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'Chicago, Chicago . . . '

If you plan to attend just one jazz festival next season, let me make a suggestion. Pick Chicago. It has one of the best-planned and best-executed jazz festivals I have ever attended. It runs five evenings and three afternoons going into Labor Day weekend.

Each concert has two major attractions, the rest of the program being filled out with Chicago performers. One should not assume — in accord with the idea that success in New York or Los Angeles is the measure of merit in jazz — that you will be hearing "only" local talent. I am constantly astonished at the high level of jazz you find even in the smaller cities of America, places like Santa Maria, California. This, incidentally, is something European writers about jazz know nothing about: the depth of the jazz talent in America, the sheer density of it throughout the United States and Canada. The Europeans know jazz only from records and the visits of those players who have attained some degree of stardom. They do not know it in its natural habitat, they do not grasp its place in the American culture, and sometimes their comments on the subject sound like opinions on panthers from someone whose knowledge of them is gleaned from observations made at a zoo.

And Chicago is aswarm with superior jazz musicians, people like Don Bennett, Larry Novak, Jodie Christian, John Frigo, Bobby Lewis, Tom Radke, and others who are almost unknown outside it. Barrett Deems, who was born in Springfield, Illinois, in 1914, is still in Chicago, playing drums in such clubs as Andy's, as sprightly as ever. Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Detroit, they have all produced quantities of great jazz players, but I don't think any city has produced anywhere near as many as Chicago, particularly if you include, along with its natives, all the players who were drawn to it during their formative years, from all the cities around it, people like Bix Beiderbecke from Davenport, Iowa, and Peggy Lee from Jamestown, North Dakota.

Jimmy Yancey was born in Chicago in 1894, Darnell Howard in 1895. The first decade of this century saw the birth in Chicago of Hayes Alvis (1907), Albert Ammons (1907), Boyce Brown (1910), Sid Catlett (1910), Bud Freeman (1906), Benny Goodman (1909), Gene Krupa (1909), Jim Lanigan (1902), Joe Marsala (1907), Marty Marsala (1909), Jimmy McPartland (1907), Ben Pollack (1903), Gil Rodin (1906), Muggsy Spanier (1906), Joe Sullivan (1906), and Dave Tough (1908). All of these people were coeval with the major New Orleans figures credited with the development of jazz.

And Chicago and its contiguous communities continued to produce them: Muhal Richard Abrams (1930), Gene Ammons (1925), Red Balaban (1929), Oscar Brashear (1944), Ronnell Bright (1930), Sonny Cohn (1928), Jerome Cooper (1946), Bob Cranshaw (1932), Richard Davis (1930), Jack DeJohnette (1922), Joe Farrell (1937), Von Freeman (1922), John Frigo (1916), Johnny Griffin (1928), Herbie Hancock (1940), Eddie Harris (1936), Johnny Hartman (1923), Bill Henderson (1930), Jo Jones (1911), Clifford Jordan (1931), John Klemmer (1946), Lee Konitz (1927), Irene Kral (1932), Roy Kral (1921), Lou Levy (1928), Abbey Lincoln (1930), Ray Linn (1920), Junior Mance (1928), Al McKibbon (1919), Johnny Mince (1912), Roscoe Mitchell (1940), Ray Nance (1913), Anita O'Day (1919), Truck Parham (1913), Victor Sproles (1927), Ira Sullivan (1931), Mel Torme (1925), Lennie Tristano (1919), Gene Wright (1923), and Denny Zeitlin (1938). That's only a partial list. Nor does it include all those people who, like Nat Cole, Franz Jackson, Don Murray, Omer Simeon, George Wettling, Milt Hinton, and Joe Williams, were born elsewhere but grew up in and went to high school in and were shaped by Chicago. Eddie South was born in Missouri, but his parents moved to Chicago when he was three months old

Only New Orleans, in the early days, compares to Chicago for the number of important jazz musicians it produced. What is more, the significance of Chicago in the gestation of jazz becomes all the more conspicuous when you consider those figures who were born in New Orleans but spent the largest part of their careers and died in Chicago: George Brunis, Lee Collins, Baby and Johnny Dodds, Tom Jackson, Freddie Keppard, John Lindsey, Paul Mares, and Fats Pichon among them. Though he was born ten miles out of New Orleans, and died in California, Jimmy Noone spent most of the 1920s and a good part of the '30s in Chicago, where he exerted a formative influence.

The reason for this flowering of jazz in Chicago is obvious: the speakeasies. When the Volstead Act was passed in 1919, Chicago made it perfectly clear that it had no intention of abiding by it, and the illegal sale of liquor built immense fortunes for gangsters and compromised the politics of the city. Chicago roared, in more ways than one, and the proliferating speaks created work for musicians playing "hot" music. Chicago natives such as Sid Catlett, Jo Jones, Gene Krupa, and Dave Tough were in their adolescence in the 1920s. There were all sorts of places for them to play. With the repeal of prohibition in 1933, the gangsters simply turned the speaks into nightclubs. So there were still places to work. And by then the Chicago musicians had changed the face of American music.

There was a dark side to this. The gangsters considered they owned the musicians, who were chained to their jobs, as on plantations. This was true not only of musicians but all entertainers who worked in the mob circuits, and not only black entertainers either. Singer Joe E. Lewis got his throat cut when he quit one job for another, and he became a standup comic afterwards. Lucky Millinder (born in Alabama, raised in Chicago, alumnus of Wendell Phillips High), led a band for the Capones in their Cotton Club in Cicero, just outside Chicago. Ralph Capone told him, "My brother Al and I decided we're going to keep you boys working regularly, but you can't work for nobody but us."

When trumpeter and saxophonist George Dixon and two other musicians left the Earl Hines band at the Grand Terrace ballroom to join Don Redman in Detroit, they ar-

rived only to be told by Redman's manager that the word had come down from the Purple Gang, which controlled Detroit, that they couldn't work for Redman. Dixon said later, "The three of us jumped into my little Ford and came back to Chicago. The mob, through intimidation and organization, had things so well-regulated we couldn't even change jobs."

Billy Eckstine, who sang at the Club DeLisa, told one of the three brothers who owned it that he wanted to join the Earl Hines band. "When the DeLisa brothers didn't want you to go," Eckstine told Dempsey Travis, "they would take you downstairs and walk you into the icebox and do a number on you." Since they didn't do that to him, he said, "somebody up there with an iron fist in kidskin gloves was giving me an awful lot of help" — meaning somebody with the Capone group, which had more muscle.

That bootleggers and killers should have contributed so much to the development of jazz is ironic; they hardly saw themselves as patrons of the arts. Yet they were de facto patrons of this one art, and nowhere in the country as much as in Chicago.

Chicago is very conscious of its musical heritage, and the mayor's Office of Special Events co-sponsors the festival with Old Style beer. Programming is done by the Jazz Institute of Chicago, and the festival is unique for, among other reasons, the emphasis it puts on its own musicians and tradition. Even the imported big names this year — Johnny Griffin, Herbie Hancock, Bud Freeman, Eddie Harris, Joe Williams, Ira Sullivan, Bob Cranshaw — were almost all Chicagoans. The Saturday afternoon concert was dedicated to Benny Goodman, and that evening Bob Wilber led a big band performing the best-known Goodman big-band charts. The presentation of Stan Getz and J.J. Johnson was tied to Chicago: they recreated their 1957 concert at the Civic Opera House, part of a Jazz at the Philharmonic evening which produced a memorable recording. The "outsiders" were Sonny Rollins and Lionel Hampton.

The discovery of "unknown" Chicago musicians is one of the joys of this event. The Chicago Jazz Festival is very much a Chicago jazz festival. It has a focus, and a viewpoint. No other city in America could stage anything like this festival, since no other city has the same significance in jazz throughout all the periods of its development, from the time of the New Orleans migrants King Oliver and Louis Armstrong through to the present.

Nor can I think of another festival that is held in the very center of a great city, within walking distance of its major hotels and some of the best restaurants in America. It is staged in Grant Park, which runs in a broad sweeping plane clouded with trees from the great stone cliff-face of Michigan Avenue to the vast inland sea that is Lake Michigan. It is a stunning setting for a festival, and at night all the great new skyscrapers, their windows alight on their black surfaces, are its backdrop. It takes place in what is known as the Petrillo Music Shell, a name toward which I harbor some reservations. Why don't they call it the Louis Armstrong Music Shell, in view of Armstrong's place in Chicago's musical history? Or name it for Fritz Reiner, who polished the Chicago Symphony into one of the finest orchestras in the world?

Another virtue of this festival: it's free. It is presented as a cultural event by the city, without admission charges. This means it isn't the amusement of a minority who can afford a high ticket, and in consequence it attracts crowds as large as 100,000, which makes it, the city claims, the biggest free jazz festival in the world. These audiences are what is known to some black people as salt-and-pepper crowds. They are thoroughly mixed, and extraordinarily well-behaved — warm, enthusiastic, given to standing ovations, but always decorous. It is impossible to estimate how many young, and not-so-young, people wander in to the festival and discover this music for the first time.

The propriety of the audiences probably is a reflection of the discipline with which the festival is run. It is not overbooked. There are five acts to a concert. The evening concerts run from six p.m. to eleven. Each artist has sufficient time to present his or her music, but the acts succeed each other according to a strict backstage schedule that specifies not only the amount of time each group has on stage but how long the crew has to change the setup, which they do with despatch and efficiency. You don't find acts going on at one or two in the morning, which has happened at Monterey. Only two acts ran overtime last month. Lionel Hampton, who closed the Thursday evening concert, went on and on and on, as is his wont, until festival officials simply cut off the lights and sound system in the middle of a tune. And Sun Ra overstayed his time because he was asked to. By city ordinance there is an eleven o'clock curfew on the park. That's one reason the festival moves along so well, but another is the discipline of Penny Tyler of the mayor's Office of Special Events, who is in charge of the bookings and keeps the concerts on track.

Chicago is visually the most striking city in America. Architecturally, the only one that compares to it is Baltimore. Chicago surpasses New York in visual impact because of the way it is set up. It has not used up every square foot of ground for building. The edifices of its downtown section — the Loop, as it is known, for a now-vanished streetcar line that made a loop there and for the elevated railroad that still does — are set amid plazas so that one can get a good look at them. Downtown Chicago is inspiring without being overwhelming. Chicago has grandeur, but it also has space.

And somewhere in its past its people did something not only smart but truly public-spirited. When everything in America from railway rights-of-way and mineral and lumbering rights to broadcasting licenses was being handed away wholesale to the robber barons by bought-and-paid-for politicians at all levels, Chicago somehow made a collective decision not to surrender its waterfront to what is known, not without irony, as free enterprise. Almost the entire frontage on Lake Michigan was reserved to public use, turned into what is in effect one huge spectacular park that runs

Notice

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almost from Evanston deep into the South Side. It takes on various names as it flows south, such as Lincoln Park, and it is interrupted briefly by a cluster of buildings in mid-town, below which it becomes Grant Park and farther south Jackson and Washington Parks. And it is this huge swath of green, outlined on the west by tall buildings and on the east by beaches of pale orange sand, that lends the city its character, and a look that is a sort of cross between Nice and New York. No major city in America, perhaps in the world, has such an astonishing recreational resource. A gentle mood pervades this great lakefront greenbelt as young lovers and old ones walk hand-in-hand and joggers jog and mothers push baby carriages along its sidewalks and riders do their daily miles on its bicycle paths. Here and there boats snooze in the coves of its marinas, and out on that great blue freshwater sea, tall sailboats go racing down the wind looking, in Malcolm Lowery's phrase, like white giraffes.

Bud Freeman has always insisted that jazz began in Chicago, not New Orleans. If one wishes to contest his point, there is no disputing that modern building began in Chicago, shortly after the great fire. It was in Chicago that the engineering genius William Le Baron Jenney invented the principle of skyscraper construction in 1873. The city's engineering innovations drew the brilliant architect Louis Sullivan to Chicago. He worked for Jenney, and when I lived in Chicago, a number of his buildings were still around. They are disappearing now, cast bronze segments of their ornate facades being exhibited in museums and art galleries. It was Sullivan who first deplored the imitation of historical styles in building and called for an approach appropriate to the twentieth century. It was Sullivan who invented, and used in his writings and as the pivot of his philosophy, the phrase "form follows function." In 1887, Sullivan took on an eighteen-year-old assistant who became his passionate disciple and who always referred to Sullivan as "the Master" — Frank Lloyd Wright. Give all due credit to Le Corbusier and Mies van der Roh and the Saarinens and others, but the principles that sent all those spires into the sky all over this planet were discovered by Jenney and applied by Sullivan. Crusty and uncompromising, Sullivan died, forgotten and in poverty, in Chicago in 1924. His relationship with Wright is echoed in Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead.* Given the cumulative influence of that remarkable triumvirate, Jenney, Sullivan, and Wright, Chicago's importance in twentieth century building exceeds that of any city and for that matter any country on earth. Chicago has had its share of architectural frivolities, including the Wrigley building, which looks like a wedding cake, and the Chicago *Tribune* building, a goofy Gothic tower. Both buildings have, however, become so much a part of the Chicago cityscape that one would recoil in horror from any suggestion that they be removed.

The Chicago river, a two-branched stream of green water between stone walls, constantly plied by motorboats, flows in from the lake at the center of the city and then divides it into its north, south, and west sides. With its promenades and cafes, the river gives the downtown a little of the flavor of Paris. Downtown Chicago is a marvelous place in which to walk, and every corner you turn offers a discovery. The city has its share of urban blight — when you get a couple of miles inland from the lake, some parts of it look like Cologne right after the war. There are neighborhoods that are very dangerous, and Chicagoans commonly advise visitors to stay out of the subway at night. But it also has sweet serene neighborhoods of old houses on polite streets thick with trees. It has all those superb parks, more than six thousand acres of them. My favorite is Lincoln Park, a riot of flowers all summer. Chicago has great stores, great hotels, and great museums, including the Art Institute of Chicago and the Museum of Science and Industry, and it is dense with universities and colleges.

And Chicago drips with story. "It's a gutsy city," says Audrey Morris, the singer and pianist, who is by now one of its fixtures. It is the city of the broad shoulders, as Carl Sandburg called it. It is the city of Sandburg, and Nelson Algren, and James Farrell, and my old friend Studs Terkel. It's the city of Al Capone (an adopted Chicagoan; he was from Brooklyn) and Machine Gun Jack McGurn and the St. Valentine's Day massacre. A restaurant in the Rush Street area is called Elliot's Nesst. You can take a tour of the famous locations of its crooked past, including the movie theater where Melvin Purvis and fellow G-men gunned down John Dillinger. It's the city of the great fire caused, at least according to popular legend, by Mrs. O'Leary's cow; inevitably, there's a restaurant called Mrs. O'Leary's.

Chicago has laughter, much more than New York. When a *New Yorker* writer called it the Second City and said it had a complex about its position relative to New York, Chicago just laughed — and some pioneering young actors started a company for improvised comedy called The Second City, whose influence on American drama in the last two decades has continued to spread while New York theater wanders aimlessly toward irrelevance. Chicago does not have a complex about New York; that's a New Yorker's conceit. Chicago is comfortable with itself, not smug like San Francisco or Toronto but unselfconsciously assured, and one of the reasons you have not heard of some of its best jazz players is that they won't leave. You can't pry them out of Chicago. After years of living elsewhere, including England, Bud Freeman, who is now eighty-two, has come home to stay. Art Hodes, who grew up in Chicago (he was born in Russia) and was on the festival this year, is as much a part of the city as the crenelated water tower on upper Michigan Avenue, one of the few structures left over from the time before the fire.

One of the sources of musicians' incomes in Chicago is the jingles business. Chicago has a large advertising industry, and the jingles jobs in studios probably are second in quantity only to those of New York. To be sure, the work goes to a clique, as it does in New York. But it is a clique made up of crack players. One of the busiest of the studios is Universal, where many a great jazz album has been made. It's being crowded a little now by the encroachment of high rises. It will have to move soon to another location, and a little bit of history will vanish. But in Chicago, there's always more history to muse on.

Including Bud Freeman's claim. It is not as foolish as it at first blush might seem.

Though the importance of New Orleans in jazz history should not be slighted, it has been mythologized and oversimplified. Recent research has indicated that something like jazz was coming into being in various cities of the United States, in part as an aftermath of the popularity of ragtime, whose principal figure, Scott Joplin, was not from New Orleans but from Texas. As Bobby Scott has written, when Louis Armstrong got to Chicago, he found a dialect of the music already there.

Artie Shaw, who at the age of sixteen made a pilgrimage to Chicago to hear Armstrong, has said, "If Louis had never lived, there would no doubt be something we would call jazz. But it would not be the same."

If you consider what jazz has been throughout most of its history — a largely homophonic music dominated by great improvising soloists, each player in turn making his contribution to the music, rather than a polyphonic collective as exemplified by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band and Jelly Roll Morton's groups — then you have to give serious consideration to the idea that it was born in Chicago. For it was in Chicago that Armstrong developed this approach to it, influencing Coleman Hawkins and every other major jazz player who followed. Bud Freeman is quoted in Dempsey Travis's book *An Autobiography of Black Jazz*:

"It's been said that New Orleans is the cradle of jazz. I say that's nonsense. Louis and Joe Oliver were the most talented men to come out of New Orleans, and they didn't really get their style together until they came into Chicago and started playing what we call show tunes. It was then that they developed a new style, and of course Louis had the creative genius to make this kind of music both palatable and jazzy. Jazz was being played in Chicago long before it was being played in New York and long before it was being played in the South and on the West Coast. In fact, the musicians from Kansas City used to come to Chicago to learn the Chicago sound. Count Basie actually worked in Chicago as an organist and piano player before going to Kansas City. If you just think about some of the great swingers, even those in Harlem, like Willie the Lion Smith, Fats Waller, Eubie Blake, James P. Johnson, and Luckey Roberts — none of these guys ever saw the inside of the state of Louisiana, and yet we continued to want to give New Orleans the credit when the credit belongs to Chicago. Chicago is where jazz was developed and where it actually happened. I'm not making a Chicago Chamber of Commerce statement. I am simply relating a fact."

Freeman was part of the so-called Austin High Gang, with Jimmy and Dick McPartland, Jim Lanigan, and Frank Teschemacher. Dave Tough played with their group, though he went to Oak Park High. Also growing up in Chicago at that time were Benny Goodman, who played on lake boats, and Gene Krupa, who went to Bowen High, Jo Jones, and all the others born in our century's early years. All these young men were listening to Louis Armstrong and Bix Beiderbecke, who spent formative years in Chicago, and Benny Goodman was listening to Jimmy Noone. The development of Armstrong's solo style in Chicago, and the rapid dissemination of his influence through young men born in Chicago or drawn to Chicago by the magnet of Armstrong's playing, give the city a significance to jazz that exceeds that of any other. Artie Shaw says the Chicago players learned not to rush, they figured out something about holding back, and he points to Gene Krupa as an example of that beautiful steady Chicago time.

The influence of Chicago musicians on jazz evolution was incalculable. Consider the career of Eddie South. A child prodigy on violin, he had extensive formal training in Chicago, and had the "classical" music world been open to black musicians in his time — and it still is not as open to them as it should be — it is almost certain that he would not have been a jazz musician. Even while he was studying at the Chicago College of Music, he was working with Erskine Tate's and other bands, and was musical director of Jimmy Wade's Syncopators in the mid-1920s at the Moulin Rouge in Chicago. He went overseas to study in Budapest and Paris, but the "classical" world of course remained closed to him. For all his travels, he always returned to Chicago, and had his own television series there in the 1950s. He was working at the DuSable Hotel until a few weeks before his death in 1962, at the age of 58. He was a lovely, sweet player, with a prodigious and very "legit" technique. And his influence spread far beyond Chicago: he is considered a major inspiration for the Django Reinhardt-Stephane Grappelli Quintet of the Hot Club of France. Listening to South's group with Everett Barksdale on guitar, you can hear why.

The bassist with the Eddie South for a long period in the 1930s was Milton Hinton, another example of the highly trained musician barred from the classical music world because of color. Hinton played violin in his Chicago high-school orchestra. He says in his book *Bass Lines: The Stories and Photographs of Milt Hinton* (Temple University Press) that the orchestra played only "serious" music, not jazz. He says that the "music was written out and there was no ad libbing whatsoever." Hinton switched to bass to make a living and, after his period with Eddie South, joined Cab Calloway. When the band played Chicago, he would study with Dmitri Shmulkovsky of the Civic Opera orchestra. Hinton, one of the greatest bassists has produced, is still active at seventy-eight, playing, recording, and lecturing.

Jelly-Roll Morton made his first trip to Chicago before the first World War, then returned to the city in 1923, to make it the base of his travels and, of course, the center of his recording activities with his Red Hot Peppers.

Louis Armstrong arrived in Chicago to join King OLiver in the summer of 1922. His records with Oliver, and later the crucially important series with his own Hot Five and Hot Seven, were made in Chicago. Artistically, Armstrong's period of residency in Chicago — recording, playing with his wife Lil's band and with Erskine Tate and Carroll Dickerson — was the most fertile of his life. The association with Earl Hines began in Chicago. Armstrong's influence on Hines during that period is another crucial factor in the development of this music. When, later, Hines led his own orchestra at the Grand Terrace ballroom, one of the kids who hung around to listen was a young pianist with a remarkably retentive memory — Nat Cole. Cole passed the Hines influence along to Oscar Peterson and Bill Evans and all the pianists who flow from them.

Throughout the 1920s, Chicago was probably the most active jazz recording center in the country. It was also a major broadcasting center, more so at first than New York, presenting all manner of music. The prodigious pianist and composer Lee Sims, whose work was admired by Art Tatum, was heard regularly from Chicago on radio in the early 1930s. His harmonic practice anticipated what Stan Kenton would do with a big band fifteen years later. Zez Confrey, the pianist and composer who wrote *Kitten on the Keys, Stumbling*, and *Dizzy Fingers*, was born in Peru, Illinois, and educated at Chicago Musical College. His hundreds of piano rolls, while not jazz, contributed greatly to America's feeling for syncopated music. By the early 1930s, there were regular nightly broadcasts by big bands from such Chicago locales as the Grand Terrace, Trianon, and Aragon ballrooms, the Edgewater Beach hotel, the Panther Room of the Sherman Hotel, and the Blackhawk restaurant. The effect on the country's musical tastes is inestimable.

Chicago is the city of Albert Ammons and his son

Gene Ammons, to whom one of this year's festival concerts was dedicated. Chicago developed a school of tenor playing all its own, musicians whose work puts you in mind of Sandburg's term, big shoulders, and of Audrey Morris's word, gutsy. People like Ammons and Johnny Griffin. They play *big*, like the singing of Joe Williams. It is not a coincidence that the bassist Chuck Domanico is from Chicago. He plays big. The city thinks that way. Chicago is the end of the east, the beginning of the west. Frank Harris's *Memoirs of My Life as a Cowboy* starts in Chicago. From here on west, you're in the land of the big sky. And once upon a time, you drove to Los Angeles from Chicago on Route 66. I told Bobby Troup, who wrote the song of that name, that when I moved to California in 1974, I didn't need a road map. I just took Route 66 and sang that lyric all the way: it was my guide. Route 66 is gone now; or rather, it's there, but the little towns along its way have gone to seed as the traffic whizzes past them in the distance on the freeways that have superceded it, and weeds poke up from the cracks in its pavement.

I lived in Chicago for only thirty-two months, from May 1959 to January 1962, and I was an adult when I arrived. Yet most of the friendships of my life were made there. I studied in Chicago, I learned. My teachers were such cronies as Eddie Harris and Ira Sullivan. Ira, for one thing, taught me not to be hip. I remember once saying something about his gigs in the small towns of Michigan, that it must be a drag, playing for squares. He said, gently, "Man, you can't call those people squares. I'd rather play for the farmers of Michigan than the hippies here. They appreciate what they hear." I think Chicago influenced me more than any city I have ever lived in, with the possible exception of Paris.

After I left Chicago in 1962, I didn't go back again — except twice, and very briefly — until 1985. That's twenty-three years. I was very moved by the experience. I had thought of Chicago as a way-station in a journey, never grasping how deeply it had seeped into my being, had become one of the places I can think of as home. I walked around my old neighborhood, near the lake, a place appropriately named Bittersweet Street; I knew great joy and great pain in Chicago. That little street is just above Irving Park; or, as they say in Chicago, about forty hundred north. I had expected that the area would now have fallen victim to urban decay. On the contrary, it had been renovated. And integrated. When I lived there, Chicago was firmly separated: the black population lived south of the Loop, the white population north of it. Now that had changed. I talked to my friend Don Gold, my predecessor as editor of *Down Beat*. Don said, "It is a far better city now than the one you and I knew."

But the trip last month affected me far more. For one thing, I was there more than a week, and I kept encountering one old friend after another. I found myself remembering times past with Johnny Griffin, who lives now in France, Eddie Harris, who lives now in California, and Ira Sullivan, who lives now in Florida. Like me, they were home for a little while. In the lobby of the Blackstone hotel, I ran into Paul Serrano, the trumpet player, who now has a recording studio, one of those people almost unknown outside Chicago. We looked at each other and almost got tears in our eyes, and I don't know why. I went by the Universal recording studio to see my pal Foote Kirkpatrick, who manages it. She is a central figure in the music of that city. Again, everyone in the musical life of the city knows her, but nobody knows her outside it. We had a glass of wine together in the sidewalk cafe of Hamburger Hamlet, which owns the building that houses Universal. I remembered a restaurant that was there before it. I once had lunch there with some of the Austin High gang, including Jimmy McPartland, during a recording session to recreate in stereo some of that 1920s Chicago music. The drummer on the date was George Wettling, who went not to Austin High but Calumet High. Those men ceased to be legend that day, and became people. I remembered another great session at Universal, by the Basie band.

Chicago is like that, filled with the ghosts of jazz past. Given its place in the evolution of this music, and its equal place as the cradle of modern architecture, Chicago's cultural importance can scarcely be exaggerated.

This year's festival was the tenth, and the newspapers made much of it. It began in 1979, a successor to a series of Duke Ellington memorial concerts. According to Larry Kart, the jazz critic of the Chicago *Tribune*, it grew to its present stature in a series of peak moments, when it seemed to discover itself and its purpose. The first of these came on August 29 of that year, during a concert dedicated to Charlie Parker, whose birthdate it was. Alto saxophonist Lee Konitz had been paired with tenor saxophonist Stanley Jordan, both natives of Chicago. Then "the magic began," Kartz wrote last month.

"Amplified (and reproduced with considerable accuracy) by loudspeakers that stood above and at either side of the Petrillo Music Shell . . . the solo lines of Jordan and Konitz seemed to be both warmly humane and gigantic — as towering, in the mind's eye, as the buildings that lined the west side of Michigan Ave., a block away.

"That jazz has a social dimension, no one would deny. But here that dimension seemed to acquire literally size and weight, as though the music, a pure product of the imagination, were measuring itself against the world of real things and insisting it was no less real."

In 1980, the festival re-created the Earl Hines' Grand Terrace Orchestra, another milestone in the city's jazz history. Hines was himself in the piano chair.

The next year brought a concert paying tribute to the late Captain Walter Dyett, the bandmaster of Du Suble High School who trained, among others, Nat Cole, Ray Nance, Gene Ammons, Bennie Green, Victor Sproles, and Johnny Griffin. As tenor saxophonist Von Freeman was performing, a heavy rain came in. The audience sat soaked but enthralled. The musicians kept playing, exceeding themselves. Kart wrote, "As a bemused Johnny Griffin said, peering out through the rain before he played his heart out, 'You people must *need* to hear this music.'"

In 1984, a specially created small group that included Dizzy Gillespie, Art Blakey, Johnny Griffin, Randy Weston, and Richard Davis, performed Weston's *African Sunrise*, which the festival had commissioned him to write for Dizzy. In 1986, a big band was assembled to perform the Hall Overton charts, written in 1959 and 1964, of Thelonious Monk music. According to Larry Kart, it was a spectacular performance.

"Yes, one thought," Kart wrote, "this is the way it should be, with the music being made without compromise and being accepted on its own sweet terms. And at the

Chicago Jazz Festival — more or less miraculously, and far more often than not — the way it should be is the way it actually is."

A little local nationalism there? Not really. I've attended two of the ten festivals to date, and I think Kart's elegiac description is justified.

Penny Tyler's most vivid memory is Alberta Hunter's performance, not long before she died. Hunter was born in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1895, and ran away to Chicago to be a singer when she was eleven. Thus she was part of Chicago's musical life long before King Oliver and Louis Armstrong got there, and even as the players in New Orleans were experimenting with what we would eventually call jazz.

"She never thought she'd be performing in front of a hundred thousand people," Penny said. "She was very frail at the time. I remember walking out on stage with her and she was crying. She loved Chicago.

"Her performance ran overtime and Miles Davis was supposed to go on afterward. His people said that under no circumstance could anyone go overtime. She was running about fifteen minutes over, and I had to go tell him. He's supposed to be a temperamental person, but Miles just smiled and said, 'Nobody else but Alberta.'"

There is a delightful codicil to this festival. Despite the fact that it has an excellent sound system and you can hear well, I still prefer to listen to jazz indoors in conditions of more or less intimacy.

A short walk down Michigan Avenue is the Blackstone hotel. There Joe Segal, one of the faithful who has been presenting jazz in clubs or in concerts in Chicago for three decades, operates his Jazz Showcase, just off the lobby. Each evening, after the concert, the place becomes crowded with musicians and the more indefatigable listeners. And many of the musicians slip over to the Showcase to jam. Some of the best music of the festival is heard in these impromptu sessions.

Eddie Harris was one of the sitters-in this year, and playing superbly. So was Ira Sullivan, who often worked with Eddie in Chicago in the early 1960s.

Ira played trumpet. Ira played fluegelhorn. Ira played tenor. Ira played flute. All of them beautifully, and with unfaltering intelligence and sense of structure. Ira used to mystify us all, back in my Chicago days. It was legendary that someone once took him to a pawnshop and one after another handed him all sorts of strange and obsolete instruments, each of which he could play after a few minutes of experiment. Compounding the mystery of this astonishing natural talent was the fact that Ira couldn't read. He always left us all shaking our heads in wonder. He still does.

Silly as it seems, I can never be in Chicago without hearing fragments of lyrics in my head. I walk down State Street, that great street, and remember Don DeMicheal, my assistant editor at *Down Beat* and my successor when I left — and a drummer and vibraharp player who became a part of the city's musical life. I remember the laughs and lunches we had in the restaurant on the top floor of Louis Sullivan's masterpiece, the Carson Pirie Scott building. The town that Billy Sunday couldn't shut down. Chicago, Chicago, I will show you around . . .

Sure. And there's another song. Chicago is what Sammy Cahn called it: my kind of town.

Better than a Blank

by James Lincoln Collier

Back in the early 1970s a man named Bill Graves owned a dim and raffish bar on Broadway between 11th and 12th Streets, which he called Broadway Charlie's.

The neighborhood, which is now peopled by the upwardly mobile, and houses an inordinate number of antique shops that seem to sell nothing but enormous Chinese vases and steel engravings of *The Stag at Bay*, was at that time one of those in-between neighborhoods found in New York that didn't know exactly what it was — neither quite in Greenwich Village nor quite out of it. As a consequence, it was inhabited by drifters, alcoholic painters who had not finished a picture in a decade, small hook-shaped second-hand book dealers with gleaming eyes, and garrulous social theorists who believed that electromagnetic waves from the center of the earth were gradually hardening people's insides. The scent of failure was thick in the streets, and it was from this crowd that Bill Graves drew his rather limited clientele.

Bill was a likeable sort, and deserved better. He was a handsome man with the chisel-cut face of the type of actor who appeared in silent films with titles like *Wife or Mistress*. He claimed to have an ancestor who had come over on the Mayflower. All of this makes him sound like a preppy out of what a friend of mine calls the Bush League, but in fact he was a perfectly plain man who happened to have fine features and a Mayflower forebear. The only flaw in his character was his desire to own a saloon. As Broadway Charlie's subsisted primarily on drifters and social theorists, Bill was forced to work as often as he could as an emergency repairman for commercial refrigerators and air conditioners. He was always suddenly disappearing in the middle of the evening and returning three hours later, his fine-chiseled features spotted with air-conditioner grease.

This, clearly, was no way for a man with a Mayflower ancestor to live, and eventually Bill decided to put in music, in hopes of drawing a more affluent crowd than one composed of used-book dealers and social theorists. His idea was to have a rock band one night, bluegrass another, jazz the third, and so forth. Bill had a sidekick who in fact did qualify for the Bush League. He had a Harvard drawl, a straight spine, and penny loafers. His name was Dickie. But Bill once said that he always looked as if he were standing at the bar of the Larchmont Yacht Club, and he was ever after known as Larchmont.

It was supposed that Larchmont knew something about jazz — he was always asking people to come up to his apartment to "spin a few platters" — so he was assigned to find a jazz band. As it happened, I had recently led a small band briefly (very briefly) at a MacDougal Street club called the Champagne Gallery, at which every New York musician of the period, sung and unsung, had played at least once. Somebody gave Larchmont my name, and he approached me. The pay, he said, would be twenty-five dollars a man, nothing extra for the leader. Of course twenty-five bucks was a lot more in 1973 than it is today, but even then it wasn't any great shakes. Nonetheless it was a gig, and the consequence was that I spent one night a week at Broadway Charlie's for the next three years.

It was typical of the bars scattered through the Greenwich Village area. There was a reasonably large bar-

room in front, with a gorgeous Victorian walnut bar and huge mirrored back bar. The focus of the barroom was the pool table, the main function of which was to produce contention. I remember one night when a sportsman opened the head of a colleague with the butt end of a pool cue. These things always seemed to happen during my chorus. But given the general depressed condition of the regulars, the pool table was useful in stirring up the place, which at times resembled a plaster tableau by Segal.

Another feature of the place was the bartender, a tall, thin, saturnine man with a really serious beard, which reached to the middle of his chest. Tom had seen the human being in every condition, and presided over Broadway Charlie's with a saintly compassion formed on a recognition of the deep sadness of the world.

From the barroom you passed through a wide arch into a second room with a dusty pressed-tin ceiling, tables that wobbled, so that drinks washed back and forth as in a storm at sea, and a low bandstand of rough pine. On the bandstand stood what was possibly the worst piano in New York. I know there were many contenders for the honor, but I swear to it. The ivory was gone from a majority of the keys, and there were always a half dozen that didn't play, or worse, played some neighboring note. One leg was missing, and it was propped up on that side with a beer keg.

Further back there was a kitchen, which was used primarily as a convention hall for roaches — you could hear them voting from time to time — and on either side of the kitchen door were the Ladies and Gents. It was a general rule in Broadway Charlie's that a gentleman would not let his ladyfriend enter the Ladies until he had gone in first to check it out for a lurking drifter or social theorist.

Let me say immediately that my role as leader was nominal, in that I was expected to make the frantic last-minute phone calls to fill in for renegade musicians, and otherwise keep quiet. We tended to be cooperative in spirit, and in the interest of fairness, we decided at the outside to bring in two bands with over-lapping personnel, a small swing band out of 52nd Street of 1940, and a bop-tinged group. The bop group was quickly disbanded. The problem was, fundamentally, that Graves' clients were not notably music lovers. In fact they hated music. They were in the place for warmth, cheap whisky, and a quiet atmosphere in which to drift through a gradually growing fog of peace. The last thing they wanted was a noisy jazz band slamming and banging in the next room. Even a dulcet *Pennies from Heaven* made them stir resentfully; the clanging of *Bernie's Tune* got them to muttering rebelliously and glaring like Jacobins through the archway; and the bop band, fearful that their heads would shortly be paraded around the pool table on well-chalked cues, quit.

Those of us who remained, however, were infected with a delusion which often inflicts musicians — that if we took our music seriously and played well, we might bring in a more animated crowd, and get our fees up to, say, scale. I took a few things off records — I remember doing Jelly Roll Morton's *Sidewalk Blues*, which was fun to play, and our drummer, Ed Bonoff, wrote some nice originals and arranged some Ellington pieces for three horns. We had *Mainstem* and *Cottontail*, on which I was supposed to play the Ben Webster chorus on trombone.

But the anticipated following of enthusiastic jazz lovers did not develop. What we got instead were dogs. In summer they would wander in through the open door; in winter they would dart past one of the regulars, who generally moved at a shambling pace and in passing through the door kept it open long enough for two or three to dash in. The dogs were as various as the clients — great spotted dalmatians, pudgy-faced pekinese, brisk water spaniels, and less identifiable creatures, some of whom appeared to be able to smoke cigarettes and may not have even been dogs.

Once I had to go off to Europe for several weeks on some journalistic endeavor, and I left the band in the charge of the pianist of the moment, whose name was Lou Levi and who was forever having to tell people he wasn't *that* Lou Levy. On my return I called Lou and asked him how it had gone. "About the same," he said.

"The crowd didn't pick up?"

"Not really." Then he brightened. "We had a lot of dogs, though."

"Swell," I said.

"It wasn't so bad," he said. "It was only when they stood in front of the bandstand and barked."

Early in our tenancy we became aware of a small, dishevelled man who was always at the end of the bar when he came in. Shortly after we started to play he would put his face down on the bar and lie comatose until the last set, when he would suddenly rise from the dead and begin applauding loudly. We took a certain ironic pleasure in the fact that our most vociferous fan slept through most of a night's performance.

After a few weeks we began to miss articles of clothing. Broadway Charlie's was pretty hot in the summer, and we usually played stripped down. I lost a brand new velour pullover given to me for Christmas by my girlfriend of the day. Our tenor man, Don Phillips, lost the jacket of a fairly expensive suit, leaving him with a pair of trousers that now had cost him a hundred and twenty-five dollars. It wasn't until Art Lohman, who played trumpet and was a big man, saw his overcoat going out apparently of its own volition, that we caught on. Underneath it was our little fan, who was sufficiently shorter than Lohman that the skirt of the coat dragged on the ground and the collar reached over his head. It was a tough way to lose a loyal fan.

The surprising thing about Broadway Charlie's — and one of the reasons it sticks in the memory — was the number of first- rate musicians we enticed into the place over the years. One of them was the wonderful Dill Jones, one of the finest pianists it has been my privilege to play with, imaginative and endlessly swinging. Not long ago I was listening through some records of rather dispirited British swing bands of the 1940s for some research purpose, when all of a sudden out of the decorous air there burst some driving piano. "Who the hell is that?" I thought, snatching up the album jacket. It was, of course, the very young Dill Jones, fresh out of his native Wales.

It is no secret, however, that Dill occasionally took a small glass of sherry. At Broadway Charlie's the musicians, as lagniappe, got their supplies on the house, and this allowed Dill to enlarge on his hobby. I can remember nights when he was so assiduous in this pursuit that he would, towards the end of the evening, begin to pitch face-forward into the keys. The interesting thing is that when I nudged him awake, he would always come in at exactly the right place. I believe that each time he dozed off he went on dreaming that he was playing, and the music kept going on

through his head.

During Dill's term of duty we suddenly ran short of a bass player. I called Ed Bonoff, who said that his wife worked with a man whom I'll call Johnny, a psychologist of some kind, who claimed he played bass. "Can he play, Ed?"

"He says he can."

"We may as well try him," I said. We did.

Actually Johnny kept fairly good time. The problem with him was that he didn't understand about notes. I don't mean that he just played wrong changes. He simply didn't realize that music was organized in terms of things called scales, and that by putting your fingers on certain places on the strings you could reproduce them. He played the bass as if it were a drum, and moved from string to string to make a change of sound, as a drummer moves around his set.

That was the first problem. The second was that he shared Dill's hobby. As is always the case when two enthusiasts meet, interest intensifies. Dill, who had brought his skill at his hobby to a professional level, managed to get through the job and into a cab. Johnny, however, was less accomplished. By the end of the evening he was no longer receiving sense impressions, and was able only to lean his bass against the wall, lie down on the floor in front of the bandstand, and lapse into a trance. Instantly a dalmatian appeared and, touched by compassion, began to lick Johnny's face. At that moment the saturnine bartender Tom, stroking his chest-length beard, came through, heading for the Ladies to check for lurkers. As he passed he glanced down at the tableau in front of the bandstand and without missing a beat murmured, "I'm sorry, sir, no dancing."

Dill Jones was by no means the only high-quality musician we had in the place. I walked in one night to find a sub taking the case of a bass. He was a small man and looked very familiar, but I couldn't place him — one of those tantalizing moments when the thing is just out of reach. I asked him if he understood what the pay was and what kind of job it was. He said he knew about the pay and he'd be all right.

Before we got through the first two bars of the opening number a chill was running across the top of my head, and I knew exactly how all right he was going to be. I turned to look at him again and suddenly realized where I'd seem him before, which was playing with Bill Evans. It was Eddie Gomez.

After the gig, as I was doling out the meager money, I asked him why he bothered with a job like this one. "It's better than a blank," he said.

There were other surprises. On another occasion I had to go off for several weeks, and Ed Bonoff took over the stand. We were having some problems with the piano player — I forget what the difficulty was — and Ed said he would try to do something about it. On my return I called him. "Who did you get on piano?" I said.

"Al Haig."

I laughed. Surely that was Ed's way of telling me he hadn't been able to find anybody. But when I walked in, Al Haig was playing a Chopin etude on that tuskless piano. The story was that shortly after I had left, Al had started an engagement at Bradley's, which was only a couple of blocks from Broadway Charlie's. Ed decided to walk over to hear Al, and incidentally see if there was anybody at the bar who might be able to recommend a piano player. He did run into a friend, who happened to know Haig. On the break, introductions were made, and Ed asked Al if he knew of a pianist who could use a little gig. Al looked at Ed. "What about me?" he said.

"Jesus, Al," Ed said, "it's twenty-five bucks."

Al played with the band for a couple of months. It was an experience I'll never forget. I'm fairly confident that Al never forgot it, either.

Pianists seemed to be a special difficulty. At one early point, when we still had two bands, we had alternating pianists whom I'll call Abbot and Costello. Once, when it was Abbott's night, our drummer suddenly defected. I made the usual frantic phone calls, with no luck. Then I remembered that the other pianist, Costello, was living with a woman who played drums, a very pretty Chinese girl, as I recall. I phoned him. "Level with me, Costello. Can she play?"

"She'll be fine," he said.

But about a half a chorus into the first number I realized that Costello had double-crossed me. And it was clear from the glares emanating from the faces around me, especially from Abbott, that everybody else was aware of it too. At the conclusion of the number, Abbott rose from the spavined piano and announced that he would not play with the lady. I took him aside and explained that as a professional being paid fully twenty-five dollars a night he had an obligation to finish the job willy- nilly. He was adamant. I would have to let him go home. And at that moment the bass player, who was a pal of Abbott's, informed me that he was like-minded. The choice was between continuing with the unfortunate drummer as the entire rhythm section or sending her home. I took the coward's way out and the poor woman suffered the ignominy of packing her drums and carting them off the bandstand.

The upshot was inevitable. We played the rest of the job in a thick miasma of ill feeling. Just as we were finished, in rushed Costello, snorting and fuming, his eyes flashing lightning bolts, cursing orotundly. For a moment I nervously watched, wondering if I should intervene, and then suddenly I burst out laughing. Neither of them was remotely considering swinging a fist, especially not at anything as hard as a human skull: they were both pianists.

The one satisfaction I got out of the affair came next day as I was crossing 55th Street at Lexington. I observed a taxi pull up to the light with Abbott at the wheel. I leaned in his window and shouted, "You're fired!" How much he cared I do not know.

Eventually Bill Graves decided that he could not continue to be a patron of the arts, even at twenty-five dollars a man, and he dropped the band. Not long afterwards, as I was passing by, I noticed that in the space where Broadway Charlie's nested was an antique store filled with enormous Chinese vases. For a while afterwards I would see encounter Bill or Larchmont or the saturnine Tom or some of the regulars around the Village, but in time I stopped seeing them.

Today the gigs that come my way are likely to be in auditoriums, well-appointed country clubs, or Westchester County wedding halls. I have come to appreciate clean rest rooms, good pianos, and listeners who do not steal overcoats or swing pool cues with deadly intent. But I'll tell you the truth: if Bill Graves were to re-open Broadway Charlie's and offer me the gig for twenty-five dollars a night, I'd take it like a shot.

— James Lincoln Collier