Gene Lees
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93024-0240

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He Fell from a Star
Part Three

Almost invariably, Anita Evans said, when she and Gil would be riding in a car in Los Angeles, they would be stopped by the police: a white man and a black woman. "It infuriated him," she said.

"We were in California in 1963 when Miles and Gil wrote music for the play *The Time of the Barricuda*. Then we were in California in 1966. We came to Los Angeles from the Monterey Jazz Festival. We stayed at the Chateau Marmont on Sunset Boulevard. These incidents happened mostly on Sunset. I wouldn't mention it if it happened only once or twice. But it was an inevitable thing to be followed by a police car. We were stopped even with the children in the car."

"You ask Gil a question," Miles told Marc Crawford, "you get a straight answer. Like in New York, somebody asked him what he thought of Ornette Coleman's tonal organization, and Gil told them, 'That's Ornette's business. If it isn't good, he'll take care of it.'

Miles said, "You know, in New York we go over to each other's house, but we don't drop our problems on each other. When Gil is writing, he might spend three days on ten bars of music. He'll lock himself up in a room of his house, put a 'do not disturb' sign on the door, and not even his wife Lillian — " the interview was done at the time of Gil's first marriage " — "can come in. It's torture for her when he's writing. It's like he's out to lunch. Sometimes he'll get in there and play the piano for twelve hours. He's not only a composer and a hell of an orchestrator, he just knows instruments and what you can get out of them. He can use four instruments when others need eight . . . .

"People always want to categorize music — jazz, classical. Put labels on it. But Gil says all music comes from the people, and the people are folk. Therefore all music is folk."

Gil arrived. He was already white-haired and, Marc wrote, his six foot-plus frame filled the doorway. He told Marc, in a moment alone with him, that he considered Miles a true artist, adding, "and there are very few of them in the world today. I also think he's a pretty fine specimen of the human animal in most things he does."

He again defined himself as "a commercial arranger" and said that "what I write is popular," surely one of the oddest claims any artist ever made for himself. And he told Marc: "I only work for Miles and myself."

Nat Hentoff, who attended the sessions that winter and then wrote one of the best sets of liner notes ever attached to an album, described Gil rather aptly as resembling "a gently aging diplomat who collects rare species of ferns on weekends."

He wrote: "Though always polite, he is in firm control of his record dates and insists on hearing exactly what he has written."

One of Gil's staunchest admirers was a young and boyish-faced ex-trumpet player and former Marine Corps officer with a degree in psychology from Duke University. Creed Taylor was proving to be one of the most astute record producers in the history of the business, with a strange knack for getting from musicians performances that were simultaneously of the highest artistic merit and yet had considerable commercial appeal. His "product" usually sold well. And Creed had been following the work of Gil Evans since the Thornhill days. Indeed, Creed saw that band when it played Duke. "I remember standing there with goosebumps," Creed said. "That was the '49 band."

Creed had founded the Impulse label and established the pattern for his career. He was not "an" a&r for a label. He would always be the sole a&r man, running the label completely and doing exactly as he pleased, not answering to a front office somewhere. This may be one of the keys to his success: the fact that he early made himself answerable to nobody. And one of the artists he now wanted to record was Gil.

The first album that came of this was *Out of the Cool*, which now has a sort of cult status. Gil turned to old associates for two of the pieces. He did a new version of *Where Flamingos Fly* by John Benson Brooks and *Stratusphunk* by George Russell, who had shared arranger credits with Gil on a Lucy Reed album for Fantasy. He orchestrated Kurt Weill's *Bilbao Song* for a third track, and used two of his own pieces, one called *Sunken Treasure* and a new version of *La Nevada*. It is interesting to see how the orchestral colors in *La Nevada* differ from those in the same tune in the *Great Jazz Standards* two years earlier for Pacific Jazz. The same figure from Prokofiev that Gil used in the Helen Merrill album opens *Where Flamingos Fly*.

Elvin Jones, who had previously recorded with Gil on *Great Jazz Standards*, is the drummer on this album. He was one of Gil's favorites. Elvin is perhaps the most masterful colorist in the history of jazz drums; and Gil would use him again. Charlie Persip plays second percussion. *La Nevada* cooks unbelievably, this quirky four-bar fragment on G minor. The trumpet soloist is Johnny Coles, one of the few trumpet players to learn the lessons of space that Miles Davis exemplified. (Budd Johnson is the tenor soloist.) This is a weirdly haunting track, filled with that distant melancholy that is such a part of Gil's writing.

Gil's next album is an anomaly, an aberration, in that he didn't write it. And what one bought when one purchased an album with Gil Evans' name on it was the writing. *Into the Hot* contained three pieces by Johnny Carisi and three by Cecil Taylor. Gil told Mark Miller, in their Shanghai restaurant conversation:

"I produced that album. They'd already made the covers, and they wouldn't make new covers. It cost seventy-five hundred." There is some logic to that. The covers of the two albums were obviously photographed at the same sitting. The backdrop is reddish. Gil sits on a stool on the cover of *Out of the Cool*; wearing the same suit, he stands in front of a music stand on the

cover of *Into the Hot*. Many of his admirers hated the album.

Miller made the point that it looked like an endorsement of Carisi and Cecil Taylor. Gil's explanation to him of why that album was made is bizarre:

"I was going to go to Verve, from Impulse, because Creed Taylor moved over there. So I decided I didn't want to make that last album. I wanted to make the next album on Verve. So I was curious to know what Cecil and John Carisi were doing, and it was a way to find out."

Creed Taylor said, "*Into the Hot* should have stayed in the pot. Gil said, "I've got to write an album. But I can't write a note.' He didn't get that explicit, but that's what he meant. So he got Cecil Taylor, of all people, to follow up on *Out of the Cool*. The truth is that nobody produced that album. That album is not a good memory."

I don't know what Gil found out, but the rest of us found out that there was only one Gil Evans. Even the Carisi pieces establish that nobody wrote like Gil.

Creed indeed left Impulse, to run the Verve label, which had been purchased from Norman Granz by MGM records; Bob Thiele took over as a&r director of Impulse, and produced the finest albums of John Coltrane, the core of Coltrane's canon. (Creed had signed Coltrane before leaving for Verve.)

Creed was the sole a&r director of Verve. He closed down all releases for a period of about five months, to break continuity with the label's past. He redesigned the look of the label's covers, using abstract modern art or strikingly irrelevant but evocative photography. And he would produce for that label one of the most remarkable bodies of work in the history of jazz, classic albums by Stan Getz (*Focus*, for one), all the best work of Antonio Carlos Jobim, some of the finest of the Bill Evans albums, and albums by Walter Wanderley. And one of the albums he made was *The Individualism of Gil Evans*.

The original LP contained five tunes. Gil turned again to Kurt Weill for *The Barbara Song*, which has a strange and haunting reflective quiescence about it. Gil had an eerie ability to write the sound of quiet. The other tunes included his own *Las Vegas Tango*, *Flute Song*, and *El Toreador*, and *Hotel Me*, a co-composition with Miles Davis. The total running time of that album is 32 minutes and 29 seconds. But for the CD edition, the vaults were searched and a great deal of material that Creed and Gil had abandoned was included, those "special bonus" tracks that flesh out CD reissues. At first I thought Gil and Creed were right about the rejected material, but the more I hear it the more I value it, particularly *Time of the Barracuda*, interesting for, among other things, the excellent Wayne Shorter tenor solo. And *Spoonful* has some predictably fiery playing by Phil Woods.

I no longer remember whether it was Creed or Gil who asked me to write the liner notes of that album, but I do remember that Creed set aside an audition room for us and Gil and I listened to the tape together and discussed it. I wrote at the time:

"Without doubt the most individualistic and personal jazz composer since Duke Ellington, Evans is held in near-reverence by a wide range of composers, arrangers, instrumentalists, and critics. This feeling is only intensified by the fact that he is a rather inaccessible man — not unfriendly, or anti-social; just politely, quietly inaccessible — whose output has been small, and of all of it remarkable."

As we listened to *Las Vegas Tango*, Gil said, "It's a plain traditional minor blues." There was nothing plain about it. Gil said, "I used this title because it had a kind of open sound like the plains, to me. I grew up in the west." A gorgeous, big-toned, melancholy trombone solo by Jimmy Cleveland emerges from the orchestration. The opening phrase is so perfectly suited to the composition that I asked Gil if it was written. "No," Gil said. "That's his." One of the most striking things about the track is the way Elvin Jones dances across the cymbals, drawing from them all the varied sounds of which they are capable. Shelly Manne thought Elvin was the greatest drummer in the history of jazz.

I asked Gil why he so often used Spanish titles for his tunes. He answered: "I don't know. Perhaps because I can't find English titles for them. I've always inclined to Spanish music, but I didn't really absorb it from the Spanish. I got it from the French impressionists' — and, of course, the Spanish impressionists, like de Falla."

Creed Taylor told me that he'd had trouble getting that album done. Gil did not have the public name that Miles Davis did and limited sales could be expected. MGM allowed Creed a budget of only $10,000. These were, to be sure, early 1960s dollars. He told Gil that this was all he could get. Gil would have to bring the album in at whatever cost he could and keep the remainder for himself. Gil fiddled with the scores on the dates to the point that he ran it over budget and ultimately lost money on the album.

"That sounds right," Jimmy Maxwell said when I told him that story, and he too commented on Gil's endless fiddling with ch on the dates: "That's what happened with the Patti Page album and all the others.

"Gil never had a lead sheet even. He wrote everything on two lines, one line for the brass and one line for the reeds, and then the copyist had to separate them. And he wrote in concert. The copyist had to transpose."

Given that Gil didn't write *Into the Hot*, the *Individualism* album was his first in three years, a break in his one-a-year pattern. It was released in 1964.

George Wein recounted an incident that occurred about that time, one that gives an insight into Gil's character.

"I'd known Gil for years, but we were never that close. We weren't buddies.

"I got a serious attack of gout. And I was in pain. It was in my knee. And one night at my apartment, 9:30, there was a knock on my door. Not even a ring from down below. I opened the door and it was Gil.

"I said, 'Gil! What are you doing here?'

"He said, 'I heard you've got the gout. Cherries are very good for the gout. I brought you this bottle of cherries. Maybe they might help you.'

"Isn't that a beautiful little story? I never forgot."

This sweetness of Gil's nature, this affection for others, apparently didn't mean much to his first wife, Lillian. According to Jimmy Maxwell, she could not abide Gil's close friendships with other musicians, and she brought about a temporary estrangement between the two of them, though they had been friends since Stockton. Jimmy said:

"Gil's wife and our side had a falling out. She accused us of being faggots. After they separated she'd call me up and cry. Couldn't I get her back with Gil? She said he took all her money and spent it. I don't think he took it. I'm sure she gave it to him.

"Not that he was that kind of a guy, either. He was just casual. It would never occur to him that it meant any more to her than it did to him. To him, money meant nothing. Truly."

Finally, Gil and Lillian were divorced.

And then Gil met Anita Cooper, a native of Staten Island. "My family on my mother's side have been in New York for generations," she said. "My father was born in North Carolina."

Anita was working on her doctorate in psychotherapy when she met Gil. "But I was getting my degrees just to please the family," she said. "My true love was always music." She has been a singer, songwriter, and producer.

"I met Gil at Birdland the night before George Washington's birthday when John Coltrane was playing there. It was the very night Coltrane met Alice. She was playing with Terry Gibbs. She was then Alice McLeod.

"We got married in 1963. We went out to Fire Island. So it was over the Memorial Day weekend. Noah was born March 21, 1964. Miles was born July 5, 1965."

"The *Indidivualism* album came in '64, a little after Noah came. And '65, the year Miles was born, was the *Look to the Rainbow* album with Astrud Gilberto. The album with Kenny Burrell, *Guitar Forms*, was completed in 1966."

Gil organized a band that played Monday nights at the Village Vanguard and other clubs in New York during the 1970s, and at Sweet Basil in the 1980s. He listened to the current pop music and, along with music of Charlie Parker and Charles Mingus, played some of it. A lot of people were puzzled by what he was doing. In 1969, he recorded the album *Blues in Orbit* and in 1977 *Priestess*. Bill Kirchner played one rehearsal with Gil's band. He said, "There weren't many charts. It was mostly heads. It was very loose." In time Gil incorporated electronic instruments into the group. Examples from this phase of his work are to be found in Black Hawk albums titled *Gil Evans Live at the Public Theater*, Volumes 1 and 2. It contains a lot of long and self-indulgent solos by band members, the kind Roger Kellaway calls "frothing-at-the-mouth solos."

At one point Gil performed in concert with Miles Davis, including an evening at the Hollywood Bowl. I attended it with Roger Kellaway. We thought we were going to hear the classic charts from their great albums, but they did not even appear together. Their two groups played separately. My son, who was then playing keyboards in a rock group, attended the concert, along with some of his young friends. They were seated around Roger and me, along with some younger jazz players whom Roger knew. I didn't know what to make of the music; I certainly didn't like it. And then one of the young musicians said, "This isn't very good jazz." And one of the rock musicians said, "It isn't very good rock, either." All I can remember of the concert is that there was a good deal of synthesizer sound.

Anita has a different impression of that concert: "Miles — Miles Evans — and I have a positive memory of the concert. We'd just completed a triumphant tour of Japan as a double bill with the Miles Davis group. We didn't know the concert was being hyped as a joint venture. That was never the plan. Gil was very enthusiastic about that orchestra and shrugged off word of a tepid review. Miles was a member of that orchestra and remembers Lew Soloff, Danny Gottlieb, Mark Egan, probably Pete Levin on synth, Chris Hunter, the legendary late George Adams all adding fire, humor, spirit to Gil's charts, which were arrangements of works of Bud and Bird and Hendrix and Monk and himself and me, among others. It was a great leap forward to us, it was natural evolution to Gil."

Roger and I went backstage afterwards to pay our respects to Miles and Gil. I was uncomfortable because I couldn't say that I had loved the music. Whether Gil sensed it, I don't know. In any event, he hugged me, and I remember feeling how thin he was in my arms. I believe that it was the last time I ever saw him.

In 1984, when Mark Miller asked how many scores he had for his New York band and the concert he was doing in Toronto, Gil said there were about twenty. If it were not for the take-downs by other arrangers, we would have very little of Gil's music at all; and the amount of it that exists in his own handwriting is very small.

When the Kool Jazz Festival wanted to present an evening of tribute to Gil, the scores for his earlier work had to be reconstructed from recordings by John Oddo, Manny Mendelson, and Mike Patterson, hardly an easy task with music of such textural density and subtlety. The concert was presented as a Gil Evans Restrospective on July 3, 1983, at Avery Fisher Hall in Lincoln Center.

In 1987, Gil and Helen Merrill re-recorded the material they had recorded thirty years before. Again, the scores were lost. They were transcribed from the first recording by Mark Lopeman, who was not given credit for this in the liner notes.

During the last three years of his life, Gil worked with an amanuensis and orchestrator. Maria Schneider had been one of the students in compositions and orchestration of the late Rayburn Wright at the Eastman School of Music, along with John Oddo,

Manny Mendelson, and Mike Patterson. Gil was looking for an assistant. In 1985, she telephoned him. She started working for him as his copyist, and then she began reorchestrating some of his pieces for standard instrumentation. As he became more familiar with her music, he gave her greater responsibility.

"I tended to get nervous about getting everything done," Maria said. (Jazzletter, July 1993.) "Gil tended to be very relaxed. I think we were good for each other. He was always telling me to loosen up, but if I'd been as loose as he was, I think I'd have been the last person he wanted working for him."

Maria was his assistant on assembling the music for the Paul Newman film *The Color of Money*. It seems as if Gil was always concerned about the health of his acquaintances and friends. "We had a recording session," Maria said. "In the morning I came over to his place in the West 70s between Central Park West and Columbus. I was supposed to finish up some stuff. I had had a back problem. My back was really stiff. We were trying to get out the door. He was finished up some bit of writing. We were late. The limo was there waiting, and his son Miles was there.

"Gil was in his underwear. Miles said, 'We've got to get going.' Gil said, 'No, wait, Maria's back hurts.' He said, 'I've got the perfect book.' He pulled out this yoga book and started showing me the proper way to sleep. He spent a lot of time reading to me and showing me the proper position to sleep . . . . He was telling me all these things about my health.

"Finally we got to the Nola studio on 57th Street."

Gil had been rehearsing there for about forty years.

Maria continued: "The guys were just kind of walking around. It was Gil's band, thirteen or something. Gil started reprimanding them for not working on the music and practicing. He said, 'You know, we got detained. We've been busy writing this music. I'm so disappointed in you.' He was like a disappointed father, and here we'd been talking for an hour about sleep techniques. They were all upset, because they loved and respected Gil. They looked like beaten puppies. But they loved him so much . . . .

"Gil was so interested in all cultures and all sorts of music. He took in so much stuff. He was a synthesis of that. All these unique things came together. People become nothing that unique because they are an outcome of one or two things. Gil listened to so many different things, and outside of music he was interested in many things. He had a book on African face painting. He had a mind that soaked up everything. An interested man.

"Before he died he wasn't really talking that much to his friends. Sometimes when we worked together, I didn't get a real chatty thing going. There were nights when we'd sit and listen to music, but in general I felt that if we weren't doing work, I didn't want to bug him. In a way that was maybe a mistake. Sometimes I think Gil wanted me to relax and spend time with him, but I had this way I looked up to Gil, I didn't want to be in the way, I just wanted to help him.

"One day he called me up. I said, 'How're you doing, Gil?' He was telling me how he wasn't feeling well and was worried that something was really wrong, and he'd been to a doctor. I kept thinking he was going to say we were doing a project and could I come over. But it wasn't that. He just wanted to talk. That was the last time I ever talked to him. After that he got really sick.

"Gil was very fragile at the end. He became very thin . . . . "

Maria was one of the arrangers who reconstructed Gil's scores for performance at the Montreux Jazz Festival in 1991. Gil Goldstein did a great deal of the this writing, working from sketches that Gil's sons resurrected, material that hadn't been seen in thirty years. One score that Maria did was *Miles Ahead.*

"Just in putting that together," she said, "each individual line is so beautiful. Sometimes the vertical chords that result from the horizontal lines on their own are so strange, but everything has such gravitational pull. Everything is moving ahead. Something feels tense, but it's going some place. It's a real feeling of forward motion.

"In Gil's writing, every line makes such beautiful musical sense.

"Another thing is the surprise element. There was one thing I orchestrated for him, it went from one note in anticipated eighth notes that got real fat. He wanted the instruments with low tessitura to go into their highest range and the instruments with high tessitura to go into their lowest range. He pushes instruments out of their normal tessitura, and you get a real character. You get something in the tone besides the obvious.

"Gil used to say that the marvelous thing about Miles' tone is that it was Miles' tone in every register, from bottom to top. There wasn't that division of sound. And Gil was so sensitive to tone. That's what he liked in Miles. He said over and over again that it was the tone."

The Montreux concert was held in 1991, with Quincy Jones conducting the music and Miles Davis as the soloist. Gil was dead by then. There are two views of what happened there. According to some of the people who attended that concert, it went extraordinarily well. Anita Evans said, "It was as close to levitating a room as I have ever experienced. There were more than a thousand people, French, Swiss, Italians, some Americans. In the room, it was awesome. Because the musicians were so sensitive. Many of them European. They were floating. Everyone was almost in tears of happiness, shimmering with joy. As Miles said, there was no reason for him to go back and play what had already been played. Gil would have been so happy. It went off the way Gil would have liked. It wasn't a copy of what had happened thirty years before."

The television show derived from it was a different matter. It was shot in a gloomy style. The balances on the band were flat and dull, even allowing for the limitations of television speakers.

Fortunately, the old records are about to be reissued. In October Sony will issue a five-CD package of all the collaborations of Miles Davis and Gil Evans. Also included are some tracks that were never issued, including music they wrote together for *The*

Time of the Barracuda.

Most of the important scores have now been reconstructed and the music continues to be performed. In 1993, Maria Schneider conducted the Gil Evans Orchestra, augmented for the event, at the Spoleto festival, playing the *Porgy and Bess* music, among other things. And Teo Macero is said to have found booth copies of some of the original scores.

Maria's admiration for Gil's work is almost universally shared by composers, and most critics. An exception is Stanley Crouch, and since Crouch is "artistic adviser" to the Jazz at Lincoln Center program and controls Wynton Marsalis, who runs it, this extraordinary body of jazz composition will not ever be performed there.

Crouch expressed his contempt for Gil Evans in an article titled *Sketches of Pain*, and subtitled *The rise and fall of Miles Davis*, published in *The New Republic* on February 12, 1990.

In a recent article for the influential magazine *Commentary*, Terry Teachout — a former bass player, among other things — traced the bias in the Lincoln Center jazz program. Teachout cites the black novelist and literary scholar Albert Murray's 1976 book *Stomping the Blues*. He writes:

"Murray is not a musician, and his book is an idiosyncratic interpretation of American popular music in which jazz is treated not as an independent musical idiom but as part of the blues, an older idiom that originated among Southern blacks at some point in the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries.

"For Murray, the ability to play the blues is the defining trait of 'authentic' jazz musicians. Those who do not play the blues are not authentic — and white musicians, Murray implies, cannot play the blues."

Teachout continues: "In the caption of the only photo in *Stomping the Blues* in which white musicians are shown, Murray succinctly describes these whites — including Pee Wee Russell and Gerry Mulligan, two of the most admired players in jazz — as members of the 'third line,' carefully explaining that in a New Orleans street parade, the 'first line' consists of the musicians, while the 'second line' is made up of 'dancing-and-prancing proteges . . . . (who) are permitted to carry the instruments of their favorite musicians for several blocks while the band takes a breather before starting up again.' The 'third line' is undefined, but its meaning is clear."

Teachout points out that many black players have acknowledged the influence of white players on jazz. He continues:

"Murray deals with these awkward facts by ignoring them — just as, on the other side, he ignores the fact that such indisputably major figures as Earl Hines, Coleman Hawkins, Fats Waller, Teddy Wilson, and Art Tatum, all of them black, were not blues players. With the sole exception of the drummer Gene Krupa, who is described as a 'white drummer of the so-called Swing Era,' no white musician is mentioned in the main text of *Stomping the Blues*, favorably or otherwise. Murray does not say explicitly that whites cannot play jazz, but that is what he means; whites who try to play the blues are by definition derivative, and thus of no interest; whites who do not play the blues are by definition not playing jazz, and thus also of no interest."

Now Stanley Crouch, as Teachout points out, called *Stomping the Blues* "the most eloquent book ever written about African-American music" and "the first real aesthetic theory of jazz." And it was to Albert Murray that Crouch introduced Wynton Marsalis when the latter settled in New York. Marsalis, too, never so much as mentions a white musician.

But Crouch does. His article on Miles Davis contains an extensive attack on Gil Evans.

Of the *Birth of the Cool* album, which he calls "the highly celebrated but essentially lightweight nonet sessions," he says, "Heard now, the nonet recordings seem little more than primers for television writing. What the recordings show us, though, is that Davis, like many other jazzmen, was not above the academic temptations of Western music. Davis turns out to have been overly impressed by the lessons he received at Juilliard when he arrived in New York in 1944. The pursuit of a soft sound, the uses of polyphony that were far from idiomatic, the nearly coy understatement, the lines that had little internal propulsion all amounted to another failed attempt to marry jazz to European devices. The overstated attribution of value to these recordings led the critical establishment to miss Ellington's *The Tattooed Bride*, which was the high point of jazz composition of the 1940s."

(Gil, surprisingly, never met Ellington. But one day he received a call from Ellington. Ellington said that Gil was his favorite jazz writer. Gil was thrilled.)

Crouch says of the albums Miles made with Gil, "It is true that those albums with Evans also reveal that Davis could be taken in by pastel versions of European colors (they are given what value they have by the Afro-American dimensions that were never far from Davis's embouchure, breath, fingering); if Davis's trumpet voice is removed, in fact, a good number of Evans's arrangements sound like high-level television music."

What is Afro-American about Miles' trumpet fingering, or anyone's for that matter, is a mystery; the one trumpet, or rather cornet, player who used an unorthodox fingering of his own invention was Bix Beiderbecke. As for embouchure, you put your lips together and buzz into the mouthpiece. And it is totally new to me that African Americans breathe differently from anyone else. I thought we all did it with our lungs.

And Miles studied trumpet with William Vacchiano, for forty years the principal trumpeter with the New York Philharmonic.

No work of art is diminished by its imitations. As Dizzy Gillespie said of Louis Armstrong, "No him, no me." That Roy Eldridge, Bunny Berigan (Armstrong's own favorite trumpet player, by the way), Harry James, and ultimately even Miles owe debts to Armstrong — as indeed do all jazz musicians — in no way derogates Armstrong or detracts from the thunderclap impact he had on musicians in the 1920s. So too Fletcher Henderson and

Don Redman. Probably no score in history has been more imitated by movie composers than Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps*, as in the score for *Jaws*. Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* infuses Jerry Goldsmith's excellent score for *The Omen*. The works of Carl Orff get an occasional going-over in movie music. None of this in any way vitiates the original works. Indeed, one of the measures of greatness in an artist is the length of his shadow, and Gil, like Armstrong and Dizzy Gillespie and Bill Evans and Charlie Parker and Duke Ellington and more we can all name, has a very long shadow indeed. The very extent of his emulation is proof of his importance. If others have done what he did but not as well as he did, that does not diminish him.

Despite his admiration for Gil's work, Max Harrison, who is a musician — he was trained as a pianist — had reservations about *Sketches of Spain*, saying "Evans' boring rewrite of the first movement of Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez* was a strange miscalculation. So, too, was the bogus flamenco of *Saeta* and *Solea*, although these were solo vehicles for Davis in which Evans had little part . . . (An) altogether finer expression of Evans's taste for Iberian music is *Lotus Lands*, a track on the *Guitar Forms* album that he made with Kenny Burrell."

But all criticism, except the clearest and most meticulous technical analysis, is subjective. A piece of criticism is a sort of Rorschach test of the critic. "Boring" is a subjective word, the response of the writer, not a fact about the music. Bill Kirchner, who is not only a skilled composer but also a teacher of jazz composition, thinks Gil actually improved that movement of the Rodrigo concerto. "It's more interesting," Bill said.

Though Harrison's essay on Gil was written thirty years before the Crouch piece on Miles, it might have been in response to it. "In fact," he wrote, "this music increasingly happens on several levels at once, recalling the multiplicity of events in Charles Ives's work. For instance on *Las Vegas Tango*, a gravely serene piece from the *Individualism* set, things happen close up, in sharp focus, others take place in the middle distance, some murmur far away on the horizon, and the exactness of Evans's aural imagination is such that we can hear it all, every note, every vibration, carrying significance. Yet one gains the impression that he feels music, like other forms of truth, should never be understood, that there should always remain some further element to be revealed. Note the gradual, almost reluctant, disclosure of the melodies of *La Nevada* and *Bilbao Song*, or the way the theme of *Joy Spring* is not heard until right at the end.

"These endings, many of which fade, like beautiful sunsets, as we look at them, in turn suggest by their very inconclusiveness that Evans, again like Ives, has an Emersonian dislike of the spiritual inactivity which comes from the belief that one possesses a truth in its final form. It is tempting to think that in achieving the lyrical resignation of *Flute Song* or the alert tranquillity of *The Barbara Song* Evans uses sounds rather as Mallarmé uses words — as mirrors that focus light from a hundred different angles to his precise meaning. But they remain symbols of meaning rather than the meaning itself, and much is left to the imagination. If the listener is unwilling, or, worse still, unable, to exercise this faculty, then he will soon be left behind."

Robert Farnon is intimately familiar with Gil's writing. Gil was equally familiar with Bob's. Each was well aware that the other was born in Toronto. I don't think either ever had enough ego to contemplate the effect they jointly had on arranging and orchestration in the latter half of the twentieth century. But Gil wanted to meet Bob, and Bob wanted to meet Gil, and each of them knew that I knew the other. I wanted to arrange their meeting. I thought it would be of some historical import. It was not to be: when I saw Bob in Toronto in 1984, Gil had been there and gone only a few weeks before.

Gil's gradually fading health caused him to undergo surgery in early 1988. Afterwards he left New York's winter to recover in Cuernavaca, Mexico. Instead of recovering, he contracted peritonitis, and he died there on March 20. He was not quite seventy-six.

"Gil was my best friend," Jimmy Maxwell said. "I don't think a day goes by that I don't think of him. When I'm practicing or something I'll think, 'Gee, I wish he could have heard me do that.'

"He did a lot of nice things. Somebody told me a story. When he went to England for a presentation, he said, 'Louis Armstrong was the greatest trumpet player that ever lived, and Jimmy Maxwell swung that Goodman band single-handed. He's a blowin' ass.'

"When I was with the Gerry Mulligan concert band, Gil'd come in, and say, 'God *damn*, Fen — ' he called me Fenimore ' — you finally made it, you're really doing it. Beautiful.'"

"Gil loved him like a brother," Anita said. "He was family to him in his heart and his head and it never changed. I've never known whether Jimmy Maxwell knows how much Gil cared for him."

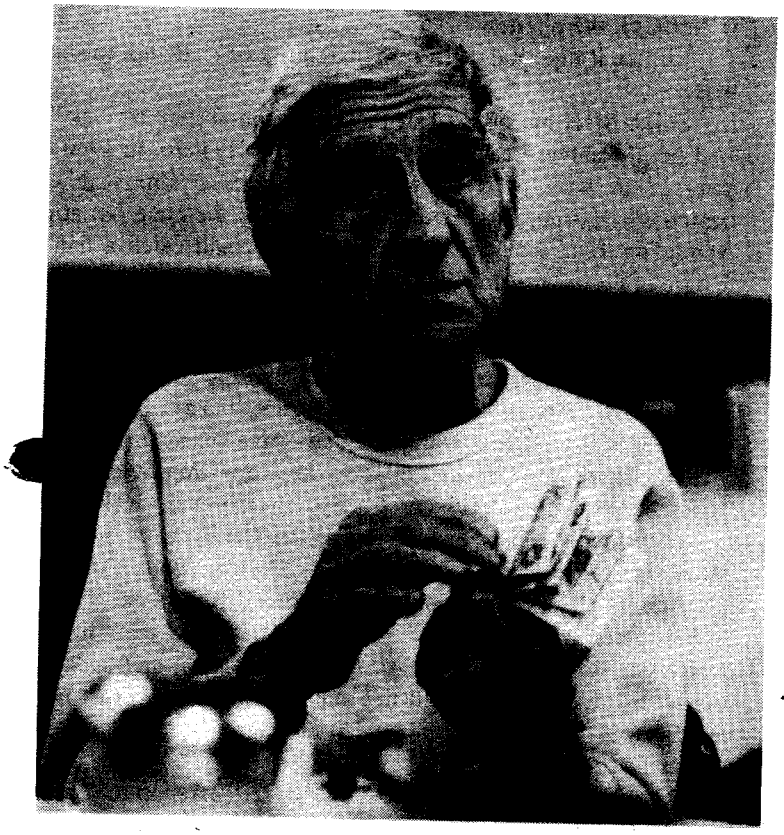
Gil touched lives in ways that even he didn't know. For example:

At one point I got a note from him, mailed from Norway, where he was doing a series of concerts. It was written on a small sheet of ochre-colored music paper, taken from one of the sketch pads composers commonly carry in case they want to jot down an idea. Gil was one of the earliest and most supportive readers of the Jazzletter. The note said simply:

"Keep on doing what you're doing. And don't smoke so many cigarettes. Love, Gil."

That note arrived when I had just made a firm decision to close down the Jazzletter. It caused me to do two things. One of them was to keep the Jazzletter going.

I had been trying to quit smoking for years. That laconic note, so typical of Gil in its understatement, was like a benediction. I held it in my hands, read it several times, and never touched another cigarette.



Gil, in Toronto, 1984 Photo by Mark Miller

I mentioned to Anita recently that some of the Brazilian musicians say that the Thornhill band and the Birth of the Cool band, as well as the subsequent work of Gerry Mulligan, had influenced the development of bossa nova. Gil was admired by such musicians as Antonio Carlos Jobim.

"Gil and I met Jobim," Anita said. "We were at a party at the loft of Kenneth Nolan, a painter we knew. Jobim was there. When he saw Gil, he got down on his knees and walked across the room on his knees and kissed Gil's feet.

"Gil was blown away.

"If it were not for music," she said, "I think it would all be over by now. Music is the magical medicine for all our souls and spirits."

And of Gil she added, "He's still here, really. I still think he's up in his studio."

Recommended Records

The following are available on CDs:

Claude Thornhill: *Best of the Big Bands*. Columbia CK 48152. This album contains several of Gil's charts for the postwar Thornhill band. This is the original workshop of what became known — quite improperly; it was very warm music — as cool jazz.

Miles Davis: *The Birth of the Cool*. This album is essential to the understanding not only of the development of Miles Davis but of Gerry Mulligan and of Gil's own work — not to mention that of John Lewis. Capitol CDP 7 92682 2.

Miles Davis: *Miles Ahead*. Gil's Spanish proclivities — and Miles' compatibility with them — are evident in their first large-orchestra collaboration. Columbia CK 40784.

Miles Davis: *Porgy and Bess*. To many persons, this album is the pinnacle of their collaboration. Certainly it is a great classic. Columbia CK 40674.

Miles Davis: *Sketches of Spain*. There are those who have reservations about this album. I'm not one of them. I love it. Columbia CK 40578.

Gil Evans: *Gil Evans & Ten*. That makes eleven, two more than on the nonet sessions. Prestige OCCCD-346-2 (P-7120).

Gil Evans: *New Bottle Old Wine*. The band this time was larger. Jazz standards refurbished by Gil. Pacific Jazz CDP 746855 2.

Gil Evans: *Great Jazz Standards*. From Bix's *Davenport Blues* to Monk's *Straight No Chaser* and John Lewis's *Django*. Elvin Jones is on drums on four of the tracks. Pacific Jazz CDP 7 46856 2.

Gil Evans: *Out of the Cool*. First of the albums Creed Taylor produced with Gil. Impulse MCAD-563 JVC-459.

Gil Evans: *The Individualism of Gil Evans*. A strong personal favorite of mine. It includes *Las Vegas Tango*. Verve 833 804-2.

Helen Merrill. *Dream of You*, Emarcy 314 514 074-2, is the 1957 collaboration with Gil. It was remade thirty years later in stereo with the title *Collaboration*, Emarcy 834 205-2.

Astrud Gilberto: *Look to the Rainbow*. This pairing of Gil with Astrud Gilberto struck me as odd at the time. But then I had not yet perceived the link of the soft, floating vibratoless sound of the Thornhill band to the similar sound in Brazilian bossa nova, particularly the sound of the singers. When I wrote of that connection in the recent Jobim piece, Creed Taylor phoned and said, "You're right on the money on that connection to bossa nova. I got out my Claude Thornhill records and imagined the music with a samba rhythm, and you can really see the relationship." In this album you can hear the link. Verve 821556-2.

It seems highly unlikely that anyone who reads this publication isn't already familiar with Gil's music. But in case there is, Verve has issued a very good survey record drawn from the Creed Taylor sessions. It's part of their Jazz Masters series. It contains three tracks of the Kenny Burrell *Guitar Forms* album as well as *Las Vegas Tango* from the *Individualism* LP. Verve 314 521 860-2.

Gerry Mulligan: *Rebirth of the Cool*. In 1992, Gerry went into the studio to re-record the classics of those 1949 sessions. John Lewis rejoined him on piano, along with Bill Barber on tuba, but the other players had to be replaced. On alto, Phil Woods went in

for Lee Konitz, who had a previous commitment. Wallace Roney replaced Miles on trumpet. Very interesting and well worth having. GRP Records, GRD-9679.

A word of caution on Gil's collaborations with Miles Davis on Columbia. If you are looking for *Miles Ahead*, be sure you get the second CD version, which has the better takes. With a little patience, however, you'll be able to get all of these records in one package. They are at this time being gathered into a five-CD package that will include some material never before released, including their incidental music for *Time of the Barracuda*.

Modern technology has restored *Miles Ahead*. The package includes an album I haven't mentioned, *Quiet Nights*, whose title tune is one of those I wrote with Jobim. I haven't mentioned it for the good reason that I've never heard it.

In any case, Columbia plans to withdrawn all the Miles-Gil collaborations from the market to let this larger package be the definitive portrait of their collaboration. It's due out in October or November, and I would suggest waiting for it. An LP version will be offered by Mosaic Records, 97 Strawberry Hill Avenue, Stamford CT 06902.

Acknowledgments

The foregoing was researched for four years. I owe thanks to many persons for their consultation in the weeks it took me to write it. I interviewed George Avakian, John Lewis, Jimmy Maxwell, Gerry Mulligan, Maria Schneider, Creed Taylor, George Wein, Paul Weston, Anita Evans and, briefly, Gil's and Anita's sons Miles and Noah. I thank Nat Hentoff for permission to quote from his description of the *Sketches of Spain* sessions, and for all his writings on Gil at different times. What passed then for journalism now can be seen as history. Bill Kirchner provided me with his paper on Miles Davis. Mark Miller of the Toronto *Globe and Mail* gave me the clipping of his 1984 interview with Gil and tapes of the extended conversation on which it was based, as well as the photo of Gil taken at that time. Roger Kellaway was, as always, my unflagging consultant, friend, and adviser. Mike Patterson let me examine some of his reconstructions of Gil's scores. A number of these persons did me the further kindness of reading the manuscript in the search for accuracy, and Anita Evans read it in several stages of its evolution. Thank you all.

Grover's Corner

Shostakovitch

By Grover Sales

"How would you like to go to the Jazz Workshop tonight with Shostakovitch to hear Cannonball Adderley?"

It was the San Francisco *Chronicle*'s jazz critic Ralph J. Gleason on the phone in 1959.

"I'd like it fine, Ralph," I said, making a vain attempt to sound blase.

"Solid. Meet me in front of the Workshop at nine o'clock."

I got the shivers. Shostakovitch was an early hero. In 1940 the gang I ran with in Greenwich Village ranked him with e e cummings, Raimu, Eisenstein, and Ellington. We hung out at the Apollo on 42nd and Broadway where we could catch a double feature of *Grand Illusion* and *The Baker's Wife* for two bits. It cost nothing to haunt Cafe Society Downtown in the Village, the first interracial nightclub in America, where of an evening you could hear Billie Holiday, Art Tatum, Big Joe Turner, boogie-woogie kings Albert Ammons and Meade Lux Lewis, and a house band led by Teddy Wilson. The comic was a new-wave banana named Zero Mostel. There was no intermission and, for improvident jazz freaks, no cover or minimum. For variety we could walk a few blocks to the Village Vanguard to take in The Revuers, an avant garde satirical group that included Judy Holiday, Betty Compden and Adolph Green; their pianist was Leonard Bernstein.

We shared a passion for Shostakovitch's stirring, martial *First Symphony*. We learned Toscanini would broadcast it on Sunday. A ndozen of us hovered around the radio. It was a broadcast we'd never forget; they interrupted the Third Movement to tell us Pearl Harbor had been bombed.

Eighteen years later I hurried to the Jazz Workshop on Broadway, eager for a look at the great composer, a grim, unsmiling little man in an ill-fitting double-breasted suit, standing outside the Workshop with Kabelevsky and other members of a Soviet delegation, herded by Ralph Gleason. Once inside the Workshop, I bulldozed my way to a chair just behind Shostakovitch, curious to gauge the reaction to his first exposure to genuine hardcore jazz.

Alto saxophonist Julian "Cannonball" Adderley, who first gained note as a member of the Miles Davis Sextet with John Coltrane and Bill Evans, walked his group on stage with the portentous air of the town alderman he invariably brought to mind. Primed for the occasion, Cannonball was *on*, spinning out furious torrents of notes replete with sly references to *Petroushka* and *Le Sacre du Printemps* at impossible tempos. Shostakovitch sat through the set with folded arms and stern countenance, unbending only to applaud the drum solo, like any other square.

Once back in the Soviet motherland, Shostakovitch made the usual noises about the "decadence" of American music that were expected of this driven, frustrated artist whose early promise in pre-revolutionary Russia was to be thwarted by the edicts of that music arbiter, Uncle Joe Stalin: "Dmitri! Write something with a tune in it! Write something the peasants can hum!"

Poor Dmitri. What even greater glories he might have achieved under a more benign regime.

And I wonder what he *really* thought of Cannonball Adderley thirty-six years ago at the Jazz Workshop.