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Jazzletter

P.O. Box 240
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October 1994

Vol. 13 No. 10

Year's End

Each fall, as the subscription year nears its end, there is a tremendous influx of mail. I consider this mail pensively. It helps me determine the direction of the Jazzletter for the coming year.

There have been only four subjects in the Jazzletter this year: *Jazz Black and White;* the experience of John Bunch in a band in a German POW camp, coming fifty years after he jumped out of a burning Flying Fortress; Gerry Mulligan; and Roger Kellaway.

One reason I quit writing for magazines is that one could barely scratch the surface of a serious subject in the short lengths allotted to writers. Editors would cut out the scrupulous documentation with which a writer presents evidence leading to sound conclusions, leaving only the conclusions, which makes the writer look like an arm-waving fanatic of unsubstantiated opinion. That rock music led to America's devastating drug problem can be documented, and indeed I predicted that it would do so in a 1965 magazine article. But simply to say so will inspire thirty-year-old editors of the rock-never-hurt-me school of non-thought to dismiss you as a nut case. That is one of the reasons I wanted my own publication. I can write to whatever length the material seems to require.

And I'm answerable only to you; and that is on a broad democratic basis. All one can do is one's work as you see it to do and hope it finds an audience. I am interested in many things. So are most of the readers, and those of narrower frame are not comfortable in our group anyway. A small number of them drop away every year, and that is as it should be.

Aside from that, I find myself fascinated by the mail. This is the most extraordinary group of readers one could imagine. Many persons had worthwhile things to say, and so I am devoting this issue to this mail and the conclusions to which it has led me.

Other Voices

I have no "preternatural talent for jazz and basketball", so perhaps I can add a thought or two on *Jazz Black and White.*

First, I disagree that blacks do not know white society because they mistake greed for racism. Greed, I grant you, is a powerful engine in American society. Powerful enough to suppress in some people their most outrageous impulses, but let me ask this question. Do you think any amount of money would make a skinhead less anti-semitic or racist? Conceivably enough it might dissuade him from bombing churches and the like, but I wouldn't want my daughter to marry one.

In general I agreed with the things you wrote about Wynton Marsalis and Miles Davis. Without wanting to be an apologist for either, I'd like to contribute to the discussion.

I see Miles a little differently than you do. True, he might have felt the same suppressed sense of vulnerability so many of us feel. If he actually experienced a loss of innocence at the hands of a white New York cop, he was both lucky and unlucky. Lucky in having such a sheltered childhood that he could keep his innocence so long. He was unlucky in not acquiring early the coping skills so important to black Americans.

One of my sisters, a pre-schooler in the 1960s, expressed an ambition to marry two television characters. When told she could not marry both men at once, she surmised, "It's because we're colored, isn't it?" If my sister had lost so much of her innocence at this tender age, Miles' childhood must have been idyllic. The down side of this, however, is that one learns to cope, if he learns at all, by coping. Perhaps his attitudes would have been different if he had realized earlier "it's because we're colored."

I continue to believe that Miles was trying to live down his background (he didn't learn that "mother" was half a word at his mother's knee). This made for contradictions in his life. On one hand his background was one that valued learning, and achieving, On the other hand, expressing these values might lead to the-grimy-ghetto school; black and white. If you accept this thesis, the remarks you cited from page sixty of his book are not so contradictory after all.

Wynton Marsalis suffers from a malady common among blacks. I know a number who feel (I almost said think) that a bad sunset is the result of white racist collusion. This is like being a member of a religious cult. Membership in the group provides a ready explanation for a lot of things and does not require thinking, a most uncomfortable activity. They resent being confused by facts.

The people I know in this camp also lack a coherent knowledge of the history they supposedly rely upon. This is not entirely their fault, considering how badly the education system in this country teaches history, particularly African American or black history. A common approach points to a string of outstanding individuals who managed to poke their heads above the clouds of racism.

Negotiating history by recourse only to salient people is a bit like crossing a river by stepping on the rocks sticking out of the water. It is a good way to cross a river. It is not a good way to learn history.

If Marsalis would stick to artistic judgments, he would be easier to bear. His high profile status somehow encourages him to make moral statements that tend to show he is historically challenged, to be kind. Unfortunately, other young musicians who admire him adopt the same attitudes. It is good, however, that his personal life seems to be free of the abuses adopted by so many. I can't imagine anything worse than a junky who is also insufferable.

Tom Mason, Daly City, California

I don't think I said blacks do not know white society because they mistake greed for racism. Many do know white society; more do not, and the reason: they are shut out by a wall of hypocrisy. And they often misread the motives of the white world.

Back in the 1960s, composer Floyd Williams and I were songwriting partners. As we were on our way to see a music publisher, Floyd started clowning, doing a Steppin Fetchit act to

hide what was undoubtedly a real nervousness and making jokes about getting robbed by Mr. White Man Boss. I said, "Listen, baby, in the music business they'll screw me as fast as they'll screw you, and don't forget it."

He never did, but his son and I, only a few months ago in Pittsburgh, saw him mistaking the bad manners of a waitress for racism. She'd been just as slow to serve me only an hour before.

The damage done to Floyd in his youth was irreversible. His death a few months ago was a terrible loss to me.

It was with real delight that Bud and I read your series on Gerry Mulligan. There were many insights, and we were interested to discover some parallel trains of thought in things we have been discussing lately. For example, the impact of radio (alas poor KJAZ), the pandering to the lowest common denominator, and the lack of true innovation in "youngsters" up and coming.

Do you think this music has finite creative limits that have all been explored? Since jazz can hardly be genetic, has the environment become so toxic to the intellect that thinking music is suffocated? Does jazz belong in a world populated by creatures whose small children know how to say "fuck" but not "please"?

In reading Part II of your piece on Gerry, we were reminded that one of the things that we share a passion for is carousels, and in particular carousel horses. The image of the carousel is an interesting corollary to jazz itself. In its time it was vital, propulsive, exciting, immediate, bright, loud, joyous, and loved by everyone. Now it is becoming faded, wistful, tinkly, peeling, all the brightness leaked away, a nostalgic echo. A few repainted relics haunt shopping malls, sad remnants that evoke shame and pity. Carousels strike me as the mechanical equivalent of harlequins: the sufferer behind the smile. Earthbound ferris wheels.

Nancy Marano played Bud's festival here this weekend with Eddie Monteiro. We have the CD with your lyric for Gerry's tune, and her gorgeous rendition of it has haunted us. And how perfect to record it with an accordion, which echoes the sound of the carousel and the hurdy-gurdy man, so mournful now.

Over lunch today we discussed the irony of reading the last part of your piece. So many subtexts (I am also a Sondheim fiend). I did not know the connection with *Early Autumn*, but years ago I produced a jazz weekend one fall in Oregon and wanted a theme that would graphically represent it on a sweatshirt. I chose the first bars of the lovely intro to that song, transposed to rest more centrally on the bar lines (to give people a better hint). Then we waited to see how many people would "get it". The answer? Three.

It may be that what is missing in jazz is what is missing in American life today: intelligence, taste, intellectual passion, artistry, refinement, the art of conversation, high standards, class, learning . . . .

We hide here in Port Townsend with our books and our music, our wine and our friends, a piano and a saxophone, and we watch the world disintegrate around us. And yet Bud's workshop this week had the most students ever, a stellar big band led by Mike Barone, and eight absolutely packed clubs night after night. And Bud's sextet is playing with grace, fire, precision, and real creativity. So what is it? Feast or famine? Rejection or renewal? The end of the line or a renaissance?

As long as you keep writing, we will have at least one voice to speculate with.

Linda Shank, Port Townsend, Washington

Linda is Bud's wife.

It suddenly became Christmas in July. At the end of that month, returning from a European journey, I found three issues awaiting me. Within the week, along came two more.

It was probably an attempt to be concise that led you to lump all of Mulligan's fifties collaborations as "a series of albums for Norman Granz," thereby depriving me of due credit for the exception. *Mulligan Meets Monk* was a Riverside LP, my only opportunity to work with Gerry. It was also a project directly conceived by me after Thelonious arrived at my office unexpectedly one day and noted that "Gerry" had dropped him off at the corner. In response to my surprise, he informed me that they were friends and frequently hung out together. I went on to suggest recording and eventually both men reacted favorably. It turned out to be a much more comfortable blend than might have seemed likely in those East vs. West days (in the late fifties, Mulligan was definitely typecast as a cool westerner), although it did get some negative reactions for being in essence Monk's original Five Spot quartet with Gerry substituted for Trane. Mulligan had no problem working with Wilbur Ware and Shadow Wilson, but this was in no way conceived as a replacement for Monk recording with Trane — *that* combination was unfortunately stymied by contractual problems stemming from Coltrane's exclusivity with Prestige.

Thelonious was quite late for the first session. Gerry and I, talking while waiting, expressed our mutual awareness of Monk's trick for diverting attention from his lateness. He would arrive at the gig or session on the run, charge up to the piano without pausing to remove hat or coat, and immediately begin to play and bark out performance instructions. I can't recall (maybe Gerry can) whether it was planned or spontaneous, but the moment Monk came through the door, both of us burst into applause. It stopped him dead in his tracks; it also defused the situation by making it clear to Thelonious that we understood his need to prove he was the man in charge.

The date was a most relaxed one. But the conclusion of the album the next afternoon also turned out inadvertently to mark the end of the original Five Spot quartet. After recording, Wilbur Ware took his bass down to the club, left it on the stand, went out to buy a sandwich — and never returned. He later claimed sudden food poisoning from the sandwich. By eleven o'clock, Thelonious had hired Ahmed Abdul-Malik.

Your mention of the abortive attempt by Gerry and you to

create a Diamond Jim Brady musical also stirred a memory for me. Cannonball Adderley and I had a long talk in my living room one mid-sixties night, on the subject of a Broadway musical based on the life of Dinah Washington. Julian had clear recollections of what a circus it was in her dressing room at the Apollo Theater ("guys peddling everything from hot jewelry to hot Kotex") and we not only had decided on major casting (Nancy Wilson, after all, was at the time vocally as close to Dinah as possible) but figured that financial backing should be no problem: both Nancy and Cannonball were doing very well for Capitol Records. We never took it any further; it still seems like a good idea.

One mild criticism: in the opening of the fascinating Roger Kellaway piece, I find the sentence: "As far as I know, only Fred Katz has ever been able to improvise jazz on the cello." Is this a double memory lapse or are you actually so unfortunate as never to have heard either Oscar Pettiford or Sam Jones on that instrument? If it's the latter, I'll gladly persuade Fantasy to send you any of at least four Riverside reissues that include some strong cello improvisation by Sam.

Finally, since this is such a Riverside-oriented letter, let me note that my July absence from home was spent running around the European jazz festival circuit as emcee of a group I had assembled: the Riverside Reunion Band (Nat Adderley, Jimmy and Tootie Heath, Tommy Flanagan, Buddy Montgomery — on vibes — and Bob Cranshaw). Wonderfully more-than-just-nostalgia music. But now I know why I've managed to live to such a ripe old age. This was the first opportunity I'd had to spend much time on the road!

Orrin Keepnews, Berkeley, California

Sometimes little things remind me of what a compact world we inhabited in New York City in those days. When I lived at 30 West 86th Street, Orrin was my neighbor, around the corner at Columbus and 85th. Gerry lived not far away on West End Avenue.

Of course I had no intention of depriving an old friend of credit for the Mulligan-Monk collaboration. Nor did I mean to deprive him of yet another credit, which he does not mention. I described how I met Roger Kellaway on a session in which Mark Murphy became the first singer to record a lyric of mine. I neglected to say that the producer of that date was Orrin, the first ever to record work of mine. These thirty-two years later, Orrin, thank you.

When I read *For Openers* in the first Jazzletter back in 1981, I realized that something very important was going to be a part of my life. Every month I would be treated to a probing, informative conversation with a superb communicator who loved the music I love. That first check to subscribe was one of the best investments I ever made. Enclosed please find my check for renewal.

The Making of Roger Kellaway goes on the list of outstanding profiles of America's great musicians. Long overdue, I might add. His ability has been too long ignored.

The first time I heard him, I mean really listened to him, was on *More Blues and the Abstract Truth.* When I received the album from Impulse, I was at first pissed. I mean, if they were going to use the title, then where was Eric? Where were Paul Chambers and Freddie Hubbard and Roy Haynes? When Impulse released Oliver Nelson's *Blues and the Abstract Truth* in 1961, a jazz classic of major proportions had been recorded in one session. I expected *More Blues* to have some out-takes, or alternates from the same session. Of course, it was a completely different group and recorded some three and a half years later. It took me a couple of weeks before I sat down and listened.

That's when I discovered Roger Kellaway. After a stunning trumpet solo by Thad Jones on Dave Brubeck's *Blues for Mr. Broadway*, a beautifully constructed piano solo (which moved me in a way Jess Stacey's interlude at the Goodman '38 concert moved me) leading to Ben Webster, seemed to raise my awareness of a new exciting player. I played it over and over, enjoying it more each time, and became a Roger Kellaway fan. Down through the years he has done so many outstanding albums and CDs. I am glad you took the time to tell his story.

His comment,"The main thing for me is that I want music to win," places him with the Jack Walraths and Don Pullens of this business, and I think assures its survival.

Oscar Treadwell, Cincinnati, Ohio

Oscar Treadwell is the widely-respected jazz disc jockey.

Enclosed is a check for another year of the Jazzletter, a publication which I now number among the treasures in my life. I only wish you produced more of them (or alternatively, that I read more slowly).

Charles Martin, Hong Kong

I enjoyed your piece on Roger Kellaway. His advice to "look for the lesson" was given to me early in my career, more than once, by those wiser than I. I have often regretted not taking it to heart a little sooner.

On at least one occasion, however, I managed to do so quickly, to the benefit of all present, including myself. It was the session you mentioned for the scoring of the TV movie *Sharon: Portrait of a Mistress* at Paramount Pictures, where I spent most of my time on the scoring stage. I had never met Sarah Vaughan, and I didn't get to work with Roger as often as I'd have liked, but in most respects this was just another group of professionals gathered together in the same place at the same time to make music — then still a fairly common occurrence. This particular call was for early afternoon, and at an hour when most of them would normally have been doing their three-martini lunches, an amazing number of "suits" was coming down out of the woodwork.

The main title and several cues involving Sarah were being rehearsed, and as usual I was taking advantage of the rehearsal to get my own act together. Normally a scoring mixer can use a bit

of dialog to help determine if the balance coming off the board will do what the composer wants it to do; but anything with lyrics would not be under dialog, and the incessant jabbering of the suits was getting to me more than it usually did.

Then I saw Sarah move away from the rhythm section to her own mic, and as I put the fader up it was as though I'd simultaneously dropped a fader on the control room: everyone got *real* quiet. And then it hit me. "Nye, you putz," I thought, "they came to hear Sarah! Leave her up there, singing or not, no matter what, and they'll stay out of your face!" I did; and they did.

Enclosed is my subscription renewal. Jazzletter means a lot more to me than sixty bucks well spent.

Nye F. Morton, Clovis, California

Nye is as recording engineer, as you have gathered.

I have a couple of memories of that session, too. The song Roger and I wrote for the main title is The Days Have No Names. *It has a gorgeous melody, but it is extremely hard to sing, which is no doubt why no one but Sass has ever sung it. We let it stand only because we knew we had Sass for our singer, and to her it would be a piece of cake, and we were having fun.*

But even she had a bit of problem with it, which of course she soon solved. Compounding the situation was the fact that she had never sung in synchronicity to a movie, and she got fascinated. Now at that point somebody led into the control booth a sightseeing tour of ladies in print dresses and men in stiff suits.

Sass missed a cue on something. As Nye noted, he had the pots up high in the control booth. And Sass's voice came thorough loud and clear: "Oh shit!" *I still remember the expressions on the faces of those ladies at this first exposure to the great Sarah Vaughan.*

A friend gave us your Jazzletter on health care. As a member of Physicians for a National Health Plan, I read it with great interest. It's the best article I've read on the subject. Enclosed is a check for three or four copies.

Jim Agna, Yellow Springs, Ohio.

What a joy it is to find your Jazzletter in my post box.

As a teacher, with no social security and therefore no Medicare, I was keenly interested in your health-care article. At sixty-nine, I am concerned about long-term care, chronic stuff, etc.

But most of all I thank you for rekindling my interest in jazz and in the popular music of the twenties through the fifties.

Claudia Whitnah, Martinez, California

Thanks in general, but specifically for the health-care piece and the Wynton Marsalis article.

Rusty Dedrick, Summitville, New York

Rusty studied with Paul Creston and Stefan Wolpe. He played trumpet with Red Norvo in 1939, then with Claude Thornhill, and later performed with Lionel Hampton and Urbie Green. He wrote for Don Elliott, Maxine Sullivan, and Lee Wiley, and became director of jazz studies at the Manhattan School of Music. He now lives in upstate New York, near the area of his childhood.

Let me add my voice to the chorus praising your health care issue. In addition to its thoroughness, I was impressed by your objectivity. It was more balanced than any health-care article I've read (or it seemed to be).

Health-care reform is tough, and your article illustrates why. It's so difficult to get the real facts into the discussion. We know the present system is shameful in many respects, but we also know that federal intervention tends to make any situation more expensive, less efficient, and less responsible. Moreover, any Democratic program (perhaps any federal program capable of being erected) will lead us closer to the day when we simply become unable to afford all of our entitlements.

I don't know if single-payer is the answer. But we sure haven't heard anything approaching your view of the Canadian system, strengths and weaknesses, and that's tragic. It also appears to be the way our politicians use "facts" to inform us.

Jim LeValley, Phoenix, Arizona

I want you to know you're writing about the right things. Music and jazz are great, but the sun and the moon are still out there.

Andy Randazzo, Richmond Hill, New York

I cannot compliment you enough on the material this year. The medical comparison with Canada alone was worth the subscription price, and your reverse-racism essay worth twice the pittance.

Bob Townend, Elkins Park, Pennsylvania

Thank you for the comprehensive, informative newsletter health coverage. We still have high hopes for a single-payer system, à la the Canadian system. It's so hard to live with lies re the Canadian system put forth by our American politicians. You helped put a lot of things straight. Thanks. Love,

Lillian Oliver, New York City

Lillian is Sy Oliver's widow.

The extra six bucks is for two Xerox copies I made of your succinct and illuminating discourse on the Canadian health-care system.

Trying to explain to my physician and my dentist pushed my patience right up against the stops. Wanting to strike while the iron (and my temper) were hot, I did the Xerox rather than order copies from you.

Keep it up. This is the best money I spend all year.

Toni Kirkman, Seattle, Washington

I find your Jazzletter one of the best written and most interesting of anything I have read, and your extensive coverage of the single-payer health plan swung me over to your position completely. I have lent that issue to several friends with similar response.

Keep up the *great* work. Sincerely,

Ted Scantlebury, Lighthouse Point Yacht Club, Florida

Ted is a Navy fighter pilot who in his career flew from carriers everything from the World War II prop jobs to the most advanced jets. He is now retired.

Apropos of your August letter:

In 1955 I stayed at Yonkers with my long-time idol Gene Krupa, whom I had brought to Australia the previous year. Between 1954 and 1980, and again in 1992-93, I brought most of the giants of jazz out to this country for tours. During my ten-day stay, I heard nothing in Gene's house except Bach. When I asked him why, he replied, "Bach was the greatest improviser in the history of music." It is an anecdote I have recounted often in the years that followed.

My other memorable comment from Gene came after playing a track from the Rampart Street Paraders and hearing the lusty solo of Abe Lincoln. Gene exploded with "Who the fuck was *that*???"

Jazz has been a big part of my life as I recounted in my 1979 autobiography, which I called *Ladies, Legs and Lemonades*.

H.R. (Kym) Bonython, North Adelaide, South Australia

Kym, who gave me welcome help on the Woody Herman biography I am now completing by rounding up all the press on Woody's one Australian tour, is an amazing man. In World War II, he flew Mosquito bombers and was a war hero with the Royal Australian Air Force. He won Britain's Distinguished Flying Cross. After the war, he drove speedboats, racing cars, and motorcycles. He has also been a successful farmer, businessman, and jazz impresario.

Enclosed is my money order for my 1995 subscription to Jazzletter. It continues to be my most eagerly awaited periodical, and the only one I frequently re-read and even more frequently quote to friends and colleagues.

Your issues on Medicare was excellent, and brave. As you know, Canadians often grumble about "high taxes" compared to the USA. Do I begrudge this when I know what it provides for everyone? Not for a moment. Neither does anyone who has had exemplary and immediate medical care, including my ninety-two-year-old mother, who following a severe stroke received six months of phenomenal care, physiotherapy, and now continuing, paid, home care to allow her the maximum time in her own apartment. Her income totals $14,000 a year from a small pension. I am sure that in most parts of the USA she would not have been able to afford the insurance necessary for this level of care, and would be dead now. While not perfect, our system works well, and the outrageous criticisms of it would be funny if they weren't so dangerously wrong.

I also particularly enjoyed the series on Gerry Mulligan. His wit and intelligence have always informed his playing, from my old ten-inch Pacific Jazz #1 quartet recording through the *Age of Steam* to *Rebirth of the Cool*. Thank you for expanding my knowledge and enjoyment of the man behind the music.

Keith Black, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Among the recent Jazzletter pearls, I particularly liked the ones on Gerry Mulligan. I heard his first big-band album in the company of friends I played with in my youth, in somewhat memorable circumstances, and I enjoyed your account of larger parallel events in the real world.

I passed your Canadian health-care piece on to a friend at the Ontario Ministry of Health. I thought it was so refreshing.

My wife had her gall bladder out at our local hospital last week. When she finally made up her mind to go ahead with it, she was given several possible dates in the near future. The one she chose was only a week away. She went into day surgery at 7:30 a.m., had the operation with the new technology, which involves a minimum of cutting, came home the same night (about 8:30 p.m.), recovered last week at home, and is now back at work.

It was our first major personal encounter with the health-care system in a while. Our impression was that things are still working well, even with the economizing reforms of the past few years. I think a lot of people up here are just astounded by the U.S. health-care debate, though I suppose the politics are easy enough to understand. The American political system is just so diffuse and so susceptible to pressure from well-financed interests.

In any case, you deserve some kind of medal for your piece.

Randy White, Toronto, Ontario

Your Medicare issue was terrific. As for the few subscribers who didn't like it, I say to hell with them.

Paul Copeland, Seaforth, Ontario

A *big* thanks for the health care reform issue. Less than a week after it arrived, the San Francisco Chronicle ran a short story stating that MediCal spends five cents on the dollar for administrative expenses while the insurance companies spend twenty-five cents to the tune of $17 billion a year. That's *just* in California.

It is extremely depressing since I am involved with two organizations that sponsor motorcycle rides to raise money. They are the Ride for Kids for Pediatric Brain Tumor Research and the California 24-Hour Rally for Alzheimer support groups. My father and an uncle died with it.

An older friend, who is not a paranoid conspiracy nut, thinks that major disease is and will be used for population control; but

that it is not an organized conspiracy but rather an unspoken understanding among nations and certain groups. If we look at the tenacity with which our governments does *not* clean up toxic waste sites or the way George Bush *refused to do anything* about population control here or abroad or any number of things you could add to the list, it sounds just a little less crazy.

Armand Caputi, San Francisco, California

I can give you firsthand testimony to the callousness and heartlessness of the modern American medicine establishment.

About ten years ago I was diagnosed with polycystic kidney disease, which means that both my kidneys are covered with cysts and are two or three times larger than the average kidney. My case was complicated by an infection of one or more cysts which, at its worst, produces pain just about equal to that of a kidney stone, supposedly the worst pain known to medical science. I won't go into detail about the total destruction this illness wreaked on my career and financial savings. In a word, it was devastating.

To be honest, I can't feel sorry for myself because I have a close friend who has several overlapping neurological illnesses, including Lupus. She was at one time an up-and-coming actress, part of that generation of actors that produced Susan Sarandon, Kevin Kline, Christopher Walken, and many more, all of whom had been her friends and colleagues. However, her illness killed her career as it ate away at every part of her body. Her once lovely face is now deeply lined by incessant pain. She has recently been denied certain treatments that could save her life, or at least greatly alleviate the terrible pain and discomfort she suffers daily, because Blue Cross refuses to cover them and she can't come up with the cash the doctors are demanding to perform these new procedures. So this once beautiful woman tragically deteriorates. It really makes you wonder what kind of a country we have become to allow such things. And if the Republicans have their way, that is pretty much the way things will continue. I hear that Montreal and Toronto are both beautiful places to live in.

The one thing that truly helps me overcome my own periods of great pain is work, writing. Writing my Coltrane book was the best therapy I could get. Not just distractions from pain, but also because filling my life with Coltrane's music itself, particularly his early music, was so healing.

Two projects have been concerning me of late, both of them to one degree or another prompted by what has been going on in jazz for the past ten years or so, and particularly the battle over Lincoln Center. I realize that to many outside the jazz world, these concerns may seem like much ado about nothing very consequential. But I believe that this music *does* matter, and although the majority of our society may be uninterested, I am certain that the eyes of our posterity are upon us.

But we do not have to look to the future to be so concerned about the current state of jazz — jazz used to be a progressive force in our society, and most members of the jazz world used to share progressive social ideals, although there were some exceptions such as Stan Kenton. This had mainly to do with racial matters, but it did go beyond that. Not that everyone in the jazz world shared exactly the same social and political views. But the constant elements of renewal and innovation and acute and compassionate sensitivity have been as much a part of the development of jazz as blues and improvisation. And those elements have profoundly affected, I believe, most of those involved in the music to whatever degree, and shaped their view of the world and its possibilities.

Which is why, incidentally, there is nothing wrong with your devoting the Jazzletter to non-musical matters. You speak from a "jazz sensibility", compassionate and humane, and genuinely progressive. That is what is key.

Black anti-white racism such as that of Stanley Crouch is usually thought of as an attitude of the extreme left, but it is, like white anti-black racism, really a reactionary viewpoint, of course. The utopian concept of a truly integrated world is the radical vision. So it is no surprise that Crouch, who supported Reagan and Clarence Thomas, is also at heart a black racist, at least when it comes to jazz — the only place where he has any power.

I greatly enjoyed your portrait of Gerry Mulligan, one of my favorite musicians. I can't believe that neither the Lincoln Center nor the Carnegie Hall programs have saluted Mulligan, one of the most influential musicians of the last forty years or so. With Mulligan, they could have had such a variety of programming, from his early and later big-band composing and arranging, his classic quartets, the sextet (one of my favorite Mulligan groups; its music, like so much of Mulligan's stuff, was genuinely mainstream and avant garde at the same time). Then, of course, if they could open their minds just a little, there is Mulligan's contemporary work, such as the *Age of Steam* album and *Little Big Horn.*

The project I have been concentrating on the last few months is called *Blue — The Jazz Scene of the Fifties and Its Influence on the Nineties.* It is, in short, a rebuff of Marsalis and Crouch. Crouch compares the current jazz scene to that of the Fifties. By presenting that truly Golden Era and comparing it to the present, the hollowness of the current jazz scene will be made clear.

I am glad to see that you are continuing to produce the Jazzletter. This past year's Jazzletters have been important enough to justify your entire venture. Keep up the wonderful work.

Eric Nissenson, Stamford, Connecticut.

Please write about jazz and less about politics. Otherwise, it is excellent.

Irwin Kove, West Hartford, Connecticut

You are doing more than just a fine job. Your writing of the English language is superb. It's probably a gift. Many are called, few are chosen. You are definitely one of the few. Keep up the good work. There are many people who love it.

Werner M. Schwarz, Meilen, Switzerland

It must be ten or more years since our good friend John Birks Gillespie let me see some of your Jazzletters and almost as long since one of our other good friends, Bud Shank, gave me a present of a subscription and got me hooked. Please keep up the great job you're doing.

Peter C. Bould, London, England

I just received the latest Jazzletter, and much to my surprise it contained a rather one-sided exposition on health care. It never occurred to me that the federal government administering a single-payer system would be the answer! Is this the same federal government that brought us the Post Office, the Vietnam war, and has done such a masterful job of managing the nation's debt?

I could counter your arguments by stating that I feel there is a jazz music crisis in this country. People in small towns cannot hear live, high-quality music without traveling to larger, urban centers. Additionally, musicians and record companies are gouging the public with exorbitant CD prices. I think the federal government should take over the jazz music industry. By regulating outfits like Mosaic and Blue Note records, we can make good, affordable music available to all. Jazz musicians could be assigned to play in smaller towns, and to ensure quality the government could determine what music should be played. Also, because whites are underrepresented in the jazz community, the government can mandate the percentage of whites to ensure fairness. The President can appoint a board of lawyers to administer the program (for example, Richard Nixon could appoint James Watt as Minister of music to keep our culture safe). Costs could be kept down by capping musicians' salaries. And because the government pays for everything, the whole program would be free to the public.

Gene, I subscribe to the Jazzletter to learn more about jazz. If you want a political forum, why don't you write for the New Republic or the American Spectator? I don't begrudge you your views, but your are forcing me to pay you to hear them! Please cancel my subscription and refund the remainder of my money.

Geb Blum, Tulsa, Oklahoma

We're going to pass for 1995. Thanks for all the good stuff over the years. I liked it best when you discussed the *music* and how musicians made it. I liked it less when you got into sociology and how this group or that was being maltreated. Jazz is to me profound and joyous, and I am grateful to all those involved. For artists in general, their worth far exceeds their recompense. Goes with the territory. Always has.

Ed Wolff, Boulder, Colorado

Robert and I thoroughly enjoyed your series on Gerry Mulligan. We had just returned from a jazz festival on behalf of the Jackie Robinson Foundation to find your Mulligan series waiting. We had a brief chat with Mr. Mulligan, and he allowed us a few photographs. It was a thrill to tell him personally how many years of pleasure he has given us. One of my lifelong goals was realized He shook my hand.

Thank you again for your excellent articles. We enjoy them all. Contrary to some of your other subscribers — you can write on any damned subject you like!

Rodney and Roberta Hampson, Fayetteville, New York

I've never written a fan letter before, although I'm fifty-seven and have had ample inspirational opportunities to have done so. So many powerful voices in jazz have come (and gone) without my having taken the time to tell them of the joy, revelation and serenity they have given me: Whitney Balliett, Irene Kral, Sarah Vaughan, Gene Norman, Norman Granz, Billy Strayhorn.

As I was making out my renewal check, I realized I had the chance to tell you how much I appreciate you. From Down Beat to *Song of the Jet*, your clarity, lucidity, and ability to articulate has been a continuing source of power, thought, and creativity.

Most of all, like Socrates, you've make me think.

Thank you.

Dave Berk, York, Pennsylvania

In Response

On August 11, Senator Gramm (who pronounces Yale as two syllables, Yay-yuhl) said on the Senate floor:

"Last year more people died in Canada waiting to get into the operating room than died on the operating table."

What has fascinated me during the shameful non-debate that went on in the Congress — which many scholars are calling the worst in fifty years — was the utter failure of the mainstream press to examine properly the Canadian medical system.

Why didn't they do so? Toronto and Montreal are a lot closer than San Francisco to the network headquarters in New York City: an hour or less flying time. And Peter Jennings, Morley Safer, Thalia Assuras, Ray Pizzi, James McNeil of McNeil-Lehrer, and other network journalists not only know what goes on in Canada, they *are* Canadians. So — listen to the accents — are a number of CNN's correpondents. Jennings even maintains a home in Canada, possibly to continue his Canadian health-care benefits. Why haven't they examined the Canadian system? Because the television industry will do anything the insurance industry wants. There is that much advertising money involved.

The health insurance industry bought and paid for the Congress and spent millions misinforming the American public about health-care reform. The Los Angeles Times Magazine ran an extensive article on the subject titled *The Triumph of Harry and Louise*. The sub-headline read: "Who is winning the health-car war? Not doctors, nurses or hospitals, not lawmakers or bureaucrats; certainly not sick, unemployed or uninsured Americans. The insurance

companies reign just about supreme." The industry is now running a similar campaign against California's Prop 186, which would give that state a "single-payer" system.

As for Linda Shank's letter, I am indeed beginning to think the music has finite limits that have been explored. Nineteenth Century romanticism reached that point. That doesn't mean David Diamond and Samuel Barber and Prokofiev and many more have not written beautiful music within its parameters. But the great explorative period is over, and so it is in jazz. I cannot help reflecting how brilliantly innovative it was when Orrin Keepnews was actively producing in New York. Nye Morton puts it well when he talks about a time when it "was just another group of professionals gathered together in the same place at the same time to make music — then still a fairly common occurrence." It isn't now.

As Tom Mason notes, many people seek credos that provide instant explanations and do not require thinking, "a most uncomfortable activity." Eric Fromm examined this phenomenon in *Escape from Freedom*. Geb Blum illustrates the point. Unlike Ted Scantlebury, he had made up his mind about the health-care piece before he started reading it. So blinded was he by his belief system that he did not really read it at all.

Others found the piece objective, as I think it was. I started out to research it with no fixed position. I sought to find what was wrong with the Canadian system, wondering indeed if its almost psychopathic derogators, such as Senator Robert Dole, knew something I didn't. They didn't. Mr. Blum, however, saw it as "a rather one-sided exposition." It was neither an exposition nor one-sided not even, as Jim LeValley suggests, an "approach". But proof that Mr. Blum did not read it is his statement, "It never occurred to me that the federal government administer a single-payer system would be the answer!"

The Canadian system, as I made abundantly clear, is NOT a single-payer system. It is a provincial system receiving federal assistance. Ontario, a rich province, gets comparatively little federal aid. The maritime provinces, which are poor, get more. But the *administration* of the system remains in regional hands.

Mr. Blum's attempt at satire in hypothesizing a subsidization of jazz is rather sad. He clearly has not studied the subject. As Gerry Mulligan noted, American jazz musicians, who travel a lot, are frequently dismayed by the provincialism they encounter at home.

Three years ago, Roger Kellaway and I wrote a narrated orchestral suite portraying the city of New York for West German (WDR) radio. We had the use of the brilliant WDR big band, and Catarina Valente was our singer. And we did indeed take this concert to little German towns, bringing the music to them. Roger had the luxury of two weeks of rehearsal with the big band, and the final performance, recorded in two concerts in Cologne for broadcasting, was stunning. That orchestra is full of Americans. The superb Dennis McKrell is now its permanent drummer, and pianist Bill Dobbins is its conductor.

No one dictated to us what we should write or do, which is more than I can say for projects done for American commercial recording outfits. Indeed, the freedom was rather disconcerting.

Bob Brookmeyer is director of the Danish radio jazz orchestra. And another American is director of ULM, the big jazz orchestra funded by the city of Helsinki.

I have just been listening to a CD by the late trombonist Sonny Costanzo, made with a big string orchestra and the Czech Radio Big Band. Superb. We don't make music like this here any more.

Recently I received a tape of a project by Alan Broadbent and pianist Walter Norris, who lives permanently in Germany. Virtually a full symphony orchestra is used. Alan's writing is wonderful, the playing is superb. Another project of WDR in Cologne.

I am not "forcing" Mr. Blum to "pay to hear" what I have to say. He has the absolute right not to resubscribe; he does not have a right to demand his money back in mid-year. Time and Newsweek do not do allow this, and neither will I. I don't write for the New Republic or American Spectator (in fact I don't even read them) because I don't want to. This is my publication; I founded it to have that freedom. Mr. Blum says he doesn't begrudge me my "views" (that's what such people call facts they don't like), and then proves that he does. He illustrates that widespread tenet that freedom of speech is the right to say anything he agrees with.

Does he know more about the Canadian health system than the three Canadians whose letters appeare above?

All the objections to an American health plan seem to center on the fear of bureaucracy. But Americans are dealing with huge, faceless, and incompetent medical bureaucracies now — fifteen hundred of them, run expensively, inefficiently, and arbitrarily by the insurance companies, which can refuse to pay at the whim of some secretary. Consided Armand Caputi's letter, noting the comparison in administrative expenses. A year and a half ago, Roger Kellaway almost died of a gall-bladder disease. (See letter by Randy White.) The doctors first tried laparoscopy. It didn't work. So they cut him open. Blue Cross refused to pay for the first operation; he paid for it himself. That couldn't happen in Canada.

What the non-debate over health care has made clear is that Americans peculiarly fuse a religious worship of their country with a seething hatred of its government. You will note — Keith Black's letter is typical — that Canadians, while they don't love taxes, don't really begrudge them. They get something for their money, including clean safe streets and health care. Americans get pork barrel. If the American political system is approaching collapse (and a number of scholars think it is), then that is a separate subject from health care, and should be addressed as such.

But the more interesting letter, for unblushing indifference to the condition of the artist, is that of Ed Wolff. Enter through the kitchen, boys, and keep the folks happy and finger-popping. Linda, you ask what has gone wrong in America? There it is. Goes with the territory. Tyrone Power said the motto of this philosophy was IGMFY: I've Got Mine, Fuck You.

The Jazzletter will continue to expand its subject matter.