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Other Voices

I think you are the only other man who knows Julius La Rosa as well as I do. Julie and I have worked together for 25 years as a team, and we have been through a lot together. I thought the article was right on the money. I only wish he'd achieved the amount of recognition his talent deserved. I guess you and I are the only who know how truly great he was.

I've learned much from Julie that has helped me throughout my career — lyric interpretation and so many other things. I work with singers all the time, and the first thing I do is tell them to listen to the few recordings Julie has done. Although they can't hold a candle to Julie, I can say they all listened to his reading of lyrics and learned so much from them. I always tell my people, as Julie would say, "Would you talk that way? Well if you wouldn't talk that way, why in hell would you sing that way?"

I played on that Don Costa album, and you are right: the reading on *Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most* was superb.

I was thrilled to read the piece. Julie is like my brother.

Joe Massimino, Tustin, California

Pianist Massimino was Julie's accompanist for many years.

I loved Jeff Sultanof's Budd Johnson piece. Budd was doing a club gig here in Kansas City, with Jay McShann, when he was stricken. He was taken from the club up the hill to St. Mary's hospital, and died.

Bill Fogarty, Leawood, Kansas

Of Ms and Men really hit the mark.

There was a slight error in the Budd Johnson article. Budd became musical director of the Eckstine band after Dizzy Gillespie left, joining the sax section. Budd was never the musical director of the Gillespie big band.

Jeffrey Sultanof, Springfield, New Jersey

Mea culpa. Editor's error. And oh, by the way, the wrong issue number in the logo of the January issue was my printer's fault. He was so embarrassed that he wanted to write all of you a letter. I told him to forget it.

He is the best printer I have ever found, and I can earnestly recommend him. You don't have to live in California to do business with him.

His name is John Landa, and his small, excellent company is Island Printers, 4587 Telephone Rd #103, Ventura CA 93003, 805 658-1222, Fax 658-9273. I had a horrible time with printers until I found John, and the January issue was his first goof in the eight or nine years he has printed the Jazzletter. And that's some track record.

Of Ms and Men reminded me of something I wrote in my journal in spring '95:

In fairness to women, we need a new synthetic pronoun for Deity. He-shi-it perhaps would be acceptable to Hesheit but might offend some effete intellectuals. How about Shehit? Between Sheheit and Jahweh it's immaterial in my mind, but somehow I have male associations with the latter.

The United States will probably subsume Mexico and Canada eventually. This will be OK with me *if* cultural diversity is preserved. When you speak of the end of Canada, I assume you refer to the government as we know it. In that sense, I look forward to the end of the U.S. as well. Perhaps then people will appropriate their own destinies, as jazz musicians are beginning to do in recording and distributing themselves.

Ogden Plumb, Streator, Illinois

I've sent *Of Ms and Men* to the director of APEC (Alliance for the Preservation of English in Canada). I am sure he will find your comments on ebonics very interesting, as well as your views on Canada's bilingual problems.

Your comments on a single North American nation brought back memories of a seminar I attended at the New York State College of Forestry in Syracuse while doing my graduate work in 1966-68. The seminar was on water resources and started with a color film that had been produced by an engineering consulting company and probably commissioned by that group of people who . . . really run North America. With great fanfare the film opened with the appropriate music, a 3-D model of North America, and the statement: "Water is a continental resource." As I looked more closely at the 3-D model, I realized that there were no boundaries separating Canada or Mexico from the USA!

The gist of the film was that by marshalling the water resources of Canada and performing the required engineering, the water needs of the USA would be met for all time. Needless to say, I didn't accept the hypothesis, and during the discussion period that got very hot, one student from California shouted at me, "When Californians want water for their swimming pools, they will get it any way they can, and no country, Canada or Mexico, will be able to stop them from taking over their water resources."

I was one of the oldest graduate students there, being all of 36 or 37, and I suggested to this young fellow (he was about 25) that we might be able to strike a deal and perhaps Canada might sell off a few extra gallons when we Canadians had satisfied our needs. Well, that made him more livid, and the verbal abuse really began. Luckily, the prof in charge, who was more my age, decided it was time to conclude the discussion, and we all went home.

But to return to those people who . . . really run North America, is this the same group that promotes the New World Order? Some of their ideas are quite frightening.

Terry Horner, Victoria, British Columbia

The Jazzletter has done all of us do-it-yourself record producers a great service by making the jazz community aware of what we're all really up to. One person who should be mentioned is Bob Rusch of Cadence/North Country Distributors. He has been nothing less than a knight in shining armor for many of us, taking on distribution of hundreds, even thousands of artistically meaningful releases that regular distributors on the make for high turnover items wouldn't even make computer entries for. Without Bob and North Country, many of us can't even get reviews in large-circulation jazz publications in which we've bought ad space on the grounds that we don't have national distribution. We need more like Bob Rusch for the real stuff to survive and prosper.

Dave Zoller, Dallas, Texas

Over the years I've been a subscriber, I've always enjoyed the stories of the music and the musicians. But equally I've enjoyed your writing on broader social issues. I've just finished reading *While You Weren't Watching*. Frightening stuff. Although the entertainment (?) industry is centered in the U.S., its bilge spreads around the world and Canada is not immune. We still have the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, but it is under constant pressure from the private radio and TV lobby groups. The link between the entertainment industry and the drug problem in both our countries is indisputable, and yet our politicians, like yours, seem incapable or unwilling to take action.

I stopped subscribing to *Time* before it became part of Warner, a decision reached easily because it had ceased to be interesting. Unlike any other journal, *Time* did not send one follow-up letter begging me to re-subscribe. It was as if they couldn't have cared a fig. I've picked it up a few times in the dentist's office and it is a miserable rag.

Your articles do not hold out much hope. But I remain hopeful that at least our four children were raised to know good from bad, have never used drugs, are not into rock and roll, have never been involved with crime, and are monogamous. We can all do our part to ensure slime, sleaze, and drugs do not overwhelm society.

My renewal is enclosed. The extra is to ensure the Jazzletter goes to someone who needs it. Sincerely,

Jim Rainer, North Vancouver BC, Canada

Jim: I couldn't live without hope. On the other hand, blind *hope is useless. My composer friend Hale Smith insists against all evidence that I am an optimist. And I do see some glimmerings that in music, at least, some of us are trying to take control of our destinies back from the corporations. That is why I wrote the recent piece supporting self-produced recording. As for drugs, I hope to examine the politics of this issue in a near-future issue.*

I once met a wine expert who told me that, unlike others of his ilk, he preferred to eat something before he tasted wine. He insisted that the taste of a familiar food gave his palate a reference, a yardstick alongside which he could better judge his wine.

What brought this to mind was an article you wrote a few months back, explaining why you inject yourself into your journalism. In fact, you need neither explain nor apologize. There are already a few jazz magazines out there that rewrite press releases and fill the spaces between ads with shallow profiles and dull interviews. Your voice is something else. Like that oenologist's food, it gives a reference, a set of values, and a particular intelligence to what would otherwise be mere facts. Since we know your writing, your own view of an issue *means* something. Whether or not we agree with every one of your conclusions is irrelevant. Your opinions is always worth reckoning with.

Objectivity is overrated anyway: most important things are pursued with passion. And it is with passion that I enclose check. Keep doing what you're doing.

Charles Martin, Chung Chau, Hong Kong

Charles Martin is a writer.

School Days
Junior Mance

The last engagement Dizzy Gillespie played was a month at the Blue Note in New York. It was a little like the final scene in John Huston's *Moulin Rouge*, probably the best picture ever made about a painter, wherein the figures who have been important in the life of Toulouse-Lautrec come (in his imagination) to the foot of his death bed to express their farewells. Not all the significant figures in Dizzy's life came to the Blue Note; there are far too many of them, and some of them were gone. But a good many came, at his behest, to play with him. He played with his reconstituted big band and with small groups. The last week the rhythm section was headed by one of Dizzy's favorite pianists, Julian Mance Jr., universally known since his early recording days simply as Jun Mance.

For Junior, it was a highlight of a life spent in the company of some of the most distinguished of jazz performers, among them Gene Ammons, Nat and Cannonball Adderley, Sonny Stitt, Lester Young, Eddie (Lockjaw) Davis, Johnny Griffin, and singers of the stature of Dinah Washington, Johnny Hartman, Joe Williams, and a particular favorite of Junior's, Irene Kral, with whom he had a brief but unforgotten association.

Junior was born October 10, 1928, in Chicago, and it is worth noting that a number of those associates were born there — Hartman, Ammons, Griffin, and Kral — and though Joe Williams was born in Georgia and Dinah Washington in Alabama, both grew up and started their careers in Chicago. Chicago musicians have an awareness of each other and a subtle if unspoken understanding. Junior grew up in Evanston, the wealthy small city fronting on Lake Michigan immediately to the north of Chicago and seat of Northwestern University.

I once met and spent an evening with his parents; Junior thinks

it must have been at the London House, when he was playing there with Dizzy. I remember them as elegant, soft-spoken, and very polite.

"They were," Junior said. "Especially when they went out, they were."

"I remember the manner of their speech."

"Well, my father was a stickler for perfect English," Junior said. "After I'd lived in New York for about a year and went home for a visit, he said, 'Gee, your speech is terrible.' He never used the word 'ain't.' He said, '*Ain't* is not in the dictionary.' At that time it wasn't. It is now. It always had a valid function, but people didn't recognize that.

"My father was a Pullman porter until the trains started to go [illegible]d and he didn't have enough seniority to continue. Then he became a clothes presser. He played piano for his own enjoyment. He was into stride and boogie-woogie. My whole musical career, he criticized my left hand. I started out with boogie-woogie and stride. My first influences were Earl Hines and Fats Waller. The guys who *used* the left hand."

"Yes, but you have a superb left hand," I said. "I was watching it the other night."

"Well you can thank my dad for that," Junior said, laughing. "When bebop came in, you know how bebop piano is, you hit a chord and play a million notes in the right hand, and when I started recording — that was with Gene Ammons — my pop said, 'Son, what about your left hand?' I said, 'What do you mean?' He said, 'It's non-existent, it's not there.' I said, 'Yes it is. Hear it? That's the way they play now.' He said, 'No, that's not a left hand. You have two hands. You're supposed to use them.'"

"But that's not really correct," I said. "Basie had a marvelous left hand, but once the rhythm section was carrying the beat, he left space and he knew how to go just 'Plink.'"

"And the funny thing is," Junior said, "Basie was my dad's all-time favorite. My dad knew about Basie's stride." Junior laughed again. "The last thing my father told me before he died was, 'Son, work on that left hand.' And this was just two years ago.

"My mother loved the blues. I love the blues. The blues are so emotional. You can be thinking about anything. It doesn't have to be depressing. I listened to the blues all my life. My mother listened to every blues singer. Memphis Slim and Tampa Red. We had stacks of blues 78s. My mother bought all the blues and my father bought all the jazz, especially the big-band records.

"My first teacher, who I still think was the best one, was just a cocktail-lounge pianist. But his heroes were Earl Hines, Fats Waller, Art Tatum, and Teddy Wilson, who he had me listen to. He had a way of getting across to me what they were really doing. So they were my first influences.

"Basie was a big influence. My father took me to see Basie when I was ten years sold. I was so thrilled. My father went backstage and said, 'I'd like to see Mr. Basie.' Basie actually came down. My father introduced himself and said, 'My son's studying piano. And he just wondered if he possibly could meet you.' And Basie talked to me for about ten minutes. And man! I thought there was nobody else in the world like Basie."

"There wasn't," I said.

Junior laughed. "Right! Well, every time a record by Basie came out, my dad bought it immediately.

"Years later, I was working in Birdland opposite Basie. Basie always played there for Christmas the whole month of December. They had a packed house every set. The first thing I said to Basie was 'You probably don't remember this, but when I was ten years old my dad brought me to meet you.' Basie was a really nice man. He smiled. He said, 'Don't spread that around. I don't want the guys to know how old I am!'"

"Where did you go to high school?"

"Evanston Township High School. When I was growing up, there was only one high school in the country, a high school in Pasadena, that was rated above it. I didn't take music. My mother didn't want me to be a musician. She wanted me to be a doctor. I took physics, chemistry, biology, algebra. And four years of Latin. The last two years I got bombarded with Cicero and Virgil. It helps you with languages.

"After I graduated from high school, my mother had me take the entrance exams for the University of Chicago, which is a school for geniuses. I did *not* want to go there. I barely passed. They told me, 'We'll accept you, but if you go to this school, you're not going to have time to do *anything* but study.'"

"Do you think maybe there was some discrimination in that?"

Junior pondered that for a minute. "Possibly so. I hadn't thought about that. I don't remember too many of us being there, if any. They had no sports program. They said they didn't have time for things like football and basketball. My mother wanted me to go to Northwestern also. It was right there, at home. I passed the entrance exam there, too, but I didn't want to go there. All youngsters want to go away to school.

"I took another entrance examination — for Roosevelt. Joe Segal and I were there together. Lou Levy. We all dropped out about the same time. I passed the entrance exam. It was easier than Northwestern. I told my mother, 'Since I can't go away to school, I'd like to Roosevelt.' Reluctantly, she gave in. When I went to register, and was walking down the corridor, past all the rooms of the different departments, I saw the sign that said School of Music. I wasn't supposed to go there. It was like a magnet. I steered right in there and signed up.

"I was on the elevated train, going back to Evanston, and I said to myself, 'What did I do? She's gonna beat my ass!' So I didn't tell her. I told my dad. My dad was very supportive of me being a musician. When he came home from work, I said, 'Everything's okay. I'm going to be a student at Roosevelt.' I tried to change the subject. And then I told my dad what I'd done. He smiled. He said, 'I knew you were going to do that anyway. But you've got a problem: your mother. And leave me out of it.'

"I didn't tell her. They mailed the grades to her — I was under twenty-one — this whole list of music grades. I got home from school that day, and she showed me the mail and said, 'What's this?'

"Then I told her. I said, 'Mom, I would not have been a good doctor. If I'd become a doctor, there'd be a serious decrease in the world population.' I tried to be light about it.

"There were a few weeks when, if I asked her anything, all I got was grunts.

"In the meantime, while I was still in school, I was working with Gene Ammons and I started recording. You remember the big ban in 1948 that the musicians' union imposed on the recording companies. Gene was recording for Mercury. The recording companies tried to get everybody into the studios and get as much on the shelf as they could before the ban. We were in the studios every day for about two and a half weeks. I was so far behind on everything at school, and I was working at night with Gene. I tried to catch up. Every now and then Gene would get these gigs out of town. Sometimes we'd be gone for about three weeks. Next thing I know Lou Levy's not there any more and neither am I.

"Joe Segal said he didn't graduate, but he was there all the time. He is one cat who really helped keep jazz alive in Chicago. He was promoting concerts every Friday in the school auditorium. He was charging maybe twenty-five or fifty cents, and he used it to pay the musicians and pay the cartage. Most of the guys lived down on the South Side. Sometimes he'd hire pros to come in. He went from there to the other business, which is now the Jazz Showcase. He's taken a beating through the years, not making much money, but he always kept his head above water, always presenting jazz somewhere. I really admire him.

"I stayed with Jug — " Jug was Gene Ammons' nickname in Chicago " — quite a while. In '49, Woody Herman offered him a gig. Lester Young was in town. Prez was doing one of those dance gigs at the Persian Ballroom or someplace. The story I got — I don't know whether it's true or not — was that Bud Powell was supposed make the gig and missed the flight. Prez offered me the gig. And when Prez offers you a gig, and you're a teen-ager! I was eighteen.

"It was not only a job with Gene, Gene and I were great friends. I told him about the offer. He said, 'Oh man, I think you should take it.' Then he told me he'd had an offer from Woody. He had mixed feelings about breaking up the group. *Red Top* was a hit. But if this was going to boost us . . . . It was a coincidence, the timing being perfect. Gene went with Woody, and I went on the road with Prez. I was with him a little over two years.

"But it was a time when it was hard to keep a small group together. He had so much time off between gigs. He did a long stint with Norman Granz and Jazz at the Philharmonic. In the meantime, I went back to Gene Ammons. That's when Gene and Sonny Stitt formed an alliance. That lasted a few months and I got drafted. I was sent to Fort Knox.

"Cannonball Adderley, I like to say, saved my life. I've often wondered what would have happened to me but for Cannonball. He was head of a band training unit. And they had a big band. He had a friend with him from Florida who could copy any chart off the record, parts and all. And they had a book that was out of sight, even charts from the Billy Eckstine band. Dizzy's early big-band records. And Basie. Nat Adderley and Curtis Fuller were in that band. But they didn't have a piano player, because piano players couldn't get in the band *unless* they played a marching instrument.

"I was walking guard duty one night, still in basic training. And it was around this service club. I heard this music. I thought it was records. At first I thought it was Charlie Parker records. Then I said, 'No, it's not Charlie Parker.' On guard duty, you'd walk two hours, rest an hour, walk some more. Instead of resting, I walked into the service club and there was this big band up on the stage and a fat guy holding an alto. Mind you, at that time I hadn't been near a piano in about six weeks.

"I ran up to the stage. I listened to a couple of numbers and I blurted out — and this is something I would never do — 'Can I sit in a couple of tunes?' The cat who was playing piano said, 'Yeah, man, come on up.' He grabbed me by the arm, yanked me up on the stage, and disappeared. He was a clarinet player, and just knew a few basic chord changes. He had a date in Louisville with a chick that he didn't want to miss.

"And I was sitting there at the stool, with a helmet on, cartridge belt, combat boots. I thought, 'I can take the helmet off anyway.' Cannonball and all the cats were giving me a look that could kill. Cannonball said, 'What do you want to play?' I said, 'Whatever's in your book.' So he called an easy tune with blues changes, medium tempo. Right up my alley. They played the head and said, 'Okay, you got it!' I played about four choruses. I just happened to glance around. I see heads turning. I was so hungry to play! I just let it all out. After about ten choruses, Cannonball said, 'Yeah, man, keep going, play some more.' I must have played about ninety-nine choruses.

"By then my arms were tired. I looked at Cannon, and he brought the band in. The band sounded good. I think it was an old Basie tune.

"Cannon walked over by the piano and said, 'Man, that was great. What's your name?' I said, 'Junior Mance.' I said 'Junior' because I'd recorded under that name.

"One of Cannon's idols at that time was Sonny Stitt. He had one of the records by Gene Ammons and Sonny Stitt that I was on. He laughed. He said, 'Ha-ha! Junior Mance! What are you doing here?' 'What are *you* doing here.' He said, 'Are you coming out for the band?' I said, 'Afraid not.' And I told him why.

"The next day, I was crawling through the infiltration course. They wet it down because it hadn't rained, to make it nice and muddy, and they were firing machine-gun bullets over your head. We got to the end. I had mud in my ears and my nose and I saw this jeep approaching. And it was Cannonball. He handed the first

sergeant a piece of paper, and the sergeant said, 'Mance, take off. They want to see you at headquarters.'

"I got in the jeep with Cannonball. I said, 'Man, am I glad to see you!' He waited till we were out of earshot and he said, 'Now listen carefully. These orders are phony. We're trying to get you into the band.' We went back to the barracks and I auditioned for the bandmaster, who knew nothing about jazz. He saw how the cats were reacting, and he gave me one of those back-handed compliments. He said, 'I guess you're good. *They* seem to think so.' And he said, 'What's your other instrument?' Cannon had forgotten to clue me in! I didn't think fast enough, and I said, 'Piano's my only instrument.' He said, 'Well that presents a problem.'

"The drummer was a company clerk. I knew how to type. I said, 'Cannonball, do you think I could get *that* gig?' You could almost see the lightbulb go on over Cannonball's head. He convinced the bandmaster to have an in-house company clerk, and then they could use him in the band. They pulled it off somehow. They got me out of basic training. I had to go to clerk-typist's school for six weeks.

"So, but for Cannon, I'd have been in Korea. The company I was in, after basic training, was absorbed by the 24th Infantry Division and shipped to Korea. They were caught in an ambush, a complete wipe-out. To this day, I've known only four people who were in my training company who came back.

"I stayed there at Fort Knox the whole two years I was in the army. So did Cannonball. He did his whole tour of duty there.

"The day I got out in 1953, I got a call for a gig at the Beehive in Chicago. The Beehive was bringing in singles for a month each, and the first month I worked with Charlie Parker. Myself and Israel Crosby and a Chicago drummer named Buddy Smith.

"Then Dinah Washington had a record date in Chicago. She called me. After that, she offered me the gig with her. The money was good, better than the Beehive. But I was having so much fun at the Beehive, I was really torn between the two. I said, 'Take the chance and decide after you get to New York and have spent some time there.' Dinah lived in New York then. So I went on the road with her. I stayed with her almost two years.

"After the army, Cannonball went back to teaching school in Florida. Then, in summer, he and Nat decided to take a vacation and drive up to New York. They had their horns in the trunk. And Jerome Richardson was playing saxophone with Oscar Pettiford. He was late that night. And they were doing a record date. Cannonball overheard them talking about it. He went to Oscar Pettiford and told him he could play the parts. Cannonball went to the car and got his horn. Ozzie Cadena from Savoy was there and heard Cannonball. Next day Cannonball was in the studio, recording.

"So then, when the record came out, he decided to get out there and test the waters. He called me. I said, 'I'm for it.' And I went with him.

"I met Dizzy when I was with Cannonball. That was in 1956. We were playing opposite his big band at Basin Street East, the one that was near Birdland. Dizzy liked the group, Cannonball, Nat, Jimmy Cobb, Sam Jones, and myself. The band broke up for lack of gigs. Cannonball joined Miles, Nat joined J.J. Johnson, and I joined Carmen McRae for a month.

"I saw Dizzy on the street one day in New York. Knowing that Cannonball had broken up, he said, 'What are you doing now?' I said, 'Nothing. I just did some things with Carmen.' He said, 'The rehearsal is at my house,' and gave me the address. That's how it came about.

"It was such a relaxed rehearsal! Les Spann was in the group, playing guitar and flute. Les died, you know. He ended up on skid row, at rock bottom. Somebody rescued him and checked him into the hospital to dry him out. Cats were taking him music paper, because he loved to write. They gave him every encouragement. One day, he checked himself out of the hospital and back to skid row. He died in the Bowery.

"Actually, when I went with the band, Les wasn't with it. It was Junior Cook, Jimmy Cobb, and Sam Jones. That group lasted only a couple of months. Jimmy went with Miles. Junior Cook went with Horace Silver, Cannonball reorganized in 1959 with Bobby Timmons and Sam Jones and Louis Hayes. I wanted to stay with Dizzy, because I was beginning to learn things just by osmosis, just by listening, things I had never learned before.

"In the three years I played with Dizzy, I think I learned more musically than in all the years I studied with teachers and in music schools. Besides his being a hell of a nice guy.

"We lived near each other in Long Island. He lived in Corona and I lived in East Elmhurst. Two villages, you might say, right next to each other. I was, like, a five-minute walk away from his house.

"You never knew what he was going to do. I used to try to play at tennis. And so did he. He'd say, 'Let's go play tennis.' I figured we're going to a court or something. We'd go out and find an open field in Queens and just hit the ball back and forth.

"It was always exciting. I remember when the band was in Pittsburgh once. One day he took a walk. He saw a firehouse. Some of the firemen were playing chess. He sat down and wiped them all out. They told him to come back the next day. And he did. He was always relaxed and nonchalant about everything. He was a man who could converse with anybody on any subject. It really amazed me. He could meet people in other walks of life, far removed from music, and hold the most brilliant conversation. He had a picture in his house of him and former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Earl Warren, playing chess on a plane. They had the board on a support between the seats. He had the photo on his wall.

"I used to spend time with him in his basement, where he had his own private little studio. He would show me things on the piano. But he never forced you to play any way you weren't comfortable. I got the impression that he knew how you played

before he hired you. And by listening to him, I would think you would have to get better. It's like Miles Davis said, any trumpet player who played in Dizzy's big band and didn't improve didn't have it to begin with.

"Everybody who played with him improved. Especially drummers. He made so many guys who were just average drummers into fantastic drummers. I didn't hear Charlie Persip before he played with Dizzy, but somebody told me he was just another drummer. After a while with Dizzy's big band, he was one of the most fantastic big-band drummers, *and* small-group drummers, around.

"Dizzy had such a great sense of rhythm. He could teach you any kind of rhythm. It was almost as though he'd invented the rhythms. Rhythms you might think you'd been playing right for years, and one little thing he injected would change the whole thing.

"Another thing. I'd been playing *'Round Midnight* for years. He said to me one night on the gig, 'You know *'Round Midnight*?' I said, 'Yeah, sure.' We played it all the way through. And he said, 'You know, you played that wrong.' And I did. He liked Monk's changes. And to this day I still play Monk's changes. But everybody was playing the changes Miles used on the *'Round Midnight* album. Every time Monk ran into Miles, he'd say, 'Hey, Miles, how're you doin'? Are you still playing my tune wrong?'"

"Yeah," I said, "well Miles also did that to Benny Carter's *When Lights Are Low*."

"He did, that's right," Junior said. "Oh man, he crucified that channel. And you know most guys have gone back to Benny's original version."

He laughed over Dizzy's memory. "You never knew what was coming out of his mouth. He was the funniest cat. You remember Big Black, the conga drummer, who played with Dizzy? Somebody asked Dizzy, 'What's Big Black's last name?' Dizzy said, 'Motherfucker.' He was so quick. I really miss him.

"When I left the group, he was so supportive. He set up my first record date as a leader, with Norman Granz. Norman asked me if I had any qualms about using Ray Brown. I said, 'Are you serious? Of course not.' So Ray Brown and Lex Humphries made my first trio record. I think that was after *The Ebullient Mr. Gillespie*. Dizzy gave me a solo track on that album. And right after that Norman asked me to do my own album. And I did."

I said, "Somebody said he was the greatest teacher in the world so long as you didn't let him know he was teaching."

"This is the thing!" Junior said. "There was so much unwritten knowledge just coming out of him. You said, 'Wow!' I'd hear things and run home just to get to the keyboard and say, 'Oh, this is what he did!'"

"And he was so modest," I said. "He could go rather shy on you, and he said to me once, 'I don't know that I know all that much, but whatever I know I'm willing to share.'"

"He was *always* glad to show you," Junior said.

I suggested to Junior that because of the enchantment of the American public with flawed and tragic figures, premature demise, and consequent distorting hagiography — Rudolph Valentino, Lenny Bruce, James Dean, Billie Holiday, Marilyn Monroe, Bud Powell, Bix Beiderbecke, Bill Evans, Lester Young, and even in a way Jesse James — jazz history in its general outlines has tended to give all the credit for what became known as bebop to Charlie Parker while withholding it from Dizzy. Dizzy's life was for the most part a happy one, with a single sustained marriage, and he died in a fair fullness of years loved and admired by everyone who knew him, not to mention a substantial public.

"That's *right*!" Junior emphatically agreed. "But he was good about that.

"That last gig at the Blue Note in New York, he played there a whole month, which was unprecedented. Each week featured different people. The first was big-band, the second was saxophone players, the third week was big band again. The fourth week, each night there was a different trumpet player. Plus the rhythm section. I played the last week. Kenny Washington was the drummer. They recorded all of them, but that was the first to come out on CD. On Telarc. It was called *To Diz with Love*. He gave me a lot to play, a lot of stretching out. When I was playing, he kept looking over and winking and smiling. It felt like old times.

"The last night, up in his dressing room, I said, 'Oh man, thank you for a wonderful week!' And he squeezed and hugged me and said, 'You're finally doing it.' That's all he said. So I guess I must have been doing something different that I hadn't done before. I'd learned how to do something.

"One day Katie Couric came over to interview him on camera about the things he had been doing all week. It was daytime. We were doing a sound check. She said, 'How did you happen to invent bebop?'

"He said, 'I didn't invent bebop.'

"She said, 'You were the creator of bebop.'

"He said, 'I was not. Charlie Parker was the creator of bebop.'

"She said, 'Everybody knows that you were.'

"Dizzy is, by the moment, getting more pissed off. Kenny Washington and I were sitting there, and looking at each other, as if to say, 'Is she kidding?'

"Dizzy even tried to cut her off. He said, 'Listen, Charlie Parker started this whole movement.'

"Dizzy finally turned toward the bar and said, 'Bartender, can I have a beer?' And she had to say 'Cut' to the camera. The interview was never finished."

I said, "It's all very well for Dizzy to minimize his role in the music. But if you listen to one of Dizzy's charts, written for the Woody Herman band, recorded in 1942, *Down Under*, you can see where his mind was already going. For the period, it was radical. You can hear a change that is about to happen. Obviously when Birks met Charlie Parker, it was powerful meeting of minds. But Dizzy had a lot to do with it, and Don Byas and Kenny Clarke and

Monk had something to do with it, obviously."

"Monk, yes! Especially," Junior said. "I agree, Dizzy has definitely not been given full credit.

"These wonderful things never ceased to come out of his mind. Daily. You never knew what was going to happen, or what you were going to learn."

"I think Dizzy could do anything," I said. "If he'd chosen to be, he could have been one of the great standup comics."

"Yes," Junior said. "When I was with him, he played a lot of rooms that were not jazz rooms. He didn't care. He still knew how to get an audience. Like, say, we'd start off with one of his compositions, some bebop tune, and get polite applause, audience indifference. Then he'd go right into a tune — and he knew we didn't like this tune — *School Days*. After that everybody is clapping, with it. And then he'd go right back into some of his other stuff, and the attitudes had changed.

"I said, 'You have a reason for playing *School Days*.' He said 'Yeah. If I don't get 'em, *School Days* will. And after *School Days*, they're into this other rhythm. And from that, everything is going to sound good to them.' And he was right. After that we'd go into the rest of our repertoire. And they would love it.'"

"You know he was criticized for his comic antics," I said. "But you know, he came from an era when people considered they were in the entertainment business. There was no talk then of jazz as an art form. Dizzy knew how to handle audiences like no one I ever saw. And he once told me — I remember it was at the Sutherland Lounge, in Chicago — he said, 'If I can get the audience laughing, and make them sympathetic to our music, I'm going to do it.'

"That's it," Junior said. "You see, Dizzy was a master of programming. He'd fit the situation, it was like tailor made for each room. He'd use the same tunes, but maybe in a different way each time. That's one of the things I learned from him, how to program things. So many of the young cats now, they'll get up there, they'll play one tune after another the same tempo, they'll play all they know each tune. They're good musicians, but you can't get an audience that way. Dizzy would mix it up, he knew how to do it. I do it myself. I'll do it in a different way. I'll start with one rhythm or one tempo, and a ballad, then maybe throw a blues in there. But it's all stuff that I like. And this is what I noticed about Dizzy. He wasn't tomming, or bending over backwards to get anybody's attention — even when we played *School Days*. After a while, *we* began to like *School Days*, too, because that shuffle rhythm will get you every time. I like shuffle rhythm. And Dizzy, being Dizzy, when he put that horn up, it worked, and I said, 'Wow, yeah!'"

"Groups get hotter as the evening wears on," I said, "but Dizzy's groups always *started* hot. I once asked him how come, how did he do that. The group would swing on the first tune of the first set. I said, 'What's the secret?' He said, 'Play short tunes.'

"Right! And another thing. Dizzy always started out a tempo like *this*." And Junior clapped a very fast tempo. "Other musicians would ask me, 'Why do you play so fast the first tune?' To me, that dictates how it's gonna be the rest of the night, how I'm gonna feel. I do the same thing. I get criticized for it a lot. But I don't care. And the guys who criticize, after a while they're in the same bag I am.

"Also, at that tempo, it gets your audience. We used to open with *Bernie's Tune*, very fast. And what you said about short tunes — Dizzy never played more than . . . Oh, if he stretched out, he never stretched out more than three or four choruses. Very condensed. A lot of the older musicians, the old masters, were the same way. That month at the Beehive in Chicago with Charlie Parker, he *never* played more than three or four choruses. All the young musicians would come in to see him. They'd say, 'Why don't you just stretch out?' He'd say, 'Listen, if you can't say it in three or four choruses, you're not going to say it. Wait till the next tune.'

"And Lester Young said the same thing. We'd have guys in the band, some of them, they'd be struggling. And he never put restrictions on how long you should play. Some cats would get to that fifth or sixth chorus, he'd say, 'Save some for the next tune!'

"That month I worked with Bird at the Beehive, he would keep it to two or three choruses. The whole month."

"In the old 78s, guys would play a lot in eight bars."

"Right! Because they *had* to. LPs kind of spoiled a lot of musicians. One thing Dizzy told me when I first joined the group, that really stuck with me, he said the sign of maturity in a musician was when you learned what *not* to play, what to leave out."

From the time I first met him, I was conscious of Junior as a superb jazz pianist and master accompanist for horns. But one day I became aware of another dimension of his playing: his extraordinary lyrical sensitivity as an accompanist to singers. I turned on a car radio and heard a track by Irene Kral. I was enthralled by her, as always, but immediately was caught with curiosity about the pianist in the trio. The announcer said at the end that it was Junior Mance, and after that I simply had to hear the album.

"That album was almost an accident," Junior said. "Mickey Roker and Bob Cranshaw and I were working with Joe Williams. We knew Joe Burnett, Irene's husband then. We were in California and had some days off. Joe and Irene invited us out to their house for a barbecue. They'd converted the garage to a practice studio. We went out there and started playing. Irene started singing.

"Joe was sitting there listening. He said, 'You guys want to make a record?' I thought he was kidding. He wasn't. He set it up with Fred Astaire's label. We talked about the tunes, but we just went in there with no rehearsal. We just walked in and did it. It was a wonderful record date. The record never did do much commercially. But I got the biggest surprise of my life last year when I returned from Japan and found all these calls on my machine saying, 'Did you know that you're in the movies?'"

I knew what was coming even before Junior told me. In the sound track of the exquisite *The Bridges of Madison County*, Clint Eastwood used as source cues recordings supposedly heard from a Chicago radio station, by singers Dinah Washington, Johnny Hartman, and Irene Kral, with all three of whom Junior had been associated. Whether Eastwood was aware of it or not, I do not know, but all three singers, as we have noted, were Chicagoans and would logically be favorites with a Chicago jazz station. The Irene Kral tracks are from the album she and Junior made together, released on Fred Astaire's label.

There is a bit of information I should interject here. Eastwood's movie about Charlie Parker, *Bird*, was based on a property written by Chan Parker about her life with Bird. It was owned by Warner Bros., and she had been paid for it. Eastwood bought the property from Warner Bros. — and paid Chan a second time, although he was not obligated to do so. She told me this herself. And so what came next from Junior, in describing his arrival back from Japan, was not a surprise to me.

The calls on his answering machine, of course, referred to *The Bridges of Madison County*. "Then," he said, "I was going through my mail, a big pile of it. Then I saw this big envelope from Fred Astaire's widow. And there are all these papers in there and a nice fat check, for the movie.

"All these people were calling, because they not only used the tracks, they gave us credit on the crawl. I've always thought that Irene was one of the most under-rated singers, if not *the* most under-rated. So was Johnny Hartman. I worked on gigs with Johnny, too. He never worked enough to keep a steady group, which was tragic. He was such a nice guy, without bad habits, except cigarettes — he died of lung cancer."

I said, "Johnny's problem is that he made it sound too easy. People never caught on to how good he really was."

For the last nine years, Junior has been teaching at the New School in New York. The faculty there has included Donald Byrd and Jim Hall.

"I teach only part time. They want working musicians. They want to turn out performers, not more teachers. Just about all of the schools in the east, the faculties consist of working professionals. Jim Hall's schedule got so heavy I haven't seen him at all this year. We have a clause in our contract that if we have to go on tour, or have a gig, it's fine. We're just required to leave a qualified substitute."

Recently he played a week's engagement at the Montreal Bistro, with Don Thompson, who he says is one of his favorite bass players, and the excellent drummer Archie Alleyn. Don said:

"It was one of those perfect weeks. If you'd started recording the first night, by the end of the week you'd have had six CDs. We had a ball. The ultra-high end. And we could play *slow*. The slowest band you ever heard. We left some holes you wouldn't believe, and the time was always perfect. We had a perfect gig. He's such a beautiful person. And so is Archie.

"He's coming back in the fall, and this time we're going to record."

My conversation with Junior occurred last fall aboard the S.S. Norway. One of the advantages of these cruises is that one gets a chance to talk to old friends. He was playing in a trio with Keter Betts on bass and Jackie Williams on drums. Some of their performances included the superb Scottish baritone saxophonist Joe Temperley; this quartet is going to Japan in October. An album recorded on the Norway's 1995 jazz cruise, with Benny Golson as guest soloist, is out on the Chiaroscuro label, number CR(D)340, and should be available in stores. Another album, this one with Temperley, is due out on that label in September. And there are other albums available on the Enja label.

Junior has been a bachelor, in effect, for nearly twenty years now. He was married three times.

"My late wife was Swiss," he said. "She died in 1978 of liver cancer. She spoke five languages. She learned English and Spanish simultaneously in the States. In about six months, she was not only speaking English fluently but writing it. She knew word derivations. Latin transcends all of it. We'd only been married five years. My mother-in-law in Switzerland keeps telling me, 'You should get married again. It's not nice to grow old alone.' And that one phrase gets me, right here. I just turned 68. She says, 'You need somebody.' Which is true. When my wife was alive, our apartment looked great. Now it looks like the Oklahoma bombing.

"But I've been travelling since she died. I'm not home long."

There was a wistfulness in the way he said it.

Keter Betts, Junior Mance, Jackie Williams
photo by Hank O'Neal