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Charles Lloyd
“...how important character is”

By Eric Nemeyer

JI: Could you discuss some of what you experienced or discovered playing in jazz clubs in California with Ornette Coleman, Eric Dolphy, among others, during those times in the late 1950s while you were pursuing a Master of Music degree at University of Southern California?

CL: Master Higgins and I found each other in L.A. Billy started playing in my band—with Don Cherry, Bobby Hutcherson, Terry Trotter and Scott La Faro—we gigged all over Los Angeles. Master Higgins and I became lifelong friends and collaborators. Ornette, Eric and I had a lot of interaction as well, during those years. It was a powerful and rich cauldron. But New York was calling.

JI: What were some of the challenges and opportunities you began to experience when you moved to New York in the 1960s?

CL: Just figuring out where to live was a challenge. When I first got there I went to the Alvin Hotel where my hero, Prez had stayed—but fortunately, the first night I was there my friend, Booker Little, said, “Oh, no. You’re coming home with me.” He saved me from a few roads to destruction and despair early on. We often stayed up late into the night talking about music, but he also told me how important character is. I came to understand what they used to tell me on my grandfather’s farm when I was growing up - “Every tub’s got to have it’s own bottom.” I learned a lot about survival during those early years in New York City.

JI: Could you talk about the kind of musical understandings that you developed with Gabor Szabo while you were in drummer Chico Hamilton’s band from 1960 to 1963, that inspired your compositional direction, and performance interplay?

CL: Gabor and I were both Pisces, both dreamers. He had been a freedom fighter in Hungary. I brought him to Chico’s group. We were very close. When we played it was almost telepathic. He already had the guitar playing of the Roma people in his blood and I opened him up to Ravi Shankar and Ali Akbar Khan. He started bending his notes more. We had amazing musical moments together.

JI: What kinds of discussions did you have with Cannonball Adderley, or what words of advice or suggestions did he offer during your tenure with his band in 1964, that made an impact on your own music and or career?

CL: Cannon was a great man and very supportive, encouraging, warm, a humanist. He was very eloquent, and he liked fine cuisine—and he was serious in the kitchen himself. When we went through Memphis we would eat at my folks house, and in Florida, we always ate at his parents house. He gave me a lot of space to grow in the music. We traveled coast to coast in two station wagons, 50 weeks a year. The rhythm section was very special to play with—Joe Zawinul, Sam Jones, Louis Hayes. Playing with them every night made me pick up the tempo in terms of development. Cannon told me he wanted to be able to hear that growth from night to night. In 1964 there were labor exchange laws and when the Beatles came here, we were the exchange group that went to England—where we were received very warmly and enthusiastically.

JI: What kinds of driving forces and criteria played a role—in the selection of players and repertoire—in the creation and organization of the quartet that you led from 1966-1969 with Keith Jarrett, Cecil McBee [and later Ron McClure] and Jack DeJohnette?

CL: Nature—the laws of attraction.

JI: How did the immense popularity of the 1966-69 group—having a commercial success with the album Forest Flower, and being the first jazz group to play at the Fillmore—compare with what expectations, if any, that you might have had initially?

CL: This is not something I was looking for. It just happened. When we performed “Forest Flower” in Monterey, we had no idea it was being recorded. But it captured that moment. For some reason people in all walks of life identified with “Forest Flower.” It was like an anthem at the time.

JI: By comparison to the 1960s, when your groups had reached a high level of popularity, in the 1970s you were less active on the jazz scene. What was your creative life like at that point and what kinds of studies and personal development were you pursuing?

CL: My mother died in 1969, and my best friend Booker Little had died at the age of 23 in 1961. Scotty [LaFaro] died in the early 60s as well. These deaths affected me profoundly. I started to think that there must be more to life than fame and fortune. My success came very fast as a young man. I began living a life of extreme excesses—life in the fast lane which Booker had warned me about. On top of that the music business wanted to control me and put me in stadiums as a product. I didn’t see what that had to do with music. So I got off the bus, so to speak. I realized that if I wanted to change the world through the beauty of music, I had better start by changing myself. I first moved to Malibu, California—and then a few years later I moved to the more reclusive and beautiful Big Sur, further up the

“The rhythm section was very special to play with—Joe Zawinul, Sam Jones, Louis Hayes. Playing with them every night made me pick up the tempo in terms of development. Cannon told me he wanted to be able to hear that growth from night to night.”
Charles Lloyd

coast. I fasted and meditated and hiked the mountains. The years stretched on. It was a difficult and wonderful period for me.

JI: How did your work with the pop group—the Beach Boys—impact your creativity and musical development? Mike Love was a friend of mine. We share the same birthday, March 15th. I had recorded on a couple of their albums—and I think he thought it would be novel if I went on the road with them from Texas to hear the concert. There was Jason glowing. I had not met him until Eric introduced us. He said “your music touched me all the way to my back bone.” And being from the South I knew what that meant. Last mountain, to leave my retreat. I wanted to seek inspiration at your creative best? and the things you miss in Bob’s playing? And he brought it. When Reuben came aboard, it gave us even more elasticity which I had been longing for. So it was organic and we just keep going. I met Jason [Moran] backstage at Carnegie Hall when we performed there in 2006 with Sangam, the group with Eric and Zakir Hussain. I went to Eric’s dressing room to say hello to his mother who had come up from Texas to hear the concert. There was Jason glowing. I had not met him until Eric introduced us. He said “your music touched me all the way to my back bone.” And being from the South I knew what that meant. Last Mountains. The years stretched on. It was a difficult and wonderful period for me.

CL: Michel inspired me to come down off the mountain, to leave my retreat. I wanted to help him, as the elders had helped me. I saw a fragile being and heard a strong, great talent. He had the gift. So my friend Steve Cloud, who had been trying to get me to perform for a few years, organized several California concerts and then we took him to Europe in the summer and fall of 1982, and again in the summer of 1983. Later, I went back to the mountain, but after a near death experience in 1986, I rededicated my self to this indigenous art form called jazz. I returned to recording in 1989 with ECM and Fish Out of Water.

JI: What was it about Michel Petrucciani that inspired you to emerge in the 1980s from what appeared to be a sabbatical from performing and public involvement with your music?

CL: I met Eric [Harland] shortly after Master Higgins passed away in 2001. I was to have opened at the Blue Note on 9/11. When we did finally play on September 14, he was playing with a midnight jam band. I would sit and listen because something about Eric drew me to him. I knew that from the other side Higgins had sent him. Higgins had said he would “always be with me”, so, I recognized Eric immediately. Eric has been with me the longest and he has grown immensely. Our level of communication and understanding has nothing to do with words. When Robert Hurst left to perform with Diana Krall, I was at a low point because I thought it was a great 4tet. Check out “Jumping the Creek.” Eric said, “You know the things you love in Bob, and the things you miss in Bob’s playing? I know a bass player who will give you all of that.” He was speaking of Reuben Renwick Rogers from the islands. And sure enough he brought it. When Reuben came aboard, it gave spring we had a scheduling problem with Geri Allen who had been playing with me for several years. Eric let me know that Jason wanted to play with me – “He understands.” I said “Welcome.” Jason was the missing piece of the puzzle. We have deep conversations every night in the music. And he brings his own unique perspective and language, reflecting his deep knowledge and understanding of all that came before and what is happening at this very moment. It is a blessing to have this level of clarity to interact with each time we play.

JI: Could you talk about the kinds of inspirations sounds, sights, people, situations, and opportunities, especially involving jazz, that played a significant part in your upbringing in Memphis and that contributed to your career pursuit?

CL: I was nine when I got my first saxophone. Soon I had gigs with blues musicians in Memphis—Howlin’ Wolf, Bobby Blue Bland, B.B. King, Roscoe Gordon, Johnny Ace, Jr. Parker. Memphis had a long tradition of great jazz musicians from Jimmy Lunceford, W.C. Handy, Bill Harvey, Willie Mitchell—and a lot of jazz bands came through town: Duke Ellington, Lionel Hampton, Count Basie, Cab Calloway, Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, Billy Eckstine, Dinah Washington. Since there were no hotels for Blacks, my mother rented out rooms to musicians when they came through. I would get up at the crack of dawn every morning waiting for them to come down. Then I would pounce on them to try and learn everything about the music. Duke and Hamp were always very kind to me. This is the music I grew up listening to, along with the blues I heard on my grandfather’s farm in Mississippi, the songs of my great grandmother, Sallie Sunflower Whitecloud and the “shake in your shoes” gospel singing on Sundays. I was about nine when Phineas Newborn turned me on to Bird and gave me a record, “Relaxin’ at Camarillo.” Bird stole my heart with his modern approach and flight. This is what I wanted to do. Phineas was a mentor to me. He grabbed me after I won an amateur show and told me I needed lessons bad. So, right away, I came back to earth after so much applause and adulation. He took me by the hand and lead me around the corner to Irvin Reason on Beale Street, who became my teacher. But Phineas was a beautiful soul, with a great gift. A couple years later, he had me join his father’s band. Knowing Phineas and having him look after my development was a great blessing in

“I realized that if I wanted to change the world through the beauty of music, I had better start by changing myself.”
my life. Phineas was a genius. He was our Bach and Beethoven rolled into one. He was in the lineage of Art Tatum and Bud Powell. George Coleman lived a block from my high school. He was very helpful to Booker [Little] and myself. He was another great Memphis musician who developed early and was very encouraging to us. When I got out to California in the mid 50s to study at USC, I had 300 years of European classical music during the day, but at night, I found people to jam with like Billy Higgins, Bobby Hutcherson, Ornette Coleman, Don Cherry. Horace Tapscott and I, along with Cherry, Eric Dolphy, Harold Land, Elmo Hope, Clifford Jordan, Walter Benton were in Gerald Wilson’s big band. And Buddy Collette, who is the spiritual father of Mingus, and Eric [Dolphy], began to mentor me and send me on gigs. He is responsible for my joining Chico.

**JI:** Having developed your sound and skills as an improviser over many years, in many different inspiring situations, what kinds of practice, perspectives or approaches do you currently undertake to stay fresh, and constantly expand your approach?

**CL:** I spend a lot of time in my laboratory and hiking the mountains, swimming under water, walking along the sea and reading. I am a solitary creature, so when I am not touring, people don’t see me around much. It’s been said I play a mean game of ping pong.

**JI:** Could you discuss the kinds of processes and challenges that you go through and experience in composing a new composition?

**CL:** That is such an internal process, it is not something I can not discuss with fluidity. It is beyond words.

**JI:** Discuss the temptation to focus on or be drawn to technique over the music itself that some artists experience. How have you worked to balance the two?

**CL:** I am a sound seeker, and I am in service. I still have to row the boat.

**JI:** Dan Boorstin, former Librarian of Congress stated that “The greatest obstacle to discovery is not ignorance, it is the illusion of knowledge.” How have you experienced and dealt with this in your life? In dealing with others?

**CL:** As a young man I knew too much, the older I get, the less I know.

**JI:** What are some of the things that you’d like to do musically and artistically that you have not yet done or otherwise accomplished?

**CL:** My next concert. I try to have a beginner’s mind.

**JI:** How do you stay balanced—as an artist, as an individual in contemporary society in the face the stress and sensory overload that surrounds us?

**CL:** Who told you I am balanced? I just do the best I can and put one foot in front of the other and try not to trip.

**JI:** Are there words of wisdom or a quote that has significantly influenced you that you’d like to share with the readers?

**CL:** “Truth is one, sages call it by various names.” Rig Veda

**JI:** If there is one for you, what is the connection between music and spirituality?

**CL:** All this is that. We are all spirits on a human journey and music is the best way I know to communicate more directly and most deeply to the heart.
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Helen Sung  
“keep being true to yourself”

Interview By Eric Nemeray  
Photo by Kat Villacorta

JI: Could you talk about your new album on Concord and the transition or expansion you have made from Classical music to jazz.

HS: I feel like I’m treading water finally. I feel like I had failed all of my classical stuff. I played classical for so long but I failed it because I was really chasing this jazz thing. I did do a CD that was kind of a mix of the classical and jazz and I’ve been introduced to a whole bunch of other music. But those are the big pillars I would say—kind of the running theme. Then the goal of any artist, any leader, is to have a consistent band—and that’s hard. From my experience it hasn’t been the easiest thing because everybody’s so busy doing different things. But I’ve gradually kind of formed a pool of musicians I’d really love to work with. These are the musicians that I’ve selected for this recording because I felt like the music for this recording represented—because the process never ends. You’re a fellow artist, you know that.

JI: The process is endless. When we stay on the path of mastery, we definitely can reach levels of subtlety that we never could have imagined when we first started out.

HS: Yes, exactly. The more you get into swing, there are just more and more levels of that. That to me is one of the most wonderful and infuriating things about music [laughter because I’m a perfectionist and it’s never perfected]. It’s a balance I have to hold. It’s a tension, I guess, one has to hold.

JI: So I guess when you listen back after recording, do you sometimes want to jump off a bridge when you hear certain things that weren’t quite as you expected? It’s happened with me and numerous artists with whom I’ve spoken. Astonishingly, when you let it go for weeks or months and you come back to it, it’s not uncommon to say, “Wow, that’s really good.”

HS: [laughter] Yes, I know exactly what you’re talking about. I do. Yes, that’s hilarious. Once you make the record, you’re like “Oh, my God, I don’t want to listen to that anymore.” With this album, as my first five albums—I am proud of them, and the recording of them. I hear many voices, well-meaning, from teachers, mentors and what not, just “Helen, you need to check this out, Helen, you need to be more that, Helen did you think about this?” Even though every album I had an idea for it, I feel like with this album it’s the beginning of me being more confident about who I am as an artist and where I’m headed. So I’m so excited and thankful that this coincided with my first major label.

JI: I heard you get a little anxious there when you used the word but. Maybe try the word “and” instead.

HS: “And” [laughter]. Thank you. I’ve got to remember that one. I don’t mean to denigrate the former albums or the labels associated with them because I’m so grateful for those labels who believed in me as an artist to release my work. I’m so thankful. Like you said, sometimes when I go back and listen I’m like “Wow, that wasn’t as bad as I thought.” That’s very fortuitous because Concord is great. They have such amazing history and just this incredible roster of artists and I’m really honored to be a part of that. They have an amazing platform for introducing me to hopefully a whole bigger audience and a level of exposure, and I’m excited. I’m excited to see how this album is received.

JI: Well, I think that being with Concord is a really good development for you. Over the last fifteen years of publishing Jazz Improv and Jazz Inside Magazines, I’ve had the opportunity to observe and experience how every record label, publicist, promoter, and manager works — or doesn’t work. The positive, upbeat attitudes among the staff at Concord are palpable. Their clarity of communication and responsiveness is noteworthy. And, the perceptiveness and business savvy at the company represent models of success that industry participants could derive benefit for themselves—and for those artists and industry participants who may have in good faith signed over their masters and their marketing in hopes of getting the service and results they were promised.

HS: [laughter] Oh dear. Well that makes me feel good because my experience with them has been really positive too. So I’m really grateful. I was so lucky that all these people came together, were available, and then also, of course, to have Paquito [D’Rivera] and Regina Carter—what an icing on the cake. I appreciate their individuality and their artistry. I also love how they play my music - what they bring to the table. They bring it alive. As a classical artist who was never encouraged to write music when I grew up, I’m just floored. I have to laugh that, “Wow, I wrote this and I played and people played.” It’s such a great feeling. I know you know what I’m talking about.

JI: Yes, to hear something that you’ve struggled with ... Sometimes it comes easy, sometimes you struggle with writing the music, and you think, “Well gee, should the bridge be maybe a whole step up or a third down? I wonder what that sounds like.” I remember reading in one of Ellington’s biographies how he agonized over the bridge to “Sophisticated Lady.” I think the book actually showed two or three or four different bridges he wrote — representing different tonal modulations.

HS: Oh my goodness. That’s so fascinating.

JI: But, you have to decide on something - commit to it – and move forward. What are you going to do, write fifteen versions?

HS: That’s the great thing because back in the day, Ron Carter was our Artistic Director at the Monk Institute and he would say that they [Miles Davis’ group] would be playing these songs for months, five to six nights a week, sometimes seven nights a week, two or three sets a night. They’d be working all of this stuff out – and a lot of their recordings are the product of this continuous accumulation of songs or performance. That’s what I think makes those recordings so rich and so complex. Unfortunately, the way things are done these days is a little bit different. It seems like it’s almost backwards: you record and then you tour the music, which I accept. That’s our world and we have to deal. I didn’t mean to wait this long to make a recording, to make my next recording. But in a way it was a blessing because I had a chance to - I guess the term is workshop - workshop the music on a lot of my gigs. So I did try out some of the fourth or fifth or sixth versions [laughter].

JI: That means things evolve. Everybody is in process.

HS: Yes, I know. Band members were like, “Okay, Helen, what’s different this time?” [laughter] So that’s maybe one way I try to get some of that process in before I record. I think it’s important. I think both ways can work. But for me, it takes a while for it to reach where I feel like this is kind of the form that I want it to be. But even then, one of the songs I performed on the album … I don’t play it that way anymore. So it’s just a big mess sometimes. It’s messy but that’s what I love about jazz. It’s real life. It’s grounded. It’s earthy. It’s messy but full of great surprises, and it’s life. That’s why I feel like this music will always be relevant and always alive.

JI: During my first few years in college, I was a Biology major. During the first class, the first question that one of the biology professors asked was, “What distinguishes life from what is not living? He proceeded to answer his own question saying that life is distinguished by spontaneous movement – isn’t that what improvisation is predicated upon?

HS: Absolutely. I love that.

JI: Yes. By the way, in reference to what you were saying about what Ron Carter said about developing the music on the bandstand … In an interview with Lou Donaldson, Lou emphasized that all those Blue Note albums that he did with Lonnie Smith and others were the product of several months of touring on the “Chitlin’ Circuit.” Then they’d come back to New York and they’d record for Blue Note based on having worked out those tunes on the road.

(Continued on page 28)
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Thursday, November 1
- Pat Martino Trio + Horns; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Andy Laverne Quartet; Troy Roberts Quartet; Charles Goold “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Jon Batiste & Friends - Jon Batiste, Piano/Vox/Harmonabord; Joe Saylor, Drums; Phil Kuehn, Bass; Tivon Pennicott, Tenor Sax; Patrick Bartley, Alto Sax; Giveton Gelin, Trumpet; Village Vanguard 177 7th Ave S.

Friday, November 2
- Yotam Silberstein Quartet; Joe Farnsworth Trio; Corey Wallace DuBlet “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Jon Batiste & Friends - Jon Batiste, Piano/Vox/Harmonabord; Joe Saylor, Drums; Phil Kuehn, Bass; Tivon Pennicott, Tenor Sax; Patrick Bartley, Alto Sax; Giveton Gelin, Trumpet; Village Vanguard 177 7th Ave S.

Saturday, November 3
- Small’s Showcase: Corin Stiggall Quartet; Yotam Silberstein Quartet; Joe Farnsworth Trio; Philip Harper Quintet; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Jon Batiste & Friends - Jon Batiste, Piano/Vox/Harmonabord; Joe Saylor, Drums; Phil Kuehn, Bass; Tivon Pennicott, Tenor Sax; Patrick Bartley, Alto Sax; Giveton Gelin, Trumpet; Village Vanguard 177 7th Ave S.

Sunday, November 4
- Vocal Masterclass with Marion Cowings; Ehud Asherie Trio; David Gibson Quintet; Ben Zweig Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Jon Batiste & Friends - Jon Batiste, Piano/Vox/Harmonabord; Joe Saylor, Drums; Phil Kuehn, Bass; Tivon Pennicott, Tenor Sax; Patrick Bartley, Alto Sax; Giveton Gelin, Trumpet; Village Vanguard 177 7th Ave S.

Monday, November 5
- Joel Frahm Trio; Jonathan Barber Quartet; Jon Elbaz Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.

Tuesday, November 6
- Shi Maestro Trio; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Spike Winer Trio; Frank Lacy Group; Mallk McLaughlin Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.

Wednesday, November 7
- Glad Hekselman Trio; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Loren Stillman & Steve Cardenas Quartet feat. Ben Allison and Matt Wilson; Sam Dillon Quartet; Giveton Gelin Quintet “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.

Thursday, November 8
- James Francis Band; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Carl Bartlett Jr. Quartet; Brian Melvin’s Sacred Geometry; Sean Mason “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.

Friday, November 9
- James Francis Band; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Vocal Masterclass with Marion Cowings; Ehud Asherie Trio; David Gibson Quintet; Ben Zweig Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.

Saturday, November 10
- Marcus Strickland’s Twi-Life; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Small’s Showcase: Jon Roche & Friends; Mike Boone Quartet; The Flail; Brooklyn Circle; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.

Sunday, November 11
- Marcus Strickland’s Twi-Life; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Vocal Masterclass with Marion Cowings; Fat Cat Big Band swings the work of J.S. Bach, Strayhorn, Ellington, Babie, & Synsteken; Tim McCauley Quintet; Alon Negev Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.

Monday, November 12
- Palladium: Celebrating Wayne Shorter; Joe Farnsworth Trio featuring Buster Williams; Jon Elbaz Trio “After-hours”

Tuesday, November 13
- Steve Nelson Quartet; Abraham Burton Quartet; Malik McLaurine Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.

Wednesday, November 14
- Remi Le Boeuf Quintet; Aiuko Tsugawa Quartet; Aaron Seiber “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.

Thursday, November 15
- Sean Jones Quartet; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Samir Zarf Sextet; Benny Benack Band; Enedas Owens “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.

Friday, November 16
- Sean Jones Quartet; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Paul Nedzela Quartet; George Coleman Jr. Quintet; JD Allen “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.

Saturday, November 17
- Sean Jones Quartet; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Small’s Showcase: Ben Barnett Quintet; Paul Nedzela Quartet; George Coleman Jr. Quintet; Jon Beshay “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.

Sunday, November 18
- Sean Jones Quartet; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Vocal Masterclass with Marion Cowings; Nick Hampton Band; JC Stylies/Steve Nelson “Hitting the Hutch”; Ben Zweig Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.

Monday, November 19
- Lucas Pino Nonet; Jonathan Michel Quintet; Jon Elbaz Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.

Tuesday, November 20
- Maria Schneider Orchestra; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Robert Edwards Quintet; Frank Lacy Group; Mallk McLaughlin Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.

Wednesday, November 21
- Maria Schneider Orchestra; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Marshall McDonald Jazz Project; Harold Mabern Trio; Julius Rodriguez “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Dizzy Gillespie All-Stars; Dizzy’s Birthday Celebration

Thursday, November 22
- Wyckoff Gordon; Dizzy’s Club; Jazz At Lincoln Center, 66th & Bway
Friday, November 23

- Wynton Gordon; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdwy
- Maria Schneider Orchestra; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Birdland Big Band; Birdland, 315 W. 44th
- John Fedchock Quartet; Jason Marshall Group; JD Allen “After-hours”; Smalls, 183 W. 10th St.
- Dizzy Gillespie All-Stars: Dizzy’s Birthday Celebration

Saturday, November 24

- Wynton Gordon; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdwy
- Maria Schneider Orchestra; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.

Monday, November 26

- Tyri Woolf; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdwy
- Mary Stallings with the Emmet Cohen Trio; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdwy
- Mary Stallings with the Emmet Cohen Trio; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdwy
- Aaron Goldberg Trio with Matt Penman & Leon Parker; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.

Tuesday, November 27

- David Berger Orchestra with Harry Allen Celebrate the Four Brothers: Stan Getz, Zoot Sims, Al Cohn and Gerry Mulligan; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdwy
- Wilmel Delisfor Project; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdwy
- Frank Kimbrough; Monk’s Dream; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Curtis Stigers; Birdland, 315 W. 44th
- Phillip Johnston & The Silent Six; Abraham Burton Quartet; Malik Mckinsey Trio “After-hours”; Smalls, 183 W. 10th St.
- Mark Turner, tenor saxophone; Jason Palmer, trumpet; David Virelles, piano; Matt Brewer, bass; Nasheet Waits, drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- John Scofield Quartet ft Gerald Clayton, Vicente Archer & Bill Stewart

Wednesday, November 28

- David Berger Orchestra with Harry Allen Celebrate the Four Brothers: Stan Getz, Zoot Sims, Al Cohn and Gerry Mulligan; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdwy
- Wilmel Delisfor Project; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdwy
- Frank Kimbrough; Monk’s Dream; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Curtis Stigers; Birdland, 315 W. 44th
- Tyler Blanton Trio; Patrick Cornelius Octet; Jovan Alexandre “After-hours”; Smalls, 183 W. 10th St.
- Mark Turner Quartet; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- John Scofield Quartet ft Gerald Clayton, Vicente Archer & Bill Stewart

Thursday, November 29

- Wilmel Delisfor; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdwy
- Mary Stallings with the Emmet Cohen Trio; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdwy
- Aaron Goldberg Trio with Matt Penman & Leon Parker; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Curtis Stigers; Birdland, 315 W. 44th
- Landline; Luca Santanintiello Trio; Mike Troy “After-hours”; Smalls, 183 W. 10th St.
- Mark Turner, tenor saxophone; Jason Palmer, trumpet; David Virelles, piano; Matt Brewer, bass; Nasheet Waits, drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- John Scofield Quartet ft Gerald Clayton, Vicente Archer & Bill Stewart

Friday, November 30

- Wilmel Delisfor; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdwy
- Mary Stallings with the Emmet Cohen Trio; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdwy
- Aaron Goldberg Trio with Matt Penman & Leon Parker; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Mark Turner, tenor saxophone; Jason Palmer, trumpet; David Virelles, piano; Matt Brewer, bass; Nasheet Waits, drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- John Scofield Quartet ft Gerald Clayton, Vicente Archer & Bill Stewart

Saturday, December 1

- Eric Comstock; Birdland, 315 W. 44th
- Steve Slagle Quartet; Joel Ross Quartet; Eric Wyatt “After-hours”; Smalls, 183 W. 10th St.
- Mark Turner, Tenor Saxophone; Jason Palmer, Trumpet; David Virelles, Piano; Matt Brewer, Bass; Nasheet Waits, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- John Scofield Quartet ft Gerald Clayton, Vicente Archer & Bill Stewart, Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Sunday, December 2

- Mary Stallings with Emmett Cohen Trio; Wilmel Delisfor; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdwy
- Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra; Birdland, 315 W. 44th
- Vocal Masterclass with Marion Coings; Tarsico Hammer Trio; Angela Roberts Quartet; Ben Zwet Trio “After-hours”; Smalls, 183 W. 10th St.
- Mark Turner, Tenor Saxophone; Jason Palmer, Trumpet; David Virelles, Piano; Matt Brewer, Bass; Nasheet Waits, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- John Scofield Quartet Ft Gerald Clayton, Vicente Archer & Bill Stewart, Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

(Continued on page 16)
Pat Martino & Jimmy Heath

© Eric Nemeyer
Monday, December 3
- Manhattan School of Music Jazz Orch with Paquito D’Rivera; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 6th W
- Jason Kwan; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Joel Frahm Group; Joe Farnsworth Group; Jon Etabzo Trio "After-hours"; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Vanguard Jazz Orchestra; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Arturo Sandoval; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Tuesday, December 4
- NY Youth Symphonic Jazz with Roxy Coss; Alexander Claffy; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 6th W
- Pharah Sanders; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Spike Wilner Trio; Frank Lacy Group; Malik McLaurine Trio "After-hours"; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Peter Bernstein Trio; Jim Hall Birthday Celebration - Peter Bernstein; Guitar; Doug Weiss; Bass; Leon Parker; Drum; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Arturo Sandoval; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Wednesday, December 5
- Alexi Cuadrado; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 6th W
- Pharah Sanders; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Michael Feinberg Quintet; Dan Aran’s New York Family: Album Release Show; Jonathan Thomas; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Peter Bernstein; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Arturo Sandoval; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Thursday, December 6
- Obba Babatunde & Friends; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 6th W
- Pharah Sanders; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Myron Walden Quartet; Dmitri Baevsky Quartet; Corey Wallace Duet; "After-hours"; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Peter Bernstein; Guitar; Sullivan Fortner; Piano; Doug Weiss; Bass; Leon Parker; Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Arturo Sandoval; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Friday, December 7
- Ben Allison; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 6th W
- Pharah Sanders; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Birdland Big Band; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Myron Walden; Dmitri Baevsky; Corey Wallace Duet; "After-hours"; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Peter Bernstein; Guitar; Sullivan Fortner; Piano; Doug Weiss; Bass; Leon Parker; Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Arturo Sandoval; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Saturday, December 8
- Ben Allison; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 6th W
- Pharah Sanders; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Eric Comstock; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Myron Walden; Dmitri Baevsky; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Peter Bernstein; Guitar; Sullivan Fortner; Piano; Doug Weiss; Bass; Leon Parker; Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Arturo Sandoval; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Sunday, December 9
- Ben Allison; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 6th W
- Eyal Vilner Big Band; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Vocal Masterclass with Marion Cowings; Marianne Solivan Quartet; JC Styles Organ Quartet; Alon Noir Trio "After-hours"; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Peter Bernstein; Guitar; Sullivan Fortner; Piano; Doug Weiss; Bass; Leon Parker; Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Arturo Sandoval; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Monday, December 10
- Juilliard Jazz Ensembles Play Lennie Tristano; Charlie Parker; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 6th W
- Michael Longoria; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Ari Hoenig; Jonathan Michel; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Vanguard Jazz Orchestra; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Chris Botti; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Tuesday, December 11
- Sullivan Fortner; Alphonso Home; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 6th W
- Stacey Kent; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Ian Hendrickson-Smith Quartet; Abraham Burton Quartet; Malik McLaurine Trio "After-hours"; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Kenny Barron Quintet; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Chris Botti; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Wednesday, December 12
- Sullivan Fortner; Alphonso Home; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 6th W
- Stacey Kent; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Jonathan Kreisberg Quartet; Josh Lawrence “Color Theory”; Micah Thomas "After-hours"; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Kenny Barron Trio; Mike Rodriguez; Trumpet; Dayna Stephens; Saxophone; Kenny Barron; Piano; Kiyoshi Kitagawa; Bass; Johnathan Blake; drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Chris Botti; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Thursday, December 13
- Riley’s Red Hot Holiday; Dizzy’s, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 6th W
- Stacey Kent; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Jonathan Kreisberg Quartet; Joe Sanders Trio, Aaron Seeger "After-hours"; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Kenny Barron Quintet; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Chris Botti; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Friday, December 14
- Joe Farnsworth; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 6th W
- Stacey Kent; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Birdland Big Band; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- James Barbour Celebrates the Holidays; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Mark Soskin Quartet; Freddie Bryant Quintet; JD Allen "After-hours"; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Kenny Barron Quintet - Mike Rodriguez; Trumpet; Dayna Stephens; Saxophone; Kenny Barron, Piano; Kiyoshi Kitagawa; Bass; Johnathan Blake; drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Chris Botti; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Saturday, December 15
- Joe Farnsworth Quartet; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 6th W
- Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Vocal Masterclass with Marion Cowings; Ralph Lalama & "Bop-Juice"; Bruce Harris Quintet; Ben Zweig Trio "After-hours"; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Kenny Barron Quintet - Mike Rodriguez; Trumpet; Dayna Stephens; Saxophone; Kenny Barron, Piano; Kiyoshi Kitagawa; Bass; Johnathan Blake; drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Chris Botti; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Sunday, December 16
- Dick Hyman; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 6th W
- Steve Ross; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Ari Hoenig; Joe Farnsworth Group; Jon Etabzo Trio "After-hours"; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Vanguard Jazz Orchestra; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Chris Botti; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Monday, December 17
- Dick Hyman; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 6th W
- Isaiah J. Thompson; Dizzy’s; Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 6th W
- Steve Ross; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Landline; Malik McLaurine Trio "After-hours"; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Kenny Barron Trio – Kenny Barron, piano; Regina Carter, violin; Kenny Barron, Piano; Kiyoshi Kitagawa; Bass; Johnathan Blake; drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Chris Botti; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Wednesday, December 19
- Jason Marsalis; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 6th W
- Freddy Cole Quartet Featuring Special Guest Joel Frahm; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- New York Jazz Nine; Harold Mabern Trio; Micah Thomas "After-hours"; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Kenny Barron; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Chris Botti; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.
- Matt Wilson’s Christmas Tree O + Special Guest Aaron Diehl; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.

Thursday, December 20
- Jason Marsalis; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & 6th W
- Freddy Cole Quartet Featuring Special Guest Joel Frahm; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Russ Nolan Quartet; Caleb Curtis Quartet; Jonathan Thomas "After-hours"; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Kenny Barron Trio; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.

(Continued on page 17)
“Some people’s idea of free speech is that they are free to say what they like, but if anyone says anything back that is an outrage.”

- Winston Churchill

- Chris Botti; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.
- Houston Person Quartet; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.

**Friday, December 21**
- Barry Harris Trio; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Freddy Cole Quartet Featuring Special Guest Joel Frahm; Birdland, 315 W. 44th
- Randy Johnston Trio; Robin Eubanks Group; Corey Wallace Duo; “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Kenny Barron Trio – Kenny Barron, piano; Regina Carter, Violin; Kenny Barron, Piano; Kiyoshi Kitagawa, Bass; Johnathan Blake, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Chris Botti; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.
- Houston Person Quartet; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.

**Saturday, December 22**
- Barry Harris Trio; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Freddy Cole Quartet Featuring Special Guest Joel Frahm; Birdland, 315 W. 44th
- Small’s Showcase: Ben Barnett Quintet; Randy Johnston Trio; Robin Eubanks Group; Brooklyn Circle; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Kenny Barron Trio – Kenny Barron, piano; Regina Carter, Violin; Kenny Barron, Piano; Kiyoshi Kitagawa, Bass; Johnathan Blake, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Chris Botti; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.
- Houston Person Quartet; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.

**Sunday, December 23**
- Barry Harris Trio; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way

**Monday, December 24**
- Barry Harris Trio; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Jake Ehrenreich with the Roger Kellaway Trio; Birdland, 315 W. 44th
- Ehud Asherie Trio; Mike Troy Quartet; Jon Elbaz Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Vanguard Jazz Orchestra; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Chris Botti; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

**Tuesday, December 25**
- Jake Ehrenreich with the Roger Kellaway Trio; Birdland, 315 W. 44th
- Steve Neison Quartet; Malik McLarenine; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Chris Potter, Saxophone; David Virelles, Piano; Joe Martin, Bass; Marcus Gilmore, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Chris Botti; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

**Wednesday, December 26**
- Carlos Henriquez; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- David Ostwald’s Louis Armstrong Eternity Band; Birdland, 315 W. 44th
- Itamar Borochov; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Chris Potter, Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Chris Botti; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.
- Michael Leonhart Orchestra “Holiday Show” with Special Guests; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.

**Thursday, December 27**
- Carlos Henriquez; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Birdland Big Band; Birdland, 315 W. 44th
- Keith Brown Group; Carlos Abadie Quintet; Aarón Seeber “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Chris Potter, Saxophone; David Virelles, Piano; Joe Martin, Bass; Marcus Gilmore, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Chris Botti; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.
- Raul Midón; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.

**Friday, December 28**
- Carlos Henriquez; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Birdland Big Band; Birdland, 315 W. 44th
- Valery Ponomarev Quintet; Dezron Douglas Group; JD Allen “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Chris Potter, Saxophone; David Virelles, Piano; Joe Martin, Bass; Marcus Gilmore, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Chris Botti; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.
- Raul Midón; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.

**Saturday, December 29**
- Carlos Henriquez; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Birdland Big Band; Birdland, 315 W. 44th
- Billy Mintz Quintet; Dezron Douglas Group; Eric Wyatt “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Chris Potter, Saxophone; David Virelles, Piano; Joe Martin, Bass; Marcus Gilmore, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Chris Botti; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.
- Raul Midón Band; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.

**Sunday, December 30**
- Carlos Henriquez; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Birdland Big Band; Birdland, 315 W. 44th
- Deborah Davis; Neal Caine Group; Ben Zweig Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Chris Potter, Saxophone; David Virelles, Piano; Joe Martin, Bass; Marcus Gilmore, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Chris Botti; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.
- Raul Midón Band; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.

**Monday, December 31**
- Carlos Henriquez; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Birdland Big Band; Birdland, 315 W. 44th
- Chris Potter; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Chris Botti; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.
- New Year’s Eve with Mingus Big Band; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
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— Mark Twain

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Patty Waters
I took a risk

Interview by Ken Weiss
Photo by Chuck Stewart, Courtesy of Patty Waters

Patty Waters (b. March 11, 1946, Council Bluffs, Iowa) is a groundbreaking avant-garde vocalist/composer/pianist who made two arresting ESP-Disk recordings in the 1960s – Sings (1965) and College Tour (1966) – and then disappeared for 30-years. Waters’ career was originally kick-started with the help of saxophonist Albert Ayler, who recognized her uniqueness and introduced her to Bernard Stollman of ESP-Disk. She is best known for her shocking rendition of the traditional song “Black is the Color of My True Love’s Hair,” which was delivered with haunted wails of anguish centered on the word “black.” That recording, with the aggressive piano trio backing led by innovative pianist Burton Greene, was the first extended free-vocal solo on record. Waters’ original compositions are melancholic works that are so openly pure and honest that they’re almost unsettling to listen to. She has released a handful of recordings over the years but has remained a mystery, partly because she has eschewed interviews. Waters, who would like to reenter the performances. Are you very affected by what’s written about you?

PW: Yes, that’s an easy, easy yes! Everything else has been so complimentary. I’m really happy that I took a risk and it wasn’t negative like I feared.

PW: Billie Holiday’s life and singing have had a profound influence on you. What is it about her that resonates with you?

PW: It’s her singing and the songs that she sang, too. It was of the times that she was singing those songs. I loved all of it, everything she ever sang. For a while I had a huge record collection, and I still have at least 25 Billie Holiday albums in vinyl. I just love her. You know how you listen to something and you just don’t want to stop? That’s with her. I just can’t get enough, I love her.

PW: Billie Holiday lived a very hard life. Is that something you relate to about her?

PW: I don’t think so. I’ve never been attracted to her [use of] drugs, I’ve avoided that kind of thing. I don’t know about that, I just have lots of love for her.

PW: Most singers employ musicians to accompany and support them but it seems you’ve taken the approach of including and improvising with your bandmates.

PW: Yes, I think that’s so, I think that’s especially part of my recent performances. I like doing that and you can hear it if you listen to my newest recording from Cafe OTO in London. The whole concert is for sale through Cafe OTO’s digital label - OTOROKU. There are a couple more recordings coming. One from Blank Forms is due in December [2018]. My concert in Houston will also be coming out but I don’t know who will release it. Both concerts each had their own flavor and energy.

PW: Would you talk about your early years growing up on a dairy farm in Logan, Iowa, outside of Omaha, Nebraska?

PW: I moved there with my family when I was in fourth grade after living in Council Bluffs, Iowa before that. So I started school in Council Bluffs and I would visit friends after school and I’d walk home or ride my bike. I was becoming social and then we moved to Logan when I was 9, to a dairy

(Continued on page 22)


Patty Waters

(Continued from page 20)

farm that was very isolated. I went to a country school with 14 people in it. I walked a mile to the school and then back home. There were fun things about it because the weather was so extreme. We’d skate on the ice on the creeks and things like that but it was a very isolated life from 9-years-old until I was out of high school. I started traveling with dance bands when I was a teenager but I had an isolated childhood.

JI: Did you want to talk about your mother? You mentioned that you wanted to set the record straight about her.

PW: There’s been lots of stage mothers, and she was like a stage mother, but she wasn’t like a cruel stage mother. [laughs] She devoted lots of time to me, helping me learn lines for dramatic contests. She sewed all my clothes and spent a lot of time on me. Her life was devoted to having me perform and preparing me for performances. I wasn’t aware then that she and my stepfather really felt that they couldn’t afford college for me, and that eighteen was a cutoff point, so I was pretty shocked when they said I had to move away from home [when I turned eighteen]. I’d done some traveling but I didn’t expect that. I hadn’t thought of anything like that. They couldn’t afford college but I didn’t expect that I had to move away. When I was in high school, my mother met with the school superintendent and I was moved to Council Bluffs. I lived in a rooming house there when I was a senior and that was the start of the lonely years away from home. There were a lot of rooming houses after that, moving from place to place.

JI: So you’re saying that you had to leave home and go to Council Bluffs?

PW: My mother set it up that my senior year of high school was to be done in Council Bluffs and I sang four nights a week at a staff headquarters on a big military base. My parents saw this as preparation for my career. They thought I’d be a singer. I don’t understand it but I was just sort of expected to be a singer, and they used to tell me that I was lazy when I couldn’t survive. [laughs] They were very religious, Catholic converts. They didn’t know anything about how to help me so I was really on my own. It was kind of tough.

JI: Why did you have to spend your last year of high school in Council Bluffs? Was that to prepare you for life away from your family?

PW: Yes, I guess so. I was singing four nights a week and keeping my grades up, but I was driving from our farm to clubs in Omaha, so my mother thought it would be better for me to leave home then and move to Council Bluffs to go to school [and sing locally there]. They just thought it was right for me to move at that time. It must have been so important to them for me to continue singing four nights a week. [laughs]

JI: Do you feel that you were pressured by your family to be a singer? As someone who is so shy in the public eye, would you have chosen a career as a performer on your own?

PW: I don’t know, that’s a good question. I really don’t know. I really did love music so it was a pleasure to sing or think about music. That was fine but, no, I have no idea.

JI: There’s some discrepancy in previous interviews over whether you ever had formal voice training or not.

PW: I didn’t ever have formal voice training.

JI: Do you see that as a benefit or a downside?

PW: A benefit. There’s a basic first lesson you get when you sing. You need to sing from the roof of your mouth and use your abdomen. Those are the basics, but I didn’t have lessons.

JI: You spent some time in Los Angeles in the early ‘60s. Were you pursuing work in the film industry?

PW: No, I was pursuing a singing career. I lived at the Hollywood Studio Club [a chaperoned dormitory usually for young women involved in the motion picture business] which was kind of famous. I was going out to hear music and working as a waitress. After living there, I found work as a singer at a nightclub in Ventura called the Royal Lion. They set me up in an apartment with a pool and a piano. That experience lasted only a few months.

JI: By 1963, you were living in San Francisco and ended up meeting Miles Davis who became a mentor to you. How did you meet him and how did he help you?

PW: That’s been exaggerated, I think. He just helped me notate some music, which was fantastic, and he advised me. His quote to me was, “Don’t be afraid,” and “Accent your strengths,” and it was good advice. After that I remember him saying, “There are no mistakes,” that was how he felt about things. I was very shy and he told me not to be afraid.

JI: It seems that you had a romance with Miles?

PW: You know, I’m sure he had lots of other ones. I don’t care to say.

JI: Do you have a memory of Miles to share?

PW: Helping me with notation was my favorite memory.

JI: You knew [comedian] Lenny Bruce when you lived in San Francisco.

PW: Yes, we dated. We both lived at the Swiss American Hotel and he invited me to attend his shows. He liked jazz and he liked for me to read books to him. He never heard me sing.

JI: Were you performing in San Francisco?

PW: No, I was just listening to music. It’s kind of a blur now but I was just friends with a lot of musicians. I’d go to hear music all the time.

JI: What spurred your move to New York City in 1964? By all accounts you were low in self-confidence so was your plan to make a career as a performer?

PW: I think it was an odd kind of thing. Do you
know how there’s a kaleidoscope sometimes in life when things just kind of move, a bunch of things move at once, those little pieces? A group of us from San Francisco moved to New York in 1964. We were all jazz hopefuls [Laughs] and everybody had a career after that. It was Dewey Redman, Pharoah Sanders, Monty Waters, Joe Lee Wilson, Jimmy Lovelace, Art Lewis, Henry Grimes and Jane Getz. We didn’t talk about it, it just happened. One year we were in San Francisco and the next year we were in New York. We’d see each other in New York. My apartment was just a piano and a bed. [Laughs]

JI: Did you move with the intention of working as a jazz vocalist in New York?

PW: Yes.

JI: Once in New York, you jammed on stage a lot and privately with many star players including Bill Evans, Chick Corea, Ben Webster, Herbie Hancock, Mingus, Jaki Byard, Roland Hanna and Kirk Lightsey. Would you share some memories from that?

PW: I was in the clubs a lot. I worked lunch hour in Wall Street as a waitress so I was in the clubs hearing music all the time [at night], every minute I could. I don’t remember how it happened but I took a long subway ride with Bill Evans. We went to his house and I met who I thought was his wife. We rehearsed at his house and then I sang at the Village Vanguard with him one night. Also, I kind of knew Herbie [Hancock] a little and he let me use his piano to practice when I moved to New York. He lived on Riverside Drive. All the musicians were nice. I did sing a little. I sang at loft parties sometimes. I used to love hearing Keith Jarrett practice. I’ve been very fortunate to meet nice people, they were all sweet.

JI: Which musician helped you the most in New York?

PW: I’m tempted to say Bill Evans but they were all very kind. I don’t even understand how it happened or why it happened sometimes.

JI: It must have been quite a thrill to perform at the Village Vanguard with Bill Evans.

PW: Yeah, but I was so shy and I was disappointed in my singing.

JI: You had an early experience with Salvador Dali at Slugs.

PW: Yes, Salvador Dali and his entourage, maybe 9 or 10 people, walked into Slugs one night. I was there so much. [Laughs] They walked in holding candles. It was quite a beautiful entrance. They sat at a big table and listened to jazz. I think he made entrances at other places like that as well.

JI: So you spent a lot of time at Slugs. That was located in what was known to be a very rough neighborhood. Did you ever have any problems there?

PW: No, I was lucky. I must have had a very protective aura around me because I had no problems.

JI: You’re best known for your two 1966 ESP-DISK recordings – Sings [recorded 1965] and College Tour [recorded 1966]. Those recordings were made possible with the help of Albert Ayler who took you to meet Bernard Stollman of ESP-DISK. There’s conflicting reports in previous interviews regarding how Ayler “discovered” you. Did he hear you performing on stage or in a private setting?

PW: I guess he heard me on stage. I don’t remember the very first time we met but we became friends and he came to my apartment a lot, he and his brother.

JI: How would you describe your relationship with Albert Ayler?

PW: We were simply friends.

JI: Did you perform with him in clubs?

PW: No, I never performed or sang with him.

JI: That was very nice of him to bring you to the record company. Did he do that for many other people?

PW: I don’t think so.

JI: Your first recording Sings includes eight songs, the first seven of which are self-composed and self-accompanied on piano. They’re all short, most not even two minutes long, and are best described as hushed, sad, delicate pieces. Talk about those compositions and where that inner torment, those extreme emotions, came from?

PW: It’s difficult to talk about because I was in love and felt like writing them. I just enjoyed them. I don’t think they’re very sad. You know how you say blues makes some people happy, well sad songs also make me happy. [Laughs] Blues and sad songs both make me happy. [Laughs]

JI: Is there significance to why all the songs were written at night?

PW: I guess because I was such a night owl. No, there wasn’t [a reason]. I was a total night owl.

JI: Sings opens with “Moon, Don’t Come up Tonight,” a song that you’ve continued to sing throughout your career. Does that song have special meaning to you?

PW: Yes, I like it, I like the song. It was one of my first songs. I was 18 when I wrote most of that song.

JI: Is that your favorite song that you’ve written?

PW: Well, yes, I think so.

JI: The last song on Sings is your shocking version of the traditional folk song “Black is the Color of My True Love’s Hair.” What was your plan going into the studio to record this tune with a quartet led by pianist Burton Greene? Greene has said that you planned to sing it in the traditional way and that he intentionally pushed you out of your comfort zone. Did he surprise you with how he played or had you practiced that with the band?

PW: No, that’s not true. It’s funny how in articles people write things that aren’t accurate. I did read where Burton said he encouraged me, and I even read where Richard Alderson, who was the engineer in the sound booth, said, “I don’t remember what I did but I must have told her to loosen up.” That’s a farce. [Laughs] He didn’t do that, he didn’t do anything. He was just there doing the sound. He didn’t say, “Hey, loosen up Patty.” Those stories get sort of crazy embellished. [Laughs] I remember going to Burton’s loft and we talked very briefly about what I wanted to do. It was fantastic to find the sound that he did use inside the piano. That had a great deal to do with how I sang, but in my head I was an orchestra, and I was singing a composition. I was creating a composition.

JI: So you’re saying, you went into the studio with the intention of singing the song the way you actually sang it?

PW: Yes, absolutely. I planned that.

JI: Greene used a garbage can cover on the piano strings for that eerie effect.

PW: I guess so. I don’t remember seeing one or realizing that. I really don’t recall a garbage can lid. I just remember hearing him play inside the piano and I liked that.

JI: How did you put together the quartet that you used to record that song?

PW: It was such a very short notice to go into the studio for the Sings album. I put the word out that I wanted to ask Clifford to play drums for me but I had no luck in contacting him. So Burton found Tom Price, who was wonderful. I only wish there had been time enough on the recording for Tom to play a drum solo. When I returned home to my apartment that night, there was a note at my door from Cliff saying he had been there. Clifford Jarvis was the great love of my life, and of which I wrote most of my songs to side one of the Sings album. And best of all, we had a beautiful baby boy together. I wanted him to play on the Sings album but couldn’t find him. He did visit us a few times in California before he moved to Europe, and I visited him in London in 1991. We had finally reached a point of calmness being together and it felt really good.

JI: Your repeated blood curdling shrieks of the word “black” made you an immediate vocal innovator and spurred a cult following. Was your in-
“I’ve never had anyone discourage me from singing. I guess I just can’t do any more than what I’m doing. Back to the phrase, following my bliss … I try to follow my bliss but I don’t work at promoting myself. It’s really difficult for me. I’m excited for the future, life is unfolding as it should.”

PW: I just thought it was a good idea. I liked the song and I thought it was a great idea. I didn’t talk to people about it. It was a good idea and I knew it.

J: So you were drawn to it through an attraction for it as a traditional Scottish folk song or because you wanted to make a heavy societal statement?

PW: Both.

J: Nina Simone also famously sang that song. Did you have any contact with her?

PW: No.

“Patty Waters”

PW: Yes, I mean that was the side effect of singing the word “black.” Sure, for whoever heard it, they would take that out of it.

J: Did you get angry feedback after the song’s release? Any threatening situations?

PW: Never, never. No, in fact it was so nice to be positively received. People appreciated that I was trying to make an art piece, like painting a painting. You paint a picture, it’s done, and that’s how I feel about “Black is the Color of My True Love’s Hair.” That was it, it was a complete picture.

J: How many times have you performed that song during your career? I would imagine that audiences might expect you to sing it.

PW: That was it, only that one time in the studio. I don’t want to do it anymore. Like I said, the complete painting is done. I don’t think that people expect me to do that song. I think people are more evolved and they appreciate an artist deciding what they want to do. I’m certainly not going to repeat myself or say, ‘Well, this is a hit. I’ll try to follow my bliss but I don’t work at promoting myself. It’s really difficult for me. I’m excited for the future, life is unfolding as it should.’ They said, “You know you should speak up. You can represent yourself, you don’t have to be so shy.” So it was nice of them to say that but I was too shy to answer questions at that time.

J: Your second album College Tour was compiled from the tour’s live shows and the material was all new and considerably more aggressively experimental than the bulk of your first recording. Was that the direction you wanted to head to?

PW: I didn’t feel that way, I didn’t think the music was different. I didn’t think like that, I didn’t plan anything. Marion Brown invited me to To-

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Ji: Did you perform at all in Europe?

Pw: No, I don’t know how to get singing work. I still don’t know how to do it. [laughs]

Ji: So it wasn’t that you feared success?

Pw: No.

Ji: Eventually you returned to New York City and while dating Clifford Jarvis, who was in the Sun Ra Arkestra at the time, you became pregnant with his child. Did that create any tension between you and Sun Ra? You must have had a relationship with Sun Ra since you spent time on the bus with him. He didn’t like his Arkestra members dating, he wanted them focused on the music.

Pw: That’s very true, but I didn’t know that at the time. No, there wasn’t anything negative, except for one time, and that was before I was pregnant. It’s not on the College Tour recording but one time the audience called me back on stage to sing an encore and I sang a cappella. I had asked if Sun Ra would give his permission for Clifford to play drums behind me as I sang and he did not agree to that.

Ji: Your son Andrew Miles Giuseppi Waters was born in 1969. Would you comment on naming him after Miles Davis and Giuseppe Logan?

Pw: He was a friend. He used to come to my apartment to visit, same as the Ayler brothers. We were just friends.

Ji: You had a couple of very negative experiences in New York at that time that helped lead to you relocating to California. One came during the time you were out of the country. The person you had sublet your apartment to didn’t pay the rent so your piano got thrown out on the street and your tapes and music were stolen.

Pw: Right, that’s true. Also, someone put a knife to my throat and robbed me. That was scary. It was just someone on drugs. You could tell they weren’t even seeing clearly in their eyes. They weren’t there, really. That was about the time I left New York.

Ji: You ended up leaving New York for California to raise your son and were off the music scene for 30 years. Did you always have the intention of returning to your career?

Pw: I think maybe I did, yes. I think so. I think that’s just how it happened.

Ji: The Cadence interview includes you mentioning a sad occurrence but it’s not clear when it occurred. You point out that in high school you were an honor student, class president, and a band queen, but eventually your family disowned you, although they were an honor student, class president, and a band queen, but eventually your family disowned you,

Pw: [laughs] I don’t know, people make mistakes.

Ji: You never got paid for that recording?

Pw: No.

Ji: Your two ESP-Disk recordings were well-received and created a buzz for you but you soon split for Europe and Canada for a period of time. Why would you leave New York at a time that you had just produced two recordings and your career was starting?

Pw: I didn’t know how those things worked. I mean, I didn’t do anything to ruin my career, in my opinion. I just thought I had an opportunity to go to Europe and who wouldn’t take it? It was my first trip over there. It was wonderful, I went all over Europe. It was fantastic, no regrets. I saw my Sings album in record store windows in Amsterdam and London.

Pw: Well, I guess I thought I was doing the right thing but I’m not sure if I should have included Clifford’s name. I probably should have but I was a little afraid to. He has in his family, three Cliffrids. I did it myself. I probably made a mistake there…

Ji: We talked about the importance of Miles Davis in your career but not Giuseppi Logan. Would you talk about him?

Pw: No, I don’t think they know about my career?

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Patty Waters

(Continued from page 25)

reer. It was a permanent kind of disowning. In fact, I haven’t been back to Iowa since I was 19. I’m still in touch with some nice people from there, by way of Christmas cards, but that’s how it happened. They were very religious and that’s how they felt. I think they felt I would influence the children of the family, and that if I was thinking in a certain way, it would influence the children in a negative way. They thought that I was thinking negatively. That’s what I think but I don’t know. I don’t understand it.

JI: When did they disown you? Was it when you became pregnant or was it earlier when you were in an interracial relationship?

PW: It was when I was dating, I wasn’t pregnant yet. I had no idea that they would react like that. It was a shock but I always knew that I hadn’t done anything that wrong. I still feel that way. I hadn’t done anything wrong. No one else gave me any trouble except my family.

JI: You mounted a short comeback with 1996’s Love Songs (Jazz Focus), a recording of standards with pianist Jessica Williams. What prompted the resurgence?

PW: She invited me to sing with her and I was happy about that. It was great to record with Jessi-ca. I wanted to do more. It was too short and sweet. I’d love to make another album with her. [Note: Jessica Williams has married and retired from performing]

JI: Your next recording came in 2004 with your self-released You Thrill Me, a collection of unissued songs from 1962-79 on your own label – Water. It opens with a Jax Beer commercial [including trumpeter Joe Newman] that you made in 1964, the year before your first album was recorded. Did you do a lot of commercial work?

PW: That’s the only commercial work I did. It was a Texas beer. I was asked to do it. Malcolm Dodds was the arranger and he invited me to sing. I remember I got paid 43 dollars.

JI: I was just going to ask you if that was the best paying gig of your career. So you didn’t get residuals every time the commercial aired?

PW: [Laughs] No, and I still don’t know anything about things like that.

JI: Have you ever tried a Jax beer?

PW: No, I never have. [Laughs]

JI: In 2004 you reported earning only a total of $350 from your recordings.


JI: I thought I was the one who had to prepare for this interview.

PW: [Laughs] Could I tell you something that I read in the book? Bernard said that he was disappointed that I didn’t want to participate in the book but he did say on page 82 that he said that he appreciated when I spoke to Robert Campbell [1995 Cadence interview] and I was quoted to say, ‘This stuff sounded as if Patty was on some mood stabilizer.’

JI: I wasn’t going to mention this but since you brought up the ESP book, I will. Richard Alderson is quoted to say that he asked you years later for new material but that he was disappointed when he heard what you gave him. He said, ‘This stuff sounded as if Patty was on some mood stabilizer.’

PW: That’s very cruel, I don’t appreciate that. I haven’t ever had any kind of [medicine like that]. He’s a cruel person, I guess. That’s fine. Some people like to talk and they don’t have anything valuable to say, they just think they have to say something.

JI: Your last release was Happiness is a Thing Called Joe [DBK Works, 2005]. Who do you view to be your target audience at this point of your career?

PW: Oh, gosh. I think European audiences might be the most receptive to me because they’ve followed me and the ESP records have continued to sell. I have lovely scrapbooks full of nice reviews from around Europe and Russia. I’ve had a really fantastic reception through the years there.

JI: How often are you performing now?

PW: I’m not. I did two concerts this past April – in New York and Houston. They were both recorded. I’d love to perform a lot, especially in Europe.

JI: What are your pleasures outside of music?

PW: I love where I live. There’s nice weather. I love to travel, number one, now that my family is not living with me anymore. Good food, good living, good music. I listen to everything.

JI: The last questions were given to me by other artists to ask you:

Kirk Lightsey (piano) asked: “Would you talk about your studies with Nat Jones at 9 Great Jones Street? That’s where I met you. I had a space in Nat’s loft in the late ’60s to early ’70s and you took a lesson with Nat once or twice a week.”

PW: Wow! Hi Kirk, I’d love to sing with you! Well, it’s not true that I ever took vocal lessons from Nat Jones. He was a friend. Yes, Kirk was living there, and I recall that Kirk was eating health food at the time, and I was very impressed—brown rice and things. Nat was lovely and Kirk was wonderful. I wish I could have sung with Kirk. I think I was too shy to ask him. They had nice parties at Nat Jones’ loft and one evening, Kirk Lightsey played piano as I sang ‘Come Rain or Come Shine’ while holding the hand of Roland Kirk. This was before he named himself Rahsaan Roland Kirk. Afterwards, Roland Kirk said, ‘This girl is a singer!’

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say, and I still agree, ‘I really think ESP has a fantastic place in history, and it put me in a position where I was making history…I’m very, very grateful to Bernard’ and I definitely feel now like I’m happy that he recorded me.

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JI: There was a lot of missed opportunity there.

PW: Yes, there’s been a lot of missed opportunities. Tom Wilson took me to Columbia records. The piano there was beautiful but I had no confidence and sort of apologized and thanked the people there and left feeling defeated. It had been a big chance to record for Columbia. I also felt that same way when I felt defeated after singing with Bill Evans at the Village Vanguard. I hurried out after singing with him and felt so defeated. I had wanted so much to make a success of singing with him that evening. He was so kind. It was very special that he invited me to sit in and

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sing. Those were both discouraging experiences. I couldn’t ever face Bill Evans or Tom Wilson again. I regret that I couldn’t have faced them again and should have apologized to them afterwards. I ran away rather than believing in their friendship as I should have done. I am also reminded of how I always struggled to have a piano wherever I lived in Manhattan. I went through moving pianos each time I moved into a new tiny apartment. Sometimes they were hoisted through the windows on cables.

Amirtha Kidambi (vocals) asked: “What was it like being a vocalist in a predominantly instrumental scene of avant-garde improvised music? Was it isolating or empowering? What were the challenges you faced or the avenues that opened up to you as you forged your path? In a community that is still dominated by instrumentalists, I think it is important for us young singers to hear from those who came before us as we hone our craft and demand space.”

PW: It was empowering. Even in high school, I liked being the one woman in a big band. I’ve never minded the percentage of one woman to a bunch of guys. I like it. [Laughs] I never thought there was anything wrong with it. I’m making light of this and maybe I shouldn’t because she’s asking seriously. She deserves her place in music, and all women do, absolutely. As far as what challenges I faced? I don’t know. [Author] Joseph Campbell said, “Follow your bliss.” I was following my bliss [Laughs] before he made that phrase.

Amirtha Kidambi also asked: “In terms of vocal health, do you have any advice for vocalists who are working with extreme or harsh techniques and want to be singing for a long time?”

PW: Good question, I do not have a very good answer. I’ve read what other singers have done, like concoctions of herbal teas that have worked for them. I don’t think alcohol is a good solution but I use honey if I’m worried about my throat. I think it’s about really just trying to relax. The throat is most important so try not to strain. Don’t use throat lozenges or medicines. For me personally, I use honey if I’m worried about my throat. I have had lovers try to discourage me for years not to sing but I never gave up or gave into their demands. Music is part of me and is an extension of my being. Did someone discourage you? I hope not. I hope you come back on the scene with your beautiful songs. The world needs you and you need you. Best to you always…Sheila”

Ji: So you never had any problems with club owners or musicians with unwanted attention?

PW: Never, never, they’ve all been good to me. It may seem hard to believe, but this has been true in my case. I can’t thank them enough, they were supportive and kind and still are.

Warren Smith (percussion) asked: “I first saw you in London while I was working with Janis Joplin in 1968. Did Janis Joplin have much of an influence on your singing?”

PW: Oh, Warren, I’d love to talk with him! He wrote some arrangements for me. Janis Joplin, no, she had no influence on me at all, but I liked her.

Ji: But now you have a lifetime of experience behind you. Doesn’t that enter into it?

PW: Maybe, I guess so. Some people say I’m hired because I have a legacy. [Laughs] So I have a legacy now. I can’t wait to get on the road and do more.

Sheila Jordan (vocals) asked: “You always sang with such passion and depth so my question is why did you stop giving yourself and the world your profound messages? I had loved singers try to discourage me for years not to sing but I never gave up or gave into their demands. Music is part of me and is an extension of my being. Did someone discourage you? I hope not. I hope you come back on the scene with your beautiful songs. The world needs you and you need you. Best to you always…Sheila”

PW: Oh, gosh. I’ve never met her and I respect her so much. Oh, I’m gonna cry and fall apart. Oh, that’s so sweet. My goodness, so sweet. Well, I need a Pisces, if that helps explain anything. I’m always confused about what I’m doing. [Laughs] Two fish – opposite directions! I don’t know what to say? These questions - incredible questions. I love her and I appreciate it. I’ve never had anyone discourage me from singing. I guess I just can’t do any more than what I’m doing. Back to the phrase, following my bliss … I try to follow my bliss but I don’t work at promoting myself. It’s really difficult for me. I’m excited for the future, life is unfolding as it should. [Laughs] Pretty corny, huh? I’ve probably had more pleasure than I deserve during my life. I do feel extremely lucky.

PW: Hi Burton, he’s wonderful. I can’t compare to the ‘60s, I was in better voice. The ‘60s were when I was singing well.

Ji: Now you have a lifetime of experience behind you. Doesn’t that enter into it?

PW: I’m very grateful for it. I’m very, very, very grateful for the ‘60s.

Ji: Would you address the gender issue? You were a woman in a heavily male predominated field, especially at that time.

PW: I never objected to any of that. I’ve always thought of myself as a singer in a band, a big band that’s the world of musicians. I have no problem being part of a predominantly male community of musicians. We all play music together and music is our focus. There’s always room for a good musician, male or female. I honestly think it will continue. I think women will always be appreciated in music for the talents they offer. Men musicians have been a great support to me through the years.

Ji: Let’s expand her question to ask about your years in California. You earned three degrees at a community college. Was that done as a challenge to yourself?

PW: Yes, I think so. It was perfect timing. My son was in elementary school at the time and I enjoyed going to school. I have a B.A. in Fine Art and Art History. I did a variety of things while I lived out here. A pre-school assistant working with kids. I never did anything with my degrees.

Burton Greene (your past and occasionally present pianist) asked: “I played with you in the ‘60s, as well as the current day. How do you feel about what you are doing with your vocals now as compared to what you were doing in the ‘60s?”

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PW: Maybe, I guess so. Some people say I’m hired because I have a legacy. [Laughs] So I have a legacy now. I can’t wait to get on the road and do more.

Sheila Jordan (vocals) asked: “You always sang with such passion and depth so my question is why did you stop giving yourself and the world your profound messages? I had loved singers try to discourage me for years not to sing but I never gave up or gave into their demands. Music is part of me and is an extension of my being. Did someone discourage you? I hope not. I hope you come back on the scene with your beautiful songs. The world needs you and you need you. Best to you always…Sheila”

PW: Oh, gosh. I’ve never met her and I respect her so much. Oh, I’m gonna cry and fall apart. Oh, that’s so sweet. My goodness, so sweet. Well, I need a Pisces, if that helps explain anything. I’m always confused about what I’m doing. [Laughs] Two fish – opposite directions! I don’t know what to say? These questions - incredible questions. I love her and I appreciate it. I’ve never had anyone discourage me from singing. I guess I just can’t do any more than what I’m doing. Back to the phrase, following my bliss … I try to follow my bliss but I don’t work at promoting myself. It’s really difficult for me. I’m excited for the future, life is unfolding as it should. [Laughs] Pretty corny, huh? I’ve probably had more pleasure than I deserve during my life. I do feel extremely lucky.

PW: Hi Burton, he’s wonderful. I can’t compare to the ‘60s, I was in better voice. The ‘60s were when I was singing well.

Ji: But now you have a lifetime of experience behind you. Doesn’t that enter into it?

PW: I’m very grateful for it. I’m very, very, very grateful for the ‘60s.
it was at the New England Conservatory when I attended—I wouldn’t be doing what I’m doing today. I am so indebted to that program and their special vision of recreating a University environment the way jazz had been taught for most of its history—which is on the bandstand from master to apprentice. Clark was our very first teacher. Besides being an unbelievable trumpet player, flugelhorn player, he makes everything sound and look so easy. I remember one time I tried to play basketball myself and I’m like, “Dang, they make it look so easy on TV.” I almost cracked my nail just trying to catch a rebound. So he’s just a phenomenal instrumentalist and his swing—he’s so woven into the history of jazz. He’s also unique in that he really pioneered jazz education. That to me is one of his special qualities. He has such an amazing legacy of people that he’s touched. I’m grateful to him because I think he’s one of the band leaders who made it a point to hire women musicians back in the day. Sylvia Cuenca was his long time drummer, and Terri Lyne Carrington before that. He gave me a chance to play and a chance to experience that whole world. You have to be on your toes. You don’t know what he’s going to play next and if he doesn’t like what he’s hearing he’s going to let you know it in no uncertain terms—no mincing of any words. He was also always so encouraging. He always asked “Well what are you up to? Let me hear your record.” And the stories he would tell … I really appreciated that about that generation which unfortunately is passing. Just being with them, spending time with them, that’s part of the music too. It’s not just the technical nuts and bolts of chord changes and stuff like that. Just him letting me be a part of his musical world and life was such a privilege. Hearing him play is like a lesson. That big band thing, besides being so much fun, it was also just a really great learning experience, a history lesson every night. Besides telling you the truth and kicking your behind and all that stuff, they would also always encourage you: “Look, you need to move the music forward too.” So I’m so grateful for Clark.

**JI:** I remember attending a clinic of his one time and somebody was starting to get into analyzing the music to the point of being a musical scientist. Clark asked, “What are we doing here? Are we trying to figure out the square root of B flat?” I’ll never forget that.

**HS:** [laughter] Oh my God, that’s great. I never heard of that one. I’ve got to remember that one.

**JI:** Where was the Thelonious Monk Institute located when you were a student?

**HS:** They were housed at the New England Conservatory of Music, but they weren’t part of the Jazz department. They moved to USC for a good while then they went to Loyola and now they’re back at UCLA. So, yes, I was a student of both I guess.

**JI:** So talk a little bit about some of the other influential artists with whom you’ve either studied or worked. Perhaps, give a broad view of some of the conversations you might have had or things that they might have said that made a significant impact on your own development as an artist or your life.

**HS:** As a student I learned so much from Ron Carter - the rigors of being on the bandstand. I remember him saying “You want to develop your own voice? Then you need to write music.” He would come through maybe once every two weeks and be there for two or three days with us, and we would have to have a new song every time he came. We would perform the song and he would critique it and give suggestions. That was such an invaluable experience. Jon Faddis was the one who said “Helen, I don’t hear enough blues in your playing. You need to check out the blues.” He made me learn Ray Bryant’s solo on “After Hours” on that album *Eternal Triangle* or was it *Sunny Side Up*, sorry?

**JI:** With Sonny Stitt and Sonny Rollins?

**HS:** Exactly, and Dizzy. Oh no, no, no. I’m going to get the two albums confused.

**JI:** I think it was the *Eternal Triangle*.

**HS:** Yes, that’s right. So for years after he’d seen me, “Helen, let me hear that soul.” That was just also so important; and Barry Harris unlocking be-bop for me. What a guy, what a master and beautiful spirit and soul. And bebop for me is always the biggest challenge because it’s the one thing I can’t fake. If you don’t understand it … I remember when I was trying to learn it, it was the one I couldn’t fake. So I’m so indebted to him for helping unlock some of that. Be-bop is another thing that just gets deeper and deeper, right. I also studied with Kenny Barron and Danilo Perez while I was a student and both of them were just so fantastic.

**JI:** Do you remember anything in particular that Kenny suggested to you?

**HS:** Kenny was the type of teacher where he would play for me and I would listen, and he would talk through his playing and comment on that. I was trying to absorb this new music that to me had such a different approach at least initially versus classical music. One thing he said, “Well Helen, the difference between classical music and jazz is that in classical, you perfect it in the practice room, and jazz you perfect on the stage.” It made a deep impact on me because I’d get very anxious, like “I hope this will be a great performance.” It’s still something that I have to watch - because of that perfectionist in me and the whole classical aesthetic, where you practice...
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Helen Sung

and you practice until it’s perfect. If you can reproduce that perfect performance in the practice room on stage, then that constitutes a successful performance. But jazz is not like that—especially if you’re playing with a band—because you’re dealing with at least two to three to four other different conscious beings who have their ways of hearing music, and you have to allow that to impact you and work together with that. That’s a whole different ball of wax. I just love Kenny’s touch, his sound. It’s so inspiring and how he is as a human being. I really looked up to him—not just as an artist but just everything about him. After that, I really learned the most from Lonnie Plaxico. He’s such an amazing musician and I learned so much from him, not just from playing his crazy music. He has such vast experience and knowledge in music. I can’t tell you how much music he lent me—everything—the whole gospel, R&B to fusion to funk—everything he liked, all the Motown stuff—Marvin Gaye, Aretha Franklin, all that stuff through Parliament and Sly and the Family Stone, Larry Graham, Stevie Wonder, all that. I didn’t know any of that stuff. I kind of peripherally did. So I was just like a crash music course with him. Then to early hip hop tribe and fusion, Weather Report, Light as a Feather, Tower of Power was one of his favorite groups. It’s just fascinating to see how all of that comes out in his writing. But that was such an incredible experience for me. Playing with Wayne Shorter was a milestone experience—seeing how he works, and spending time with him and listening to him talk about his influences. What a privilege. He’s such a big influence on me in terms of writing and harmonies. Working with Terri Lyne Carrington—that’s what an incredible musician and artist. I recorded that Mosaic project CD with her back in 2010. I’d say, in the summer—I didn’t realize how much it had influenced me in the making of this record, Anthem for a New Day.

Ji: In what ways did recording with Terri Lyne Carrington influence your new record?

HS: She has so much experience in funk, urban music, R&B, all that stuff. My jazz experience is that you record in the studio and that’s it. I remember we recorded a trio track with her, me and Esperanza. I was like, “Wow, that’s a nice recording.” But then when I heard the final product, she had added so much stuff in post production—additional things she was hearing, that it was almost a different piece.

Ji: You mean she added things that she played?

HS: No, she added a clarinet, she added vocals and background stuff too, layering stuff which is very present day with the hip hop. So just that idea that a track is the starting point—and that’s how she goes into the studio thinking, versus this is the track. It’s a different process. That happened with some of my songs.

Ji: Did you have any discussions with Wayne Shorter that you’d like to share? By the way, one of the albums of his on which I am fascinated by the orchestrations is Atlantis.

HS: Oh yes. That blew me away. That’s one of my favorite albums. I really think Wayne’s music is not defined by any genre anymore. It’s him, and when you hear him play you know it’s him. I know when I hear Wayne on the radio—and not just because I know all of his recordings. His writing—I admire someone who has persisted through to find that purity. That’s his music. Even though you look through his history, there’s that sense that what he writes is not derivative, it’s just him. Monk is another person like that who was like that out of the gate. I think that is remarkable because he never sounded like anybody but himself. That takes so much courage and perseverance. I loved hearing Wayne talk about his influences. A lot of it was about movie music. I’d hear that, like on that album Speak No Evil. He loved scary movies. He loved Dracula. He loved The Blob and The Sting and The Werewolf and all that stuff. He gave me some advice. I had just moved to New York. He said when he was in New York, he floated around. He said there were many musical cliques and circles but he called himself an observer. He liked floating around in these different circles, not necessarily being firmly entrenched in any of them but just observing. So that’s something I did, because I’m the type of person who I like to feel like I belong. It’s hard as a jazz artist sometimes—for me, because I came to the music so late. I didn’t really go to school four years like a lot of artists did. So sometimes I feel like a bit of an outsider. I feel like a lot of people’s connections for the rest of their musical career, they make in school.

Ji: I understand how you would kind of feel a little bit outside. Of course, everybody is struggling with their own music and careers and almost narcissistically in a mode of thinking that doesn’t go beyond themselves: “Do I sound good? Did I sound good tonight? What did he think, what did she think?” And there’s this kind of paranoia now and then.

HS: No, that continues for me. I think it’s a lifelong struggle. Sometimes when I’m feeling like “Oh man, where do I fit in,” it’s like, “It’s okay.” You just have to keep being true to yourself and being honest about what you hear. I think the worst thing we could do as artists is to change ourselves to try and fit in somewhere because it’s not honest and it can’t be real. That’s one thing jazz has taught me. That’s why I’m so grateful. I feel like jazz has been used in my life at least to help make me hopefully the best or better version of who I could be. The masters would say you play who you are. So I had to deal with myself, work through a lot of stuff in order to feel like an authentic musician and person. Going back to Wayne really quick before I forget it again … I was talking to him about his approach to writing, and he said sometimes he would sit there at the piano all day just trying to find what chord or note comes next. So that to me was like, “Wow.” Sometimes I’ll be trying, just hanging out the chord here … no here … let me try this … hear that again. It’s a very organic way of composing. He is not going to move on until that chord comes, until that note comes. Just to think that Wayne Shorter does that! [laugh] Wayne has been so encouraging too. He was just saying, “Keep doing what you’re doing.” He would say it in his own very cool, unique, peculiar way. To have someone like that say something like that to me, it was just really … and Herbie too! Gosh, these guys are my heroes! I can’t tell you how much it means. The business is hard enough—just to struggle artistically. They’re like a drink of water in the desert when you’re needing that extra little push to help you keep going sometimes. I really treasure those moments and just remind myself how very fortunate I am.

Ji: When you got to New York, what kinds of gigs were you playing? What were some of the challenges that you were experiencing?

HS: I was not one of those people who came to New York and already had a gig. I hung out at all the jam sessions I could find. There was one in Brooklyn that I went to a lot. The club is no longer there—the Up and Over Jazz Club. Then of course Small’s, Cleopatra’s Needle. That’s how I got to meet a lot of musicians. I started doing little gigs here and there. I worked a lot with vocalists. I don’t do that as much anymore—and I would love to again. I love playing with vocalists. I’d play at African American social clubs and I would look up and I’m the only Asian person there. But they were so cool, so accepting. That’s another really important part of jazz I want to acknowledge. It is an African American art form. It came from that culture and I always say jazz is one of the most generous art forms. I think it’s able to take in so many different influences and treatments, but it’s jazz. It still retains what it is. I think that’s very special. That’s very unique. I think that’s what makes jazz so timeless because somehow it’s still jazz. I am just so grateful that jazz had room for me. I really feel like that experience of being around African Americans, hanging out with them, observing their culture—really helped me so much in being able to be a better jazz player too. It’s not just about the technical things. There’s the whole spiritual, cultural—that’s all so much a part of the music too.

Ji: What was the culture like for you growing up?

HS: Well, I’m the oldest of four kids and my parents were immigrants. They were born in [Mainland] China. Their families were on the wrong side when the Communist revolution (Continued on page 30)
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(Continued from page 29)

happened. So their families fled to Taiwan when they were both young. That’s where they met. My dad came here for graduate schooling and my mom eventually also. That’s how I came to be born in Houston, Texas. They were traditional. We call it “Chinesey.” They were Chinesey in some ways, or traditional. But in a lot of ways they weren’t—meaning that we didn’t celebrate Chinese New Year. I remember we didn’t get upset about that until we found out our Chinese friends got money on Chinese New Year — “Wait a second, what is this?” It wasn’t like we always ate Chinese food. One thing I really appreciate about Houston is that it’s a huge city and it’s diverse and it’s urban. We attended magnet schools. Magnet schools were a big tool back in the day to help desegregation. So I remember always being around different ethnicities growing up. Unfortunately I did experience my own little racism against Asians. So it wasn’t like I only grew up around Chinese people or I only grew up around white people.

JI: The racism against Asians that you were experiencing—was that verbal?

HS: Yes, verbal. You know, the stupid calling “chink” and all the words like that, and “jap”. I was like “Wait, first of all I’m not Japanese so why are you saying that?” [laughter]

JI: Like, get your ethnicities together, okay.

HS: Yeah. Like “slanty-eyed,” awful stuff like that. Kids can be mean. They learn it from their parents or whatever.

JI: Like in the book Lord of the Flies, did you ever read that?

HS: Yes, oh my God, awful, right? Gee whiz. But then I grew up in the tradition in the way that we were expected to have straight A’s, never get in trouble at school.

JI: I think it’s really good to develop responsibility and experience a quality upbringing.

HS: Yes. When I was young, I had a little red toy piano that I always tucked under my arm. My mom said that she would hear me play melodies I heard on the TV or the radio. That’s why they were like, “Well maybe she likes this and ought to start taking lessons.” So I started piano and violin at around age five. They were traditional. They never expected me to choose it as a profession. They really wanted me to be a doctor or something like that. Then I got into it and studied under a very strict teacher from Russia. “Nothing is worth listening to except classical music.” So that was basically my life until I left for college. Of course, I had some friends so we would sneak in and listen to Michael Jackson and Madonna. But I always felt a little guilty [laughter]. That was it—pretty one-dimensional artistically. I used to get really bent out of shape when I felt, “Why don’t my parents support me and blah, blah, blah…” not just “Why can’t they get into the music, why can’t they understand.” I have so much appreciation for them now. Wow, how do you do it? You come to a country where you don’t speak the language. You’ve studied at home but it’s different when you’re there. And you started a life and you raised a family. They never had the chance to cultivate an appreciation. That was a luxury really. I’m so grateful that they worked so hard to give me a life where I could make a living as a musician. I get down like everybody else but remind myself to be grateful.

JI: What is it that are attractors for you about this music?

HS: I was talking about this with a friend of mine, the drummer Donald Edwards yesterday. He was saying that we get into the music so much in terms of the breadth. He felt like when he worked within other genres it was very focused — and they don’t want anything else but that. But jazz is just a big mess I guess, in a good way. It’s so wide ranging. What got me into jazz was that feeling that swing gave me. That it made me want to move, made me want to jump up out of my seat. It’s so alive. At the same time jazz has grown and it will continue to evolve, and that’s the beautiful thing about jazz. We get into all of it — that complexity, the nuance, the layers upon layers upon layers.

JI: What were some of the albums that you first listened to that got you interested in the music?

HS: Oscar Peterson’s Night Train. Miles Davis, Kind of Blue, I think that’s the first album I ever bought. Bill Evans, Jazz Explorations. Herbie Hancock, Maiden Voyage. Keith Jarrett — ow, what is he doing? This solo piano thing — it was just so remarkable. You could probably see these all have kind of a classical shading to them. That’s how I made my way in.

JI: What’s composing like for you? What kinds of inspirations do you experience?

HS: Well, I’ll never forget something Gil Goldstein said. He said there’s always stuff going through your head. There’s stuff going through your ears. But there are a few seeds that you know you need to pay attention to — and that if you don’t pay attention to them it’s going to be lost. That’s not consciously what I thought about what I was doing. But it’s so true. Most of my songs come from an idea. It can be rhythmic, it can be melodic, it can be a harmonic progression that somehow I see where this is going to lead. I never took composition lesson — which I want to do at some point — to have a more systematic way of looking at things. Sometimes textures are a source of inspiration for me — chamber music textures, orchestral textures. Chamber music also informs my writing. And like you said, transcribing has helped me, like “What is that [chord or melody line]?”

JI: Yes, sure. You’re trying to figure out that one note that’s obscured by some other instrument or chord, or whatever.

HS: Yes, because it all goes inside in the big mix and it comes out at different times. I think music is such a great responsibility. There’s a creative aspect, but there’s also an emotional and spiritual aspect. I feel like we’re receivers of beauty that we are meant to transmit to the world. It’s always like, “Oh, gosh, I wish I could do more. Why didn’t I blah, blah, blah?” It is important to be faithful to that because music is a gift. I’ve been given this gift and I want to be a faithful steward.

JI: In an article that I read years ago about Mastery, a primary idea was that you’re on this path of mastery as opposed to being a master at whatever you do. Also, we spend most of our time on plateaus. For example, you’re practicing and practicing and practicing and you feel like you’re not going anywhere.

HS: Oh lord have mercy, yes.

JI: Then suddenly, you put it down for a day, a week, maybe months, or maybe not at all, and suddenly there’s this jump up to another level.

HS: Breakthrough.

JI: Yes. This breakthrough is a jump up to this next level, but you don’t stay at that next level. You drop back to a level that’s a little bit lower than the one you’ve jumped to, but higher than where you just were. So the path of mastery is an ongoing series of spending most of your time on plateaus, interspersed with jumps up to a higher level and retreat back to somewhere in between — until the next jump up.

Clifford Brown
His Life & Music — Part 3

By John R. Barrett, Jr.

Clifford’s July session for Pacific Jazz (Clifford Brown Ensemle - Pacific Jazz PJ-19) was unlike any he had made up to that point. The band was an octet, with people he had never played with before (Zoot Sims, Carson Smith, Shelly Manne.) The result was a blend of East and West Coasts: the group swung like a big-scale bop unit, and the sound palette was richer than anything you’d find in the East. Two Clifford Brown standards were recorded for the first time, including “Daaahoud,” a tune he started while in Algeria. Arranger Jack Montrose put the group into sections: Brown plays, then the reeds in a separate line, and the two rarely intersect. Pianist Russ Freeman is used as a percussionist, chiming in between the horns. Clifford’s solo seems “cooler” than usual, each phrase having the same precision you’d find in the chart. (Montrose said “[I]n Brownie’s improvisations all the notes were correct—like they were written down by Beethoven.”)

“Joy Spring” begins with a sunny walk—Brown starts gently and the band answers with a chord. Here the horns seem intrusive, obscuring the tune’s clean lines; Clifford is nice but his turn is too short. “Tiny Capers” has the feel of a classical piece, with its contrapuntal lines and resonant brass. Brown stays near the theme, wistful and calm; Stu Williamson’s trombone is more active, with a tone close to Clifford’s. Zoot plays Lester on his wonderful solo, and Freeman romps it back home. It’s an interesting experiment; if the session proves anything it’s that Clifford has no “coast”—he is everyone’s.

On August 2 the quintet was at the Capitol Tower in Hollywood, cutting their first session for Emarcy. Some tunes would appear on Clifford Brown and Max Roach (Emarcy MG 26043), the rest on Brown and Roach Incorporated (Emarcy MG 36008). “Delilah” is sensuous, with Powell’s chords washing over a baião-like bass. Clifford has a mule, snapping against the desert sand; Land has a grainy voice and a forceful attack. (His model was Lucky Thompson and you can hear some of that here.) Brown’s solo is open, and works from a soft mumble into roof-raising shouts. Max holds a clinic, going over everything in his kit: a range of tonal color barely hinted on the GNP sides. Land is alone for “Darn That Dream,” choking up on those trembling, breathy notes. The accompaniment is like a celeste, or a music box.

Richie Powell contributed a tune of his brother’s, “Parishian Thoroughfare”: the cymbals go crazy and the horns honk. (Powell quotes “La Marseillaise” on the theme.) Harold shouts his solo while Clifford finesses his—a nice, relaxed gait. Despite the bluster, there’s no real hurry here; the group simply lets the beauty of the tune display itself.

August 3 saw work on three tunes; Duke Jordan’s “Jordu” is taken at a crawl. The horns work together before Brown’s creamy solo; Land’s is slippery and sly. “Sweet Clifford” is a “Georgia Brown” variant, very fast and not much else. There’s a quote of “High Society,” which Clifford did often. Brown’s ballad is “Ghost of a Chance,” told in hard, slightly weary tones. He yawns, then he wails—it’s a great feeling. Four tunes came three days later: a triumphant “Daaahoud” (brass pitted against drums, with Powell deep in the mix), a sparkling “Joy Spring” (Land uncorks a gritty gem of a solo), the earthy “Mildama” (a tom-tom spotlight for Max, and the delicate “These Foolish Things” (a feature for Morrow, not released until the Brownie box set.) The result was a potent album, full of good solos and a showcase for Clifford’s songwriting. When the disc was reissued as a 12” LP, more tunes were needed, and these would be recorded later.

Several standards were planned on August 10: “Stompin’ at the Savoy” is almost sedate, going slower than usual. Clifford starts the theme, Harold completes it, and the theme gets varied, almost from the start. (It sounds like Brown is egging Land on.) Harold buzzes through a happy solo; Powell’s turn is clever, and Clifford’s is a warm whisper. “String Along with You” is a solo for Richie, glistens with romantic echo, and “I Get a Kick” is a storm where the heat keeps building. Land takes the bridge, and it’s impressive—but not like Clifford. He begins by running through the depth of his range, followed by some high patterns, and then he goes faster. Land’s solo is great, and Powell’s very good, but they can’t compete with Clifford. After all, very few could.

The next day was totally unplanned: a herd of musicians in a massive jam session, to be called Best Coast Jazz. (It was later reissued as Clifford Brown All-Stars—Emarcy MG 36132). Present were Kenny Drew, Herb Geller, Walter Benton, Joe Mami, Curtis Counce, with Brown and Roach. The numbers are very long (the shortest exceeds fifteen minutes!), there are good solos, but you have to wait for them. As Nick Catalano remarks in his book Clifford Brown: “This session goes right for the gut before pausing at the brain.”

On August 14, Emarcy called again: it was another jam session, only more organized. Dinah Washington was making a live album in the studio (fifty guests were admitted, for a “party” atmosphere) and she wanted an all-star band. When Clifford arrived, he was awed: he’d be playing beside Clark Terry and Maynard Ferguson (neither were far-famous yet, but would soon be.) He told LaRue, “I won’t be able...” and went to talk with Dinah Washington. When he asked, “Do you really want me to do this?”, her reply was “You’re going to save me!”

The results were put into two albums, Jam Session and Dinah Jams (Emarcy MG 36000). If Dinah needed confidence, she doesn’t show it: her voice bubbles and stings, with a hint of Billie Holiday. She is sweet and serene on “No More.” And in the distance you hear Clifford, murmuring, slow and sad. Harold has a long, lyrical solo on “Darn That Dream”, and “I’ll Remember April” is a box of riches. Max sets up a mambo rhythm, Dinah has a smile in her voice, Terry grows through a mute...and before he ends, Clifford explodes, with some devastating high notes. He might not have saved Dinah, but he made her session (Continued on page 32)
memorable.

The end of August was as memorable as the beginning. Clifford won his first major award: Down Beat’s New Star on trumpet, on August 25. He also placed fourth in the trumpet poll, behind Gillespie, Armstrong, and Eldridge, but ahead of Miles Davis.

On August 30th the group played its final concert for Gene Norman, at the Pasadena Civic Auditorium. The music was transmitted, by telephone line, to Radio Recorders in Hollywood, where it was mastered directly onto 16-inch discs. (The engineer also did some on-the-spot editing, against Norman’s wishes; many sax solos were lost in the process.) These tunes are similar to the Emarcy versions, perhaps with a little more polish. “Jordu” is now faster, and the peaks higher; Clifford triggers two waves of applause with his loud, percussive solo.

“On August 14, Emarcy called again: it was another jam session, only more organized. Dinah Washington was making a live album in the studio (fifty guests were admitted, for a ‘party’ atmosphere) and she wanted an all-star band. When Clifford arrived, he was awed: he’d be playing beside Clark Terry and Maynard Ferguson (neither were famous yet, but would soon be).”

(There’s an abrupt cut to the exchanges, which is the only place we hear Harold Land.) Clifford is then announced, playing “I Can’t Get Started”; he’s fine, but there’s a bad ring in his microphone. (His final flourish sounds like a rainstorm; the crowd eats it up.)

“I Get a Kick” is very close to the studio version; Land has a mellower tone, and Clifford flutters his notes in a way you won’t believe. “Parisian Thoroughfare” is taken up a notch; Powell quotes “Can Can” and Harold is silky smooth. Clifford is good, but Max is amazing, going over his kit at various speeds and rhythms. The applause is fit for a job well done.

After Pasadena, the band went on its first tour, centered in the Northeast. They hit Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit. When they reached New York on December 16, Clifford had a job waiting for him. Sarah Vaughan was about to make a new record, and she requested his horn—they had first met when he was touring with Chris Powell. The other horns are Herbie Mann and Paul Quinichette; the arranger was Ernie Wilkins, who was beginning his long run with Count Basie.

This album (Sarah Vaughan—Emarcy MG 36004) is full of small delights: Sarah scatting low of “Lullaby of Birdland,” followed by Brown in a similar tone. Jimmy Jones’ warm piano on “April in Paris,” enfolding Vaughan as she moans her regret. Quinichette, called “The Vice President” for his resemblance to Lester Young, shows why in his solo of beautiful sadness. Sarah’s duet with Mann on “Jim,” leading to Clifford’s bright solo in hopeful escalation. (Herbie and Paul then whisper together, sounding like one instrument.) Her mannered verse on “I’m Glad There Is You,” with the horns weaving through at odd moments. Brown’s muted chorus on “September Song,” relaxed yet busy—his impact is loud while his tone is soft. Wilkins makes this small group sound like a choir, a lovely fog through which Sarah’s star can shine, and the glow is impressive.

 Barely a week later, on December 22, Clifford returned to the studio for another singer: Helen Merrill in her first album, arranged by Quincy Jones. (Helen Merrill with Clifford Brown - Emarcy MG 36006.) With a great rhythm section (again led by Jimmy Jones) behind him, Clifford was the main solo voice. Helen Merrill was so affected by this session that forty years later she produced Brownie, an album-length tribute to the man who helped her career get started.

Brown-Roach started 1955 on the road, playing Philly and Toronto before returning to New York. The entire group, minus Land, was on hand for Clifford’s next project: an album of ballads with a nine-piece string section. (And he was still 24 years old; some jazzmen wait their whole lives for a string album.)

The arranger was Neal Hefti. A trumpeter himself, Hefti knew of Brown but hadn’t yet met him: “I was conducting the orchestra, but I was really conducting Clifford. My eye contact was more with him than anyone else…[W]hen I heard Clifford Brown go into sixteen bars of beautiful improvisation on ‘Stardust’ after the final chorus, I thought ‘Gosh, I never heard anyone do it like that.’”

The strings had already been rehearsed when Brown entered the Fine Recording studio. By all accounts, it went smoothly: the strings open “Yesterdays” lushly, then recede as Clifford unleashes big, creamy notes. Max’ cymbals are the anchor, along with the light guitar of Barry Galbraith. Brown trembles on “What’s New?”, sounding frail even as his tone is strong. Powell adds dramatic chords, and the strings sort of sneak in. While the charts can be heavy-handed, Clifford is understated; his simple lines on “Blue Moon” outdo the grandeur around him. “Lavin’ Dat Man” shows the strings at their jazziest, while Clifford comes on like a sax. One note slides into another, and his breath never falters; the command he displays here is impressive. He’s loud and soft on “Willow Weep for Me” in a duet with himself, and “Stardust” is all Hefti says it is. The end result was Clifford’s best-selling album (Clifford Brown with Strings - Emarcy MG 36005) and it’s the record which inspired Wynton Marsalis to become a trumpeter.

The quintet spent much of February in Boston, where they played the Storyville club on a bill with the Modern Jazz Quartet. (It was during this stay that Clifford and LaRue had their third wedding ceremony.) On February 23 they arrived at Mercury Sound Studios in New York to make their next album for Emarcy, Study in Brown. (Emarcy MG 36037.) Leftover tracks from this session were added to Clifford Brown and Max Roach when that disc was reissued as a 12” album.

“Gerkin for Perkin” is a fast bopper with “wrong” chords—it sounds modern even today. Land has a lusty solo, full of grit; Clifford’s is tightly wound, with high notes on top for decoration. “Take the ‘A’ Train” arrives in a crowd-ed station: Morrow plays 4/4 as Max goes 6/8. Powell crashes down, faster and faster; a train whistle roars through, and now starts the theme. Harold starts the bridge slow with Brown in double-time; the roles are reversed by phrase’s end. Harold has oomph on his solo, a drive you’d expect from Johnny Griffin; Clifford runs fast, bopping between three or four notes. “Land’s End” sneaks up on you, its busy bridge contrasting with a greasy slow theme. Harold’s tone has a blunt buzz, where Brown is careful

“The greatest day in your life and mine is when we take total responsibility for our attitudes. That’s the day we truly grow up.”

-John Maxwell
Clifford Brown, Part 3

and cautious—it’s a beautiful contrast.

The following day was busy, with six different tunes getting cut. (Some alternate takes were saved for More Study in Brown—Emarcy 814637—as was a truncated version of “Land’s End.”) “Swingin’” is first on the menu: a Silverlike bop line, it’s fast and lives up to its name. “George’s Dilemma” was originally called “Ulcer Department” and works Morrow’s bass into a calm, exotic environment. Land’s solo has no worry, and ambles with a warm assurance. (Powell’s turn is drenched in echo, for a different kind of beauty.)

“If I Love Again” is intricate and fast, with phrases heard on other Brown solos; “Blues Walk” is more like a jog, with everyone getting their licks in. (The version on More Study is faster, and I think I like it better.) “What Am I Here For?” is very fast, sporting one of Clifford’s best solos, and “Cherokee” starts on the warpath, the band chanting together with force. Harold is wonderful here, and don’t forget Max—as if you could from that opening.

Finishing up on February 25, “Jacqui” finds the group in a salon, taking a prim theme from the drawing room to the barroom. Brown shows off his lower register, while Morrow bows an ending which suggests “Con Alma.” And the slow blues take us home on “Sandu”: Clifford has a good double-time bit, while Land seems even faster. This album is less mannered than the first, more bluesy, and stronger...in several different ways.

In their typically restless manner, the group spent their springtime in transit, passing through Detroit and Toronto before heading to Philadelphia. During their week at the Blue Note, Max got hurt in a car crash and had to take five days off. (During that time, he was replaced by Art Blakey.) Then came two weeks at Chicago’s Bee Hive; this engagement ended on July 15, with the group. Brown may be good here, but Sonny takes over. He sounds especially inspired. In one regard, he was: struggling with addiction at the time, Rollins adapted the practice regimen of his bandmate. “Clifford was a profound influence on my life. He showed me that it was possible to live a good, clean life and still be a good jazz musician.”

“Junior’s Arrival” was titled “Step Lightly” by its author, Benny Golson; the name was changed with the birth of Clifford’s son. Brown plays high and pure on the theme, deep and speedy on his solo. Sonny tries the same thing,...

“[Clifford] found out that Sonny Rollins was in town, rooming with Billy Mitchell at the YMCA. Rollins wasn’t seeking employment at the time; he’d said no to Miles Davis earlier in the year, and was delaying his answer to Clifford. Finally, the silence was broken by Billy Mitchell: ‘Look, if you don’t want the job, I’ll take it.’”

(Continued on page 35)
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unquestionably hot. “I Feel a Song” has a great opening vamp and a “sheets of sound” solo by Brown—and there is nothing wrong with “Pent-Up House.” The theme is great, Clifford is intricate, Rollins is earthy, and Max is thunderous. After this strong effort, the band packed up and headed to their next gig. It would be the last album the group would make.

After a long stay in New York, the band went south: a week in D.C., then a concert in Norfolk, Virginia. On June 18, LaRue and Clifford, Jr. flew to Los Angeles; Clifford promised to join them (with the gift of a fur coat) after the tour was complete. On June 19 Max and Sonny headed to New Jersey to record Saxophone Colossus, possibly Rollins’ most important record. Brown and Richie Powell headed to Philadelphia, for a few days’ relaxation.

“I Feel a Song” has a great beginning vamp and a “sheets of sound” solo by Clifford Brown, Part 3

Music City, on 1035 Chestnut Street, was owned by Ellis Tollin, a music teacher and session drummer. (In 1961, he would play on Chubby Checker’s “The Twist.”) Begun as a drum studio in 1948, it expanded to teach other instruments and, eventually, sell them. On Tuesdays a part of the store would be cleared away, a major star would jam from 7:00 to 8:00 PM, and Tollin’s own group would play until 10:00 PM—all for the admission of one or two dollars. Clifford played many times here, which led to the confusion of the dates. Many times he’d stay after the sessions and offer pointers to the trumpeters in the audience, one of whom was Lee Morgan. On this session, the players were among the best Philly had to offer. The pianist was Sam Dockery, later to join the Jazz Messengers; on tenor were Billy Root (who would play in Dizzy’s big band) and Ziggy Vines (who only made two records in his lifetime.) The drummer, as usual, was Ellis Tollin. The music they produced can, without exaggeration, be called legendary.

“Walkin’” starts at a fast pace, propelled by Tollin’s crisp cymbals. Brown takes the first solo, with delicate high notes and low swoops. And then he goes fast—someone screams, and the crowd approves. Root, best known on the baritone sax, gives to his tenor the power of the big horn. His solo includes the “High Society” quote Brown sometimes used, perhaps in acknowledgment of Clifford. Ziggy is smooth and sly, a tone so close to Lester Young it’s scary. The crowd eats it up, and the exchanges are something special.

Dockery opens a swift “Night in Tunisia” with a tense little riff. Smooth, shiny notes emerge from Clifford’s horn, and the fans shout excitedly. This solo could be composed… it is that perfect. (Those high notes will drop your jaw.) Ziggie skates around with finesse, and Dockery has a reflective solo. “Donna Lee” is a little ragged at first, but builds into a speed trial for Clifford. (Not as good as “Walkin’,” but it’s close.) Dockery has an extended solo, his best; Brown returns, with better control this time. Ending with a flourish, Clifford Brown tells his audience, “You make me feel so… wonderful. I really must go now.” If this was his final night on earth, those words seem positively chilling.

Right after the show, Clifford and Richie Powell got into Brown’s car, heading towards Chicago. At the wheel was Nancy Powell, Richie’s wife. Max Roach believes Clifford started driving, then handed the keys to Nancy when he got tired. After a gas stop in Bedford, Pennsylvania, the car hit a curve on the rain-slicked road—a curve which had taken other lives that week. The car leaped a guardrail, hit a bridge abutment, and ran down a steep embankment. Richie Powell, Nancy Powell, and Clifford Brown were all killed instantly.

Max tried to keep the band going, with Kenny Dorham in Clifford’s place; Sonny Rollins soon left, and afterwards the group disbanded. Sonny would embark on a solo career, yielding albums like Freedom Suite, Sonny Rollins at the Village Vanguard, and the aforementioned Saxophone Colossus. Max would proceed to large-scale projects like It’s Time, Freedom Now!, and the percussion group M’Boom. For those who played beside him, knowing Clifford Brown was a pivotal moment in their lives. His presence is still felt today: as Nicholas Payton has stated, “I don’t know if we’ll ever hear the trumpet played like that again.”

This article is respectfully dedicated to the memories of Harold Land, who played beside Clifford Brown for nearly two years, and to Ellis Tollin, who hosted the final performance of Clifford’s life. Ellis Tollin died in Tamarac, Florida, on March 30, 2001; Harold Land died in Los Angeles on July 27, 2001. For those who knew them and their music, they will truly be missed.

Special thanks go to Gene Norman, Don Schlitten and Jeanette Tollin for participating in the interviews which contributed to this article. Their insights were invaluable for the preparation of this work.—John Barrett

“A man can get discouraged many times but he is not a failure until he begins to blame somebody else and stops trying.”

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