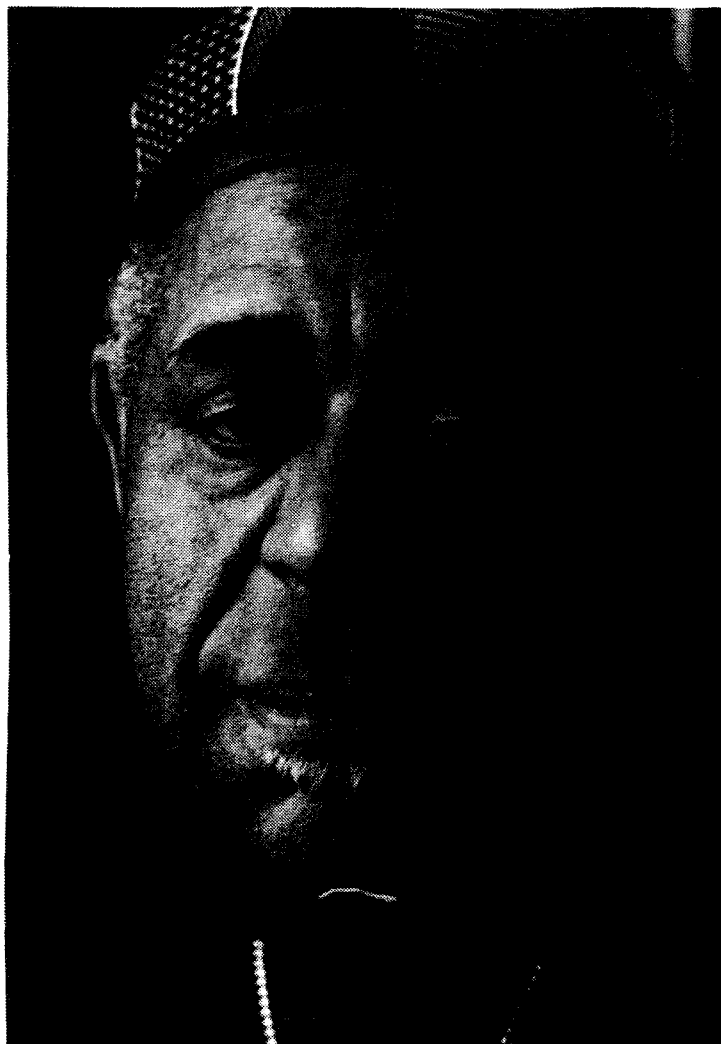


The Immortal Joker Part Two



*"Beauty is truth, truth beauty"—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know*

This admired aphorism of Keats baffled me as a child, and now I know it is preposterous. Truth is what lies in the mass graves of Kosovo, and it is not beautiful.

All we know is not all we need to know, but it is all we're ever going to get. We know only the brain's solipsistic processing of

vibrations. In the frequencies of light, they are processed as vision, interpreted as colors. We have no way of knowing whether you process the frequency of yellow into what I would call green and I process what you call blue into what I call red. Instruments, but not we, can detect vibrations in the radio and x-ray frequencies, leading to major advances in astronomy, although as has been observed—I think by Sir James Jeans—the universe is not only stranger than you think, it is stranger than you *can* think.

When one touches an object with a fingertip and finds it hot or cold, your nerve endings are merely reacting to the frequency of molecular motion within it. When we process vibrations in an approximate frequency range of 100 to 15,000 cycles, we call it sound, and by a process of its coherent organizing, we make what we call music.

All beginning music students are taught that it is made up of three elements, melody, harmony, and rhythm. This is a usage of convenience, like Newton's physics, but in a higher sense it is wrong. Music consists of only one element, rhythm, for when you double the frequency of the vibration of A 440, to get A 880, you have jumped the tone up an octave, and other mathematical variants will give you all the tones of the scale. As for harmony, the use of several tones simultaneously, this too is a rhythmic phenomenon, for the beats put out by the second tone reinforce (or interfere with) those of the first. The complexities of interaction of the rhythms in a five-note chord make for the richness of its sound. In the end, perception, life itself, is rhythm, an insight I had about thirty years ago listening to the Oscar Peterson trio during a matinee at the Black Hawk in San Francisco.

At the intermission, I stood in the sun on the sidewalk with Ray Brown, pouring out to him what I had perceived: that this, this pulse of that music, was like the turning of the seasons, the planets, the galaxies, the very heartbeat of the universe.

Ray moved in close, peered into my eyes, and with a wry smile said, "What have you been smoking?"

But I was wrong. Everything—everything, our pathetic perception of the universe itself—is rhythm.

Melody, harmony, and rhythm are all to be found within a single sound. Music is what the brain makes of the ordered processing of vibrations, i.e. rhythms. When you strike a guitar or bass or violin string, you seemingly hear one sound. But you hear many. The basic tone, the fundamental, is caused by the vibration of the string along its whole length. But that vibration subdivides, and in fast action photography, you can detect this phenomenon. There is a second vibration that is half the length of the string. It produces the first overtone. The next vibration divides the string

into three parts, a sort of long S shape, giving the second overtone.

It is almost impossible not to know the do-re-mi-fa-so-la-ti-do scale, that is to say the major scale. If you look at a piano, and start at middle C, which is the white note immediately below the grouping of two black keys, and go up the scale until you get to the C above it, you've played the do-re-mi scale in the key of C. In western harmony, chords are traditionally built by playing every other note, skipping the one in between: do-mi-so gives you a chord called the major triad. But re-fa-la gives you a minor triad. The major scale contains two major and three minor triads. Musicians think of the tones of a scale not as do-re-mi but in numbers, 1-2-3. So a simple C triad is made up of the 1, 3, and 5 of the scale. The two tones C and E constitute a major third. The interval 1 to 5 is called a perfect fifth.

It is the overtone series that determines our scale and harmonic system, and the timbre of our musical instruments. The overtones contained in a low C pile up in this series: C C1 G (the fifth of the scale) C2 E (the third), G2, B-flat C3, D, E, and an "out of tune" F-sharp (the raised eleventh — and also the flatted fifth), and more above that. Many musicians can actually hear a long way up the overtone series. If you analyze the lower tones in the series, you will see that they give you a dominant-seventh chord, the most gravitational in western music. Its natural tendency is to go to the chord built on the I of the scale, called the tonic triad.

Harmonic development in the vocabulary of Western music proceeded up the overtone series. Early music was triadic, and conventional country-and-western music still is. But composers began using more complex harmonies as time went on, and often they were considered crazy for doing so: the *Fifth Symphony* was called by some the final proof that Beethoven was insane. A Paris critic wrote: "Beethoven took a liking to uneuphonious dissonances because his hearing was limited and confused. Accumulations of notes of the most monstrous kind sounded in his head as acceptable and well-balanced combinations." Similar things would be said of Parker and Gillespie.

By the time of Richard Strauss, composers were using the harmonic extensions implicit in the overtone series. Debussy refined the method, arriving at the view that a chord didn't have to be "going" anywhere, as in Germanic music, but had meaning in and of itself. This produced a floating quality, which passed in time into the Claude Thornhill band, the writing of Gil Evans, the work of Miles Davis at his greatest period, and more.

A few years ago, I had a conversation with Mel Powell, who during the period when Dizzy was doing his deepest experimenting, was writing and playing piano for Benny Goodman. I reported this conversation in a Jazzletter piece on Mel. Part of it bears review in the present context.

I said, "When I was a kid, classical music and jazz were looked on as two separate musics, and when some of the guys went to conservatories, why, jazz was being corrupted. But I have become more and more aware that a lot of the early people, such as James P. Johnson and Willie the Lion Smith, had good training. You can hear the roots of stride in Chopin and that set of variations Schumann wrote on his wife's maiden name. The left hand pattern.

Even the trumpet players had good brass training. The myth of separate, competitive musics doesn't make sense."

"Of course," Mel said. "I never took the separatism seriously. I thought it was merely a way of making bad use of bad categories. I remember there was a guitarist, I wish I could remember his name, a jazz player, he was the first one I ever heard play excerpts of *Wozzeck*."

"On guitar?"

"Yes! I was *stunned*. This was in the thirties."

"That he even knew *Wozzeck* . . ."

"There wasn't a player in the New York Philharmonic who knew it, I can guarantee you. The fact is that not only the eighteenth and nineteenth century had been exploited and explored by a lot of early jazz players—I'm talking about Fats Waller and so on, not today's kids who are in the atmosphere of college. You're exactly right. Jazz and classical music were looked on as very different because of the sociological, not the musical, environment.

"When I think of Bix and *In a Mist* and so on, I want to say that the jazz player could be counted on to respond more intelligently to the more interesting advanced, serious music, than any of the so-called classical players. I loathe the term 'classical', it's a misnomer, but you know what I mean."

"Yes, but we're stuck with it, as we're stuck with the term 'jazz.'"

"Yes. But the jazz player, unquestionably, even if he only said, 'My God, dig those changes!' was responding in a far more profound sense to everything advanced than the classical players."

"Did Earl Hines know the legit repertoire?"

Emphatically: "Yes!" Then: "It was a narrow range, by which I mean he knew some Beethoven, some Brahms. He certainly knew some Scarlatti and some Bach. I heard him play some Chopin. You don't have the technique that Earl had out of the gutter, don't kid yourself. He was a startling player"

I said, "Don Redman was a schooled musician, Lunceford was a schooled musician. Bix was listening to Stravinsky."

"No question," Mel said. "You can note it from his piano pieces."

"Now," I said, "all those guys were becoming aware of the movements in modern music in the 1920s. William Grant Still was studying with Varèse by 1927. The harmony in dance bands became more adventurous through the 1930s until you got Boyd Raeburn in the '40s, and Bob Graettinger's *City of Glass* for Kenton, which sounded radical to me at the time but no longer does. I can't believe that the arrangers were not aware of all that was going on with the extension of harmony in European music. Bill Challis was starting to use some of that stuff when he was writing for Goldkette. Is there an answer to this question: were the writers waiting for the public to catch up?"

"I think I'll surprise you," Mel said. "They were waiting for the bandleaders to catch up. The bandleaders were much more aware of what a negotiable commodity was." He chuckled. "When an arrangement would be brought in and rejected because 'That's too fancy,' that was a signal that I was no longer welcome. So I meant exactly what I said. If the arrangers were waiting for anything,

they were waiting for the bandleaders.”

“Okay. Given Benny Goodman’s inherent conservatism, I am surprised that he welcomed what you wrote. Because some of it was very radical. *Mission to Moscow* is radical for the period.”

“Yeah. It gets close to peril,” he said. “Now, why would Benny respond very favorably to that? And also, by the way, to Eddie Sauter. I don’t think we did this out of slyness. The clarinet music was very interesting. And it was great fun for Benny to play. Yes. *Mission to Moscow*, he had this duet with the piano. So he would put up with these quasi-innovations. I thought that Eddie Sauter brought in some of the most inventive, imaginative things. Eddie was really devoted less to composition than he was to arranging, in the best, deepest sense of ‘ranging’. He was really given over to that. I can recall rehearsals when Eddie Sauter would bring music to us, and it would be rejected. A lot was lost. On some pieces that we do know—for example his arrangement for *You Stepped Out of a Dream*, which I always regarded as a really advanced, marvelous kind of thing—Benny would *thin it out*. And sometimes get the credit for it being a hit, getting it past the a&r men. I don’t think the thinning out was an improvement. Quite the contrary. I think that Eddie, and I to a lesser degree, were exploring harmonic worlds that ought to have been encouraged, rather than set aside.”

Goodman, of course, was one of those who hated bebop.

And what did the Goodman and others hate? They hated its harmonic practices, including the use of extensions that had been common in European classical music for more than half a century: jazz has always played harmonic catchup to classical music. Indeed, “classical” music by then included the work of Schoenberg, Webern, Berg, not to mention Edgard Varèse, with whom Parker wanted to study.

But this was not the only thing about bebop that was disconcerting. Parker and Gillespie “evened out” the eighth notes, which is to say they did away with the strong stress of doo-BAH-doo-BAH-doo-BAH; and to the ears of a John Hammond, this didn’t swing. To younger ears, unburdened by preconception, it swung more. But beyond that, Parker and Gillespie developed some really odd uses of stress points, and started and stopped phrases in unexpected places. To anyone used to Bach, this presented nothing really unsettling—laden with surprises, to be sure, but exciting for just that reason—but disoriented many older (and even some younger) listeners and musicians. Others perceived and admired what they were doing, among them Benny Carter and Coleman Hawkins. Hawkins, after his *Body and Soul* record, and with his penchant for exploring the harmonic contents of a song, was a sort of proto-bopper, as was Mel Powell. Aware of and interested in new developments in classical music as well as jazz (and in graphic art; he haunted museums), Hawkins welcomed the innovators, and in February 1944, recorded with a band that included Dizzy, Oscar Pettiford, Max Roach, and Budd Johnson.

In the Earl Hines band, Parker and Gillespie continued their explorations, refining *Salt Peanuts*, which Dizzy and Kenny Clarke had developed earlier, and polishing *A Night in Tunisia*, which had begun life with the title *Interlude*. Dizzy also wrote the arrangement of *East of the Sun* that Sarah Vaughan recorded with the

band. And Hines, whatever his misgivings, allowed Gillespie and Parker to use his band as a laboratory for their ideas, with Dizzy of course doing the writing. Dizzy adored Hines, giving him a respect he never held for Cab Calloway. Hines was a musician.

In August 1943, the Hines band’s singer Billy Eckstine left the group, and nine of the musicians went with him, including Dizzy and probably Charlie Parker. Eckstine planned to form his own band with these men as the core of it, but that band did not immediately materialize, and Dizzy went back to freelancing in New York. Billy Taylor, yet another of the musicians to whom Gillespie became a solicitous mentor, said, “Of all the people who were taking part in this bebop revolution, Dizzy was the one who really intellectualized it.” In the last months of 1943 and into 1944, Dizzy and bassist Oscar Pettiford led a group at the Onyx Club on 52nd Street. Their pianist was a young man born in Sicily named Giacinto Figlia, who changed it to George Wallington, wrote some bebop anthems, including *Godchild* and *Lemon Drop*, then walked away from music to go into his family’s air-conditioning business.

Early in 1944, Eckstine was able to launch his band. Its personnel at various times included Sarah Vaughan, Charlie Parker, Tadd Dameron, Fats Navarro, Miles Davis, Dexter Gordon, Sonny Stitt, and Art Blakey. Dizzy was its musical director and chief arranger, a role he took up at the behest of Billy Shaw, head of the Shaw booking agency, who promised that if he did the job well, the agency would back him in his own big band. The Eckstine band’s legacy on records is thin; it was poorly recorded on the independent Deluxe label. But in the memory of those who played in it and heard it, it was an inspired band, and the final great training camp for the bebop movement. Art Blakey remembered it, in a radio interview with the British writer Charles Fox, as a really crazy band, with Gillespie and Parker the chief clowns and Sarah Vaughan their willing foil. Blakey was shocked by the profanity in use; Eckstine told him he’d better get used to it, and in later years Blakey marvelled in memory at the magnificent spirit and dedication of the band. The band survived until 1947, but Dizzy left it early in 1945.

In mid-January, he joined the highly experimental Boyd Raeburn band, both on trumpet and as arranger. The band included Oscar Pettiford, Benny Harris, Al Cohn, Serge Chaloff, Shelly Manne, and Johnny Mandel. Dizzy was also freelancing as a writer. In January, he was voted “new trumpet star” in the *Esquire* poll, putting the lie to the theory of general public and critical rejection of bebop, and took part in a network broadcast from Carnegie Hall set up to publicize the winners. In May 1945, he and Charlie Parker performed together at Town Hall with Al Haig, Curley Russell, and Max Roach.

By now the message of bop had spread. Bluebird CD 2177-2-RB, titled *The Bebop Revolution*, chronicles some of that expansion. (Some tracks duplicate those in the Gillespie 2-CD set mentioned in the previous issue.) A group called the 52nd Street All-Stars, in a Denzil Best tune titled *Allen’s Alley*, features Pete Brown (a favorite of Paul Desmond’s) and Allen Eager on tenor. The music hangs between swing and bop. It was recorded February 27, 1946. Six months later, on September 5, 1946, a group billed

as Kenny Clarke and his 52nd Street Boys recorded *Epistrophy* (by Monk and Clarke), *52nd Street Theme* (by Monk), *Oop-Bop-Sh-Bam* (by Dizzy and Gil Fuller), and Clarke's own *Royal Roost*. Clarke was an incomparable drummer, and at that point nobody even came close to his fluency in the new idiom. The influence of Gillespie on Fats Navarro and Kenny Dorham is inescapable, but even more obvious is that of Parker on Sonny Stitt's alto work. In places he even has Bird's sound. There is some marvelous Bud Powell on these tracks.

As for Dizzy during this period, Alyn Shipton quotes Whitney Balliett:

"Few trumpeters have ever been blessed with so much technique. Gillespie never merely started a solo, he erupted into it. A good many bebop solos begin with four- and eight-bar breaks, and Gillespie, taking full advantage of this approach . . . would hurl himself into the break, after a split second pause, with a couple of hundred notes that corkscrewed through several octaves, sometimes in triple time, and were carried, usually in one breath, past the end of the break and well into the solo itself. Gillespie's style at the time gave the impression—with its sharp, slightly acid tone, its cleavered phrase endings, its efflorescence of notes, and its brandishings in the upper register—of being constantly on the verge of flying apart. However, his playing was held together by his extraordinary rhythmic sense."

Given the ultimate impossibility of describing music in words, Balliett's description comes as close as one can imagine to capturing Dizzy. And he is quite right about Dizzy's uncanny coherence, the rhythmic equivalent of absolute pitch. Once in Paris Quincy Jones said to me that Dizzy played like a drummer, with the notes in pitch. I don't think jazz has ever known anyone with Dizzy's infallible rhythmic sense, and he influenced generations of drummers.

The qualities described by Balliett are all evident in a date Dizzy led in February, 1946, to be found in the RCA two-CD package previously mentioned. The personnel included Gillespie, Don Byas on tenor, Milt Jackson on vibes, Al Haig on piano, Bill DeArango, guitar; Ray Brown, bass; and J.C. Heard, drums. The tunes are Monk's *52nd Street Theme*, *A Night in Tunisia*, by Dizzy and Frank Paparelli, *Ol' Man Rebop*, by Leonard Feather, and *Anthropology*, by Parker and Gillespie. Dizzy's flying gyrations are simply amazing, and deeply exciting. His powers of invention and execution were awesome. Years later, listening to him in clubs, I used to marvel at not only his thinking but the co-ordination of mind and neurotransmitters and muscle that permitted such instantaneous flowing realization of his imaginings.

After a series of successful appearances with Charlie Parker, Dizzy, creature of the big-band era, assembled an eighteen-piece unit to go on the road. In July of that year, after a rehearsal of quintet material expanded to full band and some new material from Gil Fuller, they began a tour that featured the Nicholas Brothers, under the title "Hep-sations of 1945." They toured the south, sleeping in the homes of black families forming a sort of circuit for travelling blacks, who simply could not get into the hotels in those days. White audiences weren't interested in the band, and

black audiences were baffled by bebop. It was not, they said, music they could dance to, and Dizzy, according to Alyn Shipton, was not comfortable onstage during this tour. By late September, Dizzy put aside his ambitions to have a big band, and he returned to small-group work in New York.

By now, Miles Davis was with Charlie Parker's quintet. But Parker and Gillespie were reunited for a famous sojourn at Billy Berg's Club in Los Angeles. Dizzy hired Ray Brown on bass, Milt Jackson on vibes, Al Haig on piano, and Stan Levey on drums. The booking called for only five men, but Milt Jackson was his safety in the event that Parker did not show up.

Legend has it that the Billy Berg engagement was a disaster, but those who were present say that the club was packed every night, particularly with musicians, who had heard elements of bop from, among others, Howard McGhee. One of those who came by was Art Tatum; another was Ernie Royal. But Parker, heavily addicted to heroin, behaved erratically, as Dizzy had feared he might, and when the band returned to New York on February 9, Parker missed the flight. He remained behind and was eventually admitted to the Camarillo State Hospital, where he stayed from August 1946 until January 1947. The hospital no longer exists: it was closed a year or two ago.

The Billy Berg engagement was the last Parker and Gillespie would play together for some time. For all he admired Parker, Dizzy could not tolerate his personal and professional instability. Alyn Shipton notes: "The year 1946 was to be one in which Gillespie again pushed forward the development of the new music unaided by Parker."

On returning to New York, Dizzy went to work with his sextet, including Milt Jackson, Ray Brown, Stan Levey, and Al Haig, at Clarke Monroe's Spotlight. Monroe promised that if he did well, he would help him launch a new big band. Again Gil Fuller was to be the arranger. Dizzy recruited Kenny Dorham, Sonny Stitt, Kenny Clarke and, in due course, Thelonious Monk. Monk's own unpredictability disturbed Dizzy as much as Bird's, and when, after a month, Kenny Clarke introduced him to John Lewis, whom Clarke had known in the Army, Dizzy inducted him into the band. Along with playing piano in it, Lewis wrote for it.

These associations led to the formation of one of the most successful of all small jazz groups. Because the Gil Fuller charts were hard to play, particularly for the brass section, Dizzy suggested that the rhythm section and Jackson play as a quartet for fifteen-minute periods, to give the band a rest. And they did: Milt Jackson, Ray Brown, John Lewis, and Kenny Clarke. These interludes became integral to the performances, and eventually the four musicians stepped out to play other gigs, first as The Atomics of Modern Music, a tacky *nom de guerre* that gave way to the Milt Jackson Quartet. They kept the initials but changed the name to the Modern Jazz Quartet, with John Lewis as its musical director. Brown and Clarke left, to be replaced by Percy Heath and Connie Kay, and this quartet lasted longer without a personnel change than any group in jazz history.

John Lewis wrote full charts, not sketches, for the band,

augmenting the book being built by Gil Fuller with contributions by Tadd Dameron, Dizzy, and Ray Brown.

Probably from the beginning of the Big Band era, the audiences in ballrooms tended to divide into two parts: the dancers who went in for some (at times) astonishingly gymnastic dancing alternating with close and seductive movement during the ballads, and the conscientious listeners who crowded close to the bandstand to pay attention to the soloists, stars in their own right, and, probably to a lesser extent, to the writing. These dedicated listeners were, one sees in retrospect, the core of what would become a concert audience in the years after the war, when the dancers dropped away. The Gillespie group was essentially a concert band. Dizzy expressed puzzlement that audiences couldn't dance to this music. He said that he could; but then Dizzy was an exceptional dancer.

Dizzy's interest in more complex rhythms than the straight four of jazz grew during that edition of his big bands. Had his big bands been called Herds, like those of Woody Herman, this would have been billed as the Second.

He had been using Latin rhythms for some time. He once told me that most of his own compositions used Latin rhythms — *Con Alma*, for example—and when I thought about it, I realized this was so. His friend Mario Bauza pulled his coat to the remarkable Cuban percussionist Chano Pozo, whose full name was Luciano Pozo y Gonzales. He joined the band and inspired its off-the-wall chanting, seeming to evoke moods and images of Africa whatever the syllables meant (if anything). Chano Pozo collaborated with Dizzy on a piece titled *Cubana Be—Cubana Bop*, which George Russell arranged for the band.

Chano Pozzo enriched Dizzy's feeling for and knowledge of Latin polyrhythms (ultimately African rooted, even more purely so than jazz) and led to such pieces as *Manteca*, *Guachi-Guaro*, and many more in later times.

It was the beginning of Afro-Cuban jazz. It would be imitated by other bands, notably Stan Kenton's, but no one could equal the energy and passion it produced in the Gillespie band.

Meanwhile, Billy Shaw kept the focus of publicity on Dizzy's ostensible eccentricities. *Time* magazine ran photos of Dizzy and Benny Carter exchanging a "bebop greeting." If memory serves me it was a gesture with the fingers making what was supposed to be the sign of the flatted fifth.

Dizzy began to emerge as a public figure, but above all as that of a clown. It is difficult at this distance to know why he allowed this image of himself to be sent forth. But various factors suggest themselves.

Perhaps since so many persons were viewing bebop as a joke, Dizzy decided, consciously or otherwise, to give them what they expected. Much was made of his horn-rimmed glasses, beret, though neither was particularly unusual, let alone outrageous. The beret was always a practical item of headgear, as witness all the world's military units that have worn it, not to mention the French, and more than a few trumpet players avoid shaving the lower lip.

In any case, Dizzy came out of *show business*, with all its attendant horseplay. One of the masters of onstage clowning and

funny singing was Louis Jordan. Dizzy had known him since 1937, when Chick Webb would invite Dizzy to sit in with his band at the Savoy Ballroom. Alto saxophonist Jordan was in the band, and he was being featured as a vocalist. Ultimately, with his Tympani Five, he would have a series of hit records, all of them comic and using an infectious basic beat. The group is often cited as a precursor of rock-and-roll.

Later, in the Cab Calloway band, Dizzy observed night after night the way a flamboyant showman controlled an audience.

A significant issue arises here. Most of the early trumpet players, including Louis Armstrong and Henry Red Allen, and even later ones, such as Clark Terry, Jack Sheldon, and Conte Candoli, did a certain amount of comic singing. There is a reason for it. (Excepting Chet Baker, they largely eschewed ballads.)

A symphony trumpeter plays a comparatively few measures of music in the course of an evening, none of it in the *altissimo* register common among jazz trumpeters. And the jazz trumpeter played hard music all evening long. One of the ways you get high notes on a trumpet is to jam the mouthpiece into your lip, which in many cases cuts it up badly, leaving white scars on the mouth. Dizzy, curiously, didn't have them.

(Once, when the three of us were doing guest appearances on the Steve Allen TV show, I shared a dressing room with Dizzy and Doc Severinsen. I anticipated some interesting conversation. Mostly they talked about lip unguents.)

I asked Clark Terry two or three years ago if the reason so many earlier trumpeters sang was that doing so gave the mouth a rest. "Absolutely," Clark said, and related that Louis Armstrong always urged him and Dizzy to sing more. "It lets you get some blood back into your chops," Clark said.

And so Dizzy, singing *Swing Low Sweet Cadillac*, *School Days*, and *The Umbrella Man*, was resting his chops while amusing the audience and making it more open to his music.

In any case, Dizzy had a natural proclivity for clowning. It was just born in him, and it continued through the spit-ball days with Cab Calloway. He would have been spared the opprobrium had he become a professional comedian, at which he would have been superbly skilled, for he had Jack Benny's kind of slow timing and powerful presence, the ability to make people laugh while doing hardly anything. Dizzy loved to laugh, and to make others laugh. But jazz was in the phase of being discovered as a Serious Art Form, and the antics of Dizzy didn't seem to be helping the cause. Bird, dark, doomed, and remote, made a better icon for idolaters. This too, without question, contributed to the diminished perception of Gillespie's importance.

Dizzy once told me, "If by making people laugh, I can make them more receptive to my music, I'm going to do it." And, he said, he didn't give a damn what the critics said.

As for his seriousness about his music, let there be no doubt. When Grover Sales did a retrospective on Dizzy's career at San Francisco State University, with Dizzy in the audience, a student asked a question about jazz and "serious" music.

Dizzy called him on it. He said, "Men have died for this music. You can't get no more serious than that."

But the press concentrated on his shenanigans, and a famous and very funny photo from the period shows him in a long-lapelled chalk-striped gray-flannel suit, standing with his trumpet crooked in his arms and his knees crossed at the ankles, staring into the camera with a demure schoolgirl smile. That and other photos of him set off fads among his fans. It seemed that every young man who dug Dizzy had a pair of those horn-rimmed glasses, whether he needed them or not, and a beret.

By this time, the quail were rising from the tall grasses. The attacks on bop, Bird, and Dizzy were shrill and even vicious.

The supposedly perspicacious John Hammond, self-advertised always as the great discoverer and perpetrator of jazz, said, "Bop is a series of nauseating clichés, repeated ad infinitum."

Critic George Frazier wrote, "Bop is incredible stuff for a grown man to be playing." In 1947, Ralph Toledano, a man of the political right, wrote, "Bebop music is usually based on a repeated phrase or series of phrases with 'modernist' pretensions. To watch earnest collegians discussing 'bebop' with the seriousness which Stiedry brings to a Bach fugue is a gruesome experience."

(I smile, reading that, remembering that my late friend Glenn Gould, who knew a lot more about Bach than Toledano could ever dream, had a taste for modern jazz.)

But the most abysmal writings about bebop came, not surprisingly, from an Englishman, the late Philip Larkin, England's poet laureate, who wrote articles on jazz for the *Daily Telegraph* in London. Larkin actually admits, in a book unimaginatively titled *All What Jazz*, on which the American publisher Farrar Strauss Giroux wasted 361 pages of perfectly good paper, that he began reviewing just to get free records, a motive not unknown among his counterparts in America. The only thing that kept me from flinging this book across the room is that I like to keep handy sterling examples of human stupidity against those rare moments when I am tempted to optimism about our species. Philip Larkin is useful because he can express his bigotry, being a classic example of that most dangerous of creatures, the articulate idiot. And he managed to squeeze into a few paragraphs all the animosity that greeted bebop.

"It wasn't," he wrote, "like listening to a kind of jazz I didn't care for—Art Tatum, shall I say, or Jelly Roll Morton's Red Hot Peppers. It wasn't like listening to jazz at all. Nearly every characteristic of the music had been neatly inverted: for instance, the jazz tone, distinguished from 'straight' practice by an almost-human vibrato, had entirely given way to utter flaccidity."

Dizzy's tone? Flaccid? Parker's?

"Had the most original feature of jazz been its use of collective improvisation? Banish it: let the first and last choruses be identical exercises in low-temperature unison. Was jazz instrumentation based on hock-shop trumpets, trombones and clarinets of the returned Civil War regiments? Brace yourself for flutes, harpsichords, electronically-amplified bassoons."

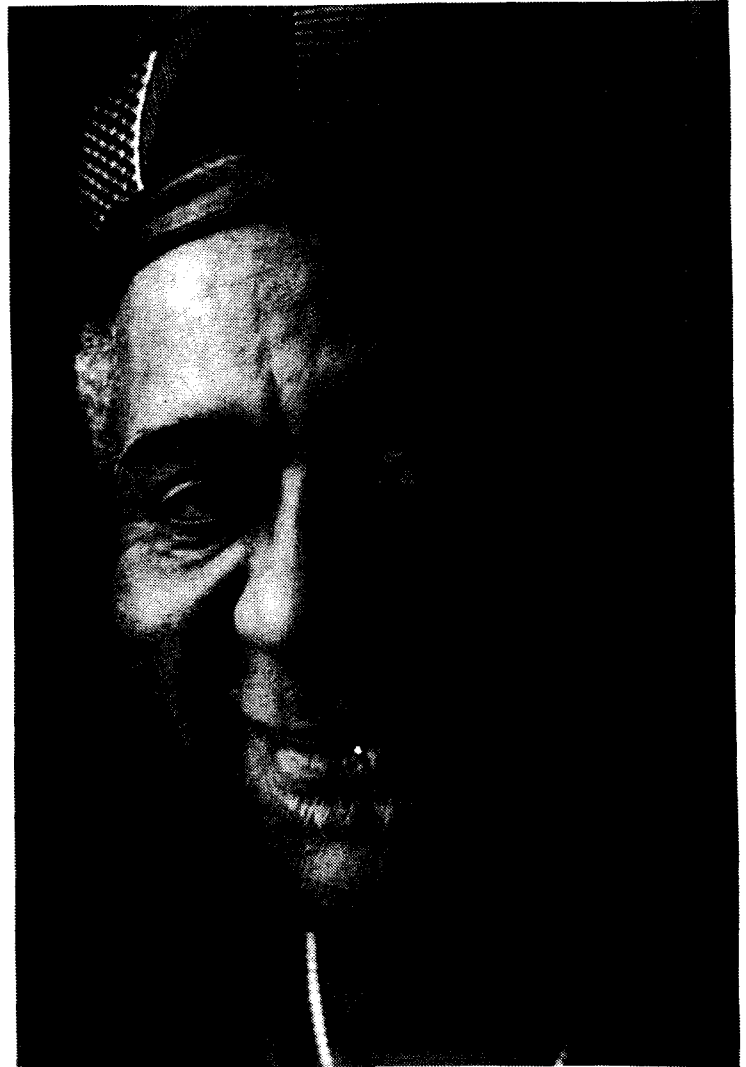
Harpsichord has almost never been used in jazz. Has anyone ever encountered an electronically-amplified bassoon?

"Had jazz been essentially a popular art, full of tunes you could whistle? Something fundamentally awful had taken place to ensure

that there should be no more tunes."

One wonders if Mr. Larkin ever heard such gorgeous Gillespie tunes as *Lorraine* and *Con Alma*, Tadd Dameron's ballad *If You Could See Me Now*, and the Gil Fuller-Chano Pozo *Tin Tin Deo*. Larkin sounds, in fact, a lot like Oscar Commetant, writing of Bizet on May 27, 1872, in *Le Siècle* in Paris:

"To the listener of sound mind and ear, these chromatic meows of an amorous or frightened cat—heard over a chord with a double pedal, or accompanied by as many diminished-seventh chords as there are notes in those meows—will never replace an expressive tonal melody, well pondered, of original turn, distinguished and yet natural and accompanied by chords that are correct."



Photos 1991 by John Reeves

Mr. Larkin continues: "Had the wonderful thing about (jazz) been its happy, cake-walky syncopation that set feet tapping and shoulders jerking? Any such feelings were now regularly dispelled by random explosions 'dropping bombs', and the use of non-jazz tempos, 3/4, 5/8, 11/4."

Mr. Larkin apparently did not know the difference between a tempo and a time signature. And of course in his book of rules, only a simple 4/4 rhythm was comprehensible. In other cultures, such as the Greek and Armenian, complex time figures are common in *popular music*.

"Above all," Mr. Larkin fumes, "was jazz the music of the American Negro? Then fill it full of conga drums and sambas and all the tawdry trappings of South America, the racket of Middle East bazaars, the cobra-coaxing cacophonies of Calcutta."

Away with you, Jobim, Gilberto, Ary Barossa, and the rest, and take your tawdry Latin trappings with you.

What Mr. Larkin finally reveals to us is an authentic British neo-imperialist, a racist condescending to all cultures, and an admirer of jazz so long as its happy singing' and dancin' darkies keep it simple so he can tap his feet and shake his shoulders.

Larkin may have been preposterous, but he expressed the prejudices of those who so ardently attacked Parker and Gillespie and Monk and Clarke and their brilliant advances in the music. Charlie Parker, asked what it was he and his colleagues were rebelling against, denied that they were rebelling against anything. He said they merely thought it was the way the music ought to go. And surely it was time for it to advance as far as, say, the harmonic practices already in place in the popular music of, among others, Harold Arlen and Cole Porter.

Critics were not alone out there on that limb. Some musicians, as the French say, put their foot in the plate. During a Leonard Feather *Blindfold Test*, Sy Oliver said of something by Dizzy and Monk, "It's one of those bop records in the sense that I detest it. No stars."

As late as 1953, Buck Clayton said, "Bebop is not, never was, and never will be true jazz if it has a beat or not."

Tommy Dorsey said, "Bebop has set jazz back twenty years." Back to what? The harmonic practices of the mid-1920s? To the sixth chords of Fletcher Henderson? He did not foresee that those bands and small groups that embraced or at least tolerated bebop, such as Herman and Basie, were the ones that survived; those that didn't were the ones that died, Dorsey's among them.

Even Charlie Barnet fired a broadside at bebop, though he liked it, saying, "Outside of the top exponents of the music like Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie and a few others, the boppers were a bunch of fumbler who were obviously incapable of handling the new idiom . . . This effectively delivered the death blow to the big bands as we had known them."

But not all the bands embraced the new idiom. And the public had the right to ignore the bands that incorporated it and patronize those that did not. This is not what happened. But that mindlessly-reiterated argument that "bebop killed the big bands" is an echo of the schism that was opened up by journalists such as Barry Ulanov. The causes of the death of the era were social and economic.

The jazz press wallowed in all this. Ulanov produced two battles-of-the-band on radio, with Charlie Parker and Dizzy in combat with a traditionalist band put together by Rudi Blesh, and these polarized positions were described in a piece in the November 1947 *Metronome* by Ulanov, a critic with an imperious

confidence in his own proclamations. This was the fomented hostility between the Moderns and the Moldy Figs, as the lovers of older jazz were termed. Shipton rightly observes that Ulanov's articles and "similar pieces from Blesh's side of the critical divide contributed to a schism in public taste and critical opinion from which jazz has never fully recovered."

There is no question that Dizzy's onstage antics did him harm, and contributed to the elevation of Charlie Parker to the role of bebop's almost sole creator. Parker's hagiographer Ross Russell, in a book titled *Bird Lives: The Life and Hard Times of Charlie "Yardbird" Parker*, abetted the idea that Parker was the force in bebop, Gillespie the disciple. The very title of the book suggests that it was Parker's private problems that enraptured Russell. For all his brilliance, Bird should never have been placed in jazz history in a sharp and solitary foreground with Gillespie a small figure back in a misted aerial perspective.

It is in its contribution to a more balanced evaluation that Alyn Shipton's book is most valuable.

(To be continued)

by Grover Sales

Lost Chords: White Musicians & Their Contribution to Jazz 1916-1945, by Richard M. Sudhalter, Oxford University Press, 889 pages, \$35.

Jazz cornetist, critic, and former foreign correspondent Richard M. Sudhalter—co-author of the definitive biography of Bix Beiderbecke—with this huge ground-breaking study enters combat in the corrosive cultural war that has balkanized the world of jazz criticism. Dug into rigid emplacements are the doctrinaire theorists of what has been called "Crow Jim," convinced that jazz is almost entirely the creation of black Americans and bent on eliminating all the white "imitators" from its history with the finality of Stalin expunging Trotsky from the history of the Bolshevik revolution. Crossing all barriers of color and musical persuasion, Crow Jim infected flat-earth white critics, such as Hugues Panassié, his late disciple Stanley Dance (who to his last breath insisted that Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker "ruined" jazz), "modernist" black writers Albert Murray, Stanley Crouch, and Wynton Marsalis, and avant-gardists like Amiri Baraka, whose esthetic judgments are sicklied o'er by the pale cast of relentless political agenda.

To affect that Bix, Jack Teagarden, Django Reinhardt, Bunny Berigan, Benny Goodman, Bill Challis, Stan Getz, and Bill Evans were of neither consequence nor influence is to fly in the face of history—and of the testimony of seminal black musicians, including Lester Young, Benny Carter, Louis Armstrong, Earl Hines, Count Basie, Dizzy Gillespie, and Miles Davis. This mind-set ignores the ineradicable seventy-five years evidence of phonograph records.

Crow Jim was an inevitable reaction to the Big Band Era of the 1930s, when imitative and often mediocre white bands outsold and

out-poll Ellington and Basie, and when white journalists monopolized jazz criticism and journalism. This galling situation goaded the first important black jazz critic, Le Roi Jones (Amiri Baraka), to such extreme posturing as:

The spectacle of Benny Goodman hiring Teddy Wilson, Lionel Hampton, Charlie Christian, and Cootie Williams into his outrageously popular bands and thereby making them "big names" in the swing world seems to me as fantastically amusing as the fact that if the jazz polls of the thirties and forties . . . almost no Negro musicians won . . . big band jazz developed to a music that had almost nothing to do with the blues, had very little to do with black America. (Blues People).

Damned if you don't integrate and hire blacks, damned if you do. You're a racist if you don't, a thief if you do.

What Jones conveniently overlooked is that the Goodman Trio and Quartet marked the first *widespread public* appearance of an interracial group in America (blacks and whites had been playing together in New Orleans, and "integrated" records had already been made) and that it introduced millions of listeners to an incontestably superior form of chamber jazz, that Goodman's black cohorts relished their enhanced exposure and paychecks, and were openly vocal in their admiration for Goodman as a musician and his incomparable heart-beat drummer Dave Tough. Most of all, Jones' doctrinaire jeremiad fails to acknowledge that genuine racial integration in the United States took root and blossomed in the community of the jazz musicians. You can still go through high school and university without finding this out.

The late Ralph J. Gleason, perhaps the most widely-read syndicated writer on jazz in the 1960s, was emboldened to state:

It is possible to speculate that all the white musicians could be eliminated from the history of the music without significantly altering its development.

This qualifies as a classroom example of what academic semanticists would term a non-verifiable sentence. It is indeed possible to so speculate, as it is possible to speculate that the moon is made of cheese or chalk or chicken liver. It is not possible to establish it, particularly to such black jazz musicians influenced by Bill Evans, according to their own witness, as Herbie Hancock and Jack DeJohnette.

Sudhalter's meticulously researched *magnum opus* should do much to deep-six such extravagant nonsense. While he deals in astonishing length with such well-known innovators as Bix, Bud Freeman, Pee Wee Russell, Goodman, and Teagarden, he also unearths all-but-forgotten pioneers like Miff Mole and the Original Memphis Five, Sidney Arodin, Adrian Rollini and the California Ramblers, and the superb band of Jean Goldkette that humbled the non-pareil Fletcher Henderson aggregation in a battle of the bands in 1926. Refreshing, and welcome, is Sudhalter's lengthy tribute to the unique Bob Crosby co-operative group, the most underrated and unusual of the big bands, black or white, of the Swing Era,

and his appreciation of the contributions of the Dorsey Brothers and the Boswell Sisters. He includes an overdue celebration of guitarists Eddie Lang, George Van Eps, Dick McDonough, and Carl Kress, who paved the way for all contemporaries like Bucky Pizzarelli who said, "George Van Eps did for modern-day guitar what Segovia did for classical guitar. Made it a complete orchestral instrument, a lap piano. Sudhalter branches out from jazz to celebrate the forgotten American composer Eastwood Lane, a primary influence on Bix's all-too-few imperishable piano pieces.

Sudhalter swings an engaging literary style, with memorable anecdotes, a ready wit enhanced by wide-ranging intelligence, and personal remembrances that carry us along, although this heavy-weight tome is designed more for the specialist and professional musician than for the casual listener. The author draws on his long professional career to provide insight into thousands of rare recordings, illuminated by a wealth of musically annotated solos. He shows scant tolerance for non-musician critics, as in his rapt appreciation of clarinetist Frank Teschemacher: "Generations of writers who have trouble finding middle C on a keyboard have disclosed with great authority . . . alleged deficiencies in Teschemacher's technique and intonation."

Lost Chords includes excellent photos that, to my knowledge, have rarely, if ever, been reproduced.

There are a few curious lapses, such as Sudhalter's stated decision to ignore the splendid bands of Charlie Barnet because they emulated black bands, mainly Ellington and Basie. And considering his coverage of marginal figures, his almost total neglect of Mel Powell is puzzling in a work of this magnitude—an oversight Sudhalter later regretted in a letter to me. But these are quibbles in assessing a monument destined to take its place on the shelf of essential jazz literature. Sudhalter plans a follow-up volume covering 1945 to the present.

In his epilogue, Sudhalter makes a persuasive summation:

If understanding jazz, in all its endless variegation, is to survive, there must be acknowledgement of its contributory forces, free of the distortions of racial bias . . . the "blacks invented jazz, whites appropriated" cannon is based on either ignorance or willful misreading of the historical record . . . There must be a coming together, a rejection of fragmentation [to what Terry Teachout called] "a safe haven from the storms of ideology, a meritocracy of comrades in which players are judged not by the color of their skin but the content of their choruses."

—Grover Sales

The Jazzletter is published 12 times a year at PO Box 240, Ojai CA 93024-0240. Subscriptions are \$70 U.S. per year for the U.S. and Canada, \$80 for other countries. Present subscribers may buy gift subscriptions for others for \$40 a year.

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