Interviews

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Jazz At Lincoln Center, May 15-16

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With David Sanchez, Village Vanguard, April 22-24

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Annual Guitar Directory
Clayton-Hamilton
Together with an all-star lineup of Los Angeles-based musicians, the big band received an enthusiastic response from reviewers and fans.

Charles McPherson
He remains a strong, viable force on the jazz scene today. He is at the height of his powers. His playing combines passionate feeling with intricate patterns of improvisation.

Terell Stafford
Stafford’s exceptionally expressive and well defined musical talent allows him to dance in and around the rich trumpet tradition of his predecessors while making his own inroads.

Joshua Breakstone
His flowing lines on up-tempo cookers are impeccably clean and fiery, bearing the mark of a first-rate improviser, while his chordal work on heartbreaker ballads is the final word in finesse. — Guitar Player magazine.

Ken Peplowski
Ken Peplowski is reunited with his NYC working group that includes Ted Rosenthal on piano, Martin Wind on bass and Matt Wilson on drums.

Stranahan / Zaleski / Rosato
Limitless shows that the partnership is working quite well and in all likelihood hadn’t even hit its ceiling yet.
— S. Victor Aaron, Something Else Reviews

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Monday, April 1
- William Paterson University Jazz Orchestra & Quintet With Ingrid Jensen; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Vanguard Jazz Orchestra; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Ari Hoenig Quartet; Joe Farnsworth Trio feat. Buster Williams; Jon Faddis Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Deborah Davis, 21st Annual Jazz Benefit; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Tuesday, April 2
- J.D. Allen Quartet Featuring Liberty Elman; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Yotam Silberstein Quartet Featuring John Pettittucci; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Sullivan Forth Trio – Sullivan Forth, Piano; Ameen Saleem, Bass; Jeremy ‘Bean’ Clemons, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Hilk Salem Quintet; Abraham Burton Quartet; Malik McLauryne Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Benny Green; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Joshua Redman Quartet; Aaron Goldberg/Reuben Rogers/Gregory Hutchison; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Wednesday, April 3
- J.D. Allen Quartet Featuring Liberty Elman; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Yotam Silberstein Quartet Featuring John Pettittucci; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Sullivan Forth Trio – Sullivan Forth, Piano; Ameen Saleem, Bass; Jeremy ‘Bean’ Clemons, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Brent Broehlhead; Sam Dillon Quartet; Davis Whifflet Quartet “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Clint Holmes Celebrates The Jazz of Sammy Davis. Jr From The Copa to Broadway; Joe Alterman; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Joshua Redman Quartet; Aaron Goldberg/Reuben Rogers/Gregory Hutchison; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Thursday, April 4
- Veronica Swift; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- An Evening With Ben Vereen; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Sullivan Forth Trio – Sullivan Forth, Piano; Ameen Saleem, Bass; Jeremy ‘Bean’ Clemons, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Aaron Seiber Quartet; Francisco Mela and the Crash Trio; Malik Koly “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Diane Marino; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Joshua Redman Quartet; Aaron Goldberg/Reuben Rogers/Gregory Hutchison; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Friday, April 5
- Veronica Swift; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- An Evening With Ben Vereen; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Sullivan Forth Trio – Sullivan Forth, Piano; Ameen Saleem, Bass; Jeremy ‘Bean’ Clemons, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Eliot Zigmund Quintet; Ken Fowser Quintet; JD Allen “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Birdland Big Band; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Joshua Redman Quartet; Aaron Goldberg/Reuben Rogers/Gregory Hutchison; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Saturday, April 6
- Veronica Swift; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- An Evening With Ben Vereen; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Sullivan Forth Trio - Sullivan Forth, Piano; Ameen Saleem, Bass; Jeremy ‘Bean’ Clemons, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Eliot Zigmund Quintet; Ken Fowser Quintet, Brooklyn Circle; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Joshua Redman Quartet; Aaron Goldberg/Reuben Rogers/Gregory Hutchison; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.
- McCoy Tyner and Charles McPherson At 80; Pianist McCoy Tyner and saxophonist Charles McPherson join the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis for an 80th birthday celebration. 8PM, Rose Theater, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way Sunday, April 7
- Jazz For Kids; Veronica Swift; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- An Evening With Ben Vereen; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Sullivan Forth Trio - Sullivan Forth, Piano; Ameen Saleem, Bass; Jeremy ‘Bean’ Clemons, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Jeremy Manasia Quintet; The Zetet; Music of Saul Zebulon Rubin; Alon Near Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.

Monday, April 8
- Mingus Big Band: Celebrating 10 Years at Jazz Standard; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Manhattan School Of Music Jazz Orchestra: Manhattan Sings; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Vanguard Jazz Orchestra; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Omer Avital Trio; Rodney Green Quartet; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Jim Curnis’s Cast Party; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Pablo Sainz Villegas; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Tuesday, April 9
- SFJAZZ Collective plays Miles Davis; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Julien Labro & The Chanson Experiment; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Steve Wilson & Wilsonian’s Grain - Steve Wilson, Alto Saxophone; Orrin Evans, Piano; Ugonna Okegwo, Bass; Ulysses Owens, Jr., Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Justin Robinson Quartet; Frank Lucy’s Tromboniverse; Malik McLauryne Trio; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- James Carter Organ Trio; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Dizzy Gillespie Afro Cuban All-Stars; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Wednesday, April 10
- SFJAZZ Collective plays Miles Davis; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Mason Brothers Quintet; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Steve Wilson & Wilsonian’s Grain - Steve Wilson, Alto Saxophone; Orrin Evans, Piano; Ugonna Okegwo, Bass; Ulysses Owens, Jr., Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Remy Le Beauf Quintet; Mike Lee Trio; Davis Whifflet Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- James Carter Organ Trio; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Dizzy Gillespie Afro Cuban All-Stars; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Thursday, April 11
- SFJAZZ Collective plays Miles Davis; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Mason Brothers Quintet; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & B’way
- Steve Wilson & Wilsonian’s Grain - Steve Wilson, Alto Saxophone; Orrin Evans, Piano; Ugonna Okegwo, Bass; Ulysses Owens, Jr., Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Carlos Abade Quartet; Jeremy Wheelon Quartet; Jonathan Thomas Trio “After-hours”; Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
- James Carter Organ Trio; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Arturo Sandoval; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Friday, April 12
- SFJAZZ Collective plays Antonio Carlos Jobim; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.

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Saturday April 13

- SFJAZZ Collective plays Antonio Carlos Jobim; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
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Hello, my name is David Haney. I am a pianist and composer. In 2012 I took over as publisher and editor of Cadence Magazine. We have the same mandate to present independent free press. We are dedicated to the promotion of creative music. I encourage you to give us a try. You will love the new Cadence.
Monday, April 22
- Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Terence Blanchard ft The E-Collective; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Tuesday, April 23
- Darcy James Argue's Secret Society; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Sam Reider & Human Hands; Dizzy's Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bway
- Gerald Clayton Quintet - Logan Richardson, Alto Saxophone; Walter Smith III, Tenor Saxophone; Gerald Clayton, Piano; Joe Sanders, Bass; Marcus Gilmore, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Gene Jackson Trio; Frank Lacy's Tromboniverse; Malik Mc Laurine Trio "After-hours"; Smalls, 183 W. 10th St.
- Kurt Rosenwinkel; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Roy Haynes 94th Birthday Celebration; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Wednesday, April 24
- Darcy James Argue's Secret Society; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Evan Christopher: The Kings Of New Orleans Clarinet; Dizzy's Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bway
- Gerald Clayton Quintet - Logan Richardson, Alto Saxophone; Walter Smith III, Tenor Saxophone; Gerald Clayton, Piano; Joe Sanders, Bass; Marcus Gilmore, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Matt Pavolich's Horns Band; Dave Baron Quintet; Micah Thomas Trio "After-hours"; Smalls, 183 W. 10th St.
- Kurt Rosenwinkel; Dena DeRose Featuring Special Guest Artist: Houston Person; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Roy Haynes 94th Birthday Celebration; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Thursday, April 25
- Stefon Harris Blackout; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- "New York, Old Friend": Songs Of Kenneth D. Laub With Clint Holmes; Veronica Swift And Nicolas King; Dizzy's Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bway
- Gerald Clayton Quintet - Logan Richardson, Alto Saxophone; Walter Smith III, Tenor Saxophone; Gerald Clayton, Piano; Joe Sanders, Bass; Marcus Gilmore, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Matt Pavolich’s Horns Band; Dave Baron Quintet; Micah Thomas Trio “After-hours”; Smalls, 183 W. 10th St.
- Kurt Rosenwinkel; Dena DeRose Featuring Special Guest Artist: Houston Person; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Manhattan Transfer; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Friday, April 26
- Stefon Harris & Blackout; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Kenny Barron Quartet; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bway
- Gerald Clayton Quintet - Logan Richardson, Alto Saxophone; Walter Smith III, Tenor Saxophone; Gerald Clayton, Piano; Joe Sanders, Bass; Marcus Gilmore, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Christopher McBride; Noah Preminger Quintet; Coney Wallace DUBset "After-hours"; Smalls, 183 W. 10th St.
- Manhattan Transfer; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.
- Wynton Marsalis and Ken Burns: Country Music - Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis and vocalists Emmylou Harris, Rhiannon Giddens, and Marty Stuart perform country hits. Plus get a sneak peek at Ken Burns’ latest documentary, Country Music. 8PM, Rose Theater, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bway

Saturday, April 27
- Stefon Harris & Blackout; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Kenny Barron Quartet; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bway
- Gerald Clayton Quintet - Logan Richardson, Alto Saxophone; Walter Smith III, Tenor Saxophone; Gerald Clayton, Piano; Joe Sanders, Bass; Marcus Gilmore, Drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Christopher McBride & The Whole Proof; Noah Preminger Quintet; Philip Harper Quintet; Smalls, 183 W. 10th St.
- Kurt Rosenwinkel; Dena DeRose Featuring Special Guest Artist: Houston Person; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
Monday, May 6
- Vanguard Jazz Orchestra; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Mingus Orchestra: Celebrating 10 Years at Jazz Standard; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Mios; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Tuesday, May 7
- Antonio Sanchez with Chris Potter; saxophone; Donny McCaslin, saxophone; Scott Colley, bass; Antonio Sanchez, drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Sax & Taps With Dewitt Fleming, Jr. & Erica Von Kleist; Dizzy’s Club, 315 W. 44th St.

Wednesday, May 8
- Antonio Sanchez with Chris Potter; saxophone; Donny McCaslin, saxophone; Scott Colley, bass; Antonio Sanchez, drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Sax & Taps With Dewitt Fleming, Jr. & Erica Von Kleist; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdwy

Thursday, May 9
- Antonio Sanchez with Chris Potter; saxophone; Donny McCaslin, saxophone; Scott Colley, bass; Antonio Sanchez, drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Juilliard Jazz Orchestra: Music Of Duke Ellington; Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdwy

Friday, May 10
- Antonio Sanchez with Chris Potter; saxophone; Donny McCaslin, saxophone; Scott Colley, bass; Antonio Sanchez, drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.

Saturday, May 11
- Antonio Sanchez with Chris Potter; saxophone; Donny McCaslin, saxophone; Scott Colley, bass; Antonio Sanchez, drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.

Sunday, May 12
- Antonio Sanchez with Chris Potter; saxophone; Donny McCaslin, saxophone; Scott Colley, bass; Antonio Sanchez, drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.

Monday, May 13
- Vanguard Jazz Orchestra; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.

Tuesday, May 14
- Seasons Band - Ben Wendel; saxophone; Glad Hinkelerman, guitar; Aaron Parks, piano; Matthew Brewer, bass; Eric Harland, drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Bill Charlap Trio; Dizzy’s Club Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdwy

Wednesday, May 15
- Seasons Band - Ben Wendel; saxophone; Glad Hinkelerman, guitar; Aaron Parks, piano; Matthew Brewer, bass; Eric Harland, drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Gil Evans Project directed by Trudy Vaness; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.

Thursday, May 16
- Seasons Band - Ben Wendel; saxophone; Glad Hinkelerman, guitar; Aaron Parks, piano; Matthew Brewer, bass; Eric Harland, drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Gil Evans Project directed by Trudy Vaness; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.

Friday, May 17
- Seasons Band - Ben Wendel; saxophone; Glad Hinkelerman, guitar; Aaron Parks, piano; Matthew Brewer, bass; Eric Harland, drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Gil Evans Project directed by Trudy Vaness; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.

Saturday, May 18
- Seasons Band - Ben Wendel; saxophone; Glad Hinkelerman, guitar; Aaron Parks, piano; Matthew Brewer, bass; Eric Harland, drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.

Sunday, May 19
- Seasons Band - Ben Wendel; saxophone; Glad Hinkelerman, guitar; Aaron Parks, piano; Matthew Brewer, bass; Eric Harland, drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.

Monday, May 20
- Vanguard Jazz Orchestra; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Mingus Big Band: Celebrating 10 Years at Jazz Standard; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Amanda Brecker; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.

Tuesday, May 21
- Trio Tapestry - Joe Lovano, saxophone; Marilyn Crispell, piano; Carmen Castaldi, drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Gil Gutierrez; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Dr. Lonnie Smith with The Jazz Orchestra of the Concertgebouw; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.

Wednesday, May 22
- Trio Tapestry - Joe Lovano, saxophone; Marilyn Crispell, piano; Carmen Castaldi, drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Brandee Younger & Friends with Special Guests TBA; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Thursday, May 23
- Trio Tapestry - Joe Lovano, saxophone; Marilyn Crispell, piano; Carmen Castaldi, drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Melissa Aldana Quartet; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.

Friday, May 24
- Trio Tapestry - Joe Lovano, saxophone; Marilyn Crispell, piano; Carmen Castaldi, drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Melissa Aldana Quartet; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.

Saturday, May 25
- Trio Tapestry - Joe Lovano, saxophone; Marilyn Crispell, piano; Carmen Castaldi, drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Dr. Lonnie Smith with The Jazz Orchestra of the Concertgebouw; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.

Sunday, May 26
- Trio Tapestry - Joe Lovano, saxophone; Marilyn Crispell, piano; Carmen Castaldi, drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Melissa Aldana Quartet; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Greg Ruvolo Big Band Collective; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.

Monday, May 27
- Vanguard Jazz Orchestra; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Arianna Neuking; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.

Tuesday, May 28
- Mark Giuliana Quartet - Jason Rigby, saxophone; Shai Maestro, piano; Chris Morrissey, bass; Mark Giuliana, drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Fred Hersch Duo Invitation Series with Kenny Barron; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.

Wednesday, May 29
- Mark Giuliana Quartet - Jason Rigby, saxophone; Shai Maestro, piano; Chris Morrissey, bass; Mark Giuliana, drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Fred Hersch Duo Invitation Series with Julian Lage; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Alain Broadbent; Jazz Masters Play Onette Coleman with Tom Harrell, Donny McCaslin, Ben Allison, Steve Smith; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.

Thursday, May 30
- Mark Giuliana Quartet - Jason Rigby, saxophone; Shai Maestro, piano; Chris Morrissey, bass; Mark Giuliana, drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Fred Hersch Duo Invitation Series with Kurt Elling; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Alain Broadbent; Jazz Masters Play Onette Coleman with Tom Harrell, Donny McCaslin, Ben Allison, Steve Smith; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Kenny Garrett; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.

Friday, May 31
- Mark Giuliana Quartet - Jason Rigby, saxophone; Shai Maestro, piano; Chris Morrissey, bass; Mark Giuliana, drums; Village Vanguard 178 7th Ave S.
- Fred Hersch DUO Invitation Series with Drew Gress & Billy Hart; Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St.
- Alain Broadbent; Jazz Masters Play Onette Coleman with Tom Harrell, Donny McCaslin, Ben Allison, Steve Smith; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Kenny Garrett; Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St.
"A system of morality which is based on relative emotional values is a mere illusion, a thoroughly vulgar conception which has nothing in it and nothing true." — Socrates
Donny McCaslin
Lead A Balanced Life

Interview by Eric Nemeyer
Photo (right) - Cover of album Beyond Now

DM: Well, with Gary Burton, as I was saying earlier, I started playing with him when I was chosen for a student group that he took on a Jazz cruise when I was a junior at Berklee and then my last year, I joined his band and toured with him pretty regularly for the next few years. The thing that was great was that he was really clear about what he wanted musically and what my role in the band was. Before I played with him, I was used to sort of playing tunes, a lot of rhythm changes, blues, modal tunes, etcetera … playing really long and really open. In his group, it was a very structured environment musically. He gave me a clear role in terms of what to do during the melody, what part of the melody to play. When it came to soloing, it wasn’t kind of an open ended thing. He would say, “Okay, play a couple of choruses on this tune.” You would kind of have a general idea what his expectations were in terms of your role in the group basically. It was a good discipline for me because I was so used to playing really long and taking a few choruses to warm up to a solo and basically with him, if I knew I only had two choruses, I knew I had to get right to the point and sort of cut out the superfluous information.

J1: And then with Mike?

DM: With Mike Mainieri, I was a few years older and had more experience. The thing with Mike was it was sort of wide open but he was clear with me with what my role was. He wanted me to be sort of upfront, taking charge of the band, and playing strong. In that sense, it was clear. In terms of how I did that, whether it was one chorus or fifty choruses or whatever, that was pretty much up to me. The thing that was really great about that gig is that I had grown up as a fan of that band, Steps Ahead, and Mike Mainieri. Michael Brecker is such a great player and he played with Steps Ahead. I just loved those records. Here I was, years later, playing those same tunes that I had grown up listening to and I guess it was a really great experience for me because I felt like, “Here I am and I need to play these tunes in a way that’s original. I can’t just play these tunes and try and sound like Michael Brecker.” It’s nothing against him because I absolutely love what he did on those tunes. Here’s something where I really need to try and fill this role and do it in a really personal way, strongly, with a lot of authority. It was a great challenge. I think the tendency for me when I was playing “Pools” for example, I was hearing the recording that I had heard as a teenager 300 times in my head. I had to let go of that and try and find a different way of playing that tune that was still going to have a lot of energy and where I could do my thing. It was really great for me in terms of forcing me to come up with a way that felt original to me of playing on those tunes.

J1: What saxophonists have influenced you the most and why?

DM: Over the years there have been a lot of saxophone players in whom I’ve immersed myself, and developed an interest for various reasons. When I was just starting out, I think John Coltrane was my first big influence. Listening to him play, it felt so spiritual and emotional and it was just so amazing and overwhelming to me. I loved his sound and I was drawn to him from such a young age, age, 12, 13, whatever, and I just listened to him exclusively for such a long time. I listened to some “Bird” [Charlie Parker] and some Sonny [Rollins] but for the first four, five, or six years I was playing, I was listening to “Trane” all of the time. It’s hard to say if there was one thing that drew me to his playing but his sound, his lyricism, the emotional intensity of his playing really grabbed me. I listened to Trane a lot for awhile and when I was in high school, I think I started getting into Brecker. This was the time when I was listening to Steps Ahead a lot. In ’80 or ’81 the Metheny record had come out and his sound on that is so amazing. He plays so great and so lyrically. The intensity with which he played and the sort of “virtuosic” ability he had, and the sound being so clear, and so compelling to me, I think that really drew me to his playing. So, I checked him out for awhile. Then, I think when I got to Berklee, I started kind of expanding and checking out different guys. I went through a period of really listening to a lot of Joe Henderson and it’s hard to say why. He’s such an amazing player on so many lev-
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els. He’s an amazing composer and just the sound and the way he constructs his melodic lines is so ingenious to me. Stan Getz I got to for awhile because the warmth of his sound, his lyricism, the clarity of his melodic lines, his feel. Somebody who had a lot of influence on me is Wayne Shorter. Certainly, as a composer, one of the greatest composers of the 20th century for me. I learned a lot of his solos from records like Witch Hunt and Juju. It’s so hard to put into words. He plays like a composer. I think that’s what really drew me to his playing. He’s such an improviser. That actually reminds me of something, something really valuable I learned playing with Gary. Gary talked a lot about thematic development as an improviser. Prior to playing with him, I hadn’t really checked that out. He sort of really harped on the thematic development issue and I really learned a lot from that. So, later, when I was really checking out Wayne, I found that in his music.”

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“Gary talked a lot about thematic development as an improviser. Prior to playing with him, I hadn’t really checked that out. He sort of really harped on the thematic development issue and I really learned a lot from that. So, later, when I was actually checking out Wayne, I found that in his music.”

Jl: I like his solos on Sonny Rollins on Impulse and of course the classic Saxophone Colossus and Tenor Madness. By the way, you’re talking about Joe Henderson’s time. You’re probably familiar with Four, the album by Joe Henderson and the Wynton Kelly Trio Live at the Left Bank in Baltimore, 1968.

DM: I learned the whole solo from Four. It’s unbelievable.

Jl: Yeah. Did you write it out?

DM: I don’t think so. I haven’t listened to it in a long time. That’s one of my favorite records of life. That’s one of my desert island records. That’s Joe Henderson at his best.

Jl: The second volume, too.

DM: Yeah. I have that. I like the first one better.

“Gary talked a lot about thematic development as an improviser. Prior to playing with him, I hadn’t really checked that out. He sort of really harped on the thematic development issue and I really learned a lot from that. So, later, when I was actually checking out Wayne, I found that in his music.”

Jl: You don’t have to name everybody.

DM: I could go on and on. That’s probably enough on that subject, right?

Jl: We can publish an extended version on the web or something. What is it that inspired you to become serious about music?

DM: For me, it was a natural path in that my father was a jazz musician. My parents were divorced. I’d see my father once a week. He’d pick me up Sunday morning. We’d drive to downtown Santa Cruz, to the mall. I’d help him set up his Wurlitzer piano, his vibraphone, and his marimba. I’d sit there for the better part of the afternoon and he’d play with his band called Warmth. They’d play from like noon until 4 o’clock depending on the weather and how many people were there. Then, we’d pack up all of his stuff, put it in his car, and then we’d go play basketball, throw the football around, play baseball, depending on what season it was sports wise. I grew up with him as a big influence on my life, of course. When I started playing around age twelve, music came to be pretty quickly. It just felt right…how can I say this? I didn’t even have to think about it. I started playing, I was taking lessons, I was into it, I was enjoying it. Before I knew it, I could tell that music was what I wanted to do and it was at a really early age.

Jl: What’s the motivation and inspiration that drives your career today?

DM: It’s the joy of participating in something that I love. I love music so much. It’s such a joy to participate in it because music has such a healing and cathartic power and can be such a powerful thing for people. I almost feel that it’s sort of a ministry thing, like my way of participating in spreading God’s love and mercy and passion to the world by being a musician and trying to express that musically and getting that vibe out there, that light out there through music. The motivation for me is that, I would say. It’s partly selfish in that I love music so much and I love playing and I think it’s really important and vital thing to society and to the world. I also feel like it’s a ministry thing. God has given me this gift and I want to do something with that, I want to try and spread that light into the world and that

If you have any questions or need further assistance, please let me know! I'm here to help.
Donny McCaslin

love through music.

JI: Has developing your own sound been an intuitive process?

DM: Yeah, I mean, for me, I spent a lot of time absorbing other musicians. In college I was just inundated with information: transcribed solos, transcribing solos, listening to records, hearing other players that were my peers and what they were into. I felt like during that period of my life, I was experiencing the entire spectrum musically. Even after I got out of school, it felt like that for awhile. I moved to New York and I would go out to clubs all of the time. One night I would go to a club and hear somebody play and go, “Wow, I want to sound like that.” The next night, I’d hear somebody who was playing a lot differently and I’d also want to play like that. It took me awhile to keep filtering all of this different information. As I was filtering, there would be certain things I would latch onto. Certain things that grabbed me in my heart and soul, about something rhythmic or whatever. I would latch onto that and try to develop that. I guess, slowly but surely, my own identity emerged through this process.

JI: Did you take conscious steps to try and create an original sound or your own voice?

DM: Yeah, I took some conscious steps. I would think about, “What can I work on?” Specifically speaking, I remember one time working on these intervallic exercises that I had to do to pass my proficiencies at Berklee and I remember thinking, “Playing my scale in sevenths—wow, this is kind of cool. I don’t hear a lot of people playing these wide leaps as part of their melodic language so this is something that’s a little different. I like doing it. Let me take this concept and roll with it.” So, what I would do, was take that and as I would practice a song I would say, “Okay, for the next couple choruses I’m just going to improvise using the interval of a seventh.” A major seventh or a flat seventh or whatever. I would pick an interval and only allow myself to use that interval as I would work through the changes for a few choruses and then maybe I would change it up and do a major ninth or a minor ninth or something, and kind of keep that idea happening. I would consciously latch onto things like that and then try to bring them to fruition by working on them in a creative way.

JI: Great approach. Would you talk a little bit about the things that you’re currently doing?

DM: Sure. For the last couple of years, I was touring primarily with Danilo Perez. It was in a group called The Motherland Project. It was Luciana Souza on voice, Essiet Essiet on bass, Adam Cruz on drums, and of course Danilo and myself. That was pretty much my gig for the last couple years and then we stopped playing for awhile. Danilo is playing with Wayne Shorter, and he’s back to doing some trio stuff. Since then, I’ve been focusing on my own group. I’ve been playing maybe once a month in New York with my quartet or my trio, and then I’ve been doing various side-band projects with different people. Last night, I played with David Binnie, who has this project…basically, it’s rhythm section and 5 horns. He’s playing alto but he’s also doing some live samples. He’s just a really great writer. So, I’ve been working with him for at least ten years now on different projects. I play as a sideman in his group. I’m just conscious group. If you can imagine, just logistically getting everybody in the same place is hard.

JI: Who are some players that you might like to play with?

DM: Dave Holland. Yeah. I love his music. I just saw his big band in New York a couple of weeks ago. It was totally killing. A lot of my friends play in his group. I’d love to play with him and John Scofield. Let me think. I love to play with Danilo, I love playing with him. I hope that continues. I love Kurt Rosenwinkel’s playing and I love his writing. I did a tour with him a couple of years ago with Brian Blade’s band. That was an amazing experience. I hope that I get to tour with them again. He’s one of my all-time favorite musicians. Who else would I like to play with? It seems like there are so many.

“It’s such a joy to participate in it because music has such a healing and cathartic power and can be such a powerful thing for people. I almost feel that it’s sort of a ministry thing, like my way of participating in spreading God’s love and mercy and passion to the world by being a musician and trying to express that musically and getting that vibe out there, that light out there through music.”

The difference was the one on a different freelance, sideman dates.

JI: You have a couple of albums, one on Naxos and one on Arabesque, Scenes From Above. What was the difference between those two albums and the labels?

DM: Well, the difference was the one on Naxos, that was produced by David Baker, you know, and basically, they wanted a straight ahead type of record. I picked tunes and put together a group that I felt would best be able to represent that side of my musical personality. In terms of Scenes From Above, that was more of an original music project. I felt like I had the green light to do basically all originals…I did only one standard on that record, the rest are all originals. I was able to do something more edgy where a bigger part of my musical personality was there at this time.

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moment. Does that make sense? Basically, it was more of an original music project. I just went for it with that.

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

DM: Yeah, I would say as a Presbyterian, as a Christian, my faith is integrated into everything that I do. There’s a strong connection between that and music because I see music as a spiritual thing. I’m trying to live every moment being connected to God, whether I’m playing basketball, or doing yoga, or playing at the 55 Bar, or practicing. The spirituality, the faith thing, is a big part of everything that I do. Yeah. That’s basically it.

JI: What words of wisdom have you received from a teacher or mentor that you can share with us or is there a quotation that inspires you?

DM: Now, of course, I could say more about the spirituality and jazz thing. Should I go back to that? I see music as my way or participating in that. To me, when I’m listening to something I really like, it’s an expression of love. It’s so great and so exciting and I feel like that kind of comes from God. There’s a connection in terms of how I try and reflect that into the world through music. In terms of words of wisdom … I can’t remember where I heard this, or if it’s something that I just came to learn over there years…I think music…It’s important to be diligent about practicing and preparing yourself. Maybe it was Dave Liebman who said something about this…basically, if I’m going to practice one day a week for ten hours, and then nothing the rest of the week, I’m not going to get as much done as if I worked 45 minutes or an hour a day and really stayed focused. That’s been my experience. It’s really important to work diligently on the process of improving yourself as a musician and as a human being because they sort of go hand and hand. One thing that Danilo has said to me that has inspired me a lot lately is, “Don’t be afraid to take on different roles in a band.” What the means for me is just because I’m the saxophone player doesn’t mean I have to always play like a saxophone player. He was encouraging me a lot to dream and think like an orchestrator a lot while I’m improvising. I’ll be playing and all of the sudden, maybe I’ll start to hear a flute thing or a bass thing or a drum thing and not being afraid to just go for that. That’s really helped to open me up I think a lot in my concept of improvising. Thinking like an accompanist, or thinking like a bass player. That’s something that I think has carried a lot of weight with me.

JI: What’s the relationship of listening versus playing while you’re performing?

DM: Yeah. The more experiences I have and the more I grow as a musician, the more I listen, the deeper my listening is. Now, when I’m in the middle of playing a gig with a band, I’m really trying to completely listen and take in everything that’s going on. As I’ve grown musically, my ability to listen and take in everything has grown. When I’m playing, I’m listening intently to everything around me and just trying to be part of the ensemble more. I think when I was younger, I felt like it was my responsibility always to lead and always to be in the forefront. Now, I see it differently, and now I just try to participate in the ensemble, and add colors to the ensemble in a way, and not always thinking like a soloist, but just listening to the overall vibe of the music and how can I fit into that in an interesting way.

JI: What do you think is the most important non-musical thing that a musician needs to embrace to be happy?

DM: For me, I would say, “Well, it’s God,” but that’s connected to music for me. Ultimately for me, the peace and the sense of satisfaction in life comes from my spiritual relationship with God so for me that’s what that is.

JI: When we played together, we sat around watching the Yankees in the World Series. Are you a big Yankees fan?

DM: No, I’m more of a San Francisco Giants fan.

JI: Is there anything that you’d like to add, Donny?

DM: What else would I add? One thing that I found is that leading a balanced life is really great. Trying to get some exercise, eat healthy foods, you know, that stuff has really helped me to be a better musician. Going to a therapist, dealing with issues. Leading a balanced life is really important to me. I know a lot of guys who just do music all of the time and are really successful. For me, taking the time to take care of myself on all levels of life is really, really important. That’s just really, really important and the benefits of that, I’m seeing play themselves out not only in my career in music but in my whole life. Figuring out what my needs are and taking care of that. To live in New York, and dealing with all of that, and being a jazz musician anywhere is such a random, alternative lifestyle. By trying to put myself on the path of how to fulfill that, and doing the best I can everyday, that’s really the most important.
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Ernie Watts
Always on the journey

By Eric Nemeyer

(Continued from the previous issue of Jazz Inside)

JI: When you went to Berklee, what were the challenges and benefits that you experienced?

EW: I was playing all the instruments. By the time I got to Berklee, I had taught myself flute and clarinet, and then I was playing saxophones. When I started taking lessons at Berklee, I was studying with Joe Viola. He decided to teach me oboe. So I took oboe lessons for the year and a half or so that I was at Berklee. I was playing in Herb Pomeroy’s band and playing in bands and playing in clubs. I was working every night. We had an R&B band with John Tropea. It was John Tropea’s band.

Buddy develop?

EW: Buddy Rich’s band was in town and they were playing in a place called Lenny’s on the Turnpike. It was a very well known jazz club at the time. Gene Quill was in Buddy’s band at that time and he just decided to quit and come back to New York. So he quit. They were in a jam. So the band manager, a young guy, trombone player, called Phil Wilson to ask if there was anybody that could help him out. They wanted to get a kid for a couple of weeks because they could get a real player later. I was the kid. I went out with Buddy and I was supposed to be there for two weeks, and I was there for two years. That was their first tour. They were on the tour for their very first album, which was the one with “West Side Story.” So they were on that tour.

JI: How did your association with Buddy develop?

EW: [laughs] His favorite saying used to be, “Swing, or I’ll kill you!” Buddy Rich’s band was in town and they were playing in a place called Lenny’s on the Turnpike. It was a very well known jazz club at the time. Gene Quill was in Buddy’s band at that time and he just decided to quit and come back to New York. So he quit. They were in a jam. So the band manager, a young guy, trombone player, called Phil Wilson to ask if there was anybody that could help him out. They wanted to get a kid for a couple of weeks because they could get a real player later. I was the kid. I went out with Buddy and I was supposed to be there for two weeks, and I was there for two years.

JI: When you were rehearsing new arrangements with the band, how did that work?

EW: Well, he didn’t read. We’d be backstage getting ready to go on to do a TV show or a concert, and he’d go, “Swing, or I’ll kill you!” [laughs] His favorite saying used to be, “Swing, or I’ll kill you!” [laughs]

We had a great singer named Nate Pruitt, who is in San Jose now. We use to work in the Combat Zone, in Boston. We used to work in these clubs where we were doing all these Wilson Picket and James Brown things – “I Got You” and all of that stuff. That’s what we were doing every night. And then on the breaks I’d be doing my homework. I’d be sitting there at the bar trying to do my homework on these gigs. Then I’d have school the next day. That’s what I was doing at Berklee, and practicing and studying. Then about a year and a half, my second year back, I had the opportunity to join Buddy Rich’s band. But I was listening and playing all the time.

That’s when I joined them. I think I did three or four albums with Buddy. We did some band albums and then we did a very interesting album with Alla Rakha and Buddy. Alla Rakha was a tabla player who played with Ravi Shankar for so long. So a lot of interesting things like that. Buddy was a wonderful, wonderful player and he was 100% for the music. There are all of these legendary stories about the Buddy Rich tirades. But the thing is, I never saw him go off for no reason. There was always a reason. Somebody did something, or somebody didn’t take care of business, or somebody showed up and they weren’t prepared to do the gig, as so he would go off. I think he got an adrenaline rush from his anger. Once he got going he had trouble stopping. After he made his point, then he wouldn’t be able to stop and then it would get kind of strange. But he never just went off. There was a reason. I had a very good experience with him. He was 100% for the music, I was 100% for the music. I was playing lead alto at the time. I was practicing all day and going to the gig. One of his sayings was, “Out of a twenty-four hour day, all I need from you is four hours of responsibility. Whatever you guys do the other twenty hours of the day is fine, as long as you show up and do the gig.” I had a very good time with that band. I discovered California. We went there to do a TV summer replacement show on CBS, the Away We Go show. Buddy Greco was on it and George Carlin too, when he was still doing the Hippy-Dippy Weather Man and all of those things. We were there for thirteen weeks doing that show. I started playing in rehearsal bands and meeting people in town, and so when I left Buddy’s band I decided to move to Los Angeles rather than here. I just really love the mountains; I like the feel of it. I like the hills and stuff. When I moved there, I walked right into the middle of the studio scene. I didn’t even know what the studio scene was. I didn’t even know what it was to be a studio musician. I figured I’d just move to LA and probably play with groups, try to do some group things. I got there and I started subbing in for recordings and films for people who were very established and were so busy that they sent subs to rehearsals and stuff like that. So I started out subbing for Buddy Collette, and meeting a lot of the people that were doing quote-unquote studio work. I got involved in that for like, twenty-five years. [laughs]

JI: You mentioned before that Buddy used to get himself angry and that would give him the adrenaline rush. Steve Peck, who was Buddy’s manager in the seventies, said that Buddy used to eat a couple of chocolate bars before the gig to really get that sugar rush, in addition to the anger rush.

EW: [laughs] His favorite saying used to be, we’d be backstage getting ready to go on to do a TV show or a concert, and he’d go, “Swing, or I’ll kill you!” [laughs] His favorite saying used to be, “Swing, or I’ll kill you!” [laughs]
Ernie Watts

(Continued from page 26)

He’d just sit in the house. He’d listen. We’d play it again. He’d listen. He’d say, “Can you play that section back there?” We’d say, “Oh yeah, that’s letter C.” That might have been something that was in an odd time, or had some breaks or something. We’d play that section and he’d listen, and then he’d get up and play it.

JI: Were you interested in writing or arranging for big band at that time?

EW: I never wanted to arrange. The thing that I always wanted to do and the thing that I’m still working on is just writing good tunes. I always had the concept of, I wanted to play my own music, and if you want to your own music, it’s got to start with the tunes. So I was always interested in writing good tunes and I was always listening to people that know special kind of things. Like, Horace Silver had a sound; Oliver Nelson had a sound. Seeing what was there, the tools, things that were going on intervally. I’d practice and I’d write. It’s funny how you learn a lot of techniques, you learn a lot of science, but when you get ready to do the music, you just do the music. And I write when I practice. When I’m practicing, I hear things and I write those things down. Then I’ll fill in the harmony and the bass notes. It’s just something that I can’t get because I have absolutely no piano technique because when I was at Berklee, instead of doing my piano/keyboard, I was practicing and doing gigs. I’m miserable on the keyboard. I do everything I can, and then to fill in the harmony, I work with the piano player I play with in my quartet, David Whitman. We work together to fill in the harmony and bring the composition together. He hears harmonically the way I hear, so if it’s something that I can’t play technically, he just says, “Oh, that’s guy’s doing. But when you study the saxophone for four years and then you listen to Keith Jarrett, or Herbie Hancock, or Alan Broadbent, you say, “Oh. It’s the same tune. It’s the same set of chords, but there’s a whole other way to come at this stuff.” That’s what I’m doing. I’m very interested in coming at harmony in another direction and getting away from being a saxophone player to being a musician. I’m a real good saxophone player. Sometimes I’m not as good a musician as I would like to be. So I’m working on being a better musician. And that encompasses all of that stuff.

JI: You level of humility is astonishing compared to the level of musicianship that many people perceive you really have.

When you’re up on the bandstand, you’re not thinking about, “Okay, well I’m going to do this minor-major seventh scale here. Here comes the ii-V. Or I can do the diminished scale on the minor ii-V.” No. You don’t have time to do that. That’s what I tell the kids when I do a clinic. You have to be familiar with all of those things and you have to know your instrument because improvisation is spontaneous composition. Spontaneous composition is like speech. It’s like talking or singing a song. If you’re having a conversation with somebody, you don’t think about where you’re going to put your tongue to announce the t in the word the. If you had to do that, the conversation would be over before you could get a word out. It’s the same way with playing the instrument. All of these
Ernie Watts

things you have to know. You have to have them hard-wired. Then you forget all about them and you tell your story. You make something beautiful. That’s why we’re here. We’re here to make something beautiful. We’re not here to do math puzzles.

EW: Until I went to Berklee I played totally by ear. I did pretty well, until there was a modulation or there was some kind of harmonic difference that happened and I might not be able to pick it up. When I went to Berklee I was taught my chord-scales. When I went to Berklee, I was taught, or I learned, or I looked at it and I figured it out, that every chord has a scale. If you learn every scale for every chord, it’s impossible to play a wrong note. So on a scientific level, after that point improvisation becomes an elaborate game of multiple choice. And I’ll do that with the kids. I’ll take a mixolydian scale, and I’ll play the chord and I’ll play the scale, and then the rhythm section will play, and I’ll just play anything. But it’s in the scale, and so it’s correct and it makes sense. Then I talk to them, “And this is also because, you know, five or six years of listening to nothing but John Coltrane records.” My brain was programmed to hear melodically that way anyway. Even when I was playing random, I was coming from melody. Just like Trane. When Trane got to the point of being tonally free, that was after all of those Prestige records, playing and recording hundreds of records. Then he went to Atlantic and it was all of that concentrated work through that period of “Giant Steps,” and the “Giant Steps” reharmonizations of “Body and Soul” and “But Not for Me.” By the time he got to Impulse records, his whole consciousness was totally steeped in harmony and melody. So no matter how free you think you’re getting, after that kind of background it’s still going to be rooted in harmony and melody. That was the problem that came up with all the “new thing” guys—all of those young guys that came out of nowhere. They were doing all of this free music in the sixties and it was just really out there. The thing is that it didn’t hold together because it didn’t have the basis of discipline. Freedom through discipline.

JI: That’s it. Coltrane went from being an early fumbler through difficult chord changes to fully assimilating all of this vocabulary, building a foundation to impart his own form or structure when there was none. A lot of the people that have come afterwards in free jazz were playing out of tune or had bad technique. You can use those kinds of effects, but you can’t rely on them to pass off your inability to play as art.

EW: You should be able to play “I’ve Got Rhythm” and the blues. That’s the first thing you teach the kids in school. You teach them to play the blues and then after learning the twelve-bar blues, the next thing you teach them is “I’ve Got Rhythm” – rhythm changes. The basis of harmony and the things that come out of that, a lot of it is related. When you teach the kids the blues, they’re learning the blues scale; they’re learning how to play on the mixolydians; they’re learning about the feeling of the blues. And “I’ve Got Rhythm” is the beginning of ii-V motion and playing through keys. It’s like, you can’t break the rules if you don’t know the rules. [laughs]

JI: How did your association with the Tonight Show develop? Did the stability that comes from playing in a situation like that afford the opportunity for a lot of freedom in developing your music further?

EW: Tonight Show band, record dates, all of the studio work – was at a high level. I learned a lot about the music business. I learned a lot about playing my instruments in tune. I learned a lot about showing up on time, because when you had a 9 o’clock in the morning for a fill-in for one of these guys, and there’s an 80-piece orchestra, at 9 o’clock, the tape starts rolling and it starts costing them $30,000 a minute or whatever it is. So you learn to be on time. You learn punctuality. So I learned a lot about the music business and the craft of music. On the side, I always had a quartet. I always played in little clubs. I was always working on my tunes. I was always listening and practicing. It got to a point where it was time to turn the page. And that

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was another one of those things that worked out perfectly.

**JI:** Did you find that studio work was composed of 98% boredom and 2% terror?

**EW:** Yeah, they used to say, “98% boredom, 2% sheer terror.” [laughs] Usually the 2% sheer terror is because of someone’s incompetence. The 2% sheer terror is because the composer didn’t study orchestration, so he wrote a clarinet part that should have been a piccolo part, and then you’ve got to play it – that’s the 2% sheer terror. Henry Mancini wrote beautiful books on how to write great music and not kill anybody. [laughs] I had all those experiences. The thing with me was the studio work did not fulfill my daily minimum requirement for creativity. I got to the point where I just didn’t want to count rests and read parts anymore. So it all evolved together, really. Around 1981, the synthesizers came in. That’s when I started to do my college concerts and traveled. After that – I think it was 1986 – I met Charlie [Haden] and we started playing together. We did a few tours with Pat Metheny. After playing with Charlie and Pat Metheny and really playing all the time with great players, it was time for me to turn the page. I couldn’t do any more studio work. It was time for me to go on. So it worked out perfectly, because the work slowed down anyway. It was time for me to turn the page – I knew that. These beautiful creative environments came up with Charlie and Pat. In 1986 I sold my house in L.A. and I moved to Colorado because I figured I would take myself physically out of the scene so that I could create more time for myself to study and grow. If you’re busy in the studio scene and you say you’re going to take a day off to practice and write, you take that time and you set it aside, and you’re getting ready to sit down and practice and write, and somebody calls you up for a McDonald’s commercial, you’re not going to say, “Well, I’m practicing and writing today.” You’re going to say, “Okay.” So you get in the car, and you go and you travel in horrible traffic, and you try to find a parking place for fifteen minutes. Then you go in the studio and you sit around till they wait for you to do your two minutes. Then you do your two minutes and you have to find your car. By the time you get back home from doing a jingle, it’s five hours out of the day that’s gone, you’re so depressed and you feel so bad, all you really want to do is crawl under the bed and cry. You’re burnt-out. You’re burning and you’re unfulfilled. If you want to do it, you do it. If you don’t want to do it and you do it, it’s twice as hard. So I moved to Colorado. I bought a little house right outside of Aspen. I’ve had that little place for thirteen years. What would happen is the contractors call me and I wouldn’t be able to do it because I’d be out of town. When the contractors call you three times and you can’t do it, you’re dead meat anyway – you’re gone. I always used to tell everybody it takes everybody three days to know that you’re gone, but it takes three months for them to know that you’re back in town. You go out of town for three days, and for three months when you’re back, people were saying, “Oh! I thought you were out of town.” [laughs] So I sort-of took myself out of town. And from that, it gave me a chance to evolve and start doing more playing and touring. I started going to Europe again. I started going to Japan. I got so busy traveling that I didn’t have any time to be in Colorado. I was never there so I sold my place in Colorado and I moved back to LA and bought the condo that I had been renting. But by then, I was already out of the food chain.

**JI:** You did a number of State Department tours to Africa, for example. Could you talk a little bit about that? There are a lot of people going to Africa. It’s kind of an exotic trip. To go with a group like Oliver Nelson’s band, which was all great players playing great music, the combination of the scenery, the travel, and the music must have provided you with some extraordinary perspectives.

**EW:** That was in 1969. It was the Blues and the Abstract Truth band. It was a wonderful tour. The music was great. It was very interesting because we were in what was French West Africa and they were just beginning to turn all the countries back. We were in Senegal, Chad, Mali, Niger, and Cameroon. We were in Niger and you could just walk out of a concert and walk out into the desert, where it was totally quiet and dark. It was to me the quietest place; it was deafeningly quiet, because when it’s quiet here it’s not quiet. It’s never quiet here as long as there’s an electrical outlet and something is plugged in, there’s a hum. There’s always a hum, no matter where you in our culture – unless you go out in the middle of the desert or Alaska. So it was the only I think I’ve ever really been where it is truly quiet. I mean, it’s frightening [laughs].

**JI:** Could you talk about your association with Charlie Haden, who is himself a sensitive and soft-spoken individual? How did his music gel with what you do?

(Continued in the next issue)
Michael Feinstein
On jazz and popular song

Interview By Eric Nemeyer

JI: Talk about the highlights of the Jazz and Popular Song Series at Jazz at Lincoln Center.

MF: Well, it seems like a natural combination to me in that so much jazz is formulated from or based on American popular song. Yet, I find that, generally speaking many programs that have been devoted to jazz don’t ever acknowledge the participation or importance of the songs and the songwriters themselves. For example, Ken Burn’s series on jazz does not mention any American popular composer other than Duke Ellington. There is no mention of any other songwriter. That’s a ten hour series with not one mention. So I think that is fascinating and yet what would these guys be playing if they didn’t have American popular song - either the songs themselves or the various things that have been created based on the changes of all these songs, like I’ve Got Rhythm or “How High the Moon” or another obvious ones like “What is This Thing Called Love”. So I first met Wynton Marsalis at a Jazz At Lincoln Center benefit at the Apollo several years ago. The performance of course, was wonderful as always, but I was very impressed with talking to him afterwards when he started talking about his commitment to keeping jazz alive for young kids—keeping it going—spreading the word—propagating the world of jazz in a way that is completely resonant with what I want to do with American popular song. They’re both forms of music that are not mainstream and that the only way these art forms survived is through the sharing and the education of younger people. So that’s the first thing that I felt a bond with him about and then we became friendly and I was approached by the people at Jazz At Lincoln Center asking if I would be interested in putting together a series of programs that would celebrate and look at the connection between jazz and American popular song. Of course I was thrilled to be involved for all the obvious reasons and that’s how it began.

JI: It’s interesting that you mentioned the importance of popular song in the jazz lexicon because as a player and composer arrange myself, one of the big things that less experienced jazz players fall prey to and one of their challenges is that the melody seems to be nothing more than a jumping off point where as really the greatest improvisers have always been thematic improvisers developing the melody in a very prolific kind of way. Would you like to chat about that for a second?

MF: Sure. Who was the famous sax player who stopped in the middle of a solo and was asked why he stopped and he said, “I forgot the words”? I can’t remember who it is but it would make it a much more significant anecdote. Many of the instrumentalists know the lyrics of the songs because it is part and parcel of the creation of the work. And so sometimes the words spur the composition of the melody or gave them an identity - a further identity if you will. The songs themselves, even in jazz solos, are inextricably linked - the words are inextricably linked to the music. I remember George Gershwin’s long time girlfriend, Kay Swift, who was a marvelous composer, told me that one time she complained to George that Ruth Etting in a Broadway show in 1930 or ‘31 was mangling her song. She said Ruth was singing it straight through in the first chorus and then it became unrecognizable and George said, “Just be grateful that she sings it straight in the first chorus.” A lot of people don’t have the respect for the melody and it’s not necessarily that you have to adhere to the melody, but if you know what the melody is, then you can make more brilliant choices in what the improvisation is going to be because knowing the melody and knowing what the original changes are is knowledge and knowledge is power. So it really is essential to me when I learn something to learn exactly what it was the writers wrote, and then make any changes or substitutions or whatever. It’s so interesting when you go back and look at the original songs, the melodies are not anywhere near the way people do them. It’s like “Lover Man” – the original melody is a little different from the way it’s arranged by the composer, told me that one time she complained to George that Ruth Etting in a Broadway show in 1930 or ‘31 was mangling her song. She said Ruth was singing it straight through in the first chorus and then it became unrecognizable and George said, “Just be grateful that she sings it straight in the first chorus.” A lot of people don’t have the respect for the melody and it’s not necessarily that you have to adhere to the melody, but if you know what the melody is, then you can make more brilliant choices in what the improvisation is going to be because knowing the melody and knowing what the original changes are is knowledge and knowledge is power. So it really is essential to me when I learn something to learn exactly what it was the writers wrote, and then make any changes or substitutions or whatever. It’s so interesting when you go back and look at the original songs, the melodies are not anywhere near the way people do them. It’s like “Lover Man” – the original melody is a little different from the way Billie Holiday does it and everyone does it like her. It’s things like that that are just interesting and not amusing but they become part of the lexicon. But if you know the way it was originally written then you think, “Oh my god, that’s something that Billie Holiday improvised and maybe it’s better than the original but it’s still valuable to know where it came from”.

JI: And of course so many people toss out the theme that comes right before the well known melody which is in some cases is a really fabulous piece of music that just gets thrown by the wayside.

MF: Yeah, you’re talking about the themes of the song?

JI: Yes, I’m sorry- I meant the verse.

MF: Absolutely. Ira Gershwin said that they worked as hard on the verses as they did on the choruses. It’s valuable stuff. The thing that I find wonderful about my favorite jazz artists is how they can be faithful to the original intention of something and yet be so fresh and original in their own right. Having spent a lot of time with song writers I know how important the chords were that they chose. For example, “Love is Here to Stay”. A lot of times I’ll hear people play, if it’s in the key of F, they will do it in a C7 arpeggio and they will play single notes, “c d e”, and then they will do the G7 chord - but there’s three chords on those first three notes – three gorgeous chords that are in the music, and when I hear that song played that way and then they hit that first chord, they have already lost me because they left out the best part of the chords for me. Those notes were important to those guys.

JI: Of course, there’s no shortage of reharmonization in the jazz world when it comes to popular tunes.

MF: Well that’s one of the things that keeps the tunes fresh and keeps them alive - all the things that can be done with them. That’s the great thing about jazz because jazz gave people permission to incorporate those elements in other types of music. What I mean is that the greatest pop records of the ‘50’s and ‘60’s, like Nelson Riddle, Billy May or whoever you want to choose, they all had the greatest jazz players like, Breezin, Buddy DeFranco and all these people doing these amazing jazz solos so the general public that would listened to mood music in those days would say, “Oh I don’t like Jazz but I love Mantovani”. They were listening to jazz, they just didn’t know it and it was those elements that made them love those songs.

JI: Someone said that the only reason people don’t like jazz is because they haven’t heard good jazz. They’ve heard something that doesn’t really make much sense. And it’s like anything, if you hear something of quality, you are going to resonate with that no matter if it is a piece of artwork, painting or great music.

MF: Absolutely, I agree 100%.

JI: Could you talk about each of the four themes for the upcoming May and June series and the featured performers and supporting cast, briefly?

MF: Not without a piece of paper in front of me! [Laughs]

JI: [laughs] Do you want me to prompt you?

MF: Yes, but I know the first one [series] is Ellington.

JI: Yes, I Got It Bad and features Montego Glover, Sam Harris, and Lillias White.

MF: Coleman Domingo had to drop out. There will be a fourth male who we will know about in
the next couple of days. Ellington of course was the natural way to start this series because he traversed very easily between the worlds of jazz and popular song. And so this will be a compendium of his songs with the emphasis on the singers and the lyrics which will hopefully give the people a further perspective of Ellington as a songwriter. His granddaughter, Mercedes Ellington, told me that she didn’t like people to depart from the melody of the songs when they were sung - which I found shocking. But she insisted that was the way he felt. He liked people to sing them the way he wrote them, at least once through – just like George Gershwin said. So the program will be a variety of some well know things – it’s always important to give people what they want – and then there will be a number of lesser known Ellington things. One of the things about Ellington as a song writer is that it is probably one of the most vastly under-mined bodies of music I’ve ever encountered. When I start looking at the number of songs that he wrote, it’s dizzying.

MF: One of reasons that there are so many is because he would write an instrumental, Columbia Records would send them to the lyricist who was under contract at that time, to his publisher, and the lyricist would name the instrumental in many instances. Ellington didn’t have names for some of them—it was Don George or Bob Russell—they would name them. Then they would choose the ones they thought could become popular songs. And so they would pick ones that they felt could be adapted and then they would write a lyric for it. Of course now that is different from when Ellington was writing a Broadway musical—when he wrote Beggar’s Holiday and truly collaborated with John La Touche and wrote a Broadway score. Consequently, those songs have in many instances more emotional depth to them because they were written for plot and character and for specific situations as opposed to somebody just taking a melody and coming up with an idea for it. When Marshall Barer wrote with Duke Ellington—his very last Broadway musical called Pousse Café—it was five years in the making because Ellington was on the road touring and Marshall would get together with him every several months and they wrote, he said, eighty songs, a couple which are now lost. There are some gorgeous things in that score so we’re going to do a couple of those. That show, five years in the making, lasted three nights on Broadway. So it will be a cross section of some of the theatrical things that Ellington wrote and then a selection of familiar and unknown popular gems.

Ji: That’s fascinating. All the un-mined material that is in the archives that Mercedes and his family have.

**Michael Feinstein**

**MF:** They preserved as much of it as they could.

**Ji:** The next event is *More Than A Song: The Music That Integrated America* and that’s in mid May, hosted by you and featuring Quentin Earl Darrington, Allan Harris and Karen Zienba.

**MF:** This is going to be an interesting show and it’s the hardest one. It’s the greatest challenge to put together because it’s about black and white, songwriters and performers, and how music integrated our country. That is one part of the evening. The other part of the evening will be comprised of songs that addressed social issues, being it poverty, racism or you name it. There are so many songs that were written in response to things that were happening in our country. Or songs that someone was inspired to write that they felt needed to be said and change the face of our country, or in some cases a song like “We Kiss In The Shadow”, which became an underground anthem for gay people because what that lyric said was the way a lot of gay man and women lived their lives. So it’s taking these songs and putting them in a context that looks at their broader significance. The approach to the Broadway material is on several levels really because what was happening on Broadway in the teens, ’20s and 30’s was a time when our country was going through extraordinary challenges in the racial perception of a country and the business of music was colorblind. A black man could write a song and it could become a big hit because there was no racism possible in that sense. That is one of the wonderful things about the music business and that is why the Jews got into the music business in the late 1800’s because it was a business they could go into where there was no prejudice in being involved, and get opportunity in employment. There were opportunities for writers on Broadway and eventually integration on Broadway with Ethel Waters and things started to change. But it was through the music and songs like Irving Berlin’s “Supper Time” or Fats Waller and Andy Razaf’s, “What Did I Do To Be So Black and Blue” that addressed issues in a way that people could accept.

**Ji:** The Jazz & Popular Song the Family Concert is with *I Got Rhythm: The Common Roots of Popular Songs and Jazz,* and of course you will be hosting that again.

**MF:** Yes, it’s going to be a fun concert because that concert will be about songs that were written for Broadway or stage but have become jazz standards. Like, “I’ve Got Rhythm”, or “How High The Moon” or “April in Paris” or “All The Things You Are”. What we are going to do is perform these songs somewhat in the original context and then do jazz improvisations on them. So people will get to hear, “How High The Moon” with the verse and hear it sung sort of straight the way it was done on Broadway which was a scene in a revue which took place during the London blitz when two lovers were together and they thought they were going to be killed, and their lives were endangered. That’s what that song is about and so to hear it that way and then to move on and to hear how it evolved – that to me is going to be very exciting. It really will show the history of this music and how it has evolved in a very short span.

**Ji:** The fourth in this series is, *Sweet and Low Down: How Popular Standards Became Jazz Classics.*

**MF:** That’s really the same thing.

**Ji:** So it’s an extention.

**MF:** Yes.

**Ji:** In that one Wynton is playing and Barbara Carroll is going to be there. You’ve recently done an album with Barbara Cook, *Cheek To Cheek.* Would you like to take an opportunity to speak about the development of that album?

**MF:** Well, they are all great and extraordinary musicians. Lee [Musiker] did an arrangement of “I’ve Got You Under My Skin” for Barbara Cook that is rhapsodic. John Oddo is fantastic the way he writes for small group in the tradition of the great arrangers and as we spoke before, puts great jazz solos in the midst of these pieces. The experience of working with Barbara was wonderful because she’s all about the lyric and she’s a soprano who is now 83 and is amazing. She loves jazz and she loves to have the sound of jazz in her arrangements. The recording itself was done live at the club. We recorded five shows and just picked the best takes. It was a great honor to work with her.

**Ji:** What are the challenges in diversifying your focus into these many involvements that you have, such as Artistic Director of the Palladium Center in Indiana, Feinstein’s At The Regency, recording, The Jazz At Lincoln Center Popular Song Series? What kind of support team do you have so you do not have to move all the chess pieces around by yourself?

**MF:** I have a wonderful support team because I am lucky enough to know that I can’t do everything by myself and if an opportunity comes I only accept it if I think I can do a good job, hopefully. The support system I have is great. There are two assistants that are with me fulltime and then there is a full time road manager who takes care of all the technical requirements for concerts.

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“A man’s character may be learned from the adjectives which he habitually uses in conversation.”

- Mark Twain
Interview and photo by Ken Weiss

Chico Hamilton, born September 21, 1921 in Los Angeles, CA, has spent 75 years behind the drum set, playing a wide-ranging assortment of jazz styles, including r & b, fusion, advanced hard bop, big band and the avant-garde. Hamilton is a subtle and creative drummer who views the drums as a melodic device more than a percussive one, and is best known for his role in Gerry Mulligan’s piano-less quartet (1952-53), a group that included Chet Baker and became a leader of the Cool school of jazz, the series of quintets that he led during the mid- ’50s –mid-’60s which featured an unorthodox mix of jazz and classical instruments, and for his ability to “discover” young talent such as Eric Dolphy, Larry Coryell, Steve Potts, Arthur Blythe, Steve Turre and Eric Person. This interview took place at his New York penthouse apartment, a stone’s throw from the United Nations building.

“Just be yourself”

Chico Hamilton

“I’ve never had a problem making money because when I was a kid I used to take my shoe shine box and make a nickel a shoe. I made enough money then to buy my first set of drums by shining shoes.”

Jazz Inside Magazine: Your first name is really Foreststorn, that’s not a name you hear every day. Where did that come from?

Chico Hamilton: My ethnic background is Mexican, Apache Indian and German Jew. I’m also Swedish and my great-grandfather was some kind of African chief. He was an extremely wealthy man and when he passed away, he gave each of his grandchildren $68,000 cash. My father didn’t take his because he ran away from home, I was pissed at my father. [Laughter] I was born in Los Angeles, California but I’ve been in New York since ‘66.

CH: The best advice was save your money. I’ve never had a problem making money because when I was a kid I used to take my shoe shine box and make a nickel a shoe. I made enough money then to buy my first set of drums by shining shoes.

J: Yes. You recently had some new work come out. I listened to your Revelation CD which I found to be very uplifting. Was that a goal of yours or is that coming out of how you feel about life today?

CH: That’s the way I write. I think it’s good music, that’s all. You have to understand something, I don’t write music for people, I write music because I feel and believe that music is one of God’s will and God’s will, will be done. That’s what I believe and when you don’t write music for people, you don’t get your feelings hurt. You can’t please everybody. Dig?

J: Was there a time that your feelings were hurt because people didn’t like your music?

CH: No, my attitude was that they lose. I came up with Gerry Mulligan and that was our attitude.

J: Your drumming on the new recording features you way more up front in the mix than your early recordings. It’s now easy to hear everything you’re doing.

CH: That’s because I mixed it that way. I got an engineer that understands how to record for drums. I don’t use no pillows or blankets or nothing, just pure drum.

J: You wrote fourteen of the 22 compositions covered on the new recording. Are you writing all the time or do you gear up when it’s time to record?

CH: Every time I can get a thought. The one problem with that is that you’re writing something and all of a sudden you say, “Shit, I heard this before,” and then come to find that I had written the same kind of phrase, but that’s the price you have to pay. I keep my theory book and study every day.

J: Where do you get your inspirations to write? Are you constantly listening to the sounds around you?

CH: No, you know how I made my money? I did commercials and doing commercials I made a practice not to listen to the radio. I didn’t want to be influenced by anybody, I wanted to stay original and so far it’s worked.

J: What’s the best advice you were given during your career?

CH: The best advice was save your money. I’ve never had a problem making money because when I was a kid I used to take my shoe shine box and make a nickel a shoe. I made enough money then to buy my first set of drums by shining shoes. Dig?

J: I understand your first job was performing in the Tarzan movies.

CH: Yes. Where I grew up, there were no more than five or six black kids and (actress) Dorothy Dandridge’s mom used to get studio work for the kids before the studios were big. She’d collect us kids and put us on a truck and take us out to the location and if you got painted they paid you $14 and if you didn’t get painted, they paid you $7 a day. We used to stay hidden so as not to get painted because (Continued on page 35)
Chico Hamilton

once you got painted, that was it. They couldn’t use you no more, they couldn’t use the same face. We figured out it was best to hide. This will all be in my autobiography that I am working on. I’m going to call it All The People That Made Me Famous.

JI: Please talk about your personal take on drumming. You’ve had a unique style from the start, emphasizing subtleness, brush strokes and layers.

CH: I’ve always thought of my instrument as more of a melodic instrument as opposed to a percussive one. I heard melodies that needed to come out.

JI: You’ve said in the past that Art Blakey had a big influence on you yet your style is different from his hard percussive approach. What did you pull from Blakey?

CH: Until I heard Blakey, I’d never heard anybody play like that before. He wiped me out when I heard him in Billy Eckstine’s band. I never heard anybody keeping the time going and dancing with the left hand and the bass drum. He did that until the end.

JI: What did you learn from studying drums with Jo Jones?

CH: Jo and I were very close but I didn’t study with him. Strangely enough, we never talked about drums, we talked about the world. He had a lot to do with me formulating my life. I met Jo when I was 16 years old. The first thing he said to me was, “Stay in school.”

JI: You were about 8 years old at the start of the Great Depression (1929 - 1939). How did your family handle it and did this catastrophic event have a lasting effect on you as a musician?

CH: We all got out and worked. My mother raised chickens and we had a garden of fresh vegetables. That’s how you lived at that time, everybody was poor. It definitely affected me.

JI: Some of the liner notes to your recordings make note of your strong religious foundation. When you chose to play jazz back in the day, jazz had a sinister connotation in the minds of many. Was this a difficult decision for you and did you encounter any backlash from your community?

CH: You mean a sinner connotation. I didn’t give a shit about them. My brother was an actor – Bernie Hamilton (Captain Dobey in Starsky & Hutch) – and some of my mother’s friends would come over to the house and Bernie would be lying on the couch reading poetry or a script and they used to tell her, “Pearl, why don’t you make that boy go and get a job?” She let us do what we did.

JI: You’ve been a part of many great bands over the years but the most impressive one was your first at Jefferson High School. You were in a band with schoolmates Dexter Gordon, Illinois Jacquet, Charles Mingus, Buddy Collette, Ernie Royal and Jack Kelso.

CH: Orchestra, use the word orchestra. I hate the word band – cigar band, rubber band. We used to rehearse in my wife’s brother’s house, he played trombone and that’s how I met my wife. All those guys in the orchestra ended up being giants.

JI: What was Mingus like as a youth?

CH: Crazy, he was a crazy MF’er. I don’t want to tell any stories about him. He and my wife went to Sunday school together. We were cool together.

JI: You spent time with many of the great band leaders in jazz history. I’d like to ask you about a few of them. Please talk about what stands out for you about them and also share a few memories about Lester Young.

CH: Pres was a giant, an original in more ways than one. He never swore, he came up with his own language. He would say “Mother tucker” in place of MF’er and “Ofay” was his phrase for white people. I loved him, he was my hero. I started smoking cigarettes, the same brand he smoked because of him – Tareyton’s. He was a very independent man.

JI: How about Count Basie?

CH: He wouldn’t let me shoot craps in his band. I learned how to use dice when I was in the Army and in the tour bus I used to win all the money until he said, “You don’t play no more craps on my bus.”

JI: Were you cheating?

CH: No, I know how to roll.

JI: How about Nat King Cole?

CH: Nat played at my wedding. We were good friends, he was a beautiful man, a dynamite human being. He played unbelievable piano.

JI: Slim Gaillard

CH: He was a funny dude but he was a genius. Anything he touched, became musical. He’d kick his feet on the piano and get a good sound.

JI: Duke Ellington

CH: Duke was Duke. If you wanted to say yes, Duke could make you say no. If you wanted to say no, Duke could make you say yes. He had a gift for gab. I was influenced by four people – Duke Ellington, Billy Strayhorn, Luther Henderson and Gerald Wilson. That’s where I got my musical development from.

“Jo and I were very close but I didn’t study with him. Strangely enough, we never talked about drums, we talked about the world. He had a lot to do with me formulating my life. I met Jo when I was 16 years old. The first thing he said to me was, ‘Stay in school.’”

JI: Can you say something about Lena Horne?

CH: Yeah, I thought she was a witch, she was something else. For example, she could hold up her arm and move it and it would look like her whole body was moving. She had rhythm and movement down perfectly.

JI: You spent time with both Lester Young and Billie Holiday. Many have questioned the nature of their relationship. Do you know if they had a romantic relationship?

CH: Hell if I know? He introduced me to the lady.

JI: You first came to national prominence as a member of Gerry Mulligan’s piano-less quartet in 1952. There’s varying reports as to why there was no piano in the band. What’s the real story behind that?

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CH: There were no piano players around. At that time, all the piano players had their own thing going on.
JI: What was your first thought when you heard there was to be no piano in that band?
CH: It didn’t bother me.
JI: There’s not a lot of talk about Gerry Mulligan these days, what can you tell us about him?
CH: Gerry was a strange dude, I’m just the opposite of him. If an audience member was in the joint making noise, he’d stop and chastise them. If I’m playing in a joint, you make a noise, shit, I’ll just play softer and someone else will say, “Cool it.”

JI: The Mulligan band was considered to be a leader of the so-called Cool School or West Coast Jazz scene. Was this form of jazz a deliberate movement away from the hard-driving East Coast approach to Jazz?
CH: The West coast was on the West coast, the East coast was on the East coast.

JI: The first Chico Hamilton Quintet was formed in 1955 and set new ground combining classical elements with jazz. You added the cello of Fred Katz to Buddy Collette on flute, Jim Hall on guitar and Jim Aton on bass. Why decide on this musical assortment?
CH: The bottom line is that we just happened to be five people in the right place at the right time.

JI: You weren’t looking to do something different?
CH: Play in tune.

JI: Eric Dolphy got his start with you. How did you find him?
CH: He went to school with my brother Bernie.

JI: How did your listeners take to his playing?
CH: Some did, some didn’t. I didn’t care what people thought.

JI: What can you say about Eric Dolphy the man?
CH: He was one of the most beautiful human beings I have ever known in my life. He was a dynamite dude, man. Very professional, gentle, the most professional musician I have ever known.

JI: You put out an album in 1966 called The Dealer which has a cover photo of you smoking a cigarette and looking mean. Drugs certainly were a big problem in jazz at the time, why use this image and name the album like that?
CH: I think (producer) Bob Thiele came up with that. I would just record and forget it. I didn’t want to have anything to do with it after I recorded it, not with the liner notes or anything.

JI: The Dealer included Archie Shepp playing piano on his original tune “For Mods Only.” It’s odd that Shepp, a saxophonist, would play piano as a sideman for you. What was behind that?
CH: He was a good piano player. It wasn’t my idea, it was Bob Thiele’s idea.

JI: Throughout your career as a leader, you’ve continued to feature guitar in your band instead of piano, why this longstanding commitment to guitar?
CH: Because the way I played, I did all the dancing. Keyboard would lock you in, guitar can sustain.

JI: You’ve proven to be one of the best talent scouts/mentors for young jazz musicians in history – along with Art Blakey and Betty Carter. A few of the musicians you’ve given a start to are Eric Dolphy, Larry Coryell, Steve Turre and Eric Person. How do you discover future stars?
CH: It works both ways, they discover me, I discover them. If I’m looking for a new player, I put the word out and the next thing you know, my phone rings. The bottom line is that the musicians know I didn’t come to see a circus because they know I am the circus.

JI: You were named an NEA Jazz Master Fellowship in 2004. Drummer Roy Haynes presented you, what’s your relationship with Haynes?
CH: We’re good friends.

JI: What’s been your proudest moment?
CH: I married my wife.

JI: You mentioned earlier that you’re working on an autobiography, when will that be available?
CH: When I’m done working on it. What I wrote first had too many cuss words in it and I was told that kids are going to read it so I’m redoing it. I’m leaving out all the four-letter words.

JI: Any final comments to make?
CH: Just be yourself.
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