THE JAZZ CENTRE UK

Centrepiece

THE JAZZ CENTRE UK NEWSLETTER

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Leon Greening Trio Live at The Jazz Centre

+ FULL REVIEWS

Charlie's Good Tonight:
The Authorised Biography of Charlie Watts
Henry Lowther's Quarternity

IN THIS ISSUE ● Benny Goodman at Carnegie Hall ● The Cornopean ● Jazz and Comedy ● Archer Street Reminiscences ● Rod Brown and Phil Seamen ● Dick Morrissey

Centrepiece

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CONTENTS

THE JAZZ CENTRE UK

The Jazz Centre UK is open from Wednesday to Sunday 11am - 5pm.
You can find us at The Beecroft Centre, Victoria Avenue, Southend on Sea SS2 6EX. Tel: 01702 215169.

OUR MISSION — TO PROMOTE, PRESERVE AND CELEBRATE THE CULTURE OF JAZZ MUSIC IN ALL ITS FORMS

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Editorial

Time is Running Out

The trustees of The Jazz Centre UK (TJCUK) remain convinced that a solution can be found to allow its unique cultural offer to co-exist with the Beecroft Art Trust in Southend's Beecroft Gallery but time is running out. Our regular readers will know that last summer Southend on Sea City Council gave TJCUK until the beginning of August this year to find a new home. This has proved an impossible task. There has been an almost ceaseless quest over the intervening months to find comparable premises that allow the Centre to continue promoting jazz, preserving the music's momentous history, and publicly displaying its unique collection of memorabilia; and to do so at an affordable cost.

As we go to press the future prospects are dire.

Despite promises to help us find practical alternative premises, no realistic propositions have been forthcoming. Alternatives that have been suggested either provide inadequate space to permit public display of the Centre's jazz exhibition, or come at a cost beyond our means, as a charitable body.

It is true that, as Councillor Mulroney, the Council's Cabinet member for environment, culture and tourism, says, the Council has generously provided virtually free accommodation in the Beecroft building for over seven years. And, the City's finances are now very tight. But it is also true that there is currently significant unused space within the Beecroft building, in particular the entire second floor previously occupied by the Hive business centre. Ultimately, the Council would like to use this space to extend the Beecroft gallery, but the necessary funding is unlikely to be forthcoming for some time.

Trustee John Wilson shows Cllr Nigel Folkard round The Jazz Centre.

Adrian Green, Digby Fairweather, Toni Line & Cllr Aston Line.

Volunteer Keith Miller with Cllr Ron Woodley.

Anna Firth MP signs the 'Save the Jazz Centre' petition.

Understandably, the Council wants to present "Southend's heritage offer and art collection in a way which shows it to its best advantage," and provides better access to the artefacts in its care.

But it is surely not necessary to achieve this goal by sacrificing another hugely important cultural asset. That would represent a complete failure to appreciate what TJCUK has achieved over the last seven years, its engagement with the community and the great pleasure it has brought to Southend's music lovers.

The fact that well over 3,000 people have signed the petition to "save the Jazz Centre" illustrates the breadth of its local popularity and support.

Councillor Mulroney, has acknowledged that TJCUK "has developed a unique offer." Rather more dismissively, she has also said: "Whilst the Jazz Centre UK is a very worthwhile project and brings some benefits, it is not Southend specific..." That is a subjective and somewhat questionable statement. Yes, jazz is an international music. But what Southend has is Britain's leading custodian, preserver and champion of that music. In many other cities, hosting such a prestigious body would be a source of pride. Perhaps the importance of that role will only be understood when it's too late.

However, it is surely still inconceivable that the City Council would really countenance such a loss. Certainly, several other councillors have expressed their intention to oppose it. In February, the Jazz Centre hosted an Open Day, aimed at showing councillors and other notables what it has created on a relatively modest budget, and what is now at risk. Nine councillors explored the permanent exhibition, following the story of jazz across the decades. Almost all were sympathetic to our plight.

With good will and imagination a solution can yet be found, even at this relatively late hour. TJCUK's trustees continue to seek some way for the gallery and Jazz Centre to co-exist. In a recent statement they proposed that the Beecroft becomes a "multi-use arts centre at the heart of our City; a mini Barbican. This would enable us to form a constructive partnership with the Beecroft Art Trust (also a charity), and allow us to assist them in meeting their stated objective to promote the study of art, music and literature."

Now we must wait to see how the new Council, following the May local elections, decides to respond to this proposal.

TJCUK Trustees

An Accordionist for All Seasons

Centrepiece met and spoke with accordionist Tony Compton at his home in Southend

"I don't understand why the accordion gets so slagged off. Often by other jazz musicians," says Tony Compton, one of the foremost players of the instrument, with a look of puzzlement, almost of hurt. Tony has been playing the accordion for more than seven decades, performing with many of the pre-eminent musicians of his day, as well as leading his own bands. Although he has mastered many different styles over the years, his first love has always been jazz.

Above: Tony's music room, displaying his five accordions. Right: Entertaining his guests, plugged into the mixing box, the way he will play in July.

He is scheduled to feature in what may prove to be the penultimate Saturday afternoon gig held at the Jazz Centre, before it is forced to quit its present home in the Beecroft Gallery, at the beginning of August. This gig will give Tony an opportunity to demonstrate just what a key contribution his instrument can make to the jazz genre and the error of its long neglect. And, perhaps, counter some of the disparagement.

Vintage Hohner

The Jazz Centre's own renewed interest in the accordion has been triggered by a recent donation to its museum collection of a small, vintage Hohner version, the history of which remains, for the moment, somewhat obscure.

It was because of this awakened interest in the history of the jazz accordion, that two Centrepiece writers found themselves interviewing Tony Compton at his Westcliff home one morning recently. What was it like to have spent a lifetime playing an unfashionable instrument? In fact, the accordion is actually quite popular across much of the world. Britain is the chief exception, says Compton.

And that was not always the case. According to one authority, 10% of British bands included an accordion in the 1930s. And pianists Stan Tracy and George Shearing both started off playing the accordion, although the latter later slagged the instrument off on the radio, recalls Compton, rather resentfully.

Royal Academy

It was only in 1997 that the accordion was recognised by the Royal Academy of Music as a serious instrument, he adds. How does he account for its poor image? The answer is, in part, because it is seen as a 'folkie' instrument and often adopted by buskers. But also, because many of the musicians that have tried playing it, "just couldn't hack the left hand" (with umpteen rows of buttons).

Now in his 90th year, Tony Compton is still practicing, still giving the occasional performance, but chiefly teaching a new generation of would-by accordionists. His sitting room contains no less that five accordions, along with two pianos. And, elsewhere, he still keeps his first accordion, a Settimio Soprani, which he used to carry on his back, riding his bike to the erstwhile Middleton Hotel, Southend, aged fourteen, to play in an old-time dance band.

Looking back on a lifetime of playing accordion, Compton says he was very lucky, he had a wonderful teacher, an Italian called Donato Destofano, a great player, "years ahead of his time." He had performed with many headline stars when he began teaching a 13-year-old Tony Compton. It was a teaching assignment that was to last for seven years.

Italian instrument

As a pupil, Tony also found himself learning on a beautiful Italian instrument. Italians produce the best accordions, he reckons. "Their instruments have soul." Cashing in some saving certificates after the war, he bought a Super Dominator Galanti for £250 —a very large sum at the time. And subsequently, he acquired an Excelsior, the kind of instrument that remains his favourite to this day.

In 1974, he went electronic, adding the amplifier. And, more recently including a mixing box, enabling the replication of other instruments. So, two performers can sound like a rather bigger band.

Compton's conversation is peppered with the names of front-rank musicians he has played with and the famous venues in which he has performed. It's all a long way from the rather humble early days with a band that he formed with other local musicians, called the Mellotones —piano, bass, drums, guitar and accordion. That was followed with regular gigs at the Southend Kursaal, including playing with the Howard Baker band. In the 1950s, the Kursaal ballroom was a popular venue for many of the top big bands, including those of Eric Delaney, Ted Heath and Ken Mackintosh. Tony Compton's group used to play in the interval.

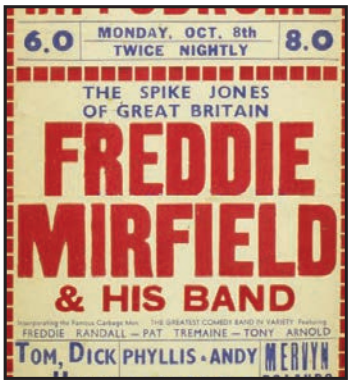
Soon he was playing with saxophonists Tubby Hayes, Don Rendell and Vic Ash at the Southend Rhythm Club on a Sunday at the Arlington Hall, Chalkwell, another top venue in the area at the time. The local music scene was buzzing then. Among visiting musicians, and important influences was band leader, impresario, and star accordionist Tito Burns, whose sextet was a regular feature of the BBC's Accordion Club radio series in the 1950s. Burns later became manager of the Rolling Stones rock group.

Bebop

But the biggest influence, and something of a turning point for Compton was the arrival of Bebop, and jazz giants like Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker. It opened up new possibilities. Compton says, however, that he still does not stray too far from the tune when he's playing jazz. He's never been an adherent of the free jazz end of the spectrum. His great hero was the late American jazz accordionist Art Van Damme. "The biggest thrill of my life was getting a hug from Art," he says. Van Damme's last visit to Britain was in 2006, four years before he died. Both Jack Emblow and I idolised Art, adds Compton.

A fellow accordionist and close friend, Emblow has worked with Compton, off and on, for thirty years, accompanying him on numerous gigs. Now retired, Emblow was regarded as one of Britain's leading accordionists, playing in the orchestras of Ted Heath, Michel Legrand, Henry Mancini and Nelson Riddle. And probably best known for accompanying the Cliff Adams Singers in their half- hour broadcasts on BBC Radio called *Sing Something Simple*.

Freddie Mirfield



Along the way, Compton has also gigged with trumpeter and founder of the Jazz Centre, Digby Fairweather, with whom he made an album; and band leader Freddie Mirfield, who became a good friend and mentor.

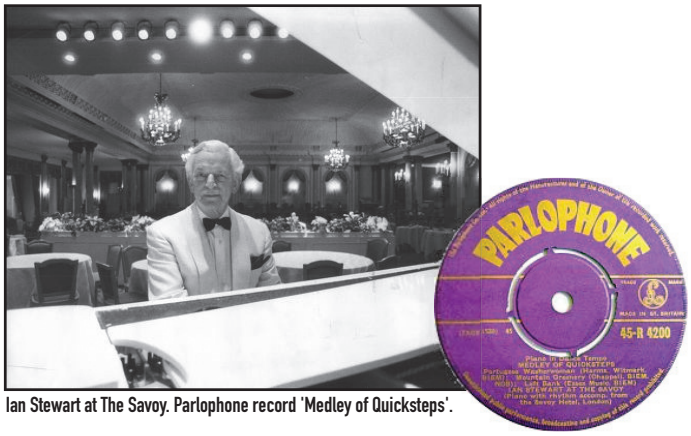
Indeed, one early break was being asked to replace Mirfield's accordionist, who had been taken sick with pneumonia. Compton was nineteen, the gig was near Chichester. Mirfield, a drummer and trombonist, was leading a relatively small five or six piece band, and there was still a week to run on the contract. It was the beginning of a close relationship. Members of the band at that time included trumpeter Freddie Randall and saxophonist Johnny Dankworth, both of whom famously went on to form their own successful jazz bands.

Mirfield, for his part, had already established his reputation winning the All-England 'Melody Maker' Dixieland Jazz Band contest in 1947, and forming a popular band called the Garbage Men.

Compton's relationship with Digby Fairweather also goes back to their early days. "We have done a number of recitals together, just the two of us, at the Civic Centre in Southend, and in London's West End. We were a good duo, together," he says. They went on to make the album *Squeezin' the Blues Away* together.

With success came the chance to play a much wider range of British and even international venues. "Jack Emblow and I were very popular, together, in Scotland," Compton recalls. "They love our jazz, there." There were gigs in Germany, France and the US, too. Jack and Tony twice represented Great Britain at the European According Festival in France. But it was the West End Hotels —Hilton, Ritz, Savoy— that proved the mainstay. The Savoy was Compton's particular favourite. He spent a big part of the 1960s playing there, coming in to contact with many of the stars of the day —Petula Clark, Matt Munroe, Françoise Hardy.

The Savoy



Ian Stewart at The Savoy. Parlophone record 'Medley of Quicksteps'.

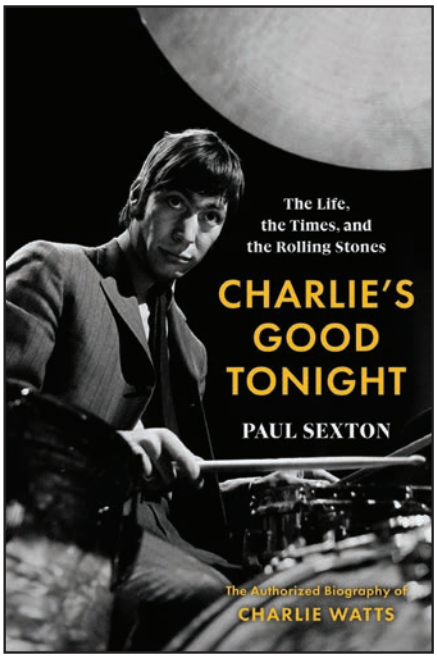
There were two bands playing at the Savoy at that time. One was a Latin American band, and the other was a strict tempo dance band led by Ian Stewart. Compton became his regular accordionist. The rest of the band comprised two pianos, bass, drums, tenor sax and trumpet. They played for forty-five minutes, then the stage would rotate to reveal the Latin American band, which would take over.

That was not the only novelty that the Savoy offered. At some point in the evening the dance floor would, to the audience's astonishment, rise to the level of the tables. The cabaret would start, and a dozen dancing girls would appear. There was a wonderful atmosphere, says a wistful Compton.

The Jazz Centre UK can't compete with the Savoy for gimmicks. But it does have its own special atmosphere to which Tony Compton will be contributing in possibly one of the Centre's last gigs. A finale of sorts. An accordion performance "to take it out with a bang," he says, with a mischievous laugh.

Melvyn Westlake

Saturday 15th July 2pm
Live at The Jazz Centre UK
Tony Compton (accordion)
Tim Huskisson (clarinet)
Tickets £12 (£6 students with ID)
from the Jazz Centre website



The Jazzer who Rocked 'Charlie's Good Tonight:

The Authorised Biography of Charlie Watts'

by Paul Sexton

Rolling Stones drummer Charlie Watts, the subject of this 'authorised' biography, in preparation before his death but completed after it, was at heart a jazz musician, and a tension between that view of himself and the way the world saw him is an intriguing part of the picture this book creates.

As a musician from a modest background, Charlie Watts was a fortunate man: he learned to play the drums, found himself amongst a set of musicians and bands that were to shape the popular music of a decade, and made a life's work out of his instrumental ability; he enjoyed a happy marriage and family life, and became a very wealthy man. Along the way, he contributed to some of the greatest records in rock music, while managing to avoid most of the traps that rock stardom has in store for its chosen few.

A self-taught drummer, obsessed with jazz of both traditional and bop varieties, Charlie grew as a musician in tandem with his neighbour and lifelong friend, bassist Dave Green. By the late fifties, they were sufficiently adept to join a semi-pro jazz group called the Jo Jones Seven. From there, Charlie moved into the rhythm and blues scene which formed around Alexis Korner and his Blues Incorporated band. This is where he came to the attention of Brian Jones, who pursued Charlie for his new band. By 1962, he had given up a nascent career in advertising design, and committed himself to earning a living as a musician.

Jazz-based

Throughout his life, he continued to consider himself a jazz musician in essence, and his own musical endeavours outside the Stones were jazz-based; small group club engagements and records, big band projects, and appearances as sideman to boogie pianists. Dave Green was a presence in nearly all of these. These are duly recorded in this book, though it is of course his life and work with the Stones that predominate. Clearly Watts drew great satisfaction from these jazz interludes, though they are not explored in any great depth. His jazz work was, it's fair to say, of a conservative nature. The presence of Watts guaranteed audiences for music which would otherwise have attracted less attention; boogie pianist Ben Waters recalls that 'we hadn't sold many tickets, then when Charlie said he'd do it, we sold out in two hours.' The Charlie Watts-Jim Keltner project from the late nineties was perhaps his most adventurous personal project, delving into sampling and remixes.

Distinctive

As this biography reveals, he was a distinctive, contradictory and, in many ways, curious character. His resolutely matter-of-fact, self-deprecating view of his profession and achievements, are more than mere modesty: they seem to derive from a deeper detachment, which expresses itself as an active lack of interest in the music of the Rolling Stones: he professed never to listen to their records, indeed to be unaware of what was on them for the most part, though with a background in design, he did contribute to sleeve design, and later stage design, on their latter-day gargantuan tours. He was a classic car collector, who could not drive. The band would observe all sorts of repetitive, obsessive-compulsive behaviour when on tour. He spent quite extravagantly, on houses, two farms, thoroughbred horses, bespoke Savile Row tailoring, and shoes, collections of historical artefacts, and on gifts for friends. He described himself as essentially a loner, and the author aptly sums him up as a man 'who knew that he was wired up differently to most other people.'

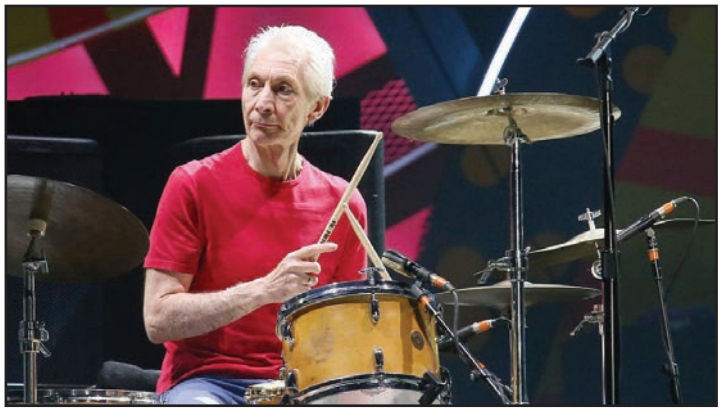
Masterpieces

In particular, he did not much like explaining himself or his art, which makes him an awkward subject for anything but an anecdote-heavy, somewhat hagiographic biography. One wonders how a musician could contribute to the making of masterpieces like *Let It Bleed* and *Exile on Main Street* and have so little to say about them. No-one would particularly want yet another trawl through the history of the Stones, but episodes like Altamont and the drug busts of the 60's might have elicited some comment from an actual member of the group, even one who seems to have existed in an orbit some way out from the central Jagger-Richards nexus. Indeed, the general picture of life in the Stones given here is that of the highly organised corporate touring organisation of recent times, and the band members are portrayed as a mutual admiration society: respectable, cricket-loving gents who send each other generous birthday presents and don't have a bad word to say about anyone.

Musicianship

But what of Charlie Watts' actual musicianship? Drumming isn't easy to write about; the author isn't a drummer, nor will more than a few readers be. But one would hope that there'd be some attempt to explain what made Watts one of rock's greatest, or how a jazz drummer becomes a rock player. There's a little, it's true, about valuable lessons learned from American masters

such as Earl Palmer and Freddie Below; and there are some interesting observations from engineer Chris Kimsey about his drum technique. Generally, though, we are repeatedly told that Charlie is 'brilliant' on this or that song, or show, with little elaboration.



Universally liked

Despite some shortcomings, though, this biography is very professionally written and edited; it's hardly an essential read but one can't help but warm to its subject, who seems to have been pretty universally liked. After all, the essence of music is in the playing and the hearing. When it's gone, in the air —as a great jazzman once said— no amount of words can really recapture it, and Charlie Watts seems to have recognised that fact from the start.

Publisher: Mudlark (HarperCollins) £25 (hardback) 334 pages

Review by A. S. C.

Author **Paul Sexton** is a freelance journalist and broadcaster, writing extensively about the music business. He is the author of *Prince: A Portrait of the Artist in Memories & Memorabilia* as well as the Charlie Watts biography. He has written for all of the daily UK broadsheet titles, being most closely associated with the Sunday Times (to whose *Culture* section he has contributed since 2003). From the early 1990s he began an ongoing association with Billboard magazine as a UK contributor. He is also a frequent contributor to BBC Radio 2, for whom he regularly presents and produces documentary programmes, including shows on everyone from the Rolling Stones to Louis Armstrong.

Live at The Jazz Centre UK

Saturday 7th January: The Alan Clarke Trio. Ted Beament (piano), Jerome Davies (bass), Alan Clarke (drums).

Saturday 14th February: The Simon Woolf Trio. Simon Woolf (piano), Dave Chamberlain (bass), Andy Panayi (saxophone).

Saturday 24th February: Spike's Place presents: The Tommaso Starace Quartet. John Turville (piano), Tommaso, Mirko Scarcia (bass), Rod Youngs (drums).

Saturday 28th January: Spike's Place presents: The Ted Beament Trio. Ted Beament (piano), Alec Dankworth (bass), Rob Fowler (saxophone).

Saturday 21st January: Nick Dawson, piano and vocals.

Saturday 25th March: Spike's Place presents: The Leon Greening Trio. Dave Chamberlain (bass), Leon Greening (piano), Matt Home (drums).

Saturday 4th March: The Jakub Klimiuk Quintet. Cody Moss (piano), Jakub Klimiuk (guitar), Harry Pearce (bass), Simeon May (saxophone), Adam Merrell (drums).

Saturday 18th February: The Big Easy Six. Gerry Hoskins (bass), Barry Crickmore (drums), Paula Jackman (saxophone), Ian Grant (banjo), Max Emmons (trumpet), Mike Nason (trombone).

Jazz And Comedy: No Laughing Matter

The following article addresses Jazz and Comedy. No. Seriously.

I can say, from experience, that analysis is the perfect answer to unwarranted comedy. Even warranted comedy doesn't leave analysis with the dross of identifiable humour. Take the Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band (please! Anyone?). A massively clever outfit with excessive instrumental ability: they wait for wardrobes, sing to shirts and do bad impressions of native English speakers who lived in resource-rich outposts of the British Empire: and then they fit a trumpet mouthpiece to a teapot to achieve humour?

I can say with equal experience, that analysis is the perfect antidote to jazz music too. Take a simple four-note phrase, repeat it, add another four-note phrase and return to the original; repeat. And repeat again for three minutes four seconds. We've got a hit! And a loud rhythmic discord to keep us awake. It took a new continent and almost a hundred years of cultural mixing to develop these simple structures.

Woody Allen didn't do analysis —he may have needed it, for sure, but that was his life burden. He never used a piece of music without a reason, as his films show. He and his actors talk, and the music —often jazz— paints audible pictures of emotion, character and suspense.

Masterpieces, every one. To be experienced, not analysed. Woody Allen had jazz in its place —a culture of live composition that keeps the audience "in the moment" with his scripts and gives him scope to confirm or surprise for psychological effect.

Many comic writers and stand-up comedians instinctively recognise the emotional capability of music, its capacity to build suspense and its use to explain character and relationship. Think of the character Flash Harry (early George Cole) in *The Belles of St Trinian's*: his every appearance is accompanied by the same jingle, until we're poised ready to laugh as we hear the opening notes.

High Society wouldn't have worked without jazz. The writers were on a loser trying to convince the audience that Grace Kelly, about to become Princess Grace, would choose an ageing Bing Crosby over up-and-coming Frank Sinatra. But Did You Evah shook Sinatra's cage and Crosby/ Kelly duets settled the chemistry. Music triggers emotion, and emotion wins every time.

Some may consider that film directors are attracted to the whole "Iconograph" film genre by the emotional capabilities of jazz music —think of the brooding threat of *I Called Him Morgan* or the sunny breadth of the (fashion photographer/ director's) cultural commentary achieved in *Jazz On A Summer's Day*. How much is cinematic visuals and how much is jazz music? Both would fail to be so powerful alone.

Surprisingly, few comedians —even the one's who are jazz practitioners and fans in their private time— use jazz music as part of their acts. Stand-up comedy today concerns itself with anomalies in cultural attitudes, rather than with building and twisting emotion. Rhythm has to be assertive, certainly, but the rat-a-tat rhythm of the modern comedian's patter defeats even the extremes of Bebop —however drug-fuelled it might have been.

Jazz emerged from vaudeville, and comedy was a key plank —the Original Dixieland Jazz Band started off as a vaudeville act, complete with a drummer who dropped his sticks and fell off his stool. Slapstick meets rhythm? Or rhythm meets slapstick? Ma Rainey got her name because she partnered Pa Rainey in a parody husband/ wife musical offset that their audience experienced as their own familiar cultural anomaly. That parody turned into vaudeville blues, which overturned (male only) Classic Blues and is one of the foundational structures of jazz. Out of comedy came Bessie Smith? No joke.

A regular feature of the Big Band era was the "comedy number", such as Pearl Bailey's *Arthur Murray Taught Me Dancin' in a Hurry*, an enjoyable break in focus that might have taken some wind out of Strictly Come Dancing's sails. Most big bands were expected to have an equivalent lighter spot in their virtuosity.

And dancing reminds us of the Fox Trot —probably named as a New York in-joke, poking fun at the eponymous comedian's exaggerated mincing trot as he moved across stage between his down-town club's show girls, while his Dolly Sister wife was dancing up-town for Ziegfield. Was Vernon Castle making a pointed joke? If he did, it lasted for 100 years.

How do you know the person at your door is a jazz drummer? Because he sounds too loud and comes in late. (Boom Boom?). Timing is the essence of comedy and —as that joke acknowledges— it is also the essence of jazz. There may be mutual recognition of the significance of timing, with both practitioners trying to set a rhythm to capture interest and hold attention while using rhythmic changes to surprise and please. Modern comedians fire a stream of words that set a scene, then drop in unexpected misfits to generate laughter. Ken Dodd could do it for hours. Jazz musicians create basic rhythms to build anticipation and mood, which is altered by memorable harmonics. For a comedian, rhythm carries words: for the jazz musician, rhythm carries harmonies.

So there we have it: like good comedy, good jazz is no laughing matter.

Michael Deakin

Mort and Lenny Be Bop Stand-Up

In December 1953 at the hungry i club in San Francisco a stand-up comedian, Mort Sahl, took to the stage with a rolled-up newspaper. Over a three-year stint at the club he proceeded to revolutionise/transform the art of stand-up. Just talking to the audience, he riffed on articles taken from that day's newspaper. His act had been refined and perfected in many small, intimate, and often dingy, basement clubs in California, alongside West Coast jazz musicians and poets; part of the burgeoning bohemian Beat Movement scene in that state.

These early experiences clearly show the influence of years working alongside the be-bop generation of jazz musicians. He was one of the first comedians to cut LP albums. On *Mort Sahl at Sunset,* recorded at the Sunset Auditorium, Carmel, California, he rambles and zooms at breakneck Dizzy Gillespie-speed through unique topical and political territory. Daniel Blazek, a classic comedy researcher at the Library of Congress: "The recording offers an aural glimpse into the cradle of modern American stand-up, revealing the breadth of Sahl's talent teeming within the 1950s jazz cognoscenti. No comedian before Mort Sahl had ventured very far from the clownish mother-in-law joke, or other such vaudevillian patter. Sahl broke new ground performing stand-up in a quick, literary way, moulded in part by the rhythms of jazz and poetry of San Francisco."

In an interview Sahl explained his approach: "Jazz musicians were saying . . . my newspaper was my axe and I improvised within a chord structure. I never found you could write the act . . . . I come in with only an outline. You've got to have a spirit of adventure. I follow my instincts and the audience is my joy." Sahl improvised very much like the jazz musicians he idolised.

In particular Sahl was a fan, and friend, of Dave Brubeck and Paul Desmond. He toured with, and compered many of Brubeck's live performances; he wrote liner notes for the Paul Desmond Fantasy album '*Paul Desmond Quartet, featuring Don Elliott*'.

To get a flavour of this relationship there is extant on YouTube a brief TV recording of Sahl and the Brubeck Quartet working together.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TV6nf2vxTa4

Comedy historian Gerald Nachman (*Seriously Funny: The Rebel Comedians of the 1950s and 1960s*), makes the jazz-comedy connection: "To use musician's terms, Mort really gets into the quarter notes . . . He knows the details and the nuances, and in many cases he knows the players personally . . ."

Woody Allen put it most succinctly: "He was like Charlie Parker in jazz".

In the wake of his success Mort Sahl influenced not just the next generation of stand-up comedians, but just about every one of them who has taken to the stage in the USA since. And for many, if not most, the jazz connection has continued.

Mort Sahl.

Woody Allen is of course also a musician, albeit inspired by Johnny Dodds and Sydney Bechet, rather than be-bop.

Bill Cosby was an aspiring jazz drummer before prioritising stand-up comedy. (Catch his hilarious drum anecdote on the 1973 Dick Cavett show, trying to play alongside Sonny Stitt.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Zn-P0ZH3_M&t=260s

Dick Gregory featured the Joe Alterman Trio in his performances; (At the *District of Comedy Festival*, and *An Evening of Comedy and Jazz* in 2016 at the Kennedy Center).

Richard Pryor was originally an aspiring jazz singer. There is a lone recording of him on YouTube singing *Nobody Loves you when you're down and out*.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3buo4VbJCmQ

To this list we can add Chris Rock, George Carlin, Eddie Murphy, Robin Williams, Franklin Ajaye (dubbed *The Jazz Comedian)*, Louis C K . . . we could carry on interminably.

Of those inspired by Sahl, though, one name stands out, Lenny Bruce. Often cited as the greatest stand-up ever, like Sahl, Bruce started out in the small clubs. He worked in burlesque, in strip joints, earning his dues, working alongside jazz musicians. Like Sahl he openly scorned comics who performed their routines word perfect night after night, his routines differed significantly each performance.

Lenny Bruce.

As his career and fame sky-rocketed to where in 1961 he performed at Carnegie Hall, he maintained his old jazz connections. On the West Coast he was a close friend of Joe Maini, and bassist Leroy Vinnegar. He formed a mutual fan club with the great contemporary drummer, Philly Joe Jones. They proposed recording together, with Bruce as a talking sideman. The script was written, but unfortunately never put down on wax. Philly Joe did, however, record a tribute to a Bruce sketch, *Enchanting Transylvania*, a spoof on Bela Lugosi's Count Dracula. Jones mimicked Lugosi in a spoken intro to his recording of *Blues for Dracula*.

Continued on p.15.

Henry Lowther's Quarternity – Never Never Land

review by Ian Gibson

This is another offering from the 'Jazz in Britain' label of hitherto unreleased material, garnered from a series of live in the studio sessions from 1974 to 1978. The first 4 selections feature the trumpet, flugel horn (and occasional violin) of Henry Lowther, alongside co-founder Phil Lee on Guitar, Dave Green on Acoustic bass and Trevor Tomkins on drums. Subsequent tracks include either Art Themen or Alan Wakeman on tenor and/or soprano saxophone.

Whilst there are comparatively few recordings of trumpeter Henry Lowther as leader, he has been a significant player in the British jazz scene for many decades, gracing the bands of Mike Gibbs, Mike Westbrook, Stan Tracey, John Dankworth, Neil Ardley and Graham Collier amongst many others. He has also made frequent contributions to numerous jazz/rock/blues combinations, when they demanded a horn section or trumpet soloist.

Lowther claims in a recent interview, that the name of the band came from the great Swiss psychologist, C.G. Jung, who used the name 'Qartenity' to describe a union or 'set' of four, with which he had some kind of obsession.

Green and Tomkins had, of course, played extensively together with the Rendell Carr Quintet, whilst Phil Lee has worked with Tomkins in Alan Gowen's band Gilgamesh (which also briefly featured Alan Wakeman).

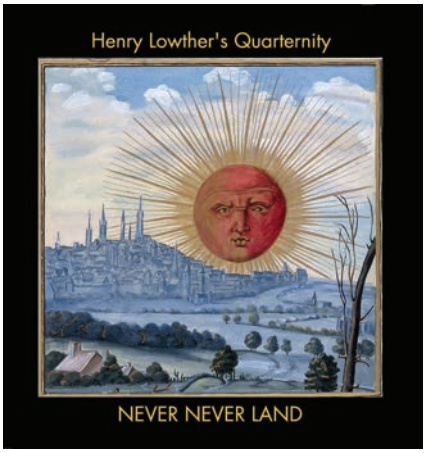
Here is a brief assessment of each track on the double album, seven of which were composed by Henry Lowther with the remaining five by Phil lee (although there are two versions of *Third World Song* —one on each disc).

Disc 1

Start Right; A vamped intro sets the scene for Henry Lowther's stately Flugel Horn melody on this mid-tempo tune. Lowther also takes the first solo, before he hands over to Phil Lee's guitar, played without any apparent effects, as was his usual preference. The piece finishes with an abrupt flourish, which is a common feature of the pieces here.

Never Never Land; Henry Lowther's bell like tone shines through on the opening theme here, as in many of these performances. As the theme develops, it switches from swift written elements to more protracted Improvised sections. The piece really starts to get going with a fast pulse from the rhythm section underpinning Lowther's main solo. There is some interplay between trumpet and guitar, which then leads into a vibrant solo effort by Phil Lee, with sterling work by Green and Tomkins throughout, keeping on top of the changing tempo and dynamics. Brief drum and trumpet solo breaks lead to more collective improvising, before a familiar short, restated theme brings us to a sudden end. The collective playing on this title cut represents perhaps some of the best work on this issue.

Chinese Wand; Swishing cymbals, bells, Pizzicato violin and guitar harmonics swirl about creating a mesmerising atmosphere, over which Henry Lowther's plaintive violin takes the lead with a melodic improvisation that segues into a more angular guitar solo until the arpeggiated harmonics return and a briefly stated ensemble figure brings the piece to its conclusion. Dave Green's solid bass anchors the whole piece admirably.



Third World Song (V1); This version is introduced by solo acoustic guitar. A memorable theme on flugel horn, underscored by guitar and drums, leads to a brief yet deftly executed bass solo by Green. This is followed by a return of the main theme and 'outro' on acoustic guitar, providing a balanced 'book-end' complimenting the introduction.

Jack And John; The opening fanfare on horns shifts between major and minor, over an insistent bass pedal point. Tomkins' and Lee's interjections punctuate Lowther's trumpet solo, before Lee improvises over a more regular rhythm, with Green holding things together in what is possibly the loosest offering in this set. A return to the opening theme brings us to a brief and perfunctory ending, with no sax solo, in spite of the presence of Art Themen.

Your Eyes Are Love; We hear the tenor of Art Themen introducing this ballad, over a restrained rhythm section, although there is a growing tension, as Themen takes us through some advanced sonic territory, with Phil lee and Dave Green anchoring the whole thing. As the pace drops, Henry Lowther joins the ensemble for a final statement.

The Story So Far; Henry Lowther on Harmon-muted trumpet leads on this composition of his, which is possibly the most conventional example of modern jazz in this selection, with a strong sense of swing. Following Lowther's florid improvisation, Dave Green then provides an exemplary bass solo, with Lee comping sensitively and Tomkins on brushes. Then, back to the theme on muted horn, before Art Themen joins in for the out chorus.

A Night in Amnesia; An atmospheric introduction on distorted guitar develops into a bass-led exchange with the horns followed by a fast paced and busy theme. Art Themen is first off the blocks with a searing solo over a Latin infused, yet swinging rhythm. There is some serious interplay at work here, with Green providing the harmonic movement within the tune's structure. Next up is the group's leader on open horn before Phil Lee takes over on guitar, with Dave Green demonstrating why he is such an in-demand bassist. Tomkins excels here too, as the ensemble parts allow him the odd bar or two to shine.

Softpower Education: From Dixieland to Swing

ON SATURDAY 1ST APRIL there was a full house for the third performance at The Jazz Centre for Jim Bayne's Softpower charity. One hundred percent of the money raised goes to a school-building programme for special-needs children in Uganda.

As with the two previous concerts, this Saturday featured a premier-league team of British jazz musicians. Digby Fairweather, on cornopean (see p.18) led the proceedings with Julian Marc Stringle and Rob Fowler (saxophone and clarinet), Nick Dawson (piano / vocal), Dave Chamberlain (bass), Eric Ford (drums). For the first set they romped through some Dixieland favourites.

The second set, the swing session, was lit up by the wonderful Val Wiseman, interpreting songs associated with Ella Fitzgerald, Peggy Lee, Anita O'Day and Billie Holiday. A rousing version of the latter's blues standard *Fine and Mellow* ended the set. The afternoon's one highlight? Hard to say but the two-tenor battle on the tune *Hindustan*, redolent of similar two-tenor work-outs by Herschel Evans and Lester Young in the Count Basie Band, or the Dexter Gordon-Wardell Gray famous *The Chase* recording, must be a contender.

Photos by Fred Morris, left and centre, and right by Phil Waterhouse
Val Wiseman with Dave Chamberlain (bass).
Digby Fairweather, Dave Chamberlain and Val Wiseman.
Eric Ford, Julian Marc Stringle and Rob Fowler.

However, the piece ends rather abruptly once more, considering the excellent build up that precedes it as we come to the end of Disc 1.

Disc 2

No Surprises; A hot start to this Phil Lee composition; horns closely locked in a Q&A response with Lee's guitar, the latter kicking off the solos. Lowther follows up with a faultless solo performance, Lee and Green providing support, then giving way to Themen's more gutsy tenor break. Once again, the main theme returns briefly and finishes.

Your Dancing Toes; A repeated figure on hi-hat introduces the sinuous themed melody, leading into a flugel horn solo, exploring the various registers of the instrument. Dave Green follows this with a short solo, similarly exploring his bass' range. Art Themen then joins Lowther in a return of the melody, before a drum roll concludes the piece.

Zemlja; The gentle opening features Henry Lowther on violin, in reflective mood over bell tree and other assorted percussion, whilst the rhythm section gradually builds the tension behind Lowther's bucolic solo. This gives way to a stately theme, played on Flugel horn and sax duetting elegantly, with little sign of Lee until he comps behind a flighty soprano break by Alan Wakeman. A promising, melodic solo by Lee then fades out rather unexpectedly over a rhythm section vamp, leaving the listener feeling a little short changed, after such promising developments early on.

Richie Street N1; A bold opening on horns with Alan Wakeman on tenor, gives way to a well-constructed solo by Lee, followed by Lowther in fine form on open horn. Wakeman then moves into the spotlight, with Lee & Tomkins comping sensitively. The opening theme makes a slight return leading to a tight ending by the whole ensemble.

Henry Lowther, Trevor Tomkins, Phil Lee.

Third World Song (V2); No acoustic guitar on this version, although Phil Lee's electric guitar still provides a brief vamped intro under Alan Wakeman's soprano interjections. The theme is then stated by both Wakeman and Lowther in a mixture of unison and harmony, before Lee takes a lengthy and dextrously executed solo. There follows a subtly recorded, yet expressively played bass solo, which I believe is an uncredited Chris Laurence on this cut. The main theme returns and is followed by a tag on the horns, again replacing the solo acoustic guitar of the previous version, providing possibly the most satisfying ending to any of the selections on this double disc set.

Henry Lowther is now in his 80s, as was Trevor Tomkins until he passed away last year. Lowther and bassist Dave Green are still close collaborators to this day; an association that continues with Lowther's Still Waters group.

Dick Morrissey: British Jazz Giant

Dick Morrissey was one of the giants of the British jazz scene from the very early sixties. He came onto the jazz scene hard on the heels of Tubby Hayes, whose lighter than air fluency was so different from Dick's more robust style. The pair dominated what was a thriving jazz scene, together with fellow tenor players Ronnie Scott, Don Rendell, Don Weller, Danny Moss, Bobby Wellins, Tony Coe and so many others.

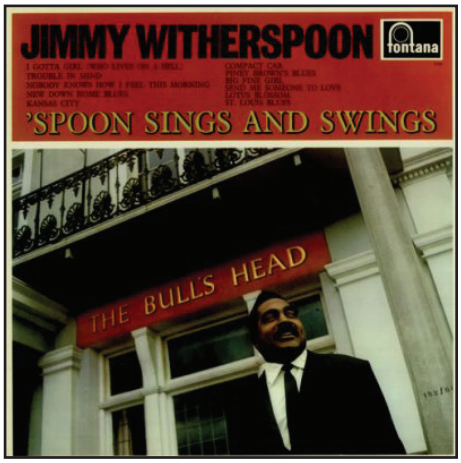
He was a quiet, modest man, whose unassuming demeanour gave no clue to the transformation that took place as soon as he began to play and his 'hot enough to dry your hair by' style, as one critic put it, filled the room.

He began playing clarinet in a school band at the age of sixteen, before joining the Original Climax Jazz Band, then moving on to Gus Galbraith's Septet, where fellow musician, alto player Pete King, played him some of Charlie Parker's recordings, prompting Dick to switch to tenor, although he also played flute and soprano sax. He began playing regularly at The Marquee in Wardour Street in 1960, recording his first LP —*It's Morrissey Man*, with Stan Jones (piano), Colin Barnes (drums) and Malcolm Cecil (bass) the following year.

1962 found him playing in Calcutta —or should that now be Kolkatta?— in a residency with the Ashley Kojak Quartet, a band that included pianist and arranger, Harry South, who, back in the UK, would hold the piano chair in Dick's long-running quartet which was completed by bassist Phil Bates and a succession of drummers, including Jackie Dougan, Bill Eyden and the inimitable Phil Seamen.

Back in the UK, this quartet was a regular booking in the many clubs that abounded in the 1960s, where Dick's hard-hitting style and rich, full-bodied tone made him a favourite. Although his was a robust style, he was equally at home crafting a ballad, fluent and inventive whatever he played and always received with great enthusiasm —and held in affection— by audiences wherever he appeared.

Dick made twelve recordings with outfits under his own name,



including several with the quartet —*Have You Heard?* in 1963, *Storm Warning* in 1965 and *Here and Now and Sounding Good* in 1966, followed by *Spoon Sings and Swings* in the same year with American blues legend, Jimmy Witherspoon. This was a standout LP, recorded for Mercury live at The Bull's Head in Barnes. It perfectly captures Dick's range and ability —from the scorching *Big Fine Girl* to the gentle *Someone to Love*. The rapport between Witherspoon and Morrissey, with Dick's responses perfectly in tune with Spoon's vocals is wonderful to hear.

Dick's career encompassed many musical directions, including leading his own quartet and playing in various other musicians' small groups, and big bands led by Harry South and Tubby Hayes, with a brief stint with the Ted Heath band. He was versatile enough to be able to adopt other styles and as the jazz scene began to change in the 1970s, with 'free' jazz, jazz funk and jazz rock gaining popularity and, in some cases, beginning to overshadow the be-bop style that had been the mainstay of the late 50s and throughout the 60s, he was able to adapt.

1970 saw him join the jazz/rock group If, with which he recorded seven albums and toured in the US and Europe, playing to large and enthusiastic audiences. However, the pace was hectic and as time went by it began to take a toll on the health of the band members, leading to the end of their rock'n' roll years and they disbanded in 1975.

The following year he toured Germany with Alexis Korner's blues band, before travelling to New York to tour and record with the rock outfit, Average White Band. There he met and teamed up with guitarist Jim Mullen for a very successful partnership with the jazz funk group, Morrissey/Mullen and they recorded their first album together whilst in New York, succinctly titled *Up*. They went on to record a further seven albums during the sixteen years that the Morrissey/Mullen band was together.

On top of the many albums he recorded under his own name, Dick

also had a prolific recording career with other artists, covering many different music genres, from jazz all the way through to Demis Roussos, and playing on over eighty albums by artists as diverse as Georgie Fame, Alexis Korner, Peter Gabriel, Paul McCartney and Hoagy Carmichael.

Alas, ill health forced his retirement in his fifties but, even when confined to a wheelchair in his last years, Dick was still able to perform sometimes at his local pub —The Alma, in Deal. At his last gig there, despite his illness, he played with all the force and fire that had always been his trademark. The audience responded with huge enthusiasm and appreciation and, at the end of the gig, formed a line to greet and shake hands with this giant of the British jazz scene. Despite the fact that he must have felt exhausted by then, Dick shook hands with all comers, sharing memories of other gigs and other venues down through the years.

He played his very last gig at The Astor Theatre, Deal, where he was reunited with Jim Mullen for an evening of Morrissey/Mullen.

It speaks volumes that after his death in November 2000, so many of his fellow musicians contributed memories of both the man and his music, every one of them full of admiration for his playing, and affection for the man himself.

His obituary in *The Telegraph* probably summed him up, saying:

"He was among the finest European jazz musicians of his generation. His command of the tenor saxophone was masterly, but it was the unforced fluency of his playing, expressed in a characteristically broad and sweeping tone, that attracted the greatest admiration. Stylistically, Morrissey was so flexible that he was able to fit happily into many contexts, from straightforward hard-bop, through jazz-rock and jazz-funk to soul-inflected pop music. He possessed the remarkable knack of making everything he played sound not only exciting but happy."

S. C.

Continued from p.9.

In a 1966 Down Beat article, Orrin Keepnews, owner of Riverside records, wrote a retrospective piece about Bruce. Its title, *The Existential Jazz Aura of Lenny Bruce* summed up what was essential about Bruce and his style. His opinion was that "Lenny was an entertainer and at the same time an artist —the same kind of tightrope-walking that many jazz musicians have come to accept as the unfortunately normal way of pursuing their craft. . . . I have always felt to be a similarity between his technique and that of at least some jazz musicians."

Both Bruce's biographer, Albert Goldman, and jazz critic Frank Kofsky have made the same observation about him and his debt to jazz, and especially black jazz musicians. Kofsky in *Lenny Bruce: The Comedian as Social Critic and Secular Moralist* writes: "Lenny drew on Black music sources for some of his concepts about both form and content, technique and substance."

Of the Carnegie Hall concert, Goldman wrote: "On this night, he rose to every chance stimulus, every interruption and noise, with a mad volleying of mental images that suggested the fantastic riches of Charlie Parker's horn."

Lenny Bruce arriving at Heathrow Airport.

In 1962 Lenny Bruce played a seven day engagement in Peter Cook's Establishment Club. Suitably located in London's seedy, bohemian Soho district, it had a jazz club in its basement. George Melly was a regular visitor, and the Dudley Moore Trio frequently performed in the jazz club.

Bruce was invited back a year later, but the government deemed him unacceptable and he was deported. His influence on British stand-up from his live appearance is hard to assess. Roger Law, of later *Spitting Image* fame, did recall his encounter with Bruce: " He was a genius. He stood spraying profanities like confetti, riffing on whatever was in his head. No sketches, no punchlines, certainly nothing approaching a script —just biting and obscene satire. It was comedy as social attack. I realised I wanted to do art like he did stand-up."

Earlier, in the 1950s, there had been a jazz-comedy connection.The radio *Goon Show* was written and starred Spike Milligan, who himself was a competent jazz trumpeter, though a failure at a professional musical career. The show regularly featured The Ray Ellington Quartet and the jazz harmonica of Max Geldray, which neatly fitted with Milligan's anarchic scripts.

But it was not really until the late 1980s that Britain could say it had a stand-up comedian who acknowledged his debt to jazz. Stewart Lee, sometimes dubbed 'the jazz comedian' , has spoken openly of his love of free improvised jazz, notably on the Radio 4 programme *In the Moment* (still available on BBC Sounds). He spoke of his first experience with free jazz in Hackney, which left him "intrigued enough to spend the rest of my life regularly attending further improvised musical performances which, quietly and incrementally, changed the way I thought about music, performance, art, life, the universe and everything." He has immersed himself in the free jazz experience, with undoubted influence on his performing style.

Naturally, any stand-up worth their salt will be adept at improvisation, but what made Mort Sahl and Lenny Bruce different, and special was their deep affinity with the jazz world. They matured alongside the be-boppers and modernists. Their style developed in a unique cultural environment, the Beat generation milieu of the 1950s. And stand-up comedy hasn't been the same since.

Phil W

Carnegie Klinkers Amid Classic Concert

By Digby Fairweather

In the old days of classic vinyl when the words of great jazz commentators came down to us as if written on tablets of stone, one that I recall with special affection came from the great Whitney Balliett, in whose words you could sometimes almost hear the music. "Nostalgia" Balliett wrote, to open a liner note for a John Lewis-led album called *Grand Encounter*, "*is cheap witchcraft*". Looking back I'm not quite sure what he meant. But perhaps what he was driving at was: that the process of looking back at significant moments in jazz history over the years sometimes transforms them into something more —or even more — significant than they appeared to be (or sound) at the time.

The thought occurred to me when —during one of those wonderful moments that could only happen down at The Jazz Centre UK— I sorted through a recent donation and found the exact copy of America's *Downbeat* magazine (February 1938) which reviewed Benny Goodman's now-legendary 1938 Carnegie Hall concert, staged a month previously. Back then *Downbeat* hadn't quite morphed into the shiny stapled A4 magazine it became in later years. In fact it was rather better. Folded into an A4 format it opened out into a double sized broadsheet (stapled again); much more room for news of all kinds, some of it decidedly eccentric but all of indicative of the Swing-crazy years when bebop wasn't yet born, and rock'n'roll was still nothing more than a menacing seed awaiting conception in order to create mayhem in the newly studious classroom of jazz for a few difficult decades from the 1960s.

Strangely enough Benny's Carnegie concert didn't even make Downbeat's cover. Instead there was a portrait of Henry 'Hot Lips' Busse (famous for his harmon-muted *When Day is Done* signature tune with Paul Whiteman) alongside his featured singer Ella Logan —aunt and temporary ward of our own Annie Ross— where the two of them were pictured, starring at Club Chez Paree in Chicago. Even the headline story, ballyhooed for page one on the cover was 'Leaders at mercy of idea thieves'. But with your permission I'll leave that early example of intellectual theft for another day.

Fold-open page one however and there was the headline: *Goodman Came, Saw and Laid a Golden Egg* with the super-hep sub-legend *Carnegie's Walls Bulge As 3800 Klinkers and Sophisti-cats hear B.G.* Leaving aside the reference to 'klinkers' (a surely inappropriate reference to wrong notes?) plus the understandable eyebrow-raiser over 'laid an egg' (more jive talk usually coined to indicate a notable failure) the headline somehow survived the editor's rod of iron back then. But what


Music News from Coast to Coast

DOWN BEAT

BALLROOM - CAFE - RADIO - STUDIO - SYMPHONY - THEATRE

VOL. 5, No. 2 (Foreign 25 Cents) CHICAGO, FEBRUARY, 1938 U. S. and Canada 15 Cents Per Copy

"Goodman Came, Saw, And Laid A Golden Egg!"

Busse & Kyser Grit Molars As Idea Thieves Cash In On Their Brain Kids

QUAKER CITY EXEC'S BLUSH AT PHONY HARMONY PACT

Carnegie's Walls Bulge As 3800 Klinkers & Sophisti-cats Hear B.G.

Disbands

Whoa-Ho-Ho

Glenn Miller

Cab Calloway

"P-MEN" WORK UNDER COVER TO FIND DIRTY DISCS

"NO MORE BRIBES FOR SONG-PLUGGING" —IS HOPE

DON'T BOOK THIS BAND!

After 102 Choruses Of Dinah

LAWYER SUES CROSBY

Music News from Coast to Coast

DOWN BEAT

LEADERS" AT MERCY OF IDEA THIEVES

Down Beat magazine February, 1938.

followed in the review would be unlikely to persuade any reader that, in the years to come, this particular concert (held in what was once an impenetrable classical-only hall, and prompting Goodman's star trumpet player Harry James to say that playing there made him feel 'like a whore in church') would be raised to sanctified level in jazz history.

Whoever the un-named reviewer was, he certainly enjoyed his own phraseology. Dig this, you cats."Fo' (hhmmm?) some the occasion was comparable to the discovery of radium, the feats of les frères Wright, and Einstein's introduction of his mathematical theories. Others linked it to the pestiferous hot foot, annoying double-talk and Bank Night with two features plus a set of dishes!". From the levity there followed a good many columns of fearsome head-scratching self-debate. I don't have room for it all here (you'll be pleased to know) but here's the key issues."Those who'd worn their Goodman platters down to the turntables" our commentator observed, "had only themselves to blame for the monotony of what had been heard previously on record". While, on the other hand, "classical music critics' boredom could be attributed not to the laxity of the music but to their own failure to comprehend its meaning." In the end, said commentator ponderously noted: "the enjoyment of the music itself depended on by what measurements you scale its worth and by what standards you weigh its value". And as a coup-de-grace he added: "The concert was a more personal success, enjoyed more by the band participants than by the audience. When the debit and credit sides are added and subtracted ('shouldn't that be the other way round?'

Benny Goodman and his orchestra at the Carnegie Hall, February 1938.

–Ed) the total indicator will probably point to 'So What'?"

So it seems Whitney Balliett's cheap witchcraft was —and remains— an undeniable fact of life. Over the decades to come Benny Goodman's 1938 Carnegie Hall concert would be edited down to a classic double vinyl album (and later CD) by the great George Avakian; a recorded monument which belongs in any definitive jazz collection. Later it would be (in my view unnecessarily) de-edited on CD to include every last pause, dead-air space and group discussion by the eccentric 'put everything back the way it was' producer Phil Schaap, as well as reissued by every budget label company who wanted a shoo-in masterpiece, safely out of copyright and guaranteed to return healthy sales. But what can we learn about the concert from Downbeat in February 1938? Well; certainly not to trust every critic who walks into your concert hall. But maybe —just maybe— we should put the whole thing down to youthful experience (or lack of it); one of the earlier attempts (as with rock music from the 60s on) to turn an unruly but irresistible new musical arrival into an art form, and (as with many things both cultural and otherwise) the need to allow old decisions to belong in their time. Take a look at other items on *Downbeat's* front page back then and you'd have discovered that postal officials in Washington were working under cover to discover sources of smutty or obscene recordings in the mail (how did they do that?); that bribes for song-plugging were almost at an end (and so presumably the last cheque was in the post!); oh and, by the way, that in England around 3000 members of the Guild of Bellringers had lodged a protest that canned (recorded) bell ringing in St John's Church in London is 'an unacceptable American importation and we cannot welcome it'.

I should think not indeed!

Centrepiece and Newsletter Collection

The Jazz Centre UK now has a full set of *Centrepiece*, and its earlier *Newsletter,* in two ring binders. Dating from the first edition in 2016 to the current 2023 isuues, they provide an essential resource for any future historian of our heritage centre.

Featured in the issues are revues, and photos, of the wonderful musicians who have graced our premises; including Evan Parker, Darryl Sherman, Alec Dankworth, Jacqui Dankworth, Clark Tracey, Greg Abate, Emma Rawicz, Dominic Ashworth, Xhosa Cole, Nigel Price, Karen Sharp, and our own Digby Fairweather.

Many articles have been written on the history of jazz and its great practitioners. The provenance, and importance, of the jazz memorabilia collected over the first eight years has been recorded; Humphrey Lyttelton's desk, the John Dankworth piano, Jimmy Skidmore's and Spike Robinson's tenor saxophones, Bix Beiderbecke's chair, Ronnie Scott's tote bag, and many, many more.

Lengthy interviews with local drum legend Trevor Taylor, and Latin jazz maestro Snowboy feature in its pages. Visits from British blues and RnB greats, Paul Jones, Peter Green, and Georgie Fame, are noted. Presentations have been made by the great bassist Peter Ind, by the jazz journalist Peter Vacher, and by the tenor saxophonist Simon Spillett on his biography of Tubby Hayes.

Many artist exhibitions, Malcolm Perry, Kay Whittaker and more, have been reviewed, including the 2019 Sky Arts Portrait of the Year of Cleo Laine by Duncan Shoosmith. We have an original Herman Leonard portrait of Charlie Parker in the recording studio, donated from an original 4-photo exhibition.

Despite the imminent move from our location in The Beecroft Centre, *Centrepiece* will continue to document the history of this unique British institution.

Digby and the CORNOPEAN

During the Saturday April 1st Jazz Centre gig, Digby Fairweather put aside his trumpet and picked up what resembled a cornet, or pocket trumpet. However, what he actually played was a cornopean.

Down the years of its existence jazz musicians have played and recorded on various 'non-standard' instruments; viz., the cello, French Horn, oboe, bassoon, piccolo. But there can't be any more unusual than the cornopean.

First, some technical information, gleaned from the internet:

The cornopean, or cornet à pistons, is the early form of the modern cornet. It is a lip-vibrated aerophone with piston valves and interchangeable crooks that make it a fully chromatic instrument that can be pitched in a number of keys. It was invented in the early 19th century by William Hill of London and perfected by Henry Willis. Tonally it lies between the trumpet and the horn. The earliest known extant example dates from 1834. It fell out of usage by the early 20th century.

For anyone more interested there is an even more detailed explanation on YouTube:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JcaFdMPhzQ4

In an interview with Digby, the provenance, and history, of this particular cornopean was divulged. It originally belonged to John R T Davies, a multi-instrumentalist (thirteen in all), who is best known for his years in The Temperance Seven. He had been a member of Ken Colyer's Crane River Jazz Band, also gracing over the years those of Cy Laurie, Acker Bilk, and Sandy Brown. Together with Dick Sudhalter he formed the Anglo-American Alliance, performing jazz of the 1920s, including a performance of the music of Paul Whiteman at the Royal Festival Hall.

John R T Davies in his workshop.

John later became famous for his engineering skills, gaining an international reputation for re-mastering old 78s, often having to glue broken shards together before transferring to tape. There is a fascinating BBC *Tomorrow's World* clip from 1971 on YouTube of the man at work:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wNqdacf-Kc&t=205s

It was John that originally possessed the cornopean. Hearing John play at a gig, the tone, and power, so impressed Digby that John promised to leave it him in his will. This he did in 2004 contained in a beautiful wooden box John had made.

The ensuing history of the instrument could be the subject of a novel. Digby played the cornopean for the next twelve years. Then, following a London gig at the Spice of Life in Charing Cross Road, it was stolen. Digby and his partner Gwen stumbled over a broken kurb stone, and while picking themselves up, and sorting themselves out, someone opportunistically stole the precious instrument.

Digby takes up the story: "That was it for seven years and then —completely out of the blue— a man called Adam Paloussos posted a picture of a Cornopean on Facebook saying 'what on earth is this instrument?' and showing it for sale at £135.00. I took a good look and thought 'Good Heavens! That looks a lot like mine!' So, I managed to find an e-mail for Adam but got no reply. Meantime though I'd started a correspondence on Facebook and a lot of clues started coming through mentioning Walthamstow (and the ridiculously low price for any cornopean).

"Finally, after more enquiries a marvellous man called Gordon Hudson came back to me with the exact address where the cornopean had apparently been seen; in Walthamstow indeed, at a music shop called 1Note2Notes (which also runs a music academy) at 130, Hoe Street. Thank you, Gordon!

"So next morning Gwen and I motored up there —and there was my beloved horn in the window. It was in a state after seven years; the bell was crumpled, there were dents all over the bodywork, and the three valves had been interchanged so it wouldn't play at all. When I managed to finally get a note everything from dust, spiders and cobwebs came flying out of the bell. It was like a cartoon. Anyhow the kindly owner dropped the price for me to £100, and that day I took it round to my great brass repairer Les Bridge, who lives near me in Southend. Most people have to travel miles to find a good brass repairer but Les is the best I've ever worked with, and within a week my old horn was back with me and fully restored to its old glory. We're just getting used to each other again, but as far as I'm concerned this is beyond my wildest dreams and real miracle."

So, we have a happy ending, and the debut of the cornopean at The Jazz Centre.

Rod and Phil

Arriving the morning of Saturday 28th January at The Jazz Centre, your editor was introduced to Rod Brown, drummer in the Ted Beament Quartet, that day's live music performers. The name, if not the face, rang a bell.

Alec Dankworth, Ted Beament, Rob Fowler.

Meeting Rod in The Jazz Centre, and performing with Ted, Alec and Rob.

Rod is a decades-long veteran of the UK and European jazz scenes. As well as with Ted Beament, Robert Fowler and Alec Dankworth, the other three members of the band that day, he has free-lanced with just about every prominent jazz musician in Britain, performed in West End pit bands, in pantomime, on TV, on multiple recording sessions, and toured with the Herb Miller Orchestra.

But it was when Digby revealed that Rod had been the very last pupil of Britain's greatest ever jazz drummer, Phil Seamen, that I remembered where I'd seen his name before. Rod has multiple mentions in the recently published biography of Phil Seamen, which I had recently finished reading. Peter Dawn's book chronicles the relationship between pupil and master in some detail, the good, the bad and the downright surreal. Rod went on to perform immaculately that afternoon, musically and sartorially.

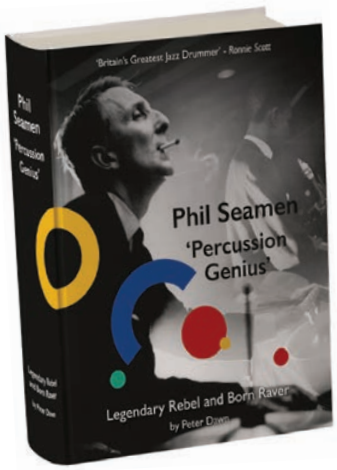
From Peter Dawn's biography, Rod Brown recalls an incident in 1972 at the 100 Club in London's Oxford Street:

"I didn't start playing drums until I was almost sixteen. I struggled along for a couple of years learning from books and records, trying to make progress myself. I then discovered jazz and became aware of Phil. I will never forget the Friday night I went to The Plough in Stockwell and Phil was playing. It was a life changing moment. I can still see him now. He had a check shirt on. It completely turned my head around because most of the drummers in jazz that I'd listened to, had what I call : 'A very highly tuned kit.' Both the British and American jazz drummers tuned their kit like that. But Phil had a very deep, big open sound. That was the thing that really hit me. It was total! Also, he had incredible charisma. I didn't talk to him that first night, but I was totally in awe of him."

"At one of my drum lessons, Phil asked me if I would help at a Drum Clinic he was going to do with Martin Drew at the 100 Club in Oxford Street. Both their drum kits were set up on the stage and there was a good turnout of aspiring drummers. To start with, Phil and Martin played alternate solos and answered questions. Phil then played a single, a double or a triple paradiddle. I had to shout out 'single, treble, double, treble, single!' in any order. This was so that Phil could demonstrate how quickly he could switch from one to another. The climax of the evening was a drum battle between Phil and Martin. For my money it was Phil's evening. Whilst Martin played well, Phil stole the show!"

Phil W

Phil Seamen: Percussion Genius, Legendary Rebel And Born Raver



Ronnie Scott once hailed Phil Seamen as 'Britain's Greatest Jazz Drummer' a man who achieved cult status during his lifetime and inspired generations of jazz and rock musicians including Charlie Watts of the Rolling Stones and Ginger Baker of Cream.

Phil is also described as a Percussion Genius and a Legendary Rebel and Born Raver in a remarkable new book written and published by author Peter Dawn. Hailing from Phil's hometown of Burton on Trent, Peter has spent over a decade researching the drummer's incredible life story, interviewing dozens of friends, fans and fellow musicians. The result is a 752 page biography packed with memories and anecdotes, all accompanied by a fascinating history of the thriving British jazz and popular music scene during the post-War years. With meticulous attention to detail the book is illustrated with historic photographs, catalogues a selection of Phil's recordings and even shows the drum exercises he used to teach pupils that included Ginger Baker.

To purchase a copy of 'Phil Seamen: Percussion Genius' go to www.philseamen.com

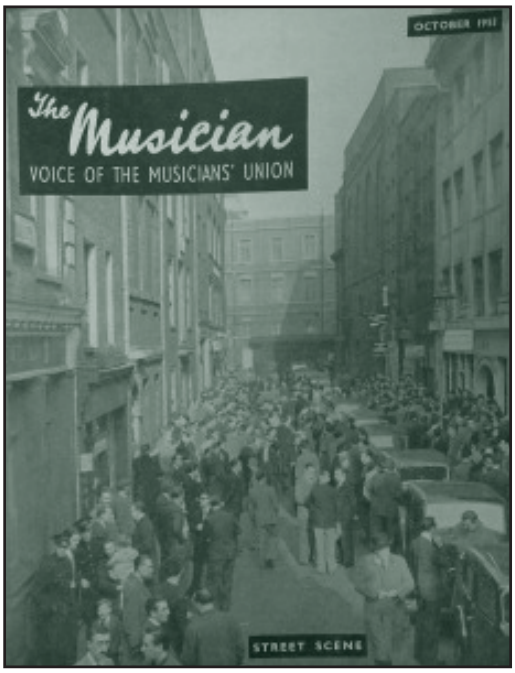
The following letter, and accompanying article about Archer Street, was received by The Jazz Centre UK in early March. 'The Street' played an important role for jazz musicians over several decades, as a place to meet and to make gainful employment. The editors felt this contribution to jazz history deserves to appear in print.

Dear Jazz Centre,
Sorry to hear that Southend wants to cease support. I have donated $20 and signed the petition.
My primary reason to contact you is to send a copy of an essay my father wrote some years ago about the culture on Archer Street. My father, Tom Harrison, was an itinerant pianist/accordionist and played with many of the bands and groups from the thirties to the nineties. In fact, after the end of the war he and George Shearing sometimes subbed for each other.
I remember going with him to Archer Street in the fifties as he schmoozed with fellow musicians, booked gigs and got payments. I believe the street business essentially disappeared by 1960.
I don't know if you archive documents but if you do perhaps you will find the attachment interesting. I only came across it in the last month as I have started going through his many published and unpublished compositions and writings. I presume he wrote it sometime in the early sixties.
Please let me know if it is of interest and feel free to include it as you see fit.
Good luck with the petition.
David Harrison

Reminiscences of Archer Street

Archer Street is a thoroughfare some 150 yards in length, to the north of, and parallel with, Shaftesbury Avenue in London W1. In fact, it could be known as the south-west frontier of Soho. And in the period I intend writing about, Soho was a rather mystical definition of a B movie, or a "Poor man's Mayfair".

The Street, or The Club, as it was known to musicians throughout the world, joined together Gt. Windmill Street in the west and Rupert Street in the east, and the twain never met on more eccentric conditions.



In the 1930's and, in in spite of a trade depression, the looming prospect of a war against Hitler, Moseley-led demonstrations for Hitler, talk of digging trenches in Hyde Park, building air-raid shelters, things were booming in the music business, at least as far as London's west end was concerned; big bands, small bands, jazz bands, straight bands . . . we were all enjoying full working-weeks. In 1937, for instance, the Musicians Union minimum rates were £8. 8. 0 (eight guineas) per week for first-class establishments such as the Savoy Hotel, the Dorchester, Grosvenor House, and £7.7.0 (seven guineas) for the rest, such as Romano's, Monico, Criterion, Oddenino's and the like; establishments which are now, alas, no more. At these prices the big hotels and restaurants could have the pick of the musicians, and for only a little extra, a big-name bandleader to front any of these various aggregations.

Wages throughout the country were low. However, London boomed. Archer Street, the muse's Alma Mater, was where all the jollity began and ended, because Archer Street was where musicians, who provided the jollity, were booked, on one Monday afternoon and paid on the following Monday afternoon by the agents and bandleaders who had booked them.

The Street was very busy every afternoon with the comings and goings of various musicians, meeting each other and gleaning information regarding regular jobs, casual gigs, concerts, theatre work and the like. But Monday was *the* day.

At 1.30pm the club was officially "opened" by Dave Scott, the violinist uncle of Ronnie Scott, of Jazz Club fame, and "closed" by him around 4pm. For two and a half hours upwards of five hundred professional musicians could be seen thronging Archer Street on the various missions related to their work.

In the thirties, of course, the better-off boys would arrive in their cars and park them in the street, to the banter of their colleagues, and the annoyance of the local police force, who were usually looking for an excuse to nab anyone for obstruction, but had no powers to order any motorist to move on. Yellow lines and parking meters were not even thought of in those far-off days. First come, first served. Taxis and trucks looking for a short-cut through the West End received short shrift on any Monday afternoon in this exalted thoroughfare.

The Street was "guarded" at each corner of the northern side by a pub —the White Horse at the east, and the Red Lion at the west. On the southern side the corners held the stage door of the Windmill Theatre to the west, and the Lyric Theatre to the east. In between these stage doors were the entrances to one or two social clubs and one very famous shop —the hairdressing establishment of Sid Seeger: haircut 6d, dry shampoo 1/6d. Sid himself invariably propped up the doorway, observing with what seemed a modicum of cynical amusement the scene being played out before him.

Sid's shop was always a busy place, with a preponderance of musicians seeking a 'short-back-and-sides'. Inside the shop Sid had charge of No. 1 chair, and his assistant, Joe, had No. 2. The chat was usually made up of Cockney,

Jewish, musician's stories, non-stop good humour, and barber-shop language. Sid's shop was notable not only for its hairdressing propensities, but for its large sign over the shop window which read: "Just say three pleases!" One of the most succinct phrases in the whole of London. Durex was under-the-counter merchandise on those days.

I don't know if Sid stood in that doorway throughout the war, but he was there on the first Monday I went "up the club" after VE Day, and for many years afterwards, when haircuts and shampoos became big business in Mayfair; (but not, maybe, in Soho).

After the war, as times changed and the nature of music changed with them, Archer Street lost some character. And, whereas before the war it was thronged most days, through the fifties and sixties and thereafter, the numbers dwindled, until eventually it became Mondays only (but without Dave Scott to open and close the establishment).

But to return to former days, Monday was the big meeting day, and the two cafes in the street did a roaring business. Those cafes were quite distinctive in character. One was Carmen's Café, the other Café Roma. Carmen's was for the hoi-polloi, and catered on a most economical basis; steak, chips and peas 1/2d, tea 1d, coffee 1d. The room was quite long, L-shaped, and although there were some tables and chairs, the fellows usually preferred to stand at the counter, mainly because they could peer through the picture window and keep the scene outside under review.

1935: In Archer Street London musicians gather in groups waiting to see if there is any work available.

Café Roma was the haunt of the big-timers, instrumentalists from the bands of Ambrose, Carroll Gibbons, Harry Roy, Sydney Kyte, Henry Hall, Ray Noble, Lew Stone, Roy Fox, the main recording and broadcast bands. The Roma was a small room, but the prices were higher than at Carmen's. Throughout the thirties Roma was the 'In' café. Ordinary mortals eschewed the Roma, but would frequently put their heads in the doorway in case there was some 'name' musician they could nod to or be acknowledged by. Talk about class distinctions! Never was it more pronounced than between Carmen's and the Roma.

There was a lot of humour on these pre-war afternoons when the jazz world was relatively young. We used to have a busking trumpet player, an elderly man, who appeared in a smart overcoat and Anthony Eden hat, stood outside Sid Seeger's shop, and played his programme regardless of the scorn and cat-calls from his contemporaries. There was even the apocryphal lemon-sucker in front of him. He battled on and gathered a few sympathetic coins. Then one day he made his mark forever on the Archer Street mosaic. He played the *Blue Danube Valse* and left the 'empty' bars for the lads to fill in, viz: la, la, la, (whistle, whistle, whistle, whistle, etc). This simple performance immortalised him. We never knew his name, but as soon as he arrived and set up shop the lads yelled in one voice, "*Blue Danube*", and out it came.

Needless to say, there were many characters amongst the musicians themselves: for instance, 'Jack the Yank'! (Jack Gray, a drummer so-called because he had played in a band for one Atlantic crossing on the Queen Mary, and had come back to The Street speaking and dressing as an American tourist). There was also 'Monkey Morgan'. A string bass player who always, even when working, had a small monkey (a real one) perched on his shoulder. He was in the resident band at Romano's restaurant, where I worked with him for some time, and when he received his notice because of coming economies, he showed his pique smashing up his bass in the middle of the dance floor. He then left, and, needless to say, never returned.

After the war, the developers arrived and began to alter the face of Archer street; but the German bombers had been kind, and at least there was a footpath and a roadway in good shape for the 'boys' to occupy in their crowds. Many faces were missing, but the ones who returned had plenty of tales to tell, and the hubbub in the street rivalled the pre-war hum.

Soon, yellow lines appeared in the gutters; parking was restricted and the police used their powers to "move on, lads". Demob suits were greatly in evidence, Carmen's Café reopened, gigs were being booked. The only thing one missed was *The Blue Danube*, and the perpetrator thereof.

As the fifties gathered momentum, and rock and roll began to dictate the pop music scene, the Archer Street crowds thinned out, and 'Monday-up-the-club' became not the day, but the only day. There was very little work for the freelancers, and the musicians in resident jobs didn't bother to come.

The sixties brought The Beatles and their cohorts, and musical fashions changed yet again. Buildings in the street change their character —Charlie Chester put his name to a casino next door to the rather conservative Orchestral Association- and across the street sex shows were opening and, sad to say, thriving. The Cafe Roma had become a sweets and tobacco shop, and, more's the pity, Jack the Yank had not reappeared.

By the seventies, most of the former frequenters had taken 'day jobs' and become semi-pros. And by the eighties Archer Street had become defunct as a haunt for musicians.

The pre-war 'occupiers' of Archer Street, wherever they may be, must have many endearing memories of a thoroughfare which was always a bit behind the times, always used a handshake instead of a contract, but being the backbone of a happier era, and knowing that they were the ones who, basically, produced the happy atmosphere, and created a nostalgia, which will never fade. See you up the club!

Fancy That:
Churchill's confusion over the two Berlins


Irving Berlin


Winston Churchill


Isaiah Berlin

It's an easy mistake to make. Winston Churchill's confusion over the two Berlins is perfectly understandable. It was not geographical confusion. In early 1944, Germany's capital city had not yet been divided east from west. Rather, it was a confusion over two distinguished individuals. One, Irving, a celebrated composer and lyricist, whose music forms a large part of the great American songbook. The other, Isaiah, philosopher, academic, champion of civil liberties, and WW2 diplomat.

Jewish émigrés

Both Berlins were Jewish émigrés from Russia (Isaiah was actually born in Riga, which was part of the Russian Empire in the early 20th century). Irving became an American, and before long was composing a raft of popular songs, including *Alexander's Ragtime Band*, *Puttin' on the Ritz*, *Cheek to Cheek*, *White Christmas*, *Anything You Can Do (I Can Do Better)*, and *There's No Business Like Show Business*.

Meanwhile, Isaiah, twenty years younger, became a British citizen. He was to spend much of his life at Oxford University, apart from a wartime period working for British Information Services. It was at this time that his succinct and penetrating dispatches from the Washington and Moscow embassies that apparently brought Isaiah Berlin to Churchill's attention. The Prime Minister, it is said, looked forward keenly to these tightly analytical dispatches.

Two Berlins

According to one account, the humorous mix up between the two Berlins was set in motion when Clementine Churchill was drawing up a list of lunch guests. She noted that Mr. Berlin was in London and suggested to her husband that he be invited to lunch. It seems that the composer had donated a rather large sum to a war charity that she was involved with. The PM thought it was a very good idea. He would like to meet the perspicacious Mr. Berlin.

Brooklyn accent

At the appointed lunch, Irving Berlin was sat next to the prime minister, who was surprised that his guest had a thick Brooklyn accent. Still under the misapprehension he was conversing with Isaiah the perceptive, scholarly diplomat, Churchill was soon interrogating him on the big international questions of the day. "When did he think the war in Europe would end?" and "Did he think Roosevelt would be re-elected President?" Struggling to answer coherently, Irving Berlin could barely disguise his bafflement over why he was being asked such question by the great British war leader. Equally, the PM could not suppress his irritation that the talented diplomat was making such heavy weather answering such all-important questions.

Finally, so the story goes, Churchill said: "Tell me Mr. Berlin, what do you think is the most important piece of work you have done for us lately?" After much hesitation, the flustered Irving answered: "*I'm dreaming of a White Christmas*, I would guess." Shortly afterwards Churchill got up and left.

He apparently went to a Cabinet meeting after lunch and told his colleagues the story with great pleasure.

Prestigious positions

Some of the details of the whole episode were provided in 1992 by Isaiah Berlin. He had been knighted in 1957 and held several prestigious positions in the post-war decades, including Chichele Professor of Social and Political Theory at Oxford University, and president of both the Aristotelian Society and the British Academy. Interviewed during an episode of the radio programme *Desert Island Discs*, Isaiah Berlin gave an account of that confusing lunch. He wasn't there, of course. But he seems to have been thoroughly briefed about it.

According to his version, the PM became gloomy at one point in the frustrating conversation with the composer. "He (Churchill) couldn't understand who he was dealing with. He still thought it was me," explained Isaiah. "My despatches were quite coherent, but he obviously had an idiot before him."

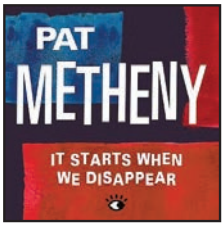
Savoy Hotel

A somewhat different account came from Irving. He went back to the Savoy Hotel still apparently in the dark about what had happened, telling friends: "You know, Mr Churchill is probably the greatest man in England, or in the world maybe, but I don't know what it was, I somehow felt we didn't click."

M.W.

Desert Island Jazz Discs

Jazz Centre UK volunteer Eddy Cater chooses his Desert Island Jazz Discs. Sixth in a regular feature.



It Starts When We Disappear - Pat Metheny

This live recording taken from the *Side-Eye* album (BMG) was composed by guitarist Pat Metheny in 2019 prior to the Covid pandemic and released in 2021. A trio ensemble was made up of Pat Metheny, James Francies (keyboards), and Marcus Gilmore (drums). For me, Metheny is a jazz guitarist who is still ever evolving in musical terms and his sound remains fresh and captivating. Twenty time Grammy award winner, Metheny's contribution to progressive and contemporary jazz is second to none. He picked up the guitar at fourteen years old and, by the time he was twenty, he was teaching at the Berklee School of Music in Boston. Early influences were Wes Montgomery, Miles Davis, Ornette Coleman and Gary Burton. As leader of The Pat Metheny Group for forty years, he now invites new up and coming musicians who bring their own fresh and challenging ideas to the table.

Chachullo (hustle) - Ruben Gonzales

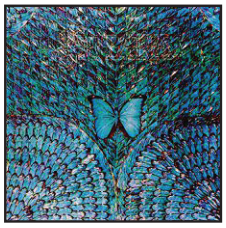
While listening to the recording of the famous *Buena Vista Social Club* album in 2000, I was immediately drawn to the sublime virtuosity of the pianist. The producers on the album, Nick Gold and Ry Cooder, decided to promote and record prominent members of the group and give them the opportunity to showcase their own individual talents. Ruben Gonzalez was one of them. This track, taken from the album of the same name, is an example of what was produced. Between 1940 through to the 1980s, Gonzalez was undoubtedly a quintessential contributor to the birth of the pulsating rhythms, known today as Cuban Jazz, which has inspired many jazz artists to date. This album was recorded shortly after the Buena Vista Social Club's impact on the international stage. Sadly, Ruben Gonzalez died a few years after the recording aged 85 years old.

Stardust on your Sleeve - John McLaughlin

After a prolific decade during the seventies, guitarist John McLaughlin produced a couple of back to back albums, *Belo Horizonte* and *Music Spoken Here*. This track was taken from the *Belo Horizonte* recording released by Warner Music group in 1981. Playing mainly acoustic guitar, he collaborated with The Translators, an international musical ensemble including Paco de Lucia and Katia Labeque who all contributed to achieve a very rich meditative Flamenco/Brazilian Jazz tone.

Liberty City - Gil Goldstein and Friends

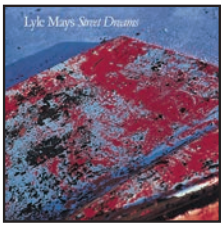
This track comes from the album *Under Rousseau's Moon* (Half Note), a 2006 live recording of the famous Jaco Pastorious composition. American pianist Goldstein is not generally known as a band leader, but here he takes on that role. In the past, he has been applauded for his work as a producer and arranger for many well known musicians. As well as being a fine piano and accordion player, he brings to the stage on this recording a handful of jazz luminaries, such as Chris Potter(saxes), Richard Bona (Bass), Randy Brecker (trumpet), Don Alias (perc) and Mike Mainieri (vibes).



Aspirations - Carlos Santana

From the album *Borboletta*, this track was written by Carlos Santana and recorded by CBS in 1973. At the time, Santana had moved away from the constraints of being labelled as a latin rock guitar player. He had already collaborated with the likes of Alice Coltrane and the jazz influence was very prominent on this recording. However, his guitar work does not feature on the track, paving the way for his guest musicians to shine. These include Stanley Clarke (bass), Ndugu Leon Chancellor (drums), Armando Perraza (perc), and Jules Broussard (sax). Aspirations is still as hypnotic now as it was nearly fifty years ago.

Chorinho - Lyle Mays



As well as being an ever-present contributor to the Pat Metheny Group for thirty plus years, Lyle Mays was one of the most innovative and creative contemporary jazz pianists in terms of musical structural development. This solo track, combining piano and keyboards, is taken from the album *Street Dreams*, recorded in 1988 on Geffen records. This album features Mark Johnson (bass), Bill Frisell (guitar), and Pete Erskine (drums). Mays is considered a true polymath, excelling in maths, architecture, chess, computer programming, as well as being a top twenty pool player and soccer coach in the US. Sadly, he died during the Covid pandemic.

Teen Town - Weather Report

Recorded in 1977, this fusion classic taken from the *Heavy Weather* album (CBS) will always be a real turning point for me. This new age jazz genre really resonated with me. The line up on this recording is Joe Zawinul (keyboards), Wayne Shorter (sax), Jaco Pastorious (fretless bass), and Alex Acuna (drums). The revolutionary bass and rhythm fusion at the time, for me, was infectious and captivating. Working as a music photographer in London, I was lucky enough to meet the group shortly after the release of the album. It was a real game changer in every way and it still sounds so fresh.

A Volta (To Return) - Eliane Elias

Listening to an album of singer/songwriter Michael Franks 20 years ago, I heard a sublime piano solo on one tracks and was immediately drawn to the sound. Eliane Elias became a jazz heavyweight overnight, combining native Brazilian musical traditions with a contemporary jazz sound. This track, from the album *Kissed by Nature*, written by Elias in 2002, is an example. Accompanied by her husband and writing partner Mark Johnson on double bass, she invites a wide range of international jazz musicians to fill in the gaps, including ex-husband Randy Brecker. Her latest project *Mirror Mirror* includes a piano duet recording with the late great Chick Corea.

una lettera dall'italia

Dear Susan,

Thanks ever so much for inviting my quartet to play in such a special place as the Jazz UK Centre in Southend.

It was certainly a treat to play amongst all that incredible memorabilia collected and displayed in that wonderful room of the Beecroft Art Gallery

Amazing also to see the saxophones of Spike. What beautiful horns and certainly well preserved. I do hope our concert was appreciated. We had a great time together and the acoustics were perfect on top of a warm audience.

Thanks ever so much and I sincerely hope the jazz series will continue for a long time in that venue!

Best wishes for many successful concerts to come at your clubs!

Tommaso

Tommaso Starace

John Turville (piano), Tommaso, Mirko Scarcia (bass), Rod Youngs (drums).

Susan May's Spike's Place gig
Saturday 24th February

Born in Milan, Tommaso Starace came to the UK in 1994 to study at Birmingham and later at the Guildhall School. With ten albums as a leader to his credit, Tommaso is an outstanding saxophonist who was hailed as 'star material' from his first recording, and brings energy, virtuosity and creativity to every performance. He is a favourite with audiences due not only to his musical abilities but also his relaxed and witty presentation.

. . . and one from the archives

EXILE

Exile Productions Ltd
142 Bangor Road
Holywood
BT18 0EX

28 January 2016

Digby Fairweather
129 Westborough Road
Westcliff-on-Sea
Essex SS0 9JG

Dear Digby,

Thanks for your letter regarding the National Jazz Centre. I'm glad you contacted me.

I fully support the idea of a National Jazz Centre and it seems to me that they have the right person to spearhead it in terms of your perseverance and your affinity with the subject matter.

Perhaps as things move forward I can find a way to offer some practical support and if there is consideration of another fundraising gig, please let me know, but as you know everything is subject to diary!

In the meantime I wish you every success with the project and keep me informed as it progresses.

Yours sincerely

Van Morrison

Van Morrison

Exile Productions Ltd, The Gate Lodge, Culloden Hotel, 142 Bangor Road, Holywood, BT18 0EX, N. Ireland
Phone: +44 28 9042 7696
Email: office@exileproductions.net

The Jazz Centre UK was founded in February 2016 by Digby Fairweather, and constituted as a charity in June of that year. Sir Van Morrison became the first patron, followed by Sir Michael Parkinson, Dan Morgenstern, Susan da Costa, Paul Jones, Simon Spillett and Alan Barnes. The full list can be seen on page 2.

Digby and Van recorded together with George Melly on the latter's album *The Ultimate Melly*. A stellar cast list joined George; with Van on a rocking version of *Midnight Cannonball* and a poignant *Back Water Blues*.

Van's only condition was that he wasn't billed above the other guests, and he asked for no fee at all.

Digby told Centrepiece that the album was recorded in Ted Taylor's very small Porcupine studio in Mottingham, South London. Van's manager, Robert Johnson, was very reluctant to come but in the event Van over-ruled him (mainly because he loved George to bits). He turned up at 10am with Robert, a small entourage and laid down two tracks in less than an hour. After that he took everyone to lunch before making his way home.