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Phrasing
Part II

"To this day, I have mixed emotions about getting fired that way," Julie said. "A lot of people said it was the best thing that ever happened to me. But it put a stigma on me, and just about every disc jockey or interviewer to this day asks about it. I've become gun-shy about answering questions about it. I have said, 'Arthur Godfrey was the father of my career, and I will always be grateful. But he wasn't a very nice man.' Bingo. Sound bite for television: 'He wasn't a very nice man.'

"My best friend in high school was Frank Ringkamp, from a very Catholic family. Frank later became a monk, Brother John, and is now dead. I was very close to the family, including his mother, whom I called Mom. She would say, 'In the name of the Father and the Son and Arthur Godfrey.' Until he did what he did to her little Julie.

"After the firing, I was visiting, and she said, 'Julie, why didn't you tell me what kind of man he was?'

"I said, 'Mom, he gave you pleasure. Why should I spoil it for you?'

"After the show that night, I went back to the green room. The cast was offering condolences, saying 'Everything's going to be all right' and that sort of thing.

"And then I went up to Godfrey's office and said, 'I want to thank you for the opportunity you gave me.' I swear to God. And later on, he was quoted in a piece about him saying that the only son of a bitch who ever thanked him was that little La Rosa."

Days after the incident, Julie got a call from Ed Sullivan's office. Sullivan had a television show as big as or bigger than Godfrey's, so big that comics still get laughs imitating Sullivan's robotic body movements and stiff-jawed manner of speech.

"Ed put me on the show the first Sunday after I was fired," Julie said. "That show drew the highest rating of any Sullivan show up to that time, and it wasn't exceeded until the first appearance of Elvis Presley, and then, later, the Beatles.

"There was a booking at the Metropolitan Theater in Boston. And Ed tells America, 'Julius is going to be arriving at 2 o'clock,' or whatever it was, 'on Monday, to perform for five days,' and there were *thousands* of people at Logan Airport!

"And then I went out and, literally, learned my job.

"You can't learn it from a book, you can't learn it any way but to go out on a stage and get your face bashed in. Which is what happened to me a lot of times.

"In the spring of 1956, I got my first booking in Las Vegas, the old El Rancho Vegas. They were going to kick me out, because I was so bad. But Tom Rockwell from GAC called them and said, 'Let the kid finish the engagement. Don't put another blot on him.'

"So they let me finish. But I was bad. I didn't know what I was doing. Saloon audiences! One guy at a front table can't wait to get to bed with the broad, two other guys are drinking, there are two pretty girls over there and they're trying to pick them up, and unless you've got some real authority, they'll kill you. And I got killed a lot of times. I didn't know how to handle it.

"I worked easily five or six times at the old Chicago Theater. The man who ran the place was a funny man, he had an acerbic sense of humor, and after two or three shows he said, 'Hey, kid, can't you sing more fast songs? You're slower than Perry Como.'

"But I was filling joints like mad during that period. I worked at the Steel Pier in Atlantic City, eleven, twelve, thirteen shows a day between the news and the shorts on the screen."

"You're putting me on," I said. "I wouldn't think that would be physically possible."

"I am *not* putting you on. Half-hour shows. Unbelievable."

"How were the crowds?"

"Huge! That was the reason for eleven shows.

"But I really can't tell you when I began to feel a little confident on a stage. I worked the different joints in Vegas because I was drawing crowds.

"And I didn't know the politics of it. When I went into El Rancho Vegas, the opening act was a new guy named Buddy Hackett. Ten years or so later, Buddy was starring at the Sands and he brought me in to open for him. That was also the case with Don Rickles and several others."

One of the things La Rosa did to learn his "job" was to continue serious vocal studies with the late Carlo Menotti, begun when he was still on the Godfrey show, in New York. Contrary to myth, a good many "popular" singers of that era were well and classically trained. Jeri Southern, Jo Stafford, and Betty Bennett were trained for opera. Jackie Cain and Irene Kral both studied with Don Maya in Chicago. And Julie went to Menotti, initiating studies that would continue for fourteen years.

But it is interesting, therefore, to go back now and listen to his first two hit records, *Anywhere I Wander* and *Eh Cumpari* to see what kind of instrument he was working with. The voice is wonderful, the more so when you remember this is a twenty-three-year-old kid with no training other than choral experience. His range is big, the consistency of sound up through the registers startling. There's no break in the voice. He has sharp-shooter intonation. There's no groping for the pitch. The chops are formidable. That this is coming from a neophyte, essentially a young Navy radarman without prior aspirations to show business, leaves one amazed. And, incidentally, except for the intelligence of the phrasing, he does *not* sound like Sinatra. In fact, he sounds a little like the late Andy Russell, and Julie may well have listened to him. Certainly Andy was around at the time, and big.

"You know," I said, "Tony Bennett told me it took him ten years or something to learn to walk on a stage properly."

"Well," Julie said. "In 1954 or '55, I was working at Loew's

State in Times Square. The star was, if you can believe this, Julius La Rosa, and the extra added attraction was Ella Fitzgerald. And I was in awe of her. And between shows, you talk, you rap. And one day I said I knew I was brand new and had a lot to learn. And Ella, she was so sweet, said, 'Julius, it took me fifteen years to learn how to walk onto a stage.'"

"One of the concert pianists," I said, "said that the longest distance in the world was that between the wings and the piano."

"Oh, that's wonderful!"

But even as he went about learning his craft, the contretemps with Godfrey haunted him:

"I had a very strong feeling that the publicity that came after it placed a strong negative stigma on me. I was no longer the little guy who sings — " why La Rosa refers to himself as little, I don't know; he's five foot nine — "but the kid who got fired."

Julie and Rory were expecting their first baby. Something went wrong and she was rushed to Mount Sinai Hospital. She was delivered of a boy, premature and still-born. Julie told the doctor he wanted to see the baby. The doctor advised against it. "Just think of a pound of butter," he said.

After sitting with Rory, Julie got into the elevator, dazed and disoriented, to descend. A woman recognized him and asked for his autograph. For once — he has almost saintly patience in dealing with the public — he declined the request. She persisted. He tried to explain that he was distraught, saying, "Please!" And finally he told the woman he had just lost a baby son.

She said, "Hmm. Arthur Godfrey was right. You've got no humility."

After his departure from the Godfrey show, Julie worked in theaters that still presented live shows between the movies, fast becoming fewer. He played in clubs, made appearances on television, began to act in summer stock, playing among others the role of Billy Bigelow in *Carousel*, having been expressly approved by the composer, the difficult Richard Rodgers, a man capable of being as vindictive as Arthur Godfrey. (Alan Jay Lerner, who tried writing with him, came to hate him.) Julie played Sky Masterson in *Guys and Dolls*.

In 1968, as he was about to begin a twelve-week engagement in Las Vegas, he got a call from WNEW in New York, asking if he would be interested in doing a disc jockey show from one to four in the afternoon. WNEW at that time was a good-music station. The hours left his evenings free to do whatever gigs came along. And the money was good, eventually a hundred thousand a year. And of course the job permitted him to spend far more time at home with Rory and their two children, Chris and Maria.

"I was a disc jockey there for eight years," Julie said. "I was there until 1977, when they had a change of management, determined to cut down on expenses. I was the expendable one. They certainly weren't going to get rid of Bill Williams or Ted Brown. So I went back to the saloons and summer stock."

By then he and his family were living in a four-bedroom split-level home in Irvington, up in the glorious Ichabod Crane-Rip Van Winkle region of the Hudson River Valley. They still live there.

I defer to Whitney Balliett, who shares my admiration of La Rosa's work and whose descriptions are arrestingly evocative:

"La Rosa is a handsome, stocky, medium-sized man. He has widely spaced eyes, and he often pops them when he is emphasizing a word or phrase. He has double parentheses on each side of his mouth. His fingers are thick and powerful, his teeth are small, and he has a firm, rocky chin. When he sings, his expression flickers between bemusement and outright smiling. His work bears little resemblance now to Frank Sinatra's. His voice, a pleasant baritone, has a slightly mystifying quality. This quality is not in its timbre or its texture; it seems to encase his voice. It gives it a cheerfulness, a hello-sunshine sound. La Rosa's gentleness is reflected in long connective single notes and in a self-effacing vibrato. He can shiver the timbers and buzz like a bee. He uses his acting abilities cautiously and well: he likes to lift an eyebrow, dip his head and close his eyes, and be regal with his hands, in the manner of Mabel Mercer, whom he first saw in the fifties . . . .

"La Rosa has a singer's power-in-reserve speaking voice, and although he is a delicate and tightly controlled performer, he talks in startling bursts and shouts. He sounds like surf on rocks, like thunder in flat country. Sometimes he shouts the opening syllable of a word and whispers the rest, and sometimes it is the other way around."

Popular singing in America was dominated for a long time by the Irish, or at least an Irish style: Morton Downey, Buddy Clarke, Arthur Tracy, and others. Then came the Italians, starting with Russ Columbo. But the full impact of Italy came with Sinatra, and after that came Tony Bennett, Perry Como, La Rosa, the late and too little recognized Tommy Leonetti, the late Bobby Darin (born Robert Cassotto in the Bronx), Vic Damone (Vito Rocco Farinola, born, like Julie, in Brooklyn), Frankie Laine (born Paul LoVecchio in Chicago), and David Allyn (born Albert DiLello in Hartford, Connecticut) among them.

Julie shares the inferiority complex common to New York City Italians. This quality, which I have seen in both men and women, baffled me for a long time. You don't find it in New England Italians, and not in all New York Italians. You didn't find it in the cocky Bobby Darin, for example, but then Bobby (whom I liked and respected) was a special case: he suffered rheumatic fever as a child, knew he didn't have long, and rushed with the abandon that only impending death can inspire to achieve all his ambitions in a life that in fact ended when he was thirty-seven.

It was explained to me by a New York native of some perspicacity that the Irish got to New York first, and were cruelly abused. And the Irish in turn took it out on the arriving Italians.

This lack of a sense of personal worth is something I saw even in Tony Bennett, in a vivid incident. Tony paints, and in recent years an amateur talent has blossomed into a superb one. Ella Fitzgerald showed me an oil portrait of her that Tony had done and

presented to her. It is stunningly excellent.

And Tony knows painting. I have never liked or understood Picasso. One day Tony was explaining Picasso to me. It was a revelation, and I listened raptly. And all of a sudden, the cloud came over him, and he said, "But who am I to be talking about Picasso?" Or something like that.

I couldn't get another word out of him on the subject.

I told Julie about this, and named this phenomenon in New York Italians "the Picasso syndrome." It has become one of our code terms. He'll be slipping into that lack of faith in himself and I'll say something like, "Oh, don't give me the Picasso syndrome."

Another New York-area Italian who doesn't suffer from it is Frank Sinatra, born in Hoboken, right across the river: you can see Manhattan from Hoboken.

And I cannot help reflecting on how the explosive Mr. Sinatra would have reacted had Arthur Godfrey done that to him. Even in his youth, Sinatra was volatile, as witness his fights with Buddy Rich in the Tommy Dorsey band. What would he have done to Godfrey? Had him punched out? I assure you, Mr. Godfrey would have regretted the incident, one way or the other. It would have been he, not Sinatra, who suffered from it. In 1960, about the time of the release of *Can Can,* in which Sinatra starred, Ed Sullivan wanted Sinatra to appear on his television show. Since the purpose would be to publicize the picture, he proposed to pay Sinatra only scale. Sinatra refused. Sullivan denounced him, probably for lack of humility. Sinatra took a full-page trade-paper ad that read:

Dear Ed:
You're sick.
Frank.
PS: Sick, sick, sick.

Like Miles Davis and Marlon Brando, Sinatra has always had a quality of the unpredictable and dangerous about him. La Rosa, however, intelligent, gentle, witty, alive with laughter, solicitous, polite, and truly humble — Arthur Godfrey to the contrary notwithstanding — comes across as someone you would like to have for a best friend, which is of course why he is one of mine.

We can all cite the injustices of show business, the talent that went unrecognized, the frauds who rose to the top. I can think of gifted performers who committed suicide over their failure.

Julie has a new album, titled *Better than Ever*, on the Avalon label, recorded, as befits him, with a big band in some tracks and strings on others. It is an excellent album of standards. Alas, it is his first album in ten years. As for the work with Don Costa, which I think is his best, I don't even have the albums, and Julie will give me tape of only some tracks, since he doesn't like the rest. I know his work as well as I do primarily from hanging out with him and attending performances. The injustice is that the work of one of the most brilliant vocal talents in the history of American song has been so little documented on records. Life alas does not occur in a recording studio. It isn't a tape we can run back and correct.

Arthur Godfrey is the perfect illustration of Marc Antony's observation in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*:

The evil that men do lives after them,
The good is oft interred with their bones.

I spent the early part of 1984 in Northern Italy, writing the lyrics for an album for Sarah Vaughan. I began to learn to speak Italian, and indeed was getting to function, if primitively, in the language. And I was becoming accustomed to Italian manners and gestures, including a pecular habit of grabbing you by the arm to seize your attention when the person wishes to say something he considers important. It began to annoy me.

When I returned, I was walking up Seventh Avenue in New York when who should I encounter on the northeast corner of Seventh and Fifty-ninth Street but La Rosa. There was laughter and much hugging and a decision to go somewhere for coffee. We were headed along Fifty-ninth to the coffee shop at Sixth Avenue. Every few feet La Rosa would seize my arm to say something. And I thought I had escaped this.

I told him about this recently, adding, "You're lucky I didn't belt you one."

"You know, you're right," he said. "It's a very, very Italian thing to do. In fact I'll tell you a story about that."

La Rosa

Over the years, of course, Julie came to know Frank Sinatra. Julie said, "Some years ago," he said, "I was doing a telethon. On the opening night, late, Sinatra was going to be a guest. It was about a quarter to twelve. I was coming out of the so-called green room. Frank walked in with two elderly men, seventy-ish. I said, 'Nice to see you again, Frank.' I said, 'You sonofabitch, you put me into the business and you put me out of it.'"

"How did you mean that?"

"Well. He put me into the business because I learned to sing from him. And he put me out of the business because I never learned to sing as good as he."

"Neither did anyone else," I said.

Julie laughed and said, "I don't *care* about everybody else. I just care about *me*!"

"How did he react to that?"

"Well he got the point. And now what he did was a typically Italian thing. He *grabbed me* by the elbow. He turned me to the two gentlemen and said, 'Tell them what you just told me.'

"It wasn't from ego, it was from pride.

"And I'll never forget it. That's the last time I saw him, and I'll remember it for the rest of my life."

The La Rosa album Better than Ever *can be ordered direct by calling toll free 1-888-652-7672. The CD is $14.95 plus $4.95 shipping. The cassette is $11.99 plus $4.95 shipping. The early recordings have been reissued as* Eh Cumpari, *$9.95 plus $4.95 shipping, or cassette $7.95 plus $4.95 shipping. New York State residents include state sales tax. The albums can be ordered by mail from W&S Entertainment LLC, 95 Madison Ave, New York NY 10016.*

A Little Touch of Harry

Stan Getz was once asked his idea of the perfect tenor saxophone soloist. His answer — pianist Lou Levy was present and heard it — was, "My technique, Al Cohn's ideas, and Zoot's time."

The fulfillment of that ideal may well be embodied in thirty-year-old Harry Allen, who is so good that after several takes of a tune on a record date, arranger and composer Johnny Mandel said from the control booth, "Harry, would you mind screwing up on some of these to make our choices easier?"

I discovered Harry Allen last fall on a Carribean cruise on the S.S. Norway. His records are not easily available. I discovered that we had perhaps met eleven years earlier. One of Harry's saxophone teachers at Rutgers University was the late Sahib Shihab. In 1985, I stayed several days with Sahib in New Brunswick, New Jersey. He was in charge of the Rutgers big band program. I attended a rehearsal of that band. Harry was in it. Harry received his Bachelor of Music Degree in 1988.

There is a lot of Zoot Sims in Harry Allen. For one thing, he has Zoot's exhilarating time feeling. And he has captured that trick of Zoot's of leaping from the low register of the horn up to the top in a sort of celebratory sunburst.

"Zoot was the master of that," Harry said. "So was Stan."

Harry's work traces back to pre-Coltrane saxophone. One hears his admiration for Zoot, for Al Cohn, and Ben Webster, which is manifest during ballads in a furry breathy sound. But it isn't quite Ben's. It may be rooted in Harry's earliest influence. His father, Maurice Allen, a drummer during the big band era and later an engineer and designer, went to high school and played with Paul Gonsalves. Harry was listening to Gonsalves with the Ellington band as far back as he can remember.

What jazz criticism in general has never understood is that *originality* as such means nothing. Much of the best music history was not original. It simply brought to pinnacles of development practices that had gone before. Bach did not begin baroque music; he finished it.

Jazz has now explored its vocabulary, at least all the vocabulary that the audience is likely to follow. Its attempts at an avant-garde will doubtless achieve as much self-sustaining acceptance as that of European music, in which certain music that is now almost a hundred years old still is perceived as radically unlistenable. The question is whether jazz will, having learned its language, use it or will it try to abandon it, as classical music did. At the time of the rise of Arnold Schoenberg, it was widely thought that the European musical tradition was exhausted. Composers since then, including Ravel, Rachmaninoff, Puccini, Giordano, Hindemith, Shostakovitch, Prokofiev, and such Americans as Samuel Barber, Roy Harris, Alan Hovhaness, Aaron Copland, and David Diamond, have proved that it wasn't and isn't.

Jazz is at a crossroads, with one ruminant element manifest in repertory orchestras, its opposite trying to find a new language that actually isn't there to be invented. Harry Allen is one of the young musicians who inspire a cautious hope that jazz may negotiate the waters between Scylla and Charybdis and emerge to use its now-rich vocabulary in original ways. He is already doing it, and each year seems to grow more personal. Certainly more powerful.

"This kid is starting to make some real noise," said Jim Czak, the recording engineer and one of the proprietors of the Nola studio in New York, who recorded the most recent Allen album.

No major record company is spending fortunes on publicity for Harry. His career is happening on its own. One reason of course is his sheer excellence. His work is at a far higher level than that of the some of the most powerfully promoted "young turks". And then there's his choice of material.

John Lewis has pointed out that jazz developed in symbiotic relationship with the superb body of popular music that America produced from the 1920s on; Alec Wilder set the end of the era at about 1955, and, in general, he was right. The songs of the era — those of Waller, Carmichael, Ellington, Kern, Gershwin, et al — were the *lingua franca* of jazz, material that audiences knew and

wanted to hear — a familiar famework on which to enjoy and judge the inventions of the jazz musician. That has changed. Often you will pick up an album by a new jazz performer and find that he or she wrote all the tunes.

Harry Allen records standards. This may be because he is (like Lester Young and Ben Webster) partial to singers; he is a particular admirer of Peggy Lee. It is no doubt for this reason that he seems to know all the songs — almost every one of them written before he was born. And whether by design or not, Allen explores a repertoire that the older audience, at least, knows and likes. Interestingly, his close friend John Pizzarelli, who is having great success, does the same. His albums are made up mostly of standards. It is worth reflecting that Rob McConnell built the international success of his Boss Brass on standards.

Harry Allen was born in Washington D.C. on October 12, 1966, the second of two children in the family. His parents moved to Los Angeles when he was a year old and, when he was eleven, to Rhode Island, where they still live. A door-to-door salesman tried to talk his parents into lessons at an accordion studio for his sister, Sally, when she was eight, but not for Harry: at seven, he was considered too young. His father consented to the lessons only on the grounds that both children be given lessons, which they were. Accordion had this advantage: it is a chordal instrument and the exploration of harmony is implicit in learning to play it.

Harry soon began to study clarinet, and then in junior high school switched to tenor. And all the while he was listening to his father's record collection. He was steeped in jazz and the standards before he ever heard rock-and-roll.

"I remember my dad would play me records before I went to school," Harry said. "My parents were great about music. They didn't push my sister and me into it. But then when we showed a natural interest, they were very supportive. I played soprano, I played a little bit of alto, and then as I went along, I would be playing the clarinet or the soprano, and I would think, 'Boy, I'd rather be playing tenor.' I spend so much aggravation and time trying to get the sound exactly the way I want on tenor. I'd love to play clarinet and really play it well and get the exact sound I want, but there are not enough hours in the day.

"I had heard mostly Paul Gonsalves with Duke's band. I just wanted to play tenor. It wasn't really because of any one in particular. But after I started, a tenor player in Rhode Island named Nick Peters told me I should pick up a Scott Hamilton record. I heard that great sound he has and said, 'That's what I want to sound like.' Scott Hamilton was the first big influence on me. After that I learned about the guys who went before him. I learned about Zoot and Al and Stan Getz and Ben Webster and Coleman Hawkins and Lester Young and Illinois Jacquet and Flip Phillips."

Harry studied at Rutgers from 1984 to 1988. "Kenny Barron was the piano instructor," Harry said. "He is such a great musician, and such a nice guy. So in a way it was four years of hanging out with Kenny Barron. I took piano with him. Larry Ridley taught bass. Sahib Shihab was there in 1985. He'd say to me, 'Ah, get out of here, you don't need a lesson, you're okay.'

"The reason I went to Rutgers was to be around New York. I felt, even as a kid, that going to school was not the way to learn how to play music. To be around the guys who were doing it was the way to do it. I felt that if I went to Berklee or one of those schools, I'd be so tied up with music courses that I wouldn't be able to go out and hear the music. I thought that Rutgers would let me go into New York and hang out. And that's exactly what I did. My first year at Rutgers was the last year of Eddie Condon's club. I hung out there a lot. I'd go to hear Buddy Tate or Scott Hamilton or Al Klink or Illinois Jacquet.

"By my junior year in college, I had enough gigs to support myself. When I graduated I kept going the same way I had been going. I went into New York and hung out and tried to get gigs.

"In my first year in college, I had already met people like Scott Hamilton and Warren Vaché. Warren told me, 'You should look up John Pizzarelli. He's about your age and he's doing sort of the same thing.' I found out that John was playing at a place two blocks from my dormitory. I went down and introduced myself. He invited me to another club where he was working with his father. I sat in. Bucky and John have since been my biggest supporters in the music business. They have done so much for me. My other big supporters have been Major Holley and Oliver Jackson. I'm so grateful to them. Oliver was the first one to take me overseas. He took me on four or five overseas tours. He showed me the ropes on how to lead a band, how to travel, he was just wonderful."

That he has made fifteen albums leaves Harry unimpressed. He laughed, "Most of them are impossible to get.

"I get good distribution on a record in a certain part of the world. I have done four or five records in England. They get them all over England but nowhere else. I've done some records for the Nagel Hayer company in Germany. They do a good job getting them around Germany but not much anywhere else. The album with John Pizzarelli for BMG has great distribution in Japan. I've never been to Japan, but everybody who goes there tells me the album is on display in all the stores. I've recorded a few for American companies that get some distribution but not total distribution.

"John Pizzarelli *is* selling records. And again, it's not a great wonder why. He swings and he plays great tunes.

"Working with Johnny Mandel and a fifty-two piece orchestra on John Pizzarelli's Christmas record has been the musical highlight of my life so far. I've just never heard anything like that. Johnny Mandel is probably my favorite arranger, ever. The opening chord of the piece, *What Are You Doing New Year's?* was so simple, yet so incredible. I can't even describe it. You listen and it's just a major seventh chord and you think,'Why does it sound so great?' And you hear it over and over again and you realize this alto flute is trilling over there, and something else is doing something different. He plays an orchestra like it's an instrument.

"There's a very high importance, and it's ridiculous, placed on being innovative. To an extent quality doesn't really matter; as long as it's innovative, it's going to get attention. Which is really silly. I don't think there's anything out there that *is* innovative, but there are those who are getting attention as being innovative. And that's a shame. The qualification for the music should be whether it's good or not.

"I'm reading Arnold Schoenberg's theory of harmony. When the book was published, about 1911, there were clamorings that it would be necessary to add more notes to the scale because all possible combinations have already been done with the twelve-note system. Schoenberg was saying, 'I don't think we have to do that quite yet.' He was just beginning his twelve-tone writing.

"There hasn't been much new musical vocabulary since then.

"It's important to be *inventive*. When I was in college, I was the only one who was into Ben Webster. Everyone else was into Coltrane. A friend of mine heard me play somewhere. He said, 'It's amazing. You're trying to take your lines to places you've never gone before.' He was so surprised that somebody could play something that was their own on standard tunes. He thought you could do that only on modal tunes. That doesn't make any sense, but that's what a lot of people think.

"I feel very pleased with the way my career has gone so for, considering that I'm not one of the people someone took hold of when they were nineteen and gave a major record contract and management and agent and publicity. There are guys like that around today who are household names and have weeks at the Village Vanguard even before their first record comes out. I didn't go that route. I like to think that whatever I've gotten, it's because people wanted to hear my music."

Since Oliver Jackson took him to Europe, he has enjoyed a steady and growing reputation there. His English recordings, including several on James Campbell's London-based Master Mix label, are not readily available in North America.

An excellent Master Mix album is *I'll Never Be the Same*, recorded in London in 1992 with only guitarist Howard Alden on some of the tracks and with Alden and bassist Simon Woolf on others. It's a lovely, intimate album, and has the further value of showing you how Allen's playing has evolved since then.

I am partial to a 1944 album recorded in concert in Hamburg for the Nagel Heyer label. Titled *Jazz in Amerika Haus*, it has the powerfully propulsive Duffy Jackson on drums, Dennis Irwin on bass, and John Bunch on piano. John is so self-effacing, so willing to erase himself in the accompanist's role, that not too many persons, I think, are aware of what a hot, hip, swinging, imaginative pianist he is. And in this album, you hear it. Indeed, the salient characteristic of this whole album, no small thanks to Duffy Jackson, is its swing.

The latest album, *A Little Touch of Harry* — the title is from Henry V — is due out in June on the Mastermix label. Harry is heard with the brilliant and consistently overlooked pianist Kenny Barron, his old teacher at Rutgers.

"Kenny Barron," Harry said, "is such a wonderful musician. You look in the newspapers, you look on records, and Kenny is on nearly every other gig. And yet he's not a household name to the general public. He can go any way he wants. As far out as he can get, he doesn't lose the things that are important. He has such a great foundation. He's just the best."

Barron's playing on this new album is breath-taking. It was Curtis Fuller who first taught me a principle about playing: "You sacrifice tone for speed." This is generally true. But not in Barron's case. He can play remarkable fast liquid passages and always produce his exquisite, crystalline tone. It has something to do with his aim. It's as if his hands float about the keyboard at some very specific height and the fingers descend with flawless touch to produce a tone fully as beautiful as the one he elicits on ballads. And he is some gorgeous ballad player. He is a deep and imaginative musician.

It is frustrating to recommend records I know you can't find in stores, and so I've arranged to import from England and Germany *I'll Never Be the Same* and *Jazz Im Amerika Haus*. And if you don't mind waiting until June to receive it, I think you'll be knocked out by *A Little Touch of Harry*. Each album is $17, including postage.

I wish Sahib Shihab were here to hear Harry. I think he'd be very proud.

Harry Allen