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Let's start with Thelonius Monk, one of the most unusual Jazz figures. Paint me a picture of him.

Well, Monk, to begin with, was one of the relatively few people in Jazz who not only was an extraordinarily original soloist on piano, and a leader, but he also had a body of compositions. Not many people do that in Jazz. Jelly Roll Morton did, Mingus did, Ellington of course. But Monk was also imposing, physically imposing. He was a big man. And before I got to really talk to him, he was imposing in terms of the legends about him. Like, "Monk may not speak for a week." "Monk is a very eccentric fellow. You won't be able to really understand him." Well, like most legends, it didn't quite pan out. It's true, it was true that Monk would sometimes wait for quite a while, but then he would have something to say. There was a marvelous moment once, once in his apartment, in that area that's now Lincoln Center, where, by the way, the piano was in the kitchen, it was a small apartment. One day, G.G. Gryce came bounding in. G.G. was a very good musician, I'd known him in Boston. He was an alto player and a composer, and he said, "Monk, I got accepted at Julliard." Pause, long pause. Monk said, "Well, I hope you don't lose it there." He, also, the pieces he wrote were so intricately interconnected that they were extremely difficult to play. They weren't hard for the audience. I mean beautiful melodies, but all kinds of other things were going on. They were so hard to play. I once was at the Five Spot and John Coltrane, who was in his band at the time, came off the stand, looking as if he'd lost a dear relative, maybe himself, and I said, "What's the matter?" He said, "I, I got lost on the bridge and it was like falling into an empty elevator shaft." "You just got desolated if you couldn't keep up. Monk, toward the end, had what I would guess now in retrospect, you would call clinical depression. He lived at the home of Baroness Niki de Koenigswatter who was a good friend of his, good friend of a lot of other people. And I was there one night, and he didn't say a word. In fact my wife was there and they were alone in a room while I was interviewing the Baroness, I think for a couple of hours, and Margo

almost went up the wall, because he didn't say anything. Later, we came into the room, Baroness and I, and I was talking to her about Ornette Coleman, who at the time was beginning to, to, to emerge as either a fake or a significant jazz figure, people were very divided. And I was saying, "Oh, he does these extraordinary, unusual things." Monk is sitting there, gets up, says, "Not so unusual. I did that, 15 years ago." And he goes over, and the Baroness, I must say, kept her records in a deplorable condition, out of the envelopes, on the floor. He somehow picked out the record he wanted, and he played it and he was right, and he sat down, didn't say another word for the rest interview, for the rest of the night. Also, I remember I went up to...

Let's go back to the Baroness's apartment. You were talking about Coleman.

Yeah, Monk in his, in his late last years lived at the house really in New Jersey of Baroness Niki de Koenigswatter, who was a marvelous woman, knew an awful lot about jazz, was a friend of Monk and Art Blakey and other people. But in those years, from what I heard, Monk really never spoke at all, because as I would figure it, he was in a clinical depression. Except for one night in my own experience. I was there interviewing the Baroness for a piece. And Monk and my wife Margo were in another room. For about two hours or so, they just looked at each other, which drove my wife crazy. Then we came into the room, the Baroness and I, and I was talking about Ornette Coleman, who was beginning to emerge as a figure, either of extraordinary significance, or a big fake. And I was saying, "Well, he did this," you know. And Monk gets out of his chair and said, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. He's the," oh, that's right, he said, "he, he's not made a contribution yet. I did that." And he goes over to the records which are all over the floor, out of their envelopes, suddenly somehow finds the record of his he wants, puts it on the player, and he was right. He comes back to his chair, never said another word.

Take me back to Monk. You said he was a melodist.

"Round Midnight," "Ruby My Dear," "Cryptoscoul With Nellie." Nellie was his faithful, extraordinary patient wife. I mean his pieces now are used by many, many jazz combos because, once you get on the inside of them, they're marvelous to improvise on. And he himself, I mean he came out of what used to be called the Harlem Stride Piano School. Both hands all over the keyboard, and they were great virtuosi. Unfortunately, few of them ever got recorded well. Lucky Roberts, Willy "The Lion" Smith, James P. Johnson, from whom Duke Ellington came. Monk came out of Ellington. I mean he had real roots, and he knew it. And there was an excitement in his playing, in his, in his performances. For example he would sometimes, in the middle of a solo, his own solo, get up and dance. And people would say, "What kind of," I mean, "that must be kind of some, really ridiculous eccentricity." And no, what the musicians told was, if you looked at his feet, he was stabilizing the rhythm, he was showing them where the rhythm was supposed to go. He

played at the Five Spot, which was downtown Manhattan, for four, five, six weeks, with Coltrane, other people, and the musicians, I mean, the musicians were lined up two and three at the bar. I went every night, every night I could, which was every night. You know, I never was in Chicago when Louis Armstrong played with his Hot Five, but it must have been comparable to this. It was just, it was exhilarating, 'cause you never knew what was happening, but you know whatever was happening would never happen again and you'd remember it for the rest of your life.

This experience at the Five Spot occurred for Monk after he had not been in the jazz life for a while. What was the story?

Oh, you know, I can speak with some authority on this, since I used to be one of them. Critics are sometimes extraordinarily obtuse. They claim to want to hear new things, but new things bother them because they can't categorize them. And Monk was really very badly criticized in "Downbeat" and other of the jazz journals. And that affects the work you get. Coltrane, the same way. Coltrane was accused of having a, well Bird was the best example. I was at fault there too. Charlie Parker was accused of having a lousy tone. And he wasn't playing anything worth hearing, it was just, just notes. Plenty of notes. And one night I was in , Boston doing radio, and we had those old transcription tables which you can get 33 1/3 and 45 and 78. I think it was Coleman Hawkins I was talking to, and he said, "I want to show you something." "Take that." These were back in the days of 78rpms. He said, "Put it on the table. Put it down to 33. Now listen. You hear what he's doing? You hear what the ideas are" It was a great lesson. The same thing with Monk. I mean, it took a while for Monk to get the kind of, you know what happens in jazz, obviously, is if somebody's gonna make it, he or she first has to get the attention and the admiration of other musicians. Then if he's lucky, the other musicians will hip some critic who doesn't know anything to speak of and the critic will say, "Hey, this guy is really important." Then the gigs come, and the record companies come. But it took a while for that to happen with Monk.

There was another part of the story that you could maybe tell us about, Monk lost what was called a police card.

Cabaret card.

Tell me all about it.

Cabaret cards, I forget which, I was told the other day that Fiorello LaGuardia, the venerated Fiorello LaGuardia, and I'm not sure of this, but he apparently put them into, into action in New York. You could not work in a place where liquor was sold, unless you had one of these cabaret cards. Which meant that you hadn't been busted for who knows what, for a certain length of time, maybe forever. And if, and if you didn't have the card, not only couldn't you work in New York, you could work in other places, but you

began to have that, that cloud over your head. There's something wrong with you 'cause they won't let you work in New York. I forget what it was that Monk had done. He got into a lot of scrapes because, it's not that he couldn't communicate, but sometimes he wouldn't communicate, because he figured it was nobody's damn business. And that would get him into trouble here and there. But anyway, he didn't have the card, and Billie Holliday didn't have the card for a long time. Frank Sinatra didn't have the card. Until Frank Sinatra said, "To hell with you," and he said, "I wouldn't appear in New York." And somehow miraculously I think he got the card. We don't have that anymore thanks to a very courageous attorney named Maxwell Cohen, who broke that whole ridiculous thing. So, you know, Monk legitimately felt he was badly treated, he was, he had become an outsider even though he came from within the deepest traditions, as I tried to say. He was, he had been in a, in a sense, banished by both the police, because he didn't have the card, and by the critics. Musicians knew how good he was, but that didn't help. And I don't know to what extent that effected his silences before the clinical depression. I tell you, if he hadn't had Nellie his wife, he probably would have been silenced for a, long before hand.

Monk's relationship with his wife

Nellie, Thelonius' wife, always somehow, in my experience, knew what he wanted whether he said a word or not. And certainly knew what he didn't want. And he depended on her for practically everything. What tie he was gonna wear, whatever. And I think she was so basic a strength for him, that that's why he was able to go through all the hard times. He also, however, she was a nervous person, understandably I guess, and she liked things to be in order. And he, I was in there one, one, one afternoon, and there was photograph he had, high up on the wall, and it was crooked. And he said, "You know, Nellie doesn't like it that way, it's crooked. And I tell her, you got to get used to it 'cause a lot of things get crooked, and once you get used to it, you don't worry about it." Anyway, it was, from what I could see, one of those, one of those legendary marriages and, it just, it just worked for him, and I assume it worked for her.

You tell a story about the time Monk lectured at Columbia.

There was this English guy, a very pretentious, so-called expert on jazz, and he was giving a lecture, and he asked Monk to come. And I was surprised that Monk, would do that, because he generally shied away from all these attempts to verbalize the music. I mean, he was like Coltrane that way. Coltrane hated to talk about his music. If the music didn't talk, speak for you, what was the point? But Monk went, and I tagged along, and the guy was saying something like, "Mr. Monk, would you explain how you make these weird chords?" And Monk looked at him, he was furious, "What do you mean weird? Nothing weird about them chords." Of course they weren't. But that's almost the epitome of the, of the bad critic, ignorant critic.

Later in his life, critics wrote that he lost the inspiration he'd had.

Well, what he lost was, I mean what happened to him, again it's my non-medical diagnosis, but I think he was clinically depressed. He may have had bouts, if you're clinically depressed over a long period of time, fairly late in your life, then you've had that before, it's a cyclical thing. And he had it. I mean, he didn't play. He was asked to play a number of times. He just sat there in the Baroness's home and that was the end of it.

Let's go on to Duke Ellington.

When I was a kid, I was very lucky, in that Duke allowed me to... Well, first of all when I was 14, 15 years old, I used to go to the dances that the Ellington band played in Boston as in other cities. He loved playing for dancers. And he regretted years later, although he, you know, he liked the concert hall and all that. He said, "You know, when you play for dancers, you hear immediately what your music is saying to them." He said, "If I hear a, a deep sigh in the middle of let's say Johnny Hodges solo, that comes into our playing." So it's, it's, it's a constant, mutual communication. And I would, I was tall enough, just tall enough to put my, my chin on the bandstand and listen to the pieces. Most of which had no names. He liked to bring out new music all the time. And I would ask Harry Carney, the baritone sax player, a very amiable man, I'd say, "Harry, what is that?" He'd say, "I don't know. We just got it." Then I used to hang out once in a while at his record sessions and his dressing room, etcetera. And he was one of the people, there were many other jazz musicians, but he first and particularly who taught me more than, than, I mean this sounds corny, but he taught me more about life than I ever learned out of, out of school or anything. He was very astute. He had this facade, you know, "I love you madly," and he wouldn't let you get anywhere close to how he felt. But once in a while he would, he would, he would give you an idea of what it was like to be black in this society, even if you were regal and Duke Ellington. I remember at one point, this is at the beginning of the, of the southern sit-ins at the drugstore counters, which had been preceded by the freedom rides. And some of the young black students, not the musicians, were saying that Duke was, if not an Uncle Tom, he was strangely passive in all of this. And I was talking to him about that one night, he said, "You know, I used to, when we went down south, I used to hire a Pullman car, and that's where we all stayed. And some of the locals would say, 'Gee, that's a jazz band?' I said, 'Yeah, we, we, we do what the president does. We go in this Pullman car.'" And as a matter of fact, I didn't know this 'til I saw a clip somewhere. There was a group, the group of students were picketing outside a restaurant in Baltimore, this must have been the late fifties. And there in the picket line is Duke Ellington. But what really got him annoyed was when people really ragged him about that. He said, "Why don't you look at my music?" I mean, "Black Beauty," "Black, Brown and Beige," which is the history of Black people in America. All through his career, he was, I mean his portraits, "Portrait of Willy 'The Lion'

Smith," that, that, that "Harlem Airshaft," and that marvelous suite, "The Harlem Suite," which by the way, Bob and I, Herriage was the best television producer of all time, present companies excepted, and Herriage did the Sound of Jazz. And after that, he wanted to do Duke. And we met someplace one night. And I said, you know what would be great on television is "The Harlem Suite." And that's all we would do. No, he didn't want to do that, nobody'd want to listen to extended work like that. He was used to Ed Sullivan and "Sophisticated Lady." And we finally talked him into it. And it was just superb. It was from old Metro Media. And Herriage forgot to pick up the tape. And he went back too late and it was erased for economy reasons. I think that was the only, I, he may have done some in Europe. Anyway, he was. The other thing about Duke, another thing about Duke I remember was in the late 60s I guess it was, he had never gotten the Pulitzer Prize for music. And finally the music jury decided on a token award, not the music prize for the year or whatever, but something for lifetime achievement. And the way the Pulitzers work, there's an overall jury that can overturn any of the awards below, and they said, "No way." He got nothing. And the press asked him what he thought about it, he said, "Well, you know, God didn't want me to be too famous too young, so it really, I don't mind." But that night I saw him, he was furious, he was so angry." He said, "That's another example of what it's like to be Black. I mean they don't think, they think European music, classical music is the only criterion for art." I don't think he ever entirely got, I mean, he used to tell me it sounded corny when I was a kid, but, it, it, I've learned from it. He said, "Two ways, two things to worry about. One is something you could do something about, and the other is something you can't do something about. So then you don't worry about it." But I think that rankled with him for a long time.

He said traveling on the road was a stimulus for the music.

Oh, yeah, he, he would drive, I mean the other guys would go on the bus, but Duke would ride, Harry Carney would drive the car, and Duke would write. He'd write sections of songs, part of the suites, whatever. And what he most liked about it, aside from the fact that he had the time to write, he said, "Nobody can get at ya." This was before those, that awful invention of the cordless phone. "When I'm on the, when I'm going down the highway, that's all I could do, that's all I have to do is think about my music." He traveled incessantly. I, I saw him one, one day when he was in his early seventies, I guess, late sixties. He had just come off one of those horrible road tours. I used to watch the itinerary. He'd be going from Fargo, North Dakota to Chicago to Boise, Idaho, and he looked terrible. Tired. I said, "You know, on your ASCAP royalties you could retire." So one of the only times he ever got angry at me, that I knew about. He said, "Retire, retire? To what?" And in the hospital, his last days when he had cancer, he was still writing music. Yeah, the funny thing he did then. I got a, this is in February or something like that, or March, I got a Christmas card from him, a lot of people did, and I guess he figured he wouldn't be around for Christmas and it made him feel good somehow to send out those cards.

You also write, have written about, his anger. Do you recall any other.... You were going to comment about...

One of the things I learned from Duke, except I didn't know it until years later, and that was, I was a pretty much of a loner when I was young and pretty much of a solo practitioner now, and I always figure, here's Ellington, he does the writing, he leads the band, he kept talking about, the phrase he used a lot, he says, "I keep these expensive gentlemen with me," which is why he never made any real money. And I began to realize in retrospect how important collaboration was to him, I mean real collaboration. At the, at the rehearsals or recording sessions, Johnny Hodges would say, "No, I don't think that's the way to do that." And Harold Baker would do something, or Cootie Williams, and for all that, everybody thought it was a Duke Ellington composition, it was the band's, although he was obviously the creator of all that. And that was important to learn. I mean, I resist editors, but after a while I realized I need them, needed them. And also of course, I mean it's a word that's been so worn out by now because people don't really exemplify it, though they say they do. He had a lot of integrity. He would not do anything terribly commercial or for that matter commercial at all. He had great pride in what he was doing, and what he was doing he would say sometimes, generally not in interviews, was really doing a history of blacks in the United States. The black musicians, black figures politically, whatever. And that, that was his, to use again a corny word, that was his mission. He was also, however, because he knew, he came up knowing this, he was also an entertainer. And he would, for example, and this drove some of us crazy at times, we'd go to a concert and he'd play "The Medley." All the famous Ellington songs, and I finally had the temerity to say, "You know, there's so much in the book that hardly ever gets played." He said, "Do you realize there are people who come to these concerts or dances from 60, 70, 80 miles, they come once a year. They want to hear those things." And that's, that made sense.

It was often said that Ellington wouldn't fire anyone, but there's a famous story about him firing Charles Mingus.

Charles Mingus was a young man then, and had a very volcanic temperament, which he always had but then he could seldom control it. And he got into an argument with Juan Tizol a valve trombone player, who also had a fierce temperament, temper. And Duke is at the Apollo Theater, and the screen goes up, and there is the two of them, Juan Tizol and Mingus, one chasing the other with a bolo knife across the stage. I think it was Tizol chasing Mingus. And Ellington said to, I wish I could repeat this word for word. Ellington said to Mingus in the dressing room, "Look, I admire your music, your playing very much. However, Juan has been with me a long time. And I want to tell you I admire the steps you used just now on stage, the adagio," and he used a series of other ballet terms. He said, "Really

extraordinarily graceful. But I really can't have this sort of thing going on in front of an audience. So I'm afraid, Charles, you're gonna have to go." Mingus put that in his book, his autobiography. He never was angry at Duke, for in fact, he practically idolized Ellington. But it was a bit too much even for... I remember once, he had a guy on the band who, to all extents and surfaces, was on junk, was on heroin. And he was nodding off in the middle of a set, and a guy who was then the editor of *Downbeat* in Chicago said, "Duke," said afterwards, "Duke, you can't have that going on." And Ellington said, "You," he really got angry, "do you realize that man fought in the Pacific for you and your people and your relatives? He was just tired."

Let's turn to another character. Paint me a picture of Miles Davis.

Miles came out of a family of a surgeon in St. Louis, east St. Louis, very well-to-do. He did not have the kind of roots that all these mythologists say that jazz people come from. He was very well educated, also an auto didact. And he could be one big pain in the ass. He was very irascible, but he had, until, this my own negative feeling here. Until, he turned to, to, to, to fusion music and rock, but in his jazz years he had extraordinary integrity. And it would, it cut across all the, all the barriers in jazz. For example, he was becoming fairly well known when he hired Bill Evans in his combo, the piano player, white piano player. And this was a time when there was a great deal of fierce rejection among some younger black musicians of the idea a, that whites could play the music, but more to the point that whites shouldn't be taking away jobs from jazz musicians. And this coincided with the great popular, great for jazz, popular interest in so-called west coast jazz, which was almost entirely white, was pretty bland, and those people were making a lot of money. So here he hires Bill Evans, not west coast jazz. And Miles wouldn't have any of that. He said, "Listen to me. I will hire anybody if he's green and has purple dots and red hair if he can play." And that was Miles. But Miles was also somebody who would take no intimation of Jim Crow easily. He once got his head bashed in by a cop outside of Birdland, who told him to move on. And Miles wouldn't move on because there was no reason for him to move on. And, his, his temper was something else. In his, in his, in the years where most people know about him or know him, he had a very sort of hoarse, very hoarse voice. And the reason that happened was that he had had an operation to take some polyps out of his throat. And he was in Birdland, owned by Moshe Levy, one of the least attractive figures in the history of jazz entrepreneurs, and they got in an argument. And Miles, who had been told by his doctor not to shout, shouted, and he ruined at least that part of his speaking voice ever since. He, he was a guy who always wanted to hear new things, and try them out. That's why he and Gil Evans worked out so well together, because Gil was an arranger, orchestrator, who's always imagining ahead. Towards the, not the end, but in, in his last active years in music, he began to include some rock musicians in his band. One theory as to why he did it was, as he, as he said to a friend of mine, "I'm gonna show those white kids that I can play rock and make even more money than they can." And he did, I guess. But it, it really, it was not the

best of Miles. The best of Miles was things like "Kind of Blue," when he began to play outside of chords, he would play modes, and that gave the musicians an awful lot of freedom. And he had, you know, through the years some, some great players in the band, John Coltrane for one. Herriage and I did a program called "The Sound of Miles Davis." Miles at that point said he would never appear on television. He'd been on one of those junky shows and I got him to meet with Herriage, and he said okay, and that was beautiful. It was just Miles and Coltrane and the rhythm section for half an hour and, you know, he, he even said he liked it, and it was rare of him to say anything like that.

You were in the recording session for "Sketches of Spain." Tell me what that was like.

All I remember essentially was something about Gil. One of the guys in the section was playing a radio, and Gil had it stopped. Gil's ears could pick up anything. I remember Miles coming into the control room, and, but I don't remember any story out of that. Do you?

Okay. Miles was in Paris, hooked on drugs. Could you talk to him about that?

Later. He is, he had enormous willpower. I mean he could also dissipate, to use that ancient word, with a great deal of zeal. But when he wanted to do something, however difficult it was, he did it. He, when he was on, on heroin, he went off to Detroit as I remember it, holed up in a hotel, and kicked the habit cold turkey. Nobody helping him, no counselors, no nothing. And as far as I know, he never went back to that again. He, unlike Charlie Parker who couldn't kick anything.

In one article you painted a poetic picture of Miles Davis. Do that for me.

Well, the best description of not only of Miles's sound, but what he evoked in listeners, at least in me, was by Andre' Audere, who was a French critic and musician. And he said that "Miles's sound was like something that came from the farther shore." It was not only loneliness, but an intensity that could sometimes be almost unbearable. All the more so because there was a lot of space in between the notes. He and Basie are not, I guess, ever considered as a tandem, but he had Basie's concern for leaving breathing room for the music, and I would also say, for the listener. And the more he got into going away from chords, the more the melodies became more stark, as it were, precise, and it was an interesting juxtaposition. You'd have these almost stark melodies in a romantic ballad, and the starkness would make the romance all the more compelling. And he knew that. He, you would sometimes see him in a club or on stage. He did what Bill Evans sometimes did. Bill Evans would sometimes get so involved in the piano that he would lean over and lean over and you'd think he was gonna be swallowed by the

piano. The same with Miles. He would bend over and bend over and it was just him and the trumpet and you were feeling as you watched and listened that you were sort of eavesdropping on a very private moment, and it was almost an imposition when the other musicians would come in. Oh, he took his music very, very seriously. And he was very serious about music. He thought, he said, "All of us people who play trumpet should get down on our knees one day and thank God for Louis Armstrong." He knew where he came from. He loved, he loved Billie Holiday enormously. Some people, I mean, I was doing a radio series with a musician, a composer, a guy who knew all kinds of music, I don't, I mean I can't tell you what chords are chords. And he was telling me how great Oscar Peterson was. And Oscar could play everything three times over, all at the same time on a piano, and I said to Miles once, "Maybe it's me. I don't understand that. Why, why all this adulation?" He said, "Hell, that guy can't even play the blues." So I got it from the master.

Let's talk about the Sound of Jazz. How did it start?

There was a man named Bob Herriage, Robert Herriage, who had done some great television series. He had something called "Camera Three" on local WCBS. He did "Notes from the Underground" by Dostoyevsky. He did William Faulkner, he did all those, those things that nobody else did. He loved jazz. And he said, "I want to do a show," he had a mantra, he said "I want it to be partisan review pure." And he asked me and Whitney Balliout of the "New Yorker" to do it, to get all the musicians together, to talk to them if that were necessary about the tunes, and, and it was. And the other thing he did was, he said, "I don't want any of these goddamn phony sets. Ed Sullivan Show again. The studio will be the set. The camera guys will be improvising as well as being told what to do, but if they have a better shot, they can do it, and they will be in the picture. There's no point having, pretending they're not there. Which led to, after the show was over, Benny Carter, who was the most elegant of all jazz musicians, he's in his '80's now, plays all over the world, a very good guy. He was so furious at me. By the way, the musicians were told they could go into the rehearsals and the actual show wearing anything they liked. So most of them, being elders of the music, put on their hats. I don't know why, but that was always the custom. Billie Holiday, I told her that she didn't have to have a gown, but she bought one anyway, and when I said, she was very angry at me, she said, "I spent \$500 for this damn gown." She came in slacks and that's the way she was seen. But after the show was over, Benny Carter said to me, "How dare you do what you did. That was so disgraceful. You brought these musicians into the homes of America wearing hats!" I said, "Benny, I'm not sorry." But, it, it, they were so relaxed, even though this was in the golden age, as they say, of television, it was live. You made a mistake, you made a mistake, so the tension was there, but we had, I mean it was just, it was like the pantheon. We had Coleman Hawkins and Ben Webster and Lester Young, and Doc Cheatham and Roy Eldridge and Count Basie and Thelonious Monk, and Pee

Wee Russell. It was, there was a collective fire as it were. And Billie. Lester and Billie had been very close for years. They gave each other nicknames that the other musicians picked up. Billie called Lester "Pres," and it was always Pres after that, and Lester called her "Lady Day." But for some reason, and nobody could tell me why, they had gone way apart in preceding years, and when we were there for the blocking and the sound check, they very carefully were on different ends, sides of the studio. Lester was not well. He was supposed to be in the big band section, in another section, and I said, "Look, why don't you just do the thing with Billie? And you can sit down, you don't have to stand." And the thing with Billie was a small group, Roy Eldridge, Lester, and Billie was singing one of the very few blues she ever did, "Fine and Mellow," which she wrote. Lester got up and he played the purest blues I have ever heard, and they were looking at each other, their eyes were sort of interlocked, and she was sort of nodding and half-smiling. It was as if they were both remembering what had been, whatever that was. And in the control room, I was there with Herriage and the director, and we were all crying. I mean it was, there was this, it was just a natural reaction, it was so utterly moving. When the show was over, they still went their separate ways, and Billie came over to me and kissed me. And that was the greatest achievement in, in, in the music I've ever had. I think they did get together after that, but what the importance of that show was, it was partisan review pure. There was nothing commercial about it in that sense. And we got a lot of mail. It was a Sunday afternoon, we got a lot of mail nonetheless. And one woman wrote to Herriage, "What a marvelous experience it was, seeing people doing something they enjoy doing so much." And that's what the music is, that's what jazz is.

The CBS officials weren't going to allow Billie to perform.

Oh, boy, you know, it was a sponsored show. Revlon, I think. And Herriage got a, they had pages in those days, and the page walked across the studio during the blocking session, gave Herriage a note. Herriage looked at the note and tore it up. The note had said that "We don't want," speaking of the homes of America, "We, the sponsor does not want this woman, who has been arrested and convicted for drug use, coming into the homes of America." So Herriage said to, I think it was John Housman I know was the executive producer, he said, "You know, this is very easily resolved. If this, if they insist on this, I leave the show, Nat leaves the show, Whitney Balliant leaves the show and you do what you want." Apparently Housman decided it was better to have that woman enter the homes of America.

Was it obvious at that time that that woman was also ailing?

No, Billie was in good shape, although she died maybe two years later. Oh, she had a great time. One of the marvelous shots in the picture as she enters the studio and walks through the band, joking with, you know she knew all these people, and then she was in utter control in that section of "Fine and

Mellow." She knew exactly what she wanted to do and she did it. In the last years of her life, some nights she was up and she could do whatever she wanted, and some nights it was just, just awful. But she never gave up.

During those two years, did you speak with her?

Oh, yeah, I saw her at a, at a movie theater in Greenwich Village. Part of the night was not good, part of the night was good. There was another time, we were spending the evening at the home of a mutual friend. And this is something I didn't know about Billie. She was a great mimic. She was mimicking some of the awful people in show business, the managers, the bookers, the club owners, etcetera, and having a great time doing it. I'll tell you the other kind of an epiphany, if that's the word, the, my former wife was pregnant at the time. And we saw Billie, I think it was on the street, and she just kept rubbing her hand over the stomach, feeling what was underneath there, 'cause she'd never had a child and she'd wanted one.

Yeah, the thing about Billie's early recordings, the ones I think most people know, "Miss Brown to You," "What a Little Moonlight Can Do," that sort of thing. They were marvelous, they were, they were a lyrical young woman who had had hard times but nonetheless was so involved in singing about the times and herself, and they, as I say, in some respects, the best part of her cannon, if that's the word. But there's a misapprehension about Billie's later recordings, the ones she made for Verve. She was in the last years of life. Her voice had become kind of scratchy. But, Benny Green, who was a British musician turned critic, said what I think was exactly right,...

Billie's early recordings which made her known were fun, I mean they were, they were a young woman exploring life, enjoying life, even though she's had hard time before. The later recording are generally put down because her voice wasn't anywhere near what it used to be, and even the rhythm sometimes sagged. But the thing about the later recordings, and Benny Green, who's a British musician and critic, has said this, and I agree with it entirely, "Because her, her equipment, if you like, was not what it used to be, she got more into the lyrics. And the lyrics came out, I mean she did mostly standards, and that was really, a lot of them turned out to be autobiographical. She was singing about her life through these lyrics. So in some respects, those later recordings are even more memorable, and more compelling, although I wouldn't want to get rid of the early ones at all.

You were around during the last months of her life. Tell us what happened.

Well, she was hooked again on drugs. And I don't remember the precise ailment, but it was serious, turned out to be terminal. And in her hospital room she was arrested. Because of her history of having been incarcerated

for drugs, etcetera. That's a hell of a way to die, to be have to have cops in there watching over you. That's the worst kind of deathwatch, I would think. It was the most ignominious way to treat, and I mean this as straight as I can, a first class artist. In a way, I don't think she would have been surprised. But it does not, I mean, whoever did that, whoever in the police department or the mayor's office, probably the police department, it is pretty much indicative of what happens on a regular basis. Except we knew about it because it was Billie, and nobody could do anything about it.

Stick with this notion of drugs--this is something we want to talk about.

Yeah.

You discussed junk and drugs with Jerry Mulligan quite a bit. How devastating and endemic it was to the jazz world?

Well, during the fifties, late fifties and sixties, it was pretty common. One of the reasons, I can't say in fairness that it was the only reason...

I would really like you to tell me what "it" is.

Oh. One of the reasons that heroin addiction in particular was, if not endemic, but quite common among some of the younger jazz musicians. The older guys pretty much, if they did anything, they did booze, that is liquor, or like Louis Armstrong, they had a toke of marijuana couple of times a day. But nothing as serious as horse. Some of them might have, but I didn't hear about it. But among the young musicians, and this sounds weird, it sounds like out of a bad novel, but one of the reasons was Charlie Parker. Bird was hooked on everything you could think of, including horse. And because he played so brilliantly, I mean, even now you can hear, they even play Bird records in elevators now. And it was just astonishing, this flow of ideas and sounds. So some of the younger musicians, stupid as it was, decided that if they, if they used junk, then they would maybe sound like Bird. Like the ancients saying, if you, if you capture an enemy and eat his heart you'll have his courage or something like that. And Jackie McLean, for example, talks about how Bird was furious at him because he fell for that idiocy and, and I think wanted to kick him in the ass a couple of times. Stan Getz once held up a liquor store, or a drug store on the West coast to get money for drugs. And then, it's interesting, after a time, for all I know it could be current now, but I don't think it is, but after a time, it subsided, and the theory used to be among drug users in general that it was an age thing. That you, after you hit a certain age, somehow the, you burnt out in terms of the desire for drugs. But sure it was a serious problem.

Other than the idiocy of trying to play like Charlie Parker, I read where one musician was turned onto it by his girlfriend.

I tell you, addiction works in multiple, intersecting ways and if you want it to. And Bird, you know, for all he would lecture people not to do what he did, he was such a, charming isn't the word. If he wanted to, he could make you believe that because he thought you were the most important person in the world, then you probably were, because he was. And on the other hand, and I think some of the players whom he hooked, I don't mean he hooked directly, I don't know if they saw much of this, but they probably did, he could be despairing. I ran into him one night about three in the morning. I was going downstairs into Birdland. Bird was coming up. We didn't know each other. I'd interviewed him a couple of times on radio. And tears were streaming down his face. He said, "I've got to talk to you, I've got to talk to you." I said, "Fine, there's an all-night coffee shop on the corner." "No, no. I'll call you tomorrow." Well he never called. And I could have been anybody, I think. There was a musician he was living with for a time when he was really strung out in Greenwich Village, who said, "Bird, Bird we owe him so much. But who can afford him?"

One time I was talking to Charlie Parker on a radio broadcast that I had, and it was like talking to, to somebody who couldn't speak. He had "The New Yorker" magazine in front of him and was leafing through it. This was of course before Tina Brown took it over. And anything I asked him, "Ug, uh, urr." I didn't know what the hell was going on and it was the second most painful interview I've ever done. The first one was when I interviewed Benny Goodman and every question I asked Benny, he'd say in answer, "Well, what do you think?" Bird wasn't even saying that. The second interview with Bird, it was like a professor of advanced music at Princeton or something. He was talking about the Bartok piano concerto, which I happen to know because one of my daughters knew that work very well. And he was explaining it to me brilliantly. "This is what happens in this section, and the motif comes in here." And he said, "You know, I want to write a concerto for a large symphony orchestra," and he went into this kind of thing. The whole interview was like, my God, you would never think this guy was ever strung out in his life. And that was Bird. He had many masks, if mask is the word. One of my favorite stories about Bird has to do with another mask, a musical mask, but it's not a mask. He used to hang out at Charlie's Tavern, which was a place musicians, jazz musicians, hung out at in mid-town New York. And they had a, they had a jukebox. And along with jazz records, there was some country music records. And that's all that Bird would play. And the guys, didn't know what to make out of this. They didn't have the courage to ask the great man why he was playing this awful music, until finally one of them did. "Bird, why do you play those recordings, the country stuff?" And Bird looked at him and said, "Listen, listen to the stories." And of course that's true. You listen to country music, you can hear about all kinds of things behind closed doors.

Let's switch to Paul Desmond. Talk to me.

Paul became known internationally because he was with the Dave Brubeck Quartet. Paul had this lovely, singing kind of sound on the alto. I mean, for example, he was in love with Audrey Hepburn, not that anything ever happened. But his music was like she appeared on screen, this sort of lightness but yet substance underneath. Just very, very lyrical stuff. He's playing with Brubeck, however. Brubeck used to play piano as if he were clearing redwoods out of a forest with a big truck. And somehow Desmond would soar above this. He was also a very funny man, one of the wittiest men in, in, in music. He wrote, he hated, he didn't hate to write, but he was afraid people would see what he wrote. He did one piece for "Punch," the British humor magazine, and it was marvelous. The other, you know, Paul who smoked far too much, cigarettes, and finally was dying of cancer in an apartment in mid-town Manhattan. And Charles Mingus decided to visit him one day. And Mingus whose way of dressing mirrored his moods, and he was very much the swashbuckling Spanish grandee that day, and he had a black cape I think, with red lining etcetera. He, Paul always kept his door open because he was, he couldn't hardly move and if he never needed anything he didn't want anybody to have to worry about opening the door. So Mingus strides into the door and Paul lifts up his head and says, "Well, set up the chessboard." Because he had seen that Bergman movie about death and the cape, etc...

Paul Desmond smoked much too much--cigarettes. And he got cancer. Toward the end he was so weak that he left the door open to his apartment. Paul I should say was very fond of the films of Ingmar Bergman, including a movie called "The Seventh Seal," in which death played a significant part. Now one day, Charles Mingus decided he would come up town and visit Paul. And Charles's dress depended on who he was that day. And that day he was a Spanish grandee, with a black cape, and he came up the stairs and into Paul's apartment wearing this black cape, a very formidable presence. Paul looked at him, and thought of "The Seventh Seal," and said, "Okay, set up the chess table." Which is how in that movie people, if they beat the devil at chess, they would live. Not that, yeah the devil, would death of the devil, same thing. So that's what he thought of as he saw this formidable person.

Go to Charles Mingus now. Paint a picture.

Charles Mingus, there's a word called protean, which means "many forms." Mingus had many forms, physical as well as temperamental. He would sometimes go on a diet, lose an enormous number of pounds and then shortly thereafter, be ballooned again. And is the way he went, what he wore, what his, the kinds of hats he wore, the kind of impression he was making on himself and therefore on everybody else. He was a man, as they say, of many parts. He had enormous energy most of his life. And that's one of the reasons he was a prolific composer, a very original composer, and very, very moving composer. As a bandleader, he was a tyrant. For one thing, he would not write out at first any of the music, any of his own music. He insisted that they listen to him sing the music or play the music on the

piano, but mostly sing it. In that way they would absorb it. Then, they had to improvise on the music, and God help them if they improvised old time licks, or licks they were familiar with, 'cause then he would stop the performance, even in a club or a concert hall, and say, "I don't want to hear that. I want to hear something new." He was also a man who was very, very sensitive to, to what used to be called Jim Crow. I was with him once in the Berkshires when he delivered a pre-emptive strike against a white man, who indeed looked to be and sounded like a bigot. And Charles whacked him and he's down on the floor, and he said to me, "I knew he was gonna hit me eventually. So I figured, why shouldn't I do this now?" I mean, it's a logical point of view, I would think. He had ups and downs in his career. He went through a period of depression on the Lower East Side. He lived alone. He had to barricade his apartment door and it didn't work--I think they stole two or three bases. And he came back. He came back. I remember one of the things that, it wasn't the reason he came back, but it made him know that he had come back. There used to be and still is a phenomenon called the Jazz Mobile in New York, where musicians, jazz musicians play for kids uptown. Other places as well. And Mingus was asked to do that. But he was still coming out of this, this, this hole. And somebody, some well-meaning idiot said, "You, you shouldn't do this Charles. 'Cause your music is too far advanced for those kids and they won't like it." Mingus went uptown and they liked it, they liked it fine. That made him feel very good. Toward the end he had Lou Gerhig's disease. And he fought it all the way, as did his wife Sue. They went all over, Mexico, India, God knows where, to find a cure. Toward the end he was still making music. He, one of the, one of the last times I saw him, about all he could do was to hum melodic lines. And he would do that into a tape recorder. I mean, all through the years of my great learning from jazz, the word "life force" has been in my mind, you know, the George Bernard Shaw's thing. Well, if anybody had life force, it was Charles Mingus. To the very last second.

What do you recall of his music and his political leanings.

Yeah, some of his music was indeed the kind of stuff that Bertholdt Brecht might have written if you were that kind of political. "Fables of Faublus" was about the then governor of Arkansas who wouldn't let the kids go to school, even though the black kids go to school, even though the courts had said they should. He had a biting, sardonic wit when he, when he did political stuff. He could also do something like "Cumbeya" for an Italian movie, that again was a lovely, lovely lyrical, it was timeless. It was something that could have come out of the Renaissance period or right now. He, he, "Goodbye Porkpie Hat" was a, was a tribute to Lester Young. He, he greatly admired Ellington and his, a lot of his music showed it. But he was never derivative. Practically everything he did was Mingus. There was a stamp on, on his music. He, his roots had started with gospel music. His mother went to a, a refined church. His father, however, went to a holiness church. And that was the music that, that, that, that really got him. He once told me that, I mean he reacted with great volatility to everything in music. When he was a kid, he

went to hear Ellington in a theater, he was in the balcony, and the music hit him so hard, he almost jumped off the balcony. He was probably the most extraordinary person I've ever known.

He was also one of the most extraordinary bassists.

He was, he and Jimmy Blanton...

In terms of Mingus as a base player, Jimmy Blanton had liberated the instrument the way Coleman Hawkins had done the tenor. But Mingus went way beyond Blanton and the other people who followed him in that he, he not only played melodies on the base, he played melodies and harmonies and rhythms and the thing he told me about his base playing that struck me, and I think this is true of some other musicians including classical musicians, he said, he studied with a symphony base player, then he woodshedded a lot and he jammed a lot, and he said, "One day, I wasn't playing notes anymore. I was playing music. And I had become the base, and the base had become me." It's sort of like William Butler Yeats, how do you tell the dancer from the dance?

He was central in an event you wrote about.

The Newport Rebels. George Wayne had produced the Newport Jazz Festival for a good many years. It was becoming more and more commercial. I mean it wasn't just jazz, it was pop people, and rock people and the like. And some of the musicians--Mingus, Roy Eldridge, Joe Jones, Max Roach, a pretty distinguished crew, and Ornette Coleman, although Ornette had to be persuaded by Mingus to leave the main festival, verbally I mean. So they decided they would have a, a, a, a Rump Festival. The Newport Rebels, same place, same period of time, and they put up a tent. Mingus helped put up the tent. He did more than that. After the, the thing was set and the musicians began to play, Mingus walked around the tent, making sure that people had tickets, otherwise he would sell them tickets. He never let any details go by. And the music was marvelous. I later, I was then for a wonderful year, A&R man for Camden Records. And I asked them if they wanted to record what they done. And they did, and it was, the al, it was called "The Newport Rebels," and it had all those people. The interesting thing about that session was that when he, when he was in high school back in Los Angeles, Roy Eldridge was, he was, they were told, the kids in the band were told that Roy Eldridge was gonna come and talk to them. And some hippie, some hip guy in the band said, "Eh, who cares about Roy Eldridge? He's an old timer, he probably can't even read music."

And Roy came and played and Mingus realized that he had been given the wrong information. But they'd never played together. And on this session of the Newport Rebels, after it was all over and Roy as usual, Roy always played as if this was his last date on earth. He never coasted. He was always playing at top strength. And he was great. Afterwards he came over to Mingus. We were closing down the studio. He said, "I want to tell you something. I never

knew much about you, about how you play, what you play. But you've got it. You're with us. And there ain't many people like that around anymore." And I tell you, that made Mingus's day, week and year.

There were a lot of other things happening that year--riots, etc.

Yeah, I don't remember if that was the exact year, but there were, the, the penalty for being commercial in that case was there were riots, a lot of drinking, cops had to be called, and for a time, Newport was closed off to the festival. And, you know, there're never any riots that I know of at a jazz festival, I say being pejorative about the other kind. But that was eventually moved to New York, etcetera. The other thing about Newport was, to everybody's surprise including Duke's, he had a, a great piece of music called "Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue." It was a very subtle piece, it had all kinds of dynamics...

You were gonna tell us about "Diminuendo in Crescendo."

Yeah, for reasons that I couldn't understand because I admire his work so much, Duke Ellington was in eclipse for quite a while. His dates were drying up, he was getting less money for a date. He still wouldn't disband, because he figured who would he be if he didn't have his expensive gentlemen with him? Then he played the Newport Festival and he played a number called "Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue," which as I remember, was written when his mother died, it's a very subtle piece. A lot of dynamics, but subtle. Not that day, not that night. It opened up. And Paul Gonsalves, who was a very nice man, played very strong tenor, must have taken 5,000 choruses on that, and they, you know, swinging choruses, the people were dancing and. This brought Duke back into the limelight. I think he appeared on the cover of "Time" magazine, the gigs kept coming back. You never can figure these things. It had nothing to do with the essence of his music, but who cared. It made him make some bread again.

Okay, let's go to Ornette Coleman.

Well, I first saw Ornette at his first recording session for Contemporary Records out in the West coast, I was there. He came in with a plastic alto saxophone and later on he had, he sent me or his, the producer sent me an interview with Ornette on tape so I could write the liner notes. I did not understand one word of it, but what I did understand was when Ornette said later that what he felt was missing in a lot of jazz was the pure human voice on an instrument, and that's what he was trying to do. He was trying a lot of other things too, rhythmically, etcetera. But that really was the core of Ornette's music. It was very human music. It was also technically, I think the word is challenging. I remember I saw him one day on the street. He'd come from Radio City Music Hall, where for some reason they'd had a show, including acrobats. And he was, couldn't stop talking about the acrobats, because they had so precise skills, and they knew exactly what they were

doing. And that's what he was after in his music. When he came to New York, he played the Five Spot, and a lot of the older musicians, and not a few of the younger ones thought he was phony. They didn't understand what the hell was going on. I was sitting with Roy Eldridge that night, and Roy said, "Oh, come on." I mean, Roy was not closed minded, but he really didn't dig this at all. But other people did. John Lewis of the, musical director of the Modern Jazz Quartet. And John invited him up to a very interesting place for a while called the Music Inn in Lenox, Massachusetts, where you could play and talk to each other, musicians don't often have a chance to really talk to each other at leisure. And Ornette I think picked up some, some supporters there. And then he recorded a lot. He picked up the violin. He went in to think, something that I don't understand at all. Some kind of rock, I don't know what it's called. He's a survivor. He's never made much money. He has the reputation for asking for an enormous amount of money whenever he does get a gig. Well, listen. But I mostly remember the human sound. And he was a guy, by the way, who came out of Texas. Who long before anybody knew his name outside of Texas, had been trashed by people because he was, you couldn't categorize him. And even in jazz, which is supposed to be an open music, if you don't fall into a category, you're in trouble.

You talk a lot about this when you were writing about the compartmentalizing of the music. Give me a story.

Well, it's very hard in any field to get out of a category once you've been put into it. And that's why, for example, Pee Wee Russell, who I think, was one of the most original musicians in the whole history of jazz. But Pee Wee spent most of his career playing with Eddie Condon, Chicago Style, Dixie, not so much Dixieland Style, but certainly nothing after swing, or before swing. And I knew he could do much more than that. And at some point, somebody recorded him with Coltrane, and it worked. And somebody recorded him with Thelonius Monk, and it worked. And Pee Wee's career was, was considerably broadened as a result. Duke once said to me that, so far as he could, he could ever figure it out, he didn't believe in categories or anything like that. He said, "What always happens is one man comes along, maybe not yet one woman, but who knows. But one man comes along, creates something distinctive, and other people follow him. But then if you, if you just stay within that school, you get lost." He saw it obviously as it is, as a continuation of individuals.

Another individual, John Coltrane.

John was just about the, next to Clifford Brown or equally with Clifford Brown, the trumpet player, he was the gentlest person I've ever known. Also the most self-effacing, but not in that phony way, you know where somebody is self-effacing because he wants you to see how self-effacing he is.

Could you start over again and get John Coltrane's name.

Alright, yeah. John Coltrane, who played tenor saxophone was, along with Clifford Brown, the trumpet player, the most gentle, non-malicious person I have ever known. He was self-effacing, but not in the way that some people are self-effacing, to show you how self-effacing they are. He was, he became totally immersed, I mean totally immersed in music. He practiced for hours and hours and he was always searching for something else. He wasn't quite sure what it was, but he'd figured he'd know it when he saw it. That's how he got involved in, in, in, in eastern philosophy and all that sort of thing. And he had an ability to get a group together. Well he used to play the Village Vanguard a lot, and one number might take an hour, an hour and a half. And, and yet, you didn't, you weren't conscious of being frustrated or impatient as time went by because it kept building and building and building. And then finally on some of the recordings like "Ascension," which was like some kind of, of convention of religious dervishes. I mean this extraordinary collective, not only spirituality but more than that. I mean, John felt that you had to get through the visceral part, the passionate part of life, the, the, to get to the higher plane. So a lot of that came out. And anger, and anger. So a lot of that came out in, in, in pieces like "Ascension." He also felt very strongly that he did not want liner notes in his albums. Because he said, "If the music doesn't speak for itself, what's the point?" So maybe every three months or so I would call him up and say, "John, Bob asked me to write the liner notes for this album of yours." And he'd say, "Oh, nab." Then I'd say, "Look John, it's a gig." "Okay." He was a very accommodating guy. He, he died obviously much too soon. I think he found some of what he wanted and that kind of total immersion in the spirituality as he would call it in the music. I would call it some kind of heightened emotionalism or whatever, but searching, that's the point, he was always searching, and the music really hits you that way. And I suppose, if you're in the right mood, gets you to search as well.

It's written that he had lots of medical problems.

I knew he had stomach problems and I think that's what killed him eventually, but I didn't know about the others. He too, fairly early in his career, had, had drug problems but worked, worked his way out of it.

Do you have a picture of Cecil Taylor?

I knew Cecil when we were both about 19 years old. We're both in Boston and right into Symphony, I remember into the wall, side-wall of Symphony Hall there was a record shop, a little small shop. And Cecil and I would be there at various times and we started talking. And we became pretty friendly. He once took me to a concert, classical music concert at Jordan Hall. And he was analyzing the concert quite critically as he went along. Then when he came to New York, I knew him somewhat, he, he found it hard to get work for a while because he was so different. Not only different musically, but nobody could quite figure him out personally because Cecil, if

he doesn't want you to know anything, you don't know it. And for a time, he was delivering sandwiches and coffee and stuff for some kind of coffee shop. But at night in his loft, he told me, he would have concerts, imaginary concerts, and play a complete repertory to this audience that wasn't there. And he said that kept his, not only his spirit going but, he was still able to get his music through, even into the, into the air. I recorded him once for, twice, for Contemporary Records when I was an A&R man. And with him as with everybody else, but especially with him, I made sure that he did the editing.

Cecil had a hard time for a long time. He had some recordings, but he didn't get many dates. In fact, when he, fairly soon after he came to New York there was kind of a traumatic experience, I don't know if it was for him but it should have been. He was playing a session, and Joe Jones, the drummer, the man who plays like the wind, whom everybody likes and respects and is terrified, was terrified by at times. Cecil is playing. Joe is so put off by the music that he takes the cymbal off his set and throws it across the room in the direction of Cecil Taylor. That's not what you call a vote of approval as you're trying to establish yourself in the music. But then years later Cecil had finally made it, I mean in a sense, he had concerts in Europe, concerts in the United States, he had gotten some commissions for pieces, and he was, I think, widely respected if not entirely understood. And then one afternoon I saw him at Bradley's, which is a bar that musicians play at in, in Greenwich Village. And Cecil was kind of feeling poignant I guess is the word. He said, "You know, all my life I wanted to get to the point where I could play with my peers. The problem is, there aren't any peers left," which I thought was the very gloomy assessment of the jazz scene. May not be accurate, but he certainly felt it.

This jazz scene--I need a riff on how they got treated by records companies.

Well, I remember I used to know when I worked for Downbeat I had to know some of the bookers, the people who actually put musicians into clubs. And I walked into one of the rooms at an agency, and I saw these guys and they were booking musicians as if they were flesh, just flesh without heads. It was really... And then I remembered Dizzy Gillespie one day was walking down Broadway in the sunlight, looking very pleased with himself, and I said, "What's up?" He said, "You know, I just came from Billy Shaw's." Billy Shaw was a big booker who booked Dizzy. "And I finally said to him, 'cause it occurred to me, I finally said to him, 'Billy Shaw, Billy Shaw, I don't work for you. You work for me.'" Dizzy is, Dizzy went on in that vein for the rest of his life. It's, even now, I mean, it's hard to see outside of New York, Los Angeles to a lesser extent, Chicago to a lesser extent, how people can, can, can make a city living at this business. I'm not sure, you know a star. I remember, I asked Jimmy Rowles once, Jimmy had played for years as an accompanist to Sarah Vaughan and Ella Fitzgerald and who knows who. I said, "What do you do in between?" Jimmy said, "I wait for the phone to ring." It's never been a place, a scene where, where, where you do make a whole lot of money. And

it's always been insecure for most of the people in it. But then consider the alternatives. I mean Mingus once said to me, "I got to where I could play the base very well. And I suppose I could have been third base in the Boston Pops Orchestra for the rest of my life." Good Lord. I don't know. There was a time when it looked as if the jazz scene would be even more secure than it usually is. That's when rock took over in the 60s and 70s. Until then, there'd always been a nucleus of people growing up who latched on to jazz. It wasn't big but it was enough to, to, to pay for the records and stuff. And it looked as if it would never come back. And Teddy Wilson made me feel better during that whole period. Teddy said, "There are some people who listen to rock who also like music. And eventually they will get tired of rock and they will come back to jazz." And then some years later, I guess it was in the middle or late 80s, I went, near where I live, I went down to the Vanguard to hear Max Roach on a Saturday night. There was a crowd all around the block of young people, not just Japanese tourists. And, and it's been that way ever since in the clubs. So I think the future looks okay.

You wrote once that the notion that there was no race prejudice in jazz was not true.

Oh, there's race prejudice everywhere else in the whole world, including America, why should it be omitted from jazz? There were guys out of New Orleans, white guys, who were, who would play with black musicians for a gig but they hated them. They were racists. There have been black nationalists in jazz who either would not play with whites, or would play with great reluctance. It's been something that, I mean, in one sense there may be less of it and maybe there actually has been less of it than anyplace else in the whole society. I know in the, in the 20's, for example, Bing Crosby told me once he would go up to Harlem and jam, as, as would Jack Teagarden, with black guys. And there was no draft or anything like that. And clubs, I mean when I was a kid, eons ago, the only place that I remember in Boston where you would see black and white couples was in the Savoy Cafe', which was the Jazz Cafe'. Course the cops would come in, take the soap out of the bathroom, then hand a summons to the owner for not having soap in the bathroom. Only because there were black and white couples. Now of course the clubs are, are, are totally integrated, a few other things are. I don't know the extent, I suppose people who really get, get hooked on jazz find it hard to be racist, but you never know. But I think it's had some positive effect in that sense, but that wasn't its purpose.

Talk to me generally about this music. What is jazz, what does it say about us?

Well, to start with, James Madison who wrote the Bill of Rights and much of the rest of the Constitution, would I think have understood what Max Roach said years ago, that jazz is, in it's way, the perfect working definition of constitutional democracy. Because it can't work without having a collective group attuned to each other. And soloists coming out of that group say what

they want to say, but they have to be part of the group. I wish that were taught at schools, by the way, because jazz is not taught in the schools to any extent so that. I'll tell you, to digress, I once, I was running an education, and I think it was Lincoln, Nebraska. And I was told by various people that one of the best schools in that town was, was an elementary school, it was almost entirely black, and it was a hell of a good school. And the principal showed me around, and I saw portraits in the, in the, in the hallways, Marian Anderson, William E. DuBois, people like that. I said, "Gee," I wasn't being funny, I said, "Where's Duke Ellington, is he upstairs?" She said, "We don't have entertainers." You know, it's not only the white ignorance. Sterling Brown, the poet and teacher told me that he taught at Howard University for many years. They would not allow him, Sterling Brown, they would not allow him to play jazz music. The only way he got to do it was, he said, "I would, I would take a recording of Stravinsky's Ragtime, and then I would say to the students, 'Now let me show you where it came from.'" So you've had this kind of resistance to jazz among blacks, among whites, etcetera all the time. But what it shows about, shows us about who we are or maybe who we ought to be, is that when it comes down to it, the music is played by people of all, as they say, backgrounds. And, and, and you have to work with, with each other to make it work. One of the main problems in this society, in this country, is what Martin Buber used to talk about, "The I-thou relationship." There is no "I-thou" relationship with most people as it, as regards to whites and blacks or whites and Asians or whatever. In jazz you can't avoid it--you gotta know the thou there 'cause you're, he's the one that you're depending on to play the chords behind you. So in that respect, sure it's, it's quintessential American. And, as a matter of fact, the only language I guess we have except some of the folk music that's become an international language.

A quote from Sidney Bechet about how music has to keep moving.

Sidney Bechet came out of New Orleans playing the soprano sax. He played it so strong that I've often heard when I was a kid he would get into a session with Wild Bill Davison, who played the coronet or the trumpet as if he were playing eight trombones and he would just overpower. And Sidney was a tough man. Sidney, I saw him at the Savoy in Boston. Bunk Johnson, the fabled Bunk Johnson had come out of the cane fields where he'd been for, I don't know, 40 years, he was an early contemporary of Buddy Bolden, you know, the vintage New Orleans jazz man. The problem was that Bunk had no teeth anymore. So somebody got him a set of teeth. Then Bunk was exposed to young women in Boston, and he had no inhibitions, and...

Story about Bechet

Yeah, Sidney Bechet is a soprano saxophonist. Then whom there was nobody like else, excuse me on the grammar. Sidney wrote a book called Treat Her Gentle. It's about the early days of New Orleans, his early days. It really

reads like, not fiction but like a groit, you know the storyteller in Africa would have told it. It has that kind of cadences. And at the end of the book, Sidney says that this is a music, jazz, that can't be stopped. You can't control it. It has to by its own inner life, it has to keep moving on. And if anybody tries to control it, or stop it, he'll be left behind. And it's all the more interesting coming from Sidney because he was never what you'd call a modernist let alone a bop player. But he really played the essence of the music, including the blues. And what he said, of course, is so true.

He said that's what happened to the Dixieland

Yeah. Yeah. Except he was, Dixieland, I mean all these terminologies get blurred but Dixieland was essentially a white music out of New Orleans originally which became Chicago style, which was a white music. Whereas the New Orleans Black players would call what they did New Orleans music, like Red Allen, etc. And Sidney.

Red Allen someone you called underrated, forgotten

Well, Red, you know, came out of New Orleans, trumpet player, and he grew up in a time when you had to entertain to make a living. And he did it with great gusto even though he was personally a very shy man. But he would get up on a bandstand and talk about whamp whamp used to start a song, etc and call out people's names in the audience but underneath that, he though he came out of New Orleans he was in Louis Armstrong's big band. He played swing very well but he was always, as a trumpet player, listening ahead and trying things out. Miles Davis told me that he respected Red an awful lot. But he, Red never quite got the attention he deserved because, I think, people saw him as an entertainer. Uh and of course, Louis Armstrong was an entertainer and people forget, at least some people forget, there's nothing wrong with being an entertainer if you're also, at the same time, playing very good music.

Louis Armstrong - Picture of him towards the end of his life

Well, Louis, again was regarded by many people as primarily an entertainer. That is people on the outside of the music who didn't, who watched him on the Ed Sullivan Show. And loved him singing "Hello Dolly" and "Blueberry Hill". He was a very serious musician. And he was so he was so accomplished a musician that the story goes and I checked I checked it out, back in the thirties, he was playing these high notes one after the other absolutely crisp and clear. And a delegation of Boston Symphony Orchestra trumpet players came to his dressing room and said, "How do you do that?" And, Louis couldn't tell them. I mean you could show them the fingering but it takes more than the fingering to do it. He also had the reputation of being among some people some kind of an Uncle Tom because he used the handkerchief a

lot in his performances. Louis Armstrong, during the time when Eisenhower refused to send troops into Little Rock so that the schools could be integrated said publicly that Governor Forbis was a racist and Eisenhower had no courage. And back in New York, his manager, Glaser, Joe Glaser was so outraged at Louis that he sent a guy down to straighten him out. And Louis straightened the guy out by throwing him out of his dressing room. So Louis knew what was going on and was not afraid of what was going on. Toward the end of his life, he, you know, he answered there is now a Louis Armstrong Museum in Queens and it's interesting to see what's there. Many many many oral tapes that he made of his music and other people's music, books, magazines. He really liked to replay his life as it were and I think that's probably what was happening. And he loved to write letters. There's a young woman now who has permission from Louis Armstrong's estate to do a collection of his letters and that should go down, I would hope, in literary shelves for the rest of all time.

Tension between the different schools

You're talking about the War of the Roses, or the 100 Years War in England, in in Europe. There was a fair period of time as bop was starting, modern jazz, Bird, Dizzy Gillespie, that the aficionados of the older style, including some of the musicians, the swing musicians were at odds and sometimes at fierce odds. The older people, and that is the entertainers of the older music, especially Dixieland and New Orleans were called moldy figs. And it got so bad that that Muggsy Spanier, the trumpet player and a Louis Armstrong disciple who was a moldy fig according to some people saw Leonard Feather, a critic who was an advance publicist for bop and Muggsy Spanier hit him right in the chops. And that's the kind of musical division that shows how seriously people take music.

Chet Baker

Well, I would hate to see Venetian glass break. I mean, Baker played with Gerry Mulligan for a time and fitted into that quartet contrapuntal stuff pretty well. But I like passion in music. I mean, I like somebody going all out with his feelings and his sarcasm or whatever and Baker struck me as not quite able to let anything go. He was very introverted, he was he was a druggie for a long time. Which is, I'm not putting that down pejoratively but that was part of his personality. And I thought it was a very weak personality. And as Orwell says, how people think comes out in their writing and what their personalities are comes out in their playing.

Modern Jazz Quartet

Well Milt Jackson, the vibist in the Modern Jazz Quartet is about as passionate a vibist as you can find. He plays the blues. John Lewis, the musical director and pianist is more passionate than his austere bearing would indicate and the same Lewis Connie Kay and the Late Connie Kay and Percy Heath. The thing about that was that John really wanted, among other things, I mean he was obviously very careful about the music. But he wanted to bring dignity back to jazz. And I was there at a rehearsal when they were just starting and they were going from Philadelphia to New York and I tell you they spent more time in that rehearsal as John told them what to bring in terms of clothes than they did about the music. You know, it's beautiful stuff that they play, again, I wish they were a bit more soul's music. I mean it's there but I'd like to hear more of it.

What about all that soul music?

Well, it takes somebody like Ray Charles who was the quintessence of soul and he has played with jazz groups and he certainly fits right in there. Some of the others, I like soul music, I mean, Black soul music, it's a lot of fun and sometimes more serious than fun. But I think it's on the margins of jazz rather than in the middle of it the way Ray Charles sometimes is when he chooses to be.

Criticism.

Well, it sounds odd coming from me because I did so much of it and thank God I don't do anymore now. I only write about musicians and recordings for the Wall Street Journal that I like. I don't put anybody down anymore. I just, it's like I used the word use used the term once angular with regard to a pianist, to Horace Silver. And Horace who was a very gentle fellow came up to me and said, "Will you explain to me what angular means? Would you play that on the piano?" I mean, a lot of us use words that I don't think have much resonance or clarity to either the musician or to the audience. There have been, in any field, obviously but in jazz there have been very few, there have been a lot of reviewers, but there haven't been many critics, people who can get inside the music and analyze it, I won't say for the benefit of the player. I don't think that's useful. We once, we, Martin Williams and I once had a magazine called *The Jazz Review* and it was written only by musicians. We wanted to start that. And Gunther Schuller who was a first class musician once wrote a piece explaining how Sonny Rollins does what he does. Everything, the chords, the rhythms, and unfortunately, Sonny read it and he was paralyzed for quite a while because he was thinking all the time about what he's supposed to be doing. I don't think you should write for artists. Let artists be artists. You're supposed to I think, to some extent, try to clarify things for the lay people like ourselves. But by and large, as I mean, Martin Williams, the late Martin Williams was a true critic. Gary Giddens knows what he's doing but not many other people do. And the problem is and this has

been all through the music. All through the history, critics can determine whether a guy can feed himself and his family.

The End