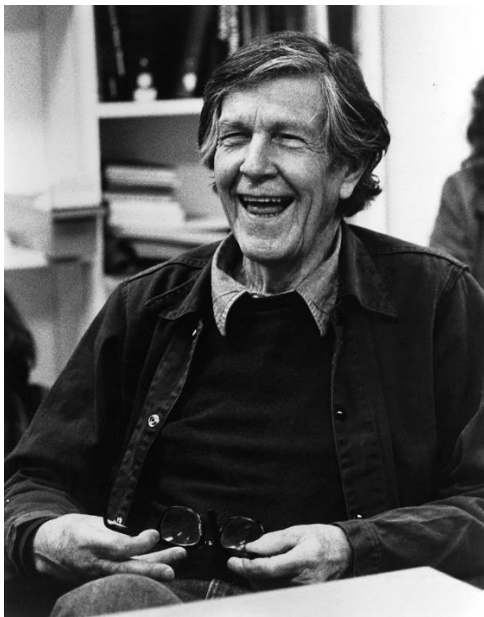


THE MUSIC OF SILENCE IN MODERN TIMES

by Ian Muldoon*

The recital of *Four Thirty Three* by John Cage at the University of New England by a student of the music department was received with a degree of self-consciousness by myself and the audience accompanied by the wish to not breathe loudly or move. This was in 1981, 30 years after its premiere which was given by David Tudor on August 29, 1952, in Maverick Concert Hall, Woodstock, New York, as part of a recital of contemporary piano music. The audience saw him sit at the piano and, to mark the beginning of the piece, close the keyboard lid. Sometime later he opened it briefly, to mark the end of the first movement. This process was repeated for the second and third movements.” (Wikipedia).



John Cage: the recital of his “Four Thirty Three” at the University of New England was received with a degree of self-consciousness...

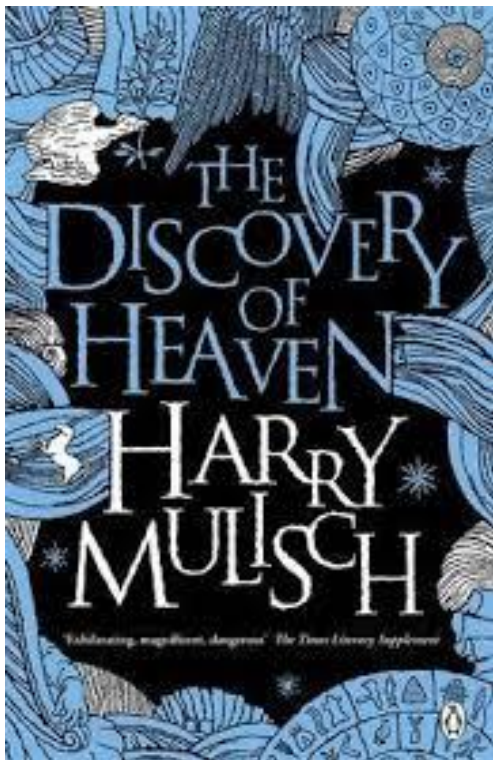
However, John Cage said of the original audience: "They missed the point. There's no such thing as silence. What they thought was silence, because they didn't know how to listen, was full of accidental sounds. You could hear the wind stirring outside during the first movement. During the second, raindrops began pattering the roof, and during the third the people themselves made all kinds of interesting sounds as they talked or walked out.” (Wikipedia)

**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.*

Sounds that Cage refers to are related to the physical effects of the movement of air on the ear which then impact on the brain. But even when all physical effects are removed the brain does not stop working. Indeed, it may supplement the absence of sound with the memory of sound or create its own sound collage of fill.

I recall instances where silence reigned: Exmouth Gulf beach on a moonless midnight which amplified the sounds of gently lapping waves and made huge the sigh of a mother turtle laying eggs; in the forest of Northern Manitoba and the sounds of expanding and cracking ice from the frozen creeks, rivers, lakes; the sounds of one's own breathing in the silence of the depths of the Ningaloo Reef when diving there; the seemingly laboured loud breathing of the pilot of a dual Mirage fighter aircraft on landing approach coming through the rear seat passenger's head set; the eerie quiet of the desert on a moonless night in Western NSW; all these seemed to hone the nerves to a tingling sensitivity.

Such sensitivity is captured by the writer Harry Mulisch in *The Discovery of Heaven*, when the character of Max on a Cuban beach is about to enter the water: "When he emerged from the trees, his bare feet sinking into the sand, the moonless starry sky spread out with a gesture he thought he could almost hear: like a marvellous chord played by the whole orchestra."



Similarly, the creative artist finds in the silence sudden inspiration. In his autobiography, *Music is my Mistress*, Duke Ellington recalls one source for one piece in his work *The Queen's Suite*: "One evening we were a little late leaving Tampa, en route to West Palm Beach to make a gig. The weather was wonderful, and it was just about sunset when, half way across Florida, we passed a bird. We didn't see it but we heard its beautiful call. I asked Harry Carney if he heard it and he said, 'Yeah.' We were a little too pushed for time, and going too fast to stop or go back and thank the

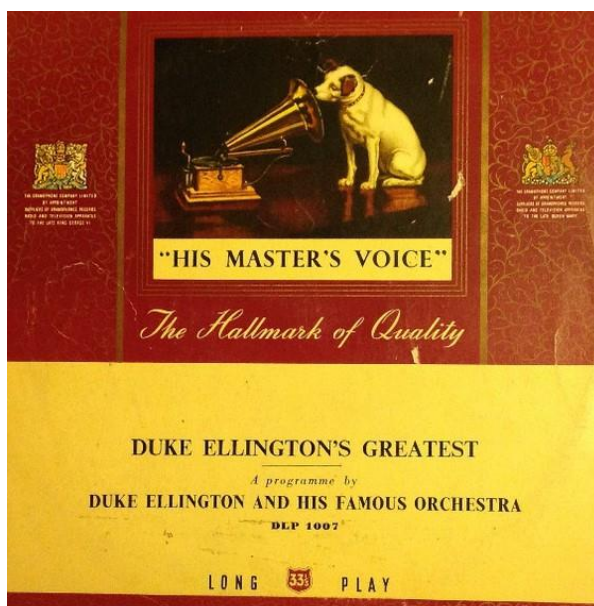
bird, so I pulled out my pencil and paper and wrote that lovely phrase down. I spent the next two or three days whistling it to the natives and inquiring what kind of bird it could have been that sang that beautiful melody. Finally, I was convinced it had to be a mockingbird. I made an orchestration around that melody, titled it *Sunset and the Mockingbird* and included it in *The Queen's Suite* as one of the 'beauty' experiences of my life."



Duke Ellington: "Sunset and the Mockingbird" is one of the 'beauty' experiences of his life... PHOTO CREDIT LEE TANNER

Equally, it is the case that in the absence of plenty - sounds, noise, bustle, hustle - we relish the little, the lone, what we have. In possession of unlimited streaming of music, of films, etc, are we losing the ability to relish the little, the lesser, the minute, losing the patience to listen carefully with focus?

I recall my relatively lonely teens (no siblings and living with my grandmother) and the intensity with which I listened to my five 10" LP records: 1/ Duke Ellington and His Famous Orchestra, *Duke Ellington's Greatest* which included *Sepia Panorama*, *Ko-Ko*, *Blue Goose* and *Bojangles*.



2/ Yank Lawson and Bobby Haggart play Louis' Hot 5's and 7's (*Heebie Jeebies*, *Skidat-de-dat*, *Melancholy blues*, *Potato head blues*, *Cornet shop suey*, *King of the Zulus*, *Gully low blues*, and *Wild man blues*) with Lawson, trumpet; Lou McGarity, trombone; Bill Stegmeyer, clarinet; Lou Stein, pianist; George Barnes, guitar; Bob Haggart, bass and Cliff Leeman, drums.



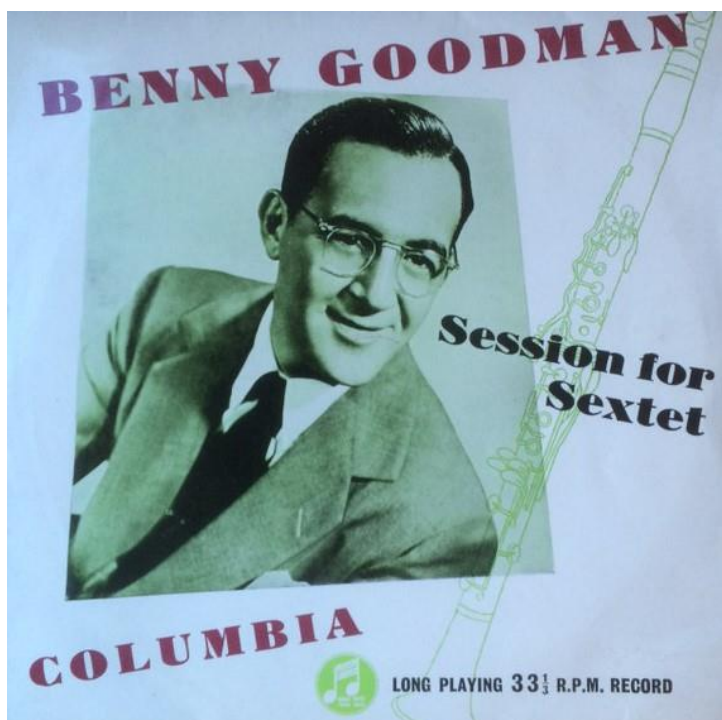
3/ *The Gerry Mulligan Quartet* with Mulligan, baritone sax; Chet Baker, trumpet; Bob Whitlock, bass and Chico Hamilton, drums (*Frenesi*, *Bernie's Tune* etc) with Chico Hamilton using brushes like nobody before him. This album is the very first release of Pacific Jazz Records founded by Richard Bock and Roy Harte.



4/ Clifford Brown & Max Roach, *Clifford Brown & Max Roach*, with *Delilah*, *Parisian Thoroughfare*, *The Blues Walk*, *Dahoud*, *Joy Spring*, *Jordu*, and *What Am I Here For?* with Clifford Brown, trumpet; Harold Land, tenor; Richie Powell, piano; George Morrow, bass; and Max Roach, drums.

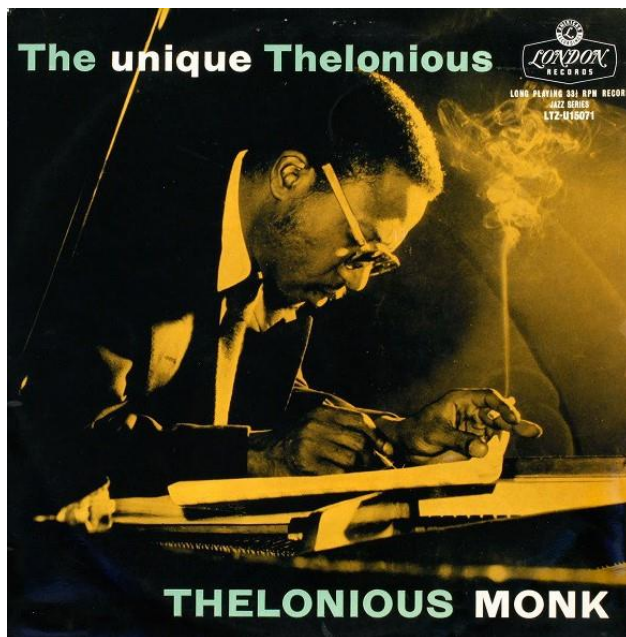


5/ Benny Goodman *Session for Sextet*, with Benny Goodman, clarinet; Red Norvo, vibraphone; Mel Powell or Teddy Wilson, piano; Mike Bryan, guitar; Slam Stewart, bass and Morey Field, drums. The songs: *Tiger Rag*, *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *She's Funny That Way*, *I Got Rhythm*, *Just One Of Those Things*, *China Boy*, *Shine* and *Rachel's Dream*.



These are the texts, the canon of texts, of my education. Nothing at Balgowlah High School or Manly Boys High School got my attention, or thought, or feeling, as these documents. When a boy friend might say: “What did you think of *As You Like It*?” I’d reply: “I prefer *Skit-dat-de-dat!*” And to the inquiry: “Who’s your favourite writer?” my reply was: “Bud Powell and his *Parisian Thoroughfare*.”

Yes there was probably a large element of my wanting to be seen as the hippest kid in Manly but when I took a record called *The Unique Thelonious* to play to Mary Fallon, a girl I was courting, her response to the music was a nonplussed expression and a question: “Do you like *A Purple Cow*? By Doris Day?” Much to my (later) shame I scoffed. I still dream of Mary Fallon and what might have been.



In retrospect these five documents were, and perhaps still are, a rich and fascinating window and summary of that astonishing decade in the music, the 1950s. The few hours of music on these discs traverse the origins, the immediate past, the then present, and also the future directions jazz would take. The one absence in the five was vocal music except for Slam Stewart’s harmonising as he bowed the double bass, but the blues was in evidence, as well as collective improvisation of its New Orleans origins, the big band swing era, contemporary experimentation, and Duke Ellington. When Miles Davis was once asked about his “modern” music he responded: “If you want modern, listen to *Ko-Ko* by Duke Ellington.”

The Yank Lawson/Bob Haggart band was not a “Dixieland revival” band popular at the time. These latter bands were clunky imitators of an historical genre. Yank Lawson was steeped in the tradition of jazz out of the Chicago crucible (Ben Pollack, Benny Goodman), whilst Bob Haggart was one of the finest bass players of the swing era, recording with Duke Ellington, Billie Holiday, and Benny Goodman. Lou McGarity had come of age with the Benny Goodman big band, and Bill Stegmeyer was an excellent but unheralded clarinetist. George Barnes got credit for making the first record using an electric guitar: *It’s A Lowdown Dirty Shame* with Bill Big Broonzy (1/3/38).

The Benny Goodman Sextet of the late 1940s had elements of the modern in guitarist Mike Bryan's bebop influences, as well as bassist Slam Stewart who had played and recorded with Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie. Drummer Morey Feld had recorded with Stan Getz in the famous recordings for Roost Records in the early 1950s which included modernist pianist Horace Silver. The legendary Red Norvo who'd once employed Charles Mingus, had also worked with Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie even though he recognised that "Bird and Diz were dirty words for musicians of my generation - but I gambled".

In short, the Benny Goodman *Session for Sextet* album was a shining example of music that had transitioned from swing towards the complexities of the bebop revolution without losing its rhythmic power. To take just one track, the up-tempo *Rachel's Dream*, (Goodman/Reisfield) and to put aside the gemlike solos of the clarinet, piano, bass, and vibraphone, one has to marvel at the brilliant arrangement by Goodman and the entrancing cascading harmonies.

The Gerry Mulligan Quartet, pianoless, with the reticent trumpet of Baker and the swaggering, bottom-sounding cheeky baritone saxophone of Mulligan, combined with Hamilton's inventive brushes and the solid bass of Bob Whitlock or Carson Smith, was a bouncing, restrained and elegant sound with a strong melodic twists that made songs such as *Bernie's Tune* ones to whistle.

Clifford Brown and Max Roach were the perfect combination of lyrical, full, expressive, rich trumpet playing with the melodic bebop drumming of Roach.



Clifford Brown & Max Roach: the perfect combination of lyrical, full, expressive, rich trumpet playing with the melodic bebop drumming of Roach...

Although recorded on Emarcy in 1954, this music became the prototypical hard-bop sound of the Blue Note label. With a mix of two originals by Brown - *Daahoud*, *Joy Spring*, - and one each by pianists, Duke Jordan (*Jordu*), and bop legend Bud Powell (*Parisian Thoroughfare*), the album opened with the Victor Young song *Delilah* (Mason, Reed, Young). These were beautifully arranged and performed compositions making the album something of a benchmark in modern jazz and a model of the classic bop group.

The Duke Ellington album was on another level in terms of melodic content, harmonic richness, colour, arrangements, and form. Nor did it exclude the elements of “swing” which both the Benny Goodman and Yank Lawson bands were renowned for. *Cottontail* by Ellington from 1940 with the Ben Webster solo might be one of the finer swing recordings. *Ko-Ko* which opens the album features a trombone solo, muted trumpet solo, a brass section in counterpoint, amazing percussive piano work by the composer, a climax broken by a bass solo by Jimmy Blanton, and a coda echoing the beginning to the orchestral finale.



“Cottontail” by Ellington from 1940 with the solo by Ben Webster (above) might be one of the finer swing recordings... PHOTO COURTESY PINTEREST

In this music there are references to Ellington’s great “jungle” period, to New Orleans music and to swing. There are impressionistic Ravel-like works *Blue Goose*, and *Sepia Panorama*; a concerto form in *Concerto for Cootie*; Latin-influenced melody *Conga Brava* by valve trombonist Juan Tizol. Two musical portraits also feature: *Portrait of Bert Williams* and *Bojangles*. The instrumentation of the former is intriguing and worth noting in itself: bass (Jimmy Blanton), three clarinets, three alto saxophones, tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone, cornet, two trumpets, two slide trombones, valve trombone, guitar, piano, and drums. In *Bojangles* the full

ensemble writing is balanced with a tenor solo and four-horn tutti with clarinet lead. Interesting to compare such works with the likes of Saint-Saens and arrangements of flutes, oboes, cor anglais, clarinet, violins and violas in unison, answered by brass, low strings and tymps in harmony. Finally the Billy Strayhorn composition, *Take the A Train* which became the signature tune for the Ellington bands and orchestras often preceded by a long involved piano solo introduction when performed live.



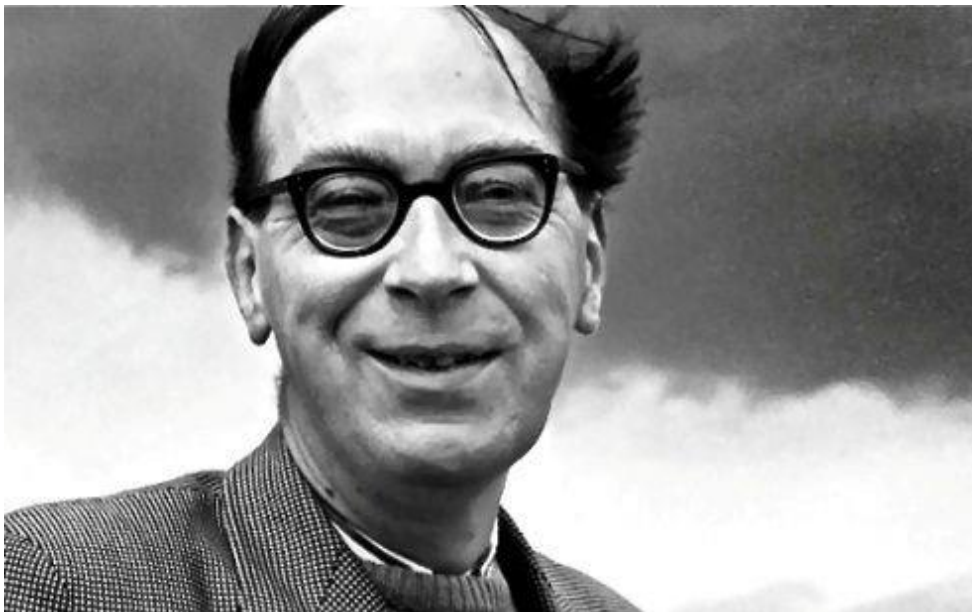
Billy Strayhorn: his “Take the A Train” became the signature tune for the Ellington bands and orchestras... PHOTO COURTESY PINTEREST

My concern in highlighting these programmes of music is to show, at least in part, that the beauty of the music on each has no relevance to the particular genre within jazz: each had its revelations, and qualities, and power to move. As Duke Ellington pointed out, there is really only good music and bad music: genres are irrelevant.

In the 1950s however, there were many divisions both within the music called jazz, and without by the devotees. The obvious one was between the Mouldy Figs, such as cultural commentator Clive James and jazz critic/poet Philip Larkin CH CBE FRSL, and the bebop devotees. The Mouldy Figs had a very wide influence in England where classicism, tradition and monarchy are entrenched. Books were written about “classic” jazz and a canon was established focussing on Louis Armstrong, Jelly Roll Morton, and New Orleans jazz with aberrations (so-called), such as swing, being frowned upon. Legitimacy and illegitimacy reigned, purity of expression prevailed and musical police as it were proliferated in the music magazines.



Clive James (above) and jazz critic/poet Philip Larkin (below) were “mouldy figs”...



It seemed like the *L'Académie française* of jazz had been set up to monitor what was “correct” or “legitimate” jazz. Louis Armstrong once referred to bebop as “Chinese music” and Louis Armstrong was himself referred to by activist African American “new jazz musicians” as an entertaining Uncle Tom out of touch with the new, especially that referencing the racism and cultural war on “black America” which was the motivation driving the music of, for example, Charles Mingus and Archie Shepp. It’s like school teachers banging on about grammar and “correct” writing, forcing students to parse sentences to make them “better” writers, ignoring how we actually spoke and wrote to communicate. Yes, understanding rules of grammar is helpful, but is a tool only, not the answer. Knowing the ins and outs of the internal combustion engine is helpful but has little relevance to driving. The music of “traditional” jazz is the beautiful and rich beginning of the music, but it is not its end.

Other dichotomies emerged where swing musicians decried the loss of melody in bebop and free jazz. There was also those who reckoned “real” jazz could only be made by African Americans. The hard bop movement, especially the Blue Note stable of musicians, was overwhelmingly African American. Some believed that soul, rhythmic feeling, intuitive insights into the blues, was only possible for African Americans in a nod to genetic influences and the cultural horror of slavery that had bred the blues and jazz.

From the 1969 release of the first ECM album Mal Waldron’s *Free at Last*, another dichotomy emerged - on the one hand, between the (apparent) cool, even icy, northern European sound, spacious and precise Germanic production values with black and white modernism and minimalistic aesthetic and, on the other, for example, the sounds and colours and aesthetic of Impulse records. Even the titles themselves seem to mirror the aesthetic: reason on the one hand with Editions of Contemporary Music, and feelings, on the other, having an Impulse where there were albums screaming faith, feelings and passion: *A Love Supreme*, *Fire Music*, and *Black Saint and the Sinner Lady* among them. And the design aesthetic of the albums featured rich browns, reds, and shades of purple where ECM was black, white and infinite shades of grey.



Yet, virtually all these dichotomies were false, beginning with the clash between Mouldy Figs and bebop devotees, and ending with the European “sound” versus the African American “sound”.

The main musician to put paid to these divisions was Miles Davis and especially his *Kind of Blue* album which eventually sold more than five million copies. And the evidence is clear. Whether in the music itself, or in his experiences as a leader, Davis was dedicated to his craft and art above all else.

Miles was a decidedly black African American who had experienced serious racism first hand, including direct and public violence on 25th August 1959 in New York some four months after recording *Kind of Blue*, when he was at a career high point.



Miles Davis, on 25th August 1959, after being assaulted by a New York policeman...

Yet, he never baulked at working with or employing non-African American artists. Among them many famous names such as Lee Konitz, Gerry Mulligan, Gil Evans, Dave Holland and John McLaughlin. When asked by other more politically conscious musicians why he employed “Honkys when there are great black musicians”, he replied “I don’t care if he’s purple, if he can play I want him.”



Miles Davis (left) & Bill Evans: they changed jazz, or the perceptions of what jazz is, or could be, forever...

Charlie Parker was colour-blind too as he had employed inter alia white drummers such as Stan Levey. One “honky” that Miles employed was Bill Evans and it was on the two tracks that Evans composed with Davis that changed jazz, or the perceptions of what jazz is, or could be, forever. Those two tracks were *Blue in Green* and *Flamenco Sketches*.



Stan Levey, a white drummer employed by Charlie Parker...

The first begins with the pensive tentative piano of Evans then Davis enters on mute and despite his fine solo it's the piano of Evans that dominates, whether behind or in front of the group, which grips, and which opens and closes proceedings. It's a searching, centripetal, performance which is not about swing, or percussion, but impressionistic, and delicate as if etching into silence the bell-like sounds of pure music. The second piece hints at the influence of Spain on Davis, and on the album following *Kind of Blue* he devoted his full attention to that interest with *Sketches of Spain*.



Philosophically there were two elements surfacing at this time in his career, even though these may not have been fully articulated by Davis, but given voice by others. The first was the notion of *duende*. This term refers to a heightened state of emotion, expression and authenticity, often connected with flamenco. It's used sometimes in the context of the Spanish "spirit" especially in reference to that quality needed by the bullfighter. Whatever we may think of the romanticism of such notions, mentioned by the po-faced and subject to raucous laughter by straightforward practical Australians, Davis was a sterling example of the elements of *duende* in his music and his personal life.

The second element was that of Zen. Again, Eastern influences: yoga, Buddhism, Sufism, were flourishing in post-WW11 Western culture paralleling the rise in Indian, and Japanese film and music. Bill Evans was interested in Islam, Buddhism and Zen and introduced John Coltrane to the Indian philosophy of Krishnamurti.



Bill Evans (left) was interested in Islam, Buddhism and Zen and introduced John Coltrane (right) to the Indian philosophy of Krishnamurti... PHOTO COURTESY PINTEREST

Evans referenced Zen in his notes regarding *Kind of Blue*, and said in part: "This conviction that direct deed is the most meaningful of reflections, I believe, has prompted the evolution of the extremely severe and unique disciplines of the jazz or improvising musician." In an interview with his brother for radio he explained the creative process of improvisation in part: "It's better to do something simple which is real. It's something you can build on because you know what you're doing. Whereas, if you try to approximate something very advanced and you don't know what you're doing, you can't build on it."

In short, the philosophical underpinnings, the approach and the musical aesthetic of Evans encouraged thoughtfulness, and emphasised the power of silence over throbbing rhythms and percussive sounds and the passionate expression of the blues and the need to fill every space with sound. And being embraced by the most renowned African American jazz musician of the day, Miles Davis, meant that this approach was validated in the jazz world, just as later, Coltrane's *Ascension* validated free jazz.



The musical aesthetic of Bill Evans encouraged thoughtfulness, and emphasised the power of silence over throbbing rhythms and percussive sounds... PHOTO COURTESY TWITTER

The notion of spareness, or silence, in jazz is most evident, most dramatically realised, in percussion, including the piano. The great influencer here may be Count Basie whose spare "plinks" perfectly placed in the coda reminded one of his overall minimalist approach. Though Thelonious Monk was essentially an outgrowth of stride piano, especially the playing of childhood neighbour James P Johnson (cf Monk's tune *Functional*) he evolved into a master of the use of space, and time, to create the brilliant drama of his music which underpinned his melodic genius: consider the power of both on the track *I Mean You* featured on the album *Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers With Thelonious Monk* (Atlantic).

Silence was part of Monk's being and behaviour as a student of Sufism. In Sufism there is a belief that much is understood and communicated in silence, without words. The pianist Randy Weston once spent eight hours with Monk in his home in silence. On departing, Weston was enjoined to come again. When he did, Monk

played the piano for him three hours non-stop. Sometimes one note at a time, with space between. Monk was a master of communicating silence.



Randy Weston (above) once spent eight hours with Thelonious Monk in his home in silence. Monk (below) was a master of communicating silence...



A pianist whose use of space propelled him into bestseller land, was Ahmad Jamal who Miles Davis acknowledged as an influence. The 1958 live recording of *Autumn Leaves* (Kosma/Prévert/Mercer) by Jamal with Israel Crosby on bass, and Vernell Fournier on drums is a fine example of both the power of repetition and the use of space between chords and notes to increase the tension and drama and interest of the listener.



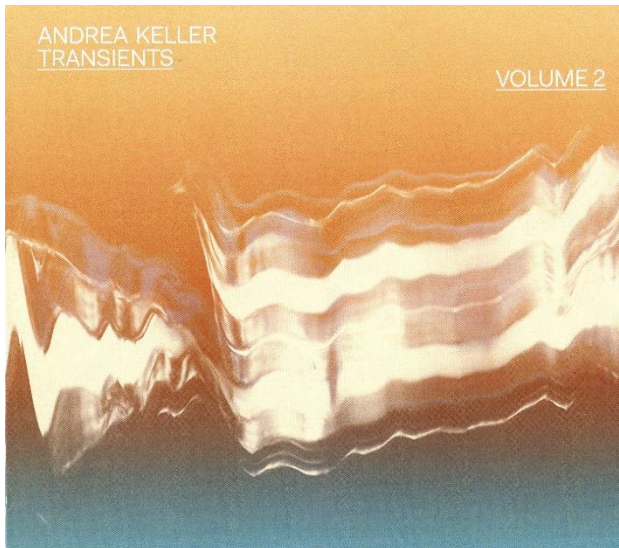
Pianist Ahmad Jamal: his use of space propelled him into best seller land...PHOTO COURTESY PINTEREST

Modern classics like *Ida Lupino* by Paul Bley (*Open to Love*, 1972), which uses the left hand for the pulse and the right for melodic statements and silence, and *Peace Piece* by Bill Evans (*Everybody Digs Bill Evans*, 1958) the haunting brilliance of it with the left-handed figure and the right-hand melodic variations and silence, grip one and hold one transformed.

The extension of this approach may be found in the work of Tord Gustavsen, *Kneeling Down* for example from ECM *The Ground* 2004 with Harald Johnsen, double bass and Jarle Vespestad, drums, where the piano teases out the melody and the drums provide the drama. It's all very studied and cool and the recorded sound is the recognisable pristine spacious sound of the label.

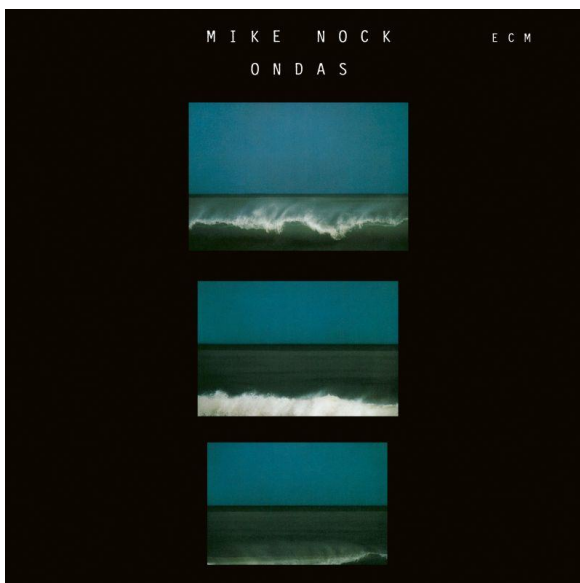


Andrea Keller's *The Rain Outside* with Phil Slater is a good example of the use of silence and the lyrical style of Miles Davis. It's a very fine impressionistic and dramatic music making. *Salmon Life* from *Transients Volume 2* (2019) is another where sparse notes, repetition, and silence illuminate the music. The work of Julien Wilson here is a study in restrained brilliance, breathing thick sound in the beginning reminding one of the great Ben Webster and ending in an upper register scream, and a breathless coda. It builds to a fine climax, as if fighting upstream and ending in the climax of reproduction. It's an outstanding instance of the sounds of contemporary improvised music.



“Salmon Life” from Andrea Keller’s “Transients Volume 2” (2019) is another where sparse notes, repetition, and silence illuminate the music...

One of the finest ECM documents (out of over 700 released) is Mike Nock's *Ondas* (1981). There are five original compositions including one referencing his place of birth *Land of the Long White Cloud*, and four others *Forgotten Love*, *Ondas*, *Visionary*, and *Doors*.



Eddie Gomez is on bass and Jon Christensen on drums. *Visionary* is an interesting work with a repetitive left-hand figure prefiguring the journey with dissonant occasional atonal melodic variations building through tempo changes into a long explorative improvisation including repetition, space and percussive climaxes at the top end. Quite a musical (swinging) journey in 11 minutes with a fine bass solo by Gomez.



A fine bass solo by Eddie Gomez (above)...

The music itself and Australian musicians such as Keller, Nock, Barnett, Wilson, Cutlan, the Slaters, Evans, Stuart, Swanton, Oh, Tinkler, Barker, Ball, Muller, McAll, Grabowsky, Berardi, the Parrotts, Hannaford, and the thousands of other living improvisers give the lie to the divisions referred to above. Honky's all, they are living breathing evidence of the "racial" blindness of the music.

In the same way, the suffering of the African Americans or their slave forebears is not an exclusive cultural provenance for the music: for example, the Gulag, the Holocaust, the Chinese cultural revolution, and the millions upon millions of women who have suffered and died in domestic circumstances, who are dying in the hundreds every year now in our lucky country, are tragic examples of suffering equal even more horrible and lasting than that of slavery. But jazz music reflects universal feelings, not just suffering, and see Shannon Barnett's 2017 album *Hype* for an instance of joy in the music.

This music has also evolved to reflect the realities of modern life. The trend to choose to live alone has accelerated since WW11 and prosperity. In the 1960s the numbers of people living alone in industrialised nations increased noticeably. In 2019, in the USA, according to research aggregator Our World in Data, 28% of households were single-person. In Stockholm, in 2012, 60% of households had only one person.

In Japan tens of thousands of young people not only live alone but avoid leaving their domicile. Now the novel coronavirus has swept the globe and is forcing people to isolate. The musical phenomenon of thousands in a stadium listening to a rock and roll band may become a distant memory. On 26th February 2020 in Coffs Harbour, Elton John managed a concert of some thousands, just days before lockdowns became the norm. More people than ever thus have experience of silence, and its power, to constrict or to enlarge through music, which is one of the most powerful connectors.

The greatness of this greatest of musics, is that it is a universal music, for Everyman, in every circumstance and there is no end to its possibilities. Its beginnings may be treasured as we treasure Armstrong, Ellington, Bechet over and over, but we continue to hunger for the sweet surprise that is always beckoning with the new voices in its thrall such as Jacques Emery, the Avgenicos', Peter Farrar et al.

As for my teenage arrogance regarding Doris Day at aged 10, I loved her *Sentimental Journey*, and *My Dreams are Getting Better All The Time*, and at age 81 I love her *Choo Choo Train*, and *Canadian Capers* (and many others) for the sweet voice, fine articulation, sense of swing and fun she brings to these. Are you listening to me Mary Fallon?



Doris Day (centre) pictured in her 1948 film debut "Romance On The High Seas": a sweet voice, fine articulation, and a sense of swing and fun... PHOTO COURTESY THE GUARDIAN

As Edward Kennedy Ellington reminded us, there is only good music and bad music, and as Louis Armstrong reminded us: "All music is folk (people) music because I ain't ever heard a horse play a trumpet."