



Dave Brubeck

Location: N/A

Date: N/A

Take me back to Concord, California where you grew up, tell me what it was like for you as a boy in that part of the world.

Concord, California was a great place to grow up. We had a real cross section of people from Europe, the various countries and then most people forget that California was originally a Mexican extension of Mexico, with a Governor, P.O. Peco and various Governors from Mexico and our streets were mostly Spanish names and they still are. So, you had all these different influences and from the time I was a kid I heard music from the Spanish and Mexican influence, the German and my mother played all the classical piano literature. Then we had Portuguese celebrations, the Holy Ghost Day was a parade.

As a kid I always walked along with the band on the side of the street, kept up with the band and in fact I've used that theme in my music, I also wrote a piece for the bicentennial called "They All Sang Yankee Doodle". I took the theme of "Yankee Doodle" and mixed it with Portuguese music, I mixed it with German music, Russian and Spanish, a little American Indian, Native American. All this came from my youth and I still think about Concord as a great place to have grown up, and a great melting pot.

It sounds like a mini history of jazz, you must have been listening to all that kind of music... but when did you first hear jazz, I mean real jazz?

The first time I heard jazz would have been right in my home in Concord, my oldest brother, he was eleven and a half years older than I rehearsed his dance band every Thursday night in our house. In fact, uh the leader of that band Dell Courtney(?) is still alive, he's 86 or 87 and up until last year he had tea dances in Honolulu, at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, every Wednesday and Saturday. So, whenever I go to Honolulu I talk about all the guys that Dell, and my brother brought to my house and all the musicians. I would be say six or seven or eight, hearing these very very good musicians.

What kind of jazz were they playing?

They were playing a lot of early Dixieland and early Swing, and commercial because they worked at the Oakland Hotel, which was near Concord, as a dance group and so you had to be able to play for dances, that was the main reason you had a group. My brother's drum had a picture of a gondola and every time he hit the bass drum a light would go on and cowbells and Chinese temple blocks and I was fascinated with his drum set and then I remember hearing the saxophones for the first time. My mother always getting a little upset that this band would come in and use her studio, and not put paper down on the floor, because when you play trombone, there's a little leakage of plain old spit, which would scar up her front room, outside of that my mother accepted the dance band and it was hard for her but she allowed them to use the studio.

She had high hopes for you didn't she?

My mother wanted three sons, that would play music, that was her ambition and she got three sons, she almost missed me because my dad said he's the last one and he's going to be a cowboy, like me. My dad was a great rodeo roper and took first place at the top rodeos many times in steer roping, in calf roping, and he wanted one son to follow in his footsteps.

But you were no slacker now, you did alright as a cowboy too didn't you?

Compared to my father no, but compared to other kids, I was alright yeah.

Tell me what kind of a cowboy you were, what your event was and make yourself then a musician.

When my father became the manager of a 45,000 acre cattle ranch in Northern California, he automatically just tired of the road, like I've been tired of the road. Because he used to buy the cattle all over the west and Oregon, Nevada, Arizona, at the Hearst Ranch in lower California and he was gone like I've been gone as a jazz musician and he was offered to manage this ranch, and he decided to go, and I would have been eleven and a half years old and I thought oh this is great. My mother was in tears and stayed in tears for years, because she had to leave her students and leave the Bay area of San Francisco, so going to this cattle ranch meant isolation, because we were two or three miles out of town and the ranch extended for miles, sometimes, in some parts it was 25 miles long.

And then my dad said, 'You have to be the son. I have two sons that are musicians, you're going to be a cattle man.' I thought this is great, I don't have to practice anymore, and I didn't, but I always played jazz. At night I'd come in and and play jazz in the front room of the ranch house. But to get

away from classical music and studies was a big break and to listen to jazz on the radio. I knew even if I'm a cowboy, I'm going to be involved in jazz some way. And there were jazz fans up in the mountains, up in the Sonora and the Sutter Creek area, there were good musicians that just existed up there because they didn't want to be on the road. It was a whole different life, I was alone so much at the time on the ranch, just ridding horseback.

My dad would send me to pump water at a tank and you'd ride for miles on horseback, so its really boring and the horse gets into a gait, 'bum bum bum' or 'bum ba da bum ba da' or you trot and I would always sing in my mind a different rhythm against this and that's how I started getting into poly-rhythms was riding on on the range there. Sometimes you'd be riding a fence line for hours, and nothing to do, but I was always thinking about music. I thought I was away from music but I never was away from music, I was just away from having to study music. And I developed this wonderful feeling of freedom, being out on the ranch, and alone. Alone a lot which I think was very wonderfully strong for me and being around cowboys that didn't talk a lot, but when they said something they meant business.

I think that this ranch experience gave me the strength to get through the jazz life that was so tough. Some other guys collapsed under it, but I had that strength of my father and the strength of these cowboys that I grew up with. Often just ride, flowing mustache, you know. I've even seen the guys with rifles in a touring car, chasing other guys off the ranch that were coming in to hunt and wouldn't leave. My dad would go back and say, 'Come on boys we got a little job to do.' All these guys sitting with a 30 30 rifle.

And what was it about jazz that was exciting?

Having watched my brother and the musicians, they had such a great time playing and it also expressed a feeling of freedom and I thought that the happiest I could be would to be in a jazz club playing. But it was kind of impossible, it was a dream in my life. When we drive the cattle and we get near the Sacramento Road, which is the furthest place on the ranch, my dream was that the Benny Goodman Band Bus would want to get through the cattle and I wouldn't let him through unless they let me get on the bus and play with them. I had all these fantasies that if you saw a B-movie, it wasn't too much of a fantasy. Because that's what happened in the old jazz movies, you know guys were playing on the band bus.

I've been on band buses where guys were playing. Ella Fitzgerald was singing and one guy hollered, 'Knock it off Ella, we're trying to sleep.' Can you imagine telling Ella to knock it off, but in my mind that's what I was... Someday I'd be heard with some band going through here. The compromise that made it possible for me to go to college was that I would study to be a veterinarian. And my mother said, 'He has to go to college.' And my dad said, 'OK, he'll be a veterinarian, come back and help me at the ranch.' When I got to college, I hated Pre-med I loved the conservatory across the lawn,

and Dr. Arnold, this wonderful professor said, 'Brubeck, go over there next year, your mind is not here.' So I switched to a music major.

Well, go back just a second now, I want the story of how your mother came around, because she sort of opposed jazz music for her for her son right?

Yeah right.

Tell me that story.

I was on my way from the ranch down to Stockton and my mother was with me in the car and I had on a jazz station which was kind of bothering her. Then Art Tatum came on playing "Humoresque" which is a classical piece that my mother knew backwards and forwards, and she said, 'Now David I know why you want to play jazz.' And from then on she relaxed, because Tatum did other classical pieces, "Elegy" and other things but thank goodness he played "Humoresque".

I was looking at an oral history of Jay McShann the other day, who said that Swing is freedom.

Yeah.

Is it?

Sure.

What is Swing, talk to us about it.

When when you get a group of musicians that are really playing and in the days of the swing bands it was this really feeling of freedom and then a guy would get a solo and this was his expression of freedom and the band were well rehearsed, but I was always waiting for this guy to stand up and play his solo. A trumpet player, a trombone, or saxophones, or the pianist or the drummer and then they were completely free, away from the constriction of the written music, but improvising on top of it, and this is the thing I love the most about jazz, it's the thing that expresses the United States, it expresses freedom. All over the world, jazz is accepted as the music of freedom, it's more important than baseball. When you get to Russia and behind the Iron Curtain the music of jazz is the music of freedom and I was in a underground meeting in Poland in 1958, and this fella took the chance that of these 50 fifty people there wouldn't be any finks that would report him, and he said, 'I wanna do a salute.' We all stood up and he said, 'I want you to know that we Polish people love freedom as much as you people from the United States.'

Tell me about your childhood inability to read music and take to ear training.

When I was first aware that I couldn't read music I didn't know I couldn't read because I could play the music that was in front of me. My mother didn't know I couldn't read music, but I started putting it together and when we would rehearse with my brothers, one played violin, the oldest and the other was playing string bass, I was playing cello. I'd make a mistake and go like that because my brother would hit me with the bow, and it was an automatic response, pretty quick people started realizing I couldn't read and I got through a conservatory without being able to read and it was mostly that I could write very slowly, it was very hard for me to write, I learned to read, I'm not a good reader yet.

In ear training the professor, Dr. Bodley would play a chord and ask the class, 'What chord is that?' And if no one knew he'd say, 'Wake up Brubeck, and ask him, we'll ask him.' I remember the first chord he asked me about, 'Wake up Brubeck,' it was from a tune, "Don't Worry About Me" and it's a seventh and a flat ninth, so I said, 'I don't know what it is but I can come up and play it.' So, he said, 'Well what chord is it?' I said, 'I says the first chord of "Don't Worry About Me."' He says, 'That's not an answer! You're supposed to know that's a flat ninth, why can't you learn to say what a chord is?' But, he said, 'You're right that's what it is'.

So I got through college until my last year, I had to take piano and the piano teacher discovered I couldn't read and they weren't going to let me graduate. And the composition teacher and this ear training teacher and the counter-point teacher said you're making a mistake, he does wonderful counter-point, and you're making a mistake not to let him graduate. So, I got through school, barely.

Why do you think jazz symbolizes freedom? More than just improvisation.

When you go back to the roots of jazz, you gotta go back to the African-American and really the slaves and they weren't allowed any freedom at all. They couldn't even sing when they were working, couldn't speak. There were even things that were put on their tongues and if if there was singing it would keep them from singing.

When you take away everything from any culture, whether its Native Americans or the Chinese that came here, you you rob this person of all his culture and all his freedom, he's going to find a way anyway. That's the way jazz started I think, as an expression of freedom and an expression of joy. In the New Orleans musical scene I think it's about the most joyful music you'd ever want to hear. But, you cannot take freedom away from any culture that they won't find a way to express themselves and jazz was this first expression of the African-American's freedom, the way he wanted to express himself some way.

You were in the service in World War Two and you happened to play some music there too. Tell me how you came to form the Wolf Pack Band.

In World War Two, I enlisted in a band in the United States, it was understood as soon as I graduated from college that I'd go to this band, and I was there about two years and there were four bands on that camp and they broke up three of them and put us in usually the infantry because they needed guys for D-Day, the invasion of Europe. I was sent to Texas to take basic training and when I got there they put me on KP for months and then they sent me along so that I would get to D-Day. Above Boston was where we were going, but in every camp we stopped at, the musicians would ask me to play in the band. It was a wonderful black band that met to train in Maryland, and I jammed with them that night and they said you gotta be in our band, well it's the first time I felt what it's like to be told, 'No, you can't be in our band, because you're white you know and it's an all black band.' It's the first time because I'd always played with black, white bands mixed and this segregation was new to me. I went along and I finally ended up in Europe three months after D-Day fortunately, and we went to Verdun, if you turn left you'd be in Bradley's Army, if you turn right you'd be in Patton's Army.

So, we'd been in boxcars for three days standing up, we turn right, we're in Patton's Army that night. And they said you know you're going to have to be at the front soon, but tonight there's going to some girls come up and entertain you, Red Cross girls, so they had a piano on the back of the truck, where the side of the truck came down and made a stage, and they asked over their loud speaker, 'Is there a pianist that will come up and play with, for us, because we need a piano player.' So, I finally raised my hand. I remember I was sitting on my helmet, in a place called 'The Mudhole', and I went up there and a Colonel heard me play and he said, 'This guy shouldn't go to the front. We want to keep him here and form a band.' We formed a band of two guys that were with me, that hadn't been to the front and the rest of the guys, were guys that had been to the front and been injured, shot and they would send them to me. My Wolf Pack Band was mostly guys that had Purple Heart, we could play right at the front line because the front line troops, when you're just ready to go into battle the USO doesn't usually get up that far and if they did they wouldn't be accepted as well as seeing guys that have already been wounded.

That's the way we did a lot of the rest of the war, was stay right behind the front line a few times I got lost and was on the other side of the line, on the German side and had to get my way back in the bulge, I was way into the German territory and had to come back and as I came back all of Patton's Army was going this way. One truck coming back through was me with my band, and we had to stop at a sentry post and they wouldn't believe us

because the night before everybody had been killed there by Germans in American uniforms in American trucks.

So they didn't believe me, they came up to the truck with hand grenades with the pins pulled, in other words, if I shot them, they'd drop and the hand grenades went off. So this is kind of the way that the Wolf Pack Band lived out the war.

What was unique about the Wolf Pack Band?

It might have been the first integrated unit in World War Two, and maybe in the Army, I don't know, but we had Jonathan Richard Flowers was my trombone player, he was an African-American. A kid named White, of all names, who was our black MC. We had a lot of conflict within our own troops that didn't think we should live together and be billeted together. But the old Colonel, he thought we should be, his name was Colonel Brown, he became a General, but he was responsible for us being a integrated unit.

You have a reputation, deservedly of being someone who stood up for integration, who stood up for men who were black in your group all through the '50s and '60s when segregation was still enforced.

Yeah, when we came home to the United States from Europe there was a Japanese in charge of us because the highest rank on the airplane, would be in charge. When we landed in Texas we all went to the dining room to eat, and they wouldn't serve the black guys. So, this one guy that I knew just slightly went back and got in the airplane. The rest of the guys had to go around and stand at the kitchen door, and he said they wouldn't eat any of their food, and he started to cry and he said, 'What I've been through and the first day I'm back in the United States, I can't even eat with you guys.' He said, 'I wonder why I went through all of this?' You know the first black man that I saw, my dad took me to see on the Sacramento River in California and he said to his friend, 'Open your shirt for Dave.' There was a brand on his chest. And my dad said, 'These things can't happen.' That's why I fought for what I fought for.

That first day in class in Mills College...

The first day in class in Mills College in Oakland California, when I came to study, on the GI Bill after the war, with Darious Milhaud, he asked how many jazz musicians were in class. Well I'd been so used to being put down for being a jazz musician that almost every conservatory in the United States you couldn't play jazz, even in a practice room. So, I timidly raised my hand and some of my friends did. And he said, 'Well I want you to write your counter-point, your fugues, some of the compositions, using the jazz musicians if you want to.' And out of that class was born my octet with Paul Desmond. Cale Tjader, came from San Francisco State to join us, but there was Bill Smith who still plays with me, from 1946 'till now was in that class.

Dick Collins, Bob Collins, Dave Van Creek, Jack Weeks, and they were all compositional students of Milhaud. It was really his acceptance of jazz.

And Darius Milhaud said to us that the two most important American composers were George Gershwin and Duke Ellington, this really surprised us all and it was a big relief to hear him say this and then he said, 'If you're going to express America, you've got to have the jazz idiom in your music.' This is wonderful you know he could say this because he was probably the first European composer to use the jazz idiom in so-called classical music in a piece called, "The Creation of the World".

This was wonderful to be in a class where jazz was gonna be encouraged and boy did he encourage us. He got us our first college concert at Mills College and then we went to the College of the Pacific, in Stockton, California.

Since you brought the subject up, let's dance over to talk about the great musician, Duke Ellington. Why in your impression did not only Darius Milhaud, but you, think he was a great musician a great composer?

Duke Ellington is my favorite American composer and he also was my friend, and I'm a Duke Ellington Fellow at Yale because Duke insisted that Louis Bellson and I be Ellington Fellows. He started early in my career to help me with my music and to see that I was heard and we finally went on tour together and toured a lot of the United States. On this tour I heard a knock on my hotel room at seven o'clock in the morning and it was Duke, and he said. 'Dave, you're on the cover of *Time* magazine.' And my heart sank because I wanted to be on the cover, after Duke, I didn't want to be on the cover before Duke, because they were doing stories on both of us. The worst thing that could have happened to me was that I was there before Duke and he was delivering the magazine to me saying here. But, he was very happy for me, very gracious.

Now, did it surprise you at that point that your work with the Octet and other things had gotten to that point of acceptance. Because a lot of your music was kind of controversial...

When *Time* magazine recently did a cover story on Winton Marsalis, it was almost parallel to the story they did on me in 1954, which included a lot of other musicians. Just like Winton's story included a lot of his contemporaries and the guys that are coming up today. It is a broad approach that they did at this time and the focus was on us, at the point I was starting to do college concerts and so many of the things written about me always say, 'Brubeck really made his mark on Campus, with the college students.' But I want everybody watching this show to remember I won the first black poll. It was the Pittsburgh Courier, our integrated group, predominately white, was that accepted at one time in the United States. We had a tremendous following with the black audience and I think that's wonderful.

Well I think that's absolutely true, a lot of musicians, Cecil Taylor, when they asked who he was listening to as a pianist, said. 'I was listening to Dave Brubeck.' And the music is changing at this point in time really from, the Bop era to Cool. Did you think of yourself as a part of that Cool Movement, and what does that mean?

We were always associated with the West Coast Cool jazz. We didn't call ourselves Cool Jazz. That became a word that was used to write about us. We just happened to live in San Francisco and you know there's always been types of jazz, there's New Orleans, there's Kansas City, there's Chicago, there's New York, then there was West Coast. It's been a geographical movement around the country, of just people that happened to be together and be a strong group at that time but its geographical more than anything else. We weren't trying to be cool.

But the times were not as volatile as they were during the war years. There were different sensibilities afoot, people were sort of settling down and, for better or worse there was an affinity for your music. Did you ever think about that and how it came to be?

I know the certain steps along the way that helped. One, was Jimmy Lyons, who ran the Monterey Jazz Festival, and he liked my group and he put us on the air, NBC, which had a signal that went halfway across the Pacific. And all the sailors coming into San Francisco he'd bring them to the club where we were working. He brought Stan Kenton out, but I had known Stan earlier, but he did bring Stan and the guys in the band and Duke and Woody Herman and being in San Francisco we became kind of known through the bands that traveled through San Francisco.

So you're going to tell me about Paul Desmond and that sound of his and what you guys were trying to do with your music...

When I had my trio with Cal Tjader and Ron Crotty, Paul Desmond used to come sit in with the group every chance he got, and at first the owners would say, 'Get rid of that sax man. People are here to hear the trio, and that's what your records are, and they don't know about the saxophone.' And so it was hard to adjust to having a horn man, because most of the groups were trios, with bass, drums, and piano or Nat Cole's Trio, guitar, bass and piano.

The horn was a little foreign at first but I knew that Paul and I worked together really well and so gradually he sat in so much that finally when it came time to have a quartet I included Paul, and his sound the way we played counter-point together and ballads together and if you've heard the old Oberlin, jazz at Oberlin Concert. You'll hear Paul when he's really smoking. People always think of him as a great ballad player, but I can tell you that if I nudge him enough, because he loved ballads and that's all he wanted to play, I could nudge him into some up tempo things where he'll

swinging them like crazy. There's great recordings of tunes like "Tangerine" where where he's just playing so inventive, he had such an inventive mind...

You were going to tell me how Paul could really swing hard when you nudged him. How would you do this?

I wanted to get Paul to really get into some up tempo swinging, I would play harder and when I played harder the bass and drums would play harder and some nights Paul would talk back to me through his horn, he'd play, "Give Me Land, Lot's of Land in the Starry Skies Above, Don't Fence Me In". Or he'd play, "You're Driving Me Crazy." Right in the middle of another tune, and he could do a whole conversation, a put down or a story, just by playing quotes from other tunes. Eventually we'd get him up into gear and not to be so laid back and want to play just ballads. I think he was the greatest ballad player that ever played and his tone he described as 'a dry martini,' that's Paul's description of his tone, was right pure very little vibrato. And very dry I guess.

Take me to how you two composed "Take Five" there's a whole story about that ...?...

I wanted to do an album, called "Time Out". Where we would get into a lot of different time signatures that weren't used in jazz like, (PLAYS PIANO) that's - one two- one two - one two - one two three - one two - one two - one two - one two three, and (PLAY PIANO) that's one two three - one two three, then it goes (PLAYS PIANO) into two bars of three, and two bars of four. And I asked Paul to do something in five, Joe Morello, had a wonderful 5:4 beat that Paul used to play just noodle around backstage before we were going on just trying to warm up, so I said, 'You guys do that.'

We had a rehearsal in my home in Oakland, California and Paul came, the first thing he said, 'I can't write anything in 5:4.' I said, 'I heard you play and you were playing in five, why didn't you write some of that down?' And he said, 'Well I wrote some of the themes, here's a couple of the theme's I wrote down.' And I looked at them and I said, 'Paul, you know if you take the first theme...' which was (PLAYS PIANO) and started with a bridge, that's the first theme he played, instead of (PLAYS PIANO), so I said, 'Put that theme first, repeat it and then go to the bridge.' And so the the tune was really kind of born in rehearsal, but we gave Paul the credit because he had thought of the melodic lines and we played so many things together where I would write the first part of a tune and then Paul would improvise, and then I'd say it was written by Paul Desmond and Dave Brubeck. I was just in the habit of crediting whoever came up with some ideas. A lot of the band leaders always took everything, put their names on it. That's kind of how "Take Five" was born.

You pull things from a lot of places though. You said that you pulled "Blue" out of some sounds that you heard while in Turkey?

Darius Milhaud said, 'Travel the world and keep your ears open and use everything you hear from other cultures, bring it in to the jazz idiom.' You know the jazz idiom is probably the most universal music in the world, because there's guys from China, Russia, Turkey, almost any country has guys contributing to the jazz idiom. It started by being African, for sure at the beginning.

But they were influenced by European music and the music they heard in New Orleans, from the French Opera house and places like that. That all got into jazz and so its not foreign to jazz to bring foreign music into it. "Saint Louis Blues", (PLAYS PIANO) started as a tango, W.C. Handy wrote that and it's one of the first blues ever written so the influence of Latin American music. I don't know where he heard the tango, but its there, right in "Saint Louis Blues". Jazz always used what it was surrounded by. It's become a world music now, that's the term they use, but early on and before me Dizzy Gillespie was getting into African music and Latin music and I was bringing in music from all over the world. When I was in Turkey, and heard Turkish musicians playing this rhythm (PLAY PIANO) they weren't playing that melody, they were just playing, one two - one two - one two - one two three, and I was on my way to a Turkish radio station and they had a big band, just like all the cities in the United States had a big radio band, that's when we had some sense.

And we had live music and beautiful music in every city, there's still that going on in places like Turkey, Poland, Russia, all over Europe there's a great radio band.

Wonderful jazz musicians. I said to them, 'What is this rhythm? One two - one two - one two - one two three.' Before I finished the bar they're all going, yah yah yah - yah da da da - don don don - don da da and they were playing in 9:8 all improvising, just like it was American Blues. And I thought jeez a whole bunch of people can improvise in nine? Why don't I learn how to do that, so that's the way that tune was born.

You were on the road a lot during the '50s and '60s with an integrated band, do you recall any story that you can tell us about how you guys dealt with segregation and the situations you ran into?

Eugene Right, was my wonderful bass player for years and he was African-American, knew that it was going to be tough when we toured. And it didn't have to be just the South, it was tough at Lake Minitonka, Gene couldn't stay at the lake. And the guys had to drive back to Minneapolis every night. It was tough in Chicago. We couldn't stay in the same hotels together so it wasn't just the South like so many people think, it was tough in a lot of surprising places. We were in Enid, Oklahoma, and we had played at the Army base or the Air Force, after the job, Eugene and Joe Morello and I went to find a hotel and there was only one big hotel that people recommended that we stay in. Well, I went inside and Gene and Joe came in and they

wouldn't register Eugene Right, so we're standing out in front of the hotel and Paul Desmond pulled up in a big white Lincoln, that some guy had given him a ride after the job and he says, 'Why?' this man said, 'Why you standing here in the street? Why don't you go in the hotel?' And I said, 'Well they won't register us on account of Eugene Right.' And he says, 'You mind if I go in and talk to 'em?' And I said, 'It won't do any good, I've given him every argument in the world.' And he says, 'Do you mind if I go in?' I said, 'No.' He came back out and he said, 'Go in and register.' I said, 'Well what did you say, that I didn't say?' He said, 'I said I'm going to foreclose on your little old hotel.'

About blacks and whites, who's music is this? Give me give me your take on that.

When you think of of jazz, you think of all the people don't think black and white. You just think about the the music and the devotion to the music and my friends like Jerry Mulligan, Dizzy Gillespie, Miles, Stan Kenton... I only think of how great they played and what what they tried to do with the music. And you know there's a wonderful book came out recently by Gene Lees and the books title is a quote from Louis Armstrong and its called, *Cats of any Color* and that says it all. I've seen times when you were tried to be put in a trap blindfold test, and my favorite blindfold test, where I was put in a trap was mostly black musicians mostly playing the Blues and Willie "the Lion" Smith was the one that was being asked to identify them. When they got to me, Willie said, 'He plays like where the Blues was born, havin' straw, hackin' straw, I forget the name in New Jersey, New Jersey.' And he didn't think Blues were born in New Orleans.

Of all the people devoted to the music, you've been and you've played with a lot of them. They say Billie Holiday was not just a girl singer, she was a real musician, tell me about working with her.

Well, Billie was such an influence on all the singers and she was the greatest in her time. There wasn't anybody that could really compete with her and when I did a tour with her, she slept in the band bus at night and didn't get to go into a hotel and she had pneumonia she was in such bad shape, and yet she would go out and sing her heart out when when it was time for her to perform. She lived one of the roughest hardest lives, I know of in this music business.

But she, so she was a survivor, too in another sense wasn't she?

Oh sure, she could sing and throw her heart and soul in into whatever she was doing no matter what was going on in her life.

You worked with Armstrong?

Yeah.

A number of times, tell me about Louis.

Louis, when he did the real Ambassadors, my favorite story about that was when we did it at the Monterey Festival. At dress rehearsal, I said to Louis, 'You're the real Ambassador, will you wear this top hat and carry the attaché case?' The audience will immediately identify you as the real Ambassador and he said, 'Dave I'm not wearin' a top hat and I'm not carrying that case.' It came time to open and it was time for the concert to begin, Louis to make his entrance, and he came in, there's the top hat the attaché case and he struts right by me and he says, 'Pops, am I hammin' it up enough to suit you now?'

He captured that audience, we had it written so that, lines that Louis was to say would make people laugh about segregation and but still think about it. And one of the first things that Louis said is he sang a song that was the Blues against a Gregorian Chant. Lambert, Hendricks and Ross were singing the chant, Louis singing the Blues. And the Blues goes, 'They say I look like God, could God be black my God! If both are made in the image of the, could thou perchance a zebra be?' There wasn't a smile in the audience, Louis had tears. He took those lines that we thought would get laughs right to his heart and everybody in that audience felt what he felt.

They say the same thing about, "Shine". He would sing "Shine" it was the same way. Did you ever hear him sing "Shine"?

Just because my hair is curly? Yeah and my teeth are pearly? Yeah.

What about Count Bassie?

Bassie. I played with Bassie, lots of concerts but all his friends were invited to Kansas City and it was Kansas City's Count Bassie Day. And that night I wrote a tune, my wife and I called, 'The Bassie Band Is Back In Town' (PLAYS PIANO) Just in the style of Bassie, I loved him so much, yeah.

Did you play with Goodman, did you talk to Goodman, you knew him?

There's a recording out that I'd love to get if anybody has it with Benny and my quartet, but I don't have a copy of it but we did it right here in Stanford, Connecticut for the museum. The first week that I was at Birdland, we all thought Benny Goodman was fantastic and I looked down at the first table and there's Benny Goodman sittin' there. Of course Paul Desmond almost died because he liked Benny Goodman so much. Next to him is John Hammond, who's Benny's brother-in-law a famous critic. That was my introduction to really meet these guys in person, having them right at the front table in Birdland. But we were quite friendly all his life, I remember being with him at his 75th birthday party.

Charlie Parker, you were also on tour with at one point right?

Yes. Yeah we played, Charlie said he wanted to come to San Francisco to hear what I was doing. He formed a quartet with Chet Baker, Jimmy Rollins, a great pianist, Shelly Mann on drums and I think Carson Smith on bass. Then I had my quartet with Paul Desmond, Ron Crotty, and Joe Dosh. And we toured the West Coast and I got to know Charlie pretty well on that tour. He was a wonderful guy very intellectual. He and Paul used to play chess on the band bus, he played one night that made his reputation, made him live up to the reputation. Some of the other nights he was too tired, and just kind of worn out, and I was wondering, 'How did he get this great reputation?' You know he isn't really playing. Until, the one night when we hit Oakland, California. He played and I knew where the reputation was coming from.

The subject is Ellington. Why was he such a great composer?

Duke Ellington really stretched jazz earlier than anyone into the long form, in pieces like, "Black Brown and Beige" and later on he got into sacred music and he was always constantly expanding the jazz. The whole influence of jazz, was for years coming from Ellington. All of us thought he was the greatest composer, I remember when I was maybe 18 really discovering Ellington. Some of the early recordings, "Blue Surge", "Warm Valley", "Flaming Sword", "Jack the Bear", "Jumpin' Pumpkins", and this always has remained my favorite period of Ellington the late '30s, the '30s in general.

I think that's where he stretched everything the most for all of us to really listen and know that this music, so-called jazz, was very very serious American Art music. And the way he kept that band together, they called him the Iron Fist in the Velvet Glove. Because guys did all kinds of bad things as far as sidemen go, where they wouldn't show up and at times didn't realize how great the band was and what a privilege it was to play in it. Duke always, I remember one time we were angry at somebody that didn't treat us right and he said, 'Dave, don't let his bad blood get in our blood.' And I never forget what he meant about that, don't get angry, keep yourself away from anger. I learned a lot just through being around Duke, of how to handle bad situations. Try to smooth everything over and not get angry, and being on tour with him, was a real experience. He was the only guy, we didn't have to write out, when we rode a train, the menu. In those days you always had to write the menu, but when Duke ordered, 'Yes Mr. Ellington, what would you like?' Until the day he said, 'Grits.'

What is jazz? Why is it so special and why is it so American, what's it mean to us in America?

People don't never say what is classical music. Because it's too big and too broad and that's why they shouldn't say, 'What is jazz?' For the same reason, it's too big, and it's too broad and it expresses so much of what is America. It

expresses our country more than anything we have and I always think of all those people all over the world that were seeking freedom that found it through jazz recordings, or the Voice of America. Now they're thinking about stopping and not funding some of these things that are so important to the freedom of the world, not just the United States, and it's ridiculous because cultural exchange is what we need. It cost a fraction of the tip of a bomber wing, a fraction of the tip of the wing! To, have jazz musicians going all over the world. This is what we should be doing, because we can bring our culture to the people of the world through the jazz idiom, that's what they want to hear outside this country, what jazz expresses. and it's always the first thing that a dictator will stop, jazz music on the radio or being able to buy jazz records. Because, it demands freedom.

Do you think our music, jazz has a capacity to heal people to bring people together?

I have always felt that jazz brought people together and one of the first dates I ever took my wife on while we were still students was to bring her to San Francisco and go to what we called in those days, the Fillmore District. It had basically clubs that were black clubs. And, I wanted to see my wife, how she would react in this environment, because if she didn't react well, she wouldn't be exactly happy in the environment I was going to throw her into. She loved the music and I was asked to sit in and she saw the acceptance of me by the black musicians and mainly by the people in the club. It always seemed to bring the various people together and when I had to work clubs, in the South that were segregated, the whites on one side and the blacks on the other, there was a rope down the middle and invariably that rope would be crossed and everybody just like one big family. It took a couple of sets. They were separated because of the law, not because of their feeling.

When we were banned from playing many universities, I realized that there's a situation here that no one really understands, but it was brought home to me because we were downstairs in the locker room under a big gymnasium and there were thousands of students upstairs stomping their feet on the floor because we weren't on stage.

The president of the college said we couldn't go on if my black bass player, Eugene Right went on with us and he said you gotta play with a trio. The bus driver, who was a southerner, said, 'Dave, don't go on.' This surprised me because I thought maybe he'd be against me, he said, 'They're talking to the Governor.' The president of the school came back in, he said, 'We don't want this to be another Little Rock. Will you go on and keep your bass player in the background?' And I said, 'OK, we'll go on.' And after the first tune, I called the bass solo and I said to Eugene, 'Your microphone isn't picking anything up, come out and use the microphone in front.' Gene didn't know what I was up to. It broke the place wide open, but then the president said, 'You know all the students wanted you, that's how you were hired. I wanted you, but we'd lose our funding, the state funding that's why I called the

Governor and he said you won't lose it.' You see it was coming through laws that were not accepted and we finally broke through all of that in many universities.

Tell me about jazz criticism in your career, help or hindrance, which you got a problem with it? Tell me about it.

I won the first *Downbeat* critics poll and in the same year I won the popular poll, the dangerous thing is to become successful, when you're coming up they're all helping you. When I told you that John Hammond was in the front row, when we first played at Birdland, he gave me a great review, but he had given me the first great review I ever had, just for my recording saying, 'You should hear this guy in San Francisco, he's taken jazz in a new direction.' All this thing about criticism, is it's a little dangerous for Louis Armstrong to become successful, he got criticized terribly. So did Duke, Tatum, how could you criticize Art Tatum, but he was...

The End