Gene Lees
Jazzletter

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Letters

Please keep the *Jazzletter* alive. The Goodman story was a classic — just one of many.
Ed Crilly,
Chicago, Illinois

Very, very interesting articles on Goodman. The *Jazzletter* is outstanding.
George Morgan,
Jonesboro, Georgia

The B.G. series was superb. The data ' B.G. was a "narcissistic personality disorder".
Bill Offenkrantz MD,
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Bill Offenkrantz is a psychiatrist.

I thought the lengthy pieces on Benny Goodman were:
1. Immature.
2. In bad taste.
3. Said more about the author than Benny Goodman.
4. "UnChristian."

Many notable people in history may have been personally obnoxious. So what?!
Anthony Young,
Santa Monica, California

Anthony Young is an attorney.

Bravo to Bill Crow for his Benny Goodman Russian saga. It had excellent balance — not merely a hatchet job.
Chuck Folds,
New York City

Chuck Folds is a pianist and former editor at American Heritage.

Too bad he died. He should have read the articles. They were excellent.
Bob Petteruti,
Johnston, Rhode Island

Bob Petteruti is a bassist.

New Frontiers In Jazz Criticism

As a matter of fact, it could probably be argued that their coupling (Pat Metheny and Ornette Coleman) represents a political-aesthetic-social strategy that more than competently confronts the 80s, age of postmodernist verbose.

— David Lee in *Coda*

Loved the Goodman stuff. Thank God the truth is out.
Margaret Whiting,
New York City

Please cancel my subscription.
Yehuda Norman,
Hialeah, Florida

I just read Maurie Kessler's copies of the Goodman series. I should like to subscribe.
Saul Chapman,
Toronto

I am a new subscriber and a Goodman collector. I would like to order the back issues about Goodman.
Louis Loewenstein,
San Francisco, California

Louis Loewenstein suggested I subscribe to the Jazzletter. He says I should read the back issues (on Goodman). The Lees Side was one of the more important reasons I used to subscribe to *High Fidelity*. I have a folder with all your Lees Side articles I wonder if you can help in my search for Benny Goodman as a side man — music on tapes and/or recordings. I have many broadcasts, all the Columbia, except a few by Ben Selvin, and all his RCA records.
J.P. Browne
11511 Wasco Road
Garden Grove CA 92641

I loved Bill Crow's Benny Goodman piece so much, I devoured it like a Mounds bar. Here I come out of the woodwork (along with many others, I'm sure) with my own little bag of Benny Goodman experiences.

For example, my first meeting with Benny was at a rehearsal for a European tour — 1960, maybe — at Nola. (A New York rehearsal and recording studio — Ed.) I remember Roy Burns was the drummer, and rehearsers that day included Freddy Greenwell, Zoot, Jerry Tyree, Jerry Dodgion, Tommy Newsom, et al. My knees were rubbery, of course.

Benny called number twenty-five and I found myself staring at an Eddie Sauter concerto with Mel Powell's piano solo and fills transcribed in the piano part. I tried to grab an eyeful of the first four bars so I could at least start with the band, and suddenly Benny was counting off. The band was playing something not remotely related to my part.

Benny cut them off: "Ready, piano?" he said. We tried it again — same train wreck. Benny stood behind me with his clarinet and instructed me to play the chart alone with him. It was a nightmare, a total humiliation, a disaster, and we stopped after about eight bars. The guys in the band were looking off in five different directions.

Benny said, "That sounds about right," and counted off the band again. It still had nothing to do with my part. He stopped the band and called to me, "Hey, Pops, what number you got up?"

"Twenty-five," I told him.

"No, Pops, no. I said forget twenty-five. We're playing number nineteen. Try to pay attention."

Once Ruby Braff brought Benny to a jam session at Marshall Brown's studio. Naturally, a chill fell over the room as the two of them walked in. Benny took nearly an hour to find a reed, and the rest of us had to wait, couldn't play because he was noodling with a dozen different reeds and wouldn't stop. Finally we played a tune, and Benny took every chorus. I left and don't know what happened after that.

I was with Gene Krupa's quartet at the Metropole with Eddie Wasserman and Dave Perlman. Must have been 1962. Benny walked in and the place went crazy. We were on the bandstand, just having finished an hour-and-fifteen-minute set. I looked at Gene and his face was white. He said, "It's the King of Swing, and he's got his horn. I don't believe this. Here he comes."

So Benny walked up on the stand and began to try out reeds. He stared off into space and tootled and fluttered up and down the scale. This went on for long minutes. Meanwhile Jack Waldorf had herded dozens -- hundreds! -- of passersby into the club, and he had them chanting, "Benny! Benny!" Some were hollering out years -- like "1936!" The camera girl, standing down by the bar, snapped a picture, and hurried downstairs to make prints, promising autographs of Goodman and Krupa.

Benny was finally ready. He said, "Brushes, Gene." Gene obediently picked up the brushes and flashed a big smile, but I could see he was in a cold fury. Then Benny turned to me and said, "*Sweet Lorraine* in G. Give me a little introduction." I complied, and Benny entered in F. He waved me out and continued without piano accompaniment.

He stayed on the stand for about an hour. The camera girl was going into a second printing. Then, abruptly, he packed up his horn and descended, demanding safe escort through the crowd, and he was gone into the night. He hadn't signed one picture.

Krupa was drenched with two shows' worth of perspiration, but he sat patiently on the steps of the bandstand and signed dozens of photos. He was writing personal notes on each one, asking each customer, "Who shall I inscribe this to?" Later in the dressing room, he said to us, "I was glad to sign this picture. This will be in a lot of homes, believe me. Did you get a load of this?"

We inspected the picture then. And there was Benny with his horn in his mouth, perched on a stool with his legs spread wide. His fly was open.

"Buttons!" Gene said. "Buttons! That suit's probably from about 1940."

Speaking of clothes: Sol yaged drove me home from the Metropole one night. Down around Seventh Avenue and 33rd, he stopped the car at the curb and pointed to a high window in an office building. "That's where Benny buys his suits," he said quietly.

In California, years later, maybe 1975, my song *I'm Hip* was to be performed by Mitzi Gaynor in her TV special, and several days before the taping I was notified that Benny Goodman would be joining her on the vocal. I persuaded Dick DeBenedictus, the musical director, to let me visit the set. I promised I would keep my mouth shut.

They had a very hip little band to accompany Benny on the show, including John Bunch, Jack Sheldon, and Carl Fontana. Tommy Newsom had written a nice arrangement of *I'm Hip* for Mitzi and Benny. On the runthrough, Mitzi sang it perfectly, but there was confusion on Benny's first vocal entrance, which occurred on the pickup to the bridge. Benny was coming in a bar late.

Dick DeBenedictus said, "Benny, you have a three-beat pickup there: Every Saturday *night*. The word *night* is the downbeat."

"Gotcha, Pops," said Benny.

They ran through it again, Benny made the same mistake, but he assured Dick that he understood. "Let's roll, then," said the director, and the taping began.

Mitzi Gaynor sailed through but when Benny's entrance came, he again waited a bar too long and the taping ground to a stop. DeBenedictus explained patiently that there were three beats pickup before the down beat of the bridge. "You're going to have to count there, Benny," he said.

Benny squinted at him and said, "Say, Pops, aren't we getting a little fussy?"

They went on from there, Benny fluffing each of his vocal entrances and the band cleverly and expertly accomodating his mistakes.

One more, even though it's hearsay. Harry James told of eating breakfast with Benny in a restaurant. Benny shook the ketchup over his plate and the bottle cap fell into the scrambled eggs. Benny left it there and ate around it. I don't know what that means, but I love the story.

I think Bill Crow is a terrific writer.

Dave Frishberg,
Portland, Oregon

No, I'm not about to bellow "cancel my subscription" and go racing off into middle distance, brandishing the moral bludgeon of my indignation. Nor will I make any silver-tongued defense of the guy in the dock, pointing out his good works, his secret charities, his unimpeachable artistry.

None of that. But I must say I find the recent verbal dismemberment of Benny Goodman in the *Jazzletter* hard to defend. And I'm both surprised and dismayed that you and Bill would have lent talent and effort to such an enterprise.

Not that I question its accuracy. We've all had our adventures with Benny through the years, gotten our laughs with each other over him in cars and bars and on late-night set breaks. There's a consistency in all the stories that furnishes its own corroboration. But to do what you've done here, exposing in print the least savory aspects of a man's nature -- all in the name, it seems, of nothing better than entertainment or gloating, petty retribution -- seems particularly craven.

Sure, you can defend it in terms of the public's right to know. That's a pretty popular rationale in these days of lapsed accountability. It provides easy reading for the millions, while making celebrities of some pretty wretched characters.

But I'm not writing to comment on the relative shabbiness of Nora Ephron, Kitty Kelley, Joan Crawford's loving daughter and the rest. I'd rather just wonder aloud whether there aren't still a few ground rules governing that vaunted right to know. Rules may be not in the ascendant right now, but still in place nonetheless, determined by such considerations as decency, privacy, mercy, compassion.

And, damnit, respect. There will be Goodman biographies, I'm sure, some better than others. One, I know, is already in the works. Writers will have to confront Benny's less attractive side, as they have with the subject of any other biography. They'll work at integrating the public with the private, the endearing with the unsavory, the real achievements with the humbugs. Some will do better at it than others, and I'll read it all with enjoyment.

But they'll all presumably approach their subject with a foundation of respect built on achievement, on having attained what he attained by dint of excellence. That doesn't suggest hagiography, something which has long marred real appreciation of the likes of Duke Ellington. It just means that the life of a Benny Goodman was not a cipher, that it bestows cachet, stature. Respect.

Somehow that's what seems to be absent from what you've done here. Goodness, Gene, the man is only months dead. Real assessment of him, both as an artist and human being, is just beginning. The '30s may have been half a century ago, but in some respects accurate perspective is achieved over an even longer time. What possible service can you and Bill have imagined you were doing by pissing on the corpse?

Why, instead, could anyone who had a mind to not have attempted a deeply thought-out closely-argued evaluation of Benny Goodman's impact on the lives of several generations of Americans; on the social history of his times; on the musical perceptions of his fellow-musicians; on the very history of his chosen instrument in this century? You name it — the possibilities were endless.

Why? Could it have been because that wouldn't have been so easy a shot, and wouldn't have yielded the apparent *Schadenfreude* that far too many seem to have enjoyed at Benny's expense?

In all, Gene, a pretty sorry exercise.

Richard Sudhalter,
New York City

Cornetist Sudhalter has a background in journalism. He raises some issues on which I'll comment in a moment.

I want to express my continuing admiration for your *Jazzletter* in general and Bill Crow's articles in particular. I love my subscription. There is nothing like it. Let me express my thanks for your unique contribution.

(I am purchasing) a subscription for a friend of mine, Dr. Ronald Odrich. Although Ron is a distinguished periodonist, he is a also truly great clarinetist who has had the opportunity to play with some of the jazz greats, such as Clark Terry. I would appreciate it if all those great Bill Crow articles could be sent to Dr. Odrich as well. Ron not only knew Benny, but many of his sidemen, such as John Bunch.

Robert S. Litwak MD,
Tenafly, New Jersey

Thank you for writing of the finest caliber about a subject we all love. I loved and still love the music Goodman provided us with, but I was still able to to enjoy the excellent writing about the trip to Russia. I will continue to enjoy Goodman records and I am sure continue to hear stories about his relations with musicians. This in no way diminishes the value of his music, but expands the understanding of the person behind the music.

Bill McCarty,
Oakland, California

The Crow pieces were fairly interesting. But why not the art of Goodman rather than the personality of Goodman? Who really cares?

I knew Benny quite well -- since 1938 -- and never had any problems with him, maybe because I'm not a musician. He always treated me as a friend, always courteous and always ready to listen. We spent many hours together listening to jazz records at his New York apartment. In fact, he approved the release of my latest Doctor Jazz album of Goodman air checks from '37 and '38 as a favor to me.

By the way, the great Danish jazz violinist, Svend Asmussen, feels the same as I do about Benny.

I'm not so upset as to cancel my subscription, but just want to say, keep the *Jazzletter* coming -- it's the greatest.

Bob Thiele,
New York City

As in the words expressed by someone on the Earl Hines record of *Boogie Woogie on the St. Louis Blues*, "Don't quit now, Jack," I mean, Gene. Keep it going till the year 2000.

Teresa Brewer,
New York City

Teresa Brewer is Mrs. Thiele. They're the only couple I know who get two *subscriptions.*

I didn't know him very well and met him on only a few occasions, but I never found Benny Goodman rude or cruel.

"How about lunch?" he asked my wife and me after one of the Lutheran church's funeral services in New York. We went to a nearby restaurant, not at all luxurious, and we were faced with a limited menu.

"What are *you* going to have?" I asked him.

"A corned beef sandwich."

I grimaced, because in England most corned beef came from Argentina and was served in slabs, cold. I had had too much experience of it at school to have forgotten even forty years later.

"What?" he said. "You don't know the magic of a corned beef sandwich?"

It struck me as such a funny remark that I ordered one. Of course the meat was hot, sliced thin, and perfectly edible.

He was very well dressed that day, I remember, very much in English fashion, and he seemed at peace with the world, but when we visited him at his Connecticut home he usually seemed, oddly enough, lonely and in need of company. Did I like fishing or playing cards? he would ask me. And as I replied negatively to each question he finally asked what the hell I did like.

"Dogs, whisky, and jazz records," I answered, and he laughed.

There was undoubtedly a difference between meeting him socially and working for him, but it is not true that no musicians liked him. Fletcher Henderson and Cootie Williams did. Lionel Hampton is trying to persuade Mayor Koch to have a statue of Benny in Times Square. Recently published interviews with Bob Wilber and Scott Hamilton reveal no animosity. The interview with him in *The World of Swing* was much more agreeable than others I had done.

I remember his giving a girl singer a big buildup at Freedomland one night, telling about her best-selling pop records, etc., and then having to ask her name. That was forgetfulness, not rudeness. Music was his game and much of the time his mind was almost entirely occupied by it. He had no bass player that night, and Cootie Williams, who was in the band, told me with a big grin that Benny had fired one the previous night and forgotten to get another.

Now it may be that among people with a casual interest in jazz --and short memories — Benny is considered responsible for giving Fletcher Henderson's works "the place of honor in musical history that they deserve," but it is not true that under Benny's direction "the genius of Fletcher Henderson is shown in a way it never was in Henderson's own recordings." Nor is it true that "the Goodman records of Henderson material are better than Henderson's own." The proof lies convincingly in *Shanghai Shuffle, Wrappin' It Up*, and *Down South Camp Meeting* as recorded by Fletcher for Decca in 1934. None of Goodman's versions, however good, can compare with those, as he himself admitted. And Fletcher had recorded many other classics years before the Swing Era began.

The black musicians Benny hired were nearly all masters -- Wilson, Hampton, Christian, Catlett, Cootie -- and he had tried to get Earl Hines at one time when Earl broke up his band. On

records he had Basie, Kenny Kersey, Jo Jones and Ella Fitzgerald. That speaks well for his ear and taste. When my wife, as Helen Oakley, sent the money to cover Teddy Wilson's fare from New York for a concert at the Congress Hotel in Chicago, she knew she would have a hard time persuading Benny to let Teddy play in the trio *publicly* for the first time, but he finally agreed and from then on he and Charlie Barnet did more than any other white leaders in trying to batter down the doors of race prejudice in jazz. That he disliked bebop is not to his discredit, for few musicians of his generation did not. He never forgot his roots. As the trumpet-playing brother Freddie once said, "He may have embellished it, but so far as jazz was concerned his language was the kind defined by Louis Armstrong, Earl Hines, and Jimmie Noone."

Maybe Chicago is where that statue should be?
Stanley Dance,
Vista, California

The Goodman stuff is amazing. I've read and re-read it.

My grandmother had an apartment at 200 E 66th Street for many years. Through one of the desk clerks, who used to drive Granny around once in a while and whom I got to know quite well, I learned that during the last few years, Benny's own family refused to come to see him.

I went to see him at Christmas time two years ago. I was full of enthusiasm about some playing I'd done and had some tapes (of Lenny Breau) and some P.R. stuff (photos playing with Dizzy etc.). I went up to the penthouse and was greeted by the housekeeper. Benny came in a few minutes later, and I was anxious to show him the stuff, sort of report in, and let him know what I was doing. He said, "I can't help you. Why don't you take the stuff to someone who can do you some good?" and refused to even look at the stuff. He never offered to help. I'd hoped that, due to the family connection -- my father went to dancing school with Alice and John Hammond (Alice Hammond became Mrs. Goodman -- Ed.) and that's how we connected up at all -- and my pretty close relationship with Rachel (Goodman's daughter --Ed.) that he'd do something.

But I also remember that he brought food and camping supplies to help with a gang of kids I was working with. He let us camp out on an old farm he owned in Connecticut. These were real ghetto kids who had nothing. Benny came by himself and brought bags of groceries, hot dogs, etc. He seemed to really enjoy helping out. That was long enough ago that kids on the street knew who he was. And the kids I had there were thrilled -- and probably had never eaten as well.

He admired my ability to fix my old truck or get his golf cart running, and in this instance, he was friendly and generous. I remember that he had ordered a Mercedes 190 convertible, and had waited a year or more for delivery. Finally it was ready and I was to be on hand when he drove it home. He'd promised me a test drive. I waited and waited and finally Benny arrived in a taxi. Someone had rear-ended him at a stop sign. The Mercedes was badly damaged. Benny was not injured. But as he told me what had happened, he was crying.

I guess that in spite of everything negative (and true) about him that I've heard -- and experienced! -- there was another side to him. Maybe, when he really didn't feel threatened, he could be different. And I do feel sorry that even if *he* didn't know it, he was a very unhappy man, and that he died a very lonely one.
Brad Terry,
Brunswick, Maine

See the Jazzletter for July, 1986.

On Pleasing Everyone

A recent letter-to-the-editor praising a computer journal included this observation: "Of course, if I liked everything in the magazine, you wouldn't be doing your job." Now there's a touch of peripheral vision in a me-me world.

When I lived in New York, it was my custom to pick up the New York *Sunday Times* at 86th and Broadway just before midnight Saturday. I'd stand near the newsstand and ritually toss into the trash basket the real estate, sports, travel, and want ad sections, thereby reducing my burden by about seventy-five pounds and half a tree. I would proceed home carrying those sections that were of interest to me, namely the news, entertainment, editorial, and book sections, and the magazine. I never wrote a letter to the *Times* demanding that they stop printing those boring stories on baseball, football, real estate, and the night life of Maracaibo. I assumed that this material was boring only to me, and of interest and value to others. I even considered it a flaw of character that I was not interested in these things, which feeling would become acute when somebody in Jim and Andy's would say, "How'd you like the game yesterday?" I would mumble something to avoid confessing that I had no idea what game -- or for that matter what sport -- was being played yesterday.

That is why I become bemused when, as occasionally happens, a subscriber writes that I shouldn't print this or that. One reader, generally praising the *Jazzletter*, said he wished I would not "waste" space on humorous pieces. But Sahib Shihab told me that in the early days, the feature he looked forward to each month was the Fingers Wombat saga. No matter how bad the conditions of the day, he would sit down when the *Jazzletter* arrived and laugh himself silly. A good many people have liked these ventures into humor -- my own, Steve Allen's, and others. Artie Shaw remarked recently, "Jazz is serious music, but it's not supposed to be solemn music." There is nothing in art as tedious as pervading solemnity. It reveals that lack of a sense of humor without which you cannot write or compose or perform tragedy, for humor is the underpainting that illuminates tragedy from within. It lends perspective; those who lack it lack perspective.

I agonized three years ago over whether to print *How to Talk Dirty and Write Lyrics* because it was about the evolution of the English language, with reference to how that process has affected the character of our songs. And that piece turned out to be the most popular article that's ever been in the *Jazzletter*. There are a number of professional lyricists among the readers, including Alan and Marilyn Bergman, Steve Allen, Dave Frishberg, Rod Mckuen, Fran Landesman, and Hal Shaper, a few talented non-professional lyricists like Bill Salter, pianist and composer David Lahm, who happens to be Dorothy Fields' son, quite a number of English teachers, a great many professional writers and editors, musicians like Gerry Mulligan and Jack Smalley who occasionally turn out some well-crafted lyrics of their own, and others like Clare Fischer who are just interested in language --not to mention singers, whose lives are involved with lyrics. So perhaps I should not have been so surprised at the response to that piece.

I brooded over the piece on Edith Piaf. She certainly wasn't a "jazz singer". And then I happened to run into Sweets Edison. Sweets told me he'd find it interesting because he'd worked with her. Shortly after that I mentioned to Alan Kishbaugh, a reader who is a lay but well-informed jazz fan, that I was considering doing such a piece. He surprised me by saying, "If you want to use a picture, I went to Pere Lachaise cemetery and took a photo of her grave." That clinched my decision, and I have not regretted it, though one reader said in the weeks after it appeared, "Let's get

some jazz back in the *Jazzletter*." He said this on three occasions, as if afraid I had missed the point the first time. But that piece turned out to be of great interest to a good many readers, and Bill Crow told me he had encountered Piaf when the Gerry Mulligan Quartet worked opposite her in Paris. And Corky Hale told me that her husband, Mike Stoller, who is a subscriber, had a hit song with Piaf. Others gained insight into the French tradition of songs. Finally, Piaf's life and work met the criterion for what I like to write or, for that matter, read: it's a good story.

Med Flory wrote objecting to the articles on Percy Faith and Robert Farnon. Why, he said, didn't I write instead about some of the "real harmonists" like Dizzy? This gave me insight into Med, as compared to those many *Jazzletter* readers, such as Johnny Mandel, Pat Williams, and Roger Kellaway, who have made careful studies of the Farnon recordings. There are a lot of arrangers and composers in the readership, including Frank Hunter, Bobby Scott, Nan Schwartz, Gil Evans (who, like Johnny Mandel and presumably unlike Med, has always wanted to meet Farnon), Jack Smalley, Dick Marx, Luther Henderson, Oscar Castro-Neves, Allyn Ferguson, Clare Fischer, Jack Elliott, Mundell Lowe, Larry Wilcox, Rob McConnell, Francy Boland, Claus Ogerman, Henry Mancini, Rick Wilkins, Lyn Murray, and Bill Potts, and I can't imagine that they haven't paid attention to those charts. In any case, I wrote that article partly *for* Dizzy, knowing he has been a friend and admirer of Bob's for years. Andr e Previn, who may know as much about music as Med, turned John Williams onto the Farnon albums for study, as Marion Evans also used to do to his students when he was teaching. Furthermore, a number of subscribers, including jazz players, had discovered the *Jazzletter* through a reference in *Journal into Melody*, the publication of the Robert Farnon Appreciation Society. Then there are the jazz musicians who have recorded with Farnon, including Phil Woods, George Shearing, and Bill McGuffie. As for Percy, Alan Broadbent recently toured Japan with a reconstituted Percy Faith orchestra, and told me on his return what a delight it was to conduct those charts, with their lovely voice leadings. And, by the way, I had already written one piece about Dizzy, and I am planning a much longer one, if Dizzy and I can ever find ourselves in the same city on the same day for more than ten minutes.

In a letter otherwise congratulatory about the *Jazzletter* a saxophonist objected, albeit gently, to pieces on Jo Stafford and other subjects "even farther removed from improvised jazz". I was surprised because I know how admired she is by musicians.

But the *Jazzletter* readership also includes a great many singers, along with the aforementioned assorted lyricists, closet lyricists, and lovers of good singers and songs. There are studio singers like Marilyn Jackson, Annette Sanders, Artie Malvin, Len Dresslar, Don Shelton, Bob Stone, Bonnie Herman, and Ann Johns Ruckert. I've had several studio singers tell me that they'd made a living imitating Jo. One voice teacher urges her students to listen to Jo, and found the article extremely useful. Other singers who subscribe to the *Jazzletter* are Julius LaRosa, Meredith d'Ambrosio, Eddie Hazell, Dave Frishberg, Joyce Collins, Stella Lawson. Sheila Jordan, Rod McKuen, Bobbe Norris, Audrey Morris, Betty Bennett, Barbara Nash, Dave and Melissa MacKay, Bob Dorough, Teresa Brewer, Corky Hale, Jackie Cain and Roy Kral, Vi Redd, Helen O'Connell, Nancy Reed, Adrienne West, Margaret Whiting, Carol Fredette, Dewey Ernie, Steve Johnson of the Modernaires, Gene Puerling of the Hi-Los and Singers Unlimited, and more. There are also many pianists who have worked extensively with and for singers, including Rene de Knight, Lou Levy, Tony Tamburello, Doug Talbert, Gerald Wiggins, Mike Abene, Mike Lang, Mike Renzi, Jimmy Rowles, Kenny Drew, Gene DiNovi, and -- one of the most underrated of all accompanists -- Junior Mance. Along with the aforementioned arrangers, who have all worked with singers. And there are vocal arrangers in the readership, such as Gene Puerling and Ray Charles. And vocal-group conductors and teachers, such as Gayle Hartwig. Then there are people who program radio stations, and need this backgrounding, not only on American song but on the America that was. There are also a good many retired persons among the readers, who have a natural interest in the era of which the article spoke. There are also several people in or retired from the military, who were particularly appreciative of that article. And there are young people who want to know about the history of popular music in America, which I don't think they're going to get from *Rolling Stone*. My correspondent was commanding me, in essence, to ignore the interests of these other people and cater exclusively to his, just as Med Flory was.

What about the issue I called *The Road to Gadgets*? That had nothing whatever to do with improvised jazz. It dealt with the corruption of the music business. Oscar Castro-Neves said he felt, on finishing it, as if he'd been slammed against a wall. He said it changed his attitude and outlook toward the music business, and in a way his life itself. Dave Frishberg says it should be "dropped as a pamphlet from airplanes all over America." I think it served one of the implicit functions of the *Jazzletter*. I seriously doubt that I can teach Dizzy very much about improvised jazz, but I can help him understand who's stealing our money and how.

How about Mike Zwerin's piece in the August, 1983, *Jazzletter*, about conditions in what he called Sad Afrika? Was that appropriate? I wasn't sure; but I knew that the story needed to be told, and that the conventional press wouldn't tell it until it was forced on them by events. *Jazzletter* readers were among the few people in America who were unsurprised by the explosion that at last came about in that tortured country.

Recently I was talking to Darius Brubeck, who is teaching music at a black South African university. Would I be interested in a piece about musical developments and artists in South Africa, which he thinks are important? You bet. And when it's done, remember that Darius cannot tell us about the politics and suppression in that country: since Zwerin was there the grip of the white supremacists has tightened terrifyingly. Darius at least can talk about the music, and we'll do what reading-between-the-lines we have to.

Last September, seven members of the Jazz Section of the Czech musicians union were imprisoned by their government. Josef Skvorecky, the distinguished Czech novelist and former musician, deeply concerned for jazz and rock musicians who continue to be harassed or jailed by the Czech government, wrote me a note about it. Local 802 of the American Federation of Musicians, of which Bill Crow is a director, established a petition of protest, but other locals of the AFM and even the AFM at the national level seemed uninterested. Five of those Czech jazzmen have been released as I write this, two -- the Jazz Section's chairman, Karel Srp, and his close associate Vladimir Kouril -- are still being detained but will probably be released. Josef tells

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me, "It seems the government, counting on the lack of interest in Czechoslovakia, overplayed its hand: it forgot that if anything excites Americans in this age of mass murder, it is the persecution of jazz which, after all, is America's greatest contribution to world culture." *The New York Review* of books has asked Josef to write a long article on the subject. Is this persecution a legitimate subject for the *Jazzletter*? Are we more parochial than *The New York Review*'s readers? I don't think we are, and with Josef's help, I'm going to follow this story up.

There is an essential difference between pop journalism, as represented by *People* and *Us*, and real journalism, of which there is all too little. The one is dedicated almost entirely to what its editors know to be popular, exactly in the manner of Top Forty radio. It caters to what the mass public already knows, already is interested in, and it is essentially parasitical. Serious journalism does something different: it may legitimately further inform us on subjects that interest us (although I must say that I don't really want to know the hockey score), but it also obeys a higher mandate, pursuing an implicit duty to tell us about things we are not interested in but should be. Such as how we got on the road to Gadgets.

The mature among us, like Oscar Castro-Neves, digest the message, no matter how distasteful, and use it for guidance. The immature raise a cry to kill the messenger.

In journalism, there are three ways to do this.

1. The first is direct suppression. We are not speaking here about full government control of the press, as in the Soviet Union or Czechoslovakia, for in such circumstances there is no messenger to kill. We are speaking of suppression, censorship, by such governments as that of South Africa, which tell the press what it can print.

It is amusing to watch the dingaling right, as represented by Patrick Buchanan and the smarmy Los Angeles television commentator Bruce Hershenson, arguing on the one hand that Ronald Reagan's only problem is the press and on the other that the proof of Daniel Ortega's tyranny is his suppression of the press — particularly when they always sound as if they are aching to do what Ortega did.

2. Cancellation, or threat of cancellation, of advertising. This can't work in publications that don't carry advertising, and won't work in publications with the ethical grit to ignore it. But in publications with weak leadership it is effective, and in some the threat isn't even necessary: they exist to serve their advertisers anyway.

3. Cancellation, or threat of cancellation, of subscriptions. This is ineffectual, but for some people it is the only means they have to try to kill the messenger.

The Buchanan-Hershenson wing of the Republican party, heir to the grand tradition of Spiro Agnew, inveighs against things printed on some unclarified issue of national security. Richard Sudhalter objects to them on some similarly unclarified issue of taste.

He says that he cannot defend what Bill Crow and I did. We have not, of course, asked him to. There was "no verbal dismemberment" of Goodman. There was — as Chuck Folds, an alumnus of a distinguished American historical magazine, perceives — a balanced report on a historic event that for twenty-five years went largely undocumented: the first major and official tour of the Soviet Union by an American jazz group. The story needed to be told. Should it have been falsified to satisfy criteria that Sudhalter thinks it is his right to set for the world?

Sudhalter says we've all had our laughs about Benny. But I'm not talking about open flies and ketchup caps, I'm talking about real humilations of people in positions of subservience. Few of them ever spoke out, because, as Bill Crow reported, they feared Goodman and his power. He was, like Richard Rodgers, capable of vindictiveness. As for his cordiality to Bob Thiele, a prominent record producer, and to Stanley Dance, a comparably prominent journalist and historian, let us note that both were potentially useful to him. If he had been rude to them too, a plea of absent-mindedness might be persuasive, but his very selectivity about whom he abused suggests something darker. One of the first things a young journalist learns, or should learn, is not to be seduced by the charm of the famous: he has something they need, access to the public, and he is seen to be potentially useful if cultivated but dangerous if wounded.

I have heard, directly and indirectly, from people who suffered at Goodman's hands that they were glad the essay had been published. I'd say "redeemed" and "consoled" rather than "gloating" and "petty" are better words for the mood that report induced in those who had experienced Goodman's courtesies — a sigh, a feeling of "There, it's been said at last, it's over." Whom is Sudhalter talking about? John Bunch, who expressed his appreciation to Bill Crow in a letter? Even to think of soft shy John Bunch as "gloating" and "petty" is ludicrous. And who are Sudhalter's repellent proletarians, rubbing their hands and baring their teeth in carniverous glee as they turn eagerly from the *National Enquirer* to the latest *Jazzletter*? Maybe he shot an arrow into the air and it fell to earth he know not where, but he hit some real people, including those whose names are on the letters that appear above.

Sudhalter says that the public's right to know is a pretty popular rationale right now. No it's not. Polls have indicated that the campaign by the likes of Buchanan, Hershenson, and George Bush, has been successful, and a frighteningly high proportion of respondents think the public does *not* have a right to know, that authority knows best and the press shouldn't stick its nose in where it doesn't belong. Sudhalter speaks of lapsed accountability — implying mine. To whom am I accountable? To him? Or to Chuck Folds and others in the readership whose view of this matter is quite different from his, to history, and to my conscience?

Sudhalter wonders whether there aren't "still a few ground rules governing that vaunted right to know". Who should set them? A committee of Richard Sudhalter, Spiro Agnew, Pat Buchanan, Bruce Hershenson, P.T. Botha, Daniel Ortega, and one of the Czech authorities who jugged those seven jazzmen? In Prague and Pretoria, they agree with Richard Sudhalter that there are indeed "still a few ground rules governing that vaunted right to know."

Sudhalter says there will be Goodman biographies, and writers "will have to confront Benny's less attractive side, as they have with the subject of any other biography." Not if nobody's recorded it. Sudhalter laments the hagiography that, he says, has marred appreciation of the "likes of Duke Ellington" — an ill-chosen phrase, by the way — yet calls for the suppression of stories about Goodman such as the one Bill told.

As for how long Goodman had been dead, what has that got to do with anything? Postponing the story wouldn't have made any difference. Benny will be no less dead in five years than he is now. And besides, I was convinced at the time that there would never be a Volume 6 of the *Jazzletter*. It was a matter of publishing it now or letting it be lost to history. What about those future biographers who'll need to know about "Benny's less attractive side"?

What possible service did we think we were doing? Well, for one thing, we were serving those future biographers. We were also offsetting the p.r. smear Benny and his people did on Byron

Janis. After all, maybe someone will want to write a biography of Janis, too. (Or Phil Woods, or Zoot Sims, or Teddy Wilson.) We were making sure that historians would not believe Janis was a whining little jerk. We were correcting some other little lies, like the one about the "difficult" Phil Lang arrangements. We were helping several adult Goodman collectors understand the man they admired, as their letters testify. Yes, I think we accomplished a thing or two. And we assuredly weren't "pissing on" anybody's grave.

And we were telling the truth, as Sudhalter admits in saying the stories have a consistency that serves as their corroboration. Bob Thiele names a musician who liked Goodman. Stanley Dance names two. Lou Levy quipped in a recent interview, "I'm so crazy I even got along with Benny Goodman."

Sudhalter says, "Real assessment, as a man and as an artist, is just beginning." That's right. And that's just what that piece was, a piece of the beginning assessment.

Sudhalter says other articles about Goodman could have been written. That's right, and others were, and printed in other publications. If Sudhalter wants to see an article about the impact of Goodman on our lives, or evaluating him as artist, why doesn't he write one? He has access to the public prints.

As for his remark about our providing "easy reading for the millions", I would suggest that he re-examine the subscribers' list. It contains about 1,200 names. And a lot of them are professional musicians who knew Goodman, knew him a lot better than Sudhalter, including a number who'd worked for him. You can't get away with phony stories in this publication. These people *know*.

Every editor has to make difficult decisions. The decision to run the Goodman series was the hardest call I've made in the five years of the *Jazzletter*'s existence. It was no easy shot, as Sudhalter, who does not have to make such decisions, so irresponsibly charges. I was convinced that Goodman would on reading it send for his lawyers. I did what any editor does in such a case, made sure that the writer had corroboration for every incident described. I followed up on some details myself. Goodman's death only made the decision more difficult. Several friends, as I have previously reported, tried to talk me out of running the piece on the grounds that the sanctimonious wrath that would follow it would jeopardize the *Jazzletter*'s survival. Far from thinking the decision would be a popular one, far from trying to please those millions of people who don't read the *Jazzletter*, I thought there was a good chance that it would destroy something I have spent five years of my heart's blood —and Sudhalter knows this — building. For him to call this action "craven" is, to put the kindest possible interpretation on it, a careless use of language.

If the Goodman story gave me the hardest single call, the *general* problem of deciding what belongs in the *Jazzletter* is harder —and grows increasingly difficult. When only a handful of professional musicians subscribed, I knew what to do, since they were mostly interested in the same things that I was. Their interests were broad — broader than those of many of their fans. But even at the present level of 1,200 readers, the variety of needs and interests within the group is wide.

The most serious problem facing jazz, and all music of quality, is its ghettoization. You will recall that Ralph Jungheim objected in a letter to my defense of Los Angeles radio station KKGO because it mixes in "fusion" and semi-pop music with the jazz — which I do not think is a bad thing at all.

The golden age of jazz-influenced big bands arose, not at all coincidentally, with network radio. The big national radio networks, predecessors and parent companies of the TV networks, launched the music. The turnaround in the Benny Goodman band's faltering fortunes occurred when it reached California and found that due to the time difference, young people there had been hearing its remote broadcasts, which in the east came on too late for students.

Network radio was a richly eclectic affair, on which you could hear Toscanini, James Melton, John Charles Thomas, Woody Herman, Johnny Mercer, Glenn Miller, Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy, Bing Crosby, Arthur Tracy, Gene Austin, Joe Penner, John Kirby, Grand Ole Opry, all those big bands broadcasting from ballrooms and high-atops, and more. One perforce encountered a wide variety of musics. You may have been a Glen Gray fan, but you couldn't avoid knowing who the Singing Brakeman and the Street Singer were.

With the desuetude of network radio and the conversion of stations to an almost total dependence on recordings for their program material, radio began its progression into its present specialization. We have talk, rock, country, classical, jazz, Beautiful Music, nostalgia, comedy, and news stations. This has caused a balkanization of the culture of which the ghettoization of jazz is only a part. The people who are interested in one kind of music never discover the others.

The well-meaning National Academy of Jazz, founded last year in Los Angeles, unwittingly contributes to the problem, its members proposing still another set of awards to honor artists and TV programs to increase the audience for jazz. It proposes scholarships for the gifted young, as idealistic organizations habitually do. But the problem in jazz isn't the training of young players; the problem is the ignorance of the mass audience. The stage-band movement in the colleges and universities is only too successful now, turning out more excellent young players than the society can absorb. A more pressing need is the exposure and employment of the seasoned older players, which requires enlarging the audience. An annual awards show on television isn't going to change things much, since it will not attract yuppies and the young who have listened all their lives to rock stations and know nothing else. TV shows on jazz will attract only those who are already interested. If jazz is to thrive (and possibly if it is to survive) it is going to have to make common cause with other forms of good music, including that made by Jo Stafford, Robert Farnon, and the late Glenn Gould, and seek exposure elsewhere than among the already converted.

Do you know who I think is doing the most for jazz? Not Ira Sabin of *JazzTimes*, as much as I commend and support him and the publication. Not the National Academy of Jazz and its members, or any of the various jazz societies. Certainly not me. No. The man who is doing the most for jazz is Billy Taylor, because the beautifully-produced TV segments on jazz artists that he writes and narrates for *CBS Sunday Morning* go to millions of people who might never otherwise know about the music. Billy is busting jazz and its practitioners out of the cultural ghetto, getting it *to the people*, and he is doing it by presenting the music and its story in a broader cultural context. It is impossible to estimate the scope and value of what Billy Taylor has done.

If I wrote the piece about Farnon with Dizzy in mind, I wrote the one on Glenn Gould with Dave Frishberg in mind. Dave said to me over dinner, "You mean you *knew* Glenn Gould?" Dave is a Gould fan (as Bill Evans was, and vice versa). Given that the *Jazzletter* readers include something over sixty pianists, most of whom have solid "classical" training, I thought that an article on Glenn might be of interest to them, if not to some other readers. It was. Even Med didn't complain about it, although it was in the same issue with the Farnon piece. Possibly in his indignation he forgot about it.

Contrary to jazz legend, "classical" music magazines are not all that unreceptive to articles on jazz; *Musical America*, than which there is nothing more Establishment, used to call on me to write such pieces for them. And it was Robert Offergeld, the music editor of *Stereo Review*, whose field was "classical" music, who brought me into that magazine and gave me critical carte blanche. It occurs to me that to bar articles about "classical" music and artists from a publication largely devoted to jazz would be to practice in reverse the discrimination that some people claim is practiced against jazz by the "classical" Establishment. The attitude of the professional jazzers, as one noted jazzman calls them, is that They should be open to Our music, but We should show no such reciprocal interest in Their music. Fortunately, such people seem to be in the minority in the jazz community.

If Med disapproved of the Farnon and Faith pieces, he warmly approved of the one on Woody Herman. However, another reader wrote, with an almost audible I'm-so-hip sniff of disdain, "I no longer listen to Sarah Vaughan, Oscar Peterson, or Woody Herman." I wrote him, "I'll tell them. They'll be heart-broken," and cancelled his subscription with a refund.

Now, let us imagine that I could go back five years, with the wisdom of what I have learned, and eschew the various articles that have raised objection from one person or another. What would get cancelled? The pieces on Sarah Vaughan, Woody Herman, Oscar Peterson, Bob Farnon, KKGO, Percy Faith, Benny Goodman, Dick Haymes (oh yes, somebody wrote, "What's he doing in a jazz magazine?"), French Autumn Syndrome (Med complained about that too), and a few more. If I tried to please everyone in every issue, we'd end up with no publication at all. Or at least, if I followed Richard Sudhalter's suggestions, we'd have a sort of *Reader's Digest* of music, in which Paul Desmond didn't drink and secretly charitable Benny Goodman is the most unforgettable character somebody ever met.

From time to time we could run an expose on the backwardness of Russian jazz musicians due to the falseness of Marxist-Leninist doctrine. We could do some articles about triumphs of free enterprise, such as the story of how the jazz label Atlantic grew to be part of Warner-Elektra-Atlantic and Capitol was sold off to EMI to the eternal improvement of the world's music. We could have an inspiring story about a dog that found a stranded band bus in a blizzard. Another story would be about this bebop zitherist who tunneled under the Berlin wall and escaped with his whole rhythm section. There could be a Toward More Colorful Speech section, which would contain a lot of quotes from Sweets Edison, Jake Hanna, and Jack Sheldon. We could have a Humor in Band Uniform feature, and an Increase Your Jazz Word Power test, in which the answers would be 1. dig, 2. lowest, 3. short, 4. pad, 5. blue note, 6. ligature, 7. clam, 8. man, 9. B-flat seventh, 10. later.

Sudhalter, like Med Flory and many others, cannot distinguish between an opinion and a fact, between his own subjective responses and their external stimuli.

Sudhalter has called bebop "nervous" music. But that tells us nothing whatever about the music. It exhilarated me, but to call it exhilarating would be as misleading as calling it nervous. To call it nervous is to externalize a neuro-emotional condition and, by attaching the adjective describing it to the music itself, to convert this into an accusation. So too when he calls the publication of the Goodman pieces "a pretty sorry exercise". For Sudhalter to attach the adjectives "sorry" to the "exercise" is no more to state a fact than it is to say bebop is "nervous". The observer is nervous, not the thing observed. Sudhalter has a private right to dislike bebop, as Goodman did -- which, by the way, may explain Sudhalter's fealty to the King of Swing, a Canute on his throne on the coastal sands, defying the incoming tide of seditious modernism. In that event we have a classic case of French Autumn Syndrome (*Jazzletter*, October, November, and December, 1982). Med Flory has the same private right to love it. But both men should learn that adjectives are not facts. William Blake said it simply:

> Every Eye sees differently. As the Eye, Such the Object. Every thing possible to be believed is an image of truth.
> The Sun's Light when he unfolds it
> Depends on the Organ that beholds it.

That "poetic" insight was confirmed as scientific fact in 1927 by Werner Heisenberg.

I am by no means unconcerned for the reaction and responses of readers. On the contrary. Some very good suggestions for pieces have come from readers. But I decline to see jazz narrowly, as a precious little music off in a corner with a tiny coterie of admirers, all of them commending themselves for the esoteric hipness of their taste. The very people who claim to love jazz so much are often the ones who, secretly, do not want it to have a large audience, since that would vitiate their claim to special perception.

I want to broaden the *Jazzletter*. Possibly in time it will be necessary to change its name -- not only because of the people who, when the word "jazz" is used, assume proprietary rights to the word, the definition of the word, the music itself, and anything that is said or written about it, but because to some of the non-fans of the music the word is off-putting, jazz having been made to seem forbidding and boring by the people who intellectualize about it as an "art form". I want the *Jazzletter* to reach out, not inward. I want it to broaden. Granted some people want it kept small in focus. We'll lose them, and it's all right. Others will replace them. During the furor over the Goodman piece, about ten people cancelled their subscriptions and some probably let theirs lapse, but we gained 136 new readers, some through gifts and some of their own initiative.

The *Jazzletter* has now lasted five years, to no one's surprise as much as mine. I'm beginning to think it may survive another five years. This little milestone occasions some reflection. And it is clear to me that if I tried to please everyone in every issue, I would destroy the *Jazzletter*, for the reason that when you eliminate according to the bias of every individual in the equation, you find at last that the thing you held in your hand is gone. The brilliant literary critic Northrop Frye defined the problem perfectly in *Fearful Symmetry*, his 1947 watershed study of Blake.

> Blake [Frye writes] does not deny the unity of the material world: a farmer and a painter, looking at the same landscape, will undoubtedly see the same landscape:
>
> > . . . All of us on earth are united in thought, for it is impossible to think without images of somewhat on earth.
>
> This fact has its importance in Blake's thought; but the reality of the landscape even so consists in its relation to the imaginative pattern of the farmer's mind, or of the painter's mind. To get at an "inherent" reality in the landscape by isolating the common factors, that is, by eliminating the agricultural qualities from the farmer's perception and the artistic ones from the painter's, is not possible, and would not be worth doing if it were. Add more people, and this least common denominator of perception steadily decreases. Add an idiot, and it vanishes.