Gene Lees
Jazzletter

P.O. Box 240
Ojai, Calif.
93023

December 1988

Vol. 7 No. 12

Resolved: The Music Biz Is Not a Whore

The funniest feud in recent memory is that between MCA Records and *Spin* magazine, published by Bob Guccione Jr., whose father publishes *Penthouse.*

Hugh Hefner once denounced *Penthouse* for being immoral or obscene or in bad taste or all of the above, which was risible in itself. To those old enough to remember *Sunbathing and Health* magazine -- which led a generation of boys to the vague impression that women were as ungendered as the specters in Abner Dean cartoons, the land below the navel having been retouched into a mysterious terra incognita -- Hefner is the man who broke the airbrush barrier and in each issue showed us a little decorous fur, though the airbrush was still used to banish blemishes and endow his vapid lovelies with boobs never seen in nature. But it was Guccione who opened the rose and gave us gatefolds of the vertical smile, educating today's small boys beyond their need to know. So much has mystery been abolished that Seka got a letter from a young boy asking her for an autographed photo with her clothes on. We owe it all to Hugh and Bob Sr., the dauntless duo of porn, the Bobbsey twins of the crotch, the Engels and Marx of lubricity, the Lewis and Clark of libido, the Joliet and Marquette of the jollies, the Stan and Ollie of balling, the Buck and Bubbles of venery, those two mavens of masturbation, always maundering pieties about freedom and stuff.

Guccione the younger was quoted as saying, "The music business is a whore, so remember you've got to treat it like a whore," which seems like a mild enough proposition. We can presume that Bob knows what a whore is, since his father employs Xaviera Hollander to write advice to the kinky in a column that comes before layouts of chicks making out together and after the column of letters *from* the kinky, though a certain sameness of diction and style leads one to suspect that they are all written in house. You can't believe in anything any more.

The younger Guccione's comment aroused the wrath of Larry Solters, Janie Hoffman, and Katie Volk of MCA Records, who said that if he was wondering where his next interview might be, "he won't find it under the rock he continually crawls out from under." You will note that they have little to add to the lexicon of obloquy.

It seems that MCA pulled its ads out of *Spin*. A letter from Solters, Hoffman and Volk to record-biz publicists and marketing executives said, "Nothing in the world of music was ever as bad as *Spin* made it out to be. You might want to think about that before you give them your next ad or place one of your artists at their mercy. We have."

Somewhat later, Solters, MCA senior vice president, got religion and did what newspaper people used to call a rowback. He said, "We never threatened to pull ads because of a story. It's understood that advertising and editorial are totally separate." This devotion to freedom of the press apparently welled up in Solters's breast *after* the letter was sent, because the letter was a clear enough call to others to join him in an attempt to control the press by the venerable method of placing or withholding ads.

Guccione Jr. then denied that he had ever called the music business a whore. What he did say, he insisted, "was that we mustn't let a record company -- like an MCA -- turn *us* into whores by letting them push us to write about their acts and unduly influencing our editorial policy."

I would urge MCA's Solters to learn a little more about his own company by reading the book *Dark Victory: Ronald Reagan, MCA, and the Mob*, a chilling documentation of the sinister machinations that achieved the expansion of MCA. It describes the complicity in that process of Reagan, then head of the Screen Actors Guild, elements of the Mafia, and an attorney named William French Smith with known Mafia associations whom the Cue-Card President later named Attorney General of the United States. (Still later another paragon of probity, Ed Meese, got the gig.) Not that I'm into Mafia bashing. There are any number of accountants, company presidents, and others in the record business *without* "connections" whose skills at theft make Willie Sutton look like an amateur. And he was, too: he got caught; record industry thieves get stock options. "Legitimate" business today is so crooked that the term "organized crime" has become meaningless. It's *all* organized crime.

After the Guccione-MCA dustup, Morris Levy, president of Roulette Records, his comptroller, Howard Fisher, and Dominick Canterino, whom law enforcement officials described as a member of the Genovese organized crime family, were convicted in New Jersey of conspiracy in a record-industry extortion case. *Variety* reported that the case was "described by authorities as an example of organized crime's influence in the . . . recording industry." Meantime, Los Angeles law enforcement authorities were looking into the payment of large sums by MCA to a gentleman with connections for some sort of "consulting" contract.

I have never heard of an instance where a performer audited a major record company and *failed* to turn up some "overlooked" royalties.

Mechanical royalties, for the sale of records, are paid through the Harry Fox agency in New York, which then distributes them to publishers who are supposed to distribute their share of them to composers and lyricists, though it is notorious that publishers too tend to have a talent for the sticky finger. This is tacitly recognized in the promise of publishers to writers, "And we'll give you an honest count." Yeah, and three shares in the Brooklyn Bridge.

A friend of mine was in the office of a notoriously dishonest record company president when an auditor from the Harry Fox office announced, "Your company owes $100,000 in mechanical royalties."

The prez said, "Fuck you. I won't pay you one dime of it. But I will pay you $10,000 personally to make it look right."

Another book that Mr. Solters should read is the late Russell Sanjek's 72-page monograph *From Print to Plastic: Publishing and Promoting America's Popular Music (1900-1980)*, available from the Institute for Studies in American Music, Conservatory of Music, Brooklyn College of the City of New York, Brooklyn NY 11210. In that slim book, Russ, for many years vice president in charge of public relations of BMI and a superb historian of the music business, chronicled the crookedness that has characterized it throughout its history. The recurring payola scandals are the least of it.

(Twenty years or so ago, a promotion man I knew at Columbia Records told me the reason he quit his job was that he was becoming a nervous wreck from carrying cocaine and heroin in his briefcase to the disc jockeys he was assigned to service.)

Russell Sanjek completed his magnum opus just before he died: his three-volume history of the music business, to be published by Oxford University Press. In it he goes even more deeply into the corruption of the music business than in his Brooklyn College monograph.

After a while I lost track of the argument between Bob Guccione Jr. and the indignant ones at MCA. I got sidetracked, hanging breathless on the further adventures of Jessica Hahn, Donna Rice, Fawn Hall, and the chick who did the deed with Jimmy Swaggart, then told all to Guccione Sr.'s journal and announced she was giving up whoring, the fee for her song presumably being somewhere in the range of the one he paid Hahn for her memoirs, enough bread, that is, to render further horizontal employment unnecessary. Meanwhile, Hefner stamped his foot in pique that Hahn had sung not to him but to Guccione and he had *his* house organ, if you'll pardon the term, reveal that she wasn't the hapless victim she pretended to be, she was a *fille de joie*. Or was it the other way around, the Gooch taking shots at the Hef? I forget. Either way, they're a class act.

This exchange of valentines between MCA and Gooch the Younger occurred some months ago, before, that is, the sudden resignation in December of Eugene D. Aquinto, president of MCA's home entertainment division, for involvement with and funneling funds to the Mafia, as revealed by FBI affidavits. Hark, hark! Have I heard any recent protestations of probity from Solters et al at MCA? Or is that a sudden silence on the subject of industry morality that thunders through the night? What say you now, Larry Solters? Where now is your righteous wrath, Janie Hoffman and Katie Volk?

The music business (and particularly the record companies, with a few admirable exception among the independents) is the sleaziest, shabbiest, crookedest "legitimate" industry in the world, but, still, I think it's improper to call it a whore.

That's unfair to whores.

Sam's Songs

Last June Sammy Cahn turned seventy-five. There are not many of the fine lyricists of his era left. *Sheet Music* magazine devoted an issue to him and his work, and asked a great many people in the business to write tributes or commentaries for the occasion. Writing my piece for what amounted to a collective birthday card to Sammy caused me to consider the effect he has had on my own life.

Lyric-writing is unique among the literary crafts, since thousands, even millions of people, memorize your words aided by the mnemonic device of music. Your thoughts become part of their thoughts, as you know if you have ever awakened with a bad song running in your head and tried to erase it in the course of the day. A record industry that denies the extraordinary social power of popular music is simply irresponsible. And the record industry is of course nothing if not irresponsible.

Johnny Mercer seemed to chronicle the life of America in his work, from the Depression through the war and the homecoming and beyond. But in a peculiar way, Sammy Cahn's lyrics seemed to chronicle my life. I am sure countless other people could say the same.

One of the most vivid memories of my adolescence is an image almost like an Andrew Wyeth painting in its clarity of detail, with the first yellow-green leaves barely open on trees and shrubs by a roadside in Woodstock, Ontario. It was fixed forever one early spring day of 1947. I was nearing the end of a gentle two-year affair with the first girl I ever loved. We had met when she was sixteen and I seventeen. Now I was nineteen. A sense of foreboding told me that our story was over. I remembered it long afterwards in lyrics, among them *Someone to Light Up My Life* and *Yesterday I Heard the Rain*.

I had hitch-hiked to Detroit to spend a few days with cousins there, and now was on my way home to St. Catharines, where Kenny Wheeler and I went to high school. (Bernard Slade the playwright also attended that high school. So did Gerard Dennis the jewel thief.) I stood at the bottom of a hollow on the outskirts of Woodstock, by a highway that ran through meadows showing the first soft signs of greenup.

The cars would pass, and I would sing. Same song, over and over again. Sammy Cahn's lyric, *It's the Same Old Dream*. It expressed what I had to say to myself, which is what good songs do for you.

I had no thought of writing lyrics myself at that time. I was then in only the early stages of thinking I wanted to write. I had been trained as a painter, preparing myself to be a commercial artist, though the lure of words was beginning to get to me. But Sam's songs had -- and would continue to have -- a profound effect on me.

He was not the only lyricist who affected me, to be sure. I admired the work of Johnny Mercer, Howard Dietz, Yip Harburg, Cole Porter, Lorenz Hart, and others; I was not yet knowing enough about lyrics to know how good Irving Berlin really was. I can't recall to what extent I was then aware of their names. Years later, when Mercer and I had become friends, we would lament the anonymity of the lyricist, both of us suffering from what I think of as the paranoia of the craft: people usually name the composer of a song, not its lyricist. There is a story singers and lyricists like to tell about the wife of Oscar Hammerstein II. Purportedly she was at a dinner party during which someone said something about Richard Rodgers writing *Some Enchanted Evening*. Mrs. Hammerstein, according to the story, said, "Mr. Rodgers didn't write *Some Enchanted Evening*. Mr. Rodgers wrote "Dum-dee dum-dee dum dum." My husband wrote *Some Enchanted Evening*."

The story may be apocryphal, but it makes the point.

The work of Stephen Foster, Paul Dresser, Irving Berlin, Cole Porter and a handful more being noted as exceptions, good songs are usually created by teams. The songs of Sammy Cahn, I was learning by reading the credit lines under the titles on records, were written mostly with Jule Styne.

All that I was going through in those years seemed to be expressed in his lyrics, although chances are that I would not have known most of them had Frank Sinatra not recorded them. Cahn and Styne during that period were something like Sinatra's court writers. I had every record Sinatra had ever made, the four Bluebird sides and all those red-label Columbias with the charts by Axel Stordahl, who like Sinatra was a Tommy Dorsey alumnus. Sammy was somehow able to remember what it was to be adolescent and in the throes of discovering love, both spiritual and physical, and its pleasures and pains. He was at that time thirty-four, having been born in New York City June 18, 1913. It is amazing how many of the best songwriters of that and the immediately preceding period were born in New York. But then perhaps it isn't. If you were born there, you were at the heart of the action, and a New York nativity gives one a ten-year edge over everybody else in street smarts.

How did he remember those things about youth? Saturday night really is the loneliest night of the week when you're young and yearning. And I really did fall in love too easily. At that age it seemed you were always begging some girl for five minutes more, aspiring to something you would not admit and which Sammy discreetly doesn't mention in the song. And you do, oh so desperately, want someone to teach you tonight.

That lyric, by the way, has a sparkle that has gone too long unpraised. What a schoolroom image: I'll use that star to write "I love you" a thousand times across the sky. One of the sexiest little songs ever written, too.

You're My Girl no doubt sends Gloria Steinem and Betty Friedan straight up the wall, but that's the way it was, in those years of my first affair. This is my first affair, so please be kind. Handle my heart with care, oh please be kind. And that first winter we would sit indoors when her parents had gone to a movie or wherever, and listen to Sinatra singing Sam's songs, and we'd let it snow. And I would think about the charm of her, and wonder if she really was what made the sunset. We taught each other. Time after time. And day by day.

The boatrides we would take, the moonlight on the lake, were indeed among *The Things We Did Last Summer*, back when the big white excursion steamers plied the Great Lakes and you could get lost for hours in the shimmering night and all its illusions for a dollar or so. Then it was clear that there would be no more boatrides, not with her anyway, and Sam had a song for that too, with music by the late Axel Stordahl and my one-day friend Paul Weston. I should care -- and I do.

That's another thing that I did not foresee: that I would ever know any of these people. They were distant phantoms in a land called Hollywood.

I grew up and got married, and was convinced that everything would work if you loved each other all the way. Maybe that was the problem: maybe we didn't love each other all the way. Whatever the reason, the marriage ended in Chicago, which really was and remains my kind of town.

Then came some years in New York, when I knew how the lady in the harbor feels, and I hung a few more tears out to dry. I was still falling in love too easily, and tried it if not for the second time around, the third or fourth. Or was it the ninth? I got tired of strong ladies always convinced they knew better than I what I should do. As Sam put it, I like to lead when I dance. Maybe Sam was right again, love is the tender trap. And love *was* a bore. Or maybe I had just lost that naivete, the infinite capacity for expectation, that leads one to look for someone who can solve it all for you. Yet I missed that naivete, the open-minded (and possibly simple-minded) eagerness that had got me into a lot of trouble. Sammy said that for me, too: there must be a place where love has gone.

The French writer Boris Vian said in a television interview that he was prouder of his lyrics (and he wrote some superb ones) than he was of his novels. For it is an exacting craft indeed. One learns from the examples of others. I learned from every lyricist whose work I admired and memorized. I assuredly learned from Sammy. I cannot estimate how many of his lyrics I know and can still sing. But I sang a lot of them, some in the blue smoke of nightclubs and one in chill clear air by a roadside in Canada in early spring.

I ran into Sammy at a luncheon a few months ago. I shook hands with him and said, "Sam, the older you get, the more you look like Stravinsky."

"I *know*," he said.

Long life, Sam.

And thanks for being with me by the roadside that long-ago day. I needed you that day, and you were there.

The New Life of Bud Shank

No doubt every biography of an artist, from Rembrandt to Gaugin, from Beethoven to Miles Davis, has tried to relate the subject's character to his art. The connection is implicit in the term "self-expression." It is assumed that the subtlest choice of colors or tones is an expression of the inner self, that everything the artist does reveals him as surely as his handwriting. In general this is true.

The expression of personality is far more obvious in jazz players than it is in "classical" musicians, although they too are capable of the imposition of self on a traditional repertoire. It has been said that Toscanini conducted Beethoven as if it were Verdi. And Glenn Gould so infused his work with his own character that he drove people to polar extremes of adulation and fury. There are those who loathed Glenn's approach to Mozart and Beethoven. I found it all interesting, because Glenn was distinctly odd and offered fresh views of everything he did, whether it was "correct" or not.

Jazz playing, however, is a creative art, as opposed to an interpretive art, and therefore acute individuality is not only tolerated, it is expected. To be sure, this freedom is compromised by those who would politicize the art and insist that this approach or that is the truth faith -- what Paul Desmond called McCarthyism in jazz. It would make for a tidy equation if we could say that this folly is restricted to critics, but some of the musicians have been equally culpable. In general, however, musicians and critics alike have looked on jazz as,

and to it for, individual expression. If you're familiar with his playing, you can identify Benny Carter in about one bar. Nobody in the world phrases like him, no one inflects notes the way he does, no one has that urbane, gentle, aristocratic tone.

But there are mysteries in jazz. One of them is Bud Shank. In general, jazz musicians find their styles early and, while their art may evolve within that style, stay with them. There are exceptions. The evolution in his fifties of the Montreal pianist Oliver Jones has been startling. And Dizzy Gillespie's tone changed radically when he altered his embouchure a few years ago. There is early Gillespie and recent Gillespie, and they are different. And although he does not, by his own statement, have the physical stamina, the capacity to burn at full throttle for hours on end, that he once had, his powers of invention and his fattened, burnished tone keep him one of the soaringly inventive, one of the half dozen most creative artists, jazz ever produced.

No jazz musician's work has changed as conspicuously as that of Bud Shank. It was reasonable to speculate that the change occurred because he gave up life working in the recording studios of Los Angeles, moved to the state of Washington, and went on the road again to play jazz, and only jazz. But that is only part of the explanation, and the change in Bud's playing is one of the most interesting examples of the relationship of personality to art that I have come across.

Bud was for many years a fixture of West Coast jazz -- a somewhat imprecise term used with condescension if not contempt by those East Coast critics and musicians who believe that the purpose of art, jazz in particular, is political polemic. As such, Bud became a focus of hostility, the handsome and successful white studio player with his swimming pool, sports cars, and sail boats. His playing was pretty and lyrical but, according to the eastern orthodoxy, it lacked balls.

The trappings of success, however, concealed a tortured spirit.

There was indeed a softness about his playing in the old days, a tentative quality. But no one -- at least no one with open ears -- would today characterize Shank's playing as tentative. On the contrary, it has a kind of ferocity about it now, and you hear tales told with a chuckle about musicians going into concerts or recording sessions expecting to dominate him and coming out of them with their asses kicked.

This change has manifested itself in his saxophone playing, not in his flute work. It is not yet generally known that a man who was considered one of the premier flutists in jazz has given the instrument up entirely. Nor is it known that Shank's standards for the instrument were so high that he despised his own playing. He hasn't played the instrument at all in several years. Just as John Heard has put down his bass to devote himself entirely to his painting, Bud has put aside the flute forever to concentrate on the saxophone, and only one of the saxophones at that. He no longer plays baritone. He plays only alto. And he is opposed to doubling.

Bud and his petite blonde wife Lynn stopped off to spend a couple of days with my wife and me in Ojai as he traveled down the coast to a gig in La Jolla, California. I have known Bud about thirty years, but never as well as I do now after those days of conversation. Indeed, now I wonder how well I -- or any of us, really -- ever knew him at all.

One of the first things we discussed was his abandonment of the flute. Bud said,

"Giving up the flute came after a great deal of thought, when I decided to make a break for it out of the studios. It was a long drawn-out decision. I had really concentrated on the flute, and I really practiced. I used to go over on my boat to Catalina Island for two weeks at a time just to practice the flute. I was really getting more and more into the classical thing and learning how to play it, realizing that the reason I was bugged with my jazz on the flute was because I really couldn't play the damn instrument.

"I knew I could not play the flute as well as I play the saxophone, so it was a matter of finding out how I'd feel really learning the instrument. I spent a couple of years doing a really concentrated thing. I did some recitals. Bill Mays wrote a suite for me for flute and piano, we made an album in 198

"All the stuff I did with the Los Angeles Four was mainly based around the flute instead of the saxophone. Finally I reached the point around 1984 or 1985 when I said, 'This is not what I want to do. I want to be a saxophone player and I always wanted to be a saxophone player.' I was not getting very far either. Even though I was becoming better and better and better on the flute, it was still, as far as playing jazz music is concerned, not making any sense to me. It was still not what I could do on the saxophone.

"So I took a long look at my life and what I had to do. I was in the position that I could say I'm here because I want to be and I'm doing what I want to do. And as long as I'm doing what I want to do, lets find out what I *really* want to do. And what I really wanted to do was to be a saxophone player. I look through my life back to the very beginning and that's all I ever really wanted to be, a good saxophone player. So I saw that the problem with the saxophone was really the flute, because the flute was taking all the practice time."

I asked Bud if there was a problem of embouchure, or was he talking about something much deeper -- the very conception of playing. He said, "Flute will not bother the saxopho playing, but a lot of saxophone playing can bother the flute, at least until you get to the point where you are so strong that nothing is going to bother you. And that's just a master of practice time and that's what I was doing. I could play saxophone all night and still pick up the flute and play one of those little classical things. I had gotten myself to that point. But the satisfaction wasn't there. It was called, So what? The satisfaction I'm getting now from my saxophone playing is total and complete. But I was trying to be two persons.

"I am a Gemini and I'm double enough things as it is, but I could not master two instruments. It's physically impossible. Nobody's done it yet. I was trying to and didn't make it, and I think I was adding to the insult to flute playing. Most other people who are trying to play both are also insulting the instrument.

"I don't know what it's going to take to produce jazz on the flute at the level I want to hear it. Maybe there is some kid out there somewhere who has dedicated his life to the flute and done nothing but play the flute. That's what it's going to take to make the breakthrough and make it make sense. Hubert Laws is getting closer. But Hubert spent a lot of time playing the saxophone too. Finally he threw away the saxophone, as I've thrown away the flute, and concentrated on

flute. Hubert is close to doing it. Dave Valentine is close, but the guy to me who is the closest is Steve Kujala. He worked with Chick Corea. He stays around L.A. and does some studio work, but he is a bitch on the flute and I see more promise in him than anybody. He grew up more in the fusion world than the straight-ahead jazz world. There's nothing wrong with that, but it's going to take someone like that, maybe another generation.

"Doublers ain't going to make it. There isn't enough time. You can be a master of the doublers but you're not going to be a master of anything else. That also goes for the writer-players, or arranger-players. Dave Grusin has gone on playing, but I'm sure Grusin doesn't think of himself as a master pianist. He is a great piano player but he is not a master. But he sure is a master writer. Even now I don't know of anybody who is a great writer and a great player. People try, we all try, I tried, but I had to go back at the age of fifty-eight and practice the saxophone again like a teenager. Actually I've enjoyed it -- as much as you can enjoy practicing."

Art Farmer's experience, I said, seemed to verify Bud's position. Art got from the fluegelhorn the sound he wanted, and after years of playing two instruments, he finally gave up the trumpet, at least for public performance. I named several other musicians who doubled instruments, or indeed, played more than two of them -- Jack Zaza in Toronto, who plays studio sessions on seemingly any instrument whatever, and Don Thompson, who records on bass, piano, and vibes.

Bud said:

"Look at Bobby Enevoldsen. He was a clarinetist with the Salt Lake Symphony, but he's most known as a valve trombone player. And back in the '50s most of his jobs were playing bass. With his talents, he should have been one of the heavy-weights in this art form. But it's because of that thing where people say, 'He's a great bass player . . . No, no he's a great trombone player.' You get into that thing with the categories, people don't know what to do with you, they can't handle it. People who are your market, your audience, can't handle all that. This new kid from Australia, James Morrison, trombone player and a trumpet player, he's something else on both those instruments. The one that kept up playing and writing most of all is Roger Kellaway, but he plays now all the time. He didn't when he was in Hollywood."

The next question was about Bud's years of studio work. He was one of the most successful players in Hollywood. He said,

"I didn't stop playing. I was just not able to improvise all the time, there wasn't any place to do it. My ears had deteriorated, what I could hear. After just doing studio work. I have pretty good pitch and I'm able to hear things, but from not using them all those years, my ears started to deteriorate. Now that I'm playing all the time, they are better than they ever were. Even though they are supposed to deteriorate with age, mine haven't.

"I was not playing much jazz for ten years, not improvising, just playing in the studios. Who cares in the studio as long as you're in tune? Not using your hearing from an improvisational standpoint, that's what all the guys face coming out of the studios, the loss of their ears. This has never happened before where jazz musicians were forced to -- or chose to -- go into another form of the business, and then come back out as jazz musicians past the age of fifty, fifty-five. This is a unique situation in history. All of a sudden there's a chance to be a jazz musician again, there's a market out there, and a chance to record. You're not going to make as much money as you did in the studios. But I got out of the jazz world and into the studios not because I wanted to but because there was no place to play. And I came back to jazz music because things have turned around the other way.

"There was nowhere to work in the early '60s. Some guys went to Europe, some guys went off into never-never land with some form of chemical assistance and avoided facing reality. In my case, I ended up doing studio work because that was what was going to pay the rent. But as soon as I saw a spark out there, I left. Same thing with Ray Brown.

"We saw that spark in 1975 when we put that L.A. Four group together. We did it very cautiously, we even had a very cautious sound. We were one classical musician, Laurindo Almeida, and three jazz musicians, myself, Ray, and Shelly Manne. Theoretically that can't work. To a certain extent we made it work, and it is amazing that we were able to keep it together as long as we did. We had to do a lot of give and take so we would not get too hot for the audience. The instrumentation made the drummer really lay back. A drummer could have pushed a flute and guitar almost into silence. So that automatically gave the group a light sound.

"We broke up the L.A. Four in 1984. My wife Lynn and I already had our house up north in 1980. That's the time I stopped doing studio work, weaning myself away from it in the middle '70s. I would maybe fly down to Los Angeles to do a movie call or something. It happened so gradually I can't put a time on it except when I made the decision in 1983 that I did not want to participate in the L.A. Four any more. That's when I decided that I really wanted to be a jazz musician. The L.A. Four group was almost like being in the studios.

"I got my first clarinet when I was ten and my first saxophone when I was twelve and I knew I was going to be a professional musician some way or another. My love was the sax, even though clarinet was my major instrument up through college. That stopped as soon as I left after three years. The clarinet never came out of the case again unless someone made me take it out.

"The most important band for me was at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, where I was a student, Johnny Satterfield's band. I started playing with that band in high school. It was a marvelous band, those guys are the ones that really made a musician out of me. Then I went to L.A. and was struggling around, doing the usual parking cars and cleaning houses and all that.

"I got a job with Charlie Barnet in the end of 1946. That was the first big-time band I went with. I was with Barnet in '47, '48, then went back to L.A. in '49. I stayed in L.A., worked with a small band Alvino Rey had.

"That's when I met all the guys from Kenton's band. They were in L.A. also. When Stan put that Innovations in Modern Music band together, they recommended me for the job, and I had my only audition of my whole life. I got the job! Stan needed a saxophone player who could play the flute. I had just started with the instrument so I had to bullshit my way through it. I guess I got the gig cause he couldn't *find* anyone else. I had and still have a lot of respect for Stan. He really encouraged the guys in the band to do whatever their thing

was. I was hired to be lead alto player, not to be a soloist. That was Art Pepper's job. Whatever your position in that band, Stan encouraged you to do your thing.

"But that band was too clumsy to swing -- because of the instrumentation and the voicings. On the other hand the sounds that came out of it were really big noises, really impressive. That's what that band was all about, making these really big noises. As far as swinging, it never did swing. Maybe it wasn't supposed to, I don't know. There sure were some players in it who swung.

"The *Contemporary Concepts* album, with those Bill Holman arrangements -- that's one of the best big-band albums I've ever heard, I really enjoy listening to that album. That's probably as good as Stan ever got. I feel bad that I was not around then, I was long gone from the band by the time that album was made. That was some marvelous writing and some pretty good playing.

"I left Stan," Bud said, "because I got drafted. He kept me out of the Army for two years. I had been 4F since I was eighteen because of my eye problem. When I became twenty-four and the Korean war was under way, they decided they were going to take me anyway. Stan's office kept me out up until January of 1953. Then I got drafted into the Marines, of all things, and they said, 'We don't want you in here, we don't want any one-eyed people in the Marine Corps. Get the hell out of here.'"

I was slightly startled by this bit of information, so casually communicated. I wasn't sure I'd heard Bud correctly. What was this about one-eyed?

"They discharged me," Bud continued. "I went home and turned twenty-five and then nobody could touch me any more.

"My military career! Six weeks, it took them six weeks to straighten it out. Which is ironic because my father is career Army and my brother went straight out of college into the Navy and here's old Bud being a saxophone player who did not want no part of none of that shit.

"So, that's how I got out of Stan Kenton's band, went to L.A., went back with Charlie Barnet for a couple of months and then I wanted to stay around L.A. for a while, and I started working with an R&B band that played jitterbug contests. That was one of the best things that happened to me. I always wanted to be a soloist and with Stan's band I never got the chance. I was the first alto player, so getting to be a soloist never happened, I was held back. By now I was twenty-six years old. I got this job with this jitterbug band playing tenor. We worked five nights a week around town. Every night there was a different jitterbug contest around. George Redman was the name of the band. Maynard Ferguson and Bill Perkins and a lot of other people played in that band. I started bringing in my friends, but the rhythm section always stayed the same, it was always horrible. I just went on honking, and it got rid of some of my inhibitions.

"Then an opening came up at the Lighthouse with Howard Rumsey's Lighthouse All-Stars. I started with them in '53, and I left in January of 1956 to form my own band, recording for Dick Bock and World Pacific. Laurindo Almeida and I made that first Brazilian album in 1953. I keep hearing that story that we started bossa nova with that album. That's bullshit.

"If bossa nova is a combination of Brazilian folk melodies and jazz music, then maybe. But there are a lot more elements involved than that. The rhythmic parts of what we were doing on that first album had hardly any relation to the samba. A couple of the tunes were baions that were somewhat related but the melodies were most certainly melodies that Laurindo remembered and brought up from Brazil with him. Maybe that album might possibly have helped in the evolution of bossa nova, but I'm not even sure about that. Those guys were quite capable of evolving what they did without the help of Laurindo or anything else. Those early albums were good and there were some valid things that came out of them. But we most certainly did not invent bossa nova, by any strange twist of the definition.

"I worked with my own quartet starting in 1956, with Claude Williamson, Don Prell, and Chuck Flores. Did a lot of tours around the U.S. and Europe, back and forth, back and for Then in '60 I started to stay in Los Angeles more. By this time Gary Peacock was working with me a lot.

"I formed another group in 1961 with Gary Peacock, Dennis Budimir, and various drummers, an endless flow of drummers. We worked at a club out in Malibu called Drift Inn for a few years. Then it sort of petered out and then the studio years began."

Bud and I were far into our conversations when suddenly, unexpectedly, the explanation of his life came out. If you remember what Bud looked like in his twenties, when he came out of the Kenton band, you have an image of a tall, notably handsome young man who seemed to have it all. He didn't see it that way. Born Clifford Everett Shank, Jr., May 27, 1926, in Dayton, Ohio, he had grown up convinced of his own ugliness.

"When you said you wanted to write this," he said, "I thought, 'What the hell does he want to write about me for? Hell, I've never done anything. I'm middle class, midwest, middle everything.' I'm finding out what I sound like and who I am, and what I am, and I like what I'm finding in here. that I'm satisfied with it, but I'm liking what I find inside me. Down inside there all those years of practicing in the woodshed to find the facility to get it out at last.

"You see, I was born cross-eyed. And I lived with that all my life. When that isn't corrected, the brain compensates. It will not accept two visual signals that it cannot co-ordinate. It shuts one of them off. The weaker eye goes blind. I went blind in one eye early in my life.

"I was cross-eyed till 1976, when I was fifty. I'm sixty-two now. I went to an ophthalmologist because I had developed glaucoma. If you catch glaucoma early, it can be treated with drugs. But while I was seeing this man about that problem, he said, 'You know, I can straighten that eye by surgery. It's not going to help your vision, you still won't be able to see out of it. But it will stay straight.' I didn't know what to do about it.

"I went off to Catalina for a couple of weeks and thought about it, because it would be such a change, and there would be surgery. I came back and said, 'Okay, lets straighten it.'"

I said, "You know, Bud, all these years I've known you, I had no idea you were cross-eyed."

"No, you sure didn't, because I had ways of concealing it, and that was part of my problem.

"We went ahead and did the surgery, and it changed me all around. I had confidence I didn't know I could ever acquire that came from down inside me somewhere. All of a sudden I could look at people and talk to people where before I was always looking with my head down.

"And I played like that, I had always played as if I was walking around with my head down.

"I hope I'm still a lyrical player but I hope I'm playing with a lot of confidence and with a lot of strength and conviction. All those things I didn't have before. I was following other people, and following what they expected of me. And now I don't give a shit. If you don't like what I do, that's tough, 'cause I feel like I'm doing it right and doing it good.

"It didn't happen overnight. It has come about over the last ten years. It really changed my life around. I gave me the courage to get to where I am now, to get rid of the flute and get to this plateau of my playing. I was always a follower, following somebody else around, following what the West Coast sound was all about, you know, like a little sheep.

"This thing of being myself didn't happen till I was nearly sixty years old. There has never been a real me, and now there is a real me. I think I was always a good player in spite of the inhibition. But it was never a zap! I'll go this way. I was waiting for somebody else to go and then okay I'll go this way too. I don't feel this way at all any more.

"I'm involved with just being a jazz musician and improviser, and creative in my own way. The funny part is that I'm having more depressing moments than ever before. I didn't realize it until I read that article you did in the *Jazzletter* about Emily Remler, and you were talking about depression as a part of the creative process, and all of a sudden I realized I was having some really down periods. I could talk my way out of them but I was having them, and this was something I did not have when I was a studio sausage, with no ups and downs. I started to get bugged at these things happening.

"When you're a studio musician, they don't want you to be individual. That's how I got into sailboat racing. I didn't care about that music, just play it and take the money, and racing was my creative release.

"But since I stopped being a studio sausage, I care about what I'm playing and sometimes I'm up about it and sometimes I'm not."

Bud and I talked about the exodus of great musicians from Los Angeles, especially those who were involved in studio work, either as composers or players. With the rise of the synthesizers and one-keyboard film music, such as the dreadful moaning that passes for music in Oliver Stone's *Wall Street*, a great many brilliant musicians have paused to re-examine their lives. J.J. Johnson, Roger Kellaway, and Benny Golson, have all given up writing music for films and television. Or else they were ignored as yuppie producers raised on rock went after swoosh-moan-and-ululate. Whichever the reason, they went back to playing, and all three are playing better than ever before in their lives, because they have applied all the years of experience in composition to improvising, and have rebuilt their chops. J.J. had doubts as he built up his chops for a return to playing, but they were groundless, and his playing has passed beyond brilliance now into grandeur. His playing now is awesome. Golson too had doubts, and he said it took two years for him to rebuild his saxophone chops. The labor was worth it: he too has exceeded himself, as has Kellaway.

Ray Brown has checked out of the studios, as has his long-time crony and partner guitarist Herb Ellis. Many of these people have left Los Angeles. Ellis now lives in Arkansas, Kellaway in New York. J.J. Johnson moved back to his home town, Indianapolis. Meantime, there is a growing jazz community in the Pacific Northwest. Dave Frishberg and Bill Hood now live in Portland, Oregon. And Bud Shank lives in the little fishing town of Port Townsend, Washington, with the Strait of Juan de Fuca before him and the great jagged blue wall of the Olympic Mountains at his back.

"We discovered Port Townsend," Bud said, "when I went to play in Seattle in a club called Parnell's and the piano player was a guy named Barney McClure. Barney told me about this little town he lived in, which was Port Townsend, and it fascinated me the way he described it. Lynn and I had been looking for an alternative place to live since 1975 and had been spending some time in Maui, in fact we had a condo there. Not a place to live permanently, just an alternative to L.A. Then that too got crowded and we looked for somewhere else.

"Two years later I went back to Seattle and learned that Barney McClure had been elected mayor of Port Townsend. Bebop piano player becomes mayor, right? In 1979 Barney was involved with a very small jazz festival and a one-day workshop they were having. He invited the L.A. Four to play there. I fell in love with it. Came home and told Lynn, Barney invited us back next year and Lynn came with me and we bought a house there in 1980.

"Barney's story was he had come up from L.A. with a bass player and drummer in the car, hippies, Barney with a beard and an ear-ring. They got to Olympia and went the wrong way and ended up in Port Townsend. Barney decided to stay there.

"Port Townsend at that time had been abandoned by the regulars and had been taken over by the hippies. A lot of kids from Berkeley had come up and found paradise and beautiful old empty houses. Meanwhile the establishment had rediscovered Port Townsend and the hippies were out on the street again. There was terrible conflict and Barney ran for mayor and won. He opened a music store and became very successful. The ex-Berkeley kids opened all the restaurants and art galleries, and the Establishment from Seattle came in and restored the old homes.

"Barney became more and more involved with politics and the Democratic party started grooming him for the governorship. And all this time he is playing piano every night -- and he's a damn good piano player. He decided not to run for governor but he's a lobbyist for the Department of Revenue in Olympia. He was a member of the state legislature. Eventually we may have our first bebop heavy-weight politician. I think he has a very bright future in politics and he really is a great pianist.

"I sort of inherited this little festival in Port Townsend, run by something called the Centrum Foundation, funded by state, federal, and private donations. The foundation also does a chamber music week. There's a week for writers, and a week for poets, and a week for the Seattle Symphony workshop, a folk music week, a bluegrass week, and a jazz workshop and festival.

"When I took it over about five years ago, it ran for two days, concentrated on Saturday. They would invite whoever was the heavy on the program to come and do a clinic, so the festival was one day and the workshop one day. We expanded it to a six-day workshop and the festival now overlaps and runs three days. When I took it over we had thirty students. This last year we had 135 with an age span from fifteen to sixty-five.

"The bulk of students are high school and college level. I have a nucleus faculty of Bobby Shew, George Cables, Jeff Hamilton, John Clayton, and three pros who are in education and they are marvelous, I couldn't do it without them. One is Dave Barduhn, who worked with the Stan Kenton band and he's now at Mount Hood College. Another one is Dave Goedecke, head of the music department at the University of Washington. And there's Roy Cummings, also from the university. Those are my three pros, and we expand on that. I've always used a resident group. Last year we used the Ray Brown-Milt Jackson quartet. One year we had Phil Woods' quartet, the whole group, and the year before Mel Lewis brought a quintet that we expanded to a big band.

"This past July I used my quartet as a resident group and I brought in Lee Konitz to teach the alto players, and Pete Christlieb came up from Los Angeles to do the tenors. Barney Kessel was the guitarist. Mark Murphy did his third year for the vocalists. Jiggs Wigham is now doing the trombones, John Clayton does the arranging along with the bass players. So it's quite a faculty.

"I hope Christlieb will come back and remain a regular member of the faculty. We had forty saxophone players last year. That's a handful for one guy. This last year we put together a big band, which was John Clayton's, in which we used all the faculty members and brought in some pros from Seattle to fill it up. We have six clubs that we take over in Port Townsend and we have the pros appear with rhythm sections in the clubs on Friday and Saturday night. Then we have the big 1,200-seat facility for the main event at Fort Worden. We added Red Rodney, Ray Brown's trio, with Ray, Gene Harris, and Jeff Hamilton. To that we added Joe Williams, and this year we had a gospel group, with a jazz-rock rhythm section. We ended it on Sunday afternoon with that.

"I will never do this other than in my own little home town. To give back something to the community. There is satisfaction working with those kids. We've had a couple of marvelous young players. One I know is going to be dynamite, his name is Pat Loomis, a young alto player. He started at Berkeley last fall on a full scholarship. I'm very proud of him, he is going to go far. We have several that are going to go far.

"What I like about the Pacific Northwest," Bud said, "is the weather, the freshness of it all. It's a very inspiring place to live. There are a lot of artists and arts minded-people -- arts-conscious versus money-conscious."

I asked Bud where he'd met Lynn. He said,

"I think my first wife introduced us in L.A. in the mid-'50s. Strangely enough it was through my other hobby, which is sports cars, racing Formula One cars. I used to go to sports car races and Lynn's first husband was a sports-car driver and that's where our paths crossed. My first wife went off into a film career. We got divorced, and Lynn and I got married in 1957 and we've been at it ever since. We don't have any children, by either marriage. Not by choice, it just happened that way."

I suggested to Bud that a new situation has arisen in jazz, the return to the art of its old masters, men such as J.J. Johnson, Ray Brown, Herb Ellis -- and Bud Shank. There is always much talk about the new young talents. What about the return of the old masters? It is bound to have an effect. Bud said,

"There are more opportunities in jazz now than ever before, certainly more than in the '60s. The clubs come and the clubs go, but the records are selling fairly well right now and there are a lot more small record companies out there, there are more opportunities. At least there are for me. There are a lot of festivals, but I don't do a lot of them. Most of the festival operators still think I'm a studio sausage, but I'm working on that. It's just a fact that there are places to play and there weren't for so long.

"I see a lot of younger audiences and that's really healthy, and I'm not talking about college tours. When you book into clubs, I'm really amazed at the younger audiences. I'm pleased and I think it's really healthy. There is a great number of jazz camps around in the summer. There may be a hundred students at each one and maybe one of those will become a star. What you have left is ninety-nine jazz fans out of each camp, and not all of them will become great players but they will have an appreciation of jazz and they will go their way and have careers and get married and then you'll have two people with an appreciation of jazz, and on it goes. I think this is the only way to perpetuate this thing."

Bud Shank remains very handsome at sixty-two, but the prettiness is gone. He now has a beard which, like his thick head of straight hair, is gray. He is full of maturity and good sense and he looks a little like a mountain man.

At the end of the two days, he and Lynn got into their car to leave. We were sorry to see them go. We waved goodbye to them from the driveway.

I'll never view him the same way again. I'd been hearing him differently for some time, and now I knew why.

Year's End

With this issue, the *Jazzletter* comes to the end of its seventh year. I am, again, infinitely grateful to the people who made it possible, its readers. I am particularly aware of those who have been with it since its first days, which suddenly seem like a long time ago.

More than half the readers have already resubscribed for 1989. If you have not done so, and intend to, I'd appreciate it if you'd do it now, obviating the work of sending individual reminders. We're holding the price at $40 U.S. a year for the United States and Canada, $50 for overseas, with gift subscriptions to these areas $30 and $40 respectively. As in the past, anyone undergoing financial hardship can have it free.

When the *Jazzletter* has run late, the most frequent cause has been typsetting errors. This is the first issue to be produced entirely in house on a Mitsuba computer and an Okidata laser printer. It should seriously reduce the problem.