Gene Lees
Jazzletter

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93024-0240

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Other Voices

Congratulations on your fascinating Gil Evans series. I wanted to clarify the issue of the bonus tracks on *The Individualism of Gil Evans* (Verve).

Around 1980, when Gil was visiting me for unrelated reasons, I took the opportunity to pull out an Evans album of previously unissued Verve material that had come out in the early '70s and ask him about personnel. Simple discographical curiosity on my part. Begrudgingly, he gave me as much information as he could remember and then explained how insulted he found it that he was not consulted or even warned about the release of this material and how much of it did not pass muster, especially the two quartet performances with Tony Studd on trombone and Gil on piano. Gil's reaction to this affair was something I wasn't likely to forget. And as fate would have it, the conversation would prove fortuitous.

About five years later, Richard Seidel of Polygram asked me to assemble a CD version of *The Individualism of Gil Evans*. Phil Schaap had researched the vaults and come up with even more material. After combing the proposed material and assembling a proposed CD — scrupulously avoiding the quartet session — I had a copy made for Gil, assuring him that nothing would be done without his consent.

Gil approved the contents and the sequence of the CD edition of this classic album. All the best,

Michael Cuscuna, Stamford, Connecticut

I have been reading *Leader of the Band*, your book on Woody Herman, and I realized how much I have always loved his band and its sound.

I heard Woody and the band a number of times, and never could have guessed any of his troubles with the IRS or anything else for that matter. He seemed to enjoy himself and the band.

When I was nineteen years old (1976) and the newly hired host of a Saturday night jazz radio show, I was on a Woody Herman kick and had to hear him. He visited my home town, Eugene, Oregon, and played the Elks Lodge. I went with another kid, about a year younger, and we sneaked in to hear Wood.

We listened for some time, and then we got brave enough to approach the Old Man. Of course, they were a playing a watered-down version of their old repertoire, mostly things from the Band that Plays the Blues. Great stuff, but not contemporary. We wanted to hear *La Fiesta* or *Giant Steps*. He looked down at us from the bandstand, smiled, and said, "Guys, I'd love to play those for you, but we can't play them here." Everyone else in the place was at least twice our age and many were in their sixties. He had brushed us off, but nicely. We thought it was so great that he'd even talk to us, let alone identify with us. We were so naive, and he was so kind to us in our exuberance. I can see why young musicians would want to work with him, and could identify with him so well. We thought he was wonderful, and he was just being himself. And he was there because he needed that gig. We had no idea.

Your book made that moment live for me again. I see Woody in my mind's eye any time I think of that moment and I realize that he probably had the same effect on many other people.

In contrast, I feel ashamed for our country that we would allow the IRS to treat such a great man as if he were a common criminal. How can we elevate smutty performers such as Madonna to the level of cultural icons and forget about Woody?

David Leonnig, Dallas, Texas

After reading the profile of Stanley Crouch in the *New Yorker*, it seems obvious to me that this is a man who cannily chooses whatever tack he believes will earn him the most points — and power and prestige and money — on the cultural scene. That he is deemed an important thinker or a man of depth shows you how degenerate popular culture has become.

I think I have down the true racial views of Crouch, Marsalis, and Albert Murray. They keep on contradicting themselves, calling jazz an "African-American art form" and then conceding that it is "universal." They refuse to be pinned down on the issue of race and do whatever they can to slip away. Did you see Wynton on *Sixty Minutes*? He was interviewed by Ed Bradley, who did nothing but toss him cream puffs after admitting that he happened to be on the board of the Lincoln Center Program. When else would this show permit such an obvious conflict of interest?

Bradley asked him why the Lincoln Center Jazz Program never performed works by white jazz composers. Wynton answered by saying that he hated to bring himself down to the level of such questions and then stated, "Duke Ellington was the greatest composer in the history of jazz. Period." Unbelievably, Bradley let this non-answer stand. Can you imagine anyone else in American life accused of racism being let off with an equivalent answer? And now Marsalis is on TV teaching kids about music. Scary.

In the interview, once again Marsalis said that jazz was "universal" and therefore anybody can play it, which is something both Crouch and Murray concede. Marsalis states the same thing in his book. But what they do believe is that white people are not as good as black people, and have never produced a true jazz master. In other words, sure, other races can play jazz, but just not very well. And they all imitate black players anyway.

In this regard, I found an astonishing statement in one of his interviews. Discussing how musicians influence each other, after a couple of examples he says, "And Bix Beiderbecke was influenced by Louis Armstrong." Of course, this is completely untrue, as anybody even remotely knowledgeable of jazz history should know. Bix learned directly from the Original Dixieland Jazz Band records, particularly Nick LaRocca's career when he had long formulated his style — a style which does not resemble Armstrong's at all, of course. Armstrong greatly admired Bix and in a famous statement said that the two men had been developing along

parallel lines without knowing each other.

For Marsalis to make the statement that he made, he must be either not nearly as knowledgeable of jazz history as he claims (the above facts are well known) or, more disturbingly, he is spreading the Big Lie as a way of diminishing Bix's real achievements. Either way, his complete misrepresentation of the facts is worrisome, especially since he spends so much time teaching kids, and in particular jazz.

Eric Nisenson, Stamford, Connecticut

Eric is the author of a biography of John Coltrane.

Cats of Any Color addresses a subject that has troubled me for many years. The idea that jazz is the sole province of black musicians seems to have gained increased acceptance among blacks in recent years. Perhaps it has always been this way and is now being expressed more openly. The same day I purchased your book, I got a copy of Arthur Taylor's *Notes and Tones*. Most of the interviews, all with black jazz musicians, include the observation that jazz is their music. Even Dizzy, to whom you dedicated *Cats of Any Color*, is quoted as saying, 'If we want to call it jazz, we'll make them (whites) call it that. It's our music . . . . '

On those occasions when I have been hurt by the attitude of black musicians I thought were friends, I concluded it might be best to let them have "their" music and let Wynton Marsalis and his ilk destroy jazz. But upon reflection, I know one of the strengths of jazz is that it does reflect a diversity (including race) that was important, probably essential, to its development. In fact, it is this diversity that distinguishes it as a great American art.

It was too bad Crouch vetoed the idea of a Lincoln Center concert featuring the music of Don Redman. He is one of my heroes and his music deserves more exposure and recognition than it has received. His work was innovative and always done with excellent musical taste. I wish I knew where I could get some of his arrangements to share with others unfamiliar with his work.

Several months ago, I read Miles Davis' autobiography. It was a very painful experience. I stopped several times before finishing the book. Some of my friends reported having the same difficulty. Really ugly stuff! And yet, my only personal encounter with Miles was absolutely beautiful. It was a one-on-one meeting that he initiated while his band was on stage at the French Lick Jazz Festival in the late 1950s. He asked how I liked the band, what I thought of John Coltrane's playing, expressed the hope that I would enjoy the festival, and parted with a "Stay cool, man." All sweetness and light . . . and to me, a real paradox.

I have also finished reading *Leader of the Band*, your wonderful biography of Woody Herman. I received several calls over the years to join his band but, much to my regret, I was never able to do it. Some of my friends were more fortunate and, through their stories about him and the marvelous music generated by the Herman Herds over the years, I came to feel that I knew him.

One of the most exciting memories of my youth is sneaking backstage here in Indianapolis to hear Woody and the band do a live broadcast for Wildroot Cream Oil. What an experience!

You're right. Woody's treatment by the IRS is a national disgrace. What a sad ending for someone who contributed so much to our jazz heritage.

After finishing *Leader of the Band*, I re-read *Waiting for Dizzy*. As with any good book, I got additional good things from it the second time around. You have mentioned that some very good jazz musicians could not read music, and give Wes Montgomery as an example. I knew Wes and worked with him here in Indianapolis. One such occasion was a pops concert with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. Carroll DeCamp, a very talented arranger and guitar player from North Vernon, Indiana, wrote Wes a couple of arrangements for full orchestra. Wes could not read music and Carroll helped him memorize his part. There was space in the charts for Wes to improvise, and when he did, it was magic time. Wes was the most natural jazz artist I ever heard. For a long time he worked a day job and played six nights a week. I have seen him so tired he could hardly move.

In the end, I think he just wore out. It's sad that his success and recognition came late in a life that was far too short.

Edward L. Cox, Indianapolis, Indiana

Ed is a trombonist.

1. You met the Miles Davis that I knew. Gil Evans' widow, Anita, who knew Miles about as well as anyone, thinks that there is a great deal in that book reflecting Quincy Troupe, Miles' co-author. Leonard Feather counted the word "motherfucker" more than three hundred times in the book. Anyone who knew Miles knew he was perfectly capable of literate, articulate speech. Asked in an interview about a certain chapter in the book, Miles said, "I don't know. I haven't read that far yet." There is much about the book that I like, and much that I take with a large grain of salt.

2. An interviewer, if he wishes to do so and above all if he is not a professional, is quite capable of eliciting the answers he wants to get. Arthur Taylor keeps asking his subjects if they are more comfortable being interviewed by a black fellow musician than a white journalist. What does he expect them to say? No? But I know what you mean. For years I thought of Arthur Taylor as a friend, even a good friend, and used to spend time at his apartment. His book brought home, not that I ever doubted it, that blacks are as capable of masked hypocrisy as whites. Notes and Tones *is a sad book, more condemnatory of white society than even its author intended, because it shows what consistent repression, rejection, and insult (not to mention violence) can do to shrink the souls of men and women.*

3. Dizzy Gillespie was a practicing and sincere member of the B'hai religious movement, which is ecumenical. Though God knows he had provocation enough to be a racist, Dizzy didn't have a racist bone in his body, as witness all the white musicians he (and

for that matter, Miles) hired, including pianist Mike Longo, who was with him for seven years.

I have just finished reading *Cats of Any Color* and I can't thank you enough for writing it. It is one of the most brilliant pieces of literature I have ever encountered.

Your insight into the racial problems in jazz as well as in general are astounding and accurate, in my opinion, and are perfectly in tune with my own thinking.

The things you point out about the "Lincoln Center clique" are things that have needed to be said for a long time now, and no one has had the balls to say them until you. God bless you for that! I want to be just like you when I grow up!

Thank you also for your dedication of this fine work to the memory of Diz.

Mike Longo, New York City

I have read *Cats of Any Color* with great interest and pleasure. I thought the following might add a modest footnote to the black vs. white ownership of jazz and improvised music.

The '50s and '60s saw the emergence of "free" jazz — music that spurned the traditional harmonic basis and regular pulse of the music. Free jazz had a wide assortment of practitioners, ranging from those skilled and knowledgeable in both "classical" music and jazz to those whose knowledge and instrumental skills could be charitably described as primitive. The free jazz movement was almost exclusively advanced by blacks and carried the burden of the political and social transformations that those decades witnessed. In short, free jazz became the almost exclusive province of blacks and became at once a statement of self-definition as its practitioners assumed a posture of alienation and rejection of the status quo only hinted at by the beboppers a decade previously.

I have never been able to discern who was the first to explore the possibilities of free jazz and, like much of the development of the music, the boundaries were most likely being expanded on a number of fronts. One has only to read Dizzy's *To Be or Not to Bop* to realize the harmonic and rhythmic expansion which culminated in Minton's and the clubs on 52nd Street was under development simultaneously in different parts of the country.

Nevertheless, one of the first to pioneer free jazz was Cecil Taylor. Cecil and I shared an apartment for a year from 1950-51 when we were both students at the New England Conservatory. Cecil graduated with a diploma (not a Bachelor of Music) in 1951 and I remained as a student at NEC until 1956. At that time there was a vibrant jazz scene in Boston and most of it was centered within five or six blocks of the Conservatory (which is located a block from Symphony Hall and the Boston Symphony Orchestra).

We could hear Bird, Serge Chaloff (whose father taught at NEC), DeFranco, Joe Gordon, and other modernists at the Hi Hat, at Massachusetts and Columbus Avenues. We heard players from the older school at the Savoy. Bob Wilber and Dick Wellstood played there with Jimmy Archey, Henry Goodwin, and Pops Foster. One could hear Omer Simeon, Red Allen, Ed Hall, and other first- and second-generation musicians from New Orleans. It was a rich environment, and although NEC had no structured jazz program until Gunther Schuller arrived in 1967, the Conservatory, while not actively encouraging, was not hostile to the music and non-students would come to the school to jam and play with registered students.

There was a rather lame popular-music course and Cecil took a course in arranging and may have taken others in that department, but he was a "classical" theory major and not a terribly accomplished pianist at the time. He agreed to be the pianist for my freshman jury and we performed Milhaud's *Sonatine for Clarinet and Piano*. He had to struggle as much as I to get it up to speed, but we were passed by the jury of mostly BSO musicians who served on the faculty. It was only after Cecil graduated that he really undertook the piano and, with his usual fierce energy, practiced ten to twelve hours a day.

It was well known that one of his early influences was Dave Brubeck. Bud Powell was another, and we heard him at least once when he came to Boston. Dick Twardzik was on the scene and was another idiosyncratic pianist we listened to. Cecil's most important jazz influence was not a black but a white musician — Lennie Tristano. I had collected a number of those 78s with Warne Marsh, Lee Konitz, Arnold Fishkin, Billy Bauer, Tristano, and a drummer whose name I cannot remember. [One was Harold Granowsky, the other Denzil Best. Ed.] We really listened to those and it changed Cecil's direction and concept. It was not his only influence. I remember going to bed at 11 p.m. one evening and leaving Cecil studying Stravinsky's *Symphony in Three Movements* and getting up early the next morning to practice at around 7 a.m. And there was Cecil as I had left him the night before, still studying the Stravinsky score. The Tristano sides were the springboard for our "atonal jamming" and we would take a tune like *S'Wonderful* as a basis and go from there. Cecil was even at that point constructing his own scales.

I recall that Cecil and I and composer John Ronsheim (who also played bass) were hired to play a wedding at the Framingham Country Club by two NEC students (the groom was a composer). As we were setting up, a crowd gathered around us in anticipation of the music we were about to play. Less than thirty seconds after we started our atonal renderings of a well-known standard, the crowd had beat a hasty retreat to the part of the ballroom as far away from our dissonant presentations as possible. The bride and groom dug it, so we got paid.

Cecil's father was a full-blooded Cherokee. I believe that is the right tribe. I am certain that he was Native American, as Cecil told me so when we had dinner last March. His mother's father (or mother) was also full-blooded Indian, which by my reckoning makes Cecil as much Native American as African American.

With this letter comes much appreciation for your work.

Henry Duckham, Waquoit, Massachusetts

Henry is director of alumni relations at the New England Conservatory.

I'd be happy to send you the complete cycle of 12 cassettes of the solo guitar works of Sor — a massive project that contains about 17 hours of music. (Which, if I might brag a little, I did while holding down a full-time job as a bus driver and also a part-time instructor at Roberts Wesleyan College. As for the Jazzletter, one page has more of substance than a year's worth of *Down Beat*.) Also enclosed are two small articles I wrote over 20 years ago, using the pseudonym John Edwards. Today I would probably express the same ideas, but far more thoroughly and with better research. But where would I find an audience for such ideas? [The articles dismember the very concept of "race". Ed.]

I used the pseudonym because at the time I had just been hired to teach at a small Catholic College. My gut instinct was that my radical ideas would not be appreciated by them. This instinct turned out to be correct. Four years later I married my present wife and, when my marriage became known at the college, I was promptly fired for bogus reasons. (I didn't dress properly, I didn't know guitar literature, etc. etc.) My wife is a beautiful woman of obvious African ancestry whereas my African ancestry is so well hidden that everyone thinks I'm "white." (I even thought so myself at one time.) "Race" mixing was definitely *out of the question* at this "religious" institution!

Lawrence Johnson, Rochester, New York

Larry is a classical guitarist and teacher. He subscribed after reading Cats of Any Color. *He sent me a CD of some of his performances of Sor, and he is an outstanding musician who studied with, among other major teachers, Andres Segovia.*

I was quite upset to learn of Gerry Mulligan's passing. I know that this must affect you quite deeply.

When I was either 13 or 14 years old, Gerry played an important part in my life. I thought that I would share this with you, as it demonstrates what a unique individual he was.

Gerry was performing at the Town Tavern with his quartet, consisting of Art Farmer, Bill Crow, and Dave Bailey. Two friends and I desperately wanted to hear the quartet so we went down. With the help of Eva, the hatcheck girl, we obtained a table just below the bandstand on the dining-room side. We ordered dinner, with soft drinks, and proceeded to enjoy the first set. At the conclusion, we gathered up our courage and approached Gerry for his autograph. He kindly provided it and then, to our amazement, asked if he could join us at our table. We were totally consumed with excitement.

He spent the intermission with us, discussing various issues about music and his horn. I recall that he played a Conn. Just prior to the commencement of the next set he took us over to meet the other members of the quartet. We returned to the table and watched the next set. You can probably guess what happened after the second set. He returned to our table and, between sets, spent the entire evening with us.

We discussed many subjects, including his excitement over the movie *I Want to Live*. For three young teenagers, this proved to be the most exciting evening of our lives. Several years later, we heard the Concert Band at Birdland and reintroduced ourselves to Gerry. As always, he was a great gentleman. I heard Gerry again in Toronto in the 1980s.

Our evening at the Town Tavern was important to all three of us. One of my boyhood friends plays the baritone sax, as a hobby. He bears an amazing resemblance to Gerry. Over the years I have met a number of jazz musicians, and classical musicians. Gerry always stood out as a unique individual. He will always be remembered by me with great fondness.

I expect that many others have shared similar experiences. Your articles on Gerry in the Jazzletter presented him in the same gentle light. I am sure you will not be surprised by my story. Some of the letters posted on the Internet contain references to Gerry's kindness. He will be missed greatly by many.

Paul Gollom, Toronto, Ontario

Paul is an attorney.

I've just finished your great book *Leader of the Band* on the life of Woody Herman. It is one of the best biographies I've ever read on jazz or popular musicians, or any other category.

As a young high-school student, I was swept away with the Herd, first by listening to the Old Gold and Wildroot radio broadcasts and later by collecting and playing endlessly the Columbia records, which I still have. Then I had the pleasure of interviewing Woody for the high-school newspaper when he appeared at the Paramount Theater here in Anderson in 1948 with his Four Brothers Second Herd. Woody was, as your book indicates, an extremely kind and patient man, and he endured my stupid questions without showing annoyance. He was very friendly and helpful and I got to meet a number of the band members, including Red Rodney, Oscar Pettiford, and Don Lamond, and got their autographs. The next day I acquired the Columbia 78 *Summer Sequence* album which had just reached Anderson, and the autographs are still there.

My parents would have liked your discussion of the Isham Jones band, which they said was the best dance band they ever heard, in the late '20s and early '30s.

It's hard to believe that *Bijou, The Good Earth, Apple Honey*, and *Wild Root* are 50 years old. It's also hard to believe that Woody and so many of his fine young musicians are gone now. I only hope later generations can appreciate what great music this

gentleman and his band produced. Your book should help the cause.

Robert W. Miller, Anderson, Indiana

Robert Miller is also an attorney.

I have often been struck by the significance of these early encounters with artists, in these instances Miles Davis, Woody Herman, and Gerry Mulligan. Note the similarity of these incidents. I met Red Norvo under conditions almost identical to those in which Paul Gollom met Gerry Mulligan, and at almost the same location: it was a few dozen yards away from the Town Tavern, around the corner at the Colonial. I was there with my sister, who was then about 18. We spoke to Red after the first set, and he spent the evening with us. At the end of it, my sister shyly asked if he wanted to come home to our apartment for sandwiches. He said he'd love to, and we got into his Cadillac and went home. We talked till dawn.

Two or three years ago, Red — to whom I had never had occasion to speak from that day on — called me to express admiration for something I had written. He began, "Gene, this is Red Norvo. We've never met, but . . . "

I cut him off, saying, "Oh yes we have!" and recounted the incident. To my amazement, he not only remembered it but could even recall the table where we were sitting.

Red and I have been cordial friends since then.

I remember another early encounter with a composer I admired in high school. He behaved much as Red did. His name is Pete Rugolo. I have always been grateful to both of them.

The following article appeared in the Baltimore Sun. *It examines from a different perspective the same subject I explored months ago in the piece titled Last Rally in Manhattan. It is reprinted by permission of its author.*

The downbeat of traditional jazz

At last hailed as 'fine art,' music loses soul, creativity

by Glen McNatt

The late jazzman Rahsaan Roland Kirk used to call the repertoire he played "black classical music." He was serious about it, though the mostly white audiences who flocked to hear him perform in places such as New York's Village Vanguard in the late 1960s and early '70s seemed to regard it as a joke — part of the colorful "jive" patter with which the eccentric saxophonist regularly entertained his listeners.

So Mr. Kirk probably would have been gratified by the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts' announcement last month that it was awarding its jazz department equal status with the New York Philharmonic, the Metropolitan Opera and the New York City Ballet.

The *New York Times* hailed the change for its symbolic importance: "It is the first time that jazz, an American art form, has been fully accepted by one of the nation's premier performing-arts centers, whose programming bulk is given over to European arts," its critic noted.

Still, there is something sad and ironic about the hubbub surrounding Lincoln Center's announcement. Sad because of what it says about the prejudices of our cultural dialogue — is there anyone who had ears over the last 50 years who seriously believed jazz wasn't a fine art? If so, the fact that the country's premier high-culture institution has belatedly given its blessing to the music is unlikely to change anyone's mind.

The irony, of course, is that jazz has won the establishment's imprimatur at precisely the moment it has ceased to be a vibrant, living tradition. When the Lincoln Center welcomes jazz as an art equal in significance to the symphony, the opera and the ballet, it is a sure sign that the creative tradition from which it sprang is in a state of acute decline, if not actual decomposition.

This is not, of course, to say that one can't still hear live jazz performed — and performed well — in any number of places around the country and abroad. Radio stations still program jazz series, and the record industry does a brisk business in reissuing classic jazz albums on compact disc. Even new music is being created here and there, mostly on college campuses.

But that does not alter the fact that the major creative forces that drove the development of jazz from the early part of this century to the mid-1970s appear to have exhausted themselves. The 20th-century American tradition that produced the masterpieces of Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Miles Davis and John Coltrane today is as dead as the 19th-century European tradition that produced Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, Verdi's *La Traviata* and Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake.*

Having struggled mightily through most of this century for recognition as the music of the modern age, as expressive of the social and musical values of our own era as the great European classics were of theirs, jazz has at last achieved the solemn equality of the dead.

No one today is creating original jazz works of the same caliber as the great masters of the past. Wynton Marsalis, for example, is a fabulous instrumentalist who is often held up as the quintessential jazzman of the 1990s. So he is, but his role is more that of a conservator than an innovator. Though Mr. Marsalis plays surpassingly well, he doesn't play anything we haven't heard before.

Today, there is simply no equivalent to the "new wave" of the 1960s, or the bebop school of the 1940s. Still, the relative decline in creative ferment appears to proceed not so much from a lack of skill or inspiration on the part of jazz's performers, or from lack of enthusiasm among audiences. Rather, it seems to come from

deeper changes in the social attitudes and modes of behavior that underlie the way of life represented by the jazz art.

Consider that the origins and evolution of jazz in America are steeped in paradox and contradiction. It was born in the rigidly segregated world blacks inhabited around 1900. Yet its influence since then has been one of the most powerfully integrative forces of the 20th century.

As music, jazz is characterized by harmonic and rhythmic freedom. Yet it was created by people whose social and political rights were severely, often cruelly, circumscribed. It is music that has always, on one level or another, been intended to make people "feel good." Yet its outward displays of happiness and high spirits draw on vast reservoirs of collective suffering.

One could say that the tradition that produced jazz has ended because the rigidly segregated world in which jazz came of age is a thing of the past. But that would not be quite honest. The racial divide is in many ways as wide as ever, having taken perhaps less visible but equally insidious forms. In any case, the collapse of public school music instruction and the extremely harsh life conditions of today's urban poor more than suffice as explanations for jazz's present moribund state.

Of course, one hopes for a renaissance of some kind, a rebirth of creative energy that would infuse new life into the music. But at present that appears unlikely. Jazz emerged as an expression of the modern age in protest against the stuffy conventions of the Victorian world that preceded it. A cynic might say that it simply has outlived its usefulness.

The post-modern age upon which we are embarking no doubt in time will give birth to its own characteristic music, of which we now can perceive but the dimmest outline. One can only hope that it will be as beautiful and wise in its own way as the art it replaces. In the meantime, people will continue to enjoy recordings of Miles, Dizzy Gillespie, Ellington and Armstrong, just as they enjoyed those of Bach, Beethoven and Brahms. If we must console ourselves, let it be with the thought that, though traditions be mortal, the music itself will live forever.

— G. McN.

In Comment

Several things commend attention in the Lincoln Center situation. One is the failure of the center's powers to take note of the racism evident in their jazz policies — and, more, the antisemitism of statements by Crouch and Marsalis, particularly since the head of Lincoln Center, Beverly Sills, is Jewish.

But more, the arrogance of Marsalis and his associates, including Stanley Crouch, is increasingly conspicuous.

Shortly after the *New York Times* wrote about the new parity of the jazz program at Lincoln Center, I received the following note:

Well, Gene Lees, according to the New York Times of December 19, 1995, it seems as though all of that hysterical ranting and raving you and your paranoid boys did didn't mean a damn thing. It didn't have that swing. Jazz at Lincoln Center, its staff and decision-makers, floated above you and yours. HA HA HA HA.

Unsigned

This missive came over my fax machine. Several things are noteworthy.

1. Its cowardice. Its writer didn't have the manhood to sign his name, nor to have a return fax number at the top of the missive, a standard practice.

2. Its writer knows a subscriber to the Jazzletter. Otherwise he could not have obtained my fax number.

3. It doesn't say, 'We are not racist.' It says, 'We won.' we screwed you.

There was of course nothing hysterical about my essay, nor was there ranting, in my pieces and in the book. What gives Lincoln Center a problem with my book is something quite to the contrary. It was a thoroughly researched, objective piece of journalism, in which I expressed hardly any opinion at all. To refute the piece, Lincoln Center's apologists — and the *New York Times*, over which Lincoln Center seems to have achieved telemetric control, is full of them — would have to establish that Arthur Taylor's interviewees did not say the things they said, prove that Oscar Peterson, Clark Terry, Miles Davis, and Sonny Rollins did not receive heat from black musicians for hiring whites and have said so, that Stanley Crouch did not write contemptuously of Gil Evans in the February 12, 1990, issue of *The New Republic,* and so on. I coolly recited facts. The only thing they can do in the attempt to discredit what I wrote is to say that Gene Lees is a bad guy.

In an interview with Chip Deffaa published in the *New York Post*, Marsalis said, "That Gene Lees, he's pathetic," and said I didn't call him up and ask him whether he is a racist.

I never said he was a racist, although some newspapers, whose critics didn't read the book carefully, said that I did. The *Detroit Free Press*, over a particularly misleading piece by one Larry Gabriel (which sounded as if Lincoln Center publicists had dictated it to him), bore the headline: **New book hits sour note calling Marsalis a racist.** No it didn't! I challenge Mr. Gabriel to find such a statement in the book.

Excepting a review by Bob Cranshaw in *Allegro*, none of the reviews of the book that I saw mentioned the fact that most of the essays dealt in varying degrees with white racism. And the essay on Dave Brubeck dealt extensively with the slaughter of the native Americans. But the mere thought that blacks might also be racist caused shock waves. Anyone who thinks otherwise, of course, need only look at the Africa, particularly Rwanda, where only months ago the rivers were full of bodies. I keep quoting Oscar Peterson's sister, Daisy: "Show me a race that is without racism."

And to the extent that I did examine black racism in the book, I examined its entrenchment in the record companies and such

institutions as the National Endowment for the Arts, whose record in this regard is shocking. Wynton Marsalis and the policies at Lincoln Center were but a part of the pattern. However, Lincoln Center and Wynton Marsalis have the most press agents, and they did a wonderful job of publicizing the book for me. Wynton Marsalis has repeatedly denied that he is a racist.

It is true that I didn't phone Marsalis to ask him if he was a racist. But then, I never phoned Orval Faubus or George Wallace to ask that question either.

What is interesting is that although I did not call Marsalis a racist, he took it that way. Apparently the shoe fit quite well, and he slipped it on. Marsalis told another interviewer: "What I'm saying is, it is true."

It's the identical defense of every white supremacist in America. They always say that their statements about "the Negro" are not racist because they are factual. That, in first inversion, is the line Marsalis takes, although there are quite a number of white musicians in jazz history who must be relegated to inferiority to make it stick. Hence Stanley Crouch's derogations of Gil Evans and Bill Evans and Marsalis' attempt to diminish Bix Beiderbecke through falsifying history.

The attacks on and praise of the book did not break along racial lines. The review in *Allegro*, the newspaper of local 802 of the American Federation of Musicians, was written by the great bassist Bob Cranshaw. I cannot help wondering how Bob feels when he hears denunciations of whites and in particular Jews. Bob's wife is Jewish. This in part is what he wrote:

In his fascinating new book . . . Gene Lees fully examines the issue of racism in the world of jazz, both past and present. The essays in this great collection first appeared, some of them in somewhat different form, in Jazzletter . . . .

The book is full of incredible insights and history that will be of interest to all musicians. There are essays on the music scholar Dominique De Lerma as well as Dave Brubeck, Ernie Andrews, Horace Silver, Red Rodney, Benny Golson, Red Mitchell, and many other greats talking about their experiences with racism in jazz.

The book's title comes from Louis Armstrong's famous comment: "These people who make the restrictions, they don't know nothing about music. It's no crime for cats of any color to get together and blow. Race-conscious jazz musicians? Nobody could be who knew their horns and loved the music."

In a similar vein, Duke Ellington told a reporter from the newspaper PM in 1945: "Jazz is like the automobile and airplane. It is modern and it is American. The Negro element is still important. But jazz has become part of America."

Still, Lees writes of Dizzy Gillespie saying, with sadness in his eyes, "'You can't know what it means to be black in the United States — not in any field.' He was right, of course. Whites can only try to imagine what a life of constant insult, abuse, rejection and danger must be. But some do try and in part succeed — particularly those who like jazz, which is why this music, quite aside from its brilliant aesthetic achievements, has been an incomprehensibly powerful force of healing in American life . . . "

In Cats of Any Color, *Gene Lees deals with the explosive issues that are increasingly dividing jazz in a judicious, balanced manner. Lees's sensitive and beautifully written plea to recognize jazz not as the sole property of any one group but as an art form that celebrates the human spirit is bound to stir up controversy and strong emotion in all who read it.*

Please, get this book and read it.

Bob Cranshaw

About a week after the book came out (in November of 1994) Lincoln Center's publicist had the stupidity to say to a publicist for Oxford University Press, "That book's yesterday's news anyway." This reflects the arrogance and indifference to opinion at Lincoln Center. Not: the book is untrue. But: the truth doesn't matter.

And yesterday's news? Books last. The paperback edition has just come out. And it continues to be reviewed around the world. In Britain, the BBC magazine *Music* carried a piece praising it by the critic and trumpeter Ian Carr. The Jazzletter brought the issue into the open. In January, *All Things Considered* ran a half-hour NPR documentary on the anti-white racism in jazz. Some of the letters in this issue indicate how widespread this perception of Crow Jim racism has become and how much Lincoln Center is seen as ripping the fabric of this country.

The book caused the editor of *Commentary* to ask Terry Teachout, one of its regular contributors, to write an article on the subject of black racism in jazz. Terry's thoroughly researched piece caused a storm of letters, about evenly divided between condemnation and praise. The most cogent was by Phil Woods. Phil wrote:

Terry Teachout's The Color of Jazz *fills me with a great sense of sadness for the music I love with a passion, not unlike the pain caused by the death of a loved one. Leading an all-white group for the past 25 years has certainly made me aware of the other nonsense in the situation described in the article. Is Chico Freeman more important than Zoot Sims? Is Marcus Roberts better than Bill Evans? And on and on. Is this what jazz is all about? Who's better? My daddy can beat up your daddy? Oh the shame.*

Of course jazz is primarily of black origin, but the influences on it are diverse. I am reminded of this anecdote:

Barney Kessel was berated by a black musician, who claimed Barney had stolen his people's music. Barney said, "I'll tell you what. I'll give back ching chinga ding if you return do re me fa sol la ti do."

The folly of our bigoted society is well-documented. The need for improvement is great. But in the past jazz has set an example for the rest of the world. I fell in love with jazz at the age of thirteen. I presume that André Watts fell in love with classical music at some point. If whites can't play jazz, then logic dictates

that blacks can't play classical music. I was part of a white quota system when I was hired by the 1956 Dizzy Gillespie band that toured the Middle East and South America, under State Department sponsorship. That is not why I worked with Dizzy on and off for over thirty years and became his close friend. And if I was good enough for him and Quincy Jones and Thelonious Monk, all of whom I worked with and considered good friends, why should I worry about what some young lion thinks of me? Because it hurts like hell, that's why . . . .

I can't get a performing grant for my group in my own town, from my local university, which thought enough of my efforts to award me an honorary doctorate, because I am white. That does not seem fair, and the policy is offensive.

But the whole issue is divisive, and further fuels enmity to the point of confrontation. And that is a very frightening thought. Is it all Wynton Marsalis's and Stanley Crouch's fault? I don't think so. Surely the media, and especially record companies, have contributed to this abysmal state of affairs. Enough already! Let's play together and learn to love each other. It is our only salvation as a people. Let jazz represent the good side of ourselves. Jazz speaks to the world and is a powerful force. The music is already on the road to fossilization. Desist or perish! The bad guys get all the press when good people don't speak out against this betrayal of America's gift to the world. I occupy that world and accept the gift as graciously as possible. I will not give it back.

Phil Woods, Delaware Water Gap, Pennsylvania

The question of grants is vexed. One writer years ago got a $53,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to write a biography of Duke Ellington. It has yet to be written. I didn't bother applying for a grant to write my biography of Woody Herman. It would have been denied. Woody was white. That's the real lay of the land. Why waste a postage stamp?

I reluctantly wonder whether certain politicians might be right (though for the wrong reasons) in thinking the NEA should be abolished. Either that, or it should clean up its act. As for the Lila Wallace foundation, it doesn't make direct grants but gives money to various groups throughout the country that do make grants. Nonetheless, I consider the *effect* of it to be racist.

Lincoln Center's policies and politics, its ethnic cleansing in aesthetics, will further divide jazz. What *Cats of Any Color* exposed is the quiet-as-its-kept fact that there is black racism in jazz. In his concentration on "the tradition", Wynton Marsalis is turning out not to be the savior of jazz, as his press agents ceaselessly proclaim, but its embalmer.

Sobering Thoughts

I get fascinated by odd statistics, and I've come across a few recently that I found amusing. I thought they might give you a smile too.

Rates of inflation: In the early 1930s, the tooth fairy left kids ten cents a tooth. Forty years later, in 1970, the average had risen two and a half times to 25 cents per tooth. Twenty-five years after that, in 1995, the average was $3.50 a tooth. That's 35 times the 1930s rate and 14 times that of 1970.

But it could be worse: Thirty tons of talonas, the temporary currency of Lithuania since 1992, were converted into toilet paper by 1994.

And speaking of that: When Ann Landers wrote a column on the ways to hang toilet paper (and I can think of only two), 15,000 persons wrote her letters about it.

There is evidence, by the way, that men tend to hang it from the front of the roll, women from the underside.

Ten percent of people are left handed. Steve Allen thinks there are few left-handed pianists. Bill Evans was left-handed (actually ambidextrous). Does anyone know any other left-handed pianists?

Other statistics: The average speed of Heinz ketchup from the mouth of an upended bottle is 25 miles a year. Figures for other brands are apparently not available.

The U.S. Post Service sold $36,000,000 worth of Elvis Presley stamps to collectors who will never use them.

On average, 88,000 faxes per minute are transmitted in the United States. Forty-six percent of Americans feel they are being left behind by technology. Sixteen percent of these say they don't care.

State of the culture: Three times as many U.S. households are without telephones as without television sets.

And when a journalism instructor named Larry Martel at Arizona State University recently queried undergraduates about names a would-be journalist should know, he found the following among the responses:

Alzheimer's: imported beer. *Yasir Arafat*: Israeli leader. *Charles Bronson*: convicted California killer. *Fidel Castro*: Palestinian leader (wife buys a lot of shoes). *Tom Clancy*: White House spokesman. *Jesse Jackson*: leader of the Moral Majority. *NOW*: Nation of Women. *Sandra Day O'Connor*: actress on *L.A. Law*. *OSHA*: killer whale at Sea World.

And *Count Basie*: vampire.

And one wonders what's happening to journalism?

And how many of these young people will join the ranks of those shoving microphones into the faces of bereaved parents and asking such brilliant questions as: "And how did you feel when you learned your children had been killed?" Only recently I heard a gem on television. The reporter asked a woman who had just hit 120 about her future. Smarter than the reporter, she replied: "There isn't going to be much of it."