**The JAZZ Story**

**An Outline History of Jazz**

In the span of less than a century, the remarkable native American music

called Jazz has risen from obscure folk origins to become this country's

most significant original art form, loved and played in nearly every land on

earth.

Today, Jazz flourishes in many styles, from basic blues and ragtime

through New Orleans and Dixieland, swing and mainstream, bebop and

modern to free form and electronic. What is extraordinary is not that Jazz

has taken so many forms, but that each form has been vital enough to

survive and to retain its own character and special appeal. It takes only

open ears and an open mind to appreciate all the many and wide-raging

delights jazz has to offer.

**THE ROOTS**

Jazz developed from folk sources. Its origins are shrouded in obscurity, but

the slaves brought here from Africa, torn from their own ancestral culture,

developed it as a new form of communication in song and story.

Black music in America retained much of Africa in its distinctive rhythmic

elements and also in its tradition of collective improvisation. This heritage,

blended with the music of the new land, much of it vocal, produced more

than just a new sound. It generated an entire new mode of musical

expression.

The most famous form of early Afro-American music is the spiritual.

These beautiful and moving religious songs were most often heard by

white audiences in more genteel versions than those performed in rural

black churches. What is known as gospel music today, more accurately

reflects the emotional power and rhythmic drive of early Afro-American

music than a recording of a spiritual by the famous Fisk Jubilee Singers

from the first decade of this century.

Other early musical forms dating from the slavery years include work

songs, children's songs, and dances, adding up to a remarkable legacy,

especially since musical activity was considerable restricted under that

system.

**BIRTH OF THE BLUES**

After the slaves were freed, Afro-American music grew rapidly. The

availability of musical instruments, including military band discards, and

the new-found mobility gave birth to the basic roots of Jazz: brass and

dance band music and the blues.

The blues, a seemingly simple form of music that nevertheless lends itself

to almost infinite variation, has been a significant part of every Jazz style,

and has also survived in its own right. Today's rock and soul music would

be impossible without the blues. Simply explained, it is and eight (or

twelve) bar strain with lyrics in which the first stanza is repeated. It gets its

characteristic "blue" quality from a flattening of the third and seventh notes

of the tempered scale. In effect, the blues is the secular counterpart of the

spirituals.

**BRASS BANDS AND RAGTIME**

By the late 1880's, there were black brass, dance and concert bands in

most southern cities. (At the same time, black music in the north was

generally more European-oriented.) Around this era, ragtime began to

emerge. Though primarily piano music, bands also began to pick it up and

perform it. Ragtime's golden age was roughly from 1898 to 1908, but its

total span began earlier and lingered much later. Recently, it has been

rediscovered. A music of great melodic charm, its rhythms are heavily

syncopated, but it has almost no blues elements. Ragtime and early Jazz

are closely related, but ragtime certainly was more sedate.

Greatest of the ragtime composers was Scott Joplin (1868-1917). Other

masters of the form include James Scott, Louis Chauvink Eubie Blake

(1883-1983) and Joseph Lamb, a white man who absorbed the idiom

completely.

ENTER JASS

Ragtime, especially in its watered-down popular versions, was

entertainment designed for the middle class and was frowned on by the

musical establishment. The music not yet called Jazz (in its earliest usage it

was spelled "jass"), came into being during the last decade of the 19th

century, rising out of the black working-class districts of southern cities.

Like ragtime, it was a music meant for dancing.

The city that has become synonymous with early Jazz is New Orleans.

There is reality as well as myth behind this notion.

**New Orleans: Cradle of Jazz**

New Orleans played a key role in the birth and growth of Jazz, and the

music's early history has been more thoroughly researched and

documented there than anywhere else. But, while the city may have had

more and better Jazz than any other from about 1895 to 1917, New

Orleans was by no means the only place where the sounds were

incubating. Every southern city with a sizable black population had music

that must be considered early Jazz. It came out of St. Louis, which grew to

be the center of ragtime; Memphis, which was the birthplace of W.C.

Handy (1873-1958), the famed composer and collector of blues; Atlanta,

Baltimore, and other such cities.

What was unique to New Orleans at the time was a very open and free

social atmosphere. People of different ethnic and racial backgrounds could

establish contact, and out of this easy communication came a rich musical

tradition involving French, Spanish, German, Irish and African elements. It

was no wonder that this cosmopolitan and lively city was a fertile breeding

ground for Jazz.

If New Orleans was the birthplace of Jazz in truth as well as in legend, the

tale that the music was born in its red light district is purest nonsense. New

Orleans did have legalized prostitution and featured some of the most

elaborate and elegant "sporting houses" in the nation. But the music, if any,

that was heard in these establishments was made by solo pianists.

Actually, Jazz was first heard in quite different settings. New Orleans was

noted for its many social and fraternal organizations, most of which

sponsored or hired bands for a variety of occasions -- indoor and outdoor

dances, picnics, store openings, birthday or anniversary parties. And, of

course, Jazz was the feature of the famous funeral parades, which survive

even today. Traditionally, a band assembles in front of the church and

leads a slow procession to the cemetery, playing solemn marches and

mournful hymns. On the way back to town, the pace quickens and fast,

peppy marches and rags replace the dirges. These parades, always great

crowd attractions, were important to the growth of Jazz. It was here that

trumpeters and clarinetists would display their inventiveness and the

drummers work out the rhythmic patterns that became the foundation for

"swinging" the beat.

The best way to account for the early development of jazz in New Orleans is to familiarize yourself with the cultural and social history of this marvelously distinctive regional culture.

One might say that jazz is the Americanization of the New Orleans music developed by the Creoles, occuring at a time when ragtime, blues, spirituals, marches, and popular "tin pan alley" music were converging. Jazz was a style of playing which drew from all of the above and presented an idiommatic model based on a concept of collective, rather than solo, improvisation.

Ultimately, New Orleans players such as Louis Armstrong and Sidney Bechet developed a new approach which emphasized solos, but they both began their careers working in the collective format, evident in the early recordings by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band (1917), Kid Ory's Sunshine Orchestra (1921), the New Orleans Rhythm Kings (1922, 1923) and King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band (1923).

Armstrong's impact became apparent with the popularity of his Hot Five and Hot Seven recordings (1925-28), redirecting everyone's imagination toward inspired solos. Meanwhile, in New Orleans, community connections such as "jazz funerals" in which brass bands performed at funerals held by benevolent

associations continued to underline the role of jazz as a part of everyday life.

Jazz may have been a luxury (entertainment) in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, but in New Orleans it was a necessity--a part of the fabric of life in the neighborhoods. And it still is.

**THE EARLY MUSICIANS - Buddy, Bunk, Freddie and The King**

The players in these early bands were mostly artisans (carpenters,

bricklayers, tailors, etc.) or laborers who took time out on weekends and

holidays to make music along with a little extra cash.

The first famous New Orleans musician, and the archetypal jazzman, was

Buddy Bolden (1877-1931). A barber by trade, he played cornet and began

to lead a band in the late 1890's. Quite probably, he was the first to mix

the basic, rough blues with more conventional band music. It was a

significant step in the evolution of Jazz.

Bolden suffered a seizure during a 1907 Mardi Gras parade and spent the

rest of his life in an institution for the incurably insane. Rumor that he

made records have never been substantiated, and his music comes from

the recollection of other musicians who heard him when they were young.

Bunk Johnson (1989- 1949), who played second cornet in one of Bolden's

last bands, contributed greatly to the revival of interest in classic New

Orleans jazz that took place during the last decade of his life. A great

storyteller and colorful personality, Johnson is responsible for much of the

New Orleans legend. But much of what he had to say was more fantasy

than fact.

Many people, including serious fans, believe that the early jazz musicians

were self-taught geniuses who didn't read music and never took a formal

lesson. A romantic notion, but entirely untrue. Almost every major figure

in early jazz had at least a solid grasp of legitimate musical fundamentals,

and often much more.

Still, they developed wholly original approaches to their instruments. A

prime example is Joseph (King) Oliver (1885-1938), a cornetist and

bandleader who used all sorts of found objects, including drinking glasses,

a sand pail, and a rubber bathroom plunger to coax a variety of sounds

from his horn. Freddie Keppard (1889-1933), Oliver's chief rival, didn't

use mutes, perhaps because he took pride in being the loudest cornet in

town. Keppard, the first New Orleans great to take the music to the rest of

the country, played in New York vaudeville with the Original Creole

Orchestra in 1915.

**JAZZ COMES NORTH**

By the early years of the second decade, the instrumentation of the typical

Jazz band had become cornet (or trumpet), trombone, clarinet, guitar,

string bass and drums. (Piano rarely made it since most jobs were on

location and pianos were hard to transport.) The banjo and tuba, so closely

identified now with early Jazz, actually came in a few years later because

early recording techniques couldn't pick up the softer guitar and string bass

sounds.

The cornet played the lead, the trombone filled out the bass harmony part

in a sliding style, and the clarinet embellished between these two brass

poles. The first real jazz improvisers were the clarinetists, among them

Sidney Bechet (1897-1959). An accomplished musician before he was 10,

Bechet moved from clarinet to playing mainly soprano saxophone. He was

to become one of the most famous early jazzmen abroad, visiting England

and France in 1919 and Moscow in 1927.

Most veteran jazz musicians state that their music had no specific name at

first, other than ragtime or syncopated sounds. The first band to use the

term Jazz was that of trombonist Tom Brown, a white New Orleanian who

introduced it in Chicago in 1915. The origin of the word is cloudy and its

initial meaning has been the subject of much debate.

The band that made the word stick was also white and also from New

Orleans, the Original Dixieland Jass Band. This group had a huge

success in New York in 1917-18 and was the first more or less authentic

Jazz band to make records. Most of its members were graduates of the

bands of Papa Jack Laine (1873-1966), a drummer who organized his

first band in 1888 and is thought to have been the first white Jazz

musician. In any case, there was much musical integration in New Orleans,

and a number of light skinned Afro-Americans "passed" in white bands.

By 1917, many key Jazz players, white and black, had left New Orleans

and other southern cities to come north. The reason was not the notorious

1917 closing of the New Orleans red light district, but simple economics.

The great war in Europe had created an industrial boom, and the musicians

merely followed in the wake of millions of workers moving north to the

promise of better jobs.

**LITTLE LOUIS & THE KING**

King Oliver moved to Chicago in 1918. As his replacement in the best

band in his hometown, he recommended an 18-year-old, Louis Armstrong.

Little Louis, as his elders called him, had been born on August 4, 1901, in

poverty that was extreme even for New Orleans' black population. His

earliest musical activity was singing in the streets for pennies with a boy's

quartet he had organized. Later he sold coal and worked on the levee.

Louis received his first musical instruction at reform school, where he

spent eighteen months for shooting off an old pistol loaded with blanks on

the street on New Year's Eve of 1913. He came out with enough musical

savvy to take jobs with various bands in town. The first established

musician to sense the youngster's great talent was King Oliver, who tutored

Louis and became his idol.

**THE CREOLE JAZZ BAND**

When Oliver sent for Louis to join him in Chicago, that city had become

the world's new Jazz center. Even though New York was where the

Original Dixieland Jass Band had scored its big success, followed by the

spawning of the first dance craze associated with the music, the New York

bands seemed to take on the vaudeville aspects of the ODJB's style

without grasping the real nature of the music. Theirs was an imitation

Dixieland (of which Ted Lewis was the first and most successful

practitioner), but there were few southern musicians in New York to lend

the music a New Orleans authenticity.

Chicago, on the other hand, was teeming with New Orleans musicmakers,

and the city's nightlife was booming in the wake of prohibition. By all

odds, the best band in town was Oliver's Creole Jazz Band, especially

after Louis joined in late 1922. The band represented the final great

flowering of classic New Orleans ensemble style and was also the

harbinger of something new. Aside from the two cornetists, its stars were

the Dodds Brothers, clarinetists Johnny (1892-1940) and drummer Baby

(1898-1959). Baby Dodds brought a new level of rhythmic subtlety and

drive to jazz drumming. Along with another New Orleans-bred musician,

Zutty Singleton (1897-1975), he introduced the concept of swinging to the

Jazz drums. But the leading missionary of swinging was, unquestionably,

Louis Armstrong.

**FIRST JAZZ ON RECORDS**

The Creole Jazz Band began to record in 1923 and while not the first black

New Orleans band to make records, it was the best. The records were

quite widely distributed and the band's impact on musicians was great.

Two years earlier, trombonist Kid Ory (1886-1973) and his Sunshine

Orchestra captured the honor of being the first recorded artists in this

category. However, they recorded for an obscure California company

which soon went out of business and their records were heard by very

few.

Also in 1923, the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, a white group active in

Chicago, began to make records. This was a much more sophisticated

group than the old Dixieland Jass Band, and on one of its recording dates,

it used the great New Orleans pianist-composer Ferdinand (Jelly Roll)

Morton (1890-1941). The same year, Jelly Roll also made his own initial

records.

**JELLY ROLL MORTON**

Morton, whose fabulous series of 1938 recordings for the Library of

Congress are a goldmine of information about early Jazz, was a complex

man. Vain, ambitious, and given to exaggeration, he was a pool shark,

hustler and gambler a well as a brilliant pianist and composer. His greatest

talent, perhaps was for organizing and arranging. The series of records he

made with his Red Hot Peppers between 1926 and 1928 stands, alongside

Oliver's as the crowning glory of the New Orleans tradition and one of the

great achievements in Jazz.

**LOUIS IN NEW YORK AND BIG BANDS ARE BORN**

That tradition, however, was too restricting for a creative genius like Louis

Armstrong. He left Oliver in late 1924, accepting an offer from New

York's most prestigious black bandleader, Fletcher Henderson

(1897-1952). Henderson's band played at Roseland Ballroom on

Broadway and was the first significant big band in Jazz history.

Evolved from the standard dance band of the era, the first big Jazz bands

consisted of three trumpets, one trombone, three saxophones (doubling all

kinds of reed instruments), and rhythm section of piano, banjo, bass (string

or brass) and drums. These bands played from written scores

(arrangements or "charts"), but allowed freedom of invention for the

featured soloists and often took liberties in departing from the written

notes.

Though it was the best of the day, Henderson's band lacked rhythmic

smoothness and flexibility when Louis joined up. The flow and grace of his

short solos on records with the band make them stand out like diamonds in

a tin setting.

The elements of Louis' style, already then in perfect balance, included a

sound that was the most musical and appealing yet heard from a trumpet; a

gift for melodic invention that was as logical as it was new and startling,

and a rhythmic poise (jazzmen called it "time") that made other players

sound stiff and clumsy in comparison.

His impact on musicians was tremendous. Nevertheless, Henderson didn't

feature him regularly, perhaps because he felt that the white dancers for

whom his band performed were not ready for Louis' innovations. During

his year with the band, however, Louis caused a transformation in its style

and, eventually, in the whole big band field. Henderson's chief arranger,

Don Redman, (1900-1964) grasped what Louis was doing and got some of

it on paper. After working with Louis, tenor saxophonist Coleman

Hawkins (1904-1969) developed a style for his instrument that became the

guidepost for the next decade.

While in New York, Louis also made records with Sidney Bechet, and

with Bessie Smith (1894-1937), the greatest of all blues singers. In 1925,

he returned to Chicago and began to make records under his own name

with a small group, the Hot Five. Included were his wife Lil Hardin

Armstrong (1899-1971) on piano, Kid Ory, Johnny Dodds, and guitarist

Johnny St. Cyr. The records, first to feature Louis extensively, became a

sensation among musicians, first all over the United States and later all

over the world. The dissemination of jazz, and in a very real sense its

whole development, would have been impossible without the phonograph.

**KING LOUIS**

The Hot Five was strictly a recording band. For everyday work, Louis

played in a variety of situations, including theater pit bands. He continued

to grow and develop, and in 1927 switched from cornet to the more

brilliant trumpet. He had occasionally featured his unique gravel voiced

singing, but only as a novelty. Its popular potential became apparent in

1929, when, back in New York, he starred in a musical show in which he

introduced the famous Ain't Misbehavin' singing as well as playing the

great tune written by pianist Thomas (Fats) Waller (1904-1943), himself

one of the greatest instrumentalists-singers-showmen in Jazz.

It was during his last year in Chicago while working with another pianist,

Earl (Fatha) Hines (1903-1983), that Louis reached his first artistic peak.

Hines was the first real peer to work with Louis. Inspired by him, he was

in turn able to inspire. Some of the true masterpieces of Jazz, among them

West End Blues and the duet Weatherbird, resulted from the

Armstrong-Hines union.

**THE JAZZ AGE**

Louis Armstrong dominated the musical landscape of the 20's and, in fact,

shaped the Jazz language of the decade to come as well. But the Jazz of

the Jazz Age was more often than not just peppy dance music made by

young men playing their banjos and saxophones who had little

understanding of (or interest in) what the blues and/or Louis Armstrong

were about. Still, a surprising amount of music produced by this

dance-happy period contained genuine Jazz elements.

**PAUL WHITEMAN - King of Jazz?**

The most popular bandleader of the decade was Paul Whiteman

(1890-1967), who ironically became known as the King of Jazz, although

his first successful bands played no Jazz at all and his later ones precious

little. These later bands, however, did play superb dance music, expertly

scored and performed by the best white musicians the extravagant

Whiteman paychecks could attract. From 1926 on, Whiteman gave

occasional solo spots to such Jazz-influenced players as cornetist Red

Nichols, violinist Joe Venuti, guitarist Eddie Lang (1904-1933), and the

Dorsey Brothers' trombonist-trumpeter Tommy (1905-1956) and

clarinetist-saxophonist Jimmy (1904-1957), all of whom later became

bandleaders in their own right.

In 1927, Whiteman took over the key personnel of Jean Goldkette's

Jazz-oriented band, which included a young cornetist and sometime pianist

and composer of rare talent, Bix Beiderbecke (1903-1931). Bix's very

lyrical, personal music and early death combined to make him the first

(and most durable) jazz legend. His romanticized life story became the

inspiration for a novel and a film, neither of them close to the truth.

Bix's closest personal and musical friend during the most creative period of

his life was saxophonist Frank Trumbauer (1901-1956). Fondly known as

Bix and Tram, the team enhanced many an otherwise dull Whiteman

record with their brilliant interplay or their individual efforts.

**THE BEIDERBECKE LEGACY**

Bix's bittersweet lyricism influenced many aspiring jazzmen, among them

the so-called Austin High Gang, made up of gifted Chicago youngsters

only a few of whom ever actually attended Austin High School. Among

them were such later sparkplugs of the Swing Era as drummers Gene

Krupa (1909-1973) and Dave Tough (1908-1948); clarinetist Frank

Teschemacher (1905-1932); saxophonist Bud Freeman (1906-1991);

pianists Joe Sullivan (1906-1971) and Jess Stacy (b. 1904); and

guitarist-entrepreneur Eddie Condon (1905-1973). Their contemporaries

and occasional comrades-in-arms included a clarinet prodigy named Benny

Goodman (1905-1986); and somewhat older reedman and character, Mezz

Mezzrow (1899-1972), whose 1946 autobiography, Really the Blues,

remains, despite inaccuracies, one of the best Jazz books.

Trumbauer, though not a legend like Bix, influenced perhaps as many

musicians. Among them were two of the greatest saxophonist in Jazz

history, Benny Carter (b.1907) and Lester (Prez) Young (1909-1959).

**BLACK & WHITE**

A great influence on young Goodman was the New Orleans clarinetist

Jimmie Noone (1995-1944), an exceptional technician with a beautiful

tone. Chicago was an inspiring environment for a young musician. There

was plenty of music and there were plenty of masters to learn from.

Cornetist Muggsy Spanier (1906-1967) took his early cues from King

Oliver. In New York, there was less contact between black and white

players, though white jazzmen often made the trek to Harlem or worked

opposite Fletcher Henderson at the Roseland. When a young Texas

trombonist, Jack Teagarden (1905-1964), came to town in 1928, he

startled everyone with his blues-based playing (and singing), very close in

concept to that of Henderson's trombone star, Jimmy Harrison

(1900-1931). These two set the pace for all comers.

Teagarden, alongside Benny Goodman, worked in Ben Pollack's band.

Pollack, who'd played drums with the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, was

quite a talent spotter and always had good bands. When Henderson

arranger Don Redman took over McKinney's Cotton Pickers in 1929 and

made it one of the bands of the `20s, his replacement was Benny Carter.

Carter could (and still can) write arrangements and play trumpet and

clarinet as well as alto sax. For many years, he was primarily active as a

composer for films and TV; but in the late 1970's, Carter resumed his

playing career with renewed vigor. (Editor's Note-Carter just turned

eighty and is still playing and recording.)

**THE UNIQUE DUKE**

Another artist whose career spanned more than fifty years is Duke

Ellington (1899-1974). By 1972, he was one of New York's most

successful bandleaders, resident at Harlem's Cotton Club--a nightspot

catering to whites only but featuring the best in black talent.

Ellington's unique gifts as composer-arranger-pianist were coupled with

equally outstanding leadership abilities. From 1927 to 1941, with very few

exceptions and occasional additions, his personnel remained unchanged--a

record no other bandleader (except Guy Lombardo, of all people) ever

matched.

Great musicians passed through the Ellington ranks between 1924 and

1974. Among the standouts: great baritone saxist Harry Carney

(1907-1974), who joined in 1927; Johnny Hodges (1906-1970), whose

alto sax sound was one of the glories of jazz; Joe (Tricky Sam) Nanton

(1904-1946), master of the "talking" trombone; Barney Bigard

(1906-1980); whose pure-toned clarinet brought a touch of New Orleans

to the band; Ben Webster (1909-1973), one of Coleman Hawkins' greatest

disciples; drummer Sonny Greer (1903-1982), and Rex Stewart

(1907-1967) and Cootie Williams (1910-1985), an incomparable trumpet

team. Among the later stars were trumpeter Clark Terry (b. 1920) and

tenor saxist Paul Gonsalves (1920-1974).

Ellington's music constitutes a world within the world of Jazz. One of the

century's outstanding composers, he wrote over 1,000 short pieces, plus

many suites, music for films, the theater and television, religious works and

more. He must be ranked one of the century's foremost musicians,

regardless of labels. His uninterrupted activity as a bandleader since 1924

has earned him a high place in each successive decade, and his

achievement is a history of Jazz in itself.

Three outstanding contributors to Ellingtonia must be mentioned. They are

trumpeter-composer Bubber Miley (1903-1932), the co-creator of the first

significant style for the band and, like his exact contemporary Bix

Beiderbecke, a victim of too much, too soon; bassist Jimmy Blanton

(1918-1942), who in his two years with Ellington shaped a whole new role

for his instrument in Jazz, both as a solo and ensemble voice; and Billy

Strayhorn (1915-1967), composer-arranger and Ellington alter ego who

contributed much to the band from 1939 until his death.

**STRIDE & BOOGIE WOOGIE**

Aside from the band, for which he wrote with such splendid skill,

Ellington's instrument was the piano. When he came to New York as a

young man, his idols were James P. Johnson (1894-1955), a brilliant

instrumentalist and gifted composer, and Johnson's closest rival, Willie

(The Lion) Smith (1898-1973). Both were masters of the "stride" school of

Jazz piano, marked by an exceptionally strong, pumping line in the left

hand. James P.'s prize student was Fats Waller. New York pianists often

met in friendly but fierce contests--the beginnings of what would later be

known as jam sessions.

In Chicago, a very different piano style came into the picture in the late

`20s, dubbed boogie-woogie after the most famous composition by its first

significant exponent, Pinetop Smith (1904-1929). This rolling,

eight-to-the-bar bass style was popular at house parties in the Windy City

and became a national craze in 1939, after three of its best practitioners,

Albert Ammons, Pete Johnson and Meade Lux Lewis, had been presented

in concert at Carnegie Hall.

**KANSAS CITY SOUNDS**

Johnson was from Kansas City, where boogie-woogie was also popular.

The midwestern center was a haven for Jazz musicians through-out the

rule of Boss Pendergast, when the city was wide open and music could be

heard around the clock.

The earliest and one of the best of the K.C. bands was led by Bennie

Moten (1894-1935). By 1930 it had in its ranks pianist Count Basie

(1905-1984) who'd learned from Fats Waller; trumpeter-singer Oran (Hot

Lips) Page (1908-1954), one of Louis Armstrong's greatest disciples; and

an outstanding singer, Jimmy Rushing (1903-1972). The city was to put its

imprint on Jazz during the `30s and early `40s.

**DEPRESSION DAYS**

The great Depression had its impact on Jazz as it did on virtually all other

facets of American life. The record business reached its lowest ebb in

1931. By that year, many musicians who had been able to make a living

playing Jazz had been forced to either take commercial music jobs or leave

the field entirely.

But the music survived. Again, Louis Armstrong set a pattern. At the helm

of a big band with his increasingly popular singing as a feature, he recast

the pop hits of the day in his unique Jazz mold, as such artists as Fats

Waller and Billie Holiday (1915-1959), perhaps the most gifted of female

Jazz singers would do a few years later.

Thus, while sentimental music and romantic "crooners" were the rage

(among them Bing Crosby who had worked with Paul Whiteman and

learned more than a little from Jazz), a new kind of "hot" dance music

began to take hold. It wasn't really new, but rather a streamlining of the

Henderson style, introduced by the Casa Loma Orchestra which featured

the arrangements of Georgia-born guitarist Gene Gifford (1908-1970).

Almost forgotten today, this band paved the way for the Swing Era.

**THE COMING OF SWING**

As we've seen, big bands were a feature of the Jazz landscape from the

first. Though the Swing Era didn't come into full flower until 1935, most

up-and-coming young jazzmen from 1930 found themselves working in big

bands.

Among these were two pacesetters of the decade, trumpeter Roy (Little

Jazz) Eldridge (1911-1989) and tenorist Leon (Chu) Berry (1908-1941).

Eldridge, the most influential trumpeter after Louis, has a fiery mercurial

style and great range and swing. Among the bands he sparked were

Fletcher Henderson's and Teddy Hill's. The latter group also included

Berry, the most gifted follower of Coleman Hawkins, and the brilliant

trombonist Dicky Wells (1909-1985).

Another trend setting band was that of tiny, hunchbacked drummer Chick

Webb (1909-1939), who by dint of almost superhuman energy overcame

his physical handicap and made himself into perhaps the greatest of all Jazz

drummers. His band really got under way when he heard and hired a

young girl singer in 1935. Her name was Ella Fitzgerald (b. 1917).

**THE KING OF SWING**

But it was Benny Goodman who became the standard-bearer of swing. In

1934, he gave up a lucrative career as a studio musician to form a big band

with a commitment to good music. His Jazz-oriented style met with little

enthusiasm at first. He was almost ready to give it up near the end of a

disastrous cross-country tour in the summer of `35 when suddenly his

fortunes shifted. His band was received with tremendous acclaim at the

Palomar Ballroom in Los Angeles.

It seems that the band's broadcasts had been especially well timed for

California listeners. Whatever the reason, the band, which included such

Jazz stars as the marvelous trumpeter Bunny Berigan (1908-1942) and

drummer Gene Krupa, not to mention Benny himself, now scored success

after success. Some of the band's best material was contributed by

arrangers Fletcher Henderson and his gifted younger brother Horace.

As the bands grew in popularity, a new breed of fan began to appear. This

fan wanted to listen as much as he wanted to dance. (In fact, some

disdained dancing altogether.) He knew each man in each band and read

the new swing magazines that were springing up--Metronome, Down Beat,

Orchestra World. He collected records and listened to the growing number

of band broadcasts on radio. Band leaders were becoming national figures

on a scale with Hollywood stars.

**OTHER GREAT BIG BANDS**

Benny's arch rival in the popularity sweepstakes was fellow clarinetist

Artie Shaw (b.1910), who was an on-again-off-again leader. Other very

successful bands included those of Jimmy Dorsey and Tommy Dorsey,

whose co-led Dorsey Brothers Band split up after one of their celebrated

fights.

First among black bandleaders were Duke Ellington and Jimmie Lunceford

(1902-1947). The latter led a highly disciplined and showmanship-oriented

band which nevertheless spotlighted brilliant jazz soloists, among them

saxophonists Willie Smith and Joe Thomas and trombonist Trummy Young

(1912-1984). The man who set the band's style, trumpeter-arranger Sy

Oliver (1910-1988), later went with Tommy Dorsey.

A newcomer on the national scene was Count Basie's crew from Kansas

City, with key soloists Lester Young and Herschel Evans (1909-1939) on

tenors, Buck Clayton (1912-1992) and Harry Edison (b.1915) on

trumpets, and Jimmy Rushing and Billie Holiday (later Helen Humes) on

vocals.

But important as these were (Lester in particular created a whole new style

for his instrument), it was the rhythm section of Basie that gave the band

its unique, smooth and rock-steady drive--the incarnation of swing,

Freddie Green (1911-1987) on guitar, Walter Page (1900-1957) on bass,

and Jo Jones (1911-1985) on drums and the Count on piano made the

rhythm section what it was. Basie, of course, continued to lead excellent

bands, but the greatest years were 1936-42.

**EXIT THE BIG BANDS**

The war years took a heavy toll of big bands. Restrictions made travel

more difficult and the best talent was being siphoned off by the draft. But

more importantly, public tastes were changing.

Ironically, the bands were in the end devoured by a monster they had

given birth to: the singers. Typified by Tommy Dorsey's Frank Sinatra,

the vocalist, made popular by a band affiliation, went out on his own; and

the public seemed to want romantic ballads more than swinging dance

music.

The big bands that survived the war soon found another form of

competition cutting into their following--television. The tube kept people

home more and more, and inevitably many ballrooms shut their doors for

good in the years between 1947 and 1955. By then it had also become too

expensive a proposition to keep 16 men traveling on the road in the big

bands' itinerant tradition. The leaders who didn't give up (Ellington, Basie,

Woody Herman, Harry James) had something special in the way of talent

and dedication that gave them durability in spite of changing tastes and

lifestyles.

The only new bands to come along in the post-war decades and make it

were those of pianist-composer Stan Kenton (1912-1979), who started his

band in 1940 but didn't hit until `45; drummer Buddy Rich (1917-1987), a

veteran of many famous swing era bands and one of jazzdom's most

phenomenal musicians, and co-leaders Thad Jones (1923-1990), and Mel

Lewis (1929-1990), a drummer once with Kenton. Another Kenton

alumnus, high-note trumpeter Maynard Ferguson (b. 1928), has led

successful big bands on and off.

**THE BEBOP REVOLUTION**

In any case, a new style, not necessarily inimical to the big bands yet very

different in spirit form earlier Jazz modes, had sprung up during the war.

Bebop, as it came to be called, was initially a musician's music, born in the

experimentation of informal jam sessions.

Characterized by harmonic sophistication, rhythmic complexity, and few

concessions to public taste, bop was spearheaded by Charlie Parker

(1920-1955), an alto saxophonist born and reared in Kansas City.

After apprenticeship with big bands (including Earl Hines'), Parker settled

in New York. From 1944 on, he began to attract attention on Manhattan's

52nd Street, a midtown block known as "Swing Street" which featured a

concentration of Jazz clubs and Jazz talent not equaled before or since.

**BIRD**

Bird, as Parker was called by his fans, was a fantastic improviser whose

imagination was matched by his technique. His way of playing (though

influenced by Lester Young and guitarist Charlie Christian (1916-1942), a

remarkable musician who was featured with Benny Goodman's sextet

between 1939-41), was something new in the world of Jazz. His influence

on musicians can be compared in scope only to that of Louis Armstrong.

Parker's principal early companions were Dizzy Gillespie, a trumpeter of

abilities that almost matched Bird's, and drummer Kenny Clarke

(1914-1985). Dizzy and Bird worked together in Hines' band and then in

the one formed by Hines vocalist Billy Eckstine (1914-1993), the key

developer of bop talent. Among those who passed through the Eckstine

ranks were trumpeters Miles Davis (1927-1991), Fats Navarro

(1923-1950), and Kenny Dorham (1924-1972); saxophonists Sonny Stitt

(1924-1982), Dexter Gordon (1923-1990), and Gene Ammons

(1925-1974); and pianist-arranger-bandleader Tadd Dameron (1917-1965).

Bop, of course, was basically small-group music, meant for listening, not

dancing. Still, there were big bands featuring bop--among them those led

by Dizzy Gillespie, who had several good crews in the late `40s and early

to mid-50's; and Woody Herman's so-called Second Herd, which included

the cream of white bop--trumpeter Red Rodney (b. 1927), and

saxophonists Stan Getz (1927-1993), Al Cohn (1925-1988) and Zoot Sims

(1925-1985), and Serge Chaloff (1923-1957).

**BOP VS. NEW ORLEANS**

Ironically, the coming of bop coincided with a revival of interest in New

Orleans and other traditional Jazz. This served to polarize audiences and

musicians and point up differences rather than common ground. The

needless harm done by partisan journalists and critics on both sides

lingered on for years.

Parker's greatest disciples were not alto saxophonists, except for Sonny

Stitt. Parker dominated on that instrument. Pianist Bud Powell

(1924-1966) translated Bird's mode to the keyboard; drummers Max

Roach and Art Blakey (1919-1990) adapted it to the percussion

instruments. A unique figure was pianist-composer Thelonious Monk,

(1917-1982). With roots in the stride piano tradition, Monk was a

forerunner of bop--in it but not of it.

**JAZZ-ROCK FUSION**

In the wake of Miles Davis' successful experiments, rock had an

increasing impact on Jazz. The notable Davis alumni Herbie

Hancock (b. 1940) and Chick Corea (b.1941) explored what soon

became known as fusion style in various ways, though neither cut

himself off from the jazz tradition. Thus Hancock's V.S.O.P., made

up of `60s Davis alumni plus trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, pursued

Miles’ pre-electronic style, while Corea continued to play acoustic

jazz in various settings. Keith Jarrett(b. 1945), who also briefly

played with Davis, never adopted the electronic keyboards but flirted

with rock rhythms before embarking on lengthy, spontaneously

conceived piano recitals. The most successful fusion band was

Weather Report, co-founded in 1970 by the Austrian-born pianist

Joe Zawinul (b. 1932) and Wayne Shorter; the partnership lasted

until 1986. The commercial orientation of much fusion Jazz offers

little incentive to creative players, but it has served to introduce

new young listeners to Jazz, and electronic instruments have been

absorbed into the Jazz mainstream.

**New York - The Jazz Mecca**

New York City is the Jazz capital of the world. Jazz musicians can be found playing at jam sessions, smoky bistros, stately concert halls, on street corners and crowded subway platforms. Although the music was born in New Orleans and nurtured in Kansas City, the Big Apple has long been a Mecca for great Jazz. From the big band romps of Duke Ellington and Count Basie at The Savoy Ballroom in Harlem to the Acid Jazz jam sessions downtown at Giant Step, New York continues to serve as the proving grounds for each major Jazz innovator.

**52nd Street - The Street That Never Slept**

Between 1934 and 1950, 52nd Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues was the place for music. The block was jam-packed with monochromatic five-story brownstone buildings in whose drab and cramped street-level interiors there were more clubs, bars and bistros than crates in an overstocked warehouse. 52nd Street started as a showcase for the small-combo Dixieland Jazz of the speakeasy era then added the big-band swing of the New Deal 30s. Before its untimely demise, hastened by changing real estate values, The Street adopted the innovations of bop and cool. So in just a few hours of club hopping, a listener could walk through the history of Jazz on 52nd Street. Favorites included pianist Art Tatum, singer Billie Holiday, tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins, Count Basie and his Big Band, trumpeter Roy Eldridge, pianist Errol Garner, trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie and alto saxophonist Charlie Parker.

**Minton's Playhouse - Birthplace of Bebop**

In the early 1940s, a group of Jazz revolutionaries gathered at an uptown club called Minton's Playhouse. Through a series of small group jam sessions frequented by musicians in their teens and early twenties, a new music called Bebop was born, sired by alto saxophonist Charlie "Bird" Parker, trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie and pianist Thelonious Monk. Bird was generally regarded as the intuitive genius and improviser of the group, his magic sound and awesome technique changing the face of Jazz. Diz was the conscious thinker and showman, a man who spent a lifetime charming audiences worldwide. Monk was the creative clearinghouse and refiner, a musical iconoclast whose compositions became legendary.

At first, Bebop's eccentric starts and stops, and torrents of notes played at machine-gun tempos jarred listeners and proved devilishly difficult to play. But by the late 1940s, when big-band swing had declined, bop matured and became the Jazz standard.

**Birdland - Jazz Corner of the World**

Miraculously, just as 52nd caved in, Birdland opened on Broadway. For more than a decade, from 1949-1962, the survival formula was memorable double and triple bills, commencing at 9pm and sometimes lasting untill dawn. Descending the stairs to the jammed basement nitery, a listener would encounter a racially mixed throng, primed for an evening of high octane musical invigoration. To add to the excitement, Birdland's colorful host was Pee Wee Marquette, a uniformed midget. Riding the final crest of the Bebop wave, Birdland was a musical oasis for accomplished improvisors where the finest jazz on planet earth was presented with a minimum of pretense. The club has let it all hang out ambiance encouraged musicians to stretch the boundaries with spirited audience encouragement. Live radio broadcasts from the club, hosted by Symphony Sid, compounded the excitement.

**JAZZ TODAY**

Diversity is the word for today's Jazz. Various aspects of freedom have

been pursued by the many gifted musicians connected with the AACM

(American Association for Creative Musicians), a collective formed in

1965 under the guidance of the pianist-composer Richard Muhal Abrams

(b. 1930). Among the groups that have emerged, directly and indirectly,

from the AACM are the Art Ensemble of Chicago and The World

Saxophone Quartet, and notable musicians of this lineage include

trumpeter Lester Bowie (b. 1941), reedmen Anthony Braxton (b.1945),

Joseph Jarman, Julius Hemphill, Roscoe Mitchell and David Murray,

and violinist Leroy Jenkins, Ornette Coleman has continued to go his own

way, introducing a unique fusion band, Prime Time, collaborating with

guitarist Pat Metheny (b. 1954), and celebrating occasional reunions with

his original quartet.

Quite unexpectedly, but with neat historical symmetry, a new wave of

gifted young jazz players has emerged from New Orleans, spearheaded by

the brilliant trumpeter Wynton Marsalis (b. 1961), who joined Art Blakey's

Jazz Messengers--a bastion of the bebop tradition--in 1979. Also an

accomplished classical virtuoso, Marsalis was soon signed by Columbia

Records and became the most visible new Jazz artist in many years.

Articulate and outspoken, he has rejected fusion and stressed the

continuity of the Jazz tradition. His slightly older brother, Branford

Marsalis (b. 1960), who plays tenor and soprano sax, was a member of

Wynton's quintet until he joined with rock icon Sting's band for a year. He

has since led his own straight-ahead jazz quartet. As his replacement with

Blakey, Wynton recommended fellow New Orleanian Terence Blanchard

(b. 1962), who later formed a group with altoist Donald Harrison also

from New Orleans, as co-leader.

Many other gifted players have emerged during the present decade -- too

many to list here. Many have affirmed their roots in bebop, and some have

reached even further back to mainstream swing (such as tenorist Scott

Hamilton (b. 1954), and trumpeter Warren Vache, Jr. [b. 1951]), but

almost all, even when choosing experimentation and innovation, operate

within the established language of jazz. As in the other arts, Jazz seems to

have arrived at a postmodern stage.

We ought not to overlook the increasingly important role being played by

women instrumentalists, among them Carla Bley, JoAnne Brackeen, Jane

Ira Bloom, Amina Claudine Myers, Emely Remler and Janice Robinson.

The durability of the Jazz tradition has been symbolically affirmed by two

events: the Academy Award nomination of Dexter Gordon, the seminal

bebop tenor saxophonist, for his leading role in the film Round Midnight,

and the widely acclaimed appearances of Benny Carter, approaching his

90th birthday, at the helm of the American Jazz Orchestra (an ensemble

formed in 1986 to perform the best in Jazz, past and present) both as a

player and composer.

And one may also take heart at the qualitative as well as quantitative

growth of Jazz education in this country, and the active involvement of so

many fine performing artist in this process.

**SUMMING UP**

No one can presume to guess what form the next development in Jazz will

take. What we do know is that the music today presents a rich panorama

of sounds and styles.

Thelonious Monk, that uncompromising original who went from the

obscurity of the pre-bop jam sessions in Harlem to the cover of TIME and

worldwide acclaim without ever diluting his music, once defined jazz in his

unique way:

"Jazz and freedom," Monk said, "go hand in hand. That explains it. There

isn't anymore to add to it. If I do add to it, it gets complicated. That's

something for you to think about. You think about it and dig it. You dig it."

Jazz, a music born in slavery, has become the universal song of freedom.

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