



Charlie Haden

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We don't want to range over a lot time. Keep within whatever moment of time we're in. Jimmie Blanton

The great bass players, right before Jimmie Blanton, the bassist that was with Duke Ellington, one of the bassists, but I feel that was the best one, his name was Wellman Broad. And he had this unbelievably beautiful deep sound on his instrument. The other bass player that I really admired before Jimmie Blanton was Walter Page who was the bassist with Count Basie. Both of these bass players ha, brought to the instrument the sound what I call of the rain forest, the wood. You know, you see these giant redwood trees and that's what I try to do to get my bass to sound like these beautiful trees, you know, the wood. That the maker originally intended, that's what they intended the bass to sound like. And violin and violas and cellos. So after them, there was a young guy, young, I mean he was in his teens when Duke Ellington heard him in East St. Louis. I don't know the exact year, it was around 1939 that Duke's band was in St. Louis playing a concert, a dance, I guess was dances back then, they were on tour. And after, the after the dance some of the musicians in Duke's band went to an after hours jam session and of course Duke always went back to the hotel and went to sleep and, and at this jam session, they heard this young bass player that was really amazing. They'd never heard anybody play this great before and they ran back to the hotel, woke up Duke which they never, ever did. They knew that you know, you don't do that. But they, they thought that he would really want to hear this kid, you know. So they woke him up and they said, "Duke, you gotta come to this session, you gotta hear this bass player, you will not believe it." Got up, got dressed, took him over there and he heard Jimmie Blanton and sure enough, hired him right there and they left St. Louis with two bass players.

What was he hearing? What was he doing?

He, he was playing the bass as a solo instrument, not just as a bass. And he was the first bass player really to bring the instrument into a solo voice and, like a horn. That's the way he, his facility allowed him to do this and it was amazing when you think about this kid. He's African-American, he probably, you know, lives in a ghetto. He, he like uh you know, he's eighteen years old, if that. How did he learn how to play with that facility? How did he learn to play with classical technique. And, you know, he studied classical bass there in St. Louis and it's amazing, that shows you the passion that can be inside a musician and determination to really, the love for the music makes them want to learn as much as they can learn.

Do you think that it takes somebody really young? I mean, I didn't know the bass couldn't be a solo instrument.

I think that innovation is inside you, when you're born. And if you feel that way about your art form, whether it's dance, or whether it's film making or whether it's writing or whether it's painting, you have a passion, you have a calling, kind of, to make something new that's never been before and that's what Jimmie Blanton had. He, the first time, you know, I heard his records it was unbelievable that someone could make those records in 1940 or 41 and be his age. It sounded like something that was done now. You know. That's how far ahead of his time he was in his playing.

That's great.

With his tone and his melodies and his concept because you know jazz is about the harmonies and the solos are made up of the harmonies that the musician hears inside himself, you know, or herself.

Idea of getting your own sound.

The African-American part of town. 'Cause you know the whole point of it is...

TV which makes -- Sense of how you get your instrument - just to get the sound out of it

To put this into words, I'd really thought about this a lot, you know, but never put it into words until I started the jazz studies out at Cal Arts in '82 and I tell my students, 'cause my class is about discovering your voice on your instrument, talking about the spirituality of the art form rather than the technical part of it.

When you think about a metal machine, like a saxophone or a metal machine like a trombone or a trumpet and then you think about the stringed instruments like the guitar, then you think about the piano, the keyboard and what goes into making up the piano. And you would think that those instruments are going to sound the same no matter who plays them, but in

the art form of jazz, that's not true. There's something that happens between the human touch of the musician and the way the musician hears music inside their soul that's transformed through this machine into the air, you know, into people who are listening as what they're hearing, the sound that they're hearing. Which is unbelievable when you , when you really think about it. It's like a miracle. And I really think that the way that happens is every musician hears music, well, actually every human being that has a musical ear hears music differently, just like we all have different finger prints. So, the the people who have real deep musical ears that have gone on to become musicians, those are the people who go on to become musicians, who have great ears, so they hear harmonies differently, they hear melodies differently, they hear intervals differently, they hear chords differently on the same compositions. They all hear it different. Each person hears different melodies. They have their own melodies and that that derive from their own chords inside, that are inside them. And when these chords are transformed into melodies and they come out of an instrument, they also are propelled by the sound that the musician is feeling and hearing inside himself. So, if you have someone like Fats Navarro playing the trumpet, the sound that's coming out of that trumpet is something that he's feeling in deep inside his soul that's coming out. And the same with Miles Davis. Now those those are two different trumpet players, but when they play, they play you hear a sound coming from one and a different sound coming from another and they're both really beautiful sounds, you know. I, I think that the great musicians that made an impact on the art form had these really deep magnificent beautiful sounds. And the same goes for the piano, if you hear Art Tatum play, the minute his fingers touch the keyboard, you know that it's Art Tatum, at least I do, you know. And it's a combination of the touch and the intervals in the chords, in the melodies that the individual musician hears.

Few more general things. Idea of spiritual process .

I think it's, I think the spirituality is about something that I discovered when I was a teenager. I was playing in LA with Paul Bley and he got a call to play at this club in Denver. And it was the first time I had ever gone out of town to play anywhere. We drove to Denver. And when I got to Denver, started playing, you know, every night in this club, I met this local musician, an older guy who was a pianist that came to me and he, he really loved the way I played. I can't remember his name, I wish I could, he was really a wonderful person and he said, "What are you doing tomorrow?" And I said, "I'm practicing or whatever." He said, "Well, would you like to go to the mountains?" And I said, "The mountains?" He said, "Yeah, there's some beautiful mountains around Denver, they're real high."

But there is also a debate going on . . . let the people hear the music. Teach them to listen to the music. Let's do it. Trips to the mountains.

He asked me if I wanted to go to the mountains and, and I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "There's some mountains outside of Denver that are very beautiful and very high. And not many people go up there." And he said, "I'd like to take you up there so you can get a different perspective of where you are, you know. And I said, "OK." So we got in his jalopy and we drove to this mountain, I can't even remember the name of it, it was 14,000 some odd feet. You could drive up a certain part of the way and then you had to stop and climb the rest of the way to get to the top of this thing. And, so we drove all, as far as we could drive and he said, I said, "Wow. This is great, let's go." He said, "Don't you want to go to the top?" And I looked up and I said, "You're putting me on." He said, "You can do it, do it." I said, "Okay." So I tried. And I started climbing and I climbed and I climbed and I got to the top and all of a sudden I heard the planet. I heard the universe. I heard the mountain. I heard the clouds. I heard the sky. I heard the wind. In a way that I'd had never ever heard anything. It was almost like the true definition of silence. And in that moment, I saw how small I was and that I was really living on a planet. And I realized that I was, I was hearing a sound that no human had anything to do with. It was just coming from where we come from and it was really moving to me. And after that experience, I really placed a lot of importance on the spirituality of music.

How does music help people to understand that?

Well, I believe that jazz and improvised music allows the person who's listening to it to touch a deeper place inside their souls that's always been there but they've never discovered it. And the musician, some of them realize what they're doing and some of them really don't. A lot of the younger musicians who are just learning the art form, they think about jazz as the technical part, you know, the scales and the licks and the phrases that they have to learn in order to play hip, you know. And things like that and play the latest stuff. They don't really think about where does beauty come from? You know, where does depth come from? Where do we come from? Why do we want to play? We come from the stars. And I always try to play the stars when I play. Try to get close to them, you know. It's like when, when you go outside on a starry night, a clear night and you look up. One night I was driving and I saw the moon bigger than I'd ever seen it before, you know. How do you play that. To get close to those kinds of things that people don't talk about, they don't find words to talk about, to explain them, you know. That's, my class, at Cal Arts, like I was saying, we talk about those things. We talk about what music teaches you. Music teaches you humility. It's just like when I was talking about the mountain, I saw how small I was. When you really touch music and you're playing, music shows you first your insignificance and your unimportance to the rest of the universe. And only after that you can see your true importance and your true significance. And that's what real humility is about. And I tell them that if they want to become a great musician, they should strive to become a great person first. To become a good human being with humility and appreciation

and givingness in their lives. And if they strive to do that then maybe, they may be able to become a good musician.

If they find it.. You were part of this music for many years. I'd like to go back to your early years.

Well, before I met Ornette Coleman, I was going to a lot of different jam sessions and a lot of different clubs and playing and sitting in, with different people and sometimes I'd be on the bandstand it would come time for my bass solo and I would want to play on the inspiration of the piece instead of the chord structure. What I really mean, in other words, most musicians improvise in jazz on the chord structure of a song. That's the inspiration to them. This song is beautiful and the chords are beautiful and they want to make a new melody on this chord structure and that's great, that's what jazz is all about. But sometimes this thing would come to me where I would want to play on the inspiration of the chord structure and create another chord structure. I wasn't talking about it back then, I didn't really know how to put it into words. But since playing with Ornette you know, we've been doing a lot of thinking about all this stuff and, and I discovered that I really didn't know what it was, except I just had this feeling and every time I tried to do this, other musicians would become very upset with me. They wouldn't know where I was in the tune. So I would have to play the melody to show them where I was so that they could come back in at the right place at the end of the bass solo. And I had to really choose very carefully where I did this. And I didn't do it very often. Sometimes with the gig with Paul Bley at the Hill Crest Club in LA I had a chance to do it because we were experimenting with freer kind of playing. But one night, I had Monday nights off from the Hill Crest Club every week and one Monday night, I went to a club over by MacArthur Park called the Hague. And Jerry Mulligans' band was playing and the place was jammed. Could hardly move. I'm there by myself, I'm standing in the crowd. This guy comes up to the bandstand with a saxophone case and he asks if he can play. And I guess they say yes and he takes out this white plastic horn and he starts to play. And all of a sudden, the room lights up for me, from the heavens. You know, I say, "What is this, it sounds like a human voice on an instrument, playing so freely." He was playing in the intervals that he was playing, the whole tune in about three notes or four notes. He would play the musical feeling of everything. And almost as soon as he started to play, someone on the bandstand asked him to stop. So he stopped, put his horn in the case, put the case back, started off. And I'm trying to get to him. I'm running through the crowd, stepping on toes, you know, trying to make my way through. I finally get to the back of the bandstand where the, you know, the door that goes to the alley, and he's gone. So, the next night I go to the Hill Crest and Lennie McBrowne who was the drummer with us with Paul Bley, he was from New York he, you know, he was kind of like my, he was my mentor. He studied with Max Roach. Really good guy. Great drummer. And he was like twenty-five and I was about nineteen. And I asked him, I told him, I said, "Man, I heard somebody play last night that was so wonderful and beautiful and brilliant." And he said,

"Did he have a plastic horn?" And I said, "How did you know?" He said, "That was Ornette Coleman." I said, "Do you know him?" And he said, "Yeah." And I said, "Would you introduce me to him?" And he said, "Sure, I'll ask him to come in."

Let's get to the part when you're actually playing together.

He, he invited me over to his apartment and we arrived, he opened the door, music was everywhere on the rug, on the bed, on the tables, I uncovered my bass, he reached down and he picked up a manuscript and he said, "Let's play this." I said, "Okay." I was real scared you know. He says, "Now, I've written the melody here. Underneath it are the chord changes. Those are the chord changes I heard when I wrote this melody. But when we start to play, after I play the melody and I start to improvise, you play the changes, you make up new changes that you're hearing from what I'm playing and from the tune." And I thought to myself, "Somebody's finally giving me permission to do something that I've been, what I've been hearing all this time." And we started to play and a whole new world opened up for me. It was like being born again. And I was hearing music so much more deeply than I had ever heard. It's like, it's like a desperate urgency to improvise completely new. We used to talk about it as if, playing music as if you've never heard music before. And we played all night, all day, all night, all day, I think we took a break to go get some food in, and we played for about two days. That was my first experience playing with Ornette.

Zip ahead to the Five Spot.

Well, the very first we played, there were so many people there, and most of them were musicians. And I tell that story one day of, one of my students in my class asked me, "Why do you close your eyes when you play?" Well, the answer to that is for concentration. But I tell that story, The first night I played at the Five Spot, I was uncovering my bass, Billie was putting up his drums and Cherry was getting his horn, Ornette was getting his, his horn out and I looked up at the bar which was facing the stage and standing along the bar, was Wilbur Ware, Charlie Mingus, Paul Chambers, Percy Heath, every great bass player in New York City was standing there, staring me right in the face. And I said, from that moment on, I close my eyes. But anyway, it was really a very exciting, I mean it's one of the most exciting things I can ever remember is the opening night at the Five Spot because no one had heard us play before, it was the first time. And they didn't know what to expect. And we started to play and like, people's mouths dropped and they listened and they couldn't believe it. See, but we weren't thinking about any of this stuff, we were just thinking about our music and playing the way we always played, you know. And the next night, more people came, the next night, I mean, every night, I think we played there for four months, six nights a week for four months and every night the place was packed. One night I was playing with my eyes closed again, and I'm playing and all of a sudden, I opened my eyes and somebody's up on the stage with his ear to

the f whole of my bass. And I looked over at Ornette and I said, I said, "Coleman, who is this, man, get him off this bandstand." He says, "That's Leonard Bernstein." I said, "Oh." So I start, and then another night we were playing, I mean, Leonard Bernstein used to come there every night with his people that he was with after his Philharmonic things and they'd come in a limo and they reserved a table and they would listen to us every night and actually later on, he was instrumental in me getting a Guggenheim Fellowship from composition. But one night I was playing and Don Cherry was taking a solo, and all of a sudden his solo took a left turn and I opened my eyes and Miles Davis had jumped up on the bandstand, grabbed his horn and started playing, you know, in the middle of his solo. Things like that, I mean, somebody, they set a car on fire out in front of the club one night. Someone came back in the, in the kitchen, we were on a break, and hit Ornette in the face. I mean, fights used to break out, there were arguments, I mean, every great painter in New York used to come, De Kooning, Larry Rivers, all the all the Ray Parker, Bob Thompson, all these great painters used to come and listen to us. The great writers, people from the arts and of course, lots of musicians.

Talk about this violence.

It is, it is scary to hear something that you're not used to hearing. It's a new, something new and people like to be familiar with what they're hearing, even if it 's jazz, they know the traditional jazz, they know what to expect and it's pretty predictable. But this music they'd never heard before and it was upsetting to a lot of people. There were only a few critics that wrote about us in a kind way. Most of them were putting us down and telling everybody that we didn't know anything about what we were doing and, but that was, I don't think it caused, that, there were a couple of incidences of violence, but it, it really, the controversy that surrounded it made people, people's tempers flare up, you know. They were like debate on whether we were good or whether we were bad or what we were doing and, and but in spite of all this stuff, they kept coming back, you know. They would come every night to hear us and it was very exciting. We were playing opposite different bands also. One, one period we played opposite Randy Weston, which was really great, I got to hear their band every night and, and another period we played opposite Art Farmer, Benny Golson's band. And I remember those, those nights with fond memories. As, as I was growing up as a, as a human being and as a musician, learning so much about life and New York.

How much what you did there -- music would never be the same.

I really believe it was important for us. That was the most, that was the main thing is the importance for us because we were all hearing music with this urgency to create something that had never been before, in the same way, in the same language. All of us met at the same time, Don Cherry and Billy Higgins had known Ornette before I did, and I actually knew Don Cherry and Billy before I met Ornette, but we all talked about, you know, playing playing

in a, in a way that would be freer, that would free up things. And not have to stick to the chord structure of a song. Not limit your solo to that. But, but also not be completely, completely free of where people wouldn't respond to what you were playing, you know, because we wanted people to like our music, we really did. But I really believe that most great musicians are free musicians. If you listen to Coleman Hawkins play, to improvise, if you listen to Thelonious Monk improvise, if you listen to Bud Powell, they improvised on a level that I call beyond category. You know, it was at this level that's above everyone. It's a level beyond category, beyond chord structure, beyond, even though they were improvising on a chord structure, they were playing so free and so deeply at a level of, you know, I call it with your life involved. Giving, being willing to give your life, to give up your life, risking your life, it's almost like being on the front line in a battle. Being able, wanting to give your life for what you're doing. Being willing to give your life for what you're doing.

It is the exhilaration that we all are looking for when we dedicated our life to this art form is, is to be able to know that you've been given a gift and know that it's your responsibility to give the gift that you've been given back to the world.

Ornette Coleman

He's one of the greatest people that you'll ever meet. He he loves people, he loves talking to people, he loves talking to young musicians and giving them advice. He's a very giving person. He's a very humble person. He's a very nice and gracious person and he's a very deep person and he thinks a lot about all the art forms. And involves himself in all the art forms. And you know, I don't know, people who think that he's not easy to get along with. I, I don't know where that comes from, but he's...

Was he hurt by that?

Well, of course, we were all disappointed when somebody, I mean, we didn't, we didn't bother ourselves to take time to even read the criticism of us because we were too busy thinking about making new tunes and and improvising and playing, talking about new ways of playing. That's what we were involved in. We weren't involved, we couldn't stop to take time to even think about the controversy. But when, when somebody told us about it, you know, like, "Oh, man I read in so and so that they were putting you down." Of course it, we were disappointed when we heard things like that. And we wanted to find some way to bring people closer to what we were doing because people look back on what we were doing now, they hear the early recordings and they're very accessible, they're, they all come from the blues and the thing about our band, in what they called the avant garde, you know, the critics labeled it avant garde, you know, what is that? Was that we swung. You can hear the swing. Billy Higgins, Ed Blackwell, with that swing,

you know. And that's what we did, we swung. And we felt very strongly about our music.

Why was it so important to swing?

Well, that's the thing about jazz, is the pulse. Is the feeling of swing. When that swing starts to happen, it's like being on a wave I guess if you're a surfer. Or it's like taking a pebble and skipping it about eight times over a lake that's real still. It's that groove that happens, you know. It's the power that, you know, maybe a 747 has when its taking off, you know. It's like, it's a, it's a momentum that starts and builds and allows you to stop thinking. Because the creative process, there's no, the thought process stops. In in the midst of creation. There's just the moment that you're in, you know. There's no yesterday, there's no tomorrow. There's just right now and there's no thinking, it's that you're taken in by the stars, all of the things that that that we cherish, you know.

Drugs. You said some really important things about how people thought.

Well, drugs are part of the American way of life since the beginning and not just in music, but in all walks of life, you know. It hits every, every, every, what's the word I'm looking for? Every..

Profession?

Profession and every class of people. You know, from the poorest to the most wealthy. And you know, a person can, can be in a car accident and be taken to the hospital and be in pain and they can give him morphine and it won't bother them. Some people take morphine and they want to keep taking it, you know. It, some people say it's a genetic thing. Some people say it's an environmental thing, some people say it's a class thing. Like the poorer people of our society which I agree with part of that and, but as far as the musician is concerned, we're involved in a profession that takes us into a very exhausting lifestyle which is touring, having to get on a stage every night after you get off a plane or a train or a bus and putting on a great concert and most people when they see you play, they have no idea of what you've been through before you got there. Then you had to take a train and two planes and you haven't had any sleep and you've got to wake up at five in the morning and catch a plane to the next town, you know. And that's, that begins to take its toll on you and that's part of it, you know. And also part of it is the vulnerability and the sensitivity that goes into a person who's in the arts, you know, and I don't think it's anything that anybody's been able to figure out. But it's very sad and very tragic when people immerse, get immersed in their lives into a different lifestyle of being dependent on an opiate derivative or cocaine or alcohol. It's very dangerous because people don't realize what's happening to them. They lose control of their life. They lose perspective. They lose objectivity and above all, the most important

thing they lose is their maturity. It keeps them a perennial child. They don't even know that when it's happening to them. And so I believe people, great musicians that were addicted to drugs like Charlie Parker for instance, played great in spite of his addiction, not because of his addiction. If he had been healthy, and if he had been clean, his music, if you can imagine his music being stronger, would have been stronger. And I really believe that very strongly. You have to be in control of your life completely if you want to create to your full potential as an artist. No matter what art form you're in. You have to have self-respect and you have to have dignity in your life. And you have to be proud of what you're doing and you have to be coherent and clear-headed, I mean how can somebody get on a bandstand be stumbling around? You know, nodding out. Or, you know, staggering with alcohol. Can you imagine someone like Martin Luther King or Nelson Mandela or Bill Clinton having to snort a line of coke before they give a speech? I mean, can you really imagine something like that? No. Most young people have to realize that there's only one life that we're living, there's no other life. You know, there's no other planet we're going to go to. This is it. And you've got to make your contribution as great as you can make it. And you have to be healthy. You know. And, thank God my kids are all healthy now. Rachel, Petra, Tonya and Josh. They're all making music. They work more than I do, but they're not using any drugs and they're not drinking and I'm so happy and I'm so proud of them.

I have heard someone say that in fact, if you're high you do hear things differently.

If you're high, you think you hear things differently. You know. Someone was telling me the other day, I was on this show about when a lot of people, different young musicians had been o.d.'ing and they wanted me to take part in this panel, and one of the record executives said, "You know, the fans of rock and roll, they want their, they want their rock and roll stars to be living on the edge." I said, "Living on the edge? I'm living on the edge being clean. They're falling off the edge."

A little bit about being a junkie.

You're in contact, when you're in that world, you're in contact with the scum of the earth. Why would you ever want to be with anybody like that? I would never be with anyone like that unless I had to cop drugs. You know. And you find yourself in neighborhoods that you would never go to, you find yourself with people that really don't care about you. You know, that would take your life in a minute to get something that they need, and you know, and then you think about what you're putting in your veins and what you're putting in your system. You don't really know who's had this stuff, what, you think they're thinking about, "Oh, this is Charlie Haden, I'm going to make sure I put the best ingredients in this." So you know, he'll, you know, "Oh he's a health food nut, I'm going to put, you know, the best stuff." I mean, you don't know, I mean one time, I brought some dope back from Harlem, this is

when I was like a kid and I coo, and I put water in it and it was Alka Seltzer. You know, you don't even know what you're gonna be putting in your system and the thing that you really have to think about is having the best for yourself. Surrounding yourself with beautiful things, healthy things, meaningful things. I'm not talking about material things I'm talking about things that matter in your life that are good, you know. Having a conversation with a person, being able to sit across from them and listen to their problems, that, if they're in trouble and listen to them with all of your heart and be able, I mean, if you're using drugs, all you can think about is getting your next medicine. You can't be thinking about what another person's telling you or, you know, if they have problems, you've got one, you've got a problem that's bigger than anything else. And that's the only, see, your problems are narrowed down to this one problem, getting medicine. And you don't have a chance, that's a very narrow existence. That's all, that's like being a cripple, you know.

In spite of that. That's enough on drugs. People keep dying.

Miles Davis?

All right, I mean, I didn't really know him that well.

How large a shadow did he cast. For a young musician, what did you think of Miles Davis in the 60s

I think it was the groups that he inspired that really were attractive to me. The first band that I heard with Miles was a band with with Sonny Rollins where they played, "But not for Me." And Sonny Rollins's reed had this little squeak in it and to me it was like one of the greatest things I had ever heard in my life. And then there was an album called, "Miles Davis' Collectors' Items." One side, this was before CD's this was an LP, one side of the LP was Miles and Sonny Rollins when he was about 17 or 18 and Charlie Parker playing tenor. Which, if you ever have a chance to hear this, it will, it's it's it's an unbelievable experience to hear Bird play "Tater" and then, and then Sonny Rollins follow him. Which you can imagine, if I was a kid and had to follow Charlie Parker, you know, but Sonny played so great. The other side of the LP is with is with Sonny Rollins and Miles Davis and and Tommy Flanigan playing piano and Paul Chambers and it's really really beautiful. His bands, you know, were very special bands and they were all innovative bands, they they started a new something, a new voice, a new, they added to the vocabulary of the music, you know. Each one of the bands that Miles got together. He he he was, I think he was a master of getting musicians together who who played real special together, you know. This one band that he had that I think Miles and Coltrane and Cannonball, I've never heard them play better. And that was this album called "Kind of Blue." And I really believe that they played better than they ever played before because they were inspired by Bill Evans's comping and the chords that he was playing, the voicing of his chords behind him really inspired them to play something

they'd never played before and they never heard chords voiced quite like that.

Bill Evans - unusual musician.

He, he heard harmonies different than other pianists. He voiced his chords without usually having a bass in the chord. He would, he would on the bottom of the chord he would have the third or the seventh of the chord. Which which communicated a feeling of sadness in a way, you know, of of a good sadness but not a bad sadness, you know. And he was influenced a lot, I think, by classical music, by Ravel and DeBussy and but it was really the way that he was hearing chords that what we were talking about before. He had these chords that he heard in his, inside his being that were different, the way he voiced them. And that's the way his solos were constructed too, from the harmonies that he was hearing. I mean, if you put together a musician. . .

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Sonny Rollins. Concentrate on Bill Evans

I can tell how Coltrane used to come to the Five Spot to hear us

Yeah, that would be good

...and then he asked Don Cherry and I and Blackwell to make a record with him. Which we did.

That'd be great, let's do that. Tell me just a little bit, what was John Coltrane like?

He was a really good, very warm person. I met him at the Five Spot. One night he came in to hear us play and introduced himself to us, and especially to Ornette because he was really intrigued with Ornette's playing, you could tell. He'd sit right in the front row and he listened to Ornette, he watched him very intensely. And he came in every night when he could and listen to us play. And then one day I got a call from him asking me if I would like to make a record with him and our rhythm section with Don Cherry and Ed Blackwell who was playing drums with us then. And I really loved Bill Honor, and I said, "I'd really love to make a record with you." And we went to the Atlantic studios in New York and we recorded several tunes and I'll never forget it because the guy was so powerful when he played. And a really good person.

He was so powerful when he played. . .

He generated this energy when he played that was almost like the energy of the sun. He lifted everything up when he played and it was very inspiring for

me. I was very young, and learning, I learned a lot listening to him, his solos. Not just playing, you know, you get another perspective when you're actually playing music with him in the same room and you're, but on his recordings, too.

Long solos that went on and on. Young musicians thought great, I'll play a 45 minute solo but they couldn't sustain.

Well, he was he was obsessed with learning how to get to what he was hearing. That's all he thought about. So as a result, he would practice what he was hearing all day, he would practice for hours and hours and hours and hours, playing, playing, playing. And you could tell that he did that because he would find ways of playing, you know, everyone can't play what they're hearing, you know, you know, goodness knows I can't play half of what I hear. I try, you know. And I'm really not ever happy with my playing. Once in a while I'll say, "Well, okay." But I don't think any artist is ever really happy with their art. With what they're doing, you know, They're kind of just like restless. You know. And but Coltrane was obsessed with reaching this sound that he was hearing and finding out how to do it. And it's, it comes out in what he plays, I think.

And did he succeed?

When you listen to him and he affects you in a way that causes you to think about something that you realize why you're here, then he did.

Bud Powell

He, it's hard to do this in a short description, Bud Powell was, had his own language also, he had his own way of making these introductions to all other things that he played and making these endings and he did it with intervals that you immediately recognize that it's Bud Powell. These little and sometimes they're humorous, these little introductions, dud diddle unh dunh dunh dunh, dunh diddle un te dum, dun diddle un te dum dum. I mean, he he and these intervals that he plays are unique unto him, nobody else did this, you know. And then when he improvised, he improvised with these really long lines that flowed on and on, never repeating himself.

Great

And he was a great composer.

Jango Rhinehart

Well Jango Rhinehart was a special, you know, when you think about a musician that is born and raised in another country and acquires the love to play jazz, the passion to play jazz, he was a gypsy musician in a gypsy caravan traveling in a covered wagon when he was a kid and he was a

violinist and when he was 18, the wagons caught on fire and his left hand was burned in the fire to a point where when it healed, he only had the use of two fingers and just the end two fingers together. And he stopped playing the violin and started playing the guitar because it was easier for him to play and, you know, you didn't want to be thankful for the fire, but, man, I mean when this guy started playing the guitar, the first record I ever heard of Jango Rhinehart, I thought he was an American jazz musician. And then I started reading about him. And found out that he was from Europe, he lived in Paris, he was a gypsy, and of course he was crazy as all, most of us are. He, you could never depend on depend on him to show up on time. Sometimes he might not show up at all, like the time he was in New York to play with Duke Ellington at Carnegie Hall, the first time he had ever come to New York and he was on his way to Carnegie Hall and he passed a bar and he looked in the bar and there were some French sailors that had just came off a French, you know, Merchant Marine ship and he went in and started having drinks with them and never showed up at the concert.

Where is jazz headed?

I believe that this art form is a very special art form that can enhance your life and make your life better. The listener and the musician. Jazz has always been a very deep art form. So because of that, it doesn't have a mass audience. Now, in this era of marketing, people are taught what they should like by the mass media and then they're sold what they're taught to like. Of course. It's different, it's a conditioning to a different value system that goes away from deeper values. And I think it's up to the musician to bring those deep values, those deeper values back to people. I think that the reason that most jazz musicians are playing their music is to bring more and more people to this art form and make more of us. You know, to to play as much as you can in different countries to make as many records as you can, to play concerts in rural areas instead of urban areas, you know, in the cities. I was raised in the country, I was raised in country music with my family and very seldom did jazz ever come to that part of the country in Missouri and the Ozark mountains and it's real important that jazz reach as many people as they can to expand the audience and to to make more people aware of how beautiful this art form really is.

Once people hear it, what do you think?

Once people hear it, if they have, if they have the ability to to open themselves up to this, then they're hooked.

Sonny Rollins

I just love the way he play, I love the way he plays, now, I love the way he played especially when he recorded with Miles and and when he made this album called "Live at the Village Van Guard" which was with Wilbur Ware who was one of my favorite bass players of all time and Elvin Jones who's one of

my favorite drummers and there was no piano, there was no chordal instrument, there was no guitar, there was just Sonny and Wilbur Ware and Elvin Jones and it was like a symphony. These guys played so great and inspired each other, I mean that's what jazz is all about, is inspiration and inspiring your fellow musicians to play better than they ever played. When I write a tune, I want to inspire somebody to play a great solo, you know. And that's what happened on this particular gig at the Van Guard with Sonny Rollins.

What was he trying to do with the music back then?

I think that every musician is just trying to express what they're feeling and hearing on their instrument and trying to express it in a way where people will be touched by it.

And he did that pretty well?

I think he does.

One more question. Anything you would like to talk about? You grew up around country music.

I sang country music. I can talk about that. Ruth can show some of them to you.

Tell us about the kind of music you were around as a child and how that relates to jazz.

My parents were both on the Grand Ole Opry singing before I was born and as each one of my brothers and sisters were born, we were added to their family band. My father was friends with Hank Williams and Roy Acoff and the Carter Family and the Delmore Brothers. My mother also was a real good friend of Mother Maybelle Carter. And so from the time I was born, I was exposed to all of this great music. Which I think is the other art form that was born in the United States besides jazz and blues. And my mother tells the story when I was a baby, she would rock me to sleep and she would hum all these folk songs and pretty soon one day I would hum with her and then one day I was humming the harmony with her because my other brothers and sisters would walk through the room humming harmony and I'd hear the harmony and then I'd start humming with her. And the day that I hummed the harmony, she said, "I think you're ready for our radio show." So they put me on when I was twenty-two months old, the Yodel and Cowboy Charlie. And that, we have like, my wife Ruth and I have cassettes of acetates of when I was twenty-two months old, two years old, three years old singing and yodeling with my father was the MC and he played harmonica and we did a radio show every morning at 4:30 and 5 in the morning and then one in the afternoon at five in the afternoon. From the time I was two years old until I was fifteen.

Unusual background to come into jazz?

Not, well, most jazz musicians are born in urban areas like New York and Detroit and Chicago and you know, Bird was from Kansas City, Miles was from was from St. Louis. Those were smaller cities, but I was born, you know, in the Ozark Mountains and I'm really happy in a way that I was exposed to that part of the music. It gave me a sense of harmony. It gave me a great ear, I think. It gave me, I hope, it gave me a chance to hear these harmonies that people like the Delmore Brothers made famous, that really influenced country music from the early thirties. They sang this beautiful deep harmony. And you know, my dad was very adamant about the kids, my brothers and sisters and I singing in tune, on pitch. We couldn't be sharp or flat, we had to be on the money all the time and that's how I think I developed an ear for music and that was my early musical background instead of going, having, you know, lessons and everything, I learned about harmony in a natural way through country music. Back then they called it Hillbilly music. Now they call it country-western.

The End