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Jazzletter

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Twilight Time

Your comments on what remains of the record business have been welcome and valuable. Good information on the subject must be shared as widely as possible if, during this time of trickle-down torment, quality music is to survive and prosper. In this regard, I hope the following comments will provide a useful summary of memoranda, meetings, and communications from my three decades as a professional musician, personal manager, and, in recent years, record executive.

All of us have a mutuality of concerns, in particular the survival of quality music at the major labels — which still comprise the bulk of the industry — and the increasingly crucial area of the productivity of *all* the artists at those labels.

Since jazz is also a common passion, and since the lack of priority attention and marketing focus for this music represents in microcosm the dilemmas that result whenever artistic quality attempts to exist — as it must — in the fabric of corporate reality, it would be helpful to begin with an obvious but necessary observation: It remains characteristic of the contemporary music industry, which is still structured on sales of rock and other musics perceived to be broadly "accessible", that jazz and music related to it have not been as profitable at major labels as they could be.

Among the causes for the present inferior status of jazz at those labels is the almost total absence of personnel with the experience and background to relate productively both to jazz artists and corporate needs. As a result, other less appropriate personnel are assigned to an area that they do not in fact understand. Faced with the constant challenges of survival in corporations threatened by an increasingly critical economy, they allocate a lower priority to jazz releases and identify themselves with product thought to be more profitable.

What is more, major label personnel will almost always choose to share useful information and associate with only those artists considered more successful — and therefore more relevant to the political survival of those label executives and staff members.

The jazz artists, already conditioned to social and creative deprivation, are further excluded from most of the constructive input and communication which they need even more than artists in almost every other category. As they then become reflexively more alienated about competing with those artists perceived to be "successful", this hostility in turn causes already insecure and overworked record company personnel to retreat even further from what should be a common goal: sales success for both the jazz artist and the label.

Ultimately, as the commercial credibility of the music decreases, jazz at the major labels continues to be cut back, in spite of a potential it was never allowed realistically to accomplish in the first place.

The success of any record company is in direct proportion to the productivity of the artists, established or new, signed to the company as performers and/or producers. What determines that productivity is the extent to which a climate exists that encourages artists to be aware of current record business realities, to keep in mind the internal priorities of the corporation they are signed to, and to be concerned for the acceptance of the industry of which they are a part.

Our industry currently suffers the most serious crisis of its existence. Although theories to explain this condition are at least as many as the probable causes, clearly, as records became an ever bigger business with increasing attractiveness for corporate acquisition, the industry suddenly found itself owned by multinational conglomerates and controlled by managements demanding even greater sales. Unfortunately, this trend culminated at a time of an adverse domestic economy that the record industry, given its natural optimism and momentum, could not prepare for. Within a negative economic context unprecedented in the industry's history of success and excess, the corporate structure has as a result become larger than the sales it can generate.

As is inevitable when corporate size exceed sales, politics has taken precedence over productivity at every level and the effect of this environment on the artists who will always remain the lifeblood of the business has been near-total paralysis. What is now sadly apparent in this period of economic uncertainty and industry-wide instability is that the too few realistically aware artists continue to be successful while the much larger majority further drain what little is left of a once-healthy business. In fact, now that major labels more than ever need renewable reservoirs of productive and competitive artists to reverse the negative spiral in which the industry is trapped, this fundamental solution has been largely ignored.

Throughout the industry, the most common "solutions" are to reduce personnel through attrition or firing waves and cut departmental budgets in the name of austerity. These are fiscal placebos. The result is that even more responsibility and workload have been put on personnel already overburdened, and in many cases unqualified as well.

Additionally, since cutbacks are premised on future projections, which in turn are based on internal input primarily reflecting political rather than actual priorities, a self-defeating catch-up process is set in motion. With new problems and pressures created by the staff overload, the process never achieves its projection. In the end, it only perpetuates both the regression it was intended to reverse, as well as the organizational excess that initially caused the difficulties.

I am convinced that neither current economic conditions nor video games nor blank cassettes are primary causes for the ills plaguing the record industry. The overwhelming acceptance of personal electronic entertainments throughout the full audience spectrum is proof that dollars for diversion still exist in immeasurable quantities. We see the highest movie grosses and profits in the history of the film business, more hardcover books commercially published than ever before, a greater number of properties now produced for regional and Broadway theater and, of course, the rapid proliferation of independent record labels which market successfully to specific audiences and which I believe indicate the most probable future form of whatever survives of the record business.

The present economy can be "blamed" only to the extent that all

consumers, including record-buyers, are now more selective and less impulsive than in the past.

At a time when more discretionary dollars are being spent for the widest variety of available entertainments within memory, it is inescapable that there are fewer hit records produced in proportion to the number of signed artists and potential audience than in any previous period of our business — and that the consumer who habitually bought records no longer does so.

All this reflects much more on the inability of an overextended industry to generate enough appropriate product for the marketplace than it does on present economic conditions. Yet record executives still cling to easy excuses and the status quo — the only status they are in fact aware of and comfortable with, however increasingly irrelevant — rather than attempt to create environments which encourage artists to once again become realistic music professionals who can compete for the quality audience long ago abandoned in a process of indulgent destruction and corporate overkill from which the record industry may never recover.

Bob Golden
New York City

Bob Golden's background includes marketing and artist development positions at CBS Records and, more recently, with the Concord Jazz label.

Your interesting discussion of the past, present, and future reminded me that Krishnamurti nailed it down with his definition of the Now: "Awareness without judgment."

Gil Evans
New York City

In the long career of Fingers Wombat, did he ever work with any of the really great blues singers? The first great one that comes to mind is Sanford U. Yesterday. But I also wonder about that blues-singing duo that came just before Sanford, the Jackie Cain and Roy Kral of their time. I refer of course to Don deMoon—Lou Clonesome.

Remember when RCA Victor used to print a Spanish translation in parentheses under the title of the record? I learned my first Spanish phrase when I bought a copy of Duke's *Take the A Train.* For the Latino market is was *Tome el Tren A.* All this came to mind the other day when I was reading a brilliant but little-known monograph on Billy Strayhorn by the noted critic Tommy L. Trenet. His works were first introduced to me by a very hip nun I had in seventh grade at St. Augustine School, Sister St. Louis of the Blue Nuns.

Bill Fogarty
Leawood, Kansas

French Autumn Syndrome Part I

One sunny autumn afternoon many years ago, I was driving across Paris with two friends. Francois, tall and cultivated and recently released from the army, had never been outside France and spoke only French. Alain, usually called Al, small and wirey and tough, was a writer, as fluent in English as he was in French, who had lived several years in Canada. His parents had died at Auschwitz. He had survived the German occupation by running and hiding, sometimes subsisting on the vegetables he pulled from farmers' fields. He was seven when his parents were destroyed. Al was one of those rare people who are above and beyond and free of nationality.

The Paris autumn has a sort of soft, golden, civilized tone. I said something about the glorious flamboyant autumn of eastern North America, a miracle of color that begins somewhere far north in Ontario and Quebec and ends somewhere south of the Virginias. No sooner were the words out than I realized how Francois would react to them, and I said in English to Al: "Watch Francois rush to the defense of the French Autumn."

And Francois said, "Oh, I don't know... The French autumn is quite beautiful."

And Al and I burst into laughter, and Francois wanted to know what we found so funny, and we could not tell him.

What was funny of course was the unquestioned conviction of the French that they and their country and culture and language are mystically superior to all others. To impugn even by a faint and unintended suggestion the supremacy of their autumn was to threaten Francois's whole body of suppositions. One's amusement at this must be tempered by the knowledge that the malady is virtually world-wide. Nationalism is what you call the other man's patriotism. This mindless reflex is on the verge of erasing life from this earth, which of course will solve the probl

At least the French word "etranger", used to designate a foreigner, merely means stranger, while our "foreigner" is laden with prejudgment: it means someone from a land where an enemy reigns. And a "barbarian" is someone whose language you don't understand. If you cannot understand, it is *ipso facto* barbaric. The moldy figs, as they were quaintly called, took this attitude in the 1940s to bebop, which they delighted in describing as "Chinese music".

Any discussion of art is freighted by a vast complex of unexamined assumptions that one might call French Autumn Syndrome. Praise one musician and someone will take up a heated advocacy of another one as his better. Like Francois, the second man feels that the foundation of his existence — implicit in his loyalties and explicit in the money he has invested in records — is being shaken. Say something about Count Basie in the 1930s, and someone is liable to tell you that the Fletcher Henderson band at its best could blow them out of town. Mention Artie Shaw and somebody will counter with Benny Goodman. Or Pee Wee Russell. Or Barney Bigard. Why? Who cares? As Ray Brown once said, "Nobody does everything best."

This intense and ultimately subjective advocacy is extraordinarily narrow way to approach music. On hearing someone he deems competitive to his favorite, the listener instantly sets up a screen of exclusion. Like Francois committed to the superiority of the French autumn, he renders himself hostile toward other experience. He becomes a fault-finder, seeking flaws and weakness in the other artist, and if necessary imagining them, rather than receiving whatever rewards the music has to offer. Implicit in this my-man-is-better-than-yours attitude is the assumption that art is a contest. Art is a matter of skilled individuals expressing their emotional (and to some extent intellectual) responses to the life experience. If the artist's manifest emotions strike sufficiently resonant chords in your own psyche, you will revel in his work. If it doesn't, you won't. And that is all there is to it.

You will encounter the Mozart maven ready to bust some Bach buff in the chops over the issue of which of them was The Greatest Composer of All Time. And you'll hear baroque boosters denigrating the entire Romantic movement. There is a major concert pianist who insists that music has been declining since Mozart, and a composer who thinks the last great composer was Schubert.

Jazz musicians are no more "objective" than their classical cousins — or the critics they accuse of bias. Pianist A respects drummer B and loves to work with him. Saxophonist C loves to

work with pianist A but despises the work of drummer B. Nor is this a hypothetical case.

This partiality in jazz is exacerbated by polls to determine who is the "best" player of each instrument. It has not helped the music. On the contrary, it has tended to divide it against itself.

And all of this, the polls and awards and acrimonious small debates, ignores the subjective nature of the artistic experience, as if there were some indisputable esthetic constant, like the speed of light in physics. If there is, it probably lies in the Fibonacci sequence of numbers, published in the *Liber Abaci* in 1202. It seems to pervade art, architecture, astronomy, biology, and even oceanography. It determines the proportions of the Parthenon and Great Pyramids, the shape of snail shells and the cochlea of your ear. Unfortunately, it has mystified scholar's from Fibonacci's time to our own.

One evening years ago I was hanging out in a Chicago club with Miles Davis. As the end of a set, Miles rejoined me at the bar. I said, "My God, the group sounds good tonight, Miles." Miles replied, "Maybe you're just listening good." And he could have been right. Perhaps I was in a particularly receptive state of mind. The mood of the moment can profoundly affect one's judgment — including that of the artist himself.

This is not to say that the artist in his vanity always thinks his work is better than others find it. He may, on the contrary, be exaggeratedly self-critical. Dizzy Gillespie told me a story when

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Transitory popularity is not proof of genius. But permanent popularity is.

— Stephen Leacock (1869-1944)

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we were discussing this point. He had played on a casual Duke Ellington recording session, and he was dissatisfied with his own work. Some time afterwards Ellington called to ask him to sign the clearance permitting its release. "You're not going to put that out!" Dizzy said. But he signed the clearance. A long time after that he heard a trumpet solo on a car radio. With his gift for the droll embellishment of a story, Dizzy described his discomfiture at hearing someone who played so much like himself. "Damn!" he said. "He's really copped some of my shit, and he's *good*!" Then he realized what he was hearing: his solo on the Ellington record.

One evening Oscar Peterson was unhappy with his trio, comprised at that time of himself, Ray Brown, and Herb Ellis. He made no secret of his displeasure. At the end of the evening, Ray Brown, annoyed, said to him, "What do you expect of this group?"

"Only a little music," Oscar said, and went off to his hotel room. The performance had been taped. Deciding he might as well know the worst, Oscar played it. "It was," he said later, "one of the best performances that group ever did, and if the quality of the sound had been good enough, I would have wanted it released." He called Ellis and Brown and apologized, saying, "You'd better come up and hear this."

"I knew it," Ray said. "I knew it all the time."

The aspects of music about which it is possible to be comparatively objective are limited to the technical; and, to make matters more difficult, the rules (such as the one-time prohibition of the tritone or parallel fifths and octaves) are subject to change. It was, I believe, Walter Damrosch who said the ear of man was like the back of a mule: beaten long enough, it could get used to anything. Even in "objective" areas, the critic can get into trouble. Jorge Bolet once performed one of the more popular piano concertos. I had to review it. I mentioned that he'd missed a few notes in the first movement. Bolet read my review the next day in the company of a musician who was a friend of mine. "Hmm," he said. "He apparently didn't notice all the notes I missed in the third movement."

As soon as you pass beyond the technical, you are in the twilight zone of taste. Few among us doubt that good and bad taste exist, but they are impossible to define. During a television documentary about his teachings and views, Mortimer Adler attempted to define beauty. He seemed like nothing so much as a man trying to carry six pounds of Jello in his hands. His delineations kept oozing through his fingers and falling to the ground in puddles of dubious assumption.

There is, however, one fundamental of any rational criticism, and it is honored more in the breach than in the observance — conspicuously in jazz. It is this: a work of art should be judged in terms of its intent. To invent a foolish example, you cannot denigrate *King Lear* because it does not make you laugh. It was not intended to. You cannot deplore a Henry Moore sculpture because it does not portray something you recognize. Or an Andrew Wyeth painting because it does. Jazz, probably more than any other art form, has been hurt by the imposition of all sorts of extraneous standards, definitions, and expectations that arise not in the heart of the performer but in the French Autumn Syndrome of critics. The critic too often does not really try to fathom what the player is *trying* to do. Instead, he objects to the artist's failure to do what he thinks *he* would have done had he the musical ability to command public attention.

The general criteria of most first-rate jazz musicians are pure. They are musical. Many of them do not separate jazz from other kinds of music, though it presents particular problems and opportunities and has its own special aspirations and satisfactions. While not losing sight of them, the jazz musician studies a harmonic system and uses instruments and techniques derived from Europe and, if he wishes to compose, puts in hard time on the standard composition and orchestration textbooks. Many jazz musicians object to the very term *jazz* because of the strictures it imposes. References to "classical" composers of the past — even the distant past — are not uncommon in their conversation, and most are well aware that collective instrumental improvisation is not unique to jazz. I've heard Miles Davis talking with knowledge about Ravel, and one of my pleasanter memories is of a long summer afternoon spent listening to Bartok with John Coltrane.

All of which makes a lack of knowledge of classical music a serious deficiency in a jazz critic. Ralph Gleason pretended to a broader culture than he actually had, which led to occassional embarrassing gaffes. When Gerry Mulligan recorded Debussy's *Maid with the Flaxen Hair* — surely a well-known work — Gleason referred to it in a review as a "lovely ballad". Jazz has consistently drawn on harmonic resources explored by "classical" composers, and jazz critics have often ascribed originality to such derivations simply because they did not recognize the sources.

What makes the matter serious is that the history of jazz is reconstructed largely from the work of commentators who are fiercely partisan and whose writings are shot through with French Autumn Syndrome. Gleason was susceptible to another symptom of the ailment — projected self-justification, which is fairly common among jazz critics. He was a champion of sloppy players, arguing that "soul" is all, and often skeptical of brilliant technical accomplishment. He was a clumsy writer, which may have had a

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Capture the ears of the young before Muzak and the school system get them!

— Canadian composer Barbara Pentland

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lot to do with his tolerance of its musical equivalent. Again, this is not confined to critics. I recently read an interview with a drummer who, admitting that he had limited technique, said that excellent technique is unnecessary in jazz. Those who worked hard to acquire it will be thrilled to hear this.

Gleason also allowed his politics, which were leftist, to impinge on his musical evaluations. He was not alone in this, of course. Nat Hentoff does the same. Gleason, interestingly enough, privately despised Hentoff, not because of any basic differences in political outlook. But Hentoff was a rival in national prominence. And of course Hentoff was and is a far more accomplished writer. On the other hand, perhaps Hentoff's political attitudes did have something to do with Gleason's attitude toward him. Perhaps he wanted to be the sole defender of down-trodden man among the jazz critics, and Hentoff was encroaching on what he considered his territory.

For various reasons — one of them being the nature of the music itself — the bulk of jazz criticism has come from the political left. It is little noticed that most of the best art comes from the left, along with much of the worst criticism.

Social and political philosophy is of course much easier to trace in literature, which is explicit, than in music, which is abstract. Consider Zola, Hugo, Tolstoy, Dickens, Jack London, Stephen Crane, Steinbeck, G.B. Shaw, H.G. Wells. Most of the great writers of the last hundred or more years have been to some degree on the left. Kipling is interesting in this regard. He began as a deeply compassionate writer. His stories reveal a love for the British soldier in India and for his Indian enemy as well. They are amazingly broad in their vision, and he was one of the truly great literary artists in the English language. But when in later life he swung to the political right, the talent withered. (Much the same thing happened to Dos Passos.) The current tendency to undervalue Kipling is probably a result of French Autumn Syndrome in liberal literary critics, who appear to be more aware of his later politics than his early stories.

It is interesting to examine the work of movie actors. Charlton Heston, Ronald Reagan, George Murphy, and John Wayne, all of the political right, have left on film a legacy of wooden performances. Wayne was a movie star, always aware of the camera and how to play to it. But he was never much of an actor — until the end of his life. After his lung cancer operation, his acting becomes touched with humanity. It was as if he had discovered his own fragile mortality; as if he had suddenly realized that he hadn't

I'm just going to keep on doing what I'm doing — tilting at windmills like every other man or woman I know, searching for a better time.
—Gordon Lightfoot

really stormed Iwo Jima, hadn't really gunned down all those bad guys and brought justice to the west. In his last three pictures he was excellent, humorous and ironic and warm, and I thought he was remarkable in the last of them all, *The Shootist*, which received bad reviews it didn't deserve — again, probably, because of French Autumn Symdrome in critics paying more attention to his politics than his work.

The bulk of truly fine acting in films seems to come from people to a greater or lesser degree left of the political center, such as Marlon Brando, Jack Lemmon, Sidney Poitier, Jane Fonda, and Shirley MacLaine. Why is this so? The answer would seem to be that the foundation of acting is the ability to imagine oneself in another's shoes — almost to become that person. Anyone whose imagination has that range has to have compassion. It is inevitable. Furthermore, the constant exercise of this "muscle" tends to make it grow. Playing the young German soldier in *All Quiet on the Western Front* turned Lew Ayres into a pacifist. Compassion breeds concern and concern leads to indignation, producing the drawings of Hogarth, some of Goya's later works, and Picasso's famous *Guernica.* And it produced the novels of Theodore Dreiser and Upton Sinclair, whose *The Jungle* was the direct cause of the first U.S. food and drug laws. A problem arises,

Political satire became obsolete in America when Henry Kissinger won the Nobel peace prize.
— Tom Leher

however, when reform becomes the purpose of art, rather than a spiritual intangible infusing it. Then it reduces art to polemic, and some appalling stuff has been turned out in the name of humanitarianism.

Nonetheless, a compassionate identification with one's fellow man seems to be absolutely essential to great art. Ronald Reagan was a notoriously poor actor, except when cast as a wealthy, superficial, and self-pleasing Drake McHugh in *King's Row.* When he achieved real power, he showed the world why: insensitivity and lack of compassion, the inability to see himself in anyone else's shoes.

Les Brown is a Republican, and the band, in fact, has a curiously Republican quality about it. Most musicians would probably argue that it's a dance band, not a jazz band. But that line is a hard one to draw, and in the early days all jazz bands played for dancers. And some fine jazz players have passed through the Les Brown band. It has always been a very good band, clean and crisp in the performance of tasteful and intelligent arrangements. It is neat. It is decorous. It is Brooks Brothers. It is country club. And it lacks fire. It does not bleed, scream, laugh or take chances. And it does not swing. It has a polite bounce to it, but it does not swing, because it never really cuts loose.

And a Les Brown performance is oddly similar to the affable tepid screen performances of Ronald Reagan, which in turn have much in common with the bland singing of Pat Boone, who is also of the political right.

Of all the actors on the political right, the most vociferous about it is Charlton Heston. Heston bitterly criticized Edward Asner for public opposition to American political and military policies in Central America. Heston's position was that Asner, as an actor and head of the Screen Actor's Guild, had no business projecting himself into such matters, even as a private citizen. And then, a few weeks later, with neither an apology nor a blush of embarrassment, Heston was all over California television, savaging Jerry Brown's campaign for the U.S. Senate and the nuclear freeze initiative. Heston is an embarrassing actor. Like Reagan, he has done one really fine performance — when cast as the egotistical and messianic Chinese Gordon in *Khartoum.* Heston chews the scenery in a mannered effort to simulate passions he seems unable to feel. James Cagney's advice to young actors was: "Never let them catch you at it." You always catch Heston at it. Sir Laurence Olivier said, "There is no such thing as over-acting — if you can fill the space." Heston cannot fill the space.

And neither could Stan Kenton, whose overblown performances resembled those of Heston. One is always conscious with the Kenton band, as with Heston, of a striving for effect. Kenton was of the extreme political right, advocating, for example, the impeachment of Earl Warren. He was a puzzling man, and I liked him. But his political thinking was terrifying in its naivete.

There are legends about the band's lack of swing. And arrangers who worked for it will tell you that Stan always wanted those

smashing climaxes. "When the trumpets were all above high C and the baritone on the low E-flat, it sure as hell couldn't swing," as one musician put it.

If any of this sounds like a suggestion that membership in the liberal camp is a passport to talent, be assured that it isn't. The rock, folk, and folk-rock movements were almost entirely of the political left, and produced some of the most meretricious trash ever to be inaccurately referred to as music. And Joan Baez is one of the coldest singers I have ever heard. Her singing has about as much humanity as a theramin.

Nor is it to suggest that altruism is the copyright property of those who define themselves as liberal. Some very acquisitive people, you will notice, like to take public stands as humanitarian sharers. (It plays well and seems noble.) And some of the most parsimonious among them are socialists who've made a lot of money. On the other hand you will encounter generous conservatives whose reason for their allegiance is a sensible conviction that the government should get its nose out of all our lives.

The difficulty of definition is compounded in the United States by the two-party system. No other western nation retains the primitive notion that the various shades of legitimate political theory can be encompassed in two parties. And both parties are full of people who obviously belong in the other party — or would if the other party actually did stand for what it says it does.

A gradual fusing of entertainment and politics has been evident for many years, but it accelerated in the 1960s when rock and folk-rock music became politicized. (Lyndon Johnson no doubt went to his grave never understanding that the man who did the most to remove him from office was not Eugene McCarthy but Bob Dylan.) This development is deeply disquieting, first of all because the stock in trade of the entertainer or artist is the manipulation of public emotion at a sub-rational level, and secondly because inordinate weight is given to the opinions of famous performers who may or may not know what they are talking about. But the trend is probably irreversible, and the line between entertainment and politics faded to invisibility as politics became television entertainment and entertainers interceded in the political process. The most successful piece of entertainment in history was the killing of John F. Kennedy. The show filled all three national television networks and kept most of the two hundred and fifty or so million people in the United States and Canada (and an inestimable number in other countries) glued to their TV sets for more than forty-eight hours, with only slight interruptions for dozing. Act One reached a spectacular climax with the very first on-camera live death, the shooting of Lee Harvey Oswald. After a decent intermission to allow an exhausted audience to recover, the networks presented Act Two, the funeral, with all the pageantry anyone could want.

Since then we have seen a number of real killings on television, including the shooting of a prisoner by a Vietnamese police chief. Dramatically, it was a little dull: the performance was perfunctory. The killing of Anwar Sadat was better, and the shooting of Governor George Wallace was pretty good. Sometimes we get a spectacular, like the mass killings in Bangla Desh and Lebanon, although the camera crews still aren't getting there fast enough: the action is usually over, and all you get to see, thus far, are piles of the dead. Much of this footage is imported, of course, like much of the best dramatic (in the fictional sense) programming, but occasionally we get a dynamite domestic production, such as the burn-out of the Symbionese Liberation Army in Los Angeles. And although it lacked corpses, you have to admit that Watergate was one hell of a piece of entertainment. People were bored for days after Richard Nixon resigned.

Only recently we saw a young Korean boxer killed on television. *Starsky and Hutch* was never like this, although David Soul managed to slip over into the news hours by beating up his wife, and Richard Dreyfuss did it with a drug bust. John Belushi topped them both, of course. In the meantime, the fictional dramas have become so realistic that every year a number of stunt men are killed in the process of giving a desensitized public ever greater thrills. After all, these shows are in competition with the news. And only recently one of them slipped — like David Soul — right into the news slot. The show was *Twilight Zone,* and the director wanted a Vietnam sequence to be very real. It was. A real explosion knocked down a real helicopter and killed the real Vic Morrow along with two real children. And the resulting amusing footage ended up in the evening news. Oh wow, outasight. Did you see that, Molly? You really missed something. Well, they'll probably show it again on the eleven o'clock news. Get me another beer, will'ya? What we have is the global village version of the Roman games, the only difference being that we're killing off expensive actors and politicians instead of inexpensive Christians. The camera cuts to Jane Pauley or Jessica Savitch or Connie Chung or somebody, who smiles just enough to convey that she does not find this funny and says, "We'll be right back after this." And Charlton Heston peers earnestly into the camera and tells you how to vote, Juliette Prowse tells you what kind of stockings to buy and James Garner and Mariette Hartley tell you what kind of camera to buy, and then Paul Newman peers earnestly into the camera and tells you to vote the opposite way. After that another actor sits before the Presidential seal and peers earnestly into the camera and tells you what he's going to do to your life. It is by now about as easy to separate art and entertainment and advertising and actuality as it is to restore an omelet to its component parts.

Amidst all this it would be surprising indeed if jazz had remained untainted by politics. And it hasn't been. Aside from a few token honorees like Marian Anderson and Paul Robeson, jazz musicians were the first blacks to become idols to both a black *and* a white public. They were obvious targets for various people anxious to manipulate the black public. Some of them will tell you of phone calls in the night — for obvious reasons I cannot use names — threatening them with serious consequences if they did not take some public stand or another.

But such incidents represent only the more obvious intrusion of politics. A subtler form of political polarization has existed in jazz at least since the 1930s.

There is a deep political split in jazz which, interestingly, follows the fault line opened by the innovations of Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker in the 1940s.

"There are lots of things in the world besides science," as Richard Feynman, 1965 Nobel laureate in physics, puts it, "and the study of social behavior needn't be a science to be of some interest. It's good to know the way people behave in a certain region, for example, even though you have no way to make any laws about it."

The medieval poet Hans Sachs said that he sang as the birds sang, without pay. But most of are not birds.

— Stephen Leacock

To me an orchestration is the memory of a storehouse of souls.

— Neil Chothem

I cannot offer you laws and statistics to illuminate this division in jazz, but I can offer you an enormous amount of observation that I could not help making over the years. To oversimplify for the present, the admirers of "modern" jazz tend to be in the spectrum of persuasion vaguely known as liberal, and the fans of "traditional" jazz (meaning for the most part white Dixieland) are in the group known with comparable imprecision as conservative. At least one of the former is an avowed Maoist. A few of the latter are past the fringes of fascism. There are racial undertones in this division — of the anti-white in modern jazz and anti-black among some of the traditionalists.

And all of this is the expression of French Autumn Syndrome, in musicians, critics, and listeners alike.

(to be continued)

Pictured Past

An arresting new history of jazz in pictures has just been published by Willian Morrow and Company. Titled *Black Beauty, White Heat,* it contains 1500 photographs and other visuals, including pages of color reproductions of old jazz labels. Few among us will be able to examine those pages without being overcome by heady fumes of nostalgia.

The authors are Frank Driggs and Harris Lewine. Driggs of course is the producer responsible for the invaluable Bluebird reissues of archive material by Fats Waller, Lionel Hampton, Artie Shaw, and many others. His work at RCA has restored to us the sounds of eras past; this book gives us the look of those times. Lewine was art director at Riverside Records in the 1950s.

The pictures, including some never published before and many never easily available, are drawn largely from Driggs' own collection. The book's nine chapters trace the history of the music from 1920 to 1950 in New Orleans, Chicago, New York, Kansas City, California, Europe. It recalls the use of jazz in films, the swing era, and the early days of what we call the modern era.

The jacket copy claims this is "the most lavish, extensive, and fully documented pictorial history of classic jazz ever published." Since I haven't seen every such picture history, I can't comment on that. But it's certainly extensive, and the text is literate and illuminating. History, said Voltaire (and so did Napolean), is an agreed-upon fiction. The writers point out that the memories of musicians are fallible. In the essay on Don DeMicheal, I said that I joined *Down Beat* the day Billie Holiday died. Wrong. It was the day Sidney Bechet died; I checked it later. This fading and elision of memory — and the continuing loss of jazz people whose memories, fallible or not, should be recorded — only underlines the importance of this book. We need more books, and we need them soon.

As far as I'm concerned, this one is superb. The price is $39.95, which in view of the cost of paper and engraving these days, isn't bad.

Nine Fingers

Fingers recorded a new trio album shortly after his return to New York, the unjustly neglected *Modal Yodel,* which included tunes by Miles Davis and the legendary Yoyo Yokum. But it was the Semihemidemiquaver album that continued to generate interest, and fan mail was becoming a problem, which the Duchess of Bedworthy alleviated by screening it. She passed only the most interesting mail to Fingers, including that which contained gifts. An admirer in Still Hollow, Tennesee, named Mason Jarman sent him a case of high-grade white lightning, an intemperate sampling of which rendered Fingers comatose for three days.

Two women — Helena Hanbasket of Troy, New York, and Lois Carmen deNominator, an algebra teacher in Cumming, Virginia — proposed marriage. Aurora Sneedle of Fruitful, Utah, wrote to say that she had an unusual hobby: she had babies by famous jazz musicians. She already had eleven and hoped that Fingers would help her bring her collection to an even dozen. Reflecting that she had almost enough to start her own band, Fingers considered making a contribution, but in the end he declined the invitation with thanks.

One of the most interesting letters came from a Navajo shaman named Drumdrum Snake Eyes, who said that in his tireless quest for ever more modern agricultural methods, he had induced his people to do their rain dance to Fingers' album. This had trebled the rainfall, quadrupled the maize crop and, most important of all, produced an eighteen million dollar profit on pot sales, which the tribal leaders planned to use to build a school and hospital. This puzzled Fingers. Try as he might, he could not see what his music had to do with this increase in ceramic production.

Colin Yuhu wrote from Ruptured Mounty, Alberta, to say that he and his wife had decided to play Fingers' album over the sound system of their chicken farm instead of the usual Mantovani records. This had increased production by twenty-seven percent, although the eggs came out square.

Fingers was pleased by this evidence that he was improving the world through music, but he had little time to muse on such matters. For one thing, he had personnel problems with his trio. Simi Lowe and Willie Rushmore had decided to form their own group, a duo consisting of bass and drums. They felt that other instruments got in their way. Fingers was sorry to lose them but wished them well and promised to come to their first opening, if any. After auditioning musicians for two weeks, he hired Sleepy Walker on bass and Chick Chickering on drums.

At the same time, his career as a classical composer was making steady progress. He received a commission to write a new piece for the Arcane String Quartet of Bayonne, New Jersey — not, as has been erroneously stated elsewhere, for the Sioux City Sue Sousaphone Society. Indeed, the circumstances of the writing of this work have been frequently misrepresented.

The facts are these:

Fingers was spending a quiet Sunday keeping up with the other arts, as was his wont. He had just left an exhibit of Keane paintings, which he greatly admired, and was on his way to a retrospective on the films of John Payne. Heading uptown on the IRT, he was enthralled by the screech of the wheels in the turns. He noticed that the pitch was E-sharp, and decided that this should be the key of his new quartet. Admittedly, the key signature would be a little hard to read, but Fingers chose not to compromise.

He began to sketch the work on a Nedick's napkin, and completed it within a week. It is in this quartet that we encounter the next major advance in his harmonic system. He had been using the flatted octave for some years, and it was now widely imitated, although few musicians have utilized it with the consummate skill of its originator. In the Quartet in E-sharp, we first find the flatted eleventh. Occasionally, adding further tension, it is used in suspension.

Because of the circumstances of its composition, this work is sometimes referred to as the Keane Payne Quartet. It had its premiere on September 15 of that year in Bayonne, before an audience of eleven, two of whom stayed to the end.

If we ate what we listen to, we'd all be dead.
— Earl Wilde
