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Jazzletter

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Mail Bag

It was a pleasure to receive the September Jazzletter from my good friend Dick Stott, Ph. D. and alto player. I am the unknown trombone player Red Mitchell mentioned, Doc Mancell. Dick Stott played lead alto on that band in Europe back in 1946-48. I did the jazz chores on trombone and Red laid down the finest bass lines I ever heard. I remember well the times when we weren't rehearsing or broadcasting when we would have sessions, with Red anchoring the rhythm section and a few of us horn players. Red was head and shoulders above us all, even then. He has done since that time what we all expected him to do: become one of the all-time great bass players. I guess the reason no one ever heard of me is the fact I stayed in the army, until 1967, when I retired from the West Point Academy Band in New York. While I was there, I believe it was 1950ish, Woody's band came through Newburgh, New York, I caught the show, and talked with Red briefly after. I have kept track of him through the years, know of his successes, and what he has done. I very much wanted to do the same thing, but I guess I didn't have enough of the nerve it takes. I have always leaned toward big band, and although I like to play solo jazz, I like the ensemble best. When I heard Kenton's five trombones I knew that was *the* sound for me.

In 1986, out in Newport Beach, we had a reunion of the band from Europe, and Red made it over from Stockholm. We had a cook-out on Saturday afternoon. Red played piano and it was great to hear him. Some people were not aware he played *that* well on piano. I remember one number at the end of the night Red and I did, just the two of us. It was *Lover Man*, and what he was putting down behind me made me want to play 98 choruses. The man has such a great conception and sensitivity. I hold him in the highest esteem. Just a monster musician. But the nicest part of it all is that he is one of the dearest guys you'll ever meet. I just feel grateful to be a friend of his.

Thanks for the Jazzletter. We need all the help we can get to keep jazz alive. I live about 25 miles from downtown Pittsburgh. I gig around town and the general area here.

With sincere best wishes.

Doc Mancell BS (Bone Specialist)
Chairman of the Bored
Rochester, Pennsylvania

I just heard about Red. I don't have to believe it if I don't want to.

Don Asher, San Francisco, California

Pianist-author Asher's latest book is Notes from a Battered Grand. *Don attended Cornell with Red Mitchell.*

The Media
Perceptions of America

The January 3, 1993, Chicago Tribune contained a long review by Howard Reich, the paper's arts critic, of the newly-published four-volume *Guinness Encyclopedia of Popular Music*, which has 10,000 entries. This ambitious work attempts to embrace everything that could be called pop from 1920 to the present, including jazz. The emphasis is heavily on American music, because of its overwhelming worldwide influence. The set sells for $295, which puts it in the same price class with the 1988 *New Grove Encyclopedia of Popular Music.*

Both were produced in Britain. Indeed, the compilation and printing of dictionaries and encyclopedias of American popular music and jazz seems to have become a British cottage industry, with books such as John Chilton's 1972 *Who's Who of Jazz*; the 1986 *Jazz:The Essential Companion* by Ian Carr, Digby Fairweather, and Brian Priestley; *The Harmony Illustrated Encyclopedia of Jazz* (also 1986) by Brian Case and Stan Britt; *The Penguin Encyclopedia of Popular Music* (1989), and *The Guinness Jazz Companion* (also 1989) by Peter Gammond and the late and widely-loved Peter Clayton.

The Penguin book -- an extremely valuable and handy work in one volume -- was compiled and edited by an American, Donald Clarke. But Clarke lives in England, most of his writers were British, and it was a British publishing house who commissioned and funded the work. Furthermore, it should be remembered that the mother of all these works, *The Encyclopedia of Jazz* (1970), though published in the United States, was the work of another Englishman, long since become an American citizen, but a native of London, namely Leonard Feather.

The Chilton work remains a valuable reference, limited though it is to prebop musicians. I still find myself turning first to Feather's book and the subsequent edition updating it to the 1970s, and I'm pleased that Leonard and collaborator Ira Gitler are nearing completion of a completely new encyclopedia for Oxford University Press. The Grove is better than I at first perceived, though Feather and I between us counted 110 major omissions, from Guido Basso to Peggy Lee.

There is not one dictionary or encyclopedia of jazz that originates with an American author or publishing house. But all of these works have in common, to greater or lesser degree, touches of a shortcoming Howard Reich cites in his Tribune review of the new Guinness book.

"Nevertheless," he writes, after praising the book highly, "certain peculiarly British, or at least foreign, attitudes do creep into (it). The fine British pianist Marian McPartland, for instance, is given fully a half-page of space, even though her somewhat self-effacing brand of pianism has had no discernible influence on the history of jazz pianism. Yet cornetist Jimmy

McPartland, her American husband and founding leader of the fabled Austin High Gang, receives but a fraction of that space.

"Along similar lines, Chicago tenor legend Von Freeman -- one of the world's pre-eminent be-bop soloists -- receives less than half the space of his son, Chico Freeman, whose accomplishments have yet to approach his father's. What's worse, the *Guinness Encyclopedia* refers to Von Freeman's brother as 'Buzz,' though he's actually known as 'Bruz'."

Similar distortions occur in the Carr-Fairweather-Priestley *Jazz:The Essential Companion*, which gives longer listings to British musicians than some of them deserve. Blues singer Beryl Bryden gets exactly the same number of lines (34) as Dave Brubeck, which may reflect the private tastes of the author but hardly measure their impact and influence on jazz.

This slightly distorted view -- "the across-the-sea vision", as Reich terms it -- is not limited to the British. It is if anything even stronger in the French. I have encountered in some Italians and Germans that secure belief that they understand the American culture better than the Americans do. It is often manifest in such preambles as "Well, we believe that . . . " and the implicit attitude seems to be: Let us explain you to you.

So much of the foreign writing has a skewed quality. Sometimes it seems as if the writers are observing the United States through the wrong end of a telescope, or even in a funhouse distortion mirror. Some of them think they know America even if they have never visited it. After all, they've read *Of Mice and Men* and seen *On the Waterfront, Kojak, Magnum Force, Lethal Weapon (1 and 2), Die Hard (1 and 2),* and *Death Wish (1, 2, 3, and 4* or whatever it is). They remind me of people speaking with total assurance about, say, the people of the Kalahari desert not because they have lived in and known the region but because they have, after all, read lots of books about it. (Peter Clayton was among the exceptions. He was one of the most unpresumptuous men I ever met. And there are others, Tony Russell and Richard Palmer among them, in England.)

But none of them writes about America and its arts with the in-the-skin, to co-opt a French phrase, understanding of John McDonough. McDonough is a perceptive jazz critic world, and an elegant writer. McDonough is a Chicagoan who contributes to Down Beat, the Wall Street Journal, and other publications. I rarely read record reviews, but I was taken by a recent McDonough piece in the Wall Street Journal on a three-CD review of an album called *The Beat Generation* and discs by Eddie Daniels and Gary Burton, Kenny Davern, Buddy DeFranco, and the Oscar Peterson trio, the last derived from the 1990 sessions of the trio at the Blue Note in New York. McDonough pulls discussion of the sundry subjects into a unified mini-essay on literature, the clarinet, and indeed the American culture from the late 1940s through to present. The two-column piece is shot full of insights, many of them very fresh, such as this: "In the quick, crowded intricacies of bop, speed and virtuosity sometimes have a way of making musicians seem like athletes. DeFranco and Gibbs, of course, are both. So is guitarist Herb Ellis, who is the third front-line player. That's why the music, while fast, is never crunched or congested."

He concludes: "I admire Peterson for the same reason I admire Benny Carter and an old Kodak 35 I have that uses flashbulbs. Without ceremony, each still does exactly what it was built to do and produces results that confound progress. Few enough things are truly good; fewer still are so good for so long."

McDonough's writing is condensed, no doubt reflecting the disciplines of his former profession: he was a top-level writer of advertising copy, in which economy is of the essence. But it als has a strong sense of America. Even when he is not stating it overtly, you can feel McDonough's underlying, perhaps never consciously formulated, understanding of the relationship between American jazz in particular and American art in general to the American cultural that nurtured them.

Europeans who have never been here have little idea of the size of America. Nor do the Japanese who are in love with *Anne of Green Gables*, which has been shown extensively on Japanese television. There is even an Anne of Green Gables theme park near Tokyo, and many Japanese seem to think she's real, as a certain element of Americans believe the actors playing doctors on soap operas really are medical men, whom they write to for advice. Much as Americans used to arrive in Canada in August heat with skis on the tops of their cars, Japanese tourists get off the plane in Toronto wanting to see during the weekend Niagara Falls, the Calgary Stampede, and the area of New Brunswick where Anne "lives." New Brunswick is about 1500 miles to the east, Calgary about 2,000 miles to the west.

It takes about a day and a half to drive across Texas. Texas is 262,839 square miles, which makes it quite a bit larger than France at 212,973 square miles. Quebec is 594,860 square miles. In other words, you could drop Texas, France, England and Scotland into Quebec and still have room left over for Ireland. West of the Maritime Provinces, Canada doesn't have a province that isn't at least twice the size of Texas, or twice the size of France and Spain combined. It has been said that if you put all the population of the world into Colorado, the population density would be no more than that of New York City. Europeans often express a kind of shock when they discover the sheer size of North America.

And European writers have little idea of the distances involved in the road life of someone like Duke Ellington or Woody Herman, and what a role distance plays in our lives.

The knowledge of jazz in other countries is derived from liner notes and radio broadcasts, records by musicians who have become famous enough to get record deals, and interviews with

musicians who have a high enough commercial appeal to tour overseas. These musicians, not wanting to offend the magazine or newspaper readers they hope to attract, say lovely things about the host countries, and may do a little grousing about conditions at home -- not all of it unjustified, by any means.

And because they have not traveled this land, driven its highways, stayed in its little towns, eaten in its diners, encountered good pianists (and a lot of bad ones) at the cocktail hour in hotel dining rooms, writers in other countries not only do not understand our distances, they have no idea of the ubiquity of jazz in America, and its place in American life. They know the famous names, but nothing of the quiet life of jazz in cities large and small all over the North American content.

Two or three years ago, I turned up the stereo on a warm day so that I could hear it outdoors. The next-door neighbor, whom I hadn't met, was in his early eighties. I thought that I would surely be getting a complaint. The phone rang. The man's voice said, "This is your next-door neighbor, Ed Calendar. That sounds like Cedar Walton, and I can't hear it very well. Would you turn it up?"

He knew Hoagy Carmichael in high school in Indianapolis, used to hire him for his band and in turn played cornet in Hoagy's group, went on to play jazz in Chicago in the Bix years, then worked on the west coast and finally went into the business world. He was now retired. And he liked Cedar Walton.

I encountered an excellent guitarist in a seafood restaurant in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Between sets he said he had played in name bands, worked in Las Vegas, inherited a family farm, and decided he preferred New England, playing four nights a week. In Santa Maria, California, a small city most Europeans (and perhaps most Americans) have never heard of, I heard a really excellent pianist who told me had worked on staff at NBC in New York, then in Los Angeles, and decided with his wife that they liked Santa Maria. He played about five nights a week and taught. In the town in Southern Ontario where I grew up, there is an outstanding young pianist named John Sherwood. Until recently, the marvelous tenor player Spike Robinson was to most people a rumor out of Colorado. He'd spent most of his working life as an engineer. In Washington, D.C., there is a great bebop tenor player named Buck Hill, who has spent most of his life as a mailman. Recently I went into the Ojai Valley Inn and heard a fine young pianist playing electric piano with a trio. In the dining room I heard another pianist, a woman, so good that I asked her name. Joanne Crandall. The young man lives near Ojai; she lives in Ojai, population 6,200. About 18 miles away, in Santa Paul, another city most people in Europe or even back east have never heard of, there is a pianist of elegant taste, impeccable technique, and gentle invention. His name is Bob Andrews. These people are everywhere. I am endlessly impressed by the sheer musicality of America.

Recently I got a letter from a subscriber in Cleveland named Ron Watt. He is president and chief executive officer of Watt, Roop & Co., a public-relations firm. He had written a piece about a Cleveland musician whom I'd never heard of. I thought you might like to read it -- and, later, now and then remember Doc Mancell and Hank Geer when you think about the place of jazz in America, or encounter a piece of overseas writing on the subject that seems slightly out of whack.

Pick Yourself Up

by Ron Watt

If you ever spent any time in Sammy's on an evening in Cleveland, you no doubt heard Hank Geer. Dark beret on his head, gray-blue eyes darting from a pinkish face, kerchief 'round his neck, hands on alto sax.

This could be Bradley's or Condon's in the Village, but Sammy's overlooks what in Cleveland we call the Flats. Geer came out of the prototypical mold of the master jazz musician. Hank had been playing for 60 years, and over that span rarely missed a day of work. Few jazzmen anywhere could say they worked every night, but Hank could -- and made a good living and lived well just doing what he loved.

In his earlier years, Hank played across America, hanging around disparate places such as Tucson and Miami and "The Street", 52nd Street. Besides the alto and soprano saxes, Hank played all the other instruments. You name it, trumpet, trombone, piano, organ, bass, drums. "Whatever they need, man," Hank would say.

Hank could tell you how jazz really emanated -- from Debussy and Stravinsky as well as from the African-American rhythms that inspired the movement of the music from New Orleans up through Kansas City and Chi-town and Manhattan, meandering onward into the swing era.

Hank graduated from Miami University, where he led a big band and was the dashing hero of many a ballroom. He studied medicine at the University of Cincinnati, but decided that music was where he wanted to be.

After years of travel, he chose to come back home, to play around Cleveland or, frequently, nip up to the quaint skiing village of Ellicottville, New York, for gigs during the winter season. Where Hank was, you could be sure it would be a hot, sophisticated show.

From the time Sammy's opened a decade ago, Hank led the house band, six nights a week. It was hard to discern whether the atmosphere was created by Sammy's or Hank. They sort of blended together.

Eighteen months ago, Hank, taking a break around about midnight, was standing on the little porch at the north side of Sammy's. He was just standing there, smoking a cigarette, peering around at the stars and the boats, listening to the sound of laughter and car horns from across the river. His eyes were as sharp as ever -- he'd had the cataracts removed recently. He was just standing there innocently with a child's charm and his

endless curiosity.

Until some drunk came barreling into the parking lot, his auto smashing to bits the little wooden deck and sending Hank Geer tumbling down the steep hill and onto the railroad tracks below.

Hank sustained multiple broken ribs, a broken pelvis, and a horribly mangled left arm and hand. By the time rescuers reached him, he had already gotten up and was sort of brushing himself off, as if he hadn't played the last set and was due back onstage.

He was rushed to Metro General, totally conscious, totally alert, and interviewing attending physicians in no uncertain medical terms. To an orthopedic specialist he said, "Man, I need this hand to work! If you can't fix it, please find me the cat who can."

The doc did a good job, and after months of therapy and a second operation to allow that precious hand to turn and flex as one must when playing the left side of a piano or hitting those stretch notes on the alto, Hank began easing his way back at Sammy's. "I'm just working out here a few nights a week," he avers. "I'm not really *back* yet, but it's good seein' ya, man. Felicitations."

It has been a remarkable recovery for anyone, let alone a man approaching 70. Hank acquired a whole cadre of doctors and therapists who have been working up special devices helping him to regain the intricate movements a world-class musician must make. Not surprisingly, many of the cast of helpers are frustrated musicians themselves and appreciate the talent of Hank Geer. They obviously see the high value of life's enjoyment that this intelligent, gentle, and sensitive man with the horn provides. And they see his strength and resolve.

Not many men who have been launched 40 yards down a hill, bones breaking, get up and dust themselves off.

Let us applaud, Hankster, while you just blow, man, blow.

-- RW

A Death in the Family: The American Song

Part Six

With the rise of commercial television in the late 1940s and early '50s, the major networks gradually withdrew interest in radio. They closed down the network broadcasts that had fed their affiliate stations. The stations turned more and more to records for broadcast material, and format radio emerged. Today most stations are not even programmed locally: they operate on tapes supplied to them by programming services. And there have been fewer and fewer commercial stations that play the classic American songs. This is the tragic cultural paradox of the United States: it continues to produce superior musicians in astonishing quantities while its educational system and communications media, especially radio, abrogate any responsibility to develop a discriminating audience.

Starting with a conference in Berlin in 1903, various nations entered into a series of agreements allocating radio broadcasting frequencies. As commercial broadcasting developed during the 1920s and, explosively, the 1930s, different countries found different ways to fund the emerging industry. Britain developed the BBC, owned and funded entirely by the government. Canada established a comparable Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. France too developed a national non-commercial broadcasting system, and Germany set up a series of government-owned regional systems, whose most spectacular immediate consequence was that they permitted Adolph Hitler to address all the people of a nation at the same time and impell them into adventures that would take an estimated eighty million lives. In the United States, Franklin Delano Roosevelt grasped the significance of the new medium and used it to inspired effect to draw the nation out of the depression and, later, to unify it in the war that radio had helped launch in the first place. In England, Winston Churchill used it for the same purpose. His broadcast speeches, and the Edward R. Murrow broadcasts from London during the worst of the German bombing raids, further galvanized the United States and Canada to a war effort that, seen in retrospect, is awesome. For anyone to insist that the broadcast media have no social influence -- part of the argument of their executives to excuse their excesses -- is simply silly.

The United States did not develop a publicly-owned and government funded broadcasting system. On the contrary, it became the only major nation to turn the AM (and later also the FM) broadcasting frequencies almost entirely over to private interests. Most broadcasting in the U.S. was from the 1930s on funded by advertising.

Advertisers had little say in the content of early radio shows. The major broadcasting networks, Mutual (which actually was two networks), NBC, and CBS, presented an astonishing amount of cultural material, some of it of very high order, and CBS and NBC both maintained staff symphony orchestras, the latter conducted by Arturo Toscanini. The power of the medium was unprecedented. For example, it made Leonard Bernstein an instant celebrity when he substituted for Toscanini in one broadcast. It made Benny Goodman a success almost overnight, and launched the big-band era. The superb songs of Gershwin, Kern, and their peers were launched by radio.

The medium proved to be the most powerful force for education in history. In time it would prove it was just as effective in disseminating ignorance.

One of the best-informed students of broadcasting I know is a Fred Hall, whose radio show *Swing Thing* is heard on more than 70 stations in the U.S., Canada, and Britain. Slim and white-haired, Fred was born May 22, 1923, in Asheville, South

Carolina. He worked in a store repairing radios, meanwhile learning about the technical end of broadcasting. In 1941, he went to work as an engineer for the Mutual network, assigned to the technical end of the remote broadcasts of big bands.

Soon after Pearl Harbor he joined the navy and was posted to the South Pacific with Armed Forces Radio Service, on the air to broadcast records to the troops. After the war, Fred became a sort of Johnny Appleseed of radio stations, working with various partners and investors to open one after another in different parts of the country. He has designed, built, and owned several stations.

In January, 1989, I interviewed Fred for the Jazzletter. Much of what he had to say bears consideration now, along with his recent observations of trends in the industry.

"Until the late 1930s," Fred said at the time, "the creative people had control of network programming. Then the advertisers took over. The agencies began to dominate. They began to package shows.

"When I got into radio, you just could not play records on the air. It was not allowed. There was a long argument about mechanical rights, and each record bore the inscription 'Not licensed for radio performance.' So they made radio transcriptions, 16-inch discs produced especially for radio broadcast. They ran at 33 1/3 rpm's, and were a predecessor of the LP.

"Then the industry just began to ignore the prohibition of records. The station I was on in Washington, D.C., WWDC, was one of the first to let us play any record we felt like. The stations, remember, were playing hits, but many of the hits were quality things. And so the disc jockeys -- they weren't called disc jockeys yet, they were just called announcers -- had a lot of leeway. They would pick their records from what was available, and what was available was often excellent material. A handful who were really good, such as Martin Block, were terribly influential in launching a new record, a new band. There were no industry journals, such as *Billboard*, running elaborate lists of hits and governing the selection of music by the stations. There was *Your Hit Parade*. It surveyed sheet-music sales in music stores. Sheet-music sales were still very important.

"Nobody was paying much attention to television after the war, or for that matter FM. In short order two or three thousand little radio stations went up all over the country, and many of them depended on the networks for news and drama, particularly the 15-minute daytime dramas. There were fewer remotes of the bands because there were fewer and fewer locations for them to play. These stations went right on playing hit records, and the hit records were for the most part still quality stuff. And gradually it began to go downhill. The networks withdrew, and withdrew, and withdrew, turning their attention to television, until all they were giving their affiliates was five minutes of news on the hour. And that left the stations to their own devices. But there were still many very innovative program directors who got deeply involved with local affairs, local programming, local news, local sports, to supplement the records they were playing.

"Then, as the small operations were bought up by large-scale operators -- the group owners -- the owners felt they had too little control over the stations that were far from their headquarters. So they turned to programmers. It began in the late 1950s, and by the mid-1970s, it was paramount, and today it is completely dominant. Radio became very impersonal. We got the self-styled consultants. They became the bane of the industry."

At the time of that conversation, there were 4,929 AM stations in the United States, 4,141 FM, and 1,369 educational FM stations, for the most part those in the National Public Radio group. By 1992, the numbers had increased to 5,546 AM and 7,303 FM stations, the latter including those of NPR. And then an amazing and unforeseeable thing began to happen. Because of the sheer impersonality of radio, the public began to turn away from it. Radio broadcasting began to implode.

"About 10 percent of those AM stations are no longer on the air," Fred said. "They're going dark all over the country.

"AM's fidelity is as good as FM's, but the manufacturers of the receivers have made them with narrower and narrower band widths because of the large number of stations crowded on the dial. The FCC let too many stations by far on the AM dial. As they narrowed the band width, they lost the frequency response.

"Another reason AM went into decline was that it was not stereo. When they came up with a good AM stereo system, the FCC refused to okay it as the standard. Three or four systems came up, none of which was very good.

"AM came to be perceived as the old-fashioned way of broadcasting, so the prices dropped and dropped. A station that would have sold for a million three years ago is now worth a quarter of that at the most. The whole industry is tumbling down, and the AMs are taking the brunt of the beating, and they're going dark all over. WAIT in Chicago, a 50,000-watt powerhouse, got an increase in rent on their transparent site, and the owners just took it off the air."

When I talked to Fred two years ago, the Federal Communications permitted a single corporation to own a maxium of 12 AM and 12 FM stations.

"I don't know how many stations you can own now," Fred said in January, 1992. "But it doesn't matter, because there's a new thing called LMA -- Lease Management Arrangement. It's of dubious legality because what it does is allow an operator to come in, lease a station from another owner, and run it. The FCC requires that the owner of a radio station be responsible for everything that's on it. But that's not true in many, and perhaps most, cases. They have a dummy office, as though they go to work every day and keep control of it. They don't have anything to say, and they get a share of the income every month.

"In many instances there's nobody there, any time of the day.

Nobody. Everything's automatic. The owner just lets it roll. It doesn't cost him anything to operate except his power bill.

"The importance of the consultants has diminished greatly because there's nothing to consult on. The position of the programming people is even lower than it was. They have nothing to say about anything.

"Radio is now being run a hundred percent by the salespeople. All the LMA managers are sales people. The programming people have nothing to say, and there is no opportunity whatsoever for creativity. There are wonderful exceptions every here and there -- but only every here and there. So the whole thing is going to hell in a bucket, and it's terribly sad.

"They've greatly reduced the worth of the FM stations. They say that in five years there will be a third fewer AM stations on the air and about ten percent fewer FM. You can pick up stations for a song. I was offered a Lake Tahoe station for $50,000. It sold, along with its FM station, two years ago for $1,600,000. A perfectly good 5,000 watt station. I didn't do it.

"Another thing is the emergence on a large scale of the talk show. It's successful because it's doing what everybody stopped doing -- it offered original programming.

"The convenational perception is that there are only three formats that matter in radio. There's rock, and the variations and shadings of rock, there's country, and there's talk. And they believe that in AM broadcasting, there are only two: talk, which predominates now, and country.

"There are still hundreds of so-called nostalgia stations, but more and more of those are even run from satellites.

"These satellite broadcasts come from three principal cities, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Dallas. The supplier uplinks to the satellite, and the station gets it on a 24-hour-a-day feed, news, music, the whole thing. There is a subsonic code in the signal, which triggers the automation equipment in the station to insert local material, ads, news, weather. That's why it sounds like it is originating locally.

"And if your station is not one, two, or three in the market, they are not going to buy time on it. They have absolutely no sense of that huge, affluent audience over 50 that does know where that music came from, and does want to hear it.

"Radio became a get rich quick business. This is part of the legacy of Ronald Reagan. The regulation used to be that after buying a station, you had to hold onto the license for three years before you could sell it. Reagan put his own people in on the Federal Communications Commission, and they got rid of that restriction. You can buy a station this morning and sell it this afternoon. So investors get into radio to make a quick buck. Mind you, there were a lot of things that needed deregulation, mostly at the technical level. But Reagan's FCC turned it into a speculator's market. We're going to be paying for that administration for a long time to come.

"Numbers control the industry more than anything. And who knows how accurate the surveys are? And it's weighted in all kinds of ways. So if your target is the audience that's 35 plus, upper-income people, you're lucky if you get a fair representation back.

"And we're not just talking about a bunch of old fogies locked into the past. There is a definable difference between quality music and junk. This was always true. The big-band era was a quirk of history. Never before, as far as I know, has popular musical taste come together with the highest levels of musicianship to create the remarkable music that we had in that era -- along with a certain amount of junk.

"We are going to have to fight for quality in the arts. And if we're going to fight for it, we have to look at the realities of radio, because it is so pervasive and so powerful.

"For 24 hours of programming, you're paying about $800 month. You can have someone on the board who can't even talk at all. All he has to be able to do is operate switches. There are, however, totally automatic systems. And there is what is called operator-assist. Much of it is automatic, but the operators have to punch in commercials and taped newscasts off the network. These people don't have to be very talented, and they can be paid as little as five or six dollars an hour. The salary cost is minimal.

"The program director was a very important figure in a radio station. He no longer is. In fact, he is often referred to now as the operations director. He coordinates the tapes in and the tapes out and the scheduling.

"So the station is being run by a salesman, and all he's got to do is sell time, and all he's got to do to do that is sell one thing: country music. Or rock music. He's not selling programs, he's not selling personalities, he's not selling specific times. So he doesn't have to know anything about program except that they've got a country station or a rock station.

"There has been an almost total abrogation of responsibili for programming on the part of management in radio.

"There is a discriminating audience out there, a large one, that recognizes talent, quality, and individuality, and it is ready to support them with their ears and their pocketbooks. But they have to be given time to find you."

There was in Los Angeles an oasis of a sort, radio station KMPC, that specialized in the songs of the classic period. As the years passed, and the audience that remembered them gradually died off -- literally -- the station began playing not the best of the old stuff but the worst of it, the junk music of that other time. The policy didn't work, and finally at the end of January, 1992, KMPC abandoned music altogether to become an all-sports station.

For a long time KKGO operated in Los Angeles as an all-jazz station, but its policy has been changed. It now plays only classical music. There is no station in Los Angeles that plays jazz, nor is there one that plays quality popular music from the golden period.

Such changes in programming have gone on all over the United States. The Cincinnati-area station WNOP, which had been broadcasting jazz since 1962, recently switched to an all-news format, and even that does not originate locally. It is piped in from by satellite CNN Headline News, which you can get on television and radio channels all across America. WNEW in New York, the great mainstay of popular music, now broadcasts only financial news and stock-market reports.

There is nothing in the United States comparable to the great public broadcasting systems of Europe, the BBC in England, ORTF in France, or WDR in Germany. We have a sort of public broadcasting here, a not particularly coherent group of television and radio stations owned by non-profit groups. The television stations border on being a network; the radio stations are run mostly by universities with a good deal of volunteer personnel. PBS and these various radio stations exist like mendicants, begging listeners for money to keep them in operation.

PBS does very little for American music. Once a year, when it launches its pledge drive for money, it makes a transparent appeal to those who have the most of it: the elderly. It regales the audience all evening with big bands, though the observant will note that the programs are usually re-broadcasts of older shows, not new material. Benny Goodman may look alive, standing there with a clarinet under one arm, waving the free hand, and wearing that mysteriously wooden grin, but he is dead, and has been in that condition for some time. Telephones ring shrilly, and various second-level celebrities peer earnestly into the camera and make pitches designed to induce guilt that you haven't hocked a few family heirlooms to raise money to fund this PBS outpouring of culture.

Having pried loose all the loot they figure they can get through this obvious sop to nostalgiacs, the network proceeds to ignore the great American song heritage for the rest of the year, though its yuppie officers will broadcast symphonies and operas -- soothing the National Endowment for the Arts, from which PBS gets some of its funding -- and offer you a history of some rock "artist" or other on whose "music" the current crop of PBS executives grew up.

Actually, it's a pretty good network, certainly the best we have -- even if it does import most of its best drama from the BBC. But for the truly great American music, it is a wasteland. European broadcasting systems do far more for American music.

How could this be? PBS has nothing like the financial and creative resources of WDR in Germany. Over the years, several European countries, including Holland and Denmark, have maintained jazz orchestras. It startles Americans to learn that WDR maintains on salary a full symphony orchestra, a light music orchestra, and a 19-piece jazz band many of whose members are American. It is probably equally startling to Europeans to learn that American radio broadcasting does not maintain one jazz band on staff, or for that matter a symphony orchestra. American commercial radio generates absolutely nothing. It is totally parasitical on the record industry. Non-commercial radio commissions no music, generates little music: it doesn't have the money. Like the commercial broadcasters who live on advertising, public radio simply plays records. It publicizes the past, but it is not an active generative participant in the culture.

Public radio -- stations such as KUSC, operated by the University of Southern California -- plays a lot of classical music, because that has status and can be justified as cultural. Some of the stations play a fair amount jazz, and a few, such as KLON at Long Beach, a lot of jazz, and that too can be justified as cultural, if a notch lower on the snob scale than classical. But the great American songs get little attention, beyond an occasional show about Broadway musicals, original-cast albums by oak-jawed baritones and enthusiastic mezzos singing slightly flat.

The deleterious effect of all this on music is beyond estimate. Since only a few of the public stations play the great American songs, and the predominating commercial stations do not play them at all, this great body of music has been almost completely forgotten in the nation of its origin. Well over half the population of America was born after the era ended, and if radio and television will not expose them to this music, how are they even to know it exists?

Even jazz, which drew so richly on the great American songbook for material, is doing little now to perpetuate it. Now and then one of the older -- meaning over-40 -- players will record a Cole Porter or Gershwin tune. But many of the younger players ignore that repertoire, along with the great non-theatrical repertoire of material like the tunes of Duke Ellington, Hoagy Carmichael, and Fats Waller. They play instead "originals" many of which are nowhere near the level of Ellington or Gershwin. Possibly they don't know the classic repertoire, no doubt they want the royalties from their own material, and in any case, that older material does not and cannot have the same value to them that it had for their precursors. In an improvisatory art, it is of benefit to the performer to begin with a melody the audience knows: it puts them at ease in the familiar while giving the player something against which to show off his wares: what he or she can do with a known piece. Even a lay audience used to have an unconscious familiarity with the chord changes of well-known tunes.

But when the audience for jazz today does not itself know that great standard repertoire, what difference does it make if the invention is done on an "original" or against an equally unfamiliar old no-longer-standard tune? As for the contemporary musical theater, it offers little on which anyone would even want to improvise. *Hair* was the death knell of the great age of Broadway musicals. Can you imagine anyone blowing on *Don't Cry for Me, Argentina*?

As for Stephen Sondheim, he doesn't bother to write, or try

to write, standards: he perceived some time ago that the record industry no longer looks to Broadway as a source of songs, and simply gave up trying to please two masters. His shows are integrated beyond the dreams of Lorenz Hart, and few of his songs mean much out of the original context. As much as I admire his shows in themselves, I have been baffled by the occasional success of one of his songs on its own, as for example *Send in the Clowns*.

David Raksin said, "Right now the best music (in the great melodic tradition) is being written by Brazilians. It's a shame that our guys are not doing it. I write all the time, but I would never even bother trying to sell it. Nobody's interested.

"Most people today don't even know what such songs are all about. You rarely hear a song, unless it's by Stephen Sondheim or Cy Coleman, which has any breadth. Every song says 'baby' eight times in the first phrase, and it's repetitious to a fault. The phrases are disjunct. They sound as if they are made to be sung by a guy who just carried a piano up ten flights of stairs. This kind of songwriting is at the level of finger painting. And people seem to think they're listening to music. It's a sad situation."

It used to be that only the best art of an age survived; the rest was filtered out by neglect until it was forgotten. Alas, this is no longer so. Now that Time Life has fused with the entertainment colossus Warner Bros., Time Warner is, through massive television campaigns for mail-order recordings, selling seemingly all the crap that was recorded in the last forty years, and for the first time in history we are proceeding into the future dragging our cultural garbage with us. The records of Elvis Presley are infinitely more profitable to Time-Warner than the music of Kern, given that Presley's teen-age girl fans are approaching or in their fifties and raised their children on that stuff. And even when Time-Life does promote music of the 1940s for the geriatric set, it is the worst of it, not the best, the silly novelty songs that slept in the juke-boxes alongside Sinatra's Bluebird record of *The Song Is You*. Bird Lives? So do *Mairzy Doats* and *Blue Suede Shoes*.

Henry Miller said in the opening of one of his books that it wasn't art, it was a gob of spit in the face of art. Elvis Presley hit the national consciousness in 1955. He was a gob of spit in the face of all education, all elegance, all aspiration: the slob proclaimed, the slob raised to the level of artist. Actually Presley was able to sing well. I once heard him sing a ballad unadorned, and he did it very nicely indeed. At a conference I attended, an engineer did a demonstration of recording techniques, starting with a raw original Presley track, then showing what was done to it electronically. I liked the raw track, hated what was done to it. The Elvis Presley we knew was a garish phenomenon, to be sure, but a manufactured one.

And American popular music has declined much since Elvis. I remember my late friend Bob Offergeld, when he was music editor of *Stereo Review*, saying, "Previous civilizations have been destroyed by the barbarians from without. This one will be destroyed by the barbarians from below."

It haunts me every time I hear someone like Madonna, every time I stumble across some current horror movie on television, every time I see some highly-acclaimed piece of vapid escapism such as *E.T.* After the 1950s, Alec Wilder used to say darkly, "The amateurs took over." The morons with guitars and three chords. American music had begun the descent toward rap, surely an ultimate: harmony, such as that with which Kern seduced the ear, was gradually abandoned, and in rap even melody disappears. And, meanwhile, as "critics" raised on Presley and with no knowledge of the American musical past acclaimed rock-and-roll to be "art" and then others raised on acid and punk rock began to talk seriously of rap as art, all sorts of people who knew nothing of real music began rising to positions of power in all sorts of areas, publishing and even politics. Quincy Jones, renegade from jazz, founded a magazine devoted to rap. His partner was our old friend Time Warner.

Oberlin University established a course on the music of the Beatles; it doesn't have one on that of Kern, Arlen, Gershwin, Porter. In the 1992 spring semester the University of Iowa instituted a credit course called -- I kid you not -- Elvis 101. The computer virus of lowered standards has invaded not only our assembly lines; it has invaded our educational system.

The social changes have been incremental, as the entertainment industry has eroded the mores of the American society. In the 1940s, adolescents were titillated by demure nudes in photography magazines and the Petty, Vargas, and Gil Elvgren paintings. Then Hugh Hefner published the nude photo of Marilyn Monroe in a publication he called Playboy. But the photos were still comparatively discreet. Hefner wrote a babble he dignified as the Penthouse Philosophy, arguing for total sexual license. In Penthouse Bob Guccione ceased blanking pubic hair from the photos. The legs opened; then the labia; then the girls began to masturbate and make love to each other. Now your local video store has its hard-core corner.

So too in the record industry. The sexual references became gradually more direct, and then came the exhortations to violence and cop killing. Movie special effects became constantly more gruesome, with Bruce Willis despatching a bad guy in *Die Hard* by stabbing him in the eye with an icicle. Always the entertainment industry pleads the first amendment, saying that it does not affect society, it only reflects it.

As money became the new religion of America, the successful acquisition of it became its own justification. Elvis Presley was honored with a postage stamp, and the nation elected a president who knew the words to all his records. Bob Offergeld's vision of the barbarians from below was at last fulfilled in the MTV inauguration of William Jefferson Clinton.

(To be continued)