

TAILGATE RAMBLINGS

October 1978

Volume 8 No. 10

The Picnic -- It Rained

The PRJC Picnic happened again! At Blob's Park as usual - on a mid-September Saturday as usual - all afternoon and long into the evening as usual - and it rained, which was not only unusual but unheard of.

Fortunately, the brief cloudburst, intense though it was, came late in the afternoon, and though it necessitated moving the picnic indoors, everyone kept swinging though clouds of steam rose from the wet jazz-lovers as they stomped to the music of the New Sunshine JB and the Sheiks of Dixie.

Perhaps as never before, the picnic underlined the divergent, original, and interesting forays many PRJC bands are making into the various stylistic byroads of jazz. Comparatively little was heard that would be fairly characterized as straight dixieland jazz, and even those bands which featured the dixie style were more often than not apt to throw in a showmanship which sometimes reached rabble-rousing proportions.

The big crowd-pleasers were hard to pick out because each band had its own following in addition to the hundreds of other fans who stayed close and were appreciative of all efforts throughout the afternoon. However, the Original Crabtowne Stompers from the Naval Academy were cheered for their pyrotechnic readings of dixie and march tunes - and, as first-time participants, were a major surprise.

The Sheiks of Dixie, another first-time band at the picnic, also drew loud applause for their "acid dixie".

The appearance of Del Beyer's Riverside Ramblers aside from bringing on the rain (the Ramblers imperturbably kept on playing while all around them jazz fans were tearing for cover), was a sad event for the club, marking as it did, a farewell performance at the picnic for its leader who is debarking for California later this year.

In the main, the bands explored widely varying avenues of jazz expression. The Federal Jazz Commission played almost entirely a King Oliver set, the Bay City 7 and the Buck Creek JB traveled the byways of the west coast revivalists, and Jimmy Hamilton's Night Blooming Jazzmen, Southern Comfort, and the Band from Tin Pan Alley laced their offerings with big infusions of swing. The Baltimore Night Owls played white jazz from the early 30's. and the Rosebud Ragtime Ensemble

(cont. on p 3)

Yankee Rhythm Kings Here Oct. 7

The Yankee Rhythm Kings from Boston, Mass., will perform for the PRJC Saturday, Oct. 7 (Potomac Room, Marriott Twin Bridges, 9-1 \$5/\$7).

Led by trombonist Bob Connors, the YRK have come to national attention this year. One of their first excursions from the Boston area was to play here last October, an event that was sadly underattended. This year they have cast off obscurity and played at the famed Sacramento Jazz Festival (see Bob Rippey's comment on p.3).

On the trip that brings them to Washington, they'll be traveling to Charlestown, W.Va., and then to Cincinnati for an appearance before the Classic Jazz Society of Southwest Ohio.

The YRK features Dave Whitney and Paul Monat on lead trumpets a la Oliver/Armstrong. Oliver and the Lu Watters bands provide much of their material, but they also play 20's pop tunes and sometimes feature their rhythm section as a ragtime ensemble behind banjoist Cal Owen.

The band was formed in 1974 and has had only one personnel change (made necessary by the death of their original pianist) since that time.

A Personal Note

It is with mixed feelings that I write the following.

Beginning with the December issue, Tailgate Ramblings will have a new editor. And a good one.

Ken Kramer - a brilliant writer on jazz (you've read his stuff in TR) and chronicler of the misadventures of Big Spider Beck - will leave a happily cloistered life to edit TR.

I'll have some further comments on the host of good things the editorship of TR has brought to me next month. I've made lots of new friends (and a few new enemies, I suppose), and have made contact with old friends unheard from in more than a quarter of a century. You can't knock that! For the moment, let me say just one thing - since there are bound to be rumors. (I know one guy is already running around chortling that he finally got Chandler.)

I am stepping down simply because I want to do other things. A year and 9 months is long enough. No one is pushing me - I'm just nasty enough to dig in my heels and stay if anyone were.

More on this and a note from the new editor next month. -- Ted Chandler

Tailgate Ramblings

October 1978

Vol. 8 No. 10

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TR is published monthly for members of the Potomac River Jazz Club, a nonprofit group dedicated to the preservation of traditional jazz and its encouragement in the Washington-Baltimore area. Signed articles in TR represent the views of their authors alone and should not be construed as club policy or opinion.

Articles, letters, and ad copy (no charge for classified ads for members) should be mailed to the editor at:

7160 Talisman Lane
Columbia, Md. 21045.

Is It True What They Say . . .

Mountain Music Don't know if it is the altitude or that fresh mountain air, but jazz at Central City was a high trip. Members of clubs from all the US - from Portland to Boston, Little Rock to D.C. - even an 80-year-old l. o.l. from Minnesota, new on the circuit, but who confides that she's coming to Manassas this year. What a setting - refurbished saloons, deserted gold and silver mines, and the Face on the Bar-room Floor. Pres. Grant even slept at the Teller House when the town was in its heyday. Like Washingtonians, Coloradans love jazz, but there are a few more stetsons and badges than one would see here. Sixteen great bands. From here, the Bakers, Messicks, and

Doyles, plus the BC7 - while Wahlers acted as hosts for Denver jazz club.

Chautauqua Playhouse Closer to home in Mt. Gretna, Pa., right before the Central City bash went 20 or more PRJCers to hear the New Black Eagles, including the Grays, Wahlers, Brownfields, Friedmans, Bill Hughes, Dave Cunnings, and Maggie Smith. From Baltimore, the Middlemans, Charles Earp, and Dick Mehling; and the Roh-leders from Richmond. Ubiquitous Wayne Lehman from Pottsville, Pa., was there as usual.

Editor Exits Retiring from the government (but not the field) is TR editor Ted Chandler. Coke flowed like water (Ted's favorite brand), I hear, at the party which was held at the Hawk and Dove with the Federal Jazz Commission giving a resounding farewell to one phase of a career.

Goodbye is Grim Hear that Del Beyer, leader of the Riverside Ramblers, PRJC board member, and the club's Mr Niceguy will be moving with his mate to sunny California after Christmas. When Del and the boys play at the B'haus they get a well-deserved great audience. Always ready with a smile and a handshake, Del (and wife) will be missed on the musical scene. Maybe he will change his mind.

Shades of Tara The annual jazz event of the Goose Creek Jass group near Middleburg, by invitation only for lucky PRJC members, had both the Yankee Rhythm Kings from Boston and the New Sunshine JB from here alternating a couple of weeks ago. Bartenders, car parkers, and a moss-covered manse - plus a nice supper. Ties and coats were the order of the day at 4 pm - one heard that there were only 2 pairs of white shoes worn by the male contingent, and both by PRJC members; not any from Loudon County. Amy, where are you? I thought white was in until August; or is white never in after 3 or 4; or never in Virginia? Answer soon.

Next month - the doings at the picnic.

-- Mary Doyle

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But On the Other Hand . . .

An Editorial Outcry

When feeling bemused, it is no bad thing to have lunch with Al Webber. We met at Dupont Circle the other day and walked over to a rather pleasant sidewalk cafe, where we got to talking jazz.

Suddenly flashed an INSIGHT! You know what fusion jazz is? Suddenly I know. It is Bix playing with Whiteman - or Bobby Hackett with Glenn Miller.

All this stuff for and against fusion - allegedly a meeting of jazz and rock - is a large crock. All we are really talking about is the same phenomenon that has happened time and time again in the history of the music. To wit, jazzmen snuggle up to the pop music style of the day and dilute their jazz playing in an effort to get a million-seller.

What's the pop style these days? It's rock - so we have jazzmen trying to incorporate rock in their playing. In the 1920's it was the Charleston - and all the jazz musicians jumped on board.

I'll take my jazz undiluted, thanks - which is one reason I'm not a greater Bix fan than I am. I think Al agrees.

--

The covering note from Stu Anderson which accompanied his piece for this issue made a couple of good points about writing. Says Stu:-

"I decided to take some time off (from writing my novel) to write this piece - and to give my next door neighbor a respite from me batting my head against the wall and sobbing bitterly. (You see, I can't go throwing typewriters out the window all the time - like Jane Fonda did in the movie)

"It seems that writers in this country have problems. I for one refuse to go along with the current standards of American literary criticism. As I see it, there are two schools. In one, the stories always start with: 'We buried Uncle Jed in the pig-pen this morning. In the other you don't say: The sun melted the snow.' Oh, no. You say: 'The snow, deprived of its integrity by the (here I'm stuck for a word for sun)...'"

--

Our colleagues out in Seattle - the Puget Sound Traditional Jazz Society - publish a newsletter called Jazz Soundings, and edited by Steve Joseph, drummer in one of the better west coast bands, the Uptown Lowdown JB. Well, sir, their man Bob Rippey, went to Sacramento this spring and came up with some good judgements on the bands he heard there.

A few of these bands have been in

this area recently - or will be - and we thought you'd like to hear some of Bob's thoughts on them:

THE JAZZ MINORS -- "Not trying to be so 'cute' anymore, but beginning to concentrate on being good jazzmen and they are good..."

(That's good news. After their appearance here last year it seemed obvious that they could play the music if only they would.)

THE YANKEE RHYTHM KINGS -- "Very, very impressive group."

THE COULSON FAMILY JB -- "I don't know how they fitted into the picture in any way except possibly someone must have thought in 10 years they might be the new Jazz Minors."

THE QUEEN CITY JB -- "This once great band is fast becoming an act, a showcase for the zany gymnastics of leader Fred-erickson and the fantastic horn work of Wes Mix."

THE HAPPY JAZZ BAND -- "Jim's boys are good. They know it and they produce."

With the ability to make judgements like that, Bob Rippey can be considered a pretty reliable guide to the sounds.

The same issue of Jazz Soundings also contained a favorable impression of Tex Wyndham by Gloria Ekrom, who commented of his ability to dig up unknown tunes.

--

On a recent Sunday morning our grandsons were visiting us, and had turned the TV to a dismal old movie called The Block Busters, starring those famed East Side Kids. It was about to get too thick even for us, when hark! A liquid New Orleans clarinet was heard! And onto the tube swam Jimmy Noone, backed by a rhythm trio. Noone played for quite a while on the soundtrack, and the sounds were lovely. Then, back came the East Side kids and the picture lurched its way back into deserved obscurity.

-- TC

Picnic

(cont. from p.1)

played Joplin rags with loving attention to detail. That left only the Storyville 7 and Fat Cats Manassas Festival Jazzers to adhere fairly closely to the gospel of dixieland. A major switch in the proceedings was a set devoted to the Waller-ish piano of Charlie Howze with Skip Tomlinson, Charlie La-Barbera, and Country Thomas in attendance.

More than 900 people voiced their approval and the PRJC coffers - badly in need of replenishment - received a welcome boost.

-- Jazzbo Brown from Columbia Town

Notes from the Bakery

Whew! Between the Central City Jazz Fest and our own picnic, it's been quite a busy month. The Central City bash is reviewed in detail elsewhere in this issue, but I would like to add my 2¢ worth. First, our own Bay City 7 deserves a big round of applause - they were superb in their first festival appearance. While they're not yet ready to eclipse the Black Eagles or Queen City band, they more than held their own in very fast company. Buoyed by their success, the BC7 are now preparing to cut a record. While it probably won't be out by Christmas, come 1979 you should be looking for this recording of one of the best traditional bands that ever graced the area.

Another pleasant surprise at Central City was the return of the Climax JB of Toronto. One of my very favorite groups in the early-mid 70's, the band floundered for most of 1976-77 in search of the right replacement for its longtime clarinet ace Bruce Bakewell. The band lured Jim Buchman from Oregon, and is now hotter than ever. I immediately started negotiations about a trip here for them next spring.

The picnic If you were one of those who left when the rains came, you missed a good party - it went on indoors until after 9 pm. Gate chairman Ray West has given me a long list of dear folks who

tore themselves away from the music for an hour or so to help at the admission gate. To them, to every volunteer in setting up and selling, and most of all to the nearly 100 musicians, our heartfelt thanks.

Board Elections, Annual Meeting

It will soon be time for our annual attempt at democracy. Before the end of October you'll receive a ballot and an invitation to the Annual Meeting. The ballot will be for the purpose of electing five new members of the Board of Directors - one third of the 15-man board. You can return the ballot by mail or bring it in person to the Annual Meeting on Nov. 11. More details in the next TR.

Tailgate Editorship I'm elated to announce that Ken Kramer has consented to take over this newsletter when Ted Chandler steps down later this year. Ken is a lifelong traditional jazz lover and even heard Bix live. If the prophet of Kerrville doesn't buy those credentials, he'll just have to take what solace he can in the fact that Ted (Rahsaan Kirk) Chandler has agreed to stay on as a contributor to TR.

-- Dick Baker

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"A New Shop For Old Jazz"

Rocky Mountain Jazz Notes

The Second Annual Jazz and Ragtime Jamboree, sponsored jointly by the Central City Opera House Assn. and the Denver Jazz Club was held Aug. 25-27 in Central City, Colo. Central City, to pin point it geographically, is located about 20 miles up the hillside from the home of Coors Beer. It evidently was settled during the mining boom of the 19th century, and has for 30 or more years been popular with visiting firemen, plain and fancy, to the Denver area. It hit the traditional jazz scene, at least nationally, a year ago. This year's program lists 19 jazzbands and 6 ragtime pianists. In a 30 plus hour schedule, extending over a 3-day period, each band made about five official appearances. Ten locations, each in easy walking distance, were involved, but at that, it is unlikely that the fleetest of foot and the sharpest of ear could have taken it all in.

I managed to hear two or more sets by 12 of the bands, and if they were representative of those asked to appear, my hat is off to the people in charge of band selection. Four of the bands - Bay City 7, High Sierra, Euphonic, and Uptown-Lowdown play in the Watters/Murphy tradition. High Sierra sports a reversible banner which reads High Sierra on one side and Three Rivers Rowdies on the other. When the Rowdies side is out one can expect to hear novelty tunes and other kinds of musical fun and games.

This no doubt eliminates a measure of uncertainty at least in the band members' minds if not always in those of the listeners.

Two bands, Climax and Magnolia, play in the George Lewis or English "Trad" if you prefer. The New Black Eagle and Queen City bands defy convenient classification, but can usually be counted on to turn in a creditable performance. Queen City's Wes Mix did manage to make some hokey sounds on Tin Roof Blues as well as a good bit of what sounded like chromatic scale practicing on some other tunes. Wes may have been suffering from what is known as the Festival Syndrome, symptoms of which are a tendency to drink a lot of beer and show off.

The Pearl St. Band, a group of teenagers from the Denver/Boulder area, play a lot of everything, and make it more musically satisfying than their near peer group in the Pacific Northwest. A gang from Casper, Wyo., called the Salt Creek, play fairly standard stuff, but have an easy bandstand manner and a Will Rogers-type humorist in charge, who from time to time gives new names to old tunes. Some of these

transparencies are obvious enough, but I confess to being at a complete loss with something called Concerto for Waterbed and Spurs. Maybe it's a jazz version of the Wyoming State Anthem.

For the more specialized ear there were the Sons of Bix's. These guys don't fool around - straight Bix, often from charts. The only thing missing is the surface noise. It was my pleasure to listen to the St Louis Ragtimers on the morning of the last day of the festival. Sunday, it was - and with a modest sized group, mostly nursing Bloody Marys without ice to keep the noise down. The band opened with a superlative 15-minute medley for a Sunday morning at 8,600 feet, which included Just a Little While, Bye and Bye, Down By the Riverside, Nobody's Fault But Mine, and Give Me That Old Time Religion. I swear I heard someone remark, "Isn't it grand to start out the week with a nice 5-piece band with no crazies in it." I'm sure the rest of the group present agreed with the sentiment if not with its phrasing.

On balance, the festival was great fun with music to match. One problem (probably insoluble) stems from the almost total lack of overnight accommodations except for the bands in Central City. This rules out the early morning jam sessions for spectators who must rely on tour busses for transportation, and would seem to increase the highway hazards for those driving private cars.

A bit more attention could have been given to the sound systems in certain locations. This is noted as a suggestion and not as a complaint. For those already thinking about next year, the services provided by the Queen City Tours organization are outstanding.

-- Jack Doyle

PS: Congratulations are due all those who share responsibility for the presence of the Bay City 7 at the fest. These things do not just happen. Infrequently if ever is Divine Providence involved. Mostly it is a lot of hard work and determination. I heard a number of very flattering comments about the band, but would have been surprised if it had been otherwise. Let's hope that Generalissimo Wiederfeld will be able to keep his band of patriots together.



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A Private In The Great Saxophone War

A new chapter in Stuart Anderson's Chronicle

During my hectic sojourn in the Land of Jazz I worked with some interesting characters. First, there was Marcellus Allen of Allen's Clown Band, the bunch I played with in my third year in the Cumberland, Wisc., high school. Allen played the C-melody saxophone, and it was worth traveling from miles around to see and hear him slap-tongue The World is Waiting for the Sunrise while doing a clog dance in his clown suit. But the drummer in that band, Martin Wick, was even more deserving of having his name etched in the archives. A dashing fellow with his flat hat and bell-bottomed pants, little red velvet wedges peeping through the laced cuffs, and the patent leather hair and shoes - Wick had rigged his Reo touring car so he could drive it from the back seat. Picture a cartoon: A juggernaut is whizzing down Main St. lickety split with no one in the driver's seat! See the pedestrians hastening away in all directions (through the air of course), only their pants and shoes showing. See the crafty Martin Wick lurking in the back seat smirking wickedly at the dismay of the local citizens.

On a rack beside his snare drum Wick kept a gigantic cowbell, attached to 40 feet of rope. Whenever he spied a couple on the dance floor mooning away cheek-to-cheek to the strains of Ramona, let's say, he would whirl the cowbell around on its tether 6 or 7 times to build up momentum, and fling it through the air to land at the feet of the moon-dreamers, putting an end to euphoria.

In Cumberland, the furniture store also contained the funeral parlor; this was typical of most middle-western small towns. So Wick, who worked in the store, also worked in the funeral parlor. What wasn't typical was that we used the furniture store as a rehearsal hall. One night I arrived early for rehearsal to find Martin Wick busily nailing up the coffin of the town band's late tuba player. "Hey, Stuey," he shouted, through a mouth full of nails, "here's another bass player for Christ's Orchestra."

After I left Hamline University in St. Paul at the end of my second year (without writing my exams) I joined Joe Lerschen's Orchestra - out of New Ulm, Minn. That band had an interesting book, by the way: one half pop tunes, and the other half square dances. Lerschen played banjo on the pop tunes (featuring Yes We Have No Bananas), and violin on the square dances (The Devil's Dream was sweeping the country then - and I do mean country). Joe had lots of friends

in central and western Minnesota and whenever any one of them approached the bandstand to say hello, he would shake hands with his left hand, leaving the right hand to handle the open strings. Oh, to this day I grind my teeth - whether or not they've been paid for - to the sound of Joe Lerschen whanging or sawing away on those open strings.

Lerschen chewed tobacco on the bandstand. In those days the dancehall pianos were always uprights - with the top open. Joe stood at the end of the piano, so he was never at a loss for a place to spit.

The Tony Pastor band that played in Culver City in the spring of 1940 had several interesting people on its roster, not the least of whom was Tony himself. However, I should like to single out one fellow for special mention at this time: Nat Kappell, the second tenor man. Nat spent all his spare time practicing low B-flat. He would blow that long low lugubrious note - Faw-w-w - after which he would take the mouthpiece from his lips and think, gazing off into space.

Again would come that mournful sound - soft and deep - wafting over the tawny hills to the sea, and again, with corrugated brow, he would meditate and blow. This went on until our engagement ended three weeks later and we returned to New York, where Nat left the band for other environments possibly more receptive to the gospel of Low B-Flat. Had we remained in Culver City who knows what dreadful monster might have come stalking and dripping out of the deep, drawn by Nat Kappell's seductive mooings?

-- Stuart Anderson

The Smithsonian has announced an event of major importance to open it's 1978-79 Jazz Heritage Series at the Baird.

October 8, Jo Jones and friends will play a concert in the circular auditorium in the cellar of the Natural History Museum. Some friends! They include Roy Eldridge - tpt; Budd Johnson - trn; Ray Bryant - po; and Major Holley - bass.

Tickets are available at the Smithsonian box office - 381-5395.

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Keeping The Beat

(With the Federal Jazz Commission having developed a formidable research arm under historian Fred Starr, TR trembles at the consequences of introducing yet more research. However, the JAZZ SOUNDINGS newsletter of the Puget Sound jazz club this month published an unusual research paper which, we feel, must be brought to a wider audience. One stands in awe! TC)

Lola Pedrini and I were sitting in the Straw Hat in old Sac. listening to Rosie O'Grady's Good Time JB with guests Ernie Carson and Johnny Mince. On a very hot number Bill Allred was leaning back so far, standing on one foot, beating time with the other, we thought surely he would fall over backwards. He did not, however, and Lola reasoned later that he must have had weights on the end of his trombone for balance.

For a long time I have been an interested observer of unusual foot tapping, etc., that musicians use when playing and often wondered if the movements were conscious ones. Several people I checked with state they do not notice this at all.

Johnny Mince shifts his entire weight from left to right with each beat. Joe Ashworth with the Hot Frogs Jumping JB, Jim Beatty, and our own Ham Carson do this. Ham occasionally tosses in a full foot stomp. All play clarinet.

Ernie Carson is a switch-hitter. He bends the knees left then right on the off-beat. As I decided this was his habit he switched and patted his right foot on the beat. Jeff Hughes keeps time with the knees. Lovely Norma Teagarden teased. For three entire tunes she tapped only her left foot double time. Then on the fourth she beat a few bars with the right foot.

Ralph Sutton, Norm Domreis, Johnny Guarneri made not one foot movement but they sounded as if they had twice the normal number of fingers at work on the keyboard. We spotted a tuba player that rocked his right foot: heel, toe, heel, toe; a guitarist who kept his heel on the floor but waved his toes left and right.

Dave Whitney, one of the two trumpet players with the Yankee Rhythm Kings, had one of the most unusual mannerisms we noticed. He would stand on his left foot, sometimes for an entire tune, move his right foot up and down lightly, rarely if ever touching the floor. Incredible balance!

But it was Ian Smith who almost drove me out of my mind. Ian is one of the twin trumpeters with Tom Baker's San Francisco JB from Sidney, Australia. He would pat his feet, alternating left and

right, but never ever the same number of times. I tried to make a pattern of the count but there was none. It went like this: Left 8 pats, right 3, left 6, right 7, left 2, right 9, left 1, and so on. Wild!

In the old days, we are told, a jazz musician could not get a job if he kept time with the music by any outward sign. He was told, as one oldtimer put it, that if he had to tap his toes, he must do it inside his shoe.

Wouldn't that be repressive! If these fabulous musicians wish to stand on their heads it's ok by me. Anything at all that frees them for more inspired playing, I'm for. The audience certainly isn't still. Could it be that they are reflecting us? At the Bacchus Theatre, which had a wooden floor, on the final day of the Jubilee the audience was so "helpful" the bands hardly needed drums.

Thank goodness the "no tapping" rule is lifted. The musicians can now join the audience in keeping the beat.

-- Mame Russell.

(We kind of wish Mame hadn't started this research. We now find ourselves watching Jim Ritter and Joe Shepherd's feet and forgetting about the music. Like the bearded old man who died of insomnia after being asked whether he slept with his beard under or on top of the blanket.)

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NEW ORLEANS —

August, 1944

By William Russell

NEW ORLEANS this summer is hotter than ever, both the weather and above all, the music. For one thing Bunk Johnson is back turning the old town upside down (in more ways than one). Glowing reports from Bill Colburn in San Francisco that Bunk was playing better than ever this year have certainly been substantiated. He's blowing the most tremendously powerful horn I've ever heard in my life. For a whole week I've heard him play at San Jacinto's Dance Hall on Dumaine St. with a band so wonderful it is impossible for me to imagine anything to equal it. Maybe there was greater jazz played 20 or 40 years ago but I greatly doubt it after hearing Bunk and his band stomp down such old favorites as *Sister Kate*, *St. Louis Blues*, *Tiger Rag*, *High Society*, *Weary Blues*, *Clarinet Marmalade*, *My Maryland*, and *When the Saints Go Marching In*.

Within the past months Bunk has received considerable criticism as well as praise—the criticism coming almost entirely from self appointed experts and publicity agents who have never heard Bunk nor even listened to his records. For example, the latest book on jazz even informs us that Bunk is dead, and although the author admittedly never heard a single one of Bunk's records he is "certain" that Bunk's playing was only a "confused stammering."

Such criticism would not be worth mentioning were it not typical of what

appears to be a particularly vicious campaign to discredit the music of Bunk and all real jazz. I can assure everyone that Bunk is very much alive today and that his music is anything but confused, although it abounds in the richest sort of imaginative invention and continually takes unexpected turns. The music of Bunk's 1944 band, both their fast stomps and the slow blues they play after midnight, is the most thrilling I have experienced during the 37 years of my interest in music.

The first Sunday afternoon of my visit I was lucky to witness a parade in Algiers. Jim Robinson invited me across the river to hear his brass band which had a job playing for a Masonic celebration. They paraded in formal style from Hope Hall to Providence Baptist Church for a meeting. Then they picked up a second line and marched a couple of miles through the main streets and back to the hall. As might be expected the band really swung out on their marches and hymns, one of which, *Lord, Lord, You're Certainly Good to Me*, developed an especially grand beat. Not a large band, as brass bands go, it contained about a dozen musicians. Among them in addition to Jim Crow were Albert Warner, on trombone; Alphone Picou, E flat clarinet; Paul Barbarin's father on alto; and an excellent trumpeter by the name of Fernandez whom I'd never heard of

before. The more I hear of Picou's dynamic and fluent style the more I'm convinced that he was the original inspiration of Jimmy Noone and thereby exerted an enormous influence on so called Chicago clarinet style.

Many times in the past I had tried without success to catch Kid Shots in a parade or at a dance. Shots was one of Louie's old third ward gang, a member of the vocal quartet and also the band at Jones' Home. He has played in many orchestras, such as the Tuxedo, Black and Tan, and worked with countless musicians, among others—Frankie Duson, Big Eye Louis, Black Benny, Picou, Manuel Manetta, and Louis Dumaine. Today Shots plays out on the lake front and is a member of the Eureka Brass Band. He had been described to me as a

vigorous cornetist with an enormous tone and a rather crude technique. One Saturday this summer I was fortunate in hearing him with George Lewis' Stompers. The big tone is there but Shots' technique surely is not crude. He never made a slip all night. The verve and brilliance with which he knocked off *High Society*, *You Can Knock But You Can't Come In*, *The Sheik*, and other rousing tunes was really something to write home about.

For a long time I'd heard tales of lawn parties, a New Orleans institution ever since the fabulous days of the Miss Betsy Cole-Bolden penny socials. Finally on Sunday, Aug. 6th George Lewis told me he had a job that eve playing for a party back on Touro St. and invited me to go along. An extraordinarily colorful affair, nothing less than a sound color-movie could do a lawn party justice. Everything—the crowd, decorations, the sensational dancing, the stirring music—all were intensely exciting. George's regular trumpet didn't show up so they sent out for another fellow whose name I never did get, although it sounded like Jean. It makes little difference for he retired from the music business some years ago, and like Johnny St. Cyr, is now a plasterer. He was at the party strictly for kicks, and the dancers and everyone got plenty of kicks in return. He is about 40 years of age and has plenty of power. Although his lip was obviously out of form and he played the worst beat up instrument I ever saw he

nevertheless got off some terrific stuff at times. A real character, he was able to whip up tremendous enthusiasm among the dancers, and one antiphonal Creole song, with a West Indian flavor, had the entire crowd participating in the music.

About 10 o'clock an interesting part of the ceremony occurred when the band suddenly swung into *Gettysburg March* as the club members made their entrance. A not too formal procession, with variations, this was a far cry from the grand march of Masonic Hall days, but a most fascinating survival.

Inspired by the festivities Laurence Marrero and Slow Drag, the bassist, and in fact the entire band, outdid themselves. The full tone Slow Drag pulls from even a battered instrument, as well as his amazing percussive, drive place him among the foremost bassists who have come out of New Orleans. He's a most picturesque performer—when Slow Drag hangs up his hat (on the scroll of his bass), lights up his pipe and goes to work the band is sure to rock.

About one A. M. Monday morning, Bunk & Company wandered in, evidently still continuing their Saturday celebration. (Bunk can go two or three nights in a row without going to bed.) Nothing could stop Bunk grabbing the beat up horn and demonstrating to his old friends the fact that he is not old at all. He ripped off *Panama*, *Careless Love* a couple of times, and settled down into his own blues. Even under the most adverse conditions, with a horn that leaks in a dozen places, Bunk is unapproachable in the blues. Not without reason was he crowned "the Blues King" forty years ago. And today more than ever he is still the King of the Blues.

The band, scheduled to quit at two, didn't stop till almost three. Maybe they have just as much fun in other cities, but as Jelly Roll once said—"There was never that particular kind of fun on the face of the globe but in New Orleans."

THE
Record
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BRUNIES AT THE TROMBONE

By Charles Wilford

Reprinted by kind permission of the editors of *Jazz Music* (London),
Albert McCarthy and Max Jones

George Brunies is a trombone-player and also a tradition. With Louis Armstrong he has the longest record of service of any big-time jazz musician, and for all of twenty years now he has held his honorable place among the few worthwhile white trombonists. Unlike Armstrong however, he has maintained all the fire of his youth and of post-war New Orleans, and resisted the temptation to grow into a Grand Old Man. He has not become a film star nor been offered the honorary degree of a catchpenny college, but he does know by now just what a trombone part should be.

The playing of a trombone part in a collective improvisation is an unrewarding task that appeals to few musicians. To relinquish the spotlight to the trumpet and clarinet and fill in the harmonies in their support; to give the bass of the chord and instinctively know the right note; to pick up and emphasize or answer the phrases of the leading instruments and always be ready with an easy fill-in while the trumpet takes a pause; to link phrase to phrase of the tune, and chorus to chorus, with a run of notes that points the new direction and always keeps the music moving; and to fulfill these duties with a forethought and taste that makes of them a fluid and intelligent extra voice in the polyphony: this is the most difficult job in the band, and when eventually mastered brings no applause from the crowd and little enough praise from the critics. It is no surprise that there has always been a shortage of good trombonists; the gap has now to be filled by the always woolly and ineffective tenor saxophone, which has not the strength to make itself felt in ensemble, and whose faults therefore pass with less notice.

The shortage is worse since fashion followed Tom Dorsey with the clambake to the *thé dansant*, and it sometimes seems that among the white musicians Brunies is the sole survivor. The great Daddy Edwards records no more; the other old master Santa Pecora appears now and then, but as quickly backs away again from the din and the com-

mercial racket; Floyd O'Brien survives, but is spasmodic and unpredictable; and the situation is such that Brad Gowans, whose jazz pedigree consists of one fifteen-year-old record on third cornet to Red Nichols and Jimmy Dorsey, has switched to valve trombone and reappeared with very undeserved success.

Among the negroes there has been no such falling-off; but this is the one branch of jazz in which they cannot claim superiority to the whites. Kid Ory of course set the style, but his playing was too archaic to be consistently enjoyable; Preston Jackson and Fred Robinson were often excellent; but in general the negro trombonists were too enthusiastic and lacking in restraint to be good ensemble players. Superb solists such as Benny Morton and Higginbotham are for instance as lacking in sense of ensemble as Teagarden.

Brunies remains. In twenty years the only change in his playing has been a gain in technique and confidence, and a progressive simplification of style towards the most forceful essence of the trombone part. His ear is now never at fault in its feeling for the right note, the exact timing and the most fitting shape of phrase for the context. His tone is shamelessly broad and assertive, his flow of ideas is unflinching and tireless, and his sweeping use of the glissando that is the chief joy of his instrument is masterly. He is in fact without rivals; there is no question that he is the greatest of all background trombonists. Yet it is with diffidence that one applies superlatives to his work, for he has not attempted any superlative or even original achievement; he has been content to raise to the highest degree the tradition he found already existing. And his is a traditional art, deriving from the bass-singer's part in the quartets beloved in American saloons and from the trombone's part in the brass band. When he is required to improvise a solo chorus, and tradition no longer sustains him, Brunies is liable to become immediately pedestrian and undistinguished. On the other hand, at fitting in a single-phrase solo break he is superb, producing the kind of thing Ory would

have played if only he had had the technique. His last break in Spanier's *Eccentric* as an instance is coarser and more outrageous than anything Ory ever achieved.

Brunies was born in New Orleans in 1902. His father and mother, and also four brothers and a sister, were all musicians; and so George as soon as he was old enough would naturally start playing the instrument that attracted him most, or perhaps just the most handy. He is not one of those stars whose life stories have been widely publicized, but we may easily guess the influence the many and famous brass bands of New Orleans had on him. In all probability his first public performances were in these bands. Later, when jazz had become the craze, he would of course play in any kind of band for any kind of job where there was a chance of getting a few free drinks.

The rest of the Brunies family have refused to be tempted away from New Orleans, and as their few records are very rare it is not possible to judge the standing as jazz musicians of brothers Abbie, Ritchie, Merritt and Harry. George however left to blow his trombone at a wider public about 1921; Paul Mares, who had already left for Chicago, sent for Brunies to join him. Soon they had gathered together Schoebel and Rappolo and formed the Friars Society Orchestra, later to be known by the more apposite name of New Orleans Rhythm Kings. This band by its many Gennett records became one of the most famous of the pioneer jazz groups; and deservedly so, for it can still be heard with pleasure.

When the band broke up in the middle twenties Brunies joined Ted Lewis, and stayed with him over ten years. With Muggsy Spanier and Jimmy Dorsey he was in the Lewis band when it visited England in 1930; it is unfortunate that Spike Hughes had never heard of Muggsy or Brunies when he dragged Dorsey to the recording studio.

In 1935 Brunies left Ted Lewis to join Louis Prima, and his name began to be voiced in the Rhythm Clubs once again. In this year also he made with Mannone and Arodin the excellent records under the revived name of New Orleans Rhythm Kings. Their issue created a considerable stir, and he has since never been out of the limelight. They remain the best field for study of the art of Brunies, for the recording balance is good, the trumpet and clarinet parts are as distinguished as his own, and the tunes selected are the old standards which suit him best.

After he left Prima there was a curious episode when he was made leader of the commercial and half-feminine Mills

Cavalcade Orchestra, but this was fortunately short-lived. Since 1936 he has been playing with constantly changing jam bands in the New York night clubs. Sometime in this period incidentally he started spelling his name Georg Brunis on the advice of a numerologist. 1939 was the year of Muggsy's glorious Ragtime Band, and in December 1940 he formed the Columbia Quintet with Art Hodes and Rod Cless. He has also recorded recently with Bobby Hackett, Eddie Condon and Sharkey Bonano.

It seems in fact that for the past few years the first question for anyone forming a jam band has been "Can we get Brunies?" Certainly it is the best assurance of the worth of this type of band to read that it has Brunies at the trombone, for we know then the foundation of the music will be strong and steady.

Another reason for the popularity of Brunies in the New York clubs these last years is that he is (so I am informed) the Last Surviving Showman Trombonist. Every night one may be sure of two acts from him: he will play one number working the slide of the trombone with his foot, and he will sing a bathetic little ballad entitled "The-Ugly Child," which has achieved great fame from his interpretation.

Despite his twenty years in jazz, he has apparently only recently started singing. Yet after hearing *I wish I could shimmy like my Sister Kate* with the Ragtime Band, one can only gasp in admiration. His is a real trombonist's voice, thick and fruity, sliding over the rhythms and stirring the phrases in a manner that shows the most intimate and instinctive mastery of the jazz idiom. He has not yet bothered to learn to read music; but then he would not be much interested in anyone else's music, and probably not very much in his own. And if he can't read, he can fake to perfection. If a testimonial from another musician is required, Rod Cless was quoted as saying "Brunies fits in on anything—he knows the right harmony."

From a consideration of the diverse activities of his career, it will appear that Brunies does not take himself or his music too seriously. The years with Ted Lewis show he is quite willing to play in a fifth-rate band if that pays better wages. If his natural way of playing produces first-rate jazz, it is not a thing he can control, or even be conscious of: it is because he comes from New Orleans, and that is the only way he learned to play.

It is precisely because his playing is not self-conscious that it has not deteriorated. Heaven be praised, the high-brow critics have not yet fooled Brunies with the story that he is a great artist.



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Bill Potts' Big Band 9-1:30 Frank Condon's Supper Club, Rockville

Fridays

The Tin Pan Alley Trio 8:30-11:30 B'haus
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(Res. - 399-1444)
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Saturdays

The John Malachi Trio Jimmy McPhail's Gold Room
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Sundays

Dick Wolters' Trio 11 am-3:30 pm Jazz Buffet, Devils Fork, Washington.

OTHER GIGS OF NOTE

- Oct. 6, Nov. 3 Tex Wyndham's Red Lion JB, Green Rm., Hotel DuPont, Wilmington, Del. (Reservations strongly advised.)
Oct. 6, Nov. 3 Va. Shy Jam, home of Frank McPherson, 2619 E. Meredith St., Vienna (938-4461)
OCT. 7 - YANKEE RHYTHM KINGS - PRJC SPECIAL - MARRIOTT TWIN BRIDGES 9-1.
Oct. 8 - Jo Jones and his Friends - Jazz Heritage Series - Baird Auditorium, Museum of Natural History. 8pm (call 381-5395)
Oct. 3-15 - Red Norvo w/Larry Eanet trio Maryland Inn, Annapolis.
Oct. 17-22- Scott Hamilton w/Warren Vache Jr. Maryland Inn
Oct. 20 - DC-Md Shy Jam, home of Dave Littlefield, 6809 5th St. NW (723-9527)
And Remember: The Jazz Band Ball Sundays 6-7:30, WPFW-FM (89.3) after mid-Oct.
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