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Killing the Father
by Michael Zwerin

PARIS

Twelve arrows carrying the colors of European countries are flying in the direction of a thick-lipped Black Sambo stereotype playing drums. Most of the arrows have hit the bass drum, which has "American Jazz Band" printed on it. The French arrow has pierced the figure's bowler hat and the Portuguese missile is about to enter his heart. His eyes are wide with terror. You can almost hear him say, "Feets, get me outta heah!"

The Afro-American Parisian artistic community and many European musicians as well were up in arms over what they considered a racist and chauvinist image appearing on the program and poster for the Europa Jazz Festival held in Le Mans April 16 through 21, 1985. The organizers and some co-sponsors admitted to embarrassment over what they called "a bad mistake".

Photographer, poet and novelist Hart Leroy Bibbs thought it was worse than that. He said, "The poster cannot be separated from the climate of mounting racism in France, from the recent bombing of the Jewish Film Festival, and the popularity of Jean Marie Le Pen's National Front party."

Alan Silva, bassist and musical director of the co-operative Franco-American jazz school IACP, would not let the poster be hung in the school. "I have a lot of Third World students," he said. "It's insulting to them." Alexander Schlippenbach, the German leader of the prestigious inter-cultural Globe Unity Orchestra, with which Silva has been working, was outraged by the image. Although he is not on the program, he told Silva, "European musicians should not be associated with this sort of fascist publicity."

Festival organizer Armand Meignan explained: "We meant it as a gag. It's too late to change it, I would if I could. The drawing represents old New Orleans style jazz, and now we Europeans can do better. But I program blues and African festivals and many black jazz musicians all year 'round."

This explanation reminded one Parisian Afro-American, who asked not to be named because he gets work from French musicians, of someone saying "Some of my best friends are Jews." Saxophonist Steve Potts tore the poster down from the wall of the New Morning Club. The Sunset, another jazz club, refused to hang it, as did the cultural section of the Netherlands embassy, a co-sponsor.

An executive of the British Council, another co-sponsor, said he told Meignan that he was "horrified" and that he "objects to the anti-American message". A cultural officer in the United States embassy in Paris (which is not a sponsor), requesting not to be quoted by name, said he was "shocked".

Serge Malik of SOS Racism, a collection of young activists for minority rights whose motto is "Don't touch my buddy", considered the poster "clumsy, more stupid than vicious."

But Maurice Cullaz, producer for co-sponsor Radio France and president of the French Jazz Academy, said, "It goes deeper than that. I know at least one Antillais musician who has been told 'Why don't you go back where you came from?' And you often hear French musicians say, 'Just because they are black doesn't mean that they can player better than we can.' It's touchy. The organizers should have known better."

The white-black European-American controversy is not new. It is still part of daily conversation among French musicians, many of whom consider American jazzmen resident in France as cultural imperialists, even though almost every biography in the Europa program cited American players as influences and credits.

In his book *Histoire Generale du Swing*, published in France in 1942, during the German Occupation, Andre Coeuroy tried to prove that jazz was European rather than African, that it descended from French and Italian folk melodies and from Debussy. "It has been assumed for a long time," he wrote, "that jazz is specifically Negro music. My theory is the opposite. Jazz became Negro by chance. The principle elements are not only white, but European. Its history and its materials both belong to us . . ."

Charles Delaunay, president of the Hot Club of France, reviewing Coeuroy's book in *Jazz Hot*, said that "the author adopted a thesis which he pushed to the absurd. He tries to prove everything worthwhile in jazz is European, he portrays Negroes as clowns, he ridicules black music. This is really shocking." On the other hand, an editorial in the same magazine in 1943 complained, "The French public falls in love with the first Negro who comes over and can bang on the top of a box, while only admitting the value and talent of white musicians with great reluctance . . . ."

As the novelty of American jazz musicians in postwar Europe gradually wore off, the European level of musicianship rose, thanks to their American teachers, while the economic crisis set off fierce competition in a declining market. Organizer Meignan wondered if the Americans were bitter because they were not included in his program.

Pianist Bobby Few denied it. "He has the right to hire who he pleases," he said. "But the drawing does not represent the image of Afro-Americans in 1985. It's a slap in the face."

Swiss drummer and painter Daniel Humair, a longtime Paris resident who was on the program, called the drawing "horrible. In bad taste. But you are wrong if you deduce from it that the French are racist. The borders are open, any jazzman can come in here and work. We can not do the same in the States. When I was playing with Phil Woods' European Rhythm Machine, Phil had to hire an American rhythm section to tour the States. The lack of reciprocity causes some bitterness, yes, but racism no."

Henry Pillsbury, artistic director of the American Center, which sponsors cultural events in all the arts, said, "As programmers of jazz in Paris we have never maintained American exclusivity. We have tried to bridge the gap, although historically jazz is the single indisputably American art form."

Alain Surrance, who heads the music section of the French Ministry of Culture, a co-sponsor, said he did not see the poster before it was printed and would not have approved it if he had. He called it "a blunder," adding, "It looks to me like they are trying to kill their father."

A Piano Poll — and Why

Polls in the arts rest on the dubious assumption that there is a best that can somehow be determined. Jazz musicians, like other artists, often question this premise, in spite of the cutting contests that are so much a part of the music's history.

It has been my experience in jazz that pianists tend to be more competitive than horn players, possibly because there is usually only one pianist on any given job. They are also disinclined to listen to each other. It is common for them to say, "I don't listen to pianists, I listen to horn players" — which may be one reason jazz pianists, *qua* pianists, in the past were rather limited, their proficiency far below that of "classical" musicians, which was not the case with horn players. Jazz developed some astonishing virtuosi on wind instruments while pianists were still clunking out chords and more or less limited solos. Under the influence of Art Tatum — more, in my opinion, through that of Oscar Peterson and Bill Evans than directly — and of Nat Cole and Teddy Wilson, this has changed in the last two decades, and we have developed some superbly proficient jazz pianists. Consider, for example, Monty Alexander, an enormously under-recognized musician.

Because I am working on a biography of Oscar Peterson, to be followed by another on Bill Evans, and in spite of the antipathy I know musicians to have toward polls, I decided to run one of my own, to see if I could elicit a general judgment of pianists on the subject of jazz piano and its practitioners.

To minimize the obvious defect of most polls, I asked the pianists among our readership to name not one but five pianists they considered the best; the five they considered the most influential; and five personal favorites they listened to for pleasure. I thought that the three lists might be different in each case, and this proved to be so. Only Alan Broadbent voted for the same five players in all three categories.

I wish I had set the number at ten in each group. I think this would have elicited a more sensitive response, judging by the number of people who said that it was with anguish that they had not listed Hank Jones (or Tommy Flanagan or whoever). A few people simply went over the total of 15 names, which did not help me in my effort to uncover a broad collective perception by people who presumably know more about the subject than the critics whose judgments they so often decry. I counted these votes anyway. One critic, by the way, voted in this poll, but I asked Leonard Feather to do so because he plays the instrument, no matter that he is quick to denigrate his own playing.

I am surprised that Nat Cole did not place higher in all three categories. It was Cole, in my opinion, who led the way to that improved tone quality that is a distinguishing asset of the best post-Peterson players, not to mention the sheer joyous bounce of his playing. I suspect that had I made the ballot a little less restrictive, his true stature would have been more accurately reflected.

Since many of the musicians I questioned are on the road much of the time, the ballots trickled in for months, and at the point when I finally had to make a cutoff, 47 had replied. The accompanying letters indicated that almost everyone had found the process of selection painful — Roger Kellaway said it aged him ten years. Bobby Scott's letter explaining his choices amounted to an essay, and a striking one, on jazz piano. It follows the poll results in this issue.

Not all the people I polled make their livings as pianists. Barry Little, a fine pianist and composer of professional stature, is a neurologist. Chevy Chase, whose piano-playing I like a lot, has another career. So does Dizzy Gillespie, who plays very good piano indeed. Dizzy, by the way, invented his own category: pianists he has particularly liked playing *with*. Several persons polled are primarily known as composers or arrangers, but all play piano to some extent and certainly know the instrument, and a few of them, such as Francy Boland, are jazz pianists of stature.

Two people broke the "influential" category into two parts: influential on jazz piano generally, and influential on them personally. I wish I'd had the foresight to set the poll up that way.

And Leonard Feather too invented a category: the most over-rated. He named Jelly Roll Morton to this distinction. And he added that his opinion was shared by Duke Ellington, Mary Lou Williams, Barry Ulanov, "and almost everyone I know who heard him in person and separated the man from the mystique."

Musicians and critics alike expect a jazz player to have a personal voice. The good ones attain it, and play what and how they want to play. Consequently, each of them harbors some degree of preference for his own work over that of other players. And this, in my experience, is far more prevalent among pianists than players of the other instruments, due in part, I'm sure, to the piano's fundamentally solo character. And there is nothing wrong with this. Many years ago, when I was interviewing Oscar Peterson for a *Down Beat* article, I asked him who his favorite pianist was. He specified the things he looks for in jazz piano, and rarely hears — at least in any one player. After that he said, in essence: If I give you a truly honest answer, therefore, I would have to say that I'm my favorite pianist. A few weeks later, I interviewed Dave Brubeck. I asked Dave the same question. Dave listed the things *he* wants to hear from a pianist. One of them, he said, was polyrhythm. He said (and I am paraphrasing from memory) that he was always trying for polyrhythmic effects. I believe the next is a verbatim quote: "I don't always bring it off, but when I do, I find it very exciting." And then he said that if he gave a truly honest answer, he would have to say that he was his own favorite pianist.

What someone out to get Dave or Oscar could have done with that material. Imagine a headline on *Down Beat*'s cover: *I'm My Own Favorite Pianist — Dave Brubeck*. In fact I suppressed the line in each case, fearing that it would be misunderstood, and even edited some of Dave's almost ingenuously honest comments to protect him. (Later, Dave said, "You didn't quote what I said, you quoted what I meant." I've always treasured that.)

I cite these instances to illustrate a point that I believe is important. Deeply-held personal conviction is an essential quality of good art, and the philosophy out of which a man builds his own work inescapably shapes his perception of that of others. Knowing this to be so, I was very touched by the fairness and conscientiousness with which every one of these people went about the task of considering the work of their colleagues, friends, and predecessors.

Their love and appreciation for each other, once I had set them to thinking on the subject, was striking. Bill Potts wrote, "1. Bill Evans, for his voicings, spread harmony, selection of pieces, and above all, his *tone*. 2. Tommy Flanagan, for everything he does. 3. Jimmy Rowles. Knowledge of the right chord progressions of all tunes, old or new. Cleverness, humor, dynamics, and sounding like nobody else. Originality. 4. Oscar Peterson. Technique!!! And a left hand so independent from his right. He rolls through tenths like it was a piece of cake. 5. Bill Basie. *Simplicity*. And time. And just plain down-home swing. He can lay out for 23 bars and play one note and make my day. 6. Dave McKenna. *Time*. Perfect time. With his left hand playing a good bass line, he sounds like a full ensemble. And swing! Sorry I named six."

Dave Brubeck wrote, "There is no way I can make up this list without leaving out so many creative players that I'd like to mention as influences, or for sheer enjoyment, or even best. What about Jimmy Rowles, Monk, Bill Evans, Teddy Wilson, Jelly Roll Morton (he should be on all three lists), Ellis Larkins, Tristano, Billy Taylor, Cleo Brown, John Bunch?" Junior Mance wrote, "The (personal favorite) list is very difficult because there are many others I enjoy listening to as much as the ones I have named, such as Hank Jones, Tommy Flanagan, Bill Evans, and Ray Bryant." Neither Dave nor Junior need have worried about leaving Bill Evans out. Collectively, the 47 pianists named him their personal favorite, and a very close second to Tatum both as "best" and as an influence.

Art Tatum received 36 votes as "best" pianist, Bill Evans 33 and Oscar Peterson 27. Tatum is also seen as the most influential, with 32 votes, followed closely by Evans with 30. And among personal favorites, Evans drew 25 votes to Tatum's 22 and Oscar Peterson's 19. Tatum, Evans, and Peterson, then, are the most highly-esteemed pianists among pianists — or at least among those who took part in this survey.

Bud Powell, with 24 votes, is also perceived to be a major influence, following Tatum and Evans, and followed in turn by Thelonious Monk, Oscar Peterson and Teddy Wilson, each with 15 votes.

Herewith the results in detail. B stands for "best", I for Influential, and P for Personal Favorites.

"Best"

Art Tatum 36, Bill Evans 33, Oscar Peterson 27, Bud Powell 13, Erroll Garner 11, Fats Waller 11, Nat Cole 8, Herbie Hancock 7, Chick Corea 6, George Shearing 6, Earl Hines 5, Hank Jones 5, Dave McKenna 5, Count Basie 3, Clare Fischer 3, Dick Hyman 3, Jimmy Rowles 3, McCoy Tyner 3, Denny Zeitlin 3.

Influential

Art Tatum 32, Bill Evans 30, Bud Powell 24, Thelonious Monk 15, Oscar Peterson 15, Teddy Wilson 15, Fats Waller 13, Erroll Garner 12, Earl Hines 11, Count Basie 6, Chick Corea 6, James P. Johnson 6, Nat Cole 5, Duke Ellington 5, Tommy Flanagan 5, McCoy Tyner 4, Herbie Hancock 3, Jimmy Rowles 3, Cecil Taylor 3.

Personal Favorites

Bill Evans 25, Art Tatum 22, Oscar Peterson 19, Erroll Garner 11, Fats Waller 11, Herbie Hancock 9, Nat Cole 8, Bud Powell 8, Duke Ellington 7, Tommy Flanagan 7, Thelonious Monk 7, Dave McKenna 6, Chick Corea 5, Clare Fischer 5, Hank Jones 5, Count Basie 4, Keith Jarrett 4, Roger Kellaway 4, Monty Alexander 3, Ahmad Jamal 3, Andre Previn 3, Teddy Wilson 3.

How They Voted

Mike Abene: B Ellington, Monk, Evans, Byard. I Byard, Ellington, Monk, Rowles, Waller. P Rowles, Byard, Monk, Ellington, Evans.

Tex Arnold: B Tatum, Peterson, Evans, Fischer, Corea. I Tatum, Peterson, Evans, Hancock, Monk. P Fischer, Grusin, Kellaway, Tatum, Mike Renzi.

Kenny Ascher: B Peterson, Tatum, Evans, Corea, Tristano, Hancock, Kellaway, Jarrett. I Evans, Bud Powell, Tyner, Tatum, Cole, Corea, Peterson. P Peterson, Hancock, Corea, Feldman, Fischer, Kelly, Kellaway, Evans,

Francy Boland: B Tatum, Cole, Waller, Peterson, Evans. I Waller, Tatum, Hines, Bud Powell, Peterson. P Tatum, Cole, Garner, Wilson, Mel Powell, Ellington, Basie, Waller.

Carol Britto: B Fischer, Hank Jones, Roland Hanna, Kenny Barron, Kellaway. I Ellington, Bud Powell, Garland, Evans, Monk. P Ellington, Peterson, Evans, Fischer, Monty Alexander.

Alan Broadbent: B Bud Powell, Evans, Tristano, Cole, Kelly. I Bud Powell, Evans, Tristano, Cole, Kelly. P Bud Powell, Evans, Tristano, Cole, Kelly.

Dave Brubeck: B Tatum, Shearing, Waller, Peterson, Garner. I Ellington, Tatum, Kenton, Basie, Albert Ammons and Mead Luxe Lewis. P Chick Corea, Keith Jarrett, Herbie Hancock, Marian McPartland, Dave McKenna.

Nico Bunink: B James P. Johnson, Tatum, Bud Powell, Ellington, Hancock. I James P. Johnson, Tatum, Wilson, Cole, Bud Powell, Peterson, Evans.

Chevy Chase: B Evans, Tatum, Monk, Tyner, Feldman. I Zawinul, Brubeck, Zeitlin, Hancock, Rowles. P Peterson, Tatum, Evans, Monk, Jarrett.

Gene Di Novi: B Evans, Peterson, Wilson, Tatum, Hank Jones. I Wilson, Tatum, Peterson, Garner, Evans. Also: Mel Powell, Clarence Profit, Ellington. P Hank Jones, Tommy Flanagan, McKenna, Wilson, Tatum.

Bob Dorough: B Bud Powell, Evans, Jarrett, Peterson, Zeitlin, Corea. I Bud Powell, Garland, Evans, Hines, Jarrett, Corea, Cecil Taylor, Monk. P Bud Powell, Monk, Evans, Waller, Hancock.

Kenny Drew: B Tatum, Bud Powell, Hancock, Evans, Barry Harris. I Tatum, Bud Powell, Corea, Peterson, Flanagan. P Tatum, Evans, Hancock, Tyner, Peterson.

Larry Dunlap: B Tatum, Cole, Evans, Jarrett, Tete Montoliu. I Tatum, Cole, Evans, Peterson, Corea. P Evans, Egberto Gismonte, Levy, Jamal, Fischer.

Jack Elliott: B Tatum, Evans, Peterson, Dave Grusin, McKenna. I Tatum, Wilson, Cy Walter, Al Haig, Evans. P Evans, Grusin, McKenna, Tatum, Peterson.

Leonard Feather: B Hines, Waller, Tatum, Wilson, Bud Powell, Evans. I Hines, Waller, Tatum, Wilson, Bud Powell, Evans. Most over-rated: Jelly Roll Morton.

Victor Feldman: B Tatum, Bud Powell, Evans, Jamal, Hancock. I Tatum, Bud Powell, Evans, Jamal, Hancock. P Evans, Tatum, John Lewis, Haig, Jamal.

Allyn Ferguson: B Tatum, Peterson, Evans, McKenna, Rowles. I Tatum, Waller, Wilson, Monk, Garner. P Tatum, Peterson, Evans, McKenna, Rowles.

Chuck Folds: B Tatum, Waller, Hines, Wilson, Garner. I Tatum, Waller, Hines, Wilson, Garner.

Tito Fontana: B Waller, Tatum, Bud Powell, Evans, Corea. I Waller, Tatum, Monk, Evans, Tyner. P Tatum, Garner, Peterson, Evans, Hancock.

Dave Frishberg: B Tatum, Basie, Cole, Waller, Evans. I Tatum, Wilson, Hines, Evans, Bud Powell. P Mel Powell, Rowles, Cole, Ellington, Waller.

Dizzy Gillespie: B Tatum, Peterson, Garner, Jamal, Cole. I Hines, Bud Powell, Garner, Monk, Wilson. P Bud Powell, Flanagan, Garner, Gonzalo Rubalcabo (Cuba). Five I have liked playing with: Tatum, Peterson, Cole, Flanagan, Garner.

Ralph Grierson: B Corea, Evans, Hancock, Peterson, Cecil Taylor. I Evans, Monk, Bud Powell, Tatum, Cecil Taylor. P Fischer, Mays, Malato Ozone, Zawinul, Zeitlin. Other favorites: Toshiko Akyoshi, Basie, Brubeck, Corea, Ray Charles, Cole, George Duke, Ellington, Evans, Feldman, Russ Freeman, Chris Gage, Garland, Grusin, Hancock, Pete Jolly, Jarrett, Kenton, Kellaway, Kelly, Kenny Kirkland, Mike Lang, Mileliu Leviev, Mike Melvoin, Monk, Peterson, Bud Powell, Previn, Billy Preston, Rowles, Joe Sample, Shearing, Lalo

Schifrin, Tatum, Richard Tee, Tristano, Tyner, Cecil Taylor, Don Thompson, Waller, Wilson.

Jane Jarvis: B Jess Stac y, Peterson, Hines, Garner, Tatum. I Stacey, Tatum, Garner, Mary Lou Williams, Peterson. P Rowles, Garland, Cole, Joe Bushkin, Dick Marx.

Roger Kellaway: B Tatum, Peterson, Dick Hyman, Evans, Zeitlin. Historically influential: Wilson, Peterson, Bud Powell, Monk, Evans. Influential on me: Peterson, Waller, Silver, Monk, Evans. P Waller, Peterson, Hyman, Evans, Zeitlin.

Roy Kral: B Evans, Peterson, Shearing, Tatum, Bud Powell. I Evans, Bud Powell, Wilson, Hines. P Evans, Peterson, Broadbent, Flanagan, Rowles.

Philip Lees: B Tatum, Peterson, Tyner, Evans, Monty Alexander. I Evans, Waller, Bud Powell, Wilson, Corea. P Early Herbie Hancock, Peterson, Alexander, Billy Preston, Ellington.

Mickey Leonard: B Tatum, Waller, Peterson, Evans, Shearing. I Tatum, Evans, James P. Johnson, Waller, Bud Powell, Jimmy Jones, Morton. P Evans, Tatum, Ellis Larkins, Peterson, Waller.

Barry Little: B Peterson, Evans, Previn, Shearing, Tatum. I Tatum, Bud Powell, Monk, Peterson, Evans. P Previn, Evans, Shearing, Peterson, Tatum.

Julian Mance Jr.: B Tatum, Peterson, Hines, Waller, Cole. I Tatum, Peterson, Bud Powell, Garner, Evans. P Tatum, Peterson, Garner, Jamal, Cole.

Henry Mancini: B Tatum, Hines, Rowles, Peterson, Evans. I Monk, Hines, Basie, Tatum, Evans. P Tatum, Waller, Monk, Hines, Evans.

Johnny Mandel: B Waller, Tatum, Evans, Garner, McKenna. I Waller, Tatum, Bud Powell, Evans, Garner. P Waller, Kellaway, Tatum, Evans, McKenna.

Roberta Mandel: B Basie, Fischer, Jimmy Jones, Harris, Flanagan, Hank Jones. I Ellington, Evans, Zeitlin, George Russell, Basie. P Hancock, Dwike Mitchell, Garner, Tatum, Monk.

Dick Marx: B Tatum, Peterson, Hyman, Evans. I Shearing, Basie, Garner, Wilson, Tatum. P Peterson, Tania Maria, Tatum, Grusin, Paul Smith.

Bill Mays: B Tatum, Hancock, Corea, Bud Powell, Evans. I Evans, Monk, Bud Powell, Tyner, Kelly. P Hank Jones, Rowles, Corea, Jarrett, Hancock.

Loonis McGlohon: B Evans, Shearing, McKenna, Hancock, Peterson. I Tatum, Hines, Garner, Evans, Corea. P John Coates, Mike Abene, Harold Dank, Evans, Jim McNeely, McKenna, Broadbent, Shearing, Flanagan, Rowles.

Bill McGuffie: B Tatum (God), Peterson, Evans, Flanagan, Hank Jones. I Hines, Waller, Tatum, Pete Johnson, Wilson. P Evans, Monty Alexander, Flanagan, Tatum, Cole.

Marian McPartland: B Garner, Tatum, Wilson, Peterson, Evans. I Ellington, Wilson, Bud Powell, James P. Johnson, Willie (the Lion) Smith. P Evans, Peterson, Mary Lou Williams (the later years), Hank Jones, Corea.

Walter Norris: B Tatum, Bud Powell, Garner, Peterson, Zeitlin. I Tatum, Bud Powell, Peterson, Evans, Cecil Taylor. Influencing me: Tatum, Bud Powell, Garner, Cole, Dinu Lipatti. P Tatum, Bud Powell, Garner, Peterson, Zeitlin.

Claus Ogerman: B Tatum, Evans, Peterson, Hank Jones, Silver. I Waller, Tatum, Wilson, Dameron, Charles. P Evans, Rowles, Hank Jones, Hawes, Joao Donato.

Nat Pierce: B Waller, Hines, Wilson, Cole, Garner, Tatum. I James P. Johnson, Wilson, Bud Powell, Garner, Evans, Buckner, Tatum. P Basie, Garner, Flanagan, Ellington, Cole, Sir Charles Thompson, Tatum, McShann.

Bill Potts: B Evans, Flanagan, Rowles, Peterson, Basie, McKenna. I Evans, Flanagan, Rowles, Peterson, Basie, McKenna.

Lalo Schifrin: B Peterson, Evans, Bud Powell, Garner, Newborn. I Bud Powell, Monk, Peterson, Garner, Martial Solal. P Peterson, Evans, Bud Powell, Garner, Newborn.

Bobby Scott: B Peterson, Garner, Evans, Shearing, Brubeck. I Tatum, Cole, Monk, Evans, Tristano. P Bud Powell, Hawes, McKenna, Garner, Herman Chittison.

Ben Sidran: B Tatum, Peterson, Tyner, Evans, Newborn. I Bud Powell, Evans, Hancock, Tyner, Shearing. P Sonny Clark, Flanagan, Kelly, Monk, Silver.

Jack Smalley: B Tatum, Garner, Bud Powell, Evans, Peterson. I Tatum, Waller, Garner, Basie, Evans. P Garner, Bud Powell, Pete Jolly, Bill Mays, Grusin.

Ralph Sutton: B Tatum, Waller, Hyman, Wilson, Paul Smith. I Tatum, Waller, James P. Johnson, Hines, Willie (the Lion) Smith. P Tatum, Waller, Hyman, Joe Turner, Basie.

Billy Taylor: B Tatum, Waller, Clarence Profit, Cole, Garner. I Tatum, James P. Johnson, Mary Lou Williams, Garner, Peterson. P Tatum, Waller, Garner, Peterson, Hank Jones.

Vote Totals

Mike Abene P 1. Monty Alexander B 1, P 3. Ammons and Lewis, I 1. Kenny Barron B 1. Count Basie B 3, I 6, B 3. Alan Broadbent P 2. Dave Brubeck B I, I 1, P 1. Milt Buckner I 1. Joe Bushkin P 1. Jacki Byard B 1, I 1, P 1. Ray Charles I 1, P 1. Herman Chittison P 1. Sonny Clark P 1. John Coates P 1. Nat Cole B 8, I 5, P 8. Chick Corea B 6, I 6, P 5. Tadd Dameron I 1, Harold Dank P 1. Joao Donato P 1. Duke Ellington B 2, I 5, P 7. Bill Evans, B 33, I 30, P 25. Victor Feldman B 1, P 1. Clare Fischer B 3, P 5. Tommy Flanagan B 3, I 5, P 7. Red Garland B 1, I 1, P 2. Erroll Garner B 11, I 12, P 11. Egberto Gismonte P 1. Dave Grusin B 1. Al Haig I 1, P 1. Herbie Hancock B 7, I 3, P 9. Roland Hanna B 1. Barry Harris B 2. Hampton Hawes P 2. Earl Hines B 5, I 11, P 2. Dick Hyman B 1. Ahmad Jamal B 2, I 2, P 3. Keith Jarrett, B 3, I 1, P 4. James P. Johnson B 1, I 6. Pete Jolly P 2. Hank Jones B 5, P 5. Jimmy Jones B 1, I 1. Roger Kellaway, B 2, P 4. Wynton Kelly B 1, I 1, P 4. Stan Kenton I 1. Ellis Larkins P 1. Lou Levy P 1. John Lewis P 1. Tania Maria P 1. Dick Marx P 1. Bill Mays P 2. Dave McKenna B 5, I 2, P 6. Jim McNeely P 1. Marion McPartland P 1. Jay McShann, P 1. Dwike Mitchell P 1. Thelonious Monk B 2, I 15, P 7. Tete Montoliu, B 1. Jelly Roll Morton I 1. Phineas Newborn B 2, P 1. Malato Ozone P 1. Oscar Peterson B 27, I 15, P 19. Bud Powell B 13, I 24, P 8. Mel Powell I 1, P 2. Billy Preston P 2. Andre Previn B 1, P 2. Clarence Profit I 1. Jimmy Rowles B 3, I 3, P 9. Gonzalo Rubalcabo P 1. George Russell I 1. George Shearing, B 6, I 2, P 2. Horace Silver B 1, I 1, P 1. Paul Smith B 1, P 1. Willie (the Lion) Smith I 2. Martial Solal I 1. Jess Stacey B 1, I 1. Art Tatum B 36, I 33, P 22. Cecil Taylor B 1, I 3, P 1. Sir Charles Thompson P 1. Joe Turner P 1. Lennie Tristano B 2, I 2, P 2. McCoy Tyner B 3, I 4, P 2. Thomas (Fats) Waller B 11, I 13, P 11. Cy Walter I 1. Mary Lou Williams, I 2, P 1. Teddy Wilson B 5, I 15, P 3. Joe Zawinul I 1, P 1. Denny Zeitlin B 3, I 2, P 3.

Of Rainbows and Mountains

by Bobby Scott

The piano is the queen, maybe the king, of musical instruments. It can offer the would-be player a wonderland of possibilities or a range of mountains too high to climb. To some it's a rainbow, to others a typewriter. I have often visualized it as what in fact it

is, a horizontal harp.

Because its range of expression is almost limitless, at least under gifted hands, it can be a world unto itself. I've always felt that Art Tatum was so self-sufficient that he had absolutely no relationship to horn players or rhythm players.

A piano constitutes an orchestra, or at least an orchestral palette. Accordingly, we develop as many different types of "orchestrators" as does the real orchestra. In the most refined accompanist's hands, a lyrical line in the upper register simulates a woodwind, chords in the middle-range a string section. It is, therefore, a form of prejudice, or prejudgment, to make an assessment of a man's playing without considering his intent.

Bartok, among the modern composers, saw the piano chiefly as a percussion instrument, taking the hammers more seriously than some of his colleagues. Debussy, unquestionably, saw the harp within the piano's casing and wrote for it accordingly.

What shouldn't be forgotten is that there was, at the start of this century, a wholesale rejection of the Romantic piano music of the previous fifty years or so. Rachmaninoff is still considered, in many musical circles, a soppy sentimentalist, too emotive in the worst theatrical sense, a man who made the piano a great crying machine. In this last quarter of the Twentieth Century, with its less rubato playing, we are discovering a good deal of excellent music inside his notes. Time not only heals, it illuminates.

Because of its breadth, its sheer scope, the piano will always give us more diametrically opposed styles and attitudes than any other single musical instrument. And for that, bravo.

When I pondered your question, I suddenly became aware of how difficult it is to list 15 pianists without adequate explanation of why I chose the ones I did. Worse, you made a lazy human being *think*! And once I did that, I perceived distinctions I'd never really given one good thought to.

Most prominent was this: Is there a difference between "jazz pianist" and "jazz player", the latter defined as a jazz musician who just happens to play the piano? To my amazement, I came to the conclusion that there is such a difference. And now I thank you for the quandary you caused. You sent me down the dark alley called dichotomy, wherein one is forced to clarify things that make one blind just so one can find one's way out. For instance.

Has Bud Powell influenced more jazz pianists than, say, Oscar Peterson or Art Tatum, whose fingers, in terms of facility, run rings around his? I believe he did, and still does, although the finest examples of his playing — in the earlier *Un Poco Loco* period — have not enjoyed the second wind of re-release and re-evaluation they deserve. I'm sad to report that quite recently I tried to buy an early Bud Powell album and couldn't find one.

Then a second question occurred to me. Was Bud a "pianist" or a "player"?

And that distinction raised still another question. Did Bud himself think he was a pianist or a player of jazz? I can't ask him, can I? But there are his recordings, and they say to me that he was a player, not a pianist. His ballad playing sounded like caricature, and of whom there can be no doubt. I often felt he was throwing away those ballads. But not without first taking a swipe at the more proficient Tatum.

I'm no Art Tatum fan. Repetition alone would rule him out of my own personal pantheon, if I had a pantheon. For sheer enjoyment, my heart tells my brain it much prefers to hear Thomas Waller strut. So that raises still another question. Can personal taste be rationalized?

But I am a musician, I tell myself, and I should be able to isolate *what* it is that makes me *feel* the way I do about the talents of two such men, or two such other men.

I want you to know that the questions you raised kept me awake. As I sat up in bed one night, pondering them, my wife asked me, "Who were *you* influenced by the most, love?" That made me sort through the cobwebs of memory. And I startled myself. In my heart I have always known who my favorite jazz player is, but I had never mentioned it to anyone, even those players who are close to me. "Can't you guess?" I said. "Milt Jackson."

And in that moment I realized that no pianist had influenced me, nor could I imagine pianists in the vanguard of general influences in jazz.

Aren't physical considerations, namely the dexterity of one's digits and the nature of one's neural reporting system, the ultimate deciding factors or influences? You can wish to be Art Tatum, but if you don't have the equipment, you have do what you can with what you have. Is someone with less facile fingers than other players influenced by another player who also has less than perfect facility?

The first pianist who entered my little-boy's ears came to my attention via the radio, and sneakily at that. I was caught by the near-wistful crystalline high notes of Herman Chittison, the then famous "Blue Note Cafe" pianist on the *Casey, Crime Photographer* show that starred Frank Lovejoy, later of film fame. What he did to me was indescribable, so much by osmosis that it is hard to clarify. I'm not sure at what age I first heard him, but he didn't sound like anything I'd heard up to then.

Then from the phonograph came the sound of *Snowfall* and the single-note warmth of Claude Thornhill. I'm not sure what that record did to me, but somehow it was suave, professional, and on a higher musical plane than the saccharine singing commercials of radio. Even that young, I noted that Thornhill's playing was "set" admirably, the soft horns a string of small diamonds encircling the piano's stark ruby quality.

Strangely, the only other recording I quickly remember from that time in World War II was William Kapell's debut performance on RCA Victor 78s, Liszt's *Mephisto Waltz*. The reason I remember it is no doubt that I was studying with his teacher, Dorothea LaFollette, who was doing her own P.R. for her most famous pupil. (She had another pupil who went on to become Miss America, a fine pianist named Bess Meyerson.)

When I started working professionally at the age of eleven, I heard the reiteration of bebop licks on every dance job and wedding I played. There was the usual fake book, and the learning of standards. The boon, though, was to be in the company of players, finding out what they were listening to on records. Before long, I had begun getting together with other musicians and exchanging opinions on what was happening in the jazz world at that time.

The talents we bantered about had names like Fats Navarro, Allan Eager, Kenny Clarke, Al Haig, Leo Parker. I'm sure we were all very parochial, and moved by the last two groups who'd been heard last Monday night at Birdland. Now it seems funny to me. It wasn't then. Monday night jam sessions at Birdland featured up-and-coming players. When I was fifteen, I

Notice

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played there myself.

Down Beat magazine ran a monthly column on pianists of note, accompanied by actual transcriptions of solos. I digested those I liked, and even now I recall vividly pieces by Bud Powell, Joe Bushkin, and Bobby Tucker — the latter a very under-rated pianist who has spent the better part of his career as accompanist to the great Billy Eckstine.

In a music store near my home in the Bronx, I found volumes of transcriptions, from Eddie Duchin to the *London Suite* of Fats Waller. My technical skills were adequate to the task of studying them and I learned much. I even stumbled — maybe "stuttered" is more like it — my way through the printed Tatum! There was a folio by Hazel Scott, another by Mary Lou Williams. Whether I actually learned anything from these journeys into the worlds of others' playing is questionable. But I did come to see who they were, and what it was that gave definition to their work.

The first pianist who expressed marked individuality to me was Erroll Garner. Erroll was one of the least presumptuous of players. Eventually 'The Imp', as he was called, and I became acquaintances. He was a warm human being, and a happy one.

His playing still delights me. So. I put him at the very top of my list of five *favorite* pianists. His classic recordings, such as *Concert by the Sea*, hold up very well indeed to the ravages of time, though I never did like the recordings he made as a sideman with Bird. He didn't fit in, in my opinion.

Once, in London, in a restaurant called of all things Scott's, I found a boilermaker in front of me before I had even asked for it. The waiter pointed down the bar, and there stood The Imp. We talked. He said that he regretted never having studied music formally when he was young. I understood. Music, as opposed to accounting or several other professional fields, isn't something one can get much out of — or, more correctly, take in — during the middle years of life. It has a cut-off point. Though Erroll did do some studying, the written aspects of the art were forever a mystery to him.

His was a tactile talent. He had an incredible pair of ears married to exquisite taste. These attributes took him far enough. I put some value on the pedagogical, but not too much. No school could turn out an Erroll Garner. So his playing defends itself.

The reason I put him at the top of my list of favorites is that I have never heard him, in person or on records, without being moved, gathered up, by his ebullience, his singular excitement while playing, which was transferred to me, making my foot tap even if I didn't want it to.

In the summer of 1955, during a two-week gig with the late Gene Krupa in Provincetown on Cape Cod, I finally got to hear Herman Chittison "live". He was the house pianist at the hotel we worked. He wove magic. It was a revelation and a joy. The man had little or no impact on the mainstream of jazz piano-playing, but to me there was in his work what I can only call a righteousness of movement. It was in the way one group of tones would connect to another, *ad infinitum*. The closest thing I have heard to the beauty of Chittison's voice-leadings is in the playing of the wonderful Hank Jones. There are no loose ends to be tied. They are not *allowed*. It was reassuring, back there in 1955, to find that what I remembered about his playing was not a figment of a child's imagination. Herman Chittison could *play*. And so I put him on my list of personal favorites.

Which leaves three other players for me to put on that list. They are: Bud Powell, Hampton Hawes, and Dave McKenna.

The latter part of Bud's life saw a horrendous decline in his playing. It is one of the great tragedies in jazz history. For his mental breakdown dried up not a streamlet but the headwaters of a mighty river.

Inside his frenetic spraying of improvised gems was an artist tightrope-walking over the abyss. Perversely, this fascinated listeners, myself included. There was in his performances a tempting of the fates, an arm-wrestling with the devil — a devil, no doubt, of his own mental making. When he did begin to have problems musically, it was already too late, apparently, for him to come back from where he had gone in his mind.

What most drew me to Bud was his attempt to effect a *dynamic* approach to his single-note improvising. The piano, unfortunately, has distinct and very real limitations, the most salient being a oneness of sound production, locked in by the very make-up of the system utilized by the instrument. Bud hurdled this, and not without great effort. He most often succeeded during those rolling solo sections, when his left hand thumped in inconsequential intervals (mostly sevenths revolving, and resolving, into other sevenths) and his whole musical being tried to draw out of the apparent oneness of the keyboard notes of differing dynamic levels. That he succeeded at all was a monumental triumph.

He threw away ballads. I imagine he thought them a saccharine *divertisement*, so he distorted the (to him) unwholesome qualities of the standards from Broadway and Hollywood. When he played a ballad of his own invention, or by a colleague such as Monk, his biting approach didn't seem half as outrageous as it was when he was playing something like *Over the Rainbow*.

I remember watching Bud one night in Birdland. His eyes were glazed and bloodshot. Sweat covered his forehead. In and of itself, this boded of a form of bleeding I did not yet know existed. It suddenly occurred to me how hard and arduous was his trekking toward a completion of his expression. There were too many phrases that fell apart in flight. I saw his left hand turn in upon itself for his lack of fingering expertise. Still, he won more than he lost, and he did so through sheer force of will.

And there was, as with Erroll, a conveyed excitement that made his listeners, even those who didn't like Bud's playing, feel more alive for hearing him drive his digits to the extremity, with a never-ending spate of neural imperatives, taxing whatever physical limitations he had at that moment in his life's time — and, miraculously, extending them!

I always sensed Bud's testing himself. No player, then or since, put as much of the grit and anguish of reaching past his gifts into his musical expression. I was made to understand that there was an aspect of improvising that goes beyond the pleasure of making music. It was the *explorative* that Bud exemplified.

I have often wondered since then whether that compulsion he had to break new ground proceeded from a talent that only writing could have set loose and realized. But that is hindsight. Bud certainly accomplished enough. My life would have a huge hole in it had he not played and won.

There ought to be a good deal of collective guilt about Bud's last years and then death. What could have been done to help him? Frankly, I don't know. I had only one direct experience with him.

I was producing a "live" concert album of a Charlie Parker memorial concert at Carnegie Hall. The man who "represented" Bud — if one can call what he did representation — so put me off that I cut a finger-tip badly when I bounced a knife off a restaurant tabletop in a white-heat anger. The debacle was so total that what Bud played at that concert was taken out of the tape, that segment literally spilling onto the floor of a room backstage. I hated the taste the incident left in my mouth, and I told Bud's "rep" that if he ever imagined walking into a room where I might be, he had better also

imagine me throwing him out the nearest window.

The sinewy playing of Hampton Hawes has always been high on my scale of delights. I'd have missed much had his hands never traversed a keyboard. Once again, he was a man with a sad, checkered life. He was dogged by drug dependency — and the outrageous failure of our justice system to know who are criminals and who are not. He was fated to remain marginal. Still, to my ears, Hampton Hawes' playing was an elixir: flowing bop lines lacking pianistic presumption. To be sure, Hampton Hawes himself wasn't influenced by pianists. His playing synthesized the melodic attributes of horn players he appreciated.

At one point Red Mitchell had been playing regularly with both Hawes and Andre Previn. I asked him about the difference. He said that Hawes was a jazz player while Previn was a well-rounded musician and fine pianist who enjoyed playing jazz. The implication was that Hawes wasn't a first-class pianist, with which assessment I agreed. But we also agreed that he *was* a first-class jazz player. And there's the distinction I mentioned earlier.

I only got to hear Hawes "live" on one occasion. It was in Los Angeles, in a tiny club on Sunset Boulevard crowded with noisy patrons. He even asked me to play a tune, so I knew he wanted a respite from the Sisyphus chore of playing in that environment. Just as with his too-short solos on a Shorty Rogers album, it was wonderful to hear him, even if the evening was too brief. This was in the early 1960s, and I have John F. Kennedy to thank for that moment of pleasure. It was his pardon that released Hampton from prison. I could stand to have all his albums re-released.

Dave McKenna is another kettle of fish. The late Don Costa introduced me to Dave's talent through a test pressing of McKenna's first album for ABC-Paramount, which Don produced. That was in 1956. As we listened, Don's eyes twinkled. I told him I was surprised, and elated, by Dave's now-famous solo ramblings, and the warm, near-innocent, approach to the harmonic structure of the tunes. I still own a copy of that album, though I've changed residence I can't remember how many times in the 29 years since then.

Dave's invention has always been lyrical, tonally though never rhythmically lazy, and certainly never lacking in muscularity. He has an invisible turbine inside him that, once set in motion, simply gathers momentum until it approximates a freight train "moving on down the line". He has never changed the fundamental directness of his expression — I have his latest album — and that pleases me. There has been a courageous quality about Dave's playing in that he never has tipped his hat to what was "in" at a given moment, nor has he approved of one style at the expense of another.

What I find most enjoyable is the way Dave straddles time zones — eras, if you prefer — and synthesizes them into a quite remarkable hybrid. I imagine that to categorists, Dave must be a traditionalist. But such filing-card fixing of talents is game-playing. I simply get great pleasure listening to Dave.

Now, a consideration of the *influential* pianists has to be approached from an entirely different viewpoint. Those I think are the most influential pianists are not my personal favorites, although they all deserve their reputations and I have at times taken great pleasure in their work.

Art Tatum of course is *numero uno*, isn't he? And hasn't every pianist listened to him and thrown up his or her hands in despair of ever taking the piano any further than that wonder of keyboard players? I have a "live" concert album of Tatum's wherein he repeated his version (and they are versions, for he played a tune the same way almost note for note) of Kern's *Yesterdays* with an allusion at one point to Chopin and then a break-neck up-tempo striding near the end of this tour de force. Mind-boggling, and an impossibility for any pianist I can think of, with the possible exception of Oscar Peterson were he to attempt such, which would be a redundancy in any case.

My particular Tatum favorite — and I do have favorites, even if I do not list Tatum among my personal preferences — was his *Aunt Hagar's Blues*. It is a classic of solo piano, in which he brought a depth to the blues form of startling dimension, including harmonic ground-breaking that, in his secure hands, never seems disparate but to the contrary seems natural. In Tatum's case, technique won its battle with its own over-use. When he tore across the keyboard, it was never an arpeggiated fill. When that Goliath of pianists plays, there is always a method to the madness, a total understanding of what is musical, what is entertaining, and what a particular piece of material itself begs the player to draw out of it. His *Humoresque* is a perfect example of leaving a light piece light.

Tatum exerted a great influence on the playing of the instrument, and still does, quite apart from the merely imitative or emulative. If in no other way but as an exemplary example of *approach*, he stands tall, his head well above the others.

Nat Cole is as day is to night when compared to Art Tatum. But he is another major influence. If he had influenced only Oscar Peterson, that would be enough. I hear him *inside of* many an itinerant pianist's solos. Perhaps even too many. I also hear him, or more precisely his attitude, every time I listen to Hank Jones or Tommy Flanagan, two examples of how this difficult instrument can be successfully stroked. And has anyone ever surpassed Nat at understatement? Or at drawing so much charm out of this unyielding harp-in-the-box? Do I thank Nat for the understatement in my own playing? Yes I do! So many of us who have followed him have merely taken possession of territory he staked out and conquered.

Where Tatum was self-sufficient — and Tatum in a trio is Prometheus Bound — and bent on using the piano as an orchestral entity, Nat Cole in his playing extends a hand of greeting, of invitation. There is warmth in the very utterance, a dancing over the keys rather than a playing of notes, a request for quiet converse, and union. Where Tatum is majestic, rhetorical, and bold (sometimes absurdly bold), Nat attempts *engagement* at the highest level of sophistication. I believe that is why Hank Jones has never tasted a certain kind of success, though God knows that every pianist I know simply adores his playing. Is it that his playing is the ultimate in soft sell?

It is a sad and sobering thought that, had he not also been gifted with that marvelous voice of unmatched communicative power, Nat might, in this horrible tide of times, just be looking for an off-night gig, like so many other gifted players.

After talking about the Goliath that Art Tatum was, let us now consider David, carrying a slingshot loaded with major and minor seconds. Thelonious Monk, though a force of major impact in the 1940s and '50s, may have suffered by being a means rather than an end — a given in the equation but never the sum. Be that as it may, his sheer individuality merited one's time and attention, and no players who made music with him could help but be influenced by him. And there is that compositional aspect to Monk's playing and music — for they were synonymous, oddly — which still has such impact, but in the present context there is time only to touch on that.

I am still fascinated by his eight-bar introduction to *An Oscar for Treadwell*. (Ed. note: The reference is to the scholarly disc jockey Oscar Treadwell, who, forbidden by a station's owner to play a Monk track, played it over and over again until he got fired. He now enriches the cultural life of Cincinnati, Ohio, with

his broadcasts on WGUC.) Make no mistake, that little "prelude" set the stage for what followed, and so perfectly that I cannot think of that recording without hearing it — that wonderful little Lights! Camera! Action! preface.

By pianistic standards, he wouldn't get a merit star for Book One of the John Thompson Big Note piano course. Accordingly, he occupies a place in jazz rather like that of Erik Satie among the Impressionists.

Monk may be the greatest single musical influence from the late 1940s. But his adventurousness spans the decades, and shows up where one least expects to hear it. It was a gift, that talent for surprise and the dissimilar. His music is at once disarming in its simplicity and outrageous for its intentional seriousness. It is never an expression that calls forth "nice" words, this splinking and splanking of Monk's fingers. One enjoys it or dismisses it, depending on the disposition one brings to it. I've loved some of the cuts on an album, only to want to tear out my hair over others, wondering how he had the temerity to include such pieces of sheer infantile nonsense.

Ah, but there is no finer example of sheer rugged individualism in action. There is a flagrant disregard for the listener consistent with the ways of an individualist who, of necessity, lives in his own world, and a bizarre transcendental sense of humor, which makes his music completely startling, like hearing a two-year-old suddenly blurt out "Fuck you!"

No one escaped being influenced, at least to some degree, by Thelonious, if only because you couldn't avoid playing *Round About Midnight*.

Tatum, Cole, and Monk. Three down, two to go.

What of the thinking man's pianist? What of Bill Evans? An influence of major proportions?

Of course!

Ever since Bill came on the jazz scene, and established his place in it, there's been a notable change in the work of scores of younger pianists that can be traced back only to Bill's realized vision of floating bar lines and Impressionist harmonic disposition. The outright emulation of him, of which there is truly far too much, alone puts him on my list of the five most important influences.

In itself, his utilizing of early Twentieth Century French harmonic "isms" doesn't mean much to my ears, since I too pored over that material with my late teacher, who had in turn studied with Debussy. But I certainly see its attraction. To hear it in its purest application to jazz, just listen to the *Birth of the Cool* writing of that other gifted Evans, Gil.

I am sad to say that not many of those influenced by Bill have ever climbed to his level of sheer *tenderness*. But being "influential" entails pointing a way, doesn't it, even if not many can follow it. Then there are his long flowing lines of pure lyricism, which, courageously stated, break new ground, and enforce later attempts by others. There is a poignancy in Bill's playing, and an imagining, that overleap his all too early passing away from us. It shows up — like Monk's influence — in the most unexpected places. It is *indirectness* made important, indeed developed to the point of being almost a science, that never attacks an ear. Rather, and simply at that, it just *is*. A tree wears no sign saying that it is a tree. It is more than a tree, in any case. It may not have as many names as those history has assigned to Jesus, but it has enough to pose a puzzle. So what is it then? It is what it *is*. And it *is*. Bill's playing was like that.

In the area of touch, Bill also succeeded, like Nat, at impressing his successors (and antecedents too) with the clear notion that *how* one played was often as important as *what* one played. Dynamically, Bill offered no validation to the horn-playing approach to the piano, for he never let the listener forget, not for an instant, that it was a piano he was playing.

In Bill's playing there is the hint of an initiation, a set of new rites of passage, a new road to walk upon, one that leads no doubt to a new town, and a new place of rest and completion. Was it his intent to go somewhere else? No. For wherever we may imagine he was traveling to, the truth is that he was always there.

That's four. I must slyly mention Bud Powell again, because the other talents he nurtured, no doubt as inadvertently as Bill Evans, Art Tatum, and Nat Cole, and insist that I have not used up my five.

So I'll say that *fifth* name I must mention is Lennie Tristano, although his influence might appear negligible to some ears. Like Bill, his materials are likely to be judged as graftings. And well they may be. But no area of music is an island, free of the influences of others. The sound of Europe is noted, but it pays to remember that an insurance executive from Connecticut was writing atonal and row-like music when the mighty Schoenberg was still patently romantic and chromatic, turning out an older kind of music.

If Bill introduced the mirror-reflecting forms of the Impressionists into the bloodstream of jazz, Lennie brought us the neoclassicisms of the second quarter of the century, with its new organization of tonality and intent.

Without citing specific examples of Lennie's influence, I'll simply say that one hears him in many of the more adventurous younger players. Perhaps they would have arrived where they are without him. But perhaps not. I'll leave that problem for future historians to ponder.

Now, for the five "best". What is "best"? Shall I use "most consistent" as my standard? Or should I use this category to list the outstanding *proponents*, those players who, though they may or may not be influences, have amassed an audience, and therefore have served to keep jazz piano in the limelight?

To my mind, Oscar Peterson has been the leading proponent. Erroll Garner is another major proponent. Over the long haul of years, George Shearing has also made a large contribution, with his "Latin" period his only lapse. I remember vividly his exquisitely solitary solo rendition of *Summertime* on an early MGM album. It most certainly ranks with whatever I would call "classic".

I would be remiss if I did not put Dave Brubeck among the five, even though it has been at least a dog's age since he has made a solo piano album. Still, he cut a swath for 20 years of damn consistently good musical output.

And I will put Bill Evans in this category too. That makes five in this group, and the total of 15. (I count it 16! — Ed.)

Now, I am going to add a category of my own, if you won't let me stretch the list of best: honorable mention. Hank Jones. No player in my memory has been a greater proponent, nor a more consistent exemplar of jazz piano-playing.

I feel better for having given the time they deserved to these questions and then written all this out. But it saddens me that the very restrictions that made me think now force me to leave unmentioned Jimmy Rowles, Tommy Flanagan, Jess Stac y, Red Garland, Roger Kellaway, Teddy Wilson, Ellis Larkins, Billy Taylor, Les McCann, Monty Alexander, Marian McPartland, John Bunche, Dick Hyman, Lil Hardin Armstrong, Bill Basie, Duke Ellington, Bobby Timmons, Ahmad Jamal, Junior Mance, Russ Freeman, Derek Smith, Walter Bishop Jr., Johnny Williams, and so many more whom I enjoy and admire and who, like myself, have plied the waters with their oars and tried to keep the boat afloat and moving toward a more variegated form of pianistic expression.

That does it. If you don't like long-winded letters, don't in future ask such tough questions. Love,

Socks