

MY FAVOURITE DRUG

by Ian Muldoon*

[This article was received on Saturday, December 7, 2019 and posted on December 9, 2019]

In one scene in the film *Manhattan*, the self-pitying protagonist Woody Allen ruminates on what makes life worth living, listing various things that move him. One item he mentions is *Potato Head Blues* recorded by Louis Armstrong and his Hot Seven (1927). I can relate to that.



Clarinetist Woody Allen: amongst the various things that move him, he mentions Louis Armstrong's Potato Head Blues...

Music, mainly improvised music (jazz), makes me feel good. We all want to feel “good”, or at least better than we ordinarily feel most of the time. There are anecdotes of those researching in various health fields that at any one time a random sample of 100 apparently able individuals taken in the street in London (say) at any time will reveal that better than 50% of them will be suffering some ailment, URI's, injuries, headaches and so on. Other research may reveal that more than 50% of another sample of a random 100 individuals taken in Canberra, have taken

**Ian Muldoon has been a jazz enthusiast since, as a child, he heard his aunt play Fats Waller and Duke Ellington on the household piano. At around ten years of age he was given a windup record player and a modest supply of steel needles, on which he played his record collection, consisting of two 78s, one featuring Dizzy Gillespie and the other Fats Waller. He listened to Eric Child's ABC radio programs in the 1950s and has been a prolific jazz records collector wherever he lived in the world, including Sydney, Kowloon, Winnipeg, New York and Melbourne. He has been a jazz broadcaster on a number of community radio stations in various cities, and now lives in Coffs Harbour.*

medication, patent or prescribed, in the past 24 hours. Such medications are used for both physical and mental pain, however real or imagined, however minor or serious. And this is without even considering the trillion dollar industry of recreational drug use.

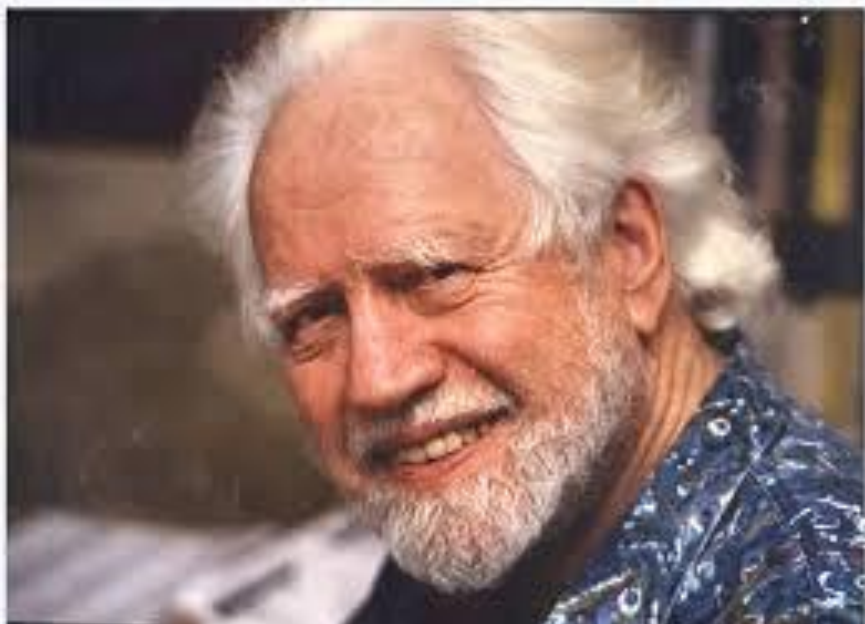
A photo of Linda May Han Oh, which seems to reveal a moment of ecstasy during performance, (Thelonious Monk sometimes got up and danced when his band hit that sweet spot) is a significant reminder of the power of the creative act to trigger "good" feelings not only in its practitioners but also in its listeners. It is another instance of the power of the mind. The placebo effect is also interesting.



Linda May Han Oh: a moment of ecstasy during performance...

In 1944 on a destroyer escort in the Atlantic Alexander Theodore Shulgin's thumb got infected. On docking in Liverpool he was transferred to a military hospital where he was prepared for surgery. He was given a glass of orange juice which he

understood contained a powerful sedative. He passed out and slept through the surgery. Later on he discovered there was nothing in the drink except orange juice. Thus Shulgin learned through personal experience the power of the mind over the body. (cf *Fentanyl, Inc, how rogue chemists are creating the deadliest wave of the opioid epidemic*, Ben Westhoff, Scribe, Brunswick, Vic; 2019)



Alexander Theodore Shulgin: he learned through personal experience the power of the mind over the body...

Shulgin (June 17, 1925 – June 2, 2014) spent his spare time in the US Navy reading chemist text books and in time became a chemist himself, as well as biochemist, organic chemist, pharmacologist, psychopharmacologist, and author. Much of his life he was dedicated to the effect drugs have on the mind - psychedelic drugs became his speciality.

Since WW11 recreational drugs, including psychotropic drugs, have become industrialised and are major exports for some countries. Fentanyl and its analogues, is, for example, a major export for China with some suggesting it is one of a suite of “weapons” the People’s Republic of China is using to achieve a dominance in world affairs. In comparison, the so called “War on Drugs” instigated by the infamous President Nixon in June 1971 has failed spectacularly, driven as it was, and is, more by a moral dimension than by a scientific one - here sociology, psychology, and other social sciences are included under the rubric “science”. One important social science is economics and Nixon’s policy addressed only one side of the economic question, supply, by ignoring demand, except to have the First Lady intone: “Just say no.”

Since we crawled out of the swamp, so to speak, humans have sought mood altering “drugs” to “feel better”. Some drugs are depressants, like alcohol, which lowers our social inhibitions. Some like the coca leaf dull pain and make us better miners or dental patients or partygoers. Some like peyote expand our mental visual experience. Some like opium and heroin make anxiety disappear. Some like cannabis slow time and enhance physical sensations. But all have their side-effects and some can cause

collateral damage when overused and each has an effect that can vary with each individual's unique genetic makeup. The new world of chemical drugs, Fentanyl and its analogues, methamphetamines, etc are another story entirely. In terms of art and its practitioners, especially musicians, with the mental and physical demands of performance, drug use has a particular meaning and consequence. Some drug users have historically championed the use of drugs in enhancing creativity, in mind expansion, in removing anxiety, and the achievement of "bliss".

Most people dabble and enjoy taking recreational or prescription drugs to feel good. Some exercise or play sport to get endorphins naturally (cf musician Simon Barker and his running). To relax in company a few drinks works wonders. Cannabis definitely works for some. Resonant highs for some can come from music, especially improvised music (jazz). But what about the musicians?



Simon Barker in 2014: getting endorphins naturally...PHOTO CREDIT TOMAS POKORNY

With this most demanding of musical artistic endeavours - improvised music - the physical and emotional and psychological demands are high. Even putting aside the place of the artist in society, where artistic endeavour is considered usually a fringe benefit of a successful life, embodied or exemplified in the visit to the Opera House outfitted in evening wear, mixing with one's cohort, the artist (musician) is constantly challenged within by her drive to create, the limitations imposed by his or her body and its biology, and the demands of the art and the artist's peers. This is not even to mention other considerations such as the listening public and general

approval and acceptance by that public. These are seriously demanding issues faced by the artist (musician) and some (psychotropic) relief from these demands is understandable. The challenge, one imagines, is to contain the consequences, to limit the effect such relief might have on creativity.

Where artistic (musical) endeavour has been traditionally a fringe benefit, improvised music (jazz) in its origins, sprang from music as integral to life. Jazz musicians who have returned to Africa for inspiration and education, Art Blakey among them, have reported that as a matter of course when something successful or happy occurred in a village, this joy was drummed so that those within the village could be part of that celebration and to those more distant, presumably to uplift them or to boast. In the same way, music to the millions of slaves brought to the USA, was integral to their very survival. The blues, however dire the lyric might be, the river rising, the lover gone, the child dying, has the sound of hope within, tinged with joy however slight. That hope and slightness is in the creative act itself. I sing for you. I feel for you. I play for you. The blues is not a simple dirge. It is an affirmation of life however dire that life might be. Hence the power of the blues, or improvised music (jazz) in all its manifestations to connect, to affirm the life of the individual in its creativity and love (desire to connect).



Art Blakey: returning to Africa for inspiration and education... PHOTO COURTESY TWITTER

Some famous musicians might be considered hypochondriacs, such as Louis Armstrong with his lip salve and pills and Swiss Kriss, but that would be unfair considering the demands placed on him through touring and performance. Some musicians felt that using was hip. Some felt that using helped creativity, such as Red

Rodney, the trumpet player but he was swiftly disabused of that notion by his boss, Charlie Parker, who warned him that you play worse when high, not better. Some were sacked because they used or drank excessively.



Red Rodney (right) pictured in 1947: he was swiftly disabused of the notion that using helped creativity by his boss Charlie Parker (left)...

There are some infamous instances of creativity being damaged by drugs. One musical one is Charlie Parker's *Lover Man* (see below also) where suffering withdrawal from heroin, he'd drunk too much whisky, was hungry, tired, physically and emotionally exhausted, and bumbled his way through the session, which was captured and released. Another is Anita O'Day who spoke of her addiction to heroin: "We were spending ten to twelve hours a day looking for it and playing games. I couldn't guess how much we spent on cosmetics I'd never wear and sundries John (Poole) would never use just so we could add, 'Oh yes, and hypodermic needles for my vitamin shots.'...Who did we think we were fooling?"* Another is the revealing *Straight Life* by Art Pepper.

*Anita O'Day with George Eells, *High Times Hard Times* (1981).



Art Pepper: no peace at all except when I was playing...

This is an excerpt from the book where he describes the first time he snorted heroin: “I felt a tingly, burning sensation up in my sinuses, and I tasted a bitter taste in my throat, and all of a sudden, all that feeling - wanting something but having no idea what it was, thinking it was sex and then when I had the chance to ball a chick not wanting to ball her because I was afraid of some disease and because of the guilt; that wandering and wandering like some derelict; that agony of drinking and drinking and nothing ever being resolved; and ... no peace at all *except when I was playing* (my emphasis) and then the minute I stopped playing there was nothing; that continual, insane search just to pass out somewhere and then to wake up in the morning and think “Oh, my God, here we go again,” to drink a bottle of warm beer so I could vomit, so I could start all over again, so I could start that ridiculous, sickening, horrible, horrible life again - all of a sudden, all of a sudden, the demons and the devils and the wandering and the wondering and all the frustration just vanished and they didn’t exist at all anymore because I’d finally found peace.” Twenty years later, Pepper is in Synanon a facility where addictions to illegal drugs, besides alcohol, were considered to be significantly different.

**Straight Life: The Story of Art Pepper by Art and Laurie Pepper, Schirmer Books, NY, 1979, p 84.)*

Charles Dederich, a reformed alcoholic, cult leader, and a member of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), decided to create his own program, called the “game”, to respond to their needs and he established Synanon. Control over members occurred through the "Game." The "Game" could have been considered to be a therapeutic tool, likened to a form of group therapy; or else to a form of a "social control", in which members humiliated one another and encouraged the exposure of one another's innermost weaknesses, or maybe both of these.



Cult leader Charles Dederich: he decided to create his own program, called the “game”...

Art Pepper spent three years in Synanon. Subsequently, he drank and used methadone or cocaine until he died. He said he never practised the alto. Charlie Parker practised at one time 14 hours a day for three years. On Art Pepper, the great Shelly Manne, drummer, leader and colleague commented:

Musicians should really sit down by themselves and realise what a great life they have. They're doing something they want to do. They're being creative. Very few people have an outlet for their creativity. They're getting paid for it, and when gifted, get paid very well for it. They can travel all over the world, expenses paid. They eat the best food in the world. They have it made, especially when they have talent and are available and working. To destroy that by being irresponsible, unreliable, which are the main reasons guys end up down the tubes... What the hell. Art's playing because he wants to play. Hopefully, to make a great living. Hopefully, to be accepted by his peers. But he gets to that point, and when he's at that point it destroys him. He's got to turn his head around. He's got to realise that all those people write about him and there's a resurgence of Art Pepper because they love him. That's not a hate relationship. That's a love relationship. They dig



Drummer Shelley Manne in 1946: musicians should really sit down by themselves and realise what a great life they have... PHOTO CREDIT WILLIAM P GOTTLIEB

*what he's doing. They dig what he's been through. They understand what he's been through. And to see him come back and play great, that's what they want. That's why they're paying money at the door to come in. That's why they go to concerts, write an article in *The New Yorker*, whatever the hell, about Art. Those are love things. People aren't trying to put pressure on him to destroy him again. He's got to get some psychiatric help if he thinks that. He's got to get his head around where he becomes self-confident about these things. He's Art Pepper.*

*Everybody has inner doubts. You've got to realise that. But what can they do to you? Who's gonna do what to you? I want to play. I want to have fun. And you've got to realise that those great moments, when you're playing, when it's almost like self-hypnosis, when you're almost outside your body watching yourself play, and when everything you play turns to gold; nothing goes wrong; the group is swinging, and you can do anything you want, even things you thought you could never do (my emphasis)...those moments don't happen every time you pick up your horn. That's not possible. It's not possible." (*Straight Life*, *ibid*, p 474). "Those moments" also occur with listeners.*

A reminder perhaps, that it's great when those moments happen but they are not the norm. But when they do happen the practitioner and the listener want them to happen again and again. Some of these moments I note below regarding recorded performances exclude mention of live performances such as, inter alia, a coda by Bernie McGann in a performance in a venue adjacent to Sydney Town Hall, or sitting two metres from Joe Lovano at Bennetts Lane, or attending a gig by Marty Erlich and Reggie Workman at Sweet Basil in New York etc etc. *Lover Man* might be a good place to start.

The Charlie Parker recording of *Lover Man*, mentioned above, had its interest but the song itself was a popular one with jazz musicians generally. It was written by Jimmy Davis, a WW2 soldier, who presented it to Billie Holiday, and had added contributions by pianist Rogelio "Ram" Ramirez, and pianist and singer James Sherman and was published in 1942 but not recorded by Holiday until 1944. Sarah Vaughan did a stunning version in 1945 with Dizzy Gillespie, and Sonny Rollins and Coleman Hawkins did an amazing version of it on their album *Sonny Meets Hawk*, NY, 15th July 1963 - Hawk's concluding high pitched ending, almost a squeal lasting many seconds, is an amazing climax to that recording. Lee Konitz has recorded over 30 versions of it.

Perhaps because of Konitz's somewhat cerebral or cool tone, his version of *Lover Man* is not my favourite despite his incredible melodic improvisational mastery. A recent excellent version is by Graeme Lyall on an album under the leadership of Tony Gould called *On the Art of Creative Music*, Move, 2016 which (live gig) music was featured in a documentary by Henk van Leeuwen called *Gould on the art of creative music*. Tony Gould is supported by Ben Robertson (bass), Graeme Lyall (alto sax), Dave Beck (drums), Imogen Manins (cello), Michelle Nicolle (vocal), Robert Burke (tenor sax), Sam Evans (tabla), Aaron McCullough (drums), Hiroki Hoshino (bass), and Ted Vining (drums).



Track five is a 13-minute version of *Lover Man* which composition is credited to Jimmy Davis and James Sherman, but both Ramirez and Davis downplayed Sherman's contribution. This track is performed by a quartet out of that line up: Graeme Lyall, alto saxophone; Tony Gould, piano; Ben Robertson, acoustic bass; and Dave Beck, drums.

The thing about playing a classic (*standard* in jazz patois) is the weight of knowledge of the performances that have gone before. The idea of tackling *My Favourite Things* on soprano saxophone is one rarely if ever contemplated. When tenor sax players tackle *Body and Soul*, the memory of Coleman Hawkins must loom large.



When tenor sax players tackle Body and Soul, the memory of Coleman Hawkins (above, left) must loom large. Miles Davis (right) almost blew the Chet Baker memory away with his 1964 version of My Funny Valentine at Philharmonic Hall, New York, in 1964... PHOTO CREDIT WILLIAM P GOTTLIEB

There are exceptions like *My Funny Valentine* made famous by Chet Baker. Miles Davis almost blew that Baker memory away with his 1964 version at Philharmonic Hall, New York, in 1964. With *Lover Man*, on alto saxophone, the alto God Charlie Parker looms large, so too Lee Konitz, as does the vocals of Sarah Vaughan and Billie Holiday, the tenor of Stan Getz and of Coleman Hawkins.



Alto saxophonist Graeme Lyall (left) and bassist Ben Robertson (right) are on track five, a 13-minute version of Lover Man...

On Lyall's effort with Tony Gould, light solo piano opens the piece, and with a quite slow tempo Gould states the theme, and then Lyall enters with a solo, with a tone comparable to Paul Desmond, and through a slow, sensitive, beautiful statement of the melody devolves into an extended six-minute faster improvisation of elegant swinging brilliance that is comparable with the best of the past whilst giving a nod to the present. Lyall is especially powerful in the coda too which is replete with feeling as if in acknowledgement of the great history of this song and this music. Melody, harmony and swing have their moment in this standout version of *Lover Man*.

Still with Charlie Parker, his *Parker's Mood* is the superb example of what he could do when circumstances were satisfactory. *Parker's Mood* is one of the classic blues. The best-known recording (Savoy, 1948) features Charlie Parker, alto saxophone; Miles Davis, trumpet; John Lewis, piano; Curly Russell, bass; and Max Roach, drums. Just to disabuse any notion that Parker was a fully formed musical genius at birth so to speak, a natural wonder, it's interesting to recall part of Paul Desmond's 1954 interview with Parker about his genesis:

CP: I put quite a bit of study into the horn, that's true. In fact the neighbours threatened... (my mum) said I was driving them crazy with the horn. I used to put in at least 11 to 15 hours a day.

PD: yes, that's what I wondered.

CP: that's true, yes. I did that for over a period of three to four years.

PD: Oh – yeah. I guess that's the answer.

As memorable and as startlingly beautiful as the original is, and it is, a comparable version on Steeplechase, and my preference, is for a 20-minute version by Jackie McLean recorded 5th August 1972 at Jazzhus Montmartre, Copenhagen, with Kenny Drew, piano; Bo Stief, bass; and Alex Riel, drums. McLean was a Parker devotee and

extended that legacy into some brilliant recordings for Blue Note, including the marvellous *Destination Out*, as well as becoming a distinguished educator. In the live gig at Jazzhus, superbly recorded by Nils Winther, it may be thought of as a typical club set, a relaxed blowing session before an appreciative and respectful audience of jazz lovers, but on *Parker's Mood*, which is the first of two Parker compositions performed along with *Confirmation*, McLean settles into *Parker's Mood* and at about the six-minute mark as his solo builds, he digs deep, and, as Bernie McGann might say, hits a hole in one, when the quartet hits a groove and McLean soars into those moments of musical beauty we all recognise. Astonishingly, Kenny Drew then enters, slows the tempo, and gives an object lesson in blues piano playing. It's one very fine example of live recording in a jazz club setting.



Jackie McLean: soaring into those moments of musical beauty we all recognise...
PHOTO CREDIT FRANCIS WOLFF

I'm on a See-Saw, music by Vivian John Ellis, lyrics by Desmond Carter, was written for the 1934 West End theatre production *Jill Darling*. Very few of Ellis' 33 theatrical productions featured songs that outlived the stage shows and very few were recorded - *I'm On a See-Saw* recorded by Fats Waller is one. It is a classic instance of a great musician taking a simple song and transforming it into a work of art. I'm thrilled every time I listen to it, with the Mozartian pianism Waller brings to it, and with a Mozartian tone of sweet/sad poignancy, as his emotions see-saw reflecting the rise

and fall of the interest of his prospective lover rises and falls. Added to this is the astonishing swing his playing and that of his “Rhythm” bring to the piece. It is basically a piano solo, and vocal, with wah-wah muted trumpet responding to the vocal, then coda of the full band with the clarinet dominating: Herman Autrey, trumpet; Gene Sedric, clarinet, tenor sax; James Smith, guitar; Charles Turner, bass and Arnold Bolding drums with Waller, piano and vocal recorded, 20th August, 1935. It is I think a reminder that simplicity can be the essence of elegance (and beauty?).



Fats Waller: a classic instance of a great musician taking a simple song and transforming it into a work of art...

Sepia Panorama - sepia, meaning reddish-brown, much like the skin colour of many African Americans perhaps, was composed by Duke Ellington but arranged with Billy Strayhorn. My recording of it is from 16th August 1940. The band comprised: Wallace Jones, Cootie Williams, trumpets; Rex Stewart, cornet; Jone Nanton, Lawrence Brown, trombone; Juan Tizol, valve trombone; Barney Bigard, clarinet, tenor saxophone; Johnny Hodges, clarinet, alto saxophone; Otto Hardwick, alto saxophone; Ben Webster, tenor saxophone; Harry Carney, clarinet, alto saxophone,

baritone saxophone; Duke Ellington, piano; Fred Guy, guitar; Jimmy Blanton, bass; Sonny Greer, drums. The soloists were: Blanton, Tizol and Williams; Carney, Ellington and Blanton; Webster, Carney, Tizol and Williams; Blanton.

At one of the two cinemas in Wagga Wagga, NSW, in 1956, a request was made to play *Sepia Panorama* in the time preceding the cinema's movie programme. It was played on the understanding there was no vocal involved. The music thrillingly filled the cinema which was a tremendous contrast to the humble beige and maroon HMV Nippergram which was its usual holding place.

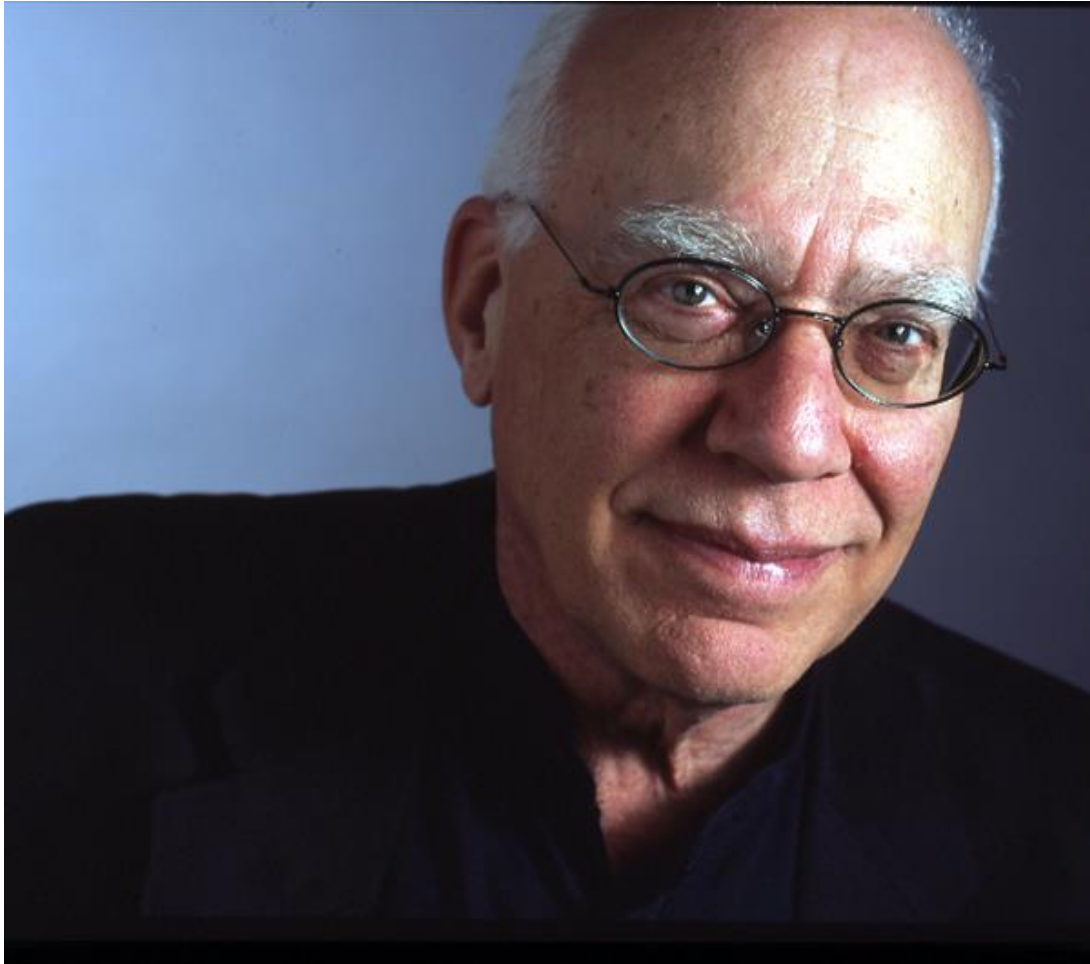
Apart from its glorious orchestral harmony *Sepia Panorama* features, memorably, the bass playing of Blanton who solos three times. It is a mid-tempo piece with a strong melody which Ellington brilliantly enunciates in his brief but powerful solo in the epicentre of the 3'26". On reflection, the music was more thrilling to me than my female company.



Bassist Jimmy Blanton: he solos memorably three times...

Trance, written by the pianist Steve Kuhn, was the title and opening track of the eponymous album of 1975. It was easily the best track of the programme of eight compositions all by Kuhn. He was supported by Steve Swallow, electric bass; Jack De

Johnette, drums, and Sue Evans, percussion. In some ways this typified for me the sounds of the time and the increasing inroads the ECM sound was making into the music. It is a haunting vamp sustained throughout by bass and percussion, punctuated by percussive chords, trills, runs, plinks, arpeggios by Kuhn to excellent effect. Recorded, November 1974, in New York.



Steve Kuhn's Trance typified the sounds of the time and the increasing inroads the ECM sound was making into the music...

Pithecanthropus Erectus, Charles Mingus, 30th January, 1956, NY, with Jackie McLean, alto saxophone (cf *Parker's Mood* above); J.R. Monterose, tenor saxophone; Mal Waldron, piano; Mingus, bass and leader; and Willie Jones, drums was a revelation partly because it moved from groove, to free expression, and back to groove, effortlessly, with changes of tempo, passionate musical expression, and a narrative of sorts - it remains a memorable musical experience. That this quintet could sound so *big* was also revelatory. The depth and range and power of the acoustic bass of Mingus had a strong appeal as well, and this legacy is evident in the work of William Parker, whose musical recorded contributions over the past 20 years have been outstanding. *The Peach Orchard*, for example, a double CD document featuring the quartet known as *In Order to Survive*, Parker, bass; Cooper-Moore, piano; Rob Brown: alto saxophone; and Susie Ibarra, drums (Assif Tsahar appears on one track on bass clarinet, *Posium Pendasem #3*) is a representative example of

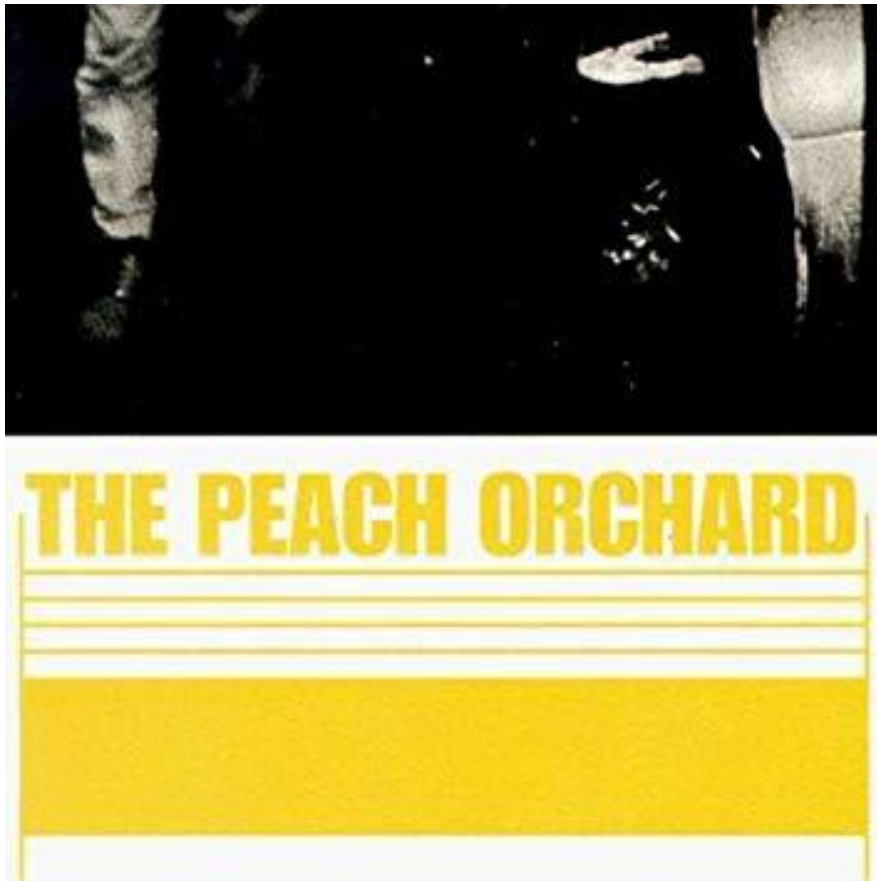
his work, recorded over two years in various club venues in New York and released by AUM Fidelity in 1998.



The depth and range and power of the acoustic bass of Mingus (above) had a strong appeal, and this legacy is evident in the work of William Parker (below)...



The similarities with Charles Mingus include a very big bass sound, a political, spiritual and ideological world view (including anger like Mingus) regarding equality, peace, love, and hope “a world where flowers walk and talk” (notes to *The Peach Orchard*) powerful passion in the execution of the music and the use of freedom of expression throughout, are common features of the music of William Parker. Some works seem to reflect the basis of the composition such as the 21-minute title track *The Peach Orchard*, inspired by the military displacement of the Navaho people of New Mexico which caused the destruction of their most loved standing of peaches. The music is intended to mirror, or is response to, the ‘massive blanketing of America by Europe’. The piece opens with a collective improvisation involving urgent bass figure, stomping piano chords, crying high-pitched alto saxophone phrases underpinned by percussion. In moving from chaos to swing to quiet arco bass lines under a piano solo, back to free collective improvisation, the piece seems to aurally reflect military action and the power and chaos of that, interspersed with respite under a tree with ominous sounds never far away in the background, and a return to fighting and free-for-all, with pain and loss the end result.



It's a mistake to conclude that *The Peach Orchard* is a summary or typical of Mr Parker's music because in any programme one encounters the blues - see the solo of Cooper-Moore on *Theme from Pelikan* - or fun, or swing, or hints of boogie woogie, in short the whole reservoir of the jazz tradition that is available to a master. A devotion to the work of Mingus may be extended to his contemporary, Mr Parker. It may be too, that any involvement in the music of William Parker necessarily triggers the mind and memory to the legacy of the great forbear Charles Mingus.

In contrast, if we consider another master bass player, composer and leader in a comparatively benign society compared to that of America, Lloyd Swanton and a work such as *Meniscus* (Moon) from his album *Gondola*, there is no narrative provided by the composer. It is also of a contrasting mood and tone altogether.



Bassist Lloyd Swanton: his Meniscus is reminiscent say of an island in the South Pacific with the absence of the noise of developed countries, with the rhythm of the sea lapping gently on the white sands... PHOTO CREDIT TOMAS POKORNY

Gondola (2006) has Swanton, composer, leader, acoustic bass; Sandy Evans, soprano and tenor sax; James Greening, trombone; Fabian Hevia, percussion; Bruce Reid, national steel, lap steel guitar, dobro, hand whistling; Hamish Stuart, drums and hand whistling; and Jonathan Pease, electric guitar. The structure of *Meniscus* is simple: a rhythmic foundation is established over which the two horns provide two extended solos. The foundation is meditative, gentle, and peaceful, reminiscent say of an island in the South Pacific with the absence of the noise of developed countries, with the rhythm of the sea lapping gently on the white sands - cliché perhaps but no less true because of it. The guitar of Bruce Reid too cannot help hinting at echoes of Hawaii so imbedded in our consciousness that beautiful State is. The moon is present in the tropical sky and a young beautiful maiden on the beach is yearning to meet her lover who is yet to arrive: enter Sandy Evans with her solo on soprano sax. If there is a more beautiful solo on that instrument point me to it, please. It is at once, yearning, passionate, modest, and full of the sweet air of unsullied love. The lover arrives and speaks: James Greening swaggers in, confident, passionate, young, energetic and with an open honest demeanour. It's a great

musical statement replete with colour and rhythm. What maiden would not be whelmed by it? *Meniscus* is a reminder of the sheer beauty of expression possible in the music. Melodic beauty was a feature of Oscar Peterson.



Sandy Evans (left): a beautiful solo on soprano sax... James Greening (right) swaggers in, confident, passionate, young, energetic and with an open honest demeanour... PHOTO COURTESY JUDY BAILEY

Oscar Peterson plays the composers series made for Clef records in the early 1950s with Barney Kessel, or Herb Ellis on guitar and Ray Brown on bass, and tunes like *Remember* (Irving Berlin), *It Ain't Necessarily So* (George and Ira Gershwin) and also later works such as *Happy Go Lucky Local* (Ellington) from the CD *Night Train* 1963 was the beginning of a life-long love affair with that pianist. There may be a tendency to take this great pianist for granted. This will change if you consider just



Oscar Peterson: his Sax No End has a power, swing, melody and orchestral greatness that makes it a contender for the greatest single swing number ever recorded for piano...

one track from his album *Travelin' On* called *Sax No End*. This piece of music has a power, swing, melody and orchestral greatness that makes it a contender for the greatest single swing number ever recorded for piano. It builds and builds - the drumming of Sam Jones on bass and Bobby Durham on drums recorded perfectly by Hans Georg Brunner-Schwer in April 1968 - and just when you think it's got to a climax, Peterson steps it up again, then again. It's one of the most remarkable piano performances in the history of swing piano demonstrating not just the synchronicity of the performers working as one pulsing swinging entity, but the orchestral possibilities of the piano itself. It is a truly memorable and remarkable moment in the history of jazz brilliantly recorded in the lounge-room of the engineer.

Sax No End was the title of an MPS LP recorded for the first time in 1967 by the European Kenny Clarke/Francy Boland Big Band. The reed section of that band at times included Tony Coe, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, Herb Geller, Johnny Griffin, Derek Humble, Ronnie Scott, Sahib Shihab, Stan Sulzmann, Carl Drevo, and Johnny Surman. The title track was written by Boland and the sax harmony and the arrangement was a wonder to hear, rivalling Basie in some ways and Gil Evans in others.



Kenny Clarke (left) & Francy Boland...

The United States Information Service (USIS) in Penang in the 1960s loaned out recorded jazz as part of its cultural propaganda remit. One was *Out Of the Cool* by Gil Evans. It reminded me about a time in a room in a house in Kingswood, NSW, in the winter of 1964 having just returned from my train journey to Ashwood's second-hand record shop in Pitt Street, Sydney, my ears were open wide when I put an LP on my

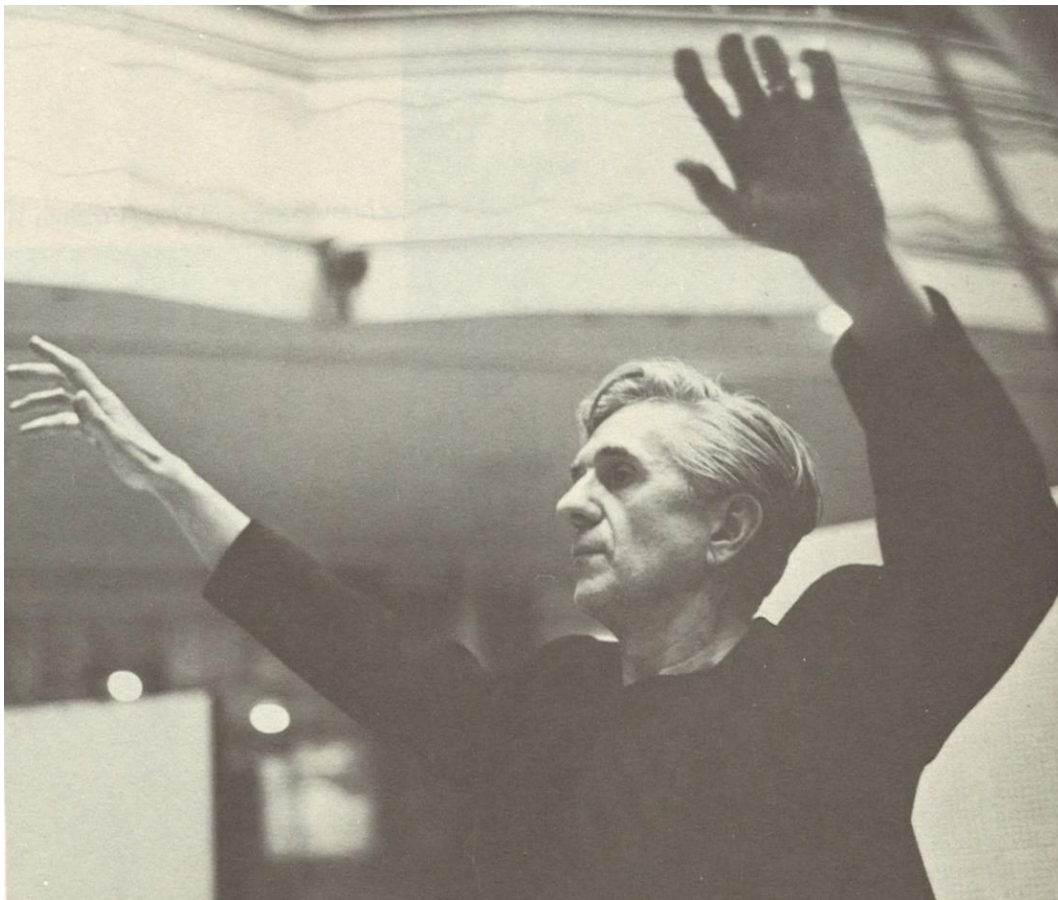
Garrard 401 turntable and lowered the tone arm with its diamond needle onto my first Impulse album and found myself in one of those moments - I'll spare you the emotional details - as the music filled the room. This was *Africa* from Impulse album A-6 featuring the John Coltrane Quartet augmented by an orchestra.



Africa: one of the great moments in 20th century music... among the best work Eric Dolphy ever did...

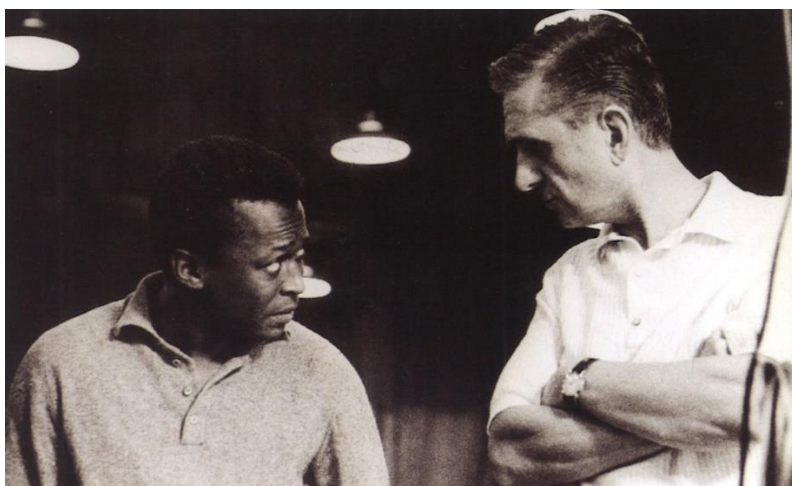
Coltrane had approached Gil Evans to arrange and conduct the piece but he was not available. Eric Dolphy who had recently joined Coltrane was invited to arrange and conduct *Africa* instead. How might Evans have proceeded? Who knows? What I do know is that *Africa* is to me among the best work Dolphy ever did, even though he does not solo. *Africa* to me is one of the great moments in 20th century music, no matter which of the three versions is preferred. I experience more ecstasy over this music than either *A Love Supreme* or *Ascension* though there may well be arguments that the latter two are better pieces, more involved, more technically demanding, better structured. No matter. The dark sound of the horns reflects the cliché about “dark” Africa, meaning “unknown” Africa and Dolphy said that Coltrane “wanted brass, he wanted baritone horns, he wanted that mellow sound and power.”

The issued take has the following line up: trumpet, Booker Little; four French horns, Julius Watkins, Donald Corrado, Bob Northern and Robert Swisshelm; alto saxophone, Eric Dolphy; baritone saxophone, Pat Patrick; two euphoniums, Carl Bowman and Julian Priester; two basses, Reggie Workman and Art Davis; piano, McCoy Tyner; drums, Elvin Jones; tuba, Bill Barber; and tenor, John Coltrane. The melody is in the background, the band has a drone, one bass is high, one low, and there is repetition and remarkable whoops and shouts from the French horns. And then in comes the majestic, confident sound of Coltrane's tenor in the same way he enters in the magnificent *Blue Train* on Blue Note. It's an unforgettable music moment. It is in the form really of a concerto in that there is a soloist and orchestra. It is the only example of this form that Coltrane recorded. *Africa* is one of the great collaborations in music.



Gil Evans: the master of such forms... PHOTO CREDIT CHUCK STEWART

For such forms, Gil Evans was master and his collaborations are justly famous, especially those with Miles Davis. A solid favourite is *Soleo* from *Sketches of Spain* written and arranged and conducted by Gil Evans and recorded 10th March, 1960. Its concerto (like) format highlights the solo mastery of Davis especially the delicate, elegant, fragility of his tone which suggests powerful emotions on the point of breaking yet powering on to higher things - his sound is almost that of the flugelhorn which has a more reflective timbre. He did play that instrument on other Evans' collaborations including *Miles Ahead*, *Porgy and Bess*, and one track of *Sketches of Spain* but on *Soleo* he sticks to trumpet. On recording the album Miles made the following remarks:



Miles Davis (left) with Gil Evans: Gil was the type of guy who spent two weeks writing eight bars of music perfectly... PHOTO COURTESY DEFINITIVE ILLUSTRATED ENCYCLOPEDIA OF JAZZ & BLUES

*Now, that was the hardest thing for me to do on Sketches of Spain; to play the parts on the trumpet where someone was supposed to be singing, especially when it was ad-libbed, like most of the time. The difficulty came when I tried to do parts that were in between the words and stuff when the singer is singing. Because you've got all these Arabic musical scales up in there, black African scales that you can hear. And they modulate and bend and twist and snake and move around.There was a little bit of the same thing, the same kind of voice that played on trumpet in Solea. Solea is a basic form of flamenco, the American black feeling in the blues. It comes from Andalusia, so it's African based..... Gil (Evans) was the type of guy who spend two weeks writing eight bars of music perfectly. He'd go over and over it and over it. Then he'd come back to it, again and again and again. A lot of times I had to be standing over him and just take the shit from him because he'd be so long in making up his mind about putting some music in or taking some out. He was a perfectionist.....Then we had to have some drummers who could get the sound that I wanted; I wanted the snare drum to sound like paper tearing, those little tight rolls. I had heard that sound way back in St Louis at the Veiled Prophet Parades with those marching legit drummers they had back there. They sounded like Scottish bands. But they're African rhythms, because that's where the bagpipes come from, too, Africa.....That meant we had to get a chorus of legit drummers to play in the background behind Jimmy Cobb and Elvin to play the stuff they normally play, solo and shit. Legit drummers can't solo because they have no musical imagination to improvise. Like most other classical players, they can only play what you put in front of them....they can remember, and they have the ability of robots... and that's all the classical music is in terms of the musicians who play it - robot shit.....there's some great classical music by great classical composers - and there's some great players....- but it's still robot playing....**

**Miles Davis with Quincy Troupe, Miles The Autobiography, MacMillan, London, 1990, pp 232-234.*

The line-up is: Miles Davis, trumpet; Gil Evans composer, arranger, conductor; Ernie Royal, Bernie Glow, Louis Mucci, Johnny Coles, trumpet; Dick Hixon, Frank Rehak, trombone; Jimmy Buffington, Joe Singer, Tony Miranda, French horn; Bill Barber, tuba; Al Block, Harold Feldman, flute; Romeo Penque, oboe; Danny Bank, bass clarinet; Jack Knitzer, bassoon; Janet Putnam, harp; Paul Chambers, bass; Jimmy Cobb, drums; and Elvin Jones and (probably) Jose Mangual, percussion. The lush, rich, darkly coloured orchestra backing and the powerful rhythmic foundation, including the big acoustic bass sound of Paul Chambers, combined with the great arrangement and outstanding structure made this recording a masterpiece with one of Davis' finest solos. Much of the finest jazz music has arisen out of arrangements by the likes of Duke Ellington and Gil Evans. Some arrangers have elevated outstanding singers to another level through their creativity and three works illustrate that: these are respectively by Buddy Bregman, Nelson Riddle and Marty Paich.



The lush, rich, darkly coloured orchestra backing and the powerful rhythmic foundation, included the big acoustic bass sound of Paul Chambers (above)...

In January 1956 Norman Granz had Buddy Bregman organise and arrange a recording session for Anita O'Day. The results were issued on an album *This Is Anita* which was the first album recorded under Granz's new label Verve replacing Clef. On first listening two things stood out: the trombone section and the take on *Honeysuckle Rose*. *Honeysuckle Rose* begins with an upbeat tempo acoustic bass solo and O'Day sings the verse over the bass; she repeats the verse with the piano quartet backing; and then again repeats with a quartet of four trombones added, with O'Day singing *a capella* in the stops. The band was: Paul Smith, piano and celeste; Barney Kessel, guitar; Joe Mondragon, bass; Alvin Stoller, drums; and Milt Berhardt, Cy Zentner, Joe Howard and Lloyd Elliot, trombone; Corky Hale was on harp, and a string section was added for some tracks. Interesting to consider the talent in this enterprise, for example, Cy Zentner's band was voted best big band for 13 straight years by *Down Beat*, and Zentner himself was voted Best Trombonist in Playboy Jazz Readers' Polls. Bregman's arrangements and his conducting of all tracks on *This Is Anita* helped make the launch of Verve records a success and propelled Ms O'Day into the second and finest part of her singing career.



Similarly, Mel Tormé is a musician's singer, but his recorded work with Marty Paich propelled him to another artistic level altogether. The Bethlehem recording titled *Mel Tormé and the Marty Paich Dek-Tette* had a programme of songs written by the likes of Harry Warren, Harold Arlen, George and Ira Gershwin, Duke Ellington, Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, Randy Weston and George Shearing. It was this last, written by Shearing, called *Lullaby of Birdland*, that might knock your socks off.



Marty Paich (left) with Mel Tormé, whose recorded work with Paich propelled him to another artistic level altogether...

It too, like Bregman's *Honeysuckle Rose*, begins with an up-tempo solo bass, indeed Mondragon's bass is strong throughout, with Tormé dispatching the lyrics with customary aplomb. At the line "And there's a weepy old willow", Mel Lewis's brushes come in at the exact midpoint of the 18-line lyric. At the end of the verse, Tormé switches to scatting, taking an instrumental role if you will with his voice, at the same time the horns quietly back him up, and then at the end of his brilliant verbal solo flight, Don Fagerquist enters on trumpet, and he and Tormé have a musical conversation - call and response - then Pete Candoli hits a phrase echoed by the whole band, replied to by Tormé, the trombone then enters and the voice/music conversation continues with that instrument. Tormé then quotes the music (not the lyrics) of *Blacksmith Blues* which the whole band responds to in turn, he brings his singing to a climax then comes back to the second nine lines of the lyric. It's a remarkable performance and an excellent piano-less arrangement of a song recorded by Stan Getz, Ella Fitzgerald, Paul Bley, Lee Konitz and Brad Mehldau (2009). Marty Paich's arrangement for Mel Tormé remains a favourite.

It was recorded January 20th, 1956, with the following band: Pete Candoli, and Don Fagerquist, trumpet; Bob Enevoldsen, trombone; Bud Shank, alto sax; Bob Cooper, and Jack Montrose, tenor sax; Jack DuLong, baritone sax; Vince DeRosa and John Cave French horn; Albert Pollan, tuba; Red Mitchell, bass; and Mel Lewis, drums.

The third reference regarding arrangers, concerns Nelson Riddle's efforts on *Where or When* by Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart. The song is from the 1937 musical *Babes in Arms*. The chorus is sung by the character Valentine, which is responded to by Billie who sings the verse, then she repeats the chorus.



Nelson Riddle (left) pictured here with Frank Sinatra...

There are over 100 recorded versions of it, including Dave Brubeck, Duke Ellington, Earl Bostic, Art Tatum, Artie Shaw, Sonny Rollins, Claude Thornhill, Jack Teagarden, Teddy Wilson, Benny Goodman, Dion and the Belmonts, Woody Herman and Clifford Brown. One the best? Frank Sinatra from his album *Frank Sinatra Sings For Only the Lonely* with arrangements by Nelson Riddle.

The lyrics by Lorenz Hart perfectly match the music. Hart was a small man who considered himself ugly. According to Stephen Holden of the *New York Times*, "Many of his lyrics were the confessional outpourings of a hopeless romantic who loathed his own body. By all accounts, Hart, who stood just under five feet tall and wreathed himself in cigar smoke, saw himself as an undesirable freak. Homosexual in the era of the closet, he pursued a secretive and tormented erotic life of which only hints appear in his songs."



Lorenz Hart: a small man who considered himself ugly... PHOTO COURTESY RODGERS & HAMMERSTEIN ORGANISATION

Whatever the truth, Hart was a master of a poignant, heartfelt, wrenchingly romantic tone which proved rich material for musicians and music lovers.

The lyrics of *Where or When* illustrate a memory anomaly known as déjà vu. The line "Some things that happen for the first time..." is often misunderstood or misheard as "Some things that happened for the first time..." which changes the meaning. Rather than recalling past events which actually "happened", the lyrics refer to present events which "happen" for the first time, but which falsely seem to be recurring.

In the last track on the album *Frank Sinatra Sings For Only the Lonely* Sinatra sings the chorus alone of the lyric *Where or When*, and he sings it as it is written (happen).

Chorus

*It seems we stood and talked like this before
We looked at each other in the same way then
But I can't remember where or when
The clothes you're wearing are the clothes you wore
The smile you are smiling you were smiling then
But I can't remember where or when
Some things that happen for the first time
Seem to be happening again
And so it seems that we have met before
And laughed before and loved before
But who knows where or when?*

Riddle's arrangement has Sinatra accompanied by long-time accompanist Bill Miller on piano alone up until the line "And so it seems that we have met before" at which point the orchestra (strings) enters quietly but engages in a crescendo over the next two lines of lyrics to reach an astonishing musical climax. It's an outstanding example when you are faced with a solid melody, good ambiguous intelligent lyrics, a great vocalist, professional musicians, when an arrangement of "less is more" raises the outcome to art. The track goes for 2'26" and is one of the finest recorded examples of popular song.



Sinatra (standing) with his long-time accompanist Bill Miller...

Undoubtedly, Nelson Riddle's arranging and conducting elevated *Ella Fitzgerald Sings the George and Ira Gershwin Song Book* to one of the better manifestations of music of the 20th century. In the same way, Sinatra's great legacy rests on the shoulders of Nelson Riddle more than any other. Riddle also may have given Linda Ronstadt her finest moments with a trio of platinum albums of the Great American Songbook. He composed and arranged music for 28 films.



Nelson Riddle (left) with Ella Fitzgerald: his arranging and conducting elevated Ella Fitzgerald Sings the George and Ira Gershwin Song Book to one of the better manifestations of music of the 20th century...

Honing back to an essence in arranging, and programming, is a feature of Ran Blake on his Soul Note document *Short Life of Barbara Monk*, in which Blake is supported by (unusually for Blake) Ricky Ford, tenor sax; Ed Felson, acoustic bass; and Jon Hazilla on drums. Blake is renowned for his solo piano recordings. He emphasises as an educator, the primacy of the ear, and focusses on improvisation and ear training. His students must dedicate themselves to listening, imitating, and improvising. They must listen and sing along to melodies on tape until they can reproduce the melody without the tape. They must do this before touching an instrument, as imitating the mechanics of a performance alone does not develop one's ear.



Ran Blake: renowned for his solo piano recordings... PHOTO CREDIT JUSTIN FREED

His programming on *Short Life of Barbra Monk* features three standards, three originals, a traditional Sephardic theme first encountered by the pianist in a recording by Victoria De Los Angeles, works by two former students, and *Vradiazi* by contemporary Greek composer Michael "Mikis" Theodorakis. The wide ranging and intelligent choice of works is one thing, but then their programming is another and the arrangements are another. Two "standards" are from Stan Kenton recordings and one, *Artistry in Rhythm* was Kenton's theme song. Kenton's original arrangement of *Artistry in Rhythm* was quite intricate, and evolved from a tight "classical" piece in 1943, to an arrangement by Pete Rugolo which changed the opening and closing of the work for the 40-piece Innovations Orchestra, to the 1956 version which added Afro-Cuban rhythms and was more relaxed, swinging and interesting as a result. What Ran Blake does is take away all the "busyness" of the piece, all the pretension, loudness, and swirling sounds and distil it to its swinging essence.

The actual recorded performance of *Artistry in Rhythm* is preceded in the programming on the CD by *Una Matica De Ruda* (the Sephardic theme translating to: *A sprig of rue, a flowering sprig, a young man gave it to me. He has fallen in love with me. A young man gave it to me. He has fallen in love with ...*) Sephardic music has its roots in the musical traditions of the Jewish communities in medieval Spain and Blake's 54-second rendition of this theme by his quartet is tinged with the atmosphere of Spain and the Mediterranean. There is then a brief pause before a dirge-like piano solo, atonal-like, exploratory, hesitant, then the drums enter swiftly followed by the robust, confident full-throated cry of Ricky Ford's tenor, backed by the deeply swinging bass of Ed Felson. The impact of this is quite electric and once again illustrates the effectiveness of skilled arrangements. Then the piece concludes, a pause, then the *Una Matica De Ruda* is performed once again at 58 seconds. The whole programme on the document reveals Ran Blake as a deeply musical, highly intelligent and sensitive artist, attuned to the many details and choices and collaborations that go to making a lasting and distinctive piece of art.



The entrance of the drums is swiftly followed by the robust, confident full-throated cry of Ricky Ford's tenor ... PHOTO COURTESY JAZZ MAGAZINE

Jimmy Mundy's arrangement of Benny Goodman's Carnegie Hall version of *Sing, Sing, Sing* (Louis Prima) added considerably to its power and yet we may associate Jess Stacy, Gene Krupa and Ziggy Elman and others with that performance and know nothing of Mundy (June 28, 1907 – April 24, 1983) tenor saxophonist, arranger, and composer, who arranged for Benny Goodman, Count Basie, and Earl Hines and whose artistic arranging skills elevated these bands to another level altogether.



Tenor saxophonist, arranger, and composer Jimmy Mundy, who arranged for Benny Goodman, Count Basie, and Earl Hines...

And Gil Evans shows how arrangements matter, regardless of the individual brilliance of the musicians involved. His *La Nevada* from the classic *Out of The Cool*, (1960) which may have given a musician such as guitarist Ray Crawford the finest platform to reveal his artistry, included the greats of the time such as Johnny Coles, trumpet; Jimmy Knepper, trombone; Ron Carter, bass; and Elvin Jones, drums. *London* from the 1987 Evans' album *Rhythm A Ning* (1987) performed by Evans with Laurent Cugny's Big Band Lumiere, and made up of European musicians none of whom, with the possible exception of saxophonist Andy Sheppard, are so-called greats of the time, yet the work *London* recorded 27 years later itself rivals *La Nevada* in its beauty and power.

Perhaps the greatest arranger of jazz (improvised) music is Duke Ellington whose deep knowledge of his musicians, not just of music, gave him the entree into arranging works for unlikely front instruments, such as the acoustic bass. *Jack the Bear* is a notable and famous instance of this. Though his legacy includes over 2,000 compositions it's hard not to credit him with the great contribution he made to the members of his band by the intelligent, sensitive artistic platforms he created to reveal their individual art. As he said, "I am my band."



Duke Ellington: it's hard not to credit him with the great contribution he made to the members of his band by the intelligent, sensitive artistic platforms he created to reveal their individual art... Here he is with alto saxophonist Johnny Hodges...
PHOTO COURTESY PINTEREST

A current Australian composer and arranger who also seems to share Ellington's attributes of leadership and example towards fellow musicians is Andrea Keller. Her recent document called *Transients* is an interesting instance of this even though it is concerned with small groups, from trio to quintet.

Musicians are, despite their occasional stage personas, delicate, sensitive beasts who respond above and beyond when treated with sensitivity and respect and given the opportunity to blossom through effective leadership and good arrangements. That Duke Ellington dressed in the way he did, superbly, regardless of the reasons for it, gave the band members a visual cue that trumpeted: "Yes, this music matters, yes, I

matter, yes this music, MY music, is dignified and worthy of respect.” And they played their hearts out for Duke. Stan Kenton, Count Basie and Benny Goodman had a similar effect, it must be said, though Duke was a class act on another level.



Andrea Keller: dignity, respect, and sensitivity to the music. This must influence musicians performing her compositions and arrangements under her guidance...

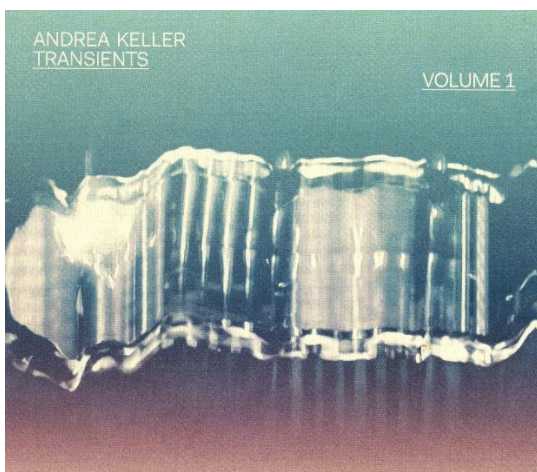
Similarly, Ms Keller brings to her presence in performance - I've seen her in an empty Festival hall in a duo setting - a dignity, respect, and sensitivity to the music. This must influence musicians performing her compositions and arrangements under her guidance. On *Transients* a quintet features on just one track, the same quartet is on two tracks though Julien Wilson plays clarinet on the first and tenor on the second, with James Macauley on trombone; Keller, piano; and Sam Anning, on double bass. And there are four tracks of various trio iterations. Established musicians like guitarist Stephen Magnusson feature as well as emerging players such as Flora Carbo on alto saxophone on the composition *Sleep Cycles*.

Missed Opportunities which is a quartet with Julien Wilson, tenor saxophone; James Macaulay, trombone; Andrea Keller, piano; and Sam Anning, double bass; opens with the horns in harmony stating the theme. The solo piano enters, running down a phrase in repetition and building tension, then the full-bodied tenor enters, resolving into thoughtful husky tones and delicacy as the solo develops then resolves itself, with the trombone responding, the piano enters in plinks and bell like melodic runs traversing a range of moods, the tempo slows and a meditative, regretful, bass solo follows, a lively piano returns with the trombone voicing a gentle cry and the piece ends in a climax of celebratory joy - at least this is my feeling about the piece. In short, the arrangement manages an emotional musical narrative if you will. The track *Sweet Cacophony* on the other hand, gives Magnusson the musical support to let fly with a solo which he delivers in brilliant fashion. There seems to be a lot of guitar history in that performance, from the blues through to Sonny Sharrock. There's also the leadership involved in fostering young players, presenting the music in a respectful fashion and then there's creative leadership of new compositions, new arrangements for innovative groups.



Two of the musicians on Transients, Stephen Magnusson (left) and saxophonist Julien Wilson... PHOTO CREDIT ROGER MITCHELL

Ms Keller's *Five Degrees Below* is an example of innovation where five rhythm instruments comprise a quintet in a live performance at Jazzlab, Brunswick, Victoria. The line-up is: Stephen Magnusson, guitar; Andrea Keller, piano; Sam Anning, double bass; Mick Meagher, electric bass; and James McLean, drums. All compositions and arrangements are by Ms Keller. It's an interesting programme of music for a band of exclusive rhythm instruments (if we include piano) with colours brought into relief between the darkness of the two basses offset, sometimes thrillingly, by the lighter end of the piano. Although a work may seem unresolved, as *Warm Voices* seems to be, ending strangely, some tracks begin so quietly, the listener strains to hear, thus is made sensitively alert to what unfolds. The opening piece, *Hills of Nectar*, begins in silence, then a note, a soft cry, rumbling, the cry of the guitar, and an intriguing soundscape follows with some piano startling in the purity of its sounds in relief over the background.



In some pieces, the dark bass sound forbidding as in *Fern Tree*, in contrast to the gambolling piano in the same piece. *Grand Forfeit* has two distinct parts, *largo* dark basses, reverberating electronic sounds, with a moody and threatening atmosphere, whilst the second part, introduced by the piano, ups the tempo, and builds to a convincing intensity climaxed by the boiling wah wah wailing electric guitar. There are some fine bass solos throughout from Anning and what I take to be arco bass sounds from the electric bass creating a powerful mood. James McLean at one stage provides a quiet hush of cymbal sound whilst at other times fills the room with effective percussion background on *Of Winter, Ice & Snow*. In short, the audience would have been taken on an interesting musical journey of nearly 50 minutes where the “sound of surprise” was in the Jazzlab and musically nothing can be taken for granted.



Bobby Hutcherson: only a quartet, but what a band!... PHOTO CREDIT FRANCIS WOLFF

Music may be taken for granted when listening to one of Bobby Hutcherson’s finest programmes of music *Happenings*, (Blue Note, 1966). It’s only a quartet, but what a band, and what a big sound it can make! Hutcherson is on vibraphone or marimba; Herbie Hancock, piano; Bob Cranshaw, double bass; and Joe Chambers, drums. It swings like mad from the opening *Aquarian Moon*; has a haunting waltz ballad *Bouquet* inspired by Erik Satie; has a swinging *Head Start* and a top work from Hancock, *Maiden Voyage*; then a ballad *When You Are Near*; and suddenly, all bets are off with the seven-minute *The Omen*, a percussive masterpiece of “free” jazz, highlighted by some ominous percussive piano work from Hancock. It’s one of those moments of joyful surprise. There are seven compositions, six by Hutcherson.



Coleman Hawkins: his sound on There's A Small Hotel till resides in memory as an instance of a powerful melody, strong rhythm and the fat sound of his tenor...
PHOTO COURTESY PINTEREST

Another surprise encountered was the sound of Coleman Hawkins performing *There's A Small Hotel* recorded 29th August 1949 in New York by Hawkins on tenor; Al Haig, piano; Nelson Boyd, bass; and Shadow Wilson, drums which was issued on a 45" rpm EP around 1955. Amazingly, it still resides in memory as an instance of a powerful melody, strong rhythm and the fat sound of Hawkins' tenor. One could be spoiled from that moment regarding the tenor sound, preferring Sonny Rollins to Lester Young, and the Texas tenor sound a la Booker Ervin.

J D Allen on his *Graffiti* (Savant, 2015) album is in that tradition and his confident, full, swaggering tenor sound is a wonderful aural experience in a trio setting of tenor, and bass by Gregg August, and drums by Rudy Royston. Moving on from that tradition, Allen added the guitar of Liberty Ellman for his *Radio Flyer* document (Savant 2017), with an all original programme of seven works. There are minimal

themes and much greater room for free expression. Allen changed his mouthpiece to get “closer to the blues” but even when more free, Allen is conscious of melody and dynamics.



J D Allen: his confident, full, swaggering tenor sound is a wonderful aural experience... PHOTO COURTESY NEW YORK TIMES

I'm happy to laugh out loud (to myself) when I think about Ms Keller or J D Allen and their growth and music and the 1960's when the cry was up: “Jazz is dead.”

The great songs of the tradition, such as Billie Holiday and *What A Little Moonlight Can Do* (Harry Woods) recorded with Teddy Wilson 2/7/35, and Charlie Shavers, 14/4/54 or *Strange Fruit* (Abel Meeropol) recorded 1939 and 12/2/54 with Howard McGhee et al; or *Stardust*, *After You've Gone*, or *Lush Life*, may be etched in one's consciousness but the new tradition includes Paul Bley's *Ida Lupino*, Wayne Shorter's *Footprints*, or Coltrane's *After the Rain* or *Countdown* which have become a more recent tradition and others, such as contemporaries J D Allen and Andrea Keller, are creating a new tradition for the future of the music.

This music is a wondrous journey and can impact at any time unexpectedly. In the process of getting some cheap high fidelity equipment in Winnipeg in 1996, the attending salesman offered to play a sample album for me. The music that emerged from the equipment made my heart flutter, my scalp tingle and my eyes to widen. It was the arco bass of Hisao Oma “Isao” Suzuki, on the opening track of an anthology album called *The Famous Sound of Three Blind Mice*, Volume 1. A reminder once more, that this music has no national boundaries, is the first truly universal music adapting and developing and evolving to bring more and more that joyous recognition of connection with another free individual. It has a powerful effect on the mind and emotions. Something worth living for indeed.