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Letters

Whither Electronics? reminds me of Tom Wolfe's essay on Marshall McLuhan. ("What if he's right?") We are in for some changes, and I have this too-big record collection which will become obsolete. One thing you failed to mention is that even in live performance, we are hearing electronically-altered sound in most cases. I heard Blood, Sweat, and Tears once, and their in-person sound was uncannily like their records: the same feeling of everything up-front, no depth, and slightly plastic (or vinyl) ted. And bass players on records often bear little resemblance to their unamplified selves. Bass players in person coming through an amp are another variation. The point of course is that electronics are already here, as you have said.

Owen Cordle, Cary, North Carolina

If your *Whither Electronics?* could only have been written a decade ago and made required reading for record company executives, maybe the business wouldn't be in the toilet today.

Many years ago, noted Harvard professor Theodore Leavitt wrote a milestone essay called *Marketing Myopia.* It warned against the perils of any industry defining its business too narrowly. Historically, one of the best examples is the American railroad industry, which thought it was in the railroad business instead of the transportation business. With a less myopic viewpoint, the rail industry could have evolved itself into the airline business, but it was beaten to the punch and practically destroyed while confining its energies to figuring out how to get more people to ride the train.

Your prognosis for the record companies is supported by the obvious parallel — that they've been too busy trying to sell round pieces of vinyl to realize that they are really in the business of technology for entertaining people. And as records go the way of the buggywhip, any ancient Egyptian pharaoh can tell them that entertainment will never go out of style.

Steven Cristol, Los Angeles

Steven Cristol is a rock and pop songwriter who is showing serious symptoms of turning into a composer. He is studying composition and orchestration in Los Angeles. He also happens to have a master's degree in marketing and his own successful consulting firm which works with advertising agencies. He is twenty-nine.

Recently I uncovered an album of mine that I hadn't heard in years. I had played it only a couple of times and had been meticulous as to its care during its shelf life. In spite of this, the album sounded terrible, full of pops and ticks and with an overall harshness that robbed the music of its dynamics.

With the advent of the digital audio disc (DAD), mentioned in the last *Jazzletter,* problems of vinyl degradation are bound to be eliminated. The new disc is impervious to handling miscues and temperature variations. Coupled with outstanding sonics, the DAD promises to end many software problems not even associated with vinyl. Cassettes may become an endangered species, relegated to office dictation. The DAD has accompanying hardware that is already being planned for 1983 in-dash auto installation. The mini-player, or "Walkman" as we know it, has already been converted to accept DADs. It will be introduced in 1983.

We should all be aware as well of another system that, although less publicized, may indeed become an alternative to the DAD. DRC-Soundstream has a prototype system that includes a player that optically scans an encoded card the size of a normal index card. The sonics, temperature, and handling attributes of the DAD also apply to the "audiofile". Some critics believe this system may have even greater benefits than the DAD. In any case, our vinyl agonies may soon be memories.

Jeffrey Weber, Beverly Hills, California

Jeffrey Weber is a prominent record producer specializing in jazz.

Like Jeff, I have discovered that some of my older LPs, including some boxed operas whose plastic wrappings were still intact, sound incredibly harsh. Evidently vinyl ages, no matter how well one cares for one's records.

The term "digital" is causing some confusion. Many LPs are digitally recorded in the first place, but after the original recording session the music runs down the usual pipeline to come out on a vinyl record tracked by a needle. The advantages of digital recording are therefore compromised. On the other hand, the compact disc, a digitally encoded record "read" by a laser, is usually produced from "acoustic" or "analog" tapes, and thus still involves a compromised sound. Sound experts say that the clean sound of the digital disc actually exaggerates the defects of the original recording, and makes tape hiss the more conspicuous.

We will not know the full benefits of the system until we get digital discs produced from digital recording sessions.

French Autumn Syndrome Part III

The reason society has failed to eradicate ethnic and other prejudice is that idealists have successfully emplaced a theory that it is unnatural. Oscar Hammerstein II said in a lyric that "you have to be taught to hate." Obviously he had not read Konrad Lorenz's *On Aggression* or Robert Ardrey's *The Territorial Imperative.* You have to be trained *not* to hate, as you are trained out of various forms of behavior potentially harmful to yourself or society. Receptivity to the new, the different, the unfamiliar, is the mark of civilized man, not the "natural" man.

Suspicion has a survival value. The hair rises along a dog's spine when a stranger approaches not because he has been taught to hate but because this response has helped his species avoid extinction; or to put it more accurately, those branches of it that were not wary were eliminated. It takes patience to overcome the suspicion of a squirrel to the point where it will eat from your hand. (And how honored we feel when a wild creature trusts us — which tells you what we *really* think of our species.)

We make constant everyday judgments of people. One day, walking down the street, I saw two men talking. Before I could hear them I sensed from their facial expressions and gestures that they were French. They were. A Japanese friend of mine said that when his American cousin came to visit and he was charged by his family with showing her around Tokyo, he noted that every shop girl immediately addressed her in English, in spite of her Oriental features. The way we respond to the unfamiliar is obviously in part a matter of conditioning, but some of it is inborn. The shyness of a child hiding behind its mother's skirts is a form of suspicion. How the parent bends it is critical to the child's development. Will he become a cultural anthropologist or a member of the Ku Klux Klan?

As we grow older we tend to associate with those we perceive to be similar to ourselves, whether by profession, religion, nationality, age, or economic situation, because one is comfortable with the familiar. Indeed, because of its connotations of warm and familiar things, *home* is one of the most emotionally charged words in the English language. Placed properly in a lyric or narrative, it can draw tears from an audience. A measure of loyalty to your own group is not only inevitable, it is necessary. Without it society could not exist at all. But it becomes dangerous in its extreme form.

Prejudice is universal. The Polish jokes of the United States are echoed by the Newfie jokes of Canada. In Spanish-speaking Latin America, they tell Mexican jokes, and in Brazil they tell Portuguese jokes. The Swedes say that Danish isn't a language, it's a throat disease; the Germans say that Swiss German isn't a language, it's a throat disease. And every country tells jokes about Americans, although very rarely to Americans. A lot of this is harmless enough, and even may provide wry insights into national characteristics. Some of it, however, is false and vicious, and some of it is dangerous.

A normal pattern is one of expansion from one's neighborhood to surrounding neighborhoods to the city to one's region to country to the world — and to all that this entails culturally. But every once in a while, as we make progress toward civilized respect for the rich texture of the whole human culture, somebody sets us back.

In his book *Straight Life,* the late Art Pepper describes a confrontation with drummer Lawrence Marable and bassist Curtis Counce when they were working in Pepper's group at Jazz City. The saxophonist's friends told him that Marable and Counce were making fun of him on the bandstand behind his back. Gradually he saw that they were, and he asked Marable what was going on.

Marable, according to Pepper, said, "Oh fuck you! You know what I think of you, you white motherfucker?" And he spat in the dirt. "You can't play. None of you white punks can play."

To which Pepper responded: "You lousy, stinking, black motherfucker! Why the fuck do you work for me if you feel like that?"

Marable said, "Oh, we're just taking advantage of you white punk motherfuckers."

Pepper muses on musicians such as Ray Brown and Sonny Stitt, with whom he'd had warm relations, then says, "I'd go to the union and run into Benny Carter or Gerald Wilson and find myself shying away from them because I'd be wondering, 'Do they think, "Oh there's that white asshole, that Art Pepper; that white punk can't play; *we* can only play..."

Pepper says, a few pages earlier in the book, "You just have to be a part of something and have the capacity to love and to play with love. Harry Sweets Edison has done that..."

A summer morning in Toronto. Every year a Caribana weekend is held there. On the morning of July 1, 1982, CKFM disc jockey Phil McKellar was making arrangements on the telephone to meet his girlfriend. A record was playing. McKellar didn't realize he had an open microphone when he told her to avoid University Avenue because, with the carnival, there would be "ten thousand niggers jumping up and down." The protests from Toronto's black population continued for months, and McKellar was taken off duty as a staff announcer, although he was allowed to continue his jazz show at the station. He insisted that he was only quoting a remark by an American black acquaintance who disliked the carnival, and he denied having any trace of racism. Whatever the circumstances, whatever the motive, the incident did great damage. In Los Angeles, Sweets Edison heard about the incident and wondered whether, for all McKellar's past embraces and protestations of friendship, he had been thinking of him all along as "that nigger".

White motherfucker... that nigger... And the damage spreads from there. What makes this ironic is that the jazz world, both artists and audience, was the first stratum of American society in which an extensive cultural integration occurred. And that this music should be used as a doctrinal battleground is a tragedy in the Greek sense in that it entails an element of the inevitable arising from a flaw in character, in this case American puritanism. Puritanism, which has been defined as the recurring suspicion that someone somewhere might be having a good time, causes a discomfort with pleasure, an uneasiness with one's own purposeless frivolity. To indulge oneself in the sensualism of art requires that one find an excuse for it, and Improving Society is always a good cause. Therefore art must have a message. Puritans and Marxists have the same expectations of art. There is of course nothing more austerely puritanical than a doctrinaire Communist.

The misguided attempts of the school system fo teach "music appreciation" condition the young to be receptive to this functionalist view of art. Generations of children have been told that the four-note motif that opens the Fifth Symphony represents fate knocking at Beethoven's door, a nonsense that is contradicted by his sketch books, containing variants he considered before settling on that one. Because they do not know how to communicate the joy of total abstraction, teachers attach programmatic "stories" to an art that actually cannot say anything. Liebniz provided us with an odd and possibly accurate description of music in the Seventeenth Century: "Music is pleasure the human soul experiences from counting without being aware that it is counting."

What music can do, and with greater power than any other art form, is to communicate emotion. And there isn't a musician alive who can tell you how it does this. Most musicians have settled for a theory that it is an arbitrary language with no intrinsic emotional content. They say we have merely been conditioned to respond to it as we do. It is a theory that has always made me uneasy and I am gradually coming to abandon it, although the majority of my musician friends continue to hold to it.

Darwin believed that music preceeded language. "In humans," he wrote in the *The Descent of Man*, "Music affects every emotion... It awakens the gentler feelings of tenderness and love, which readily pass into devotion. All these facts become to a certain extent intelligible if we may assume that musical tones and rhythms were used by the half-human progenitors of man during the season of courtship, when animals of all kinds are excited by the strongest passions. In this case, from the deeply laid principle of inherited associations, musical tones would be likely to excite in us, in an ...indefinite manner, the strong emotions of a long-past age."

Juliette Arvin, one of many people working in musical therapy, has catalogued the effects of the elements of music. She says that

pitch acts on the autonomic nervous system, which in itself calls into the question the theory that our response to music is merely conditioned. High pitch causes tension, low pitch relaxes the listener. Rhythm is central to the response — which casts an interesting light on the rise of jazz as art music in the Twentieth Century following the substantial banishment of specific rhythm from European classical music. Thr first rhythm we hear is the mother's heartbeat; we hear it in the womb. Tempos faster than the heartbeat, that is to say above seventy or eighty beats a minute, raise tension. The most soothing tempos are in the area of a calm human heartbeat, which of course is the tempo at which we play ballads. The recorded sound of a normal heartbeat will put babies to sleep, that of an excited person will awaken them, even make some of them cry.

At Columbia Unviersity, psychologist Thomas G. Bever and undergraduate Robert J. Chiarello examined the response to music of those with musical training and those without. Those without it responded with the right brain, the pattern-perceiving but not "logical" side of the brain. Those with training processed it with the left or rational side of the brain. Music is being used to treat autistic children, precisely because it can reach where words cannot go, establishing emotional contact without conceptual "meaning". (There is evidence that each of us hears music in an individual way, due to the convolutions of the ear itself.)

Music and women I cannot but give way to, whatever my business is.

—Samuel Pepys (1633-1703)

Stravinsky said, "Music first and last should sound well, should allure and enchant the ear. Never mind the inner significance." In view then of the way the ear works and the mind of a lay listener processes music, it is unfortunate that much jazz criticism has been focussed on an assumed extraneous "meaning" to the music, mainly the protest of black Americans. The only way music can *seem to* convey meanings (as opposed to emotions) is by attaching it to words, whether in an opera libretto, a lyric, or advertising copy in a television commercial. Music is used in TV ads precisely because it establishes an emotional climate that renders the viewer susceptible to even the most blatant lies. Film composers are constantly called upon to make scenes credible by adding emotion to unpersuasive moments in a story.

Words too can move our emotions, but they do it through the manipulation of images and ideas. In a well-written song, the music is exquisitely appropriate to the meaning of the lyrics; or, in a case where the music has been written first, the lyricist has fathomed the emotional content of the music and found images that heighten its effect.

Music lends plausibility to states both true and false. Patriotic songs fuel nationalism. In the American south, while civil rights activists were working up their own emotions with *We Shall Overcome*, white racists were working up theirs with songs against blacks and agitators, both using the same simple guitar chords. *John Brown's Body,* the *Horst Wessell* song, *La Marseillaise,* the *Internationale* and innumerable others have been used to inflame political feelings. But the music in each case did nothing: it merely seduced the mind to the more or less unquestioning acceptance of the message. Music is an extraordinarily powerful aid to propaganda, but it is not and cannot be propaganda in and of itself. Yet:

"All art must be propaganda," Abbey Lincoln said in the course of a discussion of racism in jazz published in *Down Beat* in 1962. Whether or not she was aware of it, she was echoing the sentiment of 1930s Progressives. It is a curiously joyless and constricted view of art.

William Faulkner, in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, expressed the artist's true preoccupation when he said that Keats' *Ode on a Grecian Urn* was worth any number of little old ladies. What he implied, I think, is that the artist at his work is not thinking of society or anything else, but of this work and the pleasure it gives him. And the pleasure is derived from meeting some personal standard of excellence that he alone understands. (The trouble is, as Ray Brown put it, that "the better it gets, the fewer of us know it.") And so art is created in a balance between blinkered selfishness and idiot idealism, after which the poor boob holds out the flower he has made, in mendicant hands, and hopes somebody will pay him enough to let him make another one. That is if he's a real artist. If he is not, his priority is to make money.

And/or to advance a propaganda cause, whether of a soap or a social change. There is no esthetic difference, although there is a moral one. In either case, the purpose of the exercise is not the artistic end product but the sale of something extraneous, whether it is Datsuns (We are driven!), Toyotas (You asked for it, you got it!) or revolution.

Propaganda art is flawed at the root. It is not, as it were, its own man. And it runs the risk of losing its emotional power as soon as the issue it addresses wanes into history. Indeed propaganda is not art at all except to the extent that it transcends its message. The plot of the ballet *Gayne* is a ludicrous porridge about a loyal lady tractor driver who turns her lover in, to the greater glory of the Soviet state. But Khatchaturian managed to write some pretty good music for it, and when one listens to the suite drawn from it, the plot is irrelevant. Much of Bach's work could be defined as religious propaganda, but it stands on its value as music — as Michaelangelo's *Pieta* stands on its value as sculpture.

Music cannot even tell a story, and various composers have tried to make it do so. Paul Dukas's *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* is a brilliant piece whether or not you know the "story" it purports to tell. Indeed, you could never deduce the story from the music, and knowing it may in fact interfere with the direct pleasure of the music. In *Fantasia,* Walt Disney used Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* with images of dinosaurs, which had nothing to do with the ballet for which the music was composed. It worked well enough. Debussy's *La mer* would be just as effective with another title. (In fact, after its premiere, Erik Satie made fun of the idea of visual or narrative content in music. Of the section called *From Dawn to Noon on the Sea,* he told Debussy, "I particularly liked the part about quarter to eleven.")

It is one thing to say that the purpose of jazz is revolution and quite another to say that it has had some revolutionary effects.

The music was the spearhead of racial integration in America. It was a music through which whites came to see blacks as individuals rather than stereotypes, expressing in music the passions they felt in themselves. It became difficult — no, impossible — to justify segregation and a lower social status for blacks to white young people clutching treasured autographs and photos of black heroes. The overt emotionality of the music at the same time helped many a young jitterbug to discover emotions in himself that a puritanical culture wanted suppressed. In the movie *Silver Streak,* there is a funny moment when Richard Pryor asks Gene Wilder, "How come you whities are all so tight-assed?" Jazz helped its admirers to escape tight-assedness, to coin a term. It leavened American society, whose art otherwise would have been some sort of stiff descendant of the New England church culture, the very thought of which chills the blood.

Musically, however, the music has never been all that revolutionary. Even the bebop "revolution" of the 1940s was tame in terms of the harmonic explorations that had gone on in classical

music; bebop barely brought jazz into the Twentieth Century. Sheila Jordan says that when she met Charlie Parker, "he turned me on to new composers like Stravinsky and Bartok." The trouble with that statement is that Stravinsky and Bartok were not all that new: Varese had already been prominent for twenty years. Despite the legends that the boppers at Minton's were playing difficult harmonies to scare the white boys off the bandstand, they were doing nothing in the harmony that any competent film composer could not have dissected on the spot. The much-discussed flatted fifth can be heard in Stravinsky's 1910 *Firebird.*

What was all the furor about, then?

Five years before bop, a New Orleans revival got under way, propelled, as Grover Sales points out in a new book about to be published by Prentice-Hall, "by the mounting resentment of purist white critics and fans against the heretical sophistication of Ellington, Tatum, Hawkins, Teddy Wilson, and other modernists believed to have tainted the purity of jazz by injecting European antibodies into what was heretofore an incorruptible native American folk art. Since history assures us that jazz, from its earliest beginnings, was a mixture of every cultural transplant to the New World, European as well as African, such notions seem quaint today, but were cherished as articles of faith by keepers of the flame like the French critic Hugues Panassie... and William L. Grossman and Jack W. Farrell...

"By the time bebop was in full flower, dozens of white revival bands were thriving throughout the U.S., Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and in England... The revival brought out of retirement elderly blacks like Bunk Johnson and provided work for young whites — Lu Watters, Turk Murphy, and England's Chris Barber. The revival also forced modernists like Earl Hines, Jack Teagarden and Pee Wee Russell reluctantly into the Dixieland camp... It is significant that without a single exception, no young blacks could be found participating in the revival movement, either as players or listeners...

"In retrospect, the New Orleans revival produced much foolish rhetoric, but also much of lasting value, as did the ragtime revival three decades later. The revival rescued from obscurity a long neglected style of collective improvisation... What seems most remarkable about the revival, aside from the music, was the emotional heat and religious fervor it unleashed — and why.

"A rigid fundamentalist sect of white critics-collectors had grown comfortable with the soothing cliches of New Orleans-Dixieland and with the cautious geniality of the blacks who played it. There were exceptions but, as a rule, black musicians of the 1920s and 1930s tended to make themselves agreeable to the white fan, as though beside themselves with delight that whites would actually appreciate their music. Though moved by generous impulses all too rare among whites of that period, many of the revivalists exuded an aura of patronage toward the 'happy, unspoiled darky' romanticized as the Noble Savage. This idealization of the Noble Savage recurs among intellectuals of sophisticated cultures verging on decadence: Horace in ancient Rome, Rousseau on the eve of the French Revolution, Sixties hippies' adoration of the Noble Red Man before his corruption by the onslaught of white civilization. The New Orleans revivalists adopted these notions with striking fidelity, viewing Bunk Johnson, Kid Ory and George Lewis as reaffirmations of the 'eternal values' of Oliver and Morton before the purity of jazz became adulterated by jaded European influences. Revivalists were brought up short by the cool, studied arrogance, on stage and off, of the beboppers, who made it clear that 'we don't give a shit whether Mister Charlie digs our music or not.' This revolutionary posture of a new generation of urban blacks proved as upsetting to white revivalists as the shocking and unfamiliar sounds that signalled a radical shift in the stance and attitude of young blacks. When Louis Armstrong hotly denounced bebop and its players to the press, Dizzy Gillespie replied, 'In these days, no cat need be a Tom.'"

An interesting question arises. Were the boppers making their music for the sake of a revolution or were they making the revolution for the sake of a music? I think the latter is the case. I have talked to Dizzy about Louis Armstrong and have encountered only the most immense respect. Of some quip he is supposed to have made about Armstrong, Dizzy said with a gentle reverence I can still hear in my mind's ear, "Oh no. I'd never say anything like that about Pops." And as for his retort to Armstrong's derogation of bebop, it too has a gentle tone. The meaning seems to be, "Once there was no other way, but tomming is no longer necessary and the artist can stand up with pride of profession."

There were great ironies to the division that opened in jazz. Hugues Panassie had in the 1930s missed the significance of the best black players. By the mid-1940s he was in the forefront of the white-men-can't-play school of criticism, which still is strong in France. (What the French really believe is that white men can't play jazz unless they're French.) Defending what they saw to be a pure black folk culture, the revivalists watched helplessly as the best black musicians, the black audience and the young white audience went on to decadent bebop, leaving Dixieland with an aging white constituency and, after the death or retirement of older revivalist performers, only white players. As the years have passed, that audience has become only more reactionary, musically and politically. The revivalists, then, exacerbated the racial division in jazz. Another one would soon open up.

In New York, toward the end of the 1940s, a group of young musicians that included John Lewis, Gerry Mulligan and Miles Davis was hanging out in the West 55th Street apartment of Gil Evans, exchanging ideas. The powerful influence of Evans, who had come to prominence as an arranger for the Claude Thornhill band, is still not fully understood. His writing for Thornhill had a serene, floating, almost motionless quality reminiscent of Debussy in that a chord was an entity in itself rather than only a step in a progression. And there was something akin to Oriental painting in the less-is-more conception of the music. Why say it in five brush strokes if you can say it in two? This group of musicians would record together, their work becoming known later as the Birth of the Cool. Gil Evans wrote two charts for the nine-piece group, including *Boplicity* and *Moon Dreams,* John Lewis wrote one, *Move,* and John Carisi wrote one, *Israel.* Most of the rest came from Mulligan's pencil. Miles Davis was chosen as the leader of this group, whose music became incredibly influential. It was the source of what became known as West Coast Jazz.

And this is where an interesting bifurcation occurs. Mulligan became associated, in popular and critical awareness, with the west coast. Miles Davis did not, although he went on to record a series of extremely influential and highly-regarded albums with Evans. And the reason was simple: Miles Davis was black, Mulligan was white.

A certain body of criticism held that this "West Coast Jazz" was somehow weak and unworthy. Lawrence Marable's imprecations to Art Pepper is a coarser expression of an attitude expressed more loquaciously by some white critics. Mulligan, whose soft playing is the consequence of physical strength and control, and Art Pepper, whose "inability" to play embraced false fingerings for every note of the chromatic scale, were left in exile in some California of the mind, while Miles Davis, whose playing was restrained and lyrical like Mulligan's, was repatriated to New York — a black New York. It helped that Miles had a reputation for hating white people, something he has repeatedly denied, at one time citing to an interviewer his close relations with Gil Evans

and Jack Whittemore. (Miles hired Bill Evans for the elegant sensitivity of his playing, and confused everybody again. Evans had to be made a sort of honorary black, at least for a while.) In essence, the Panassie prejudice was alive and well and living in bebop. To be sure, a sea change had taken place. New Orleans jazz had been the folk expression of the happy Noble Savage. Hard bop was the expression of his descendant, the unhappy Noble Savage. And that in fact was what jazz supposedly was all about: revolution. The white musician didn't have the motivation for it. A standard was set for playing: it had to be angry, hard-toned, mean. The black musician was in some undefined way more... virile. That the black was *still* being seen as a stud seems to have escaped both those white critics dispensing praise (from on high of course) and those black musicians revelling in it. It is difficult for any white person to determine how widespread the anti-white bigotry was (and is), but I have strong feelings that it was more prevalent among a small group of white critics than the general population of black musicians. For example, asked for his idea of the perfect pianist, Bud Powell — always held up as the paragon of the martyred black man — said, "Al Haig."

Nonetheless, there were more than a few black musicians who covertly held attitudes that Lawrence Marable was at least honest enough to blurt out. The inference was that the black emotional experience was worth expressing, the white experience was not. It relegated the white man to the status of a fish, that is, a creature that does not feel pain. And even if he does, it is slight and irrelevant and not worth expressing. The fact that this had been done to the black in the days of American slavery (and afterwards) does not justify its inverted practice in the Twentieth Century, but that essential underlying premise of racism turned up in what we might call the Hard Bop school of jazz criticism. And the source of this doctrine was the inability to see art as anything but propaganda, which I argue, is rooted in puritanism.

Those musicians whose purpose was the unabashed search for beauty were seen as somehow frivolous and relegated to a limbo of condescension. Paul Desmond, a unique and lyrical player, was all but ignored, except by the public and many musicians, including some young black musicians: Anthony Braxton, to my mind a very interesting member of the current avant-garde in jazz, cites Desmond as one of his early influences.

For Ralph Gleason, rock music was to provide an even better outlet than jazz for his unsleeping politicism. Rock musicians came out virtually en masse for non-conformism and social overturn, against authority and the Big Corporations (some of which, including CBS and RCA, were financing them) and the war in Viet Nam. Gleason became a champion of much rock, which no doubt had more to do with the fact that he sincerely agreed with its general political outlook than the fact that he was a founding shareholder of the rock newspaper, *Rolling Stone*. Whatever his reasons, he finally went so far as to call Bob Dylan the greatest voice for human freedom since Tom Paine, which of course effectively dismissed Tolstoy and Gandhi and a few others. He also became a champion of Joan Baez, whose activism he admired, but he finally admitted in print that she didn't swing, which is one of the great understatements in the history of music criticism.

Chick Corea has said that he thinks critics serve no useful purpose and should be ignored. Virgil Thomson, whose qualifications both as composer and critic are impeccable, said something once about criticism that bears repeating. Unfortunately I cannot find the exact quotation and neither can he and I am reconstructing it with his permission. He said that criticism is often wrong-headed, ill-informed, stupid, and all the other things we know to be among its defects. "But," he said, and here I know I am quoting him verbatim, "it is the only antidote we have to paid publicity." Somebody has to stand there with hands cupped around the mouth and shout "Nonsense!" into the hurricane of hype and advertising that blows endlessly from the wind machines of the so-called media of communications. And there is something else that can be said for criticism, good criticism, anyway. Marlon Brando was criticizing critics on a talk show some years ago when the host said, in essence, "Well, you only like the critics who give you good reviews." Brando, with restraint and precision, denied this. He said that Bosley Crowther of the New York *Times* had never given him a good review, yet he had never read a Crowther review of one of his movies without learning something about his own work. Therefore he rated Crowther a good critic.

Criticism has validity if it teaches. What it can do is teach the layman what the art is all about and whether it is attaining its highest level. If, on occasion, it teaches the artist himself — as in the case of Crowther and Brando — it attains its own highest level. The function of the critic should be like the ideal goal of the doctor, to put himself out of business, by teaching the reader so much about the art that he needs no further explanation of it. Criticism that does not inform is worthless. And criticism that is not attuned to the purposes and intentions of the artist cannot inform. If criticism is an expression not of the art itself but of the French Autumn Syndrome of the critic, it is worse than useless. It is destructive: by instilling false concepts and expectations in the audience, it seriously damages the art itself.

No one is free of French Autumn Syndrome, but anyone who has the responsiblity of passing public judgment on the artistic creations of others has a commensurate responsibility to understand his own complex of subjective responses and to try, to the extent that it is possible, to keep them out of his evaluations.

It is past time for the black-white division in jazz to be ended, and it seems in fact to be fading. Those black musicians who want to clutch jazz to their chests as the art only of blacks haven't a hope of thus restricting it. It was an ecumenical art from the beginning in that it borrowed unblushingly from every musical culture to which it was exposed. It is an ecumenical art now in that it is influencing every musical culture which is exposed to it.

No thoughtful person can be complacent about man's future. Even if we managed to scrap all the nuclear weapons in the world, we still would know how to make more. We cannot unlearn anything; we can only learn more. And W.H. Auden said, "We must learn to love one another or die." In his book *The People of the Lake*, Richard Leakey takes Robert Ardrey politely to task. He rejects Ardrey's simple dark vision of man as the killer ape. He says that altruism has a survival value. I believe he's right. Certainly I want to believe he's right.

Jazz has always had, as anyone with a real feel for the music knows, an odd healing quality. We need it more than ever now.

For, to those with eyes to see, it is obvious that French Autumn Syndrome has the potential of being the final malady of man.

The Mighty Atom

In a New York *Times* crossword puzzle, the definition was *ten percenter*, and the answer *agent*. The definition could well have been *flesh peddler*, which term tells in how little esteem agents are held. They are as a rule plausible and affable but avaricious people, indifferent to the aches and aspirations of those whose lives they manipulate. When one of them dies he is mourned by no one much but a mistress or two whose real concern is where the next fur coat is coming from.

There are occasional exceptions. Jack Whittemore was one of them.

When Jack died in New York recently at sixty-eight, jazz

musicians and the art itself lost a great and good friend. In a career that began in his childhood when he left Ridgewood, New Jersey, to go on the road with an aunt who was a singer, he had been an agent with GAC and MCA and then president of the Shaw agency. He booked Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey and indeed almost every major big band and, later, almost every major jazz soloist and small group — Miles Davis, with whom he had a long and close association, Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, Sonny Stitt, Stan Getz, McCoy Tyner, Bill Evans, Phil Woods, Horace Silver, Ahmad Jamal. Name him. Jack probably booked him.

During the last twenty-odd years of his life, Jack worked independently, booking the musicians he liked out of his apartment on Park Avenue, just south of Grand Central Station. Jack was unique. He was a man of unshakable integrity and character. He was small, stocky, and sturdy, a little cannonball of a man, not conventionally handsome but arrestingly attractive. His round face combined in approximately equal proportions qualities of the roughneck and the man of distinction. He had a sort of rugged elegance, and was the kind of man you notice when you enter a crowded room. He was quick and clever. He had a great liking for people, and the feeling was mutual.

He also had a talent for laughter, for seeing the incongruous, and he forgave eccentricity and foolishness with a kind of amused detachment. Once Miles Davis, whose history is inextricably intertwined with Jack's, called him from Paris to say he wanted a record player in his room. Jack said, "Why don't you just call Columbia Records and have them send one over to you?"

Miles said, "Frank Sinatra wouldn't have to call Columbia Records."

Jack, telling the story later and chuckling — no one who knew him will ever forget Jack's chuckle — said, "I thought it over. And you know what? Miles was right." So Jack called Columbia Records in New York and Columbia Records in New York called Columbia Records in Paris, and Miles got his record player. Jack said to me once, "The thing I respect about Miles is that he was that way *before* he became famous."

Jack had a feisty streak; he wouldn't take crap from anybody. But wedded to it was that sense of humor of his, and that gift for immediate forgiveness. All these characteristics are evident in the story of how he met Charlie Grazziano. Jack at that time was president of the Shaw agency. Charlie had a jazz club in Brooklyn. Jack went out to the club one evening. When Charlie found out who he was, he began a diatribe against the agency which caused Jack, at the crescendo, to throw a punch at him. Charlie responded in kind, and there they were, two men in business suits mixing it up. A bartender separated them and told them to cool off.

Jack smoothed out his clothes and, seeing the silliness of the situation, began to laugh. "Is your business really that bad?"

"I'm dying," or some such, Charlie said.

"Why don't you come to work for me?" Jack said. And that's how Charlie Grazziano became an agent, working for Jack Whittemore. Charlie ran Shaw's Chicago office for some years, and he was as well-liked as Jack. They remained close friends. And both of them loved the music.

Jack had two daughters by the wife he had not lived with for the last twenty-eight years. She died five months before he did. In his younger days Jack had a tempestuous love affair with Lee Wiley. Their fights were legendary. During one of them, Jack slammed a door, taking off the tip of her finger. Stricken with remorse, he decided, with her concurrence, that they had better call it off, before one of them killed the other. But he retained a deep and silent affection and a great respect for her ever afterwards.

Jack was often in Jim and Andy's in its heyday. He was always, as it were, out there on the street with the musicians, trading jokes and one-liners with some of the world's best and quickest wits. He used to cruise around to the clubs at night. He was one of the great two-fisted Irish drinkers, and proportionate to body weight could put away more liquor and still function than anyone I ever met. Yet he was never sullen or unpleasant in his cups. And he could be bagged out of his tree when someone mentioned a possible job for one of his people and he would become instantly alert, pencil and paper at the ready, saying, "What's the date and location again? And what's the money?" He would complete his business in a willed sobriety, then go back to his laughter and cameraderie.

As often as not his evenings wound down in an atmospheric Second Avenue bar owned by a lady named Leonore Lemmon, whom he always called Lemmon or just Lem. She in turn called him Whittemouse which, in its subliminal suggestion of Mighty Mouse, was oddly and humorously perfect. Lem was and is — and Jack revelled in it — a witty eccentric, an absolute original who reputedly had been the real-life model for Holly Golightly in Truman Capote's *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. Afterwards Jack would wander home to sleep in a big round bed, then get up and hit the telephones in the morning. In the last seventeen years of his life, Jack and Lem were inseparable.

Jack genuinely liked musicians, as people, and he had superb intuition about talent. He was always lending money, sometimes to musicians whose character did not exactly inspire trust. Lem would ask him why he did it. "The boy is so talented," Jack would say. The last conversation I had with Jack concerned a brilliant musician and his lady. "I'm trying to get him more money," Jack said. "I want to get his price up. They're nice people, and they deserve it."

Jack was never at a loss for clients, because musicians wanted *him*. He sought to keep his roster small, so that he could concentrate on those few people, but Jack was never very good at saying no and he was always trying to get work for people who were not in fact his clients.

He suffered a stroke and was in the hospital for two months. Some of his clients, notably Ron Carter, Phil Woods, and Horace Silver, were standup and standby people, but some others were less than grateful, and the books after Jack's death indicated that he was owed at least $145,000 in commissions which his estate will probably never collect.

His clients must now try to find someone else to find them work and collect their money, neither of which is an easy job. Record producer Helen Keane, who had managed Bill Evans for many years and was a close friend of Jack's, said, "He was *the* agent for this music, the only one who cared. Everyone was his personal client.

"He was Santa Claus."

A cold maxim holds that no man is indispensable.

Jack Whittemore was.

Afterwards

While the foregoing was on its way to press, Phil McKellar died of a heart attack — "hounded to death," according to some of his friends, by the ad hoc Committee Against Racism in the Media which, for six months, never relented in its efforts to get him.

Many musicians — and others, including journalists — were angered by the death. Drummer Archie Alleyne and vibraphonist Frank Wright, both black, tried to get other black musicians to sign a petition on McKellar's behalf, without success. But Count Basie did an interview with McKellar after he had been told of the incident and the controversy. Evidently he did not accept the description of McKellar as a racist. "He's my friend," Basie said. The interview was broadcast on CKFM on the January Sunday following McKellar's death.

McKellar was fifty-eight.