johnny Mandel (top) in the Count Basie Orchestra behind (from left) saxophonists Frank Wess, Ernie Wilkins, and Marshall Royal, 5/4 Ballroom, Los Angeles, CA, 1954.

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BB: Well, on the back it says the tunes ... are "Four Brothers" and "Early Autumn."

JM: Right. We opened with those. And I think we had Timmy Rogers, too, and somebody like that on the show. You know, there was a comic.

BB: That's right Timmy Rogers is on here. [The album cover] says he opens this cut by cracking a few jokes before he starts singing his famous tune, "Oh Yeah."

JM: Yeah... ah haaa [makes a sound of joyful glee] That's right. I played the Apollo a number of times. It was always a blast. I always loved playing there. ...

BB: What do you remember about your time with the Elliot Lawrence band?

JM: Great. That was after I got done with *Your Show of Shows*. That would be the second year, I think, around '52, I came with the Elliot Lawrence band, first writing for it. And that's one of the first times I was really in a band with Al.

BB: We have the evidence hanging on the wall here in the library, by the way.

JM: Oh yeah?

BB: Yes. We have a beautifully framed and matted photo of you standing up playing your trombone with Al seated right there next to you.

JM: Yeah, in front of me.

BB: A little in front of you, right.

JM: Right, and Al Porcino probably in the back row.

BB: Well, we have another photo just alongside of it that shows Al playing. He's standing up, and Al Porcino is seated in the background.

Johnny Mandel

JM: Right. Well, that was a lovely band.

BB: Did you write a lot for his band.

JM: Yes. Well, Al had just gotten through the thing with his eye, you know, and he had come back in the band. He hadn't been playing for a while and he started writing again. That was a great time to be there. I stayed with that band until Basie called me and I went out with that band.

BB: You've got to tell me how that happened.

JM: Well ... You'll never find anybody in the world who can say a bad word about [Count Basie]. He was one of the funniest men I've ever known, and one of the best guys in the world to work with. You'd do anything for him.

BB: Getting that call must have been a thrill for you then.

JM: Aaawwww ... and he made the calls. He didn't have his manager or somebody like that [make the call]. He didn't even have a manager then. He had been screwed by so many of them. He made the calls himself. He said, "Jimmy [Wilkins, Ernie's brother] wants to stay home." He lived in St. Louis – a lot of the guys came from St. Louis then. I'd been writing for the band a little bit by then. He said, "Would you like to come play trombone?" I was, for a moment, at a loss for words. I said, "[Shoot], yeah." He said, "Well, we're opening at the Riviera in St. Louis tomorrow night. Can you be there?"

And I said, "Hell, yes." And I was there, and it was the best job I ever had. In fact, after that, I really didn't want to play in a band anymore because I knew that was as good as it was ever going to get. Elliot's band was fun, too, but [the Basie band] was something else. When you've got that rhythm section and we had Gus Johnson then, [who] was just the nicest drummer in the world to play with. And I sat right next to Freddie Green. I said, "[Shoot], there's just nothing like this." ...

I gave up playing after that. I played a couple of gigs with Zoot and Jimmy Rowles after that at the Haig in California. By then, I was going to stay in California. That's the only reason I left Basie. I was writing a lot and playing less and I really wasn't playing that well. I felt that Basie should have somebody like Al Grey sitting in that chair I was sitting in. I told him this, and he got Al Grey. In fact, I think the guy [who] took my place was Bill Hughes, who now runs the band. But he was playing regular trombone. He wasn't playing bass trombone yet until he took Benny Powell's place.

BB: But you continued to write arrangements for the band beyond that time that you were playing in it, right?

JM: Right. I did. But that was when I went to California to stay. I'd already gotten my card by then, so ... Matter of fact, when I was getting my card, Gerry Mulligan did *The Birth of the Cool* with Miles. He told me many years later that I was supposed to have been on that record. But I was in California getting my card so they used Kai Winding.

Well, you just can't be everywhere at the time you need to be. But, you know, I never got to know Al at all, really, until

we used to play each other our songs sometimes and play arrangements and things. He used to do that quite a bit for me, on record dates in the late forties and early fifties when he was Woody. Any time we'd find a piano we'd play each other things.

And I got to know Al that way. ... Al was always Al. He was always funny and he was always just wonderful. He was the guy that I really looked up to all my life and all his life. I don't know if I ever told him that. I mean, I just couldn't believe how good he was. And, of course, in '49 I wrote for the same band he was in, for Artie Shaw. That was a great band. Artie just adored him. So much so – and Artie never took any prisoners as far as players – that he would not play after Al Cohn. He wouldn't. He always made sure that he was first in the arrangement and that Al was after him. He just loved Al that much. I don't know if he ever said that about anyone else. But Al was his kind of player, and he respected him that much.

BB: Did you talk shop with Al about arranging?

JM: Now and then.

BB: Did you have similar approaches to your work?

JM: Well, sort of. We didn't really write as much alike as others. I wrote more like Tiny Kahn, or Neal Hefti sometimes. Al wrote all kinds of different ways. But as long as I'd known him I was never in the same place as he was a lot of the time. That's what it was, because we were always friends. He didn't go into any one bag. We wrote ballads differently. ... I wrote much more like Tiny. But everything Al wrote played so easily. I mean, some guys are just easy to play, and Al was easy to play. Neal Hefti was always very easy to play. Some guys wrote well but they weren't so easy to play. Bill Holman's an example of that. And I think he's "the man."

BB: Oh, he's a wonderful arranger and composer.

JM: Oh my god, yeah. You know, Al's stuff, whether he was writing for six pieces or 60, was always just wonderful. It was just very easy and natural. And Tiny was that way.

BB: Well, we probably don't have time to talk about all your films. But there is one I would like to ask you about. Could you speak a little bit about that wonderful *I Want to Live* film score that you put together?

JM: Sure. I got a call from Jack Lewis, who probably was the best friend Al ever had as far as helping him in his career.

BB: I've spoken to Jack many times. He's a great guy.

JM: Oh, wonderful. He just adored Al and Zoot more than anyone else and he made [great] records. He was one of those guys that really should be given his just due. I still stay in touch him. I read the [interview] he did for you guys, like what I'm doing now. Jack was a very colorful son of a [gun], he was.

BB: [laughs] Still is.

JM: He still is.

BB: He was the music adviser on your film?

JM: No, he wasn't. But he called me about this film that was going to happen. I realized later, though, that he didn't get me the job. André Previn had recommended me. And

André, who I got to know and is just an amazingly wonderful guy as well as being just a masterful musician, he couldn't do the job because he was doing *Porgy and Bess*.

Jack was with United Artists records, who had the album at that time. So, he got me in touch with [director Robert] Wise and I got the gig. And for years I thought Jack had recommended me. He would've, but he didn't because it was André, directly to Bob Wise.

It was a wonderful film. It was the first film I ever did. And, you know, I forgot to mention to you too that during the Sid Caesar show there was a period there during the fifties where I was doing everything, including working in Las Vegas doing shows for the hotels, ... like the Tropicana show. So, I got this job and I'd never done a film before and I was petrified. I started looking at it and I said "What the hell? What do I do?" And then I discovered I had done everything first that I needed to do in order to do a film. I had done *MGM Theaters of the Air* at WMGM in New York and was used to working with the clock. And I had done all these shows like *Your Show of Shows*, and catching sight cues with Sid Caesar. All these things together are the techniques of working for film.

Then, learning that film ran, at that time, 24 frames a second, and 16 frames to a foot, and this kind of thing. Where you learn how at three minutes and 40 seconds you want to catch a door slam or something. All this stuff was stuff that I had done pieces of before, so it wasn't that unfamiliar. It was a wonderful movie to do and had a great director who was just wonderful to work with, the producer and all. And I said, "Hey, I like this." So, I started writing [for] films.

BB: Well, in a film like that, does somebody come to you first and give you an idea of what they're expecting you to come up with?

JM: Well, in this case, it was a jazz score because Barbara Graham, the lady whose life it was about, was a Gerry Mulligan fan. So, right away Jack Lewis decided he wanted to do two albums; one with the Gerry Mulligan group that he had at the time, with Art Farmer and Gerry, and I added Frank Rosolino and Bud Shank because I wanted to have four horns. So, we did a whole album of that stuff and another album of underscore. But it was all jazz-based. I had worked with Gerry many times in the past so that was nothing new. Gerry was part of our full thing anyway. We had been in and out of bands with Georgie Auld and [interrupted]...

BB: Well, we just spoke about him being in that Stan Getz band at the Apollo, right?

JM: That's right. Anyway, I'd worked with Gerry many times. We were very good friends all our lives. I had met Gerry when he had just done "Disc Jockey Jump" when I was in Buddy Rich's first band. And we'd always gotten along. So, we did that thing and wrote the score and it all went very well.

BB: I've seen the movie and I want to watch it again soon. It's a great pure jazz soundtrack and it fits the story perfectly.

JM: Yes. They started using jazz scores for everything after that, [especially after] Henry Mancini [wrote] "Peter Gunn," of course. But jazz doesn't fit many movies. I never

wrote another jazz score after that, mostly because I never had a movie that felt right for jazz. Then they were just using it to get a cheap score, particularly on TV, and I hated doing TV. I didn't really want to do it. Thank god, I did have *M*A*S*H*, though.

BB: Well, this was [during] the late fifties now ... '58 or so?

JM: Yes.

BB: And that was your entry into the world of jazz film scoring I guess, right?

JM: No, into the world of film scoring.

BB: Film scoring, right.

JM: Because I didn't think of myself as [just jazz] ... I wanted to do all kinds of movies. For a while there, I had the name around Hollywood as the new guy who does jazz scores and it was hard to get work. The old guard was still very much in play there, like Dmitri Tiomkin and that bunch.

I was never interested in writing songs. I wrote instrumentals, of course, always did. [I] never thought of them as songs. I started getting work towards the early part of the sixties, like '63, '64.

*[I] did some turkeys, you know, some bad films like *Drums of Africa* with Frankie Avalon and stuff like that. But, I got a chance to do *The Americanization of Emily* and that was a big film. I wrote a theme to fit Julie Andrews' character in that movie. She was kind of an uptight English nurse ...*

Marty Ransohoff, who was the producer, said, "You know ... that's such a nice theme, I think we should make a song out of it." I said, "Well, I'll need a lyricist." And he said, "Well, who would you like?" I said, "Let's start at the top, Johnny Mercer." [BB laughs] "You got him." [BB laughs] So, all of a sudden, that's how "Emily" was born. That was the first song-song I ever wrote. I never thought of the instrumentals as being songs.

BB: Not an inauspicious beginning. That song has become an American standard.

*JM: I know. And then after that I did *The Sandpiper* and got "The Shadow of Your Smile" which won the Oscar.*

BB: It's a beautiful, beautiful song too.

JM: I didn't want to write songs because I was a working arranger all through the fifties and the forties. I used to sometimes work at the Brill building because I had to have three or four charts ready for the next morning – somebody threw the stuff at me that day and we had to [get it done]. A lot of guys worked that way; Al had to do it, all of us did.

I'd see songwriters walking around the Brill building in the daytime with sheet music under their arms looking very depressed. I said, "Boy, they can have that, writing for voice and piano. Forget it. I just don't want anything to do with that." I was so happy I could arrange and I wanted to do that, that's what I loved. I couldn't see writing songs.

Also, my uncle was a songwriter who wrote shows, George, my mother's brother. He couldn't write music and he

Continued on Page 30

Milt Hinton and Ray Brown, Denver, Colorado,
September 1991

Photo by Jane Eddy, donated by Ms. Eddy





A Young Bebopper's 90 Days with Vincent Lopez

by John T. Williams

The Vincent Lopez Society Orchestra played at the Hotel Taft Grill Room in New York City from 1941 to approximately 1961. The hotel was located at 50th Street and Seventh Avenue, just north of Times Square, and was a mecca for visiting tourists as well as local matrons and their special luncheon affairs. The Taft is still there in altered name and form.

Lopez became a fixture at the Taft and the band was full of good musicians, most of whom were raising families, living the straight and narrow, and appreciating the steady employment. Many had come out of the big bands of the 1940s and had put their days of musical enjoyment behind them. If memory serves, I believe Johnny Messner, who had had his own band at the Hotel McAlpin for years, played lead alto and was the assistant leader of the band.

Although the music was pretty much an abomination, the pay was excellent. There were two gigs a day: three hours at lunchtime and three hours at dinnertime, which started at 6 p.m. Hotel scale was one of Local 802's top

Editor's Note: Pianist John Williams was very busy in New York City in the fifties as a freelance musician. He played and recorded with Zoot Sims, Al Cohn, Stan Getz, Cannonball Adderley, Charlie Mariano, Phil Woods and many others. Recently, he took time out to send us this remembrance of an "earth-shaking" event in his musical life. Thanks, John, for sharing it with our readers!

brackets, and, in addition, there was good money from the remote radio broadcasts twice each weekday and once on Saturday. For starving beboppers in those days, that kind of money seemed obscene; kind of like it is for jazz musicians today to witness the incredible wealth of the graduates from the Woodstock Rabble School of Rock 'n' Roll. Consequently, when a rare opening occurred (usually through the death of a member!), a bebopper would leap to the fore and suddenly find himself in an extremely alien environment. From Christmas 1955 to St.

Patrick's Day 1956, I was one of those alien beboppers.

At that time, I lived on West 71st Street near West End Avenue. The brownstone was full of musicians thanks to a generous and warmhearted landlady, Flo Dunk, whose son, Billy, had been a jazz drummer who committed suicide. She was an old sweetheart who loved us all, even when the rent was late, which was often in those struggling days. I lived in the front first-floor apartment which trumpeter Phil Sunkel had vacated.

On the second floor, in the rear, were Med and Joanie Flory until they moved to California in 1955 or '56, and, in the front, were drummer Winston Welch and writer Billy Scott. The third floor was occupied by two lead-type trumpet players whose names escape my memory. I just remember that they were well-known and always seemed to be working!

Winston Welch was a good drummer from Kansas City who had done stints with the Claude Thornhill Orchestra and other bands of the day. He was very much a gentleman of jazz but fairly straight-laced. He didn't "partake" in any extra-curricular activities or hang out too much with the rest of us degenerates. At that time, Winston was on the Lopez band and around Christmas 1955, an opening occurred for "second piano" and Winston got me the gig. I was then naively trying to save a marriage that was already a lost cause, and thinking that perhaps steady



From the ACMJC archive

(From left) John Williams (p), Bill Anthony (b), Stan Getz (ts), Frank Isola (d, partially hidden), Tony Fruscella (tp), Blue Note, Chicago, IL, 1955.

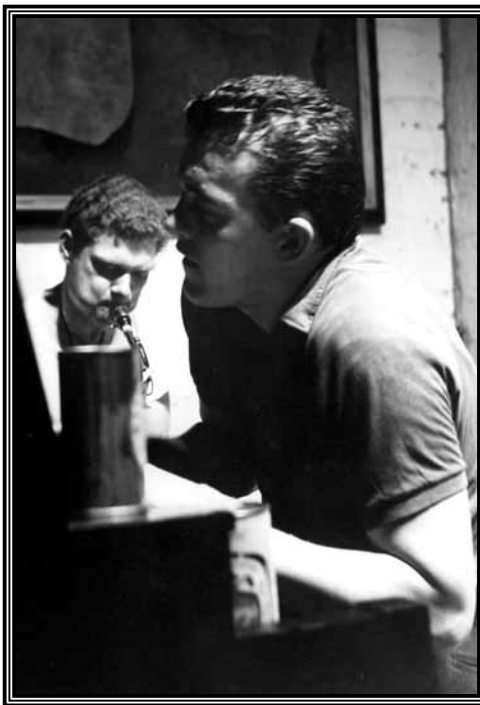
employment might help, I auditioned and got the job.

I should explain here some of the other advantages the job provided: (1) most jazz gigs then didn't even start until 10 p.m., and if one was lucky enough to get the occasional Monday night at Birdland or something similar, you could still make the gig since the Taft Grill Room evening slot ended at 9; (2) because of the break between the lunchtime gig and the evening gig, one could make the union floor on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays if one chose to do so; (3) best of all, the Taft was diagonally across Seventh Avenue from Charlie's Tavern, the musicians' bar. Desperately needed support was always available there from both alcohol and friends. For me, personally, it was a lifesaver. Every night at 9, I was there, hoping the right players would fall by and we could go someplace and play to ease the pain.

Most often it was down at an East Village loft, and many, many times it was with Zoot, and quite a few times with Al as well. Oh, those sweet memories! (I wrote a tune, "Down at the Loft," for a record date of Zoot's that I was on with Bob Brookmeyer, Gus Johnson and Milt Hinton, called *The Modern Art of Jazz*.)

The gig with Vincent was kind of doomed from the start. There were two Baldwin baby grands; mine was elevated up near Winston and Vincent's, of course, was down in front. Every chart had a piano solo and I had to pay close attention to see if Vincent was going to stop gabbing with the giddy matrons at the front of the bandstand and make it over to the piano in time to play the solo. Very often he would jump in halfway through the solo and I would drop out and go back to playing rhythm. Right away the difficulties escalated. Many times he would jump in on the off-beat or half a bar away and – look out! – the whole band would have to shift gears to get with him. That ain't easy. I put up with that for quite awhile until one time, during a solo on "The Man I Love," Vincent jumped in on the wrong beat. I said to myself, "That's enough of that crap," and instead of dropping out of the solo, I just hammered away at it where it belonged in the time until Vincent finally woke up and came along. That was the beginning of the end. I was definitely persona non grata from that point forward, even though a few of the players expressed their pleasure at my insubordination.

Another thing that made Vincent irritated was my consistent last-minute arrival at the noontime kick-off. The bandstand was at the far end of the dining room from the steps that led down from the lobby to the Grill. There was a band room right behind the stage and we each had a locker to hold our uniform jackets and clip-on bow ties. Every day I would come running up the stairs like a madman at the



Zoot Sims and John Williams, NYC, c. 1956.

Chuck Lilly, donated by Mr. Lilly

Broadway and 50th Street subway station, dash the short block over to Seventh Avenue, risk life and limb dodging the traffic to cross the street, run through the lobby and down the stairs, plow my way through the patrons at a desperate pace and hit the band room for my jacket and tie. Of course, all the other members of the band plus Vincent would already be on the stand, waiting for the down-beat when, whoosh!, I'd slide onto my bench, ready to go. Of course, he couldn't stand this. But as long as I made it on time he really didn't have much recourse.

I had a few problems, musically. Never having been a club-date musician, I didn't know all the French tunes that he loved and that the band played without charts. I had to bone up on them. But the real challenge that Winston and I had in order to survive was to somehow create a

rhythmic lilt (almost a synthetic swing at times) to the society two-four. That ain't easy either, trying to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. But, by golly, sometimes after spending the afternoon break at Charlie's, we could pull it off, or so it seemed. It helped a little but not much.

The end came on St. Patty's Day in March of 1956. As usual, I came running in, glanced up at the full band already on the stand, and – oh, oh – they all had on green derby hats, BIG green bowties, and green boutonnieres. I knew it was all over. I came up on the bandstand wearing none of the special accoutrements. Vincent directed me to go backstage and put them on. I said, "Thanks, but no thanks." He said, "You're fired. Get out of here right now." No notice. And I never even complained to the union. I knew I had it coming.

The main reason I wanted to write about this is to set the stage for an event – for me, an earth-shaking event – that happened in January of 1956. As indicated previously, many evenings after the Taft gig, revitalization was so desperately needed that I'd end up jamming someplace, anyplace, with guys I'd run into at Charlie's. Often we'd get together just over on Broadway at Nola Studios. We would drink, smoke and carry on into the wee hours. Well, on January 23rd, after a typical night of over-indulging, the phone rang at my apartment at about 4 a.m. My wife answered it and handed the phone to me across the bed (this account was confirmed and reconstructed by her at a later date). It was Hank Jones calling. Hank said he had to leave town for two days, and asked if I could sub for him at a record date with Zoot and Al at Webster Hall at noon that day. Was he kidding? Zoot and Al? Of course I could. I'll be there. Hooray!

Naturally, when I awakened from my stupor, my wife had left for work and I had a hangover and zero recollection of any such call from Hank. As usual, I made it to the Taft

John Williams

barely on time at noon. Halfway through the gig, the waiter brought me a phone message: call Jack Lewis, then the A&R [Artist and Repertoire] man for RCA. During a break I called Jack. He wanted to know where the hell I was and why I hadn't shown up. I denied vehemently ever having heard from Hank and explained I couldn't walk out of the Taft halfway through the gig. Boy, was he mad at Hank. He thought Hank had lied to him. I found out much later that Jack had finally called Dave McKenna and Dave got there in time to do three tunes, two of which were redone, along with some additional tunes, the next day. Hank was back on the third day and finished the album, which was released as *From A to Z* by the Al Cohn-Zoot Sims Sextet. It was re-issued by RCA on CD in 1999.

Now dig this. A couple of days later, during the lunch-time gig, I was sitting up there with Winston doing our painful two-four. I looked down at the table nearest to my end of the stand and there sat Hank and big brother Elvin Jones! To say the least, I was totally surprised to see them there and waved a friendly greeting that got only angry scowls in response. At break time, in total innocence, I went immediately to their table and, quietly, all hell broke loose. Hank asked if I had been "trying to ruin his reputation in the city," et cetera. Both of them thought I'd set the whole thing up and Elvin made it pretty clear he was anxious to meet me outside! Two things saved me: (1) since I had NO idea what he was talking about when he said he had called me in the middle of the night, I think my total disbelief was so genuine it was convincing, and (2) the thing that carried the day was my ability to explain how much I loved Zoot and Al, and even



Chet Baker and John Williams, Balboa Bay, CA, 1953.

Donated by John Williams

though I had already recorded with them separately, I would NEVER, EVER have missed a chance to record with them together if I'd known what I was doing when I got the middle-of-the-night call. I would have sent a sub to the Taft or called in sick! Thankfully, they finally believed me and Hank and I shook hands. Elvin looked disappointed.

When I saw my wife that evening, she confirmed she had gotten the call and handed me the telephone. But she had never even asked me about it afterwards. As I said, the marriage was already doomed. I'm pretty positive that I called Jack Lewis soon afterwards to set the record straight.

Now here's the capper. Forty years later, I was a city commissioner in Hollywood, Florida (for 20 years and five terms), and for several years in the late 1980s, early '90s, I had the wonderful opportunity to book artists for our annual mainstream jazz festival. Quite a few of them were

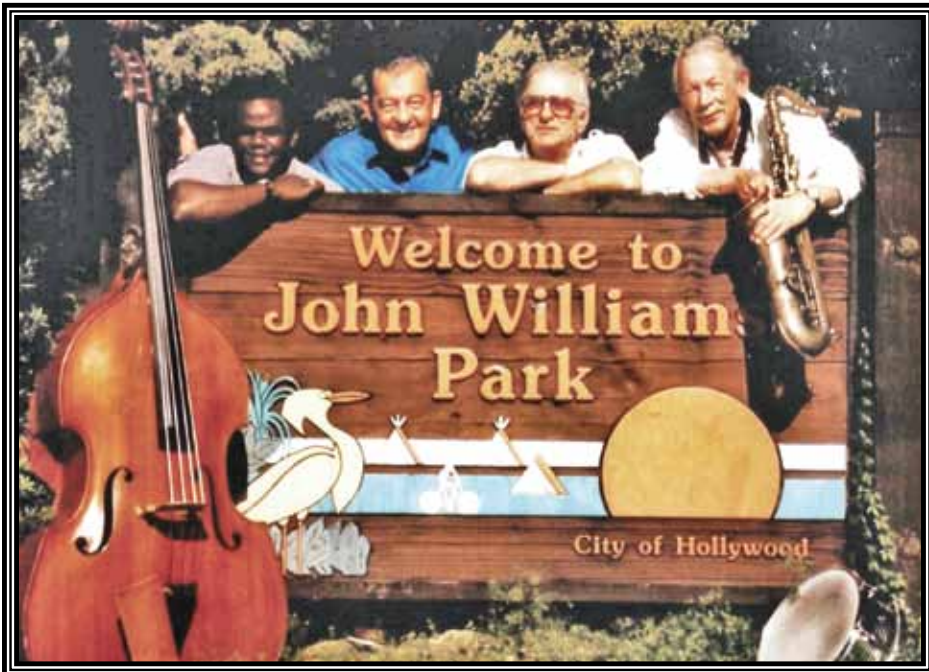
old friends, and I had a chance to play with several of them again. I advertised the festival in national publications, and so that there could be no mistake about its orientation, my ads read as follows: "Follow the 'Mainstream', Avoid Con-'FUSION', Go 'Straight Ahead' to Young Circle in Hollywood, Florida" (the festival's venue).

One year I tried to book Hank.

When he answered the phone, I said, "Hank, this is the piano player you and Elvin were going to beat the crap out of at the Taft Grill many years ago." Bless his heart, he gave a good laugh and said, "Johnny Williams!" Unfortunately, he was booked and busy and couldn't make it. He was, and still is, one of the finest gentlemen of jazz of all time and one of my very favorite piano players.

Thanks for letting me share these personal stories. Oh, those lovely days of yore, and youth. ☺

Donated by John Wilcox



(From left) Jeff Grubbs (b), John Williams (p), Frank Isola (d), Spike Robinson (ts), Hollywood, FL, 1994.

A Day in Manhattan with Red Mitchell

by Kim Parker

Anyone who had the good fortune to know Red Mitchell will tell you what a lovely man and consummate musician he was. He had a tremendous love of life and advocated fairness in terms that one could not deny. He rose above the pettiness most of us fall prey to. A great bear of a man with an enormous passion for life, Red had a generosity of spirit that was remarkable.

I had known Red for a few years and it was always a pleasure when we could get together. I was in New York City from France for about a month back in 1989-90 and he was in from Sweden. He gave me a call and asked if I wanted to meet him; he was recording a few tunes at a spacious apartment overlooking the East River. Afterwards, we went to one of his favorite Mexican restaurants, then on to his gig at Bradley's where Red was doing a duo with Hank Jones.

Bradley's, a rather small venue near University Place in the Village, catered to regular patrons and musicians who came to hear only the very best. We left the club around 3:30 and went to Red's pad. When in New York, Red usually stayed at a residential ho-



Kim Parker, ESU, 2003.

Sara Kaplan

Editor's Note: Singer Kim Parker recorded two Red Mitchell compositions on her 1983 Soul Note recording, *Good Girl*, with the Tommy Flanagan Trio. In this wonderful anecdote, Kim relates an experience she shared with Red some years ago that captures the timeless craziness that still defines life in New York City.

tel called The Collingwood. Red called it "The Crawlingwood" and it certainly earned that moniker on the night I was there.

Wound up after the gig, Red could talk for hours on any subject; I never found him uninteresting. One would think that going to a guy's hotel would involve other things but, no. We simply talked for a few hours.

I had been hearing something in the walls, a sound I couldn't place or locate. While listening to Red, I focused my ears and found its source. I put my hand on Red's arm and whispered, "Someone is drilling through your wall from next door." We watched with fascination as the drilling continued.

Red phoned down to the poor guy asleep at the front desk and told him our problem. The guy came upstairs and Red gave him a tour of the damage, saying we really should get to the bottom of this. Red knocked on the neighbor's door and when he answered said, "Excuse me, sir. Are you drilling holes through to my apartment?" The guy affably responded, "Oh. Yeah." Red asked why. Again the affable guy said, "Well, I just wanted to see what was going on."

Red asked if we might come in and check out his work. (His pad had a creepy combination of blue lighting and serious workout equipment.) En route to see the holes we knew about, the guy explained that he'd earlier been drilling in another area, which turned out to be the inside of

the cabinets in Red's kitchenette. Not getting the results he'd hoped for, he'd pressed on until he succeeded.

Red was so kind, nodding his head in affirmation, here and there adding a "Hmmm" and an "I see." Red asked if our new "pal" lived there alone. He said he did, but his mother lived in another apartment upstairs. After a few more pleasantries, we took our leave with handshakes and best wishes all around. Soon after, Red and I said "good morning" and I returned back uptown.

About 10 days later, I was watching the local New York television news and heard about an elevator accident at The Collingwood Hotel. A man and his mother plunged eight stories but no one was injured!

While it was certainly a bizarre and memorable evening which will stay in my memory for a long time, I will remember it mostly for the humanity Red displayed. Always kind and curious – that was Red Mitchell in a nutshell. ☺



Red Mitchell, Los Angeles, CA, 1954.

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On Education for the Improvising Musician



Marek Lazarski

by David Liebman

In August, 2008, I participated in a very interesting interview in Barga, Italy conducted by a musician, Marco Cattani. He was doing research into the very broad area of jazz education – how it is taught, and various other ramifications concerning the subject. This first part of the transcribed interview centers on the notion of improvisation as part of life itself and the importance of conveying this concept to students, even beyond jazz.

Marco Cattani [MC]: In your opinion, from what does the need to improvise come from? And what is its use, or rather, how can it be of service to improvise?

Dave Liebman [DL]: Well, it's a natural human impulse to want to ... express yourself and to do it in a spontaneous way. Babies do it all the time. I think our natural way of living is to be that way.

Unfortunately, as we get older, it becomes stifled by society. But to improvise is to live and to breathe. We improvise every minute. You walk across the street: should you go or should you not go because of the lights? We're always improvising, so it's natural. And improvising with music, or it could be with words or it could be with painting, I think is a very natural thing. And it should be absolutely encouraged. Of course, ... a young person does it naturally. They should be encouraged to continue it as they become adults.

MC: Going back to your idea of should I cross the street because of the lights ... would you say that's improvising or is that just an automatic response to your environment?

DL: It could be automatic but it could be a decision made in the moment – because the car is far enough away now and I can go because I can get across, if that's a consider-

Part One – Improvisation as a Function of Living

ation. In other words, we're constantly making things up. ... [In] our normal course of life, if you're sitting around a table and you're just discussing something, you're improvising. I mean, people do it every minute of their lives.

And it's something that's part of our lives – so much so that we don't really appreciate it. But, of course, what we're talking about is a specific way of training yourself to be a good improviser. Now, you have to have language; you have to have the tools; you have to have ... some sense of well-being, and some sense of self and all that. And those are different considerations. But the act of improvising, that's as natural as taking a breath.

MC: ... What can a high school student who is studying music in school, through improvisation, what can he or she learn? And independently from the actual musical aspects, would you agree that improvisation is an excellent training for developing relationships with others, and also for reflex?

DL: That's it. You just said it. That's the value of improvisation for a young person. It has to do with life – their ability to cope with situations, to react and to respond. And, of course, ... you teach a young person that it's not just improvising off the top of your head. It's based on your practiced abilities and the discipline that you put into it. When ... you put together the fact that I know what I should do, I learn what I can do, I practice what I should do, then I'm more ready to respond in a suitable way to a situation. This is fantastic training for anybody let alone musicians.

MC: There are some students [who] have reading difficulties – I presume we're talking about reading music – and others [who] have difficulties with improvisation. Generally speaking, those that are better at reading don't want to improvise or are less drawn to improvisation and vice versa. What would you say are strategies that are useful to find a meeting point between these two extremes?

DL: Well ... I can't tell you specific exercises or methodologies. But the main thing is to instill confidence in the person who is improvising or trying to improvise. That whatever they

do is not wrong, it just needs to be trained. The problem with our culture is that we say if you make something up and it's not based on something that came before, you're considered to be a novice. You're considered to be not an expert, and that's not worthwhile. And the truth is ... that's the worst message you can send to a young person.

Now, if I'm with a 25-year-old person and they don't know how to respond to a situation because they weren't trained or they never got the discipline, then we're in a different situation. That's a different story.

But ... this should be all done at ... 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 years old. Once you get somebody that [does not fear] to be themselves then you can fill in the information. Then, you spend the next 10 years learning what it is we do: scales and how to spell something and all that. But the idea that I have something to say and it's okay, and there is no right or wrong at the beginning, this is something that should be done [no] later than 12 or 13, because by then ... the personality is set.

MC: How can one use the practice of improvisation to study technique, for example, to develop rhythmic mastery or otherwise? How could we insert the improvisational practice to eliminate or at least minimize the misery of rote learning and this kind of thing?

DL: Well, we're saying the same thing again. I mean it's just [important] to give a person confidence that what they do is not right or wrong; it's an expression of who they are. And to understand that in order for that [confidence] to have any kind of depth and worth, it eventually has to be based on fact and knowledge and information, practice and routine, things that are not so much fun to work on, actually.

That's the real point to get across. Everything will follow from that, once a person is free – free from feeling that they're being censored, free from feeling that they're doing something wrong.

The classical musician who can play the most amazing cadenzas [if they are] written out (usually by some people who improvised it) ... they play these incredible technical things and then you say to them, "Uh... would you improvise on a C scale?" And they're psychologically frozen. This is beyond the music. This has to do with their training, maybe their personality, maybe some problems of behavior, we don't know. But it has to really do with the training.

MC: It's an outside limitation or other.

DL: ... Unfortunately, it's usually not them, but it's something that they grew up with and they don't know the difference. If we lived ...in an ancient culture where a young person is around the elders and is sitting by the side of the uncle, the brother, the father, the cousin, and everybody is playing the drums at five years old, obviously they're going to have a different feeling.

It's pretty apparent what we've done. The Western world, in the name of progress, in the name of technological advance, has in many cases stifled individuality and [instilled] the fear factor. This is a terrible thing and that's why

we have psychiatrists and psychologists. This is a blanket generalization of course. But my point is that if a young person is taught to be free within themselves and [understands] the need to have information at some point of development, I think you've got a good balance there because you can always learn the information.

MC: Would you say, though, that it's a contradiction to teach improvisation, a contradiction in terms? Would you say it's even a bigger contradiction to teach [others] how to teach improvisation?

DL: Yes, in a way, because [improvisation] is natural. It's supposed to be there from the beginning. It is there from the beginning. But we have to re-learn. We're re-educating is what we're doing.

I mean, I have to learn to be free and feel okay about playing on a C scale. And, in a way, I might have known that [concept] better when I was two or three or four or five years old. But, of course, I didn't have any awareness of it for obvious reasons. So, we are re-educating. But isn't education in general re-educating? I mean, as far as the deep tendencies of education. Not information – that you have to [get] when you're ready to learn what a scientific formula is, etc. ... But to learn how to be free, and to be who you are, and to express yourself, this is something that's natural to being a child. Unfortunately, it gets stifled in the Western culture.

MC: Within the context of teaching and didactics generally, would you say it's an error to think of jazz as the only reference point for the study of improvisation?

DL: [Yes], because ... improvisation [is] certainly in so many musical cultures. Look at Indian music, and Bulgarian music. Brazilian. I mean, everywhere. Improvisation is natural to the human species. It's just that in our world here, the ... Eurocentric world, jazz has sort of become THE improvised art, of course alongside whatever folk music exists, [whether] it's Finland or French folk music or whatever. Improvising happens in [that] music.

But in a certain sense we have adopted jazz universally – which is not a terrible thing. I was in Ireland at a festival one week. ... It was called the Johnny Clancy or something Festival. In this town, ... all the fiddlers and the guitarists take over. There were 15 people sitting together [who] completely know everything [about] what they're doing. There's no written music. I mean they're obviously improvising with a little melody and a little format. These are ... normal, working people, they're not musicians. That's a very big tradition in Irish music. It's everywhere – every culture has its aspect of improvisation, almost every culture.

I couldn't sit here and give you a list but I'm sure if we went to the Sudan there'd be some music that involves improvisation. So, it's natural to the human thing. It's just that jazz has become, thankfully, one of the major Western ways of doing it.

MC: What would you say is the relationship between musical language and improvisation? How many of the

Lieb on Improvisation

various musical languages use improvisation?

DL: Well, I'm not sure what [you] mean by musical language, but if [you] mean the tools of music in the Western world, those are the tempered scale, twelve keys, half steps and whole steps, what's sonorous and what's dissonant. These are the rules of music as we know them. Indian music has different rules. You're responsible to know what [the rules are] so that when you talk you have the vocabulary to [communicate].

MC: Yes, right – the command of the language.

DL: It's one thing for a baby to take paints and do a finger-painting. It's great. That's a wonderful expression of who they are. They're improvising. But that's not going to really work at 25 years old. By then, you need to have some knowledge and some [ability] to express yourself in the language of the form you're using: what came before; what is happening presently; and what, hopefully, is happening in the future.

There are three stages of learning: imitation, stylization (the present), and innovation, potentially. And innovation ranges from the individual to an entire sub group. It could be that the way I play an F sharp is different from the way you play it. Or it could be Coltrane and change the language.

So we have many levels of innovation. But you have to go through imitation – what came before; stylization, which is the current configuration of the art form within the culture. And, of course, hopefully, after 20 years or so of doing something, or whatever the period is depending on the art, you're ready for some sort of innovation – to be who you are.

Now, that's a process that we as musicians go through. An ordinary person doesn't need to go through that. But [for] somebody who [aspires] to be an artist or a professional in what they do, it is incumbent that they go through these three stages, or certainly the first two stages. ☺

Garth Woods



Phil Woods and the Delaware Water Gap Celebration of the Arts (COTA) Festival were honored in Williamsport, PA, on Nov. 12, 2008 with the 2008 Pennsylvania Creative Community Award.

(From left) Phil Woods, Gov. Ed Rendell, Jay Rattman, state Rep. John Siptroth.

Phil in the Gap

Continued from 3

I heard that Gitmo used loud rock music to break POWs. The men in custody wound up screaming and smashing their heads against walls, unable to endure more. I can relate!

Does the Kennedy Center hate jazz? Celebrities who were recently honored this year were: Barbra Streisand, Morgan Freeman, George Jones, Twyla Tharp, and Pete Townshend and Roger Daltrey of The Who. What's with that? Not one jazz person has been honored in years but they honor two Brits who only use three chords?

According to the daily Stockholm newspaper, *Dagens Nyheter*, Stan Getz and Al Cohn are partly to blame for the financial crisis now plaguing the world. The reason was arrived at after an article in the paper concluded that things might have been different had economist Alan Greenspan pursued a musical career. This conclusion was based on a Greenspan interview with PBS's Jim Lehrer. Turning to music and baseball, Greenspan said:

"I decided that baseball was my thing. I was actually getting very good, but at the age of 14, I hit a plateau and I never improved. I was a left-handed

first baseman. I hit the ball pretty well. Then, I got into music, and became a professional musician for a couple of years. I played the clarinet and saxophone, flute, bass clarinet. I actually enjoyed the clarinet, and I was a fairly good amateur, but a moderate professional. But what really did me in was I had to play next to Stan Getz and Al Cohn. I was 16; they were 15. I asked myself if I really wanted to be in this business because they were so good. They were two of the really historic and famous sax players ever. The best economic decision I ever made in my life was to decide to leave the music business and go into economics."

Well, maybe not Mr. Greenspan's best decision. So, blame Al and Stan for our economic woes. Alan Greenspan actually played with the Henry Jerome Orchestra remaining with the band for about a year. He began his career as a jazz musician and attended Juilliard. Leonard Garment who became counsel for Richard Nixon also played with the Jerome band.

And this from a *New York Times* obituary printed Dec. 3, 2008 about Joza Karas, "a musician and teacher who became a sleuth in his quarter-century search for the music and

stories of composers who managed to do masterly work in [Terezin,] a Nazi concentration camp:

"In films and by other means, the Nazis made propaganda use of the four concert orchestras and as many chamber groups that flourished at Terezin. An opera company mounted several full-scale productions. A jazz band was called the Ghetto Swingers.

"In a legendary deception, when the International Red Cross went to inspect the camp in 1944, the Nazis sent the old and sick to gas chambers, painted buildings, planted flowers and even opened a well-stocked chocolate shop. ... Flower pots obscured the feet of musicians who had no shoes.

"In truth, Terezin was a place where 140,000 people, mainly Jews, were held in a labor camp or transferred to death camps like Auschwitz. Many died at Terezin through execution, disease and starvation. About 60,000 people were crammed into an area meant for 7,000.

"But the music was real, developing spontaneously after a pianist found and repaired a piano abandoned in the town. Soon there were several choruses. Inmates smuggled in instruments in pieces.

"Eventually, more than 10 composer-inmates created original works, many of which were performed in the camp. One such composer was Viktor Ullmann, who had studied with Arnold Schoenberg. He formed the Studio for New Music at Terezin. Others were Hans Krasa, Gideon Klein and Pavel Haas.

"Despite propagandizing the music, the Nazis had no interest in preserving it, and the composers and musicians could not: many of them were killed. Tracking it down became Mr. Karas's obsession. ...

"When I started my research, I used to have nightmares,' Mr. Karas told *The Hartford Courant*. 'And guilt. I'd pick up a piece of chocolate and I couldn't eat it.' He recovered. 'They say Czechs get used to anything,' he said. 'Even the gallows.'"

Joza Karas died on Nov. 28, 2008 in Bloomfield, CT, at the age of 82.



Garth Woods

(From left) COTA Cat alumni Jay Rattman (as), Dave Lantz IV (p), and Evan Gregor (b) perform at the 2008 Governor's Awards for the Arts ceremony, with a photo of the historic Pocono jazz venue, the Deer Head Inn, projected behind them.

Kudos to our friend, the distinguished editor of *The NOTE*, keeper of the ACMJC, and all-around bon vivant, boulevardier and jazz fan par excellence, Bob Bush, on his great work on the weekly radio show, *Jazz from A to Z*, with Bill Hopkins by his side. The show features Al Cohn's music, and the final hour showcases Pocono area musicians. The program has hit its stride and is a welcome addition to the fecund artistic climate of our neighborhood. WESS 90.3 FM – Bravo!

In the summer edition of *The NOTE*, I inadvertently forgot to thank actor Peter Dennis for his Herculean efforts in securing permission from the Disney folks to allow us to record *The Children's Suite*.

The AFM, in their monthly newspaper, *International Musician*, offered the following lines to use when doing business on the phone: "Price is in the mind of the beholder, so if someone says: 'That's a lot of money,' you could always say:

'You don't look for a cheaper doctor and expect great results, do you?'

'Your plumber probably charges more.'

'We'll be charging twice as much after our next CD comes out. Good thing you're booking us now.'

'Oh, c'mon. You didn't really expect a group as good as us for less, did you?'

'You're joking with me, aren't you?'"
The last one is my favorite. Happy New Year!

Go Prez!

In the immortal words of the president of the tenor sax, Lester Young: "Ivey Divey!" Be sure to get the new Mosaic boxed set, *Classic Lester Young with Count Basie (1936-1940)*. He sounds very presidential.

I am not a religious man but I would like to close with some words from Beethoven:

"The vibrations on the air are the breath of God speaking into man's soul –

Music is the language of God.

We musicians are as close to God as Man can be.

We hear his voice – We read his lips – We give birth to the children of God who sing his praise.

That is what musicians are – and if we aren't, then we are nothing." ☺

Jazz at ESU: The Sound of Big Bands

Phil Woods conducts the COTA Festival Orchestra



Two of the most talented jazz orchestras in the world recently demonstrated the artistry of big band jazz for ESU students and the Pocono community.

In November, the second "Library Alive" concert took place at the Sherman Theater. Phil Woods and the COTA Festival Orchestra performed a diverse set of classic compositions taken from the Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection. The program featured music by Al Cohn, Neal Hefti, Gerry Mulligan, Phil Woods and Dick Cone, as well as several Bill Potts' arrangements from *The Jazz Soul of Porgy and Bess*.

On Presidents' Weekend in February, JARO (Jazz Artists Repertory Orchestra) performed "A Salute to Big Band Jazz" at ESU's Cohen Recital Hall featuring an eclectic program prepared by musical director Wolfgang Knittel. It ranged from the late 1920s (Paul Whiteman, Coon Sanders' Nighthawks); through the '40s and '50s (Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, Erskine Hawkins, Count Basie, Elliot Lawrence); and into the '60 and '70s (Cannonball Adderley, Clare Fischer, Woody Shaw and Toshiko Akiyoshi). A fitting closer for the holiday concert was a samba arrangement of "Stars and Stripes Forever" by maestro Knittel that pleased the enthusiastic audience.

Photos by Charles Perry Hebard

Jan Betz



Eddie Severn



Jim Buckley



Marko Marcinko





**Jazz Artists Repertory
Orchestra (JARO)**



Wolfgang Knittel



Pat Dorian



Bob D'Aversa



Richard Barz

played everything in F sharp like Irving Berlin, or G flat. So, part of my education in addition to taking bands off of records was to write his music down for him and make piano arrangements.

And I just couldn't see it – writing songs, like, boom! So "Emily" came out – this is back at the very end of the era when publishers actually ran around and got records for you. When it was a studio film, they had big publishing rings – Robbins, Feist and Miller, and so forth. Every company had their own [publisher].

They started getting records on the song, and I said, "Hey, I like this. This isn't so bad." And right away I started writing songs. But I'd been an arranger for 20 years in the business professionally before I ever wrote a song.

BB: Well, you were in great demand as an arranger for some of the great recording stars of our time, right? Tell me about some of this. I mean, tell me about your work with Frank Sinatra, for example.

JM: Oh, well, he heard I did an act for Vic Damone. He was working the Sands and Sinatra, of course, was a part-owner and was around there at the time, and he wanted to know who did those charts.

So, he called me when he started Reprise. I made the very first Reprise record [*Ring-A-Ding-Ding!*, 1961]. I thought he was great. I just loved working for him. I've got outtakes of these things and I listen to them now. I was amazed. He knew from the very first moment. He learned an arrangement very quickly. He never rehearsed; he hated to rehearse. In fact, he hated to do more than one take.

But he was so in command as to how he wanted the song to sound. But this is when I'd had the music there, the tempo, the whole thing. And his musicality just blew me away. He really knew. He knew how to do it and how to do it right. And he ran the session.

You know, other singers, I don't care who they are, they come in and they hear the arrangement and they try to

learn the routine and learn the arrangement. Sinatra, when he heard it once, knew the whole thing, boom! He was like Buddy Rich that way. In fact, those two guys were so much alike you wondered how they could stand each other.

BB: But they were pals, weren't they?

JM: They were pals but it was love-hate. I mean, they were roommates for a moment on Dorsey's band. But they were always fighting because they were much the same guy, as was Tommy.

BB: What about Tony Bennett?

JM: Oh, we became friends right away because he was always the same guy, he still is. He's been nicer to me as a songwriter than anyone.

BB: He goes way back with Al. I think they may have grown up in the same neighborhood.

JM: I don't think so. ... He's from Astoria [Queens] but Al's from Brooklyn.

BB: Al's from Brooklyn, yes.

JM: Yes, all those guys like Tiny Kahn, Frankie Socolow, [Lenny Garment], they're all from Brooklyn ... whereas Al Greenspan was from Washington Heights. But yeah, a lot of them are from Brooklyn, like Bensonhurst and those areas.

Tony has always recorded my stuff better than anyone else too. I always kid him. I bring him songs and I'll say, "You know, I need you to record it." Because he makes the definitive record on everything, like on "Emily," on "The Shadow." And I say, "You're like a damn dog, you know? You come in and you lift your leg on the territory and it's just better than anyone else's." *[BB laughs]* "And I can't help it that you're that way, so I'm going to keep wanting you to do my songs." And he does them. *[both laugh]* He's a beautiful guy. He's the same guy he always was.

BB: His career is remarkable and it just continues and continues on. I love the way he reaches out to new generations of listeners also. He's not hung up about that.

JM: No. Danny, his son, has really made him because he'd be a statistic now like all the other singers if it wasn't for Danny. He's the one that got him on

Tony Bennett Unplugged.

BB: Right, on MTV.

JM: Sure. Danny's a real hero for that. [He's a hard guy] to bargain with when it comes to money, but he sure has done right by his father.

BB: [laughs] There's another beautiful song that you've written for the movies that we had the opportunity and the pleasure to hear Frank Wess do a wonderful rendition of, called "A Time for Love."

JM: Oh, yeah.

BB: Yes. He was [at ESU in 2007] and played that one and the house was still. It is just such a beautiful tune.

JM: Wow, that's great. I love Frank. Well, we were in the [Basie] band together. In fact, [Frank] Wess and Frank Foster and myself are about the only guys left out of that band... and Snooky [Young] who was in the earlier band. You know, he was in the band before it broke up. Snooky's something else. But, yeah, it's just the three of us, the two Franks and me. ... It was quite a time.

*BB: Well, how did you come [to do] the score for M*A*S*H? How did that whole thing start?*

JM: Well, Robert Altman and I became really good friends when I was working with him on a movie called *That Cold Day in the Park*. Somehow I got hired to do *M*A*S*H* right after that.

Altman and I liked to party – he also threw great parties and so we kept it up socially. Catherine Altman, his wife, was just a wonderful lady. She was right there with us.

When we were starting with *M*A*S*H* ... this is in pre-production – usually, you never come on a picture, as a composer, until the picture is shot and then they're thinking about music. But we had just finished a movie so luckily, I was happy that I was hired. And we're sitting around ... drinking a little Courvoisier or whatever. ... We're on the set and they're going to start shooting. The first thing they're going to shoot is that "Last Supper" scene, when the Painless Pole has decided he couldn't get it up the night before with a WAC and life is over and he's going to cash it in.

So, Hawkeye and Trapper talk him

into taking the black capsule. ... The "Last Supper" scene is where he's lying in the casket and everybody's walking around throwing scotch [bottles] and Playboy [magazines] and all of these things [into the casket] to see him into the next life. And Altman says to me, "You know, that's the first scene we're going to shoot. There really should be a song because you look at this thing around the footage in the cutting room and it's dead air for like three minutes. We've got to have something."

So, we've got one guy who knows about two chords on the guitar [who is] in the scene, and we've got a kid who sings pretty good, Kenny Prymus. ... He said, "We need a song and it's got to be the stupidest song that was ever written." [BB laughs] ...

I said, "I can do stupid," you know? I said, "Painless Pole is going to commit suicide ... I think the song should be called "Suicide Is Painless." [Altman] said, "Sounds like a good idea."

He says, "Well, we've got to have a pre-record on it because we're going to shoot to it in the first scene in the movie. You know, they're all set up and this is the first [shoot] on the schedule so we need it in a hurry. [Altman] said, "I used to write songs years ago, let me go home and see if I can think of something stupid enough for this."

He came back the next day and he said, "I can't think of anything that's as stupid as what we need." I said, "Oh, well, it seemed like a good idea last night." He said, "Ahh, but all is not lost. I've got a 15-year-old kid [Mike Altman] who is a total idiot." [BB laughs] "He's got a guitar and he'll run through this thing like a dose of salts in five minutes." [BB laughs]

And he did. He wrote [the lyrics for] "Suicide Is Painless." But he dummied it to a Leonard Cohen song that I hated called "The Gambler," with two dumb chords in it, and I couldn't get that song out of my head. I had about two days to write it and make a demo. ... I couldn't



(From left) Al Cohn, Elliot Lawrence, Tiny Kahn, Johnny Mandel, from a *Down Beat* clipping dated July 16, 1952.

Courtesy of Johnny Mandel

write that stupid thing because I couldn't get the [the Leonard Cohen melody] out of my head.

Finally, I got drunk and wrote what is known as "The [Theme] from M*A*S*H." And I never write drunk. ... I could do all that stuff, but I couldn't do it. Al would finish a bottle of scotch and do the Sunday New York Times crossword puzzle before he'd even start and then come up with something brilliant.

Billy Byers [was] the same way. And Billy would be writing [scores] in ink and ripping off the pages, you know, and driving Brookmeyer totally crazy because [Bob's] sitting there trying to think of note one. [BB laughs] ... and every so often you'd hear "rip" and, you know, Brookmeyer would be seething. [Both laugh] They'd all be up in Manny Albam's office.

So, I wrote this thing and they liked it. Kenny Prymus recorded it, we did a real homemade-sounding demo, and they shot the scene to it. Then, they started putting it up over the main titles. I said, "What the hell are you doing? That doesn't fit." They've got the helicopters and everybody running with stretchers. Ingo Preminger, the producer, Otto Preminger's brother, and Altman are sitting there. We were still using movieolas in those days. You know what those things are, don't you?

BB: I'm not quite sure, no.

JM: They were pre-historic. It was a dreadful thing. It ran movie and picture and sound at the same time. But ... it was a terrible sounding thing and a very noisy thing. It was before they had videotape that could be run ... you were running 35 millimeter [film] in it. [Preminger and Altman] were running the song over the credits and I said, "That doesn't fit. What are you doing?" They said, "We like it." I said, "That's the stupidest excuse I ever heard."

And I got into a fight with them. I finally said, "I can't believe this. I'm not going to be a part of this conversation." and

walked out. Thank god, they ignored me. ... It became my biggest copyright because it went over to the TV series from the movie and they kept all that for the titles without the vocal on it.

BB: Well, now there's a whole generation of people, including myself, who can't get that tune out of their head.

JM: I know.

BB: Thank god, right?

JM: Yeah. [BB laughs]. Thank god is right. Yeah. It's just the luck, you know, it's all luck in this business. After you learn how to do what you do, you still have to be in the right place at the right time or it's not going to happen, as I'm sure everyone will tell you.

BB: Well, ... I realize that there's just too much to talk about, [considering] all of the artists that you have worked with over the years in both your film scoring and TV scoring. You've [produced] a real [variety] of different kinds of music.

JM: Yes.

BB: I mean, you really stayed true to your desire to try to do everything, didn't you?

JM: Yes, and luckily I was able to do it.

BB: You've even worked with the likes of Michael Jackson, for example.

Johnny Mandel

JM: Oh, he was a pleasure.

BB: *Tell me a little bit about your association with him.*

JM: I learned a lot about how to make records with Quincy [Jones]. The kind of songs and movies I was doing started really petering out at the end of the sixties, and then rock came in. Writing songs like "Emily" or "The Shadow" was really all of a sudden very passé. Rock was king and then, later on, disco and so forth.

So, I started wanting to make records again and I got hung up doing that. I started working with Quincy doing whatever writing I could but just hanging out in control rooms and watching him because [he] was just an amazing guy to work with. He had a first-class brain. I mean, it wasn't even the writing and things he was doing. It was just how he could see the whole picture and the whole vision of something from the very beginning, which is what you have to be able to do.

[Quincy] started working with Michael when they were doing the movie, *The Wiz*. They were doing a film version of the show. Right away, he and Michael got into sync. Michael is one of the most professional people I've ever worked with. Most people would be aghast when you say that, considering how the rest of his lifestyle is. He would always be there an hour before anyone else in the studio. He'd know everybody's part as well as his own. He is totally professional in every way. So, he's a joy to work with.

BB: *He's an amazing talent.*

JM: He is. But, even when he was very young, he was that way. He is just very smart.

BB: *Was **Off the Wall** the album when you first worked with him?*

JM: Yes. That was a thrill ... that was a great album to do. That's one of my favorite albums.

BB: *I remember that album fondly, mostly because it seemed to have this kind of contagious dance beat that I hadn't heard in a long time, maybe ever.*

JM: Quincy was a very big part of that because he'd build records right. You start by getting your rhythm tracks first to make this kind of a record, and you build it just like a house. You build the basement first, and if the basement is shaky and isn't quite right and doesn't have that thing that drew you in, nothing you put on top of it after that is going to sound right. It's not going to work, that's all.

So, you have to construct it that way from the basement on up. He'd put a lot of his bass on with a ... mini Moog. ... We used a lot of synthesizers but only in the right way because the only way you could get a good dance beat is with that big fat bass to start with. You'd just build it with three or four guys. Then anything you put on top of it, if you think of it that way, goes together like a Lego. It's going to keep sounding better. If you have it wrong in the beginning, everything you put on it makes it sound worse. *[Both laugh]*

So, that was a real lesson. I had a wonderful crash course in making records with Q. He had that great talent for making everybody feel comfortable while they were doing it. He was a natural that way, like a great director. You don't want to get people uptight when they're performing. You want to get them very happy so that they're in that moment. It comes through on the record if you do that.

BB: *I can't think of anybody else who seems to be so universally well-liked as Quincy Jones, and in such different settings.*

JM: Because he believes it. He believes, you know. He's just wonderful.

BB: *Well, you went on to [work] with a whole host of other people [and make many other] beautiful records ... Natalie Cole's **Unforgettable**, the [Barbra Streisand] **Back to Broadway** album, the [albums] you have done with Diana Krall ...*

JM: Oh, I love her. She's the best.

BB: *... and correct me if I'm wrong, but I think you had a lot to do with **The Art of Romance** by Tony Bennett also, right?*

JM: Oh, sure. Well, I have four or five tunes on there too.

BB: *I know Phil [Woods] played on that one and...*

JM: Oh, indeed he did. He's the best. I can't believe Phil. He's just something else, and he always was.

BB: *Well, is there anything we haven't had a chance to talk about that we should? Anything that comes to mind that you'd like to say but we didn't spend enough time talking about?*

JM: Ummmm ... I wish I knew Al better, as well as I knew him. For some reason, I always wanted his approval on things. We never spoke about things like that. We just sort of liked being together, even from the very beginning. He's one of the first people I ever met that ended up doing what I've been doing all this time. And he was always good. I don't remember him ever doing anything that wasn't great, even when he was a kid. He must have had many of those same experiences I did. I never spoke to him about that. Like, when we were first deciding that we wanted to do that, he was probably doing the same damn things I was doing – in Brooklyn somewhere.

BB: *You may have been leading parallel lives in some facets of it.*

JM: Yes, I think so. I think a lot of us were leading parallel lives: Manny Albam, who I knew very early; a lot of guys ... Brookmeyer, who was a case in point. He's just incredible.

BB: *Well, Johnny, thank you so much for taking the time to talk to me today.*

JM: Oh, well, it was my pleasure.

BB: *This was a thrill and we're going to be putting this tape right into the Al Cohn Collection for posterity ...*

JM: Great

BB: *... and to let all the up-and-coming music students here at the university take heed of the things that you've done and listen to this and enjoy your recollections. Thank you again for doing it for us.*

JM: Great, my pleasure. ☺

Sideman Asides

Compiled by Patrick Dorian

Perhaps you needed to be there, or perhaps you have to imagine Al, Zoot, and whomever speaking these quips. But no matter how you process these anecdotes, we include them to document another form of auditory joy from the jazz spirit.

Relayed by guitarist Vic Juris:

One day in September in the 1980s, I was standing backstage at the Delaware Water Gap COTA festival waiting to play my set. I had to follow Al's group, which was out there on stage cooking their brains out. I remember that the great Bill Goodwin was on drums.

Al approached the microphone and said: "We would now like to play a tune by Jule Styne, who once said about me, 'Who the hell is that?'"

I cannot ever recall a time in my life when I laughed that hard. My sides ached for days.

As told by percussionist Ed Hudak:

Al Cohn, Zoot Sims, Steve Gilmore, and I were playing golf in the late 1970s - early 1980s. (Actually, this unto itself is a funny image, but there's more!)

It took us more than three hours to play nine holes. Zoot would hit a ball into a water hazard, put another ball on the shore, and then hit that one into the same water hazard. He continued this procedure two or three times on every water hazard that we came upon.

On the eighth hole, Al hit into the water hazard, put another ball on the shore, and proceeded to hit IT into the water. Observing this, Zoot said, "What are you doing, your Zoot Sims impression?"

Epilogue: Other than Steve Gilmore, the members of the foursome shot in the high 90s - low 100s for nine holes that day. ☺

Mailbag

Imagine my surprise and delight upon opening *The NOTE* [Fall 2008] and seeing the oral history of Manny Albam. I knew Manny a little bit and we always had good dialogues and discussions about Alec Wilder and composing/arranging in general. His *Jazz Workshop LP* and *The Blues is Everybody's Business* are two of the best albums ever made.

But what made my eyes widen was the photo on page 12. The occasion was a party given for the arranger/composer Robert Farnon, a Canadian who lived in the Guernsey Islands and flew in to London to record albums of his music. Most professional arrangers considered him the best in his field, and when he came to New York to do a project (which he did rarely) sometime in 1961 or 1962, the arrangers gathered to honor him.

I had no idea that any photos were taken of this historic gathering. If I am not mistaken, this took place at Marion Evans' apartment, and many other arrangers were there, some having to

leave to do a gig, others showing up late after work.

Farnon told me that he was tremendously flattered that so many arrangers had his albums and wore them out to figure out what he did. This was during the period that Quincy Jones produced a few Farnon albums for the Philips label.

As if that wasn't enough, the photo on page 15 is also priceless. This seems to have been taken at an awards celebration of some type: Hal Schaefer, who is still teaching down in Florida, and one of the best arrangers of that period; George "The Fox" Williams, who arranged for Sonny Dunham, Glenn Miller, Gene Krupa (he wrote for the band at the same time as Gerry Mulligan), and Ray Anthony. Amazing!

This magazine is always a welcome addition. This particular edition is beyond wonderful. Thank you.

Jeff Sultanof
Paterson, NJ

Editor's Note: Jeff Sultanof edited more than 40 arrangements and compositions written by Robert Farnon with his involvement and approval. He also prepared a definitive edition of the *Birth of the Cool* repertoire using all of the existing parts, published by Hal Leonard Corporation. He currently writes for jazz.com.

Readers, we love hearing from you! Just make sure you mark 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.

Readers, Please Take Note

From The Academy

Continued from 5

2008 ACMJC Fundraising Campaign – Thank You!

Thanks again to everyone who responded so generously to our appeal letter in December and sent a donation for the first annual ACMJC fundraising campaign. Since these are such terrible economic times, your thoughtful gifts are particularly appreciated.

For those who have yet to take action, remember, it's never too late! A donation of any amount that you care to give would be most welcomed.

A gift of \$20 will help us pay for the production costs of *The NOTE* and an "extra bump" will help with the ongoing upkeep of the Collection. If you can, please make out a check payable to "*ESU Foundation – ACMJC*" and mail it to:

Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection
Kemp Library – ESU
200 Prospect St.
East Stroudsburg, PA 18301
Attention: Bob Bush

Mark These Important Dates

The summer months may seem far away but it won't be long before the greater Pocono region of Pennsylvania will be full of exciting hot-weather jazz opportunities. Here are some of them to jot down for future reference:

❖ **COTA CampJazz:** Open to student-musicians 13 years old through adult. The camp will be held July 27 through Aug. 2 at various historic sites in the Delaware Water Gap, including the Deer Head Inn. Deadline for applications is June 15. Room accommodations are now available at East Stroudsburg University. For more info: www.campjazz.org.

❖ **David Liebman Saxophone Master Class:** July 28 through Aug. 2 at East Stroudsburg University. Now in its 22nd year, this session will feature the unique Chromatics Harmony Class, with material derived from Dave Liebman's book, *A Chromatic Approach to Jazz and Melody*. For more info: www.davidliebman.com.

❖ **Scranton Jazz Festival:** August 7-9 at the Radisson Lackawanna Station Hotel (main stage) and various venues in downtown Scranton. For more info: www.pajazzalliance.com.

❖ **32nd Annual Celebration of the Arts (COTA) Festival:** Sept. 11-13 in Delaware Water Gap. For more info: www.cotajazz.org.

Oftentimes, Phil Woods, Jill Goodwin, Urbie Green and Kathy Green would join us at the pre-concert feast. The nightclub at the inn often featured East Coast-based cabaret and jazz performers. Paul Rostock remembers playing jazz there on Saturdays with Nancy Reed, and also Sunday nights with the "Electric Slide" featured on the breaks for the disco dancers.

One joyous late night, Jimmy and Mona Heath were escorted back to the inn after performing with the students. They walked by the nightclub and heard a Hammond organ trio from Jimmy's "alma mater," Philadelphia. Their performance "spoke the language."

Wayne Bolt asked Jimmy what it would take to get him to sit in. \$\$\$? No. "Get me a bowl of that sherbet and you got me!" Jimmy proceeded to perform a medium-slow shuffle with what instantly transformed into a Hammond organ/tenor sax quartet that raised the room temperature 50 degrees.

It was, to coin an Al "Fab" Grey phrase, BBBBAAAADDDDD!!!!!! I'll see Dr. Heath at the University of New Hampshire/Clark Terry Jazz Festival in March and reminisce about this uplifting evening at ESU and the Hillside. ☺

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:

Johnny Mandel, for taking time out of his incredibly busy schedule to do the interview and also for allowing us to share some of his great personal photos; ESU student **Jon Erb** for helping to transcribe the Johnny Mandel oral history interview; **Cynthia Sesso of CTS Images**, for supplying digital images of Red Mitchell and Johnny Mandel with his Count Basie bandmates; **John Williams** and **Kim Parker** for the wonderful recollections of their amusing and indelible jazz experiences; **Jane Eddy**, for her splendid centerfold photo of Milt Hinton and Ray Brown taken from the ACMJC photo inventory; and, photographers **Garth Woods** and **Charles Perry Hebard** for capturing jazz history-in-the-making at the Pennsylvania Governor's Awards for the Arts ceremony and the 2008-09 ESU Jazz Synergy Series.

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.



The ACMJC area in ESU's Kemp Library.

Charles Perry Hebard

Al Cohn performing
with the Elliot Lawrence Orchestra,
1952, with Al Porcino in background

Photographer unknown, donated by Tom Riley

