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Letters

Among the list of Chicago musicians and their birth years in the September *Jazzletter* is Dave Tough (1908). Both Feather's monumental *Encyclopedia of Jazz* and Chilton's *Who's Who of Jazz* incorrectly use the April 26, 1908, birthdate and December 6, 1948, death date. Dave was born April 26, 1907 and died December 9, 1948.

Neither Cook County nor the Illinois Bureau of Vital Statistics has any record of Dave Tough's birth. Fortunately, I found the church that the Tough family attended in Oak Park, Illinois. They were able to furnish me with a baptismal certificate which stated: "David Jaffray Tough, son of Mr. and Mrs. James Tough, was born April 26, 1907, and baptized June 9, 1907, at Harvard Congregational Church, 1045 S. Kenilworth Avenue, Oak Park, Illinois. The Rev. C. Arthur Jevne was the pastor."

When Dave sailed for Europe in 1927, his passport read "b. April 26, 1908," but the 8 was scratched out and a 7 substituted. A letter from his father, attached to the passport Application, confirmed the April 26, 1907, birthdate. No doubt this letter was the result of the missing birth certificate in the Cook County files.

Dave himself was ambiguous toward his birthdate. In an April, 1938, interview with Paul Eduard Miller, Dave gave his birthdate as April 26, 1907. In a July 15, 1944, interview with Miller for *Esquire's 1945 Jazz Book*, Dave changed the date to April 26, 1908. For an aborted trip to South America with Bud Freeman in February, 1947, Dave's passport application read "April 26, 1908," but the entire 1908 is scratched out and 1907 substituted. There was an April 26, 1908, birthdate on the death certificate, the result of inaccurate information given by Dave's wife, Margaret Majors Tough.

Dave fell on the corner of Market and Mulberry Streets in Newark, New Jersey, at approximately 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, December 8, 1948. He died sixteen and a half hours later at 10 a.m., Thursday, December 9, in the Newark City Hospital. The cause of death was given as "fracture of the skull; cerebral hemorrhage and compression; acute alcoholism. Due to probably accidental fall on the street."

Although the hospital had the name Dave Tough, it meant nothing to the medical authorities involved. The body was shipped off to the Newark City Morgue, where it was discovered accidentally by a woman looking for someone else. Coincidentally, she knew Dave's wife, who was summoned and made the identification, probably on Saturday morning, December 11.

Dave's fall took place about a block from the Newark Pennsylvania Station. Because Dave had been a patient at the Lyons Veterans Administration Hospital in Lyons, New Jersey, it is quite possible that he was attempting to reach transportation back to the hospital. He had already been at his wife's home at 35 Chester Avenue in Newark earlier that day. Dave was periodically given passes by the V.A. hospital in order to visit his wife.

The dates given for Dave on the family tombstone in Forest Home Cemetery, 863 Des Plaines, Chicago, are 1907-1948.

Harold S. Kaye, Atlanta, Georgia.

Lost Innocence

The development of photography in the early nineteenth century and then the motion picture, sound recording, and videotape, has permitted us to preserve aspects of reality. This has radically altered our perceptions and even our ideas of what art is. We know Nijinsky's dancing only from descriptions of it, and comparatively few people knew it when he was alive. That of Fred Astaire, Cyd Charisse, Leslie Caron, Rudolf Nureyev, will be admired by people yet unborn. Gene Kelly will be dancing with Jerry the mouse after we are all gone. And Laurence Olivier will be doing the soliloquies of Hamlet. We have only descriptions of the playing of Beethoven, Chopin, Liszt. We have the actual playing of Glenn Gould, Sergei Rachmaninoff, and George Gershwin.

Excepting graphic art — statues and painting; and even stone decays with time — man's art prior to this technology died with him. Ah, one might say, but we have the symphonies of Beethoven, the operas of Mozart, do we not? If at this moment (and I grant that it is unlikely) no one in the world is performing or listening to the Beethoven Fifth Symphony, then that symphony doesn't exist. What Beethoven left us was a diagram showing us how to make that symphony. It is no more the symphony than an architect's drawing is a house.

Listening to jazz of the 1920s was always for me more a matter of duty than pleasure, one of those labors you undertake with gritted teeth to try to understand your own epoch, such as reading Joan Didion, Gail Sheahy, French essays on the movies of Alfred Hitchcock, and Walter Piston on harmony. It was not just that I disliked the hissy surfaces and drain-pipe sound of the records. When bass lines are inaudible or indistinct, I am harmonically disoriented. And I couldn't hear them on the old records. Johnny Mandel says that listening to those records was like trying to see something through a dirty window.

As I reported in the September issue, an Australian collector and recording engineer named Robert Parker has over a period of time applied modern computer technology to jazz records of the 1920s and early '30s to produce a number of albums in surprisingly — no, amazingly — good stereo sound. The results of his efforts were first heard in a series of radio programs, broadcast in England by the BBC but now available on disc on the BBC label in North America, recordings by Louis Armstrong, Bix Beiderbecke, Duke Ellington, Red Nichols, Jelly Roll Morton, Bessie Smith, Joe Venuti, and Eddie Lang, as well as various less celebrated but nonetheless interesting figures.

I suggested in that earlier issue that these recordings should cause a re-examination of the music of that period. And they set a standard against which all other reissue programs are going to have to be judged. For the most part, the sound in such programs is woefully lacking when compared to what Parker achieved. With the rush to CDs, all sorts of early jazz is coming back into the marketplace. RCA has launched an extensive program of reissues. The sound doesn't begin to compare to those of the Parker reconstructions.

John Norris of Coda tells me that when some of the RCA people were asked why they hadn't gone to Parker for their engineering, they said they didn't want to spend the money or time Parker is wont to lavish on his labors of love. What's more, the RCA reissues are not in stereo, which fact may not matter to some people, but does to me, since stereo clarifies the music, lets me better hear its component parts.

Suddenly, on these CDs, I can hear them — including the bottom lines — and hear it all well, whether tuba bass, Wellman Braud's string bass in the Ellington material, or Adrian Rollini's bass saxophone or Don Murray's baritone. I had always assumed the bass parts just weren't there in the grooves of the original recordings. They may have been weak, but they were there, and they have, through Parker's electronic alchemy, been brought forward. You can not only hear the thump, you can hear the pitch of the string bass, as played by Braud, Pops Foster, and others.

For nearly a month, I played the 11 BBC-Parker albums incessantly, getting my perspectives rearranged. (More of these Parker transformations are due on the market.)

I had forgotten that the baritone and bass saxophones were used to play bass parts. The sound is odd; then you get used to it, and it is effective, producing a kind of chugging motion in the rhythm section. So the significance of Adrian Rollini strikes you immediately.

Much fun has been poked at Eddie Condon as a guitarist. He has been portrayed as a hard-drinking buffoon, author of witty aphorisms, who was able to put together good bands but contributed little if anything to the music. He never played solos, and his rhythm playing was quiet. There was even a joke that he didn't play guitar at all, just stroked his hand over the strings. Condon can be heard very well on some of the tracks in these collections, including *Nobody's Sweetheart*, made in 1927 with Jimmy McPartland, Frank Teschemacher, Bud Freeman, Jim Lannigan, and Gene Krupa — the Austin High Gang — and *Makin' Friends*, with his own Footwarmers group that included McPartland and Jack Teagarden. He plays banjo on the latter. He just sits there and makes a band cook.

The best of the tracks by Condon is a 1929 Fats Waller session for Victor. Condon was sent to see that Waller showed up sober and ready, which was pretty foolhardy on the part of somebody at Victor. They arrived hung over and unprepared, except for a couple of tunes Waller had written in the taxi on the way to the session. One of these is *Minor Drag*. (It was supposed to be called *Harlem Fuss* but somebody at Victor goofed on that too.) This is an astonishing track by Waller, Condon, and three horns, coherent, intelligent, humorous, and powerful. Both men knew how to swing, and they reinforced each other.

The Waller restorations are vivid reminders of his wonders: the total independence of his hands, his ability to cross over the time and never screw it up, the power of his left hand in stride passages. And he had the most delicate touch and tone. Like Armstrong, he achieved a success as an entertainer that overshadowed his gifts as a musician. Unlike Armstrong, he never descended to what has been interpreted as Tomming. Armstrong sang dross like *Blueberry Hill* with a big grin, as if he were enjoying it. And maybe he was. When record companies got Waller to sing and play drivel, he treated it with the contempt it deserved, and his sardonic performances are keenly funny. But, one feels on listening to the CD devoted to him, it is sad that more of his studio hours weren't expended on things such as *Minor Drag* and the solo-piano *Handful of Keys*. He was some fabulous pianist.

It is, as I have two or three times quoted Artie Shaw as pointing out, impossible for anyone who grew up after Armstrong's arrival to perceive the impact he had — which is true, to be sure, of the new music of all periods. But these restorations of Armstrong recordings from the years of his greatest creative power give some hint of it. From the first notes, you feel the crackling authority of a soaring imagination. "Where did it come from?" Shaw says. "Genius."

There are two tracks in an album devoted to Jelly Roll Morton by "Wingy Mannone and His Orchestra," *Blue Blood Blues* and *I'm Alone Without You* whose personnel is listed in the annotation as comprising Wingy Mannone, trumpet; Dicky Wells, trombone; Artie Shaw, clarinet; Bud Freeman, tenor saxophone; Frank Victor, guitar; John Kirby, bass; Kaiser Marshall, drums. The tracks were made, according to these notes, on the same date, July 14, 1930, but that, as we shall see, is unlikely. Shaw that year was 20 years old.

Blue Blood Blues opens with a clarinet solo in the chalumeau register that leaps to the top of the instrument. Assuming that Artie had by now forgotten the session, I played it for him. "Who's the clarinetist?" he said. "Jimmy Noone? That's where Benny got a lot of it, you know," and he sang an accurate simulation of Goodman's style. Listening further to the clarinetist, he said, "Barney Bigard?"

"The notes say it's you," I said.

"No. Absolutely not. Play it again."

I ran the track backwards to the start of the solo, something you can do with CDs. "That's Edmond Hall," Artie said. "I'm almost certain of it."

I played the second tune, *I'm Alone without You*. "Now that *is* me," Artie said. "But the first one is Ed Hall. You know, Wingy was a very disorganized man. That was a weird date." And, during a solo by Morton, "His time isn't very good."

What startled me was the realization that Shaw had recorded with Jelly Roll Morton, to whom he gives good marks as an innovator, if not necessarily as a pianist. "You have to view him in context," Artie said. He chuckled over Morton's claim to have "invented" jazz in 1902.

Morton's personality, his unending gasconades, his poseur's manner, have clouded the issue. The CD on Morton lets you make up your own mind. His piano playing is all right, but his writing is his forte. The material is uneven, though the best of it is powerful, and his explorations of New Orleans polyphony are ingenious. *Black Bottom Stomp*, by his Red Hot Peppers, swings beautifully. The personnel of this septet included Kid Ory on trombone, Omer Simeon on clarinet, and Johnny St. Cyr on banjo or guitar.

St. Cyr does not impress me, now that I can actually hear him. His banjo playing is passable but his guitar work has a weak and watery quality. There were better rhythm and solo guitarists around at the time, including Dick McDonough and Carl Kress — and of course Eddie Lang.

One CD is devoted to Lang and Joe Venuti, who shared an uncanny rapport. Lang, playing his chorded rhythms, is all over the instrument. His command of voicings is complete, his time a thing of beauty. And Venuti played exquisitely.

One of the tracks in the Venuti-Lang album is *Oh! Pe-*

ter, recorded with Red Nichols and his Five Pennies. There is no bass of any kind, just Nichols, Venuti, Jimmy Dorsey on clarinet, Fulton McGrath, piano, and Vic Berton, drums. But how that group swings. I have tended to accept the evaluation of Nichols as a pallid trumpet player, but the various tracks by different editions of the Five Pennies caused me to revise upward my estimate of him. So too Jimmy Dorsey, who was a hot young alto player, a good clarinetist, a strong baritone player. He plays trumpet on one track, though only passably, and his brother Tommy is also heard on trumpet. I have also revised my estimate of Mezz Mezzrow. He was an even worse clarinetist than legend holds, and it is probably true that he was tolerated by musicians because he always had the best pot.

Morton's *Millenberg Joys* is the vehicle that reveals what a great band McKinney's Cotton Pickers, under the direction of Don Redman, really was. Redman is ubiquitous in these albums, turning up with several groups, including the 1925 Fletcher Henderson band, both as saxophonist and as arranger of *Sugar Foot Stomp*. Redman is increasingly my candidate for the most underestimated musician in jazz history. He wrote for the Henderson band before Henderson himself did, and must be considered one of the major formulators of big-band jazz writing, more widely influential than Ellington, since more bands followed the pattern of the Henderson charts and format than those of Ellington. And the most under-recognized band is that of Jimmie Lunceford, heard here in a 1934 performance of *Stratosphere*, a clever but inconsequential piece that nonetheless shows what a polished, hard-swinging, fresh group it was, full of subtle mixings, dynamics, and inflections.

The Duke Ellington Band between 1927 and 1934 is documented in a 16-track album. This was its Cotton Club period, and the band was evolving from Ellington's fascination with New Orleans players and polyphony into what would later be recognizable as the Ellington style. I cannot partake of the religious transport over the band at that period that one encounters in the kind of people who sign their letters "Love you madly" and "In Duke's name." Indeed there are things that bother me about it, including the rhythm section in *The Blues with a Feeling*. It consists of Sonny Greer, who was always a strange drummer, and Wellman Braud. Braud plays arco bass here, and the effect is heavy, as if the band were slogging through mud.

And I have always been discomfited by the "jungle sound" records of the Ellington band.

The painted exoticism that Ellington devised for the audiences and management of the Cotton Club had nothing to do with the culture, or rather cultures, of Africa. The music caters to opulent ofays on shivery adventures into the "primitive" world of darkest Harlem, ogling feathered brown-skinned girls writhing around the stage, indulging fantasies of boffing these dark beauties in some steamy clearing. It is demeaning to everyone involved that black men should have been complicit in abetting this slavering.

That this was another age, and that it is always dangerous to perceive the behavior of a previous time by the standards of one's own, is obvious. Like Armstrong and Morton, Ellington must be viewed in context. Still, there was a time when it was acceptable public sport to feed people to lions, another when it was acceptable to keel-haul or even summarily hang sailors. These things are not acceptable to us now, even in retrospect. One might counter that at least the Cotton Club provided employment. But then so did the capture and care of lions.

The Mooche and *East St. Louis Toodle-oo* are examples of the affectations of the primal that Ellington contributed to the rites of the Cotton Club. That in them he does things original in popular music at the time is undisputed. But — to me — they bespeak distasteful things about the nature of man. Stephen Crane's *Maggie: a Girl of the Streets* is an objection to the conditions that drive its pathetic heroine into prostitution. *The Mooche* and its companion piece *assisted* the condescensions of the high hats, the slummers from downtown.

The album ends with the version of *Solitude* recorded January 10, 1934, *Stompy Jones*, recorded the previous day, and *Live and Love Tonight*, recorded four months later. The band has grown by now to four trumpets and two trombones, two altos, tenor, and baritone, plus the rhythm section. Braud plays pizzicato bass on *Stompy Jones* and the band swings hard. *Live and Love Tonight* is not an Ellington tune, but it shows how Ellington could convert pop material into something of his own. The band had advanced from the early Cotton Club time, it was heading toward the glory days of *Koko, Cottontail, Take the A Train, Harlem Air Shaft*.

The album is an invaluable historical record, and I have listened to it in deepest fascination — sometimes uneasy fascination, to be sure. Like every album in this BBC group, it can be compared to a roomful of famous paintings that have been cleaned, revealing colors we did not know were there.

And, even in works such as The *Mooche*, Ellington was, whether by design or pragmatic experiment, expanding the vocabulary of jazz. He is exploring shades of emotion not within the compass of the music before that. The music is leading toward the musings of Miles Davis and the palette of Gil Evans, the lyrical broodings of Bill Evans.

If the affectations of exoticism of the Cotton Club days suggest the dark side of the Roaring Twenties, most of the popular music of that decade is in keeping with the giddy quality of the period, with its flagpole sitters and rolled stockings and bee's knees, raccoon coats and gin-flask irresponsibility. It was the era of the Volstead Act, rising hem lines, bobbed hair, cloche hats, marathon dancing, Teapot Dome, art deco, the Scopes trial, the Charleston, the St. Valentine's Day massacre, the John Held flapper, 23 skiddoo, I love my wife but oh you kid, Clara Bow, Chaplin, Valentino, Gatsby, Lucky Lindy, Dion O'Bannion, Al Capone, Shipwreck Kelley, and Erte.

The boys had come home (well, most of them; some were in Flander's Field, amid the poppies), America was prosperous, it looked like the party would go on forever. Few Americans even noticed it when as the decade dawned, the propaganda chief of the German Workers Party, one Adolf Hitler, publicly stated their program. He attacked Jews, capitalists, and large property owners. That was in February 1920. And no one much paid any attention when in Paris, the following January, the Allies announced the punishment they would impose on the Germans: payment of reparations of $56 billion over a period of 42 years, and an additional payment of 12.5 percent tax on all her exports. This was in accord with the accepted simplistic premise that the Great War was the sole fault of those depraved Huns. As the '20s went on, it apparently never occurred to anyone that the Franco- American-British policy was reducing the German people to eating out of garbage cans and pimping their sisters and they just might do something desperate about it. They had it coming, and anyway, they were far away and fairly trounced and here in America, things were swinging, including the music.

That is the thing that strikes you most forcefully in these albums: the ubiquity of the swinging. That, and the joy of the music. It is almost universally joyous. These records refute the later revisionist definition of jazz as the angered outcry of a down-trodden people. This music, played by black musicians and white alike, is enormous exuberant fun. Like all great art, it exists in and of itself, with no other purpose but to please the artist and his audience. It is frivolous and gay, like art deco. And the jazz of the 1920s has the additional charm of not being thought of as art at all by the men who were making it. It is devoid of pomp or pretense or claims for itself, which cannot be said of a lot of the jazz of recent decades. Jazz, Artie Shaw is fond of saying, is a serious art but it is not a solemn one. It assuredly was not solemn back when, not yet out of his teens, Shaw came in off the road to settle in New York and play in studios and jam.

And that isn't the only illusion dispelled by these 11 albums which, in their total 188 tracks, give a fairly thorough representation of jazz in the '20s. So much fuss has been made over the hiring of Teddy Wilson by Benny Goodman that one is left with an impression that blacks and whites did not previously play together. Composer Milton Babbitt, who played jazz clarinet when he was a boy growing up in the south, said recently on a radio interview that mixed performances were quite common during that time, and that he played in funeral services himself. The Waller session with Eddie Condon, the Wingy Mannone session with Dicky Wells, Artie Shaw, and Jelly Roll Morton, were apparently not considered ground-breaking. Waller also recorded with Ted Lewis in a band that included Muggsy Spanier and Benny Goodman, and he even brought Mezz Mezzrow in on one of his own dates, though one wonders why. Maybe Fats too liked a joint now and then. Bubber Miley and Bix Beiderbecke are both on the Hoagy Carmichael recording of *Barnacle Bill the Sailor*. Certainly black and white musicians recorded together years before Goodman hired Wilson. In New Orleans, the light-skinned Creole clarinetist Sidney Arodin went casually back and forth between white and black bands, and he recorded with the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, with Mannone and George Brunies, in 1934. Morton recorded with an earlier New Orleans Rhythm Kings, whose personnel included Ben Pollack and Don Murray, as far back as 1923. I had believed that mixed groups performed only on recordings, but Babbitt refutes even that.

Another thing I noticed, reading the personnel lists, is the scarcity, in proportion to population, of Anglo-Saxons in the ranks of white jazz musicians. The Irish were there — Eddie Condon, Dick McDonough, Jim Lannigan, Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey — and the Jews, including Shaw and Goodman, and the Germans: Paul Mertz, Frank Teschemacher, Jack and Charlie Teagarden, Bix Beiderbecke, and Frank Trumbauer, who was, however, only part German: he was also Indian. There is a Pole or two, Gene Krupa among them, though it must be remembered that Poland, like England, contributed comparatively little to European "classical" composition prior to the twentieth century. And Chopin was half French. Don Murray was almost certainly of Scottish descent. And when you consider how common it was for people with "funny" names to Anglicize them in that era, one wonders how many musicians bearing respectable WASP monikers were Italian or Jewish or middle European. These changes were still being made in later years, as in the cases of Joe Albany, Joe Farrell, Louis Bellson, and Jerry Gray, born Albani, Firrantello, Balassoni and Graziano respectively. Eddie Lang's name at birth was Massaro, and he was a member of that ethnic group with the largest contingent of white players, the Italians, among them Joe Venuti, Adrian Rollini, Frank Signorelli, Paul Graselli, Leon Rapollo, Pete Pumiglio, Wingy Mannone, Sharky Bonano, Mike Trafficante, Tony Briglia, and Henry Biagnini, who was musical director of the Casa Loma orchestra when Glen Gray and Ray Eberle were its alto players. The Original Dixieland Jazz Band, the white group that came up from New Orleans in 1918 and started the national craze for jazz, contained Nick LaRocca and Tony Sbarbaro among its players. Drummer Chauncey Morehouse was an authentic WASP, but he was certainly a member of a minority in jazz.

The BBC CDs I have heard thus far include one on the jazz of New Orleans, one on jazz in Chicago, and a third on jazz in New York. These albums are compendiums of the work of different groups. Each of the other eight albums is devoted to a single subject: Armstrong, Johnny Dodds, Ellington, Morton, Venuti and Lang, Waller, Bessie Smith, and Bix Beiderbecke.

Beiderbecke has taken a place as a symbol of the Jazz Age, music's equivalent of what F. Scott Fitzgerald was to literature: the flawed and tragic poetic young men, somehow fated from birth, who would be cut off prematurely by alcohol. It was Fitzgerald who named it the Jazz Age.

Bix Beiderbecke is one of those jazz musicians whom I was in the past fated to repeatedly discover. He is one of those people like Clark Terry, Zoot Sims, and Joe Williams, each new encounter with whom is a revelation: you may forget between exposures just how good they really are. With the BBC CDs, I have now listened to him so much that I cannot ever again forget.

To get to the heart of the music Bix or anyone else made in the 1920s — or, more precisely, to let it get to yours — you have to adapt yourself to a different concept of time and the rhythm section. There are more ways than one to swing, the cult of two and four to the contrary notwithstanding. Samba swings on one and three; or rather, on one, since in Brazil the bossa nova tunes that became part of the North American jazz repertoire were notated in two. It is also hard for us to know what the early jazz drummers sounded like. Bill Crow, who has done some research on it, was told by veterans of the era that drummers had to hold back because of shortcomings in the recording equipment: on a King Oliver track in this collection, despite the improved sound, you can hardly hear Baby Dodds at all.

The bands with which Bix worked were not all inferior. Bill Rank was a fine trombonist. Don Murray was not only a very good clarinetist, he was an estimable baritone player. One of the good groups Bix played with, despite a myth created by Dorothy Baker's novel *Young Man with a Horn*, was the Paul Whiteman organization, which is heard here in *Mississippi Mud*, a song with a lyric that is all the more unsettling in that its cruelty is unconscious, its racism ingenuous: " . . . just as happy as a cow chewin' on a cud, when the darkies beat their feet on the Mississippi mud." How ghastly: an entire people characterized as being satisfied with, as aspiring to, nothing higher than the pleasure of beating their feet in mud. Sometimes the smaller horrors are the more revealing of a society and a time. Years later, in a Red Skelton movie called *Whistling in Dixie*, a man awakens a small black boy sleeping on the porch of a shanty and using his little dog for a pillow. The man asks the boy for directions and leaves. The boy puts his head back on his dog and goes back to sleep. This scene is presented to us as comedy.

Thus too *Mississippi Mud.* It is admiring of its "darkies" and envious of their primitive pleasures. Finally, what is troubling about the song is its role in the perpetuation, perhaps even the creation, of a stereotype. Some people insist that "race relations" were progressing quite nicely until David Wark Griffith, in *The Birth of a Nation*, put into place a vision of the black American that set a pattern for later movies. Marlon Brando has insisted that the movie industry created the howling-savage image of the Indians. *Mississippi Mud* epitomizes the function of popular entertainment in the shaping of social attitudes, a power the executives of television, movies, and the record industry insist it does not have, even as the salesmen of radio and TV time argue out of the other side of the face that it does.

And, like the movies of Leni Riefenstahl, Hitler's favorite film-maker, *Mississippi Mud* — sung by Irene Taylor in one of those little-girl voices popular in that era, and by Bing Crosby and the Rhythm Boys — is the more disturbing for being well done. The playing on it, including that of Bix, is marvelous. A more satisfying, because it lacks the described distraction, track by the jazz group Whiteman carried within the band — Bill Rank on trombone, Jimmy Dorsey on clarinet, Frank Trumbauer on C melody sax, Min Liebrook on bass saxophone, Bill Challis on piano, Matty Malneck, violin, and Harold McDonald on drums — is *San.* And this is arranged chamber jazz, the chart by Challis. It contains a soaring harmonized chorus by Bix and lead trumpeter Charlie Margulis, which, since Bix was a poor reader, he must have learned by rote from Challis, who obviously loved him and even wrote out Bix's piano compositions for him. The band swings, and it most assuredly is jazz.

For all the condescension and even opprobrium directed at Whiteman's memory by hind-sighted critics and historians, I have never met anyone who worked for him who did not have respect for him. This included Joe Venuti, one of Whiteman's staunchest defenders, even though he was prone to poke fun at him. I asked Paul Weston, who wrote for that band, if it were true that Whiteman couldn't read music. Paul chuckled and said that he certainly wasn't fluent at it. There were directions written on the music so that Whiteman could let it appear that he was conducting. "But I hope you're not going to put Pops down," Paul immediately said. "He made no pretensions about himself as a musician. It was all strictly among the boys. His attitude was: just don't let the advertising agency find out." So too Artie Shaw: "Pops hired good people, like Trumbauer and Bix and Jimmy and Tommy Dorsey, and gave them exposure to his audience and a chance. He did a lot for jazz."

The slightly out-of-focus quality of much overseas writing about America and particularly jazz turns up in Robert Parker's otherwise useful annotations of these albums. Aside from the heavier error of his inclusion of Artie Shaw in the personnel of *Blue Blood Blues*, he writes of the Hoagy Carmichael recording, *Walkin' the Dog*, made in May 1928 in Richmond, Indiana: "(Carmichael's) early recordings did not necessarily employ the talents of . . . 'heavyweights.' Here, the band comprises an enthusiastic group of young friends from Indiana University." First of all, Indiana University has long had an excellent music school. The note suggests that the players were all inconsequential amateurs. The name Bud Dant, listed in the personnel, apparently doesn't mean anything to Parker in Australia. But it does to us here.

Charles Bud Dant and Carmichael had graduated from the same Indianapolis high school, though not at the same time. Trained on cornet by a bandmaster uncle, Dant went directly into a vaudeville band, playing jazz cornet. When he came home a year later after a long tour, Hoagy persuaded him to come to Bloomington, where Carmichael was completing his law degree at Indiana University, to play in and arrange for the new campus band to replace Carmichael's Collegians. This evolved into Bud Dant's Collegians. Dant took a bachelor's degree in music education, planning to teach, but Duke Ellington urged him and the band to turn pro, which they did. Dant became a highly successful arranger and conductor in network radio and later television, working with major stars of the period, including Bing Crosby, Jimmy Durante, Bob Hope, and Jo Stafford. Later he became a record producer, working with everyone from Pete Fountain to Ricky Nelson.

Bud Dant is alive and well and living in Hawaii. At 81, he is still an extremely busy musician, at the moment engaged in re-arranging and re-orchestrating a suite composed by Carmichael in the early 1960s, performed then by the composer with the Indianapolis Symphony with Bud conducting, and due soon for a new performance at Indiana U. Bud happens to be a *Jazzletter* subscriber, so I got in touch with him, to ask about the 1928 session, and have him listen to the new BBC track derived from the date. He told me:

"The session was recorded in Richmond, Indiana, at the Gennett Studio — beeswax platters — the Starr Piano Company, on an old railway siding. It was during spring vacation in 1928. I was at IU, running the band that Hoagy had organized. He called me and asked me to come over and bring Van Sickle, Wolfe, Habbe, Chauncey Goodwin, and Fred Murray. Fred was Hoagy's cousin, a good jazz cornet man who is not listed, I notice, in the liner information. Hoagy brought Drummond and Keating with him from Indianapolis. We also recorded Hoagy's tune *March of the Hoodlums*, *The Wedding Waltz*, and *Stardust*. *March* was released back of *Walkin'* but the other two were scrapped.

"I am the only living player from that session. I still play my old 1922 Benge cornet.

"I've studied the *Walkin' the Dog* track and also compared the Trumbauer-Bix *Singin' the Blues* with my Time-Life copy, and I cannot believe the remarkable quality this Australian engineer came up with."

The memory of the 1920s and Prohibition, of the young men riding the boxcars in the Depression, of the big bands heard on remotes on late-night radio in the '30s and '40s, is very personal to us here, part of our heritage. We are an extension of the European culture; they are not an extension of ours, which is why so much of their writing about America, particularly jazz, seems askew, even when it is admiring. Consider Jean Francois Revel's *Without Marx or Jesus*, which sent Americans into paroxysms of self-admiration in 1971 and whose glowing prognosis has proved wrong.

There is much for us to learn about America in the music on these 11 CDs. It is the gaiety, the joy, of it, its wonderful irreverence, that gets to you, now that you can really hear it.

In a sense, Bix does indeed live. When the word went around New York bars that he was dead, Hoagy Carmichael — who, let us remember, also played trumpet and acquired Bix's mouthpiece and carried it in his pocket until his own death — said, "No he's not, I can hear him from here."

So can I, on these records. Indeed, all these records had the curious effect on me of making these players seem to come back to life, none more so than Bix. Armstrong of course lived into the age of stereo recording. But Bix was gone before I even heard jazz.

He becomes more an enigma than ever for the immediacy of his presence. If there was a dark lyricism in the playing of Bill Evans, it was there in the man. But if there was a darkness in Bix that made him drink himself to death, by the age of 28, it is not in the music.

Good old Joe Venuti, he tried to convince me that Bix wasn't alcoholic, but Artie Shaw, who roomed with him for a short time when he first settled in New York, said he was always trying to get Bix to take a shower because he smelled so badly of the booze.

Like Mozart's music, Beiderbecke's has a serenity in it, an almost angelic quality, as he makes perfect placement of those bell-sound notes. Nobody else ever got a sound like that out of a cornet, though some fine players have tried. Beiderbecke had a trick of laying back in soft passages and then suddenly cutting loose, strutting with an uncontainable exuberance. He had, as everyone knew, limited technique, and never plays very high on the horn. But the selectivity and the perfection of the line seem to be the expression of an effortless musical eloquence. His influence has been more widespread than is generally recognized, partly, as Artie Shaw points out, because a lot of his influence was on players of other instruments, including Shaw himself.

Bix Beiderbecke was not long for this world, nor was the giddy age of which he was a somehow so perfect expression. In May 1927, Charles Lindbergh flew across the Atlantic, accelerating the diminution of the world begun by Columbus's caravels. In September Isadora Duncan strangled on her scarf. In July 1928, the first television set made in the United States went on sale (for $75). The next year the first color TV set was displayed by Bell Labs. On October 24, 1929, Wall Street, as *Variety* put it in a headline, laid an egg. After the Black Thursday crash, the gaiety was gone.

On May 21, 1930, seven months after the crash, Hoagy Carmichael recorded *Barnacle Bill the Sailor* with a personnel that included Bix, Bubber Miley, Tommy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, Arnold Brilhart, Bud Freeman, Irving Brodsky on piano, Lang and Venuti, Goodman's brother Harry on bass, and Gene Krupa on drums. This record is famous in jazz circles not for its musical merit — it hasn't any — but for the fact that at the end Venuti says in a basso voice, "Barnacle Bill the shithead." The enhanced recording reveals that he isn't the only one to use the phrase: Hoagy Carmichael and Carson Robison sing it through several choruses.

The joyous and often Rabelaisian irreverence of the 1920s, which makes much of the jazz prior to this funny, has been replaced by a sophomoric and vaguely sullen scatology.

The Casa Loma band recorded *Casa Loma Stomp* in 1930. Bix died in 1931. By 1934, Ellington's style was defined in such pieces as *Stompy Jones*. His personnel, like that of other bands, had been enlarged after the manner of the Paul Whiteman band. Lunceford recorded *Stratosphere* that same year, on September 4, and eight days later, Earl Hines recorded *Maple Leaf Rag* with a rhythm section, three trumpets, three trombones, and four saxes. Five weeks later, in Cheraw, South Carolina, on October 21, a boy named John Birks Gillespie turned 17.

In Germany a young Hollander went to the guillotine for the Reichstag fire, which he didn't set. At the airport of Managua, Nicaragua, General Augusto Sandino, who was working to end peacefully the occupation of his country by the U.S. Marines, was executed by forces loyal to General Anastasio Somoza, who would soon take power with consequences we know. The Depression deepened and John Dillinger, who used a Thompson submachine gun in his bank robberies, was looked on as a hero by many people in the blighted midwest. Bonnie and Clyde died in a police ambush, then Dillinger was shot to death by FBI men in Chicago and Pretty Boy Floyd and Baby Face Nelson got theirs a few weeks later. The Gestapo was arresting and executing opponents of Adolph Hitler, who announced that he would no longer pay off Germany's foreign debts. Austrian Chancellor Engelbert Dolfuss was assassinated by Nazis, Mao Tse Tung began the Long March, and Josef Stalin had 100 of his rivals put to death.

The Jazz Age was over.

The tradition of New Orleans polyphony would be completely abandoned by black musicians, its influence lingering on almost entirely in white players clinging to a style relevant to an era that was ended. When you have experienced the ebullience of 1920s jazz, you can understand why so many people were nostalgic for it. Something went out of the music. It was replaced by other things, valuable things, which would vastly expand its expressiveness, but something was lost. Still, you could not retain the Zeitgeist of 1920s jazz by imitating it. Music, like language, continually evolves, if only because its masters grow bored with what they are doing. Music that clings to a past inevitably becomes petrified. In time the New Orleans tradition with which jazz begins would deteriorate into an affected counterpoint, predictable from repetition, played by men in straw hats and shirtsleeves with armbands.

Hines, Ellington, Armstrong, Goodman, Shaw, Hawkins, Tommy Dorsey, continued to develop in the 1930s. Not everyone did. One of the last of the records restored by Robert Parker in the BBC series somehow signals the end of the era perfectly. It is a record of *Panama* made September 12, 1934, by Wingy Mannone, himself a native of New Orleans, George Brunies on trombone, clarinetist Sidney Arodin, Terry Shand on piano, Benny Pottle on bass, and Bob White, drums. The style is instantly recognizable. It is white Dixieland.

The best white jazz players — but not the black; they were silently excluded — had gone into the studios, Bill Challis, a formative influence on jazz writing, among them. In February 1936, Challis made a series of transcriptions under the *nom de plume* of Bob Conley. Forerunners of the LP, "transcriptions" were 16-inch records containing a number of tracks, made for radio stations and not sold to the public. This material surfaced in 1983 in two albums on the Circle label, one of George Buck's companies, and can be obtained by writing to him at 3008 Wadsworth Place, Atlanta GA 30032-5899. Challis used 26 men on these sessions, and singer Bea Wain. The trumpets include Charlie Margulis and Manny Klein. The sax section includes one Art Shaw, who to this day is proud of how good a lead alto player he was. The pianist is Frank Signorelli, the guitarist Dick McDonough, the bassist Artie Bernstein, the drummer Chauncey Morehouse. The trombone section includes Jack Jenney and Wilbur Schwichtenberg.

The music is what the radio stations wanted. The time is four-square and corny. The writing is intelligent, a workmanlike job by a man capable of far better, and the playing is fully professional. But it is mostly sappy music.

"That's what we did for a living," Artie Shaw said. "The Challis sessions were better than most. They were coherent. At CBS all the jazz bands were incorporated into the Howard Barlow symphony for an hour of music by something called the Columbians. That was impossible music. When you have a hundred men playing *You're My Every-*

thing, you know you're going to have a least 25 guys playing doubles. That is irrational music, man. On a break, after we'd been doing *You're My Everything*, which was the song of the week, we heard this strange sound, you couldn't tell where it had started. It began *'Myaaaaaaaah . . . '*, this weird keening noise, and it was Jerry Colonna, who was in the trombone section, going 'Myaaaaa're my everything . . .' and all the guys in the band cracked up. It was the thing he used to do later on the Bob Hope show.

"Another time I was in a studio orchestra playing these dumb, square eighth notes, and I couldn't stand it, and I fingered the high F key without using the octave key, which produces a kind of duck sound on the alto saxophone, and I was going quack-quack-quack. The orchestra was so big and loud that the conductor couldn't hear it. This was live radio, remember. At the end of it, the conductor held up his thumb and index finger in an O, to indicate, 'Perfect.' Larry Binyon, the tenor player, who was sitting beside me, could hardly finish the tune for laughing.

"We did things like that to keep from going crazy. And we went up to Harlem to play jazz."

That, and sit around Jimmy Plunkett's and bitch about the music business. Plunkett's, a forerunner of Jim and Andy's, Junior's, and Charlie's, was a speakeasy patronized by musicians, on 53rd Street under the old elevated railway, the El of legend, long since vanished. That was in the late '20s and early '30s. With the repeal of the Volstead Act at the end of 1933, a group of musicians, including Shaw, Bunny Berigan, Tommy Dorsey, Dick McDonough, Manny Klein, Carl Kress, and Arthur Schutt among them, decided to open their own bar. It was the Onyx club, upstairs near the location now occupied by Twenty-one. There they could groan some more, hire musicians they admired, such as Joe Sullivan, Fats Waller, and Willie the Lion Smith, and let them play for an audience of pros who knew what they were hearing. They would do that and dream of playing a better kind of music.

In the summer of 1966 it became possible: Benny Goodman's band attained a sudden huge success, utilizing the homophonic kind of orchestral organization that had been taking form in the '20s, following patterns explored by the Casa Loma, Redman, Henderson, Challis, and others. A new fad was launched, and the verb, describing what the music was supposed to do, was turned into a noun to identify it: swing. The press agents jumped on it. The booking agents were looking for anyone who could put together a band that could "swing", and one after the other, these young musicians came out of the studio to do it, Artie Shaw and the Dorsey brothers among them. In partnership with Ray McKinley, Wilbur Schwichtenberg formed a band and, presumably concluding that the name would look odd on a marquee, changed it to Will Bradley.

At the same time, the admiration for soloists blowing in front of the rhythm section, brought about primarily by Armstrong but also by Coleman Hawkins, Art Tatum, Earl Hines, and Bix Beiderbecke, grew among the jazz cognoscenti, although already stubborn loyalists, admirers of the old New Orleans style, said that this new music wasn't jazz. The definition of what is and isn't jazz has always been an expression of the prejudices of the definer.

On September 11, 1939, Lionel Hampton recorded Benny Carter's *When Lights Are Low*. Carter was in the ensemble. So was John Birks Gillespie, now 22 and sounding a lot like Roy Eldridge. Europe was mobilizing. The United States War Department placed a huge order for aircraft and engines. On September 30, Germany invaded Poland, and Britain and France declared war. Eleven days later, on October 11, Coleman Hawkins recorded *Body and Soul*, establishing irremovably the concept of the jazz soloist as culture hero, himself as one of its major figures, and the song as peculiarly his. So associated with it was he to become that many years later, hiring pianist Les McCann for a week's gig somewhere, he told Les, "Now if somebody requests *Body and Soul*, you just tell them you don't know it, because I don't ever want to play that motherfucker again."

The Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, a date Americans — older ones, anyway — know as well as they do the Fourth of July.

Remembering that day, Artie Shaw said: "I left the music business in 1954, but my career as a serious dedicated player of a musical instrument really came to an end before that. It ended in 1941, when World War II started. I was playing a theater in Providence, Rhode Island. The manager of the theater asked me to make an announcement. I went out and asked all servicemen in the crowd to return immediately to their bases. It seems as if two thirds of the audience got up and left. We hadn't realized how many people had been going into service. With the whole world in flames, playing *Stardust* seemed pretty pointless. During the show I put the word out to the guys, two weeks notice. In the South Pacific I saw war face-to-face. Nothing was ever the same after that."

There is a photo of Artie performing on an aircraft carrier, leaning back, bent around his clarinet. Young sailors are hanging off every protrusion of the carrier's island. Once he and his Navy band performed for marines under ponchos in the rain on some now-Godforsaken tropical paradise. Japanese snipers opened fire on them. During a concert on Guadalcanal they came under bombing attack. Shaw and his musicians and the boys they were sent to entertain plunged into slit trenches and tried to cling to the earth, which shook. In the darkness Dave Tough asked for a cigarette, got one, then asked for a lighter. Handing the lighter back, he said, "The cigarette is Joe's, the lighter is Jim's, and the shaky voice is mine," inducing much nervous laughter. Then a Japanese plane laid a stick of bombs, bracketing their foxhole. One of them blew in Shaw's left ear drum. His head rang for months, inducing shattering headaches. He would never again have full hearing in that ear. The band was eventually sent home, sick and exhausted. "Davey Tough was just a ghost," Artie said.

Shaw formed a new band, which recorded a compelling version of *S'Wonderful*. The arrangement, by Ray Coniff, has a dark ostinato in the trombones, a moaning counterfigure by the saxes, and then the melody from Shaw's high clarinet leading tight-muted trumpets. Before the war, he apparently had a foreglimpse of what was to come: his ominous theme was named *Nightmare*. After it he seemed to find things not so swonderful. His bands had always been dark. But now they grew more so. Shaw the musician seemed to step back into the shadows of our age and at last disappeared.

Dave Tough went into the Woody Herman band, the one that would be known as the First Herd. In the early months of 1945, as German resistance was crumbling and it was obvious the war was nearing its end, he took part in a series of recordings which, in their dada-esque and sometimes even bitonal exuberance, were as characteristic of that time as *Singing the Blues* and *West End Blues* were of theirs. This was the time of *Apple Honey, Caldonia, Goosey Gan-*

der, Northwest Passage, The Good Earth, Bijou.

Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Bud Powell, Thelonious Monk, Kenny Clarke, and a few more, were playing a new kind of jazz. Just as some of the New Orleans polyphony fans said that the music of the big bands wasn't jazz, so some of the big-band fans — and even musicians — denounced what the beboppers were doing. Benny Goodman particularly disliked it.

Critic and cornetist Dick Sudhalter to this day says it is "nervous" music. For me, as a teenager listening to it, it was exhilarating. And if it was indeed nervous, it was the product of its age, as the sunny and often frenetic jazz of the '20s was of its age.

Time has clarified that bebop was evolutionary, not revolutionary.

In July, 1988, Dizzy said to New York Post columnist Pete Hamil that Louis Armstrong "is just as bright and shining today as she was 20, 30, 50 years ago. Even today, all these years later, we haven't gone too far from what he did first.

"It wasn't just trumpet he influenced. He left his print on everything: piano, trombone, saxophone, vocals. Listen to Billie Holiday, you'll hear Pops in there. Even me, I was a Roy Eldridge man. But Roy came from Louis, so when I play a Roy Eldridge lick, I'm also a part of the family of Louis Armstrong. Everybody is."

On June 13, 1953, Charlie Parker was interviewed by John McLellan in Boston. McLellan asked, "Whom (sic) do you feel were, beside yourself, the important persons who were dissatisfied with music as it was and started to experiment?"

"Let me make a correction," Parker said. "It was not that we were dissatisfied. It was just that another conception came along and this was the way we thought it should go. Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, Kenny Clarke, Charlie Christian, Bud Powell, Don Byas, Ben Webster, myself."

MacLellan said, "Lots of musicians from the swing era are finding it difficult to work because the audiences are violently split between Dixieland and Cool. There seems to be no room for these middle-of-the-road musicians."

"I beg to differ," Parker said. "There is always room for musicians. There is no such thing as the middle of the road. It's either one thing or the other — either good music or otherwise. It doesn't matter which idiom it's in. Call it swing, bebop, or Dixieland. If it's good music, it will be heard."

"I notice," MacLellan said, "that you play *Anthropology* and *52nd Street Theme*, but they were written a long time ago. What is to take their place and be the basis for your future?"

"It's hard to say," Parker said. "A man's ideas change as he grows older. Most people don't realize that most of what they hear come out of a man's horn — they are just experiences. It may be the beauty of the weather. A nice look of a mountain. A nice breath of fresh air. You can never tell what you'll be thinking tomorrow. But I can definitely say that music won't stop. It will continue to go forward."

Parker himself had less than two years of future left. He died March 12, 1955. Louis Armstrong was still going strong, by now a world celebrity, used — cynically, some thought — by his country as its "Ambassador of Good Will."

Armstrong was even a movie star of sorts, appearing in 1956 in *High Society* with Grace Kelly, Frank Sinatra, and Bing Crosby, who'd been one of the voices on *Mississippi Mud*. Crosby and Armstrong had a duet in that picture. They sang *Now You Has Jazz*, Cole Porter's tacky tribute to the music, full of his idea of the argot of the idiom. Armstrong apparently is having fun — "Louis never Tommed," Artie Shaw loyally insists — and Crosby seems unembarrassed by this piece of trash. Art Farmer still could not sit with white customers in a Kansas City nightclub. J.J. Johnson and Kai Winding would feel a draft when they took their memorable group on the road even in the 1960s. In Louisville, Kentucky, I had to bring a black musician friend up the back stairs of my apartment building when we wanted to listen to records.

It would take Autherine Lucy, heartbreak, bloodshed, and Martin Luther King to change that.

In 1958, I was driving from Paris to Stockholm. By the side of a road in Germany I noticed a small arrow sign saying Belsen. Almost involuntarily, I turned in, making my way up a country lane amid fields of spring flowers until I reached the site of the camp. The buildings were gone, but there were huge long mounds of earth with signs in German saying "Here lie 1,000 dead . . . Here lie 3,000 dead." Ann Frank had died on a bunk on those cursed grounds in March of 1945, 11 days after Woody Herman recorded *A Kiss Goodnight*. There was no one there, only me, my emotions absolutely shattered, wandering bleakly in a terrible aloneness and in a chill wind in which, I swear, I seemed to hear moans and cries. No doubt it was just the sound it made passing through the pines. Long afterwards I described the experience to an English Jewish acquaintance, who — sign of our times — happens to be one of the world's leading authorities on terrorism. He too had been to Belsen.

He said, "Did you notice that the birds didn't sing there?" I was amazed. Because in memory, suddenly, I could hear, appallingly, their absolute absence from that scene.

After Guadalcanal and Saipan and the Coral Sea, Leningrad and Stalingrad, Gold Beach and Bastogne, Treblinka and Auschwitz and Belsen, Dresden and Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it was hard to realize that that giddy time called the Roaring Twenties, Fitzgerald's Jazz Age, the Lost Generation, had ever been. Now Pioneer Ten wayfares on into the endless night beyond the solar system. The players of that other jazz in that other time seem like a little group standing in an old-fashioned railway station, hands high in a forever arrested farewell, King Oliver, Nick LaRocca, the young Louis, Jimmy Noone, Johnny and Baby Dodds, Bix and Tram and Don Murray, Venuti and Lang, growing smaller in the distance as we look back from the platform of this train we wish we were not on.

But their music is traveling with us.

Notice

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