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Letters

All the others write about music and musicians as if they are watching fish in an aquarium. You, my friend, are always in there swimming with the rest of us. With utmost admiration,
-- Johnny Mandel, Malibu, California

How long has it been? I remember seeing you at Jim and Andy's in the 1960s. Unshaven, hung over. Me too. I've been here in Louisville since 1968, although I have worked a fair amount in New York, Europe, and other places.

I came down here to cure my drinking problem but it took a long time -- till 1980. Except for a couple of slips, I have been dry since then. But now I have another problem. I'm going deaf. I have been completely deaf in my left ear for fifteen or twenty years. In the last eight to ten years it has gone to my right ear. It fluctuates. Sometimes I hear normally, at other times barely at all. I also lose my pitch discrimination. Makes it difficult to play. I can play O.K. and no one can tell, but it isn't much fun. I cannot follow someone's changes or pick up a new piece by ear.

I had a very long good spell a while back, so I was able to go to New York and make a record for the Dutch company Criss Cross Jazz. I used George Mraz and Louis Nash. I think it is a good record. It is supposed to come out some time this spring.

I read your book *Meet Me at Jim and Andy's*. I really enjoyed it. Especially the chapter on Artie Shaw. I was young and shy when I worked for him. I was afraid because of the stories about how tough he was to work for. It wasn't true, at least not in 1949. He was a gentleman at all times. If you played well, he let you alone. He gave me extra solos because there were not too many in the book. I was a poor sight reader back then but he never said anything.

He was nothing like Benny Goodman, who was really a bastard. I would never work for him. I turned down the Russian tour, and also a South American tour, because I didn't want to get trapped on the road and be at his mercy.

I have been reading the *Jazzletter*. It's the best jazz magazine around, by far.

Since I'm deaf so much of the time and can't listen to music, I do more reading and writing (music). I also have just started trying to write a couple of prose pieces. I wanted to see if you thought I show any promise. It's difficult and slow work for me. If you think they are any good, you are welcome to publish them. But I don't mind a rejection. All writers get them, even good ones.

Let me hear from you if you have time to write.
-- Jimmy Raney, Louisville, Kentucky

Old Friend

Roger Kellaway, whose solos are notable for compositional logic and continuity, has told me he got this from Bob Brookmeyer, with whom he worked often in his early days. Recently I mentioned this to Bob, who said:

"Jim Hall and I were talking about this. We got it from Jimmy Raney. A five-minute Jimmy Raney solo was a five-minute Jimmy Raney solo."

This structural integrity makes Raney one of the most distinguished musicians, regardless of instrument, in jazz history, and he is one of the great unsung influences. Jimmy was and obviously still is totally self-effacing, virtually devoid -- almost tragically so -- of ego.

He was born in Louisville, Kentucky, on August 20, 1927. His mother played guitar. Once, when I asked Jimmy why so many fine jazz guitarists were from the south, he said he supposed it was because the instrument was an integral part of the culture. Later I realized this was equally true of Brazil. Jimmy played an old pre-war Gibson which, he said, "I bought from a hill-billy." When I lived in Louisville, the term "hill-billy" was in common use. Hillbilly music became country-and-western, I suppose, in that period of terminological revisionism when janitors became caretakers and then custodians. The guitar eventually developed a crack in the back, but Jimmy didn't bother to fix it and still played it.

Jimmy studied with a guitarist named Hayden Causey, who was with the Jerry Wald band. Jimmy replaced him with Wald. Louisville is -- at least insofar as jazz is concerned -- in the Chicago orbit, and Jimmy settled for a while in Chicago, where he worked with Lou Levy. In 1948 he joined the Woody Herman band and began a recording association with Stan Getz which lasted, on and off, for some years. He worked for Artie Shaw in 1949 and '50, the same period in which Johnny Mandel was writing for the band. Johnny remembers that Jimmy was dubbed "the Stan Laurel of jazz" because of his long face, quiet mien, and dry sense of humor.

Jimmy joined the Stan Getz Quintet and made some famous Storyville albums (remember the ten-inch LP?) between 1951 and '53. He also recorded with Bob Brookmeyer. From 1955 to 1960 he worked with pianist Jimmy Lyon at the Blue Angel in New York. It was there, and at that time, that I first met him. I can pinpoint the year fairly exactly, for a reason I'll get to in a moment: it had to be 1957.

I was at that time classical music and drama critic, and entertainment editor as well, of the Louisville *Times*, whose sister paper on the morning side was the *Courier-Journal*. The *Courier* had its own rotogravure section.

Louisville has not been wanton in its production of jazz musicians, though Lionel Hampton, Jonah Jones, Bobby Jones, and Helen Hume were born there. The most distinguished -- at a purely musical level -- jazzman the city sired was Jimmy. He had become a sort of legend even when I moved there, being the first guitarist with the technique and harmonic sophistication to assimilate bebop. As J.J. Johnson was the first to adapt bop to the trombone, Jimmy was the first to do it on the guitar, although he was not strictly a total bopper: the long lyricism and linear sensibility reflected his respect for Lester Young. Prez, of course, was himself a precursor of bop. Jimmy was not a spectacular or show-boating player: you had to listen closely (and, if you had the chance, watch his

hands) to perceive his technical mastery. The echo of his presence was all through the Louisville jazz community when I joined the paper in 1955.

The paper sent me to New York on some story or another. And I made it my business to drop by the Blue Angel and hear him. After listening for a set, and watching that left hand of his, which seemed to have a separate identity and intelligence, I introduced myself and told him I was up from Louisville. He invited me home with him the next day. At his apartment in Queens, I met his wife Lee. They had a baby, a little fellow named Doug, who had just learned to stand, with support, though not yet to walk. I photographed the family, went back to Louisville, and somehow talked the *Courier-Journal* roto section into letting me do a story about Jimmy. What significance a modernist jazz guitarist could have had to its general readership I have no idea. They ran my color photo of Jimmy on the cover.

Shortly after becoming editor of *Down Beat* in early 1959, I went to New York on business. One of the first persons I sought out was Jimmy. I met him at Junior's or Charlie's bar. Bob Brookmeyer turned up that night: he had just driven nonstop from his home town, Kansas City, in a Morris Minor. We ended up in Bob's Greenwich Village apartment, talking till dawn. I was very uncertain of myself, being thrust suddenly among the famous and suddenly having, indeed, a marked discretionary power over their lives and careers, a power I did not really want. And anyway, I was as shy as Jimmy was. He and Bob put me at ease that night. I mentioned this to Brookmeyer a few months ago, and he chuckled: "Well, there you were. The least we could do was make you comfortable."

I moved to New York in the summer of 1962, becoming -- like Bob and Jimmy -- an habitue of Jim and Andy's, an establishment whose memory still haunts us all, even though so many of us (Bob, Jimmy, and Roger Kellaway among them) have quit drinking.

I lost contact with Jimmy. He and Lee were divorced because of his drinking. The saddest thing was that I sensed in conversations with her in the last year or two that she still harbored a great love for him.

Jimmy would be hard not to love. He was an extraordinary but completely self-abnegating musical scholar. Jimmy was the first person to show me a tone row in the music of Bach. He was indeed one of the first to note the relevancy of baroque counterpoint to jazz. He played 'cello, as well as guitar.

He was not one of the first-call studio players, being not a flexible craftsman but an original and individual artist. He worked in Broadway pit orchestras a lot, but such employment must have been soul-searing to one of his original powers. We all worried about him, although I doubt that he knew it.

Not long after Jimmy left New York, I packed it in too. And Jim and Andy's closed, to the eternal regret of all of us, though if it still existed a lot of us would be poor customers indeed. I kept vague track of Jimmy, monitoring his health, as it were, from a distance. Lee kept me posted. Brookmeyer knew where he was.

Jimmy's son Doug, as you probably know, is himself a prominent guitarist. There is an influence of his father's work. Lee told me, however, that it did not come directly from Jimmy. Doug absorbed it from Jimmy's records. They play much alike. In due course they were reconciled and have recorded together.

A year ago, I came across a photographic negative, taken, I surmised, with a Rollieflex. It was of a baby in a droopy diaper, standing up in one of those canvass-and-iron butterfly chairs that used to be cheap and therefore popular with young marrieds setting up house-keeping. I couldn't think who the baby was, and then it struck me: Doug Raney. I sent the negative to Lee. That's how I know I met Jimmy in 1957: Doug was on the verge of walking.

The sight of Jimmy's name on an envelope recently thrilled me. My delight was tempered by the discovery that he had gotten a grip on one problem only to be afflicted by anoth

In saying, Yes, you can write, I am reminded that the last Louisville musician I said that to was Don DeMicheal.

Herewith the first of the two short essays Jimmy sent me; the other will appear next month. This is the writing of a very great musician.

Living Legend

by Jimmy Raney

A few days ago I began to wonder how I had become a Living Legend. It's happened in the last five or six years. Before that I was an Old Master. I'm not sure what a living Legend is. I've also become an Elder Statesman. I don't know what that is either. I don't do much any more, so I think about these things. The last sentence, by the way, is a good example of what an Elder Statesman, or a Living Legend, does.

When I first became an Old Master, it worried me. I knew it meant the end was in sight, but I didn't know what to d about it. I know who's behind it, though: it's the jazz criti

I picture a secret meeting of Jazz Critics International in upstate New York, where the Mafia held their ill-fated session. It's getting near lunch time and most of the important things, such as what the new trends are and what Ira Gitler says they mean for jazz, have been taken care of. Then someone says:

"What are we to do about the old players?"

"Like who?"

"Well, like Jimmy Raney, for instance."

"Who?"

"Raney. Raney. Don't you young guys ever listen to anything but fusion?"

"Oh yeah, now I remember. He played with Bix Beiderbecke."

"No. No, no. That was Eddie Condon -- way back in the '20s. Raney came up in the '50s. He played with Stan Getz or somebody. You're going to have to do some homework or you're in serious trouble. You can't get away with doing all your writing with old Leonard Feather articles, a pair of scissors, and a pot of glue."

"Why do we have to do anything?" somebody says. "I hear he's dead anyway."

"He's not dead, he's *deaf*. That was a typo."

"Well then he doesn't play any more, so what's the problem?"

"He still plays once in a while. He played at Bradley's and Zinno's a couple of years ago. But Ira didn't cover it, so I didn't know what to say. He seemed to be doing the same sort of thing, but I'm not sure. I finally had to fall back on 'crystal clear, logical lines, stretching to infinity.' You know the one; you've all used it. Geez, we can't keep doing stuff like that. People are beginning to catch on."

"Hey, guys," a fellow pipes up, "have you seen the new Aftran software? I mean it's really great. It doesn't just give you synonyms, it's really creative. I fed in 'crystal clear, deft and logical lines,' and I got 'taut, luminous, and penetrating structures.'"

"Listen, Tony, I thought we agreed to take up the new technical equipment after lunch. O.K. -- we're all getting tired and hungry. Let's get this over with. Does anybody have any ideas?"

"I think I've got it," someone in the back says. "It's right here on Page 23 of Braintree's new book *Jazz and Jazz Criticism*. It says, 'When you have to review an older musician who hasn't done much lately, you call him an Elder Statesman or a Living Legend. It makes further comment unnecessary. It's a truism.' Don't you get it? Now the ball's in the reader's court. He feels like a dumb bell because he's never heard of him. It's a master stroke. You know, 'The elder statesman played in his usual deft, creative, and sure-footed manner.' You can write your piece in five minutes flat, and still have time for the Rangers' game on TV."

There is a general round of agreement and idle chatter.

Here, I think, is a good place to tiptoe off and leave them.

I was still stuck with what Elder Statesman and Living Legend mean. Then I found it in a book about George S. Kaufman. Elder Statesmen (or Living Legend) means:

Forgotten, but not gone.

-- JR

Another Letter

Over the past months I have read some interesting reviews of a book titled *Jazz Singing* by Will Friedwald. Inevitably I purchased the book.

There were many areas in which I disagreed with Friedwald. I have been listening to singers for a long time -- about forty-five years. And I feel compelled to make my views known to the jazz fraternity, so much of which reads the *Jazzletter*.

I came to the conclusion that Friedwald is a new kid on the block. He should have titled his book *Popular Singing*. It does an injustice to the neophyte and first-time reader on the subject of jazz. I hope it doesn't fall into the hands of too many unsuspecting consumers.

There are glowing pages of comment on Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, Rosemary Clooney, and Bing Crosby. Will Nat Hentoff, Leonard Feather, Stanley Crouch, Whitney Balliett, Dan Morgenstern, Lee Jeske, Peter Watrous, and Gene Lees tell me what these singers have to do with jazz?

Friedwald devotes a "swell" -- his term -- amount of space and praise to the likes of Ukelele Ike, Connee Boswell, the Boswell Sisters, the Rhythm Boys, and Al Bowlly. We are treated to complimentary pages on Dick Haymes, Doris Day, and Buddy Clarke. At least here, Friedwald admits to being a "whacko" and . . . "would like to own a complete set of Clarke's '40s CBS discs."

They are gifted singers of American popular music. I'm not putting them down for that, as Friedwald constantly does so many fine singers.

His pompous attitude and reckless arrogance are degrading and downright mean. He is practically a clone of Gary Giddins. He doesn't like Cleo Laine and Dianne Schuur in particular, and devotes wasted pages to them, while lambasting Mitch Miller and putting down Vic Damone, Steve Lawrence, and Edie Gorme. Why? Who cares?

He truly hates Teresa Brewer: "Must avoid department . . . out of the classic tradition . . . of really bad singing." Fortunately, I am married to Teresa Brewer, which helps me to make a serious point. Friedwald proves that he really hasn't done his homework. He seems to love quotes. Here are quotes from a few idiots who do not know a thing about jazz:

"Teresa has a God-given talent. She is completely true to herself at all times. She swings, and that's what jazz is all about." -- Duke Ellington.

"Teresa possesses great time. Those who have better time are serving life sentences in Sing Sing. How can anyone who has good time not swing? She has great phrasing, a super voice, and when she improvises, she sacrifices her long tones, and her notes always fall in the right place." -- Ruby Braff.

"The very tall wall that once separated jazz and pop is now only a thin easily-scaled partition. But that is not the only reason Brewer sounds so well on her new jazz-oriented live, double album. It is also because she has matured as an artist . . . I know it isn't fashionable in jazz circles to take Teresa Brewer seriously, but I must report that my ears tell me this is a fine album by a singer who can sing circles around Linda Ronstadt in the ballad department and hold her own in impressive company." -- Chris Albertson.

"Teresa is a swinger -- musically, that is." -- Shelly Manne.

"Teresa knows time. Tap dancers usually do. She could be a great drummer. She swings." -- Oliver Nelson.

"Teresa Brewer is irrepressibly herself, constantly evolving, constantly enjoying the surprise of herself, and communicating that joy to her audiences. Teresa is uncategorizable, perennially surprising. She is in sum a marvelous entertainer." -- Nat Hentoff.

"Doing an album with Teresa was a real pleasure. Solid swing are the words for Teresa. She proved she really can actually, actually swing. She and I had a ball." -- Count Basie.

"Brewer has grown remarkably since her days on the hit

parade and broadened her stage act to include a wide sampling of Americana from country music and pop to swing and bebop. She has developed enough vocal technique to bring her up this ring of eclecticism. The shrill, cutting edge is still there, and sometimes, especially on country material, it is appealing. Miss Brewer's vocal bag of tricks includes a husky lower register and variety of timbers from brassy to breathy. As a pop technician, Brewer is beyond approach. She can swing and execute difficult interval jumps." -- Robert Palmer.

"In recent years Teresa Brewer . . . underwent a transformation that found her exploring the world of jazz for material, and interpreting it with a communicative buoyancy in the company of some of America's greatest musicians. While too many around her have made artistic compromises, she has kept her standards high." -- Leonard Feather.

"This is a real, delightful surprise. Teresa is able to modify her vocal range to do legitimate blues interpretations of Bessie Smith's songs . . . Teresa, presenting a new side of her consummate skills; that of a blues singer." -- *Billboard.*

I wish I had collected the quotes that would empower me to defend the others Friedwald, in his infinite self-confidence, deplores, such as Cleo Laine, as I have Teresa. The quotations were just there, and available for me to make a point.

As a brief history of popular music in America, the book has some uses. It provides a lot of dates, it indicates influences, and shows pretty good insights into the machinations of the recording industry. For me to quote all the ridiculous statements about Sinatra, Tony Bennett, and Ukelele Ike, would be useless. Friedwald should have dedicated the book to Tony Bennett and Buddy Clark, whom he loves so much. It is truly unfortunate that the book was published and passed off as a book about jazz singing.

By the time this letter appears, Teresa will have released an album featuring songs associated with Louis Armstrong. There are twelve tunes and twelve guest trumpet players, among them Dizzy, Clark Terry, Ruby Braff, Sweets Edison, Wynton Marsalis, Roy Hargrove, and Red Rodney. As soon as Red walked into the studio, he went up to her and said, "You are one of the great singers. I have always admired you, even when you sang *Music, Music, Music*. I love your beat and I love the way you swing."

Friedwald's sickly remarks about many singers were not the sole cause of this letter. His critiques seemed so off-the-wall and without musical foundation that I use the Brewer quotes to make clear that he should start using his ears more often.

-- Bob Thiele, New York City

Limits of Criticism

I told Bob I would print this letter if he insisted, since I consider this publication an open forum. No matter that he might wish it to be otherwise, he cannot but sound like the angry husband, which is of course understandable and to his credit. I further pointed out that his letter would only draw additional attention to a book that doesn't deserve it.

Bob was a radio announcer on jazz record shows from 1936-'44 (the term disc jockey was not yet in use), editor and publisher of *Jazz Magazine* from 1939 to '44, and owned and ran Signature Records from 1940 to '48. He was a producer for Coral Records, Dot, Hanover-Signature, and, perhaps most importantly, for Impulse, where he turned out significant albums by John Coltrane, Oliver Nelson, Pharaoh Sanders, and many others. So much for his credentials.

Purely as a matter of my own definition, I do not make a mark between jazz and popular singers. Sarah Vaughan repeatedly insisted that she was not a jazz singer. If there is such a thing as a jazz singer, it is surely one who improvises within the framework of the song.

And I, as a songwriter, don't like too much of that sort of thing to be done to my work, since a conscientious lyricist the likes of Johnny Mercer and Howard Dietz -- carefully matches speech inflections to the intervals of the song. The recurring interval of a falling fourth in the verse of *The Folks Who Live on the Hill* gives a sense of gentle resignation that is absolutely appropriate, even essential to, the meaning of the lyric. I have heard a famous "jazz singer" scooby-doo the hell out of that passage, and thereby destroy its emotional content.

In my book on Lerner and Loewe, I analyzed the opening phrase of *I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face*, which climbs to the fifth and then falls to the second. This falling fourth, again, communicates resignation, the puzzled acceptance of Higgins that Eliza has become essential to him. The entire musical, *My Fair Lady*, pivots around that cell of melody. Alter it and you destroy not only a song but an entire play.

Singing to me is a matter of story-telling in pitch. No one has ever done it better than Peggy Lee, who conscientiously stays close to the melody as written, perhaps because she, an excellent lyricist herself, has such a sensitive awareness of the relationship of verbal to melodic intervals. I am not enthralled by heavily improvsatory singers, with some exceptions:

Sarah Vaughan was one. Such was the nature of her voc instrument and such her powers of invention that I simply lost interest in the lyrics, even when they were my own, surrendering instead to that astonishing outpouring of melody and vocal color. I was discussing this with Peggy Lee the other day. I mentioned that once, when I asked her what she looked for in a song, Sass said, "Good lyrics."

Peg was as astonished by this as I was when I heard it, and then proferred a possible explanation. "Perhaps," she said, "she used the lyric as a point of departure."

Certainly Lester Young did.

Another exception is Carmen McRae. She alone, of all the singers in the world, is able to alter the intervals of a melody, improvise on the song, and somehow, mysteriously, alchemically, *add* to the sense of the lyric. No one else can do it. She is amazing.

Nat Cole, who assuredly had all the jazz qualifications one could want, was remarkably respectful of melody-as-written. In that sense, Nat was not a jazz singer.

Probably most people, using the term "jazz singer,", mean by

it one influenced by the time feeling and phrasing and some indefinable spirit of the music. And in this sense an enormous number of our best popular singers have been influenced by jazz. Tony Bennett is assuredly one of them. Nobody seems to have noticed Tony's primary inspiration. You'll sometimes catch it in the vibrato. It's Louis Armstrong.

As for Sinatra, when Leonard Feather did a poll of jazz musicians, a substantial majority -- Nat Cole and Miles Davis among them -- voted him their favorite singer. Certainly he was Lester Young's favorite singer.

My ability to comment on the Will Friedwald book is limited by the fact that I was unable to finish it. Will is a well-meaning man who thinks his responses to music are facts about the music rather than facts about himself. It is the flaw of most jazz criticism, and for that matter most criticism, including book reviewing, which is at a deplorable level.

In his preface to the book, Friedwald makes two astonishing statements in the same paragraph. One of them is: "If Gene Lees is right, then young people should never write histories anyway . . . ." Where in the whole body of my writing and private conversations he found the justification for that strange comment, I have no idea. If young people don't write history, it will cease to be written altogether, and I have been encouraging younger writers since my earliest professional days. Indeed I started writing history at nineteen, when I was receiving the best of all preparations for it, newspaper training, which teaches you the difference between facts and opinion, between information and your own responses to it. I do not of course encourage those who are ignorant of it to write history, and we are confronted now with a generation, nay two generations, of people who have grown up a-historical. Ignorant young people should not write history, but people like the fine drummer Kenny Washington, who at thirty-five is a treasury of jazz history, assuredly should be doing so.

I admire the writing of Terry Teachout. He uses language beautifully and knows music well. He is a former bass player who has managed to assimilate a prodigious amount of jazz history in his thirty-five years. Friedwald, the dust jacket of his book obscurely informs us, is one month younger than Wynton Marsalis, which makes him thirty, only a little younger than Teachout.

Farther along in that paragraph, Friedwald says, "I hope I have succeeded in getting things across in layman's language without resorting to too many technical terms, and I've had a distinct advantage in this area in being a layman myself."

This statement blows the mind. It advances ignorance as a qualification for writing criticism. Friedwald hasn't used to "too many technical terms" presumably because, by his own statement, he doesn't know them.

In any case, that a writer has extensive technical knowledge does not foreordain him to writing impenetrable (to the layman) prose. James Lincoln Collier's biographies of Duke Ellington and Benny Goodman require technical knowledge of the reader, as do the books of Gunther Schuller and Alec Wilder's monumental study of American Popular Song. These books are not intended for the layman, a fact that all the reviewers I read failed to mention, presumably because they were unable to admit they didn't understand them.

Deems Taylor and Virgil Thompson, both composers, wrote some wonderfully lucid and literate criticism for the consumption of laymen, and Claude Debussy in his incarnation as Monsieur Croche wrote excellent if biased stuff. Harold Shonberg and Henry Pleasants have solid musical training, and the late Robert Offergeld, who could turn a layman's phrase with the best of them, studied piano with Paderewsky. Robert Schumann was virtually the father of music criticism. All -- not some, but all -- the best music criticism has been produced by writers of substantial technical background, and in some cases important musical achievements of their own. The English writer (and lyricist and librettist) Benny Green was a saxophonist before he was a writer. His "technical knowledge" has not compromised his clear prose. The same can be said of the work of Bill Crow, bassist and writer, and Terry Teachout, former bassist. Quite the contrary: it is illuminated from within with understanding. Teachout also has a background as a newspaper reporter. Could it be that his writing is so good because he was trained to the difference between fact and opinion?

(The best writing about painting I have ever read was the work of the late Harold Towne, a Canadian who was one of the most accomplished graphic artists of our time.)

Taken somewhat aback by Friedwald's curious promulgation of ignorance as qualification, I tried to plow on through the book. I succumbed in the end to an element of maturity that took me years to acquire: always recognize what isn't worth finishing, whether it's a task you've undertaken, a book you're reading, or a movie you're watching. The thought that you wasted money on the turkey in question should not deter you from this austerity. The longer you persist in a boring book only because you bought it, the more you are punishing yourself for the error. Walk out on bad concerts. No matter how restless you are, do not sit up in bed with glazed eyes hoping that something interesting will happen in the next reel of the Chuck Norris flick that's the only thing on the tube: it won't, and his acting won't improve either.

It became obvious to me that Friedwald doesn't know much more about singing than he does about music's "technical terms." He evidently has read every history pertinent to the subject, but this has done nothing to help him understand the fundamental elements of singing, jazz or otherwise. And then he has tried to make a virtue of necessity by advancing layman's ignorance as a qualification for comment.

I had hoped to ignore the book, rather than hurt Friedwald's feelings, as I am sure I am doing now -- he told me in a card that he was fearful of my reaction to the book. And I think I would have let it pass, trying even harder to convince Bob Thiele his letter shouldn't be published.

But I remembered running into Francis Davis in Chicago. He asked me what I thought of Friedwald's book, and I mentioned my perplexity at Friedwald's argument for ignorance. Davis said, "I am sympathetic to that viewpoint, since I don't have much technical knowledge of music myself."

Francis Davis writes jazz criticism for *The Atlantic*, The Philadelphia *Enquirer*, and other publications. Some of them are good pieces. A collection of them called *Outcats* was published last year by Oxford University Press. For the most part Davis has the smarts not to, as the French express it, put his foot in the plate. But one point that he makes very much bothers me, and I think it is a function of his laymanship, to coin a phrase.

He says that "by virtue of the marginal status of jazz in American culture, all jazz performers, including the most individual, influential, and housebroken, are outcats. So, too, are those of us who listen to them . . . "

I read his vision of the jazzman as alienated nomad when I was working with the distinguished Toronto photographer John Reeves on a collection of one hundred portraits of major jazz figures.

To accomplish this, John and I went on a tour that took us to New York (twice), brought him to the Los Angeles area (four times), took me to Toronto, and Chicago, as well as points in between. We photographed most of the people in their homes, and often stayed overnight -- or longer -- with them. Most of them had been friends or acquaintances of mine for decades. But because of the constant traveling that jazz requires of its practitioners -- as it does of great classical virtuosi -- I had never been to the homes of most of them, though many of them had often been to mine.

John and I visited at home Horace Silver, John Lewis, Benny Carter, Geri Allen, Tom Harrell, Gerry Mulligan, Phil Woods, Red Rodney, Chris Potter, Clark Terry, Jake Hanna, Hank Jones, Marc Copland, Bill Challis, John Abercrombie, Claudio Roditi, Warren Bernhardt, Jane Ira Bloom, Laurie Frink, Lou Levy, Alan Broadbent, Les McCann, Adam Mackowicz, Harold Land, Cedar Walton, Carmen McRae, Maynard Ferguson, Jackie Cain and Roy Kral, the Candoli brothers, Benny Golson, and -- literally -- scores more. We photographed some away from their homes, including Dizzy Gillespie, Milt Jackson, Kenny Wheeler, Connie Kaye, Albert Mangelsdorff, Max Roach, Edmund Thigpen, and Art Farmer, because they were traveling, but I had visited many of them at home anyway at one time or another.

It occurred to me that possibly no one else had ever been to the homes of so many jazz musicians in so short a period of time. We have worked on this book for more than two years, but the periods of visiting these people were intense. Sometimes we visited three homes a day.

And as well as I knew some of these musicians, I had never before had such an opportunity to examine their book-shelves, their furniture, their private mementoes, their ways of life. One day we were in the exquisitely appointed apartment of John Lewis on the upper east side of New York, a block from the east river. The next we were in the apartment of the gifted young pianist Geri Allen, who at thirty-two teaches at the New England Conservatory. She lives in a shabby district of Brooklyn, but her apartment is beautifully kept, and near the window among the house plants was her grand piano. And near the piano, sleeping in a playpen, was her newborn baby.

John and I had an overwhelming impression. Far from being alienated "outcats," these people are for the most part almost determinedly middle class. They want to live "normal" lives, to the extent that a profession that requires incessant travel will permit. And I suspect that even those whose lives are less conventional wish that they were not. These people are conspicuously articulate and intelligent. That is without exception. It became a joke between John and me. After a fascinating photographic shoot and an hour or two of far-ranging and eager conversation, we would leave our subject saying, "And another inarticulate jazz musician bites the dust." We finally stopped saying it: we'd worn it out.

Grave disservice has been done over the years by the perpetuation of the myth that jazz musicians are monosyllabically asocial and even anti-social. A psychologist -- psychiatrist -- is purported to have said that Charlie Parker was a sociopath who, had he not had his music, might have been a criminal. It ain't necessarily so, and the judgments of workers in the psychiatric field are not the last word. For one thing, too many of them are themselves unstable people (they have a high suicide rate), and forget, along with critics, that not only beauty but everything is in the eye of the beholder.

No one needs more urgently than critics to understand the principle of modern physics that the act of observation alters the thing observed. The Shorty Pederstein interview remains classic because you're never sure whether he is as alienated as he seems or just doesn't dig his pedantic interviewer and chooses to hide in an affectation of the inarticulate.

That jazz musicians had, and always had, a distaste for the criminal low-life who ran the nightclubs that provided the only milieu in which to play -- the Club Delissa in Chicago, the Cotton Club in New York, and many more -- didn't make the musician an alienated person. On the contrary, the posture of ineloquent and indifferent detachment was a cunning cloak in which to hide his integrity. He doubtless learned early that it protected him as well from those awe-stricken admirers who used the act of writing about the music as a pretext to get close enough to touch him and his very being as justification for their own. Hey, man, wha's hap'nin', baby, nice to see you. And good-bye.

I loved those Ray Coniff charts for the post-war Artie Shaw band, particularly *'Swonderful* and *Jumpin' on a Merry-Go-Round*. By the mid-1950s, Ray Coniff had left jazz and become a big success with a series of highly commercial vocal-and-band LPs on Columbia Records. I thought they were dreadful. When Coniff made a stop in Louisville during a promotion tour, I -- a young critic -- had the audacity to say to him, "How can a man of your talent write music like this?"

"Yeah?" he said. "Well when you end up working for the post office, you think about it."

I was chilled to my marrow. Never had I been put so deftly in my place. A good twenty-five years later in Los Angeles, Coniff and I were both at a luncheon held by the American Society of Musical Arrangers (ASMA) in honor of Hugo Friedhofer. I introduced myself. I reminded him of the

incident, which he had forgotten, and said, "Now that I know the conditions of the music business, what you have to deal with, I just want to apologize. I've wanted to for years." And we laughed about it.

Which of us, as Thomas Wolfe put it, has known his brother's heart? Each man or woman you meet behaves as he or she does partly in response to you. You determine the *apparent* character of the very thing you are observing. That is why you can't say this or that person "is" one thing or another. You find this out when you are doing research on someone for a piece of writing. I cannot tell you how many versions of Norman Granz I encountered in talking to his acquaintances as I researched the Oscar Peterson biography.

The responses we have to art are the consequence of our own genetic makeup, rearing, education, economic circumstances, and a host of other factors. I have a taste for the gentle, whimsical, and lyrical. Therefore I prefer Lester Young to Coleman Hawkins. But that doesn't make Lester Young the "better" saxophonist. I like Hawkins, but I like Prez better. This is a consequence of my character and experience, not a fact about either Lester or Bean. I cannot understand why writers assert their preferences as facts, and whence they derive the arrogance to tell someone else what they should or should not listen to.

In the end, there is no excuse for ignorance. It usually responds to treatment. Will Friedwald and Francis Davis might consider taking some private lessons, or the Berklee correspondence course. Spend a few hours a day at a keyboard, writing harmony and voice-leading exercises. Learn the scale chords and the chord scales. Know them reflexively. Anybody who cannot promptly name the two chord of A-flat, the four of D natural, spell the major, minor, diminished, and augmented chords, read the key signatures, know the common resolutions, has no business stating publicly what this person or performance "is" or "isn't." It may well be that the critic in question simply doesn't have the educated hearing to notice what the person "is."

Francis Davis tells us that "I make my living writing about jazz." Then he owes it to those who make their living giving him something to make his from to put in a minimum of a year learning "technically" what they are doing -- and spent a lot more than a year learning. And so does every other writer who sits down to tell you that you *must respond as he does* to a given artist or piece of music.

"I feel that jazz journalism is in crisis," Francis Davis tells us. But of course. All jazz journalists think that: what is wrong with jazz journalism is everybody else who writes about it. The British critic Miles Kingston wrote recently in *The Spectator* that "no fraternity is so ready to indulge in internal warfare as the jazz one . . . " Or as Grover Sales put it, "The average jazz critic would rather catch another jazz critic in an error than bring Bix back from the dead." Look up Hentoff's old *Jazz in Print* columns in *Jazz Review* or read Stanley Dance in *JazzTimes*.

Jazz journalism has always been in crisis, and the reason is that most of the writing about it has been done by people trained neither in jazz nor in journalism.

Davis is enamored of the idea of the jazzman as outcat. One of the impediments to the music has always been that its admiers want it that way. They do not in their heart of hearts want it to be popular, for that would strip them of their claim to arcane and special insight. Someone, I think Leonard Feather, long ago wryly identified this as the hipper-than-thou syndrome. Commonly the jazz fan *loves* the idea that the outside world doesn't understand this music, and even within it no one understands it as well as he or she does.

The notion of the jazzman as outlaw, a sort of freelance gunslinger of esthetics, has dogged the music from the earliest days, perpetrated by critics and a few writers like Jack Kerouac, who thought that writing without revision on rolls of teletype paper would approximate the improvisational character of jazz. He simply, apparently, did not understand the extent of the preparation that goes into the extemporaneity of jazz. Jazz is improvised out of pre-edited material, and every man has his licks. The outlaw, of course, has always fascinated society, nowhere more so than in America. Europe has its Robin Hood and Jean Valjean; the United States has Jesse James, Cole Younger, Billy the Kid, and John Dillinger, and when the supply of known outlaws to romanticize runs out, it invents them, as in the instances of the Lone Ranger, Zoro, the Green Lantern, Spider Man, the Shadow, the Phantom, Batman, Hawkman, et al, men who must wear masks in their struggle against corrupt society.

Superman presents a special case. His mask is a pair of horn-rimmed specs. He goes with a girl so dumb that she cannot recognize him when he dons them. He is betrayed by neither voice, mannerisms, posture, stature, shape of hands nor the color of his hair. Evidently the entire society in which he operates shares her myopia. His boss, Perry White, his friend Jimmy Olson, and for that matter even his enemies, like Luthor, the Penguin, and the Joker, seeking tirelessly to know his "real" identity, just can't get past the glasses. But those cheaters are a mask of a sort, nonetheless, and the suspension of disbelief requires that you accept it as such. So even Superman is an outlaw of sorts.

America adores its outlaws! Small wonder that some of its critics have superimposed this curious adulation on the country's one home-made art form.

"The alienation that one is likely to feel as a result of writing about jazz is a leitmotif of this collection," Davis advises us in his book's foreword. There it is, baldly stated: I am outcast by society for writing about jazz. I am apart from society. My taste makes me an outcat myself. Just what I want to be.

For myself, I can only say I have never felt alienated as a result of writing about it. I do, however, feel alienated from the world of Ivan Boesky, David Begelman, Ronald Reagan, Ted Bundy, the Ethiopian famine, Sadam Hussein, George Bush, Brian Mulroney, the S&L scandal, apartheid, Jerry Falwell, Phyllis Schaffley, and the Medellin drug cartel. I don't need jazz to make me feel alienated. This is not the world I would have chosen to live in. And 'twas ever thus. Milton

described himself as "alone and all afraid in a world I never made." Long before, let us note, Louis Armstrong.

Doesn't everyone with a passion or passions that proportionally few people share feel alienated to some degree? When I was a painter, I felt myself somewhat apart from those who did not share my interest in Tom Thomson, Emily Carr, Picasso, Dali, Whistler, Rembrandt, Vermeer, Turner, Edward Hopper, Winslow Homer, Van Gogh, Gaugin, Velasquez, Rodin. At that time, almost everyone I knew was a painter or an art student, neophyte or advanced, and at least one of my fellow students, Bill Ronald, has become quite famous. We were lost in the odor of turps and linseed oil, Grumbacher, brushes and terra cotta pencils and charcoals and tempera and watercolors, the feel of clay under the fingers. At that time it seemed to us that everyone in the world painted. We were insular. Jazz musicians, in my experience, are not as insulated as we were, although they do share a camaraderie of understanding that inevitably sets them apart. That's true of all the arts, indeed all the professions.

All -- *all* -- artists are alienated, if we really must use that dubious term. They are apart from society. Excepting scientists (who are in a sense artists) the individual who develops an almost pathological fixation on a single interest is comparatively rare, and such people have always been suspect in society. The artist has always been separate and apart. In a way, that's the nature of the job. Read Colin Wilson's *The Outsider*. Sometimes even musicians discourage their progeny from the profession. Lalo Schifrin's father, concert-master of the Buenos Aires Symphony, did everything he could to dissuade Lalo from a musical career. When he discovered that Lalo had been studying music, not law, in Paris, he had a heart attack. Gaugin was rejected by his family for pursuing his art. Perhaps you don't have to be a little nuts to pursue a career in the arts, but it probably helps.

Let us remember that in Mozart's time, musicians entered the salon through the kitchen, with the servants. At one time actors were not allowed to live within a mile of Buckingham Palace. Society has always held the artist suspect partly, I surmise, because monomaniacs are not suitably controllable.

Those non-musicians who insist on seeing the jazz musician as a rebel, outlaw, outcat, or whatever, almost certainly do so because they themselves crave to feel themselves rebels and outsiders. They use their taste for jazz as a credential of otherness, which is why they really do not want it to be popular. If indeed the jazz musician is "alienated," "outcat", it is in coninuity of a long and glorious tradition of colleagues stretching back into the mists of time. I suspect that the men who painted those flattened images on Egyptian tombs were my kind of cat, and probably sat around talking about pigments and brushes and the bad taste of those who hired them. It is only an ignorance of history (no matter the age of the writer) that permits this illusion of the jazzman as alien.

Sure, some jazz musicians have sloshed booze and done dope. So have all sorts of artists. Read a biography of Baudelaire or Verlaine or Edgar Allen Poe. Certainly there was a phase of that, manifest in the boozing of Bix Beiderbecke and Eddie Condon. But that era is over. And anyway, outsiders tend to forget how many of their fellows lived to considerable ages, like Jimmy McPartland, who knew Bix and was part of the original Austin High Gang died only this year, Benny Carter, Doc Cheatham, Bud Freeman, and Dizzy. Yes, there were those who died of heroin. But there were all those, among them John Coltrane, Zoot Sims, Hal Gaylor, Al Cohn and Gerry Mulligan, who proved that the figures of heroin addiction recidivism are a matter of motivation. "I had something else to live for," Gerry once told me. "I had my music. I don't know whether I would have been able to quit had I been some kid in a Harlem doorway with nothing to look forward to even if he does quit." That applies as well today when crack is the drug of common usage.

If you want to find the alienated, the outcats, look at the the old ladies trundling all they own in shopping carts, the dormant figures on benches in the New York subway, the inhabited cartons in alleys, the Viet Nam veterans trudging the highways in back-packs, the young men in the supermarket parking lots holding up signs saying Will Work for Food.

But do not look in the studio off the living room of Horace Silver, with all those photos of family and friends on the piano. Do not look in the New York apartment of Benny Golson or his home in Hancock Park in Los Angeles, the glorious new home Phil Woods has built at Delaware Water Gap, the handsome rustic log house in the woods near Woodstock that Jack DeJohnette and his painter wife built and inhabit, or Clark Terry's pleasant house in Long Island. Or for that matter in the modest apartment of Geri Allen not far from Bedford-Stuyvesant. These are not alienated souls, these are not outcats. These are dedicated, skilled, cultivated people.

If Will Friedwald thinks that I think young people should not write history, it may be because he has gathered that I do not trust historical sources. Certainly I think young people should not write regurgitated history. And no history I know is as compromised by propaganda, distortion, and special pleading as that which purports to recount the evolution of jazz. The who simply scalp the old books do the music a recurring disservice. Enough old masters are still around to permit a lot of primary source research, in lieu of the cut-and-paste perpetuation of petrified opinion that Jimmy Raney so neatly parodies (more accurately than he knows, by the way).

There is an old wheeze used by critics to rationalize ignorance: "You don't have to be a cow to know if the steak is tough."

Maybe. But it's advisable to know something about cooking before waltzing into the kitchen to give advice to a chef.
