

Mayakovsky, Cloud in Trousers:

p. 107: "...even frowning Apostle Peter/will want to step out in the ki-ka-pou."

endnote explains: "Ki-ka-pou: an exotic dance that was currently popular in Russian night clubs. It was apparently inspired by the American Kickapoo Indian medicine shows which traveled about in Europe in the 1890's."

he met the one named Berneta. Genetic bingo took some years yet, but
my existence was promised from the first time Charlie Doig and Berneta
Ringer put a hand in the small of each other's back and danced together
in the hall at Ringling.

reading @ Flannery O'Conor
& later
BJazz

Or am I granted the most characteristic possible glimpse of my mother and my
early self (of her sitting and reading to me by the hour, both of us ~~keepi~~ kept
quiet by the infinite song of pagewords)...

B Jazz

What was taking place in (my mother? me?) was something like an inward tuning,
the wind-struck music of the bone harp that Robinson Jeffers has said we all
ultimately are.

for Barbwire Jazz:

Brubeck's Paul Desmond story: a woman had jilted D for someone high in NY financial circles, and when B asked him, "Paul, how are you doing?" D responded: "This is the way the world ends, not with a whim but a banker."

--I'm about as square as a guy can be and still have feet under him rather than a loading pallet, but...

possible talk abt western lingo

--barbs on barbwire as musical notes; Jeffers' wind-struck music...

(barbs themselves are riffed into lingo: "bobwire"; "nothing between here and the N Pole but a bobwire fence.")

--jazz references: even the lofty Sontag quotes Ellington (clip in this file)

--my use of Armstrong's "We all go do-re-mi..."

*I have a tape ** --Brubeck reference I read or heard somewhere: growing up on ranch in n. Calif., the sound of tractor (maybe a John Deere "poppin' John"?), put a rhythm in him. Does he have an autobiog to check for this? Can he be contacted?

--DARE, inc. my own citations, some of which I made up ("fireshine")

--lingo file

--examples from my correspondence w/ westerners: homesteader letters

--power of the Chardon (?) diary Richard White uses in lecture, juxtaposing killing rats and epidemic among Indians.

--the necessary humor in bunkhouse (and barracks) talk

-- example of trying to get a voice right: Monty-Susan-Wes

--Jick: "We've pretty close to got it."

NPR, All Things Considered, March 8 '03:

in a "sound portrait" interview, Joseph Shabalala, leader of Ladysmith Black Mambazo, told of putting the throat-clearing/humming used on a farm to urge on an ox in plowing into the group's music; his city-born members asked where did he get that? It's a deeper trill, but of the same ilk as the prrrr we used to call sheep when feeding cottoncake. (Does ours go back to Scotland?)

BOOKS OF THE TIMES

A Wild Criminal in a Wilder Australia

By JANET MASLIN

In a spectacular feat of literary ventriloquism, the Australian-born novelist Peter Carey invites the outlaw Ned Kelly to tell his story. He summons the rollicking, unschooled, hugely colorful voice of Australia's best-known underdog for a bravura book-length performance.

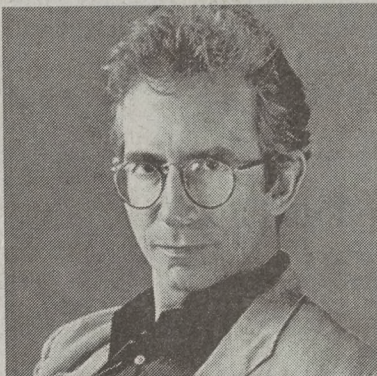
Writing so convincingly in Ned's argot that his own elegantly phrased acknowledgments at the end of "True History of the Kelly Gang" seem starkly incongruous, the Booker Prize-winning author of "Oscar and Lucinda" invests Ned's account with all the makings of a swaggering adventure tale as well as a classic Western tragedy. The effect is triumphantly eclectic, as if Huck Finn and Shakespeare had joined forces to prettify the legend of Jesse James.

Ned Kelly, a figure of such rebel cachet that he was once played (excruciatingly) by Mick Jagger on screen, is riskily imagined by Mr. Carey as a misunderstood hero. No doubt "True Adventures of the Kelly Gang" would be a richer work if Ned were not forever finding himself innocently in possession of other people's horses, or seeing his actions woefully misinterpreted by Australian authorities.

That said, Mr. Carey has still turned a hagiographer's admiration for his outlaw subject into a vastly entertaining story in which the voluble, candid Ned has no trouble holding center stage, thanks to a great gift for gab and an unforgettably vivid manner of expressing himself.

On the eve of one of his many ill-fated encounters with Australian authorities, Ned invokes local fauna with typical panache: "I were a plump witchetty grub beneath the bark not knowing that the kookaburra exists unable to imagine that fierce beak or the punishment in that wild and angry eye."

In a rough, unpunctuated and devilishly artful narrative, one that liberates Mr. Carey from the stylistic convolutions of earlier work like "Jack Maggs," Ned provides the makings of a sentimental tale. At heart, he is simply a boy who loves his mother, even if that mother happens to be a corker. Boyish Ned



Marion Ettlinger/Knopf

TRUE HISTORY OF THE KELLY GANG

By Peter Carey

Alfred A. Knopf. 352 pages. \$25.

describes, to great comic effect, the remarkable effect that Ellen Kelly had on numerous gentleman friends ("I didn't understand how she could profit so well from laundry but knew better than to question her directly") and how chagrined he felt when one of Ellen's suitors managed to move in or father a child. "Angry bunions swollen veins it were a queer thing to see a stranger's big flat feet sticking out the bottom of my mother's blanket next morning," he explains, "and to be honest I will confess I would much prefer that she invited no new husbands to her bed but seeing as I couldn't have this wish I preferred old Harry Power."

The fact that Ellen sells Ned to Harry as an apprentice, that Harry becomes the boy's first partner in accidental crime and that Ellen then angrily demands a piece of the profits does nothing to dim his filial devotion. "Harry robbed them both," Ned recounts of one criminal episode, "apologizing as he done so with his little speech about how he were forced to crime I will not trouble you with it here."

All this is being written by Ned for the benefit of a daughter he has never known but whose life he hopes to influence with tales of the injustices that her father suffered. Ned's fierce Irish pride and his treatment at the hands of Australian Protestants give the book an angry back-

bone, a sense of his ultimate folk-hero stature and an idea of how he will eventually grow up to declare, "I am a widow's son outlawed and must be obeyed."

In providing Ned's side of the various skirmishes that form the basis of his notoriety, and in drawing upon a post-bank-robbery 8,300-word public statement of Kelly's for some of the book's lively syntax, Mr. Carey delves into the relative minutiae of police and journalistic accounts of Ned's life. These particulars might threaten to eclipse the bigger picture if they were not rendered so atmospherically, complete with wombats and banshees, cockatoo pie and roasting kangaroo. He describes two strangers as "hard looking fellows all dried out and salted down for keeping." Someone else is "as lazy as the dog that rests its head against the wall to bark." When his mother is arrested, Ned claims that "the police took her and the baby as easy as plucking mushrooms in a cow paddock."

And when he falls in love with Mary Hearn, a sweetheart of Mr. Carey's invention in an otherwise mostly fact-based account, he does it with breathless, Joycean gusto. "She were a gazelle although I never saw a gazelle she were a foal I carried her around the kitchen 1/2 drunk in happiness she had that dear Irish smell of homemade soap & ashes in her hair I loved her so I told her."

"True History of the Kelly Gang," in which Ned uses the word "adjectival" to replace his ruder thoughts ("O you adjectival worm") and describes such engaging oddities as outlaws in blackface and dresses, is already controversial for its wholehearted, even maudlin embrace of the Kelly legend. (Peter Ryan, the English-born police commissioner of New South Wales, has described Australia's enduring Kellymania as "the black heart of nothingness that sits at the heart of the Australian character.")

But this rip-snorting Western novel rises far above such considerations and works on its own great merits as a seamlessly imagined coming-of-age story set in wild country and wilder times. Though Ned Kelly died in 1880 just before his 26th birthday, he could not be more furiously alive.

CONCERTS

Concert series subscriptions are available.

January 6-8

Lyrics & Lyricists: Over the Rainbow
Lerner & Loewe & Lane & Strouse, \$40

January 11

Ned Rorem Hosts
John Harbison & Michael Hersch, \$25

January 13

Chamber Music in America: 2001
Mendelssohn Quartet,
The Fry Street Quartet, \$25

January 16

Chamber Music at the Y
Juilliard Quartet, \$30

January 20

The Music & Letters of Liszt
Alan Walker, Vanessa Dylun,
Graham Roebuck, Valerie Tryon, \$25

January 21

The Singer's Art
Stephanie Blythe, Warren Jones, \$25

January 25

Jazz Piano at the Y
Barbara Carroll, Sir Roland Hanna, Dick
Hyman, Renee Rosnes, Peter Washington,
Billy Drummond, \$30

January 27

Ned Rorem Hosts
Ned Rorem & Augusta Read Thomas, \$25

January 31

Distinguished Artists
Zoltán Kocsis, \$25/\$18

February 3

International Quartets
Pražák String Quartet
Harold and Maedell Dixon, \$25

February 4

Liszt: Impressionistic & Literary Poetic
Alan Walker, Janina Fialkowska,
Janicé Weber, \$25

February 7

Chamber Music at the Y
Guarneri Quartet, \$30

February 10 **NEW**

Cabaret Uptown
David Friedman & Alix Korey, \$35

February 10-12

Lyrics & Lyricists: Over the Rainbow
Jule Styne, \$40

February 11

Music for the Whole Family: Musical Bugs
Jeffrey Siegel, \$10

February 14

Keyboard Conversations® with Jeffrey Siegel
Romance—Italian Style, \$25

February 17

Project America: All's Fair in Love & War
Oscar Brand, Christine Lavin, \$25

February 18

Ned Rorem Hosts
Christopher Rouse & Michael

February 18

Music for the Whole Family
Kevin Roth, \$10

February 24

Liszt: Compative, Virtuosoic &
Alan Walker, Steven Mayer,
Marc-André Hamelin, \$25

February 28

Tokyo String Quartet
Last But Not Least, \$30

March 3

Music for the Whole Family:
Kid's Night Out with David
and the Big Bear Band, \$10

March 4

Music of the Jewish Spirit: Pur
Regina Resnik, Margaret Ka
The Kinor Ensemble, New Y
Singers, \$25

March 7

Young Europe—Norway
Henning Kraggerud, Helge K

March 8

Distinguished Artists
Lynn Harrell, Victor Ascenci

March 13

The Singer's Art
Nathan Gunn, Julie Gunn, \$

—your heart —
your mind
your soul

The Country and the City, Raymond Williams

pp. 225-7, on orthographic simulation in dialogue; 226, Hardy decided against much of it because it reduces persons to types.

The Country and the City, Raymond Williams

pp. 243-246, James Joyce's changing the shape of language

p. 245: "...the most deeply known human community is language itself."

" : "The greatness of Ulysses is this community of speech."

my note: Joyce's slanginess in quoted passages on these pages could be used in
"Barbwire Jazz" talk.

The Country and the City, Raymond Williams: "A Problem of Perspective," pp. 9-12,
has his sequence of ~~the~~ when rural England supposedly changed, back and back to Eden.

lingo small filebox, used during Prairie:

--Montana Lingo

--cussing

--jokes

--drinking

possible talk about western lingo/2

--trying to get voice right: "Ay" parenthesis for Ninian and Lucas

--"Fit of Pa'rick" in RFair

--file folder(s) w/ my notes for talking to classes about writing

--Sea Runners examples, inc. Jrnl of Verbal Abuse

The Living Arts

y B1

MONDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2000

The New York Times

Directions: Write, Read, Rewrite. Repeat Steps 2 and 3 as Needed.

By SUSAN SONTAG

Reading novels seems to me such a normal activity, while writing them is such an odd thing to do. . . . At least so I think until I remind myself how firmly the two are related. (No armored generalities here. Just a few remarks.)

First, because to write is to practice, with particular intensity and attentiveness, the art of reading. You write in order to read what you've written and see if it's O.K. and, since of course it never is, to rewrite it — once, twice, as many times as it takes to get it to be something you can bear to reread. You are your own first, maybe severest,

reader. "To write is to sit in judgment on oneself," Ibsen inscribed on the flyleaf of one of his books. Hard to imagine writing without rereading.

But is what you've written straight off never all right? Yes, sometimes even better than all right. And that only suggests, to this novelist at any rate, that with a closer look, or voicing aloud — that is, another reading — it might be better still. I'm not saying that the writer *has* to fret and sweat to produce something good.

"What is written without effort is in general read without pleasure," said Dr. Johnson, and the maxim seems as remote from contemporary taste as its author. Surely, much that is written without effort gives a



WRITERS ON WRITING

The Difficult Journey
From Thought to Page

great deal of pleasure.

No, the question is not the judgment of readers — who may well prefer a writer's more spontaneous, less elaborated work — but a sentiment of writers, those professionals of dissatisfaction. You think, "If I can get it to this point the first go around, without too much struggle, couldn't it be better still?"

And though the rewriting — and the re-

reading — sound like effort, they are actually the most pleasurable parts of writing. Sometimes the only pleasurable parts. Setting out to write, if you have the idea of "literature" in your head, is formidable, intimidating. A plunge in an icy lake. Then comes the warm part: when you already have something to work with, upgrade, edit.

Let's say it's a mess. But you have a chance to fix it. You try to be clearer. Or deeper. Or more eloquent. Or more eccentric. You try to be true to a world. You want the book to be more spacious, more authoritative. You want to winch yourself up from yourself. You want to winch the book out of your balky mind. As the statue is entombed in the block of marble, the novel is inside

your head. You try to liberate it. You try to get this wretched stuff on the page closer to what you think your book should be — what you know, in your spasms of elation, it can be. You read the sentences over and over. Is this the book I'm writing? Is this all?

Or let's say it's going well; for it does go well, sometimes. (If it didn't, some of the time, you'd go crazy.) There you are, and even if you are the slowest of scribes and the worst of touch typists, a trail of words is getting laid down, and you want to keep going; and then you reread it. Perhaps you don't dare to be satisfied, but at the same time you like what you've written. You find yourself taking pleasure — a reader's pleas-

Continued on Page B2

POP REVIEW

Let the Good Tidings Roll With Rockin' and Stompin'

By ANN POWERS

Midway through the first performance of Handel's "Messiah" on Friday at the Bottom Line, Jane Siberry laughed. This singer had paused to catch her breath during one of the oratorio's many grace-note-laden passages, but instead of hiding her vocal imperfection, she chuckled and rolled her eyes at the challenging phrase. The crowd applauded, all smiles.

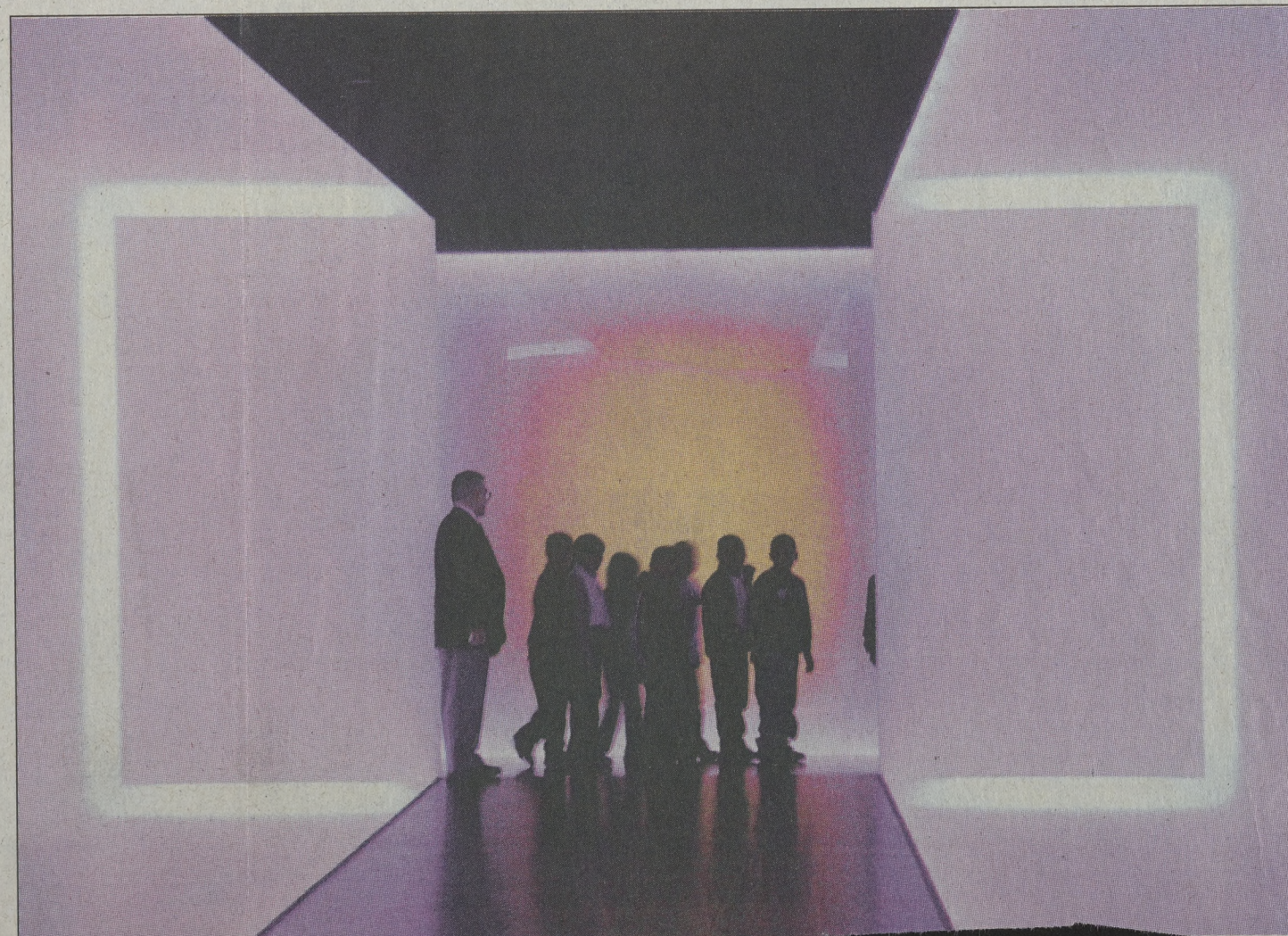
This warm moment typified "The Down-



town Messiah," the easygoing pageant that is becoming a holiday staple at this popular club. Richard Barone, the event's director, has stated the desire to keep Handel's sacred cow alive through respectful modernization. He has done so less by forcing in cutting-edge sounds than by letting his vibrant cast show off its humanity through this treasured work.

The arrangements by Peter Kiesewalter, who also played piano and clarinet, cleverly balanced traditionalism with pop renewal. The 20-voice chorus, directed by Margaret Dorn, followed an orthodox path through Handel's ornate harmonies. But the "orchestra," which included a four-piece string section, a trumpeter, an electric bassist and a drummer, expanded the dynamics to encompass jazz, gospel, rock and even a dash of country. And when each soloist stepped forward, this "Messiah" bent to his or her vision, not just of the Bible story but of the art of singing itself.

After a lovely a cappella turn by the Accidentals, Vernon Reid and Gordon Chambers took the "Messiah" somewhere Handel had never imagined. Churning out a funky riff, Mr. Reid used his guitar to connect the Baroque to the blues. Mr. Chambers had some fun leading the audience members in a gospel-style sing-along. He



Mel Gibson Helen Hunt

"WE'RE TALKING OSCAR WATCH... YOU BET. IT HAS 'WINNER' WRITTEN ALL OVER IT. 'WOMEN' IS THE NAUGHTY-AND-NICE ROMANTIC COMEDY WE'VE BEEN MISSING ALL YEAR. And Mel Gibson, flashing megawatt charm, has never been funnier, looser or sexier. ...A terrific cast...keeps the laughs coming."

Peter Travers, ROLLING STONE

"A LAUGH-OUT-LOUD celebration of the sexes! Gibson & Hunt light up the screen with TRACY-HEPBURN CHEMISTRY."

Mark S. Allen, UPN-TV

"...WILL MOST DEFINITELY BE WHAT WOMEN (AND MEN, TOO) WANT FROM A HOLIDAY MOVIE."

Glenn Whipp, LOS ANGELES DAILY NEWS

"THE MOST ENTERTAINING MOVIE OF THE SEASON.

Mel Gibson gives the most assured and appealing performance of his career. Hunt matches Gibson scene for scene."

Christopher Kelly, FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM

"THE SMARTEST, FUNNIEST AND MOST ROMANTIC COMEDY OF THE YEAR."

Maria Salas, GEMS-TV

"Mel Gibson reaches new heights of comic cleverness... FUNNY... FEISTY... AND FULL OF LIFE."

David Sheehan, CBS-TV

"Mel Gibson & Helen Hunt light up the screen! THIS ONE'S A WINNER!"

Bill Zwecker, FOX-TV

"TWO THUMBS UP!"

EBERT & ROEPER AND THE MOVIES

A FILM BY NANCY MEYERS

What Women Want

PARAMOUNT PICTURES AND ICON PRODUCTIONS PRESENT

AN ICON/WIND DANCER PRODUCTION A FILM BY NANCY MEYERS MEL GIBSON HELEN HUNT "WHAT WOMEN WANT" MARISA TOMEI

MARK FEUERSTEIN LAUREN HOLLY AND ALAN ALDA MUSIC BY ALAN SILVESTRI SUPERVISOR BONNIE GREENBERG-GOODMAN PRODUCED BY BRUCE A. BLOCK

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS STEPHEN McVEEY DAVID McADZEAN CARMEN FINESTRA PRODUCED BY MATT WILLIAMS SUSAN CARTSONIS AND GINA MATTHEWS

PRODUCED BY BRUCE DAVEY STORY BY JOSH GOLDSMITH & CATHY YUSPA AND DIANE DRAKE SCREENPLAY BY JOSH GOLDSMITH & CATHY YUSPA

PG-13 PARENTS STRONGLY CAUTIONED SOME MATERIAL MAY BE INAPPROPRIATE FOR CHILDREN SEXUAL CONTENT & LANGUAGE

SOUNDTRACK AVAILABLE ON COLUMBIA/SONY MUSIC SOUNDTRAX PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY NANCY MEYERS

www.WhatWomenWantMovie.com Internet Keyword: What Women Want

NOW PLAYING AT THEATRES EVERYWHERE

WRITERS ON WRITING



Chester Higgins Jr./The New York Times

"The love of reading," says Susan Sontag, "is what makes you dream of becoming a writer."

had to be able to reread.

Reading usually precedes writing. And the impulse to write is almost always fired by reading. Reading, the love of reading, is what makes you dream of becoming a writer. And long after you've become a writer, reading books others write — and rereading the beloved books of the past — constitutes an irresistible distraction from writing. Distraction. Consolation. Torment. And, yes, inspiration.

Of course, not all writers will admit this. I remember once saying something to V. S. Naipaul about a 19th-century English novel I loved, a very well-known novel that I assumed he, like everyone I knew who cared for literature, admired as I did. But no, he'd not read it, he said, and seeing the shadow of surprise on my face, added sternly, "Susan, I'm a writer, not a reader."

Many writers who are no longer young claim, for various reasons, to read very little, indeed, to find reading and writing in some sense incompatible. Perhaps, for some writers, they are. It's not for me to judge. If the reason is anxiety about being influenced, then this seems to me a vain, shallow worry. If the reason is lack of time — there are only so many hours in the day, and those spent reading are evidently subtracted from those in which one could be writing — then this is an asceticism to which I don't aspire.

Losing yourself in a book, the old phrase, is not an idle fantasy but an addictive, model reality. Virginia Woolf famously said in a letter, "Some-

Continued From Page B1

ure — in what's there on the page.

Writing is finally a series of permissions you give yourself to be expressive in certain ways. To invent. To leap. To fly. To fall. To find your own characteristic way of narrating and insisting; that is, to find your own inner freedom. To be strict without being too self-excoriating. Not stopping too often to reread. Allowing yourself, when you dare to think it's going well (or not too badly), simply to keep rowing along. No waiting for inspiration's shove.

Blind writers can never reread what they dictate. Perhaps this matters less for poets, who often do most of their writing in their head before setting anything down on paper. (Poets live by the ear much more than prose writers do.) And not being able to see doesn't mean that one doesn't make revisions. Don't we imagine that Milton's daughters, at the end of each day of the dictation of "Paradise Lost," read it all back to their father aloud and then took down his corrections?

But prose writers, who work in a lumberyard of words, can't hold it all in their heads. They need to see what they've written. Even those writers who seem most forthcoming, prolific, must feel this. (Thus Sartre announced, when he went blind, that his writing days were over.) Think of portly, venerable Henry James pacing up and down in a room in Lamb House composing "The Golden Bowl" aloud to a secretary. Leaving aside the difficulty of imagining how James's late prose could have been dictated at all, much less to the ratchet made by a Remington typewriter circa 1900, don't we assume that James reread what had been typed and was lavish with his corrections?

When I became, again, a cancer patient two years ago and had to break off work on the nearly finished "In America," a kind friend in Los Angeles, knowing my despair and fear that now I'd never finish it, offered to take a leave from his job and come to New York and stay with me as long as needed, to take down my dictation of the rest of the novel. True, the first eight chapters were done (that is, rewritten and reread many times), and I'd begun the next-to-last chapter, and I did feel I had the arc of those last two chapters entirely in my head. And yet, and yet, I had to refuse his touching, generous offer.

It wasn't just that I was already too befuddled by a drastic chemo cocktail and lots of painkillers to remember what I was planning to write. I had to be able to see what I wrote, not just hear it. I

Writers on Writing

This article is part of a series in which writers explore literary themes. Previous contributions, including essays by John Updike, E. L. Doctorow, Ed McBain, Annie Proulx, Jamaica Kincaid, Saul Bellow and others, can be found with this article at The New York Times on the Web:

www.nytimes.com/arts

(Even) Jazz Makes the Leap to Cyberspace

By TERRY TEACHOUT

COMPUTERS speak in many different voices, but the one coming out of the PC on Bret Primack's desk is likely to startle even the most jaded of Web surfers. Low, amused and overcareful, it sounds suspiciously like a man who has just taken a good-size shot of heroin, and not without reason: the speaker is Charlie Parker, jazz's best-known junkie. "I had the pleasure to meet Miles for the first time in St. Louis when he was a youngster," says the digitized Parker, referring to Miles Davis, the subject of www.milesdavis.com, an interactive Web site designed by Mr. Primack that opened for public viewing two weeks ago.

Milesdavis.com is not the first site devoted to the legendary trumpeter — there are at least 20 others — but it is the only "officially sanctioned" one, meaning that it has been authorized by Davis's estate. In addition to the voice of Parker, it contains numerous audio and video clips of Davis, interviews with musicians who knew him, and an elaborate multimedia biography written by Mr. Primack that will be rolled out in 12 monthly installments. Visitors can also purchase CD's by Davis and books about him, which is the whole point of the exercise, since milesdavis.com is produced by Jazz Central Station (www.jazzcentralstation.com), by far the largest and most ambitious of the many jazz-related sites currently accessible on the World Wide Web.

Jazz is big — very big — on the Web. Jazz Central Station and similar enterprises like Jazz on Line (www.jazzonline.com) and All About Jazz (www.allaboutjazz.com) are among the 300-odd Web sites devoted to jazz, the number of which is growing daily. Many of these sites are difficult to locate on search engines, but if you know where to look, you can find everything from serious scholarship to heartfelt tributes posted by avid fans. Want to know who played bass on Bill Evans's 1962 recording of "Funkalero"? A quick visit to the Bill Evans Jazz Resource (www.34skid.com) reveals that it was Ron Carter. Looking for nightspots in Azerbaijan? According to Jazz Clubs Worldwide (www.jazz-clubs-worldwide.com), there are two in Baku.

Some jazz sites are commercial in nature: Jazz Central Station, for example, is part of the Music Boulevard Network, a group of genre-specific music channels linked to an on-line retail "store" (www.musicblvd.com) that offers more than 200,000 CD's for sale at the click of a mouse. Most jazz record labels now have their own promotional sites (too many, alas, top-heavy with graphics and thus time-consuming to access with a normally equipped comput-

There are 300-odd Web sites devoted to jazz, and the number is growing daily. So much for the music's image of being tradition-bound.

er), which usually include artist biographies, tour itineraries and updates on new releases.

But jazz on the Web is just as often the work of individuals willing to pay the modest price of maintaining a site (a couple of hundred dollars a year is all it takes) in return for the privilege of paying public homage to their favorite artists. To be sure, the coverage is spotty and arbitrary: a recent search turned up no full-scale site devoted to Count Basie and no Dizzy Gillespie site of any kind. Moreover, the typical jazz Web site is amateurish-looking — homemade graphics and painful misspellings abound — and enthusiastic to the point of hysteria.

Yet the Web can also be used effectively as a research tool. A few sites, including the

Terry Teachout, the music critic of Commentary, writes the "Front Row Center" column for Civilization, the magazine of the Library of Congress.

Jazz Spots on the Web

JAZZ is big on the Internet: some 300 Web sites are devoted to the music, and the number is growing. Here are 10 sites worth visiting. **TERRY TEACHOUT**

JAZZ CENTRAL STATION

(www.jazzcentralstation.com)

A one-stop "virtual community" for jazz fans: bulletin boards, news and reviews, profiles and discographies, instant polls, a retail CD store, and much more.

DESIGN: Cluttered, but makes sense once you get used to it

SPEED: Sometimes sluggish

HIGHLIGHT: milesdavis.com, among the best interactive jazz sites on the Web

FANTASY RECORDS

(www.fantasyjazz.com)

Information on new Fantasy jazz releases (including biographies and itineraries for selected artists), plus a CD catalogue.

DESIGN: Clear and to the point

SPEED: Fast, especially for a record-label site

HIGHLIGHT: Quick access to complete track listings for all Fantasy CD's

BLUE NOTE HOME PAGE

(www.bluebonnet.com)

All about New York's fanciest jazz club, from the schedule to the menu.

DESIGN: Nondescript

SPEED: Slow

HIGHLIGHT: Live closed-circuit telecasts of selected performances

KANSAS CITY JAZZ AMBASSADORS MAGAZINE

(www.kansascity.com/kcjazz)

A comprehensive guide to the jazz scene in Kansas City, including feature stories, club schedules, and links to 638 Web sites by or about local musicians, past and present.

DESIGN: Attractive and easy to use

SPEED: Fairly fast

HIGHLIGHT: "A Virtual Visit to Charlie Parker's Grave in Kansas City"

JAZZ CLUBS WORLDWIDE

(www.jazz-clubs-worldwide.com)

Information about clubs in more than 40 countries, from Azerbaijan to the United States.

DESIGN: No-nonsense

SPEED: Very fast

HIGHLIGHT: Links to club Web sites and E-mail addresses

JAZZ CORNER

(www.jazzcorner.com)

A commercial service providing home

pages for more than 60 "independent" jazz musicians, including Ben Allison, Joanne Brackeen, Robin Eubanks, Dave Holland, Jonny King, and Renee Rosnes. All pages are designed in-house and contain biographies, itineraries, sound bites, discographies, and E-mail addresses.

DESIGN: Garish but effective

SPEED: Fast

HIGHLIGHT: Ideal for computer-illiterate musicians interested in using the Web as a promotional tool

BENNY CARTER WEB SITE

(www.lpb.com/benny)

The story of the master alto saxophonist-trumpeter-composer, as told by the Carter scholars Ed and Laurence Berger.

DESIGN: A model of clarity

SPEED: Average

HIGHLIGHT: Great art, including period posters and original 78 labels

PURE DESMOND

(www.interlog.com/~mirus/desmond/desmond1.html)

Everything you always wanted to know about Paul Desmond, the wryly lyrical alto saxophonist of the Dave Brubeck Quartet, courtesy of the Canadian filmmaker Paul Caulfield. Definitely a fan's site, but useful nonetheless.

DESIGN: Somewhat haphazard

SPEED: Slow

HIGHLIGHT: "Desmond Ephemera"

Benny Carter Web Site (www.lpb.com/benny), have been designed by noted scholars, who view them as an adjunct to their conventionally published work. Several scholarly discographies are now available on the Web, and some are equipped with their own search engines: Miles Ahead, the best of the unofficial Miles Davis sites (www.wam.umd.edu/~losinp/miles/ahead.html), can tell you in a matter of seconds when, where, what and how many times Davis recorded with a particular sideman.

The ubiquity of jazz-related Web sites may come as a surprise to those who see

jazz as a tradition-oriented music chiefly appealing to middle-aged fans. In fact the jazz audience, whose members tend to be better educated than the average CD buyer, has turned out to be full of what the industry refers to as "early adopters" — including countless younger musicians who have been surfing the Web for much of their lives, many of whom are now starting their own sites as a means of inexpensive self-promotion.

Kendra Shank, a protégée of Shirley Horn, markets her own singing and her debut CD, "Afterglow" (Mapleshade), through a Web-based home page ([www.speakeasy.org/nw-](http://www.speakeasy.org/nw-jazz/kendra.html)

THELONIOUS MONK WEBSITE

(www.achilles.net/~howardm/tsmonk.html)

A tribute to the eccentric genius of jazz piano, including dozens of links to related Web sites.

DESIGN: Plain

SPEED: Usually fast

HIGHLIGHT: The complete text of Monk's 1964 "blindfold test" with Leonard Feather

BIRD LIVES

(www.birdlives.com)

Bret Primack's cybernewsletter about jazz on the Internet, featuring weekly capsule reviews (plus links) of five noteworthy Web sites.

DESIGN: Bare-bones

SPEED: Loads immediately

HIGHLIGHT: Concise coverage of jazz on the Web, updated regularly



Jazz Corner is unifying the Jazz Community in cyberspace with more than 70 individual websites for jazz musicians and organizations. When you CLICK on the RECORDING STUDIO you'll find complete websites for more than 60 musicians. At the NITESPOT learn about concerts and club dates. Feel free to browse around the BOP 'N' SHOP, peruse the OFFICE SUITES to learn more about the business end of jazz, and check out the NEWSSTAND to learn more about JAZZ CORNER. THE SPEAKEASY is your interactive conference area for jazz on the Internet.

We encourage your feedback and e-mail to the jazz musicians and organizations residing on JAZZ CORNER. And remember JAZZ CORNER is growing and changing all the time... So come hang out with us frequently.

jazz/kendra.html).

"I've only got a very basic page, with some sound bites from my CD," Ms. Shank says, "but I still get between 300 and 400 hits a month. At my gigs, I always invite people to sign up for my mailing list — both snail-mail and E-mail — and I announce all my gigs by E-mail. I get a lot of E-mail from

Web surfers, and I hear from DJ's, who want me to send them the CD for airplay. Not long ago, I was contacted by a Web jazz magazine in France, which interviewed me for one of their issues."

Self-marketing seems likely to become one of the Web's most popular jazz-related

Continued on Page 41

ART

As Modern and Swanky as All Those Swells

By ART SPIEGELMAN

WASHINGTON
CARTOONISTS have often been, um, caricatured by the lay public as semiliterate louts whose art training consisted of doodling nasty pictures in notebook margins during high school. This is indeed how I honed my own craft as a cartoonist, but the dismissive attitude toward cartoons has left me feeling insecure about where my discipline is perceived in the hierarchy of the arts. A walk through the National Portrait Gallery's current exhibition in Washington, "Celebrity Caricature in America," offers overwhelming reassurance that at least one branch of my stunted family tree gracefully reached the celestial heights of the so-called high arts.

The 229 drawings, paintings and artifacts on view through Aug. 23 trace the rise of a new, formally playful approach to caricature that flowered in the years between the two world wars. These images are not in the tradition of Daumier's or Nast's scathing 19th-century visual indictments of the corrupt and powerful, but offer a light, almost judgment-free abstract portraiture born in response to that new 20th-century creation, the celebrity.

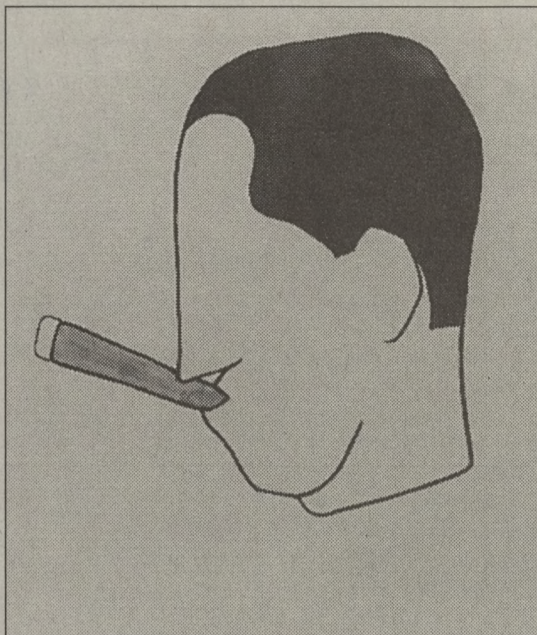
Celebrity, a notion that came into being through movies, theater, radio and mass-media magazines, is fame lite, based at least as much on personality as actual achievement. This show shimmers with luminaries like Babe Ruth, Will Rogers and Josephine Baker. Bootleggers, strippers and even politicians could enter this new pantheon of the caricatured if they were colorful enough.

The exhibition includes enticing sideshow attractions like a flapper's silk dress with a pattern made of famous Hollywood faces, a reconstruction of a Sardi's banquet complete with framed original caricatures of Broadway celebrities and continual screenings of vintage films in which Mickey Mouse and other animated creatures frolic with caricatured stars. All of this attests to the fadlike popularity of this phenomenon, and the exhibition's curator, Wendy Wick Reaves, admirably pursues the sociological and historical implications of it all; more important, by returning repeatedly to a handful of significant artists who are especially well represented here, she calls attention to an overlooked tribe of modernists.

I realize that it would be safer to categorize these caricaturists as sophisticated clowns or, at most, popularizers of modern art. One might be seduced into nostalgia by the sounds of George Gershwin, Irving Berlin, Cole Porter and Noël Coward that literally accompany the show. It would be a mistake.

"Rhapsody in Blue," for example, does conjure up the glamorous world of Manhattan's cafe society, the white-tie-and-tails crowd of the rich and talented who are the subjects of many of these images, but it also provides an important clue to the art on display. Gershwin's jazz symphony is the perfect musical analogue to the complex interaction between "high" and "low" forms that resulted in modernism and inspired this new, stripped-to-its-essentials approach to portraiture.

A small black-and-white drawing for The New York World by William Auerbach-Levy reduces Gershwin to a disembodied profile cut off at the neck, virtually suspended from the enormous cigar that is clamped in his mouth at a jaunty angle. There is a mysterious Easter Island solemnity to this spare drawing that is emphasized by the total absence of even an eyeball and only partly undercut by that goofy cigar. Cartoonists are often noted as iconoclasts, but these caricaturists applied their skills as icon makers, carving totems of the new secular gods ushered in by the mass media. They portrayed the celebrity's persona, not the person's inner soul, and they did it with the precision of a corporate



The National Portrait Gallery

STRIPPED TO ESSENTIALS Impressions of New York cafe society: William Auerbach-Levy's disembodied George Gershwin, above, and, below, Al Frueh's jaunty George M. Cohan.



The National Portrait Gallery



The National Portrait Gallery

FROTHY MEETS ANGUISHED The burlesque queen Sally Rand and the modern dancer Martha Graham by Miguel Covarrubias.

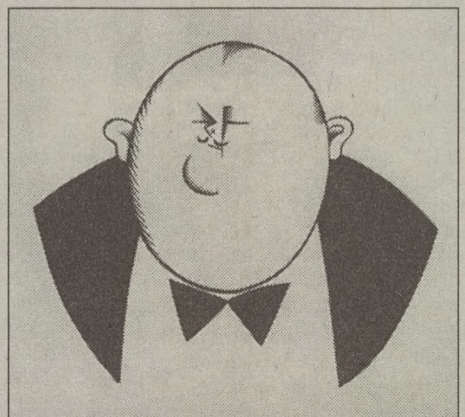


The National Portrait Gallery

RIDICULOUS AND MAJESTIC William Cotton's sumptuous pastel portrait of members of the Algonquin set playing poker carries suggestions of Giotto.

or gallery in New York?) The whole painting seems to be a direct illustration of a quote by Coward: "It's all a question of masks, really, brittle painted masks. We all wear them as a form of protection; modern life forces us to. We must have some means of shielding our timid, shrinking souls from the glare of civilization."

A strenuous reductionism is at work in Auerbach-Levy. He was the Giacometti of caricature, and one can feel the heavy lifting involved in stripping the drawing down to its essentials. Al Frueh, whose theater caricatures were regularly showcased in The New Yorker from its beginnings in 1925 until his death in 1968, is another pioneer minimalist well represented in the gallery. His economical lines are as playful as Auer-



The National Portrait Gallery



Rolland White/The National Portrait Gallery



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Dan Morgenstern

We are pleased to have Dan Morgenstern, author of *Outline History of the World's Foremost Jazz Musician: The Story of Louis Armstrong*, serve as our editor. Dan is new to the art of writing and we'll no doubt enjoy Dan's rendition of the **History of Jazz**.

CLICK ON *Detail from the home page for Jazz Central Station.*

Jazz Discovers The Web

Continued From Page 40

applications, especially when bandwidth — the amount of traffic that can be carried on the Internet — increases to the point at which recorded music can be downloaded at very high speeds. Frustrated musicians unable to attract the attention of major record labels have long been attracted to the idea of starting their own “kitchen table” labels, but they were never before able to find a simple and effective way of distributing their product. Digital on-line music delivery will make it possible for such musicians to make their own recordings and sell them directly to Web surfers, a technological development of particular significance for middle-aged artists currently regarded as unmarketable by the youth-conscious major labels. “We’re finally going to be able to cut out the middlemen,” says the pianist Roger Kellaway, “and go straight to the listeners.”

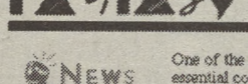
Such applications are not a pipe

The Internet offers everything from serious scholarship to heartfelt tributes posted by avid fans.


dream of starry-eyed computer geeks: N2K Inc., the parent company of Jazz Central Station, is already selling downloadable music singles via e_mod, its proprietary on-line music delivery system. Mr. Primack estimates that within three to five years, most computer owners will have modems fast enough to make digital on-line music delivery both feasible and convenient.

For now, though, jazz on the Web remains the preserve of early adopters like Ms. Shank, and few as yet have done more than merely scratch the surface. “So far,” she admits, “I’ve done nothing to encourage people to look at my page, and I haven’t used it to solicit gigs — for example, sending a bulk E-mailing to festivals suggesting they check out my page and consider booking me.”

Still, the potential of the World Wide Web as a marketing tool is already clear. One figure alone tells the story: 200,000 different computers log on to Jazz Central Station every month. Such numbers are unlikely to impress record producers who specialize in mass-market pop, but for jazz musicians wondering where their next gig is coming from, 200,000 sounds as sweet as Miles Davis playing “My Funny Valentine.” □




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


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Click on *For the Record* for a history of Fantasy.

ON-LINE *Detail from the home page for Fantasy Records.*

in Art

Goebbels delivered anti-Semitic diatribes, is being transformed into the Labor Ministry. There the Government wants the French sculptor Daniel Buren to help alleviate the severity of the building's interior courtyard. In Paris, Mr. Buren's addition of truncated candy-striped columns to the majestic court of the Palais Royal was decried as an act of desecration; amid Berlin's grim fascist-era architecture, however, a bold intervention by the artist will more likely be greeted with a sigh of relief.

But plans for the former Nazi Reichsbank, soon to become unified Germany's Foreign Ministry, have provoked unease. The architect Hans Kollhoff is working with Gerhard Merz, Germany's representative at last year's Venice Biennale, to add color to walls, floors and ceilings in an effort to give the solemn building a freshness and visual unity. To some Germans, though, Mr. Merz was a thorny choice because of his predilection for classical forms and his coy use of fascist symbols in some of his mausoleumlike art installations.

One critic, Hans-Ernst Mittag, a Berlin specialist in Nazi architecture, says Mr. Merz's installations call into question Germany's post-war anti-fascist stance. "Works like those of Merz perpetuate, elevate and certify the practice of superficial and indecisive discourse about National Socialism," Mr. Mittag has written.

The New York-based German artist Hans Haacke also assailed Mr. Merz's role. "If one is dealing with a building that is heavily fraught with history," he said, "it is irresponsible to overlook that history." The design of the Reichsbank, a sandstone colossus of 1,000 rooms, was personally selected by Hitler. Its vaults, used under the Nazis to store plunder from Holocaust victims, are being turned into the Foreign Ministry archives.

THE plan for the Reichsbank's imposing main foyer has also aroused concern among some art-board members. Mr. Merz wants to install a cobalt-blue ceiling ringed at the cornice line by 1,200 neon tubes and retain the original floor of highly polished red porphyry, a combination that board members fear will reinforce the building's chilly aura and create an uncomfortable space in which to greet foreign dignitaries and put them at ease about the new Germany.

The board therefore wants overtly politicized artists like Mr. Haacke, Hanne Darboven, Frieder Schnock and Renata Stih to attempt a more critical confrontation with the architecture. "Merz has a severity that could be misunderstood," said Mr. Bussmann, the board chief. Mr. Merz brushes aside the criticism, calling his work "beyond any ideology, enlightened, cold, uninvolved with life, only pure form."

Other artists, like Gerhard Richter, who examine the Nazi legacy and sensitive postwar political issues, can be counted on to stir strong emotions in Berlin. Mr. Richter's work often explores painful aspects of the national past that some of his countrymen would prefer to forget. One of the most provocative contemporary German works ever produced — Mr. Richter's series of 15 paintings based on the unresolved 1977 prison deaths of Baader-Meinhof terrorist group members — was bought by the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1995. It's doubtful that Germany would hang portraits of terrorists, dead or alive, on official premises, and by awarding commissions to artists like Mr. Richter, the politicians could well find their capital-art initiative reaping an unwelcome harvest. "I'm not certain whether very critical works will obtain majority support within the ministries or the cabinet," Mr. Bussmann said. "I'm very curious. It's an experiment."

The inclusion of artists who worked for the defunct East German regime has already sparked protest. Fifty-eight artists, dealers and critics signed a petition condemning the invitation to Bernhard Heisig, a Neo-Expressionist and veteran Communist, to submit a work for the Reichstag. But the Bundestag has stood by Mr. Heisig's participation.

In the United States, the General Services Administration has subjected public art projects to extensive citizens' review since 1989, when Richard Serra's "Tilted Arc," a sculpture that threw a 120-foot-long steel barrier across Federal Plaza in lower Manhattan, was removed. The German authorities appear less concerned about a populist backlash against difficult artworks. Rita Süßmuth, the Bundestag President, has argued that "precisely in a democracy, it's essential to have selection criteria other than mere acceptability to public opinion."

As for critical opinion, the esthetic merit of the huge quantities of art that will soon be strewn in the German public's path remains to be judged. But even many of those behind the project temper their support with a note of caution. For all Germany's expense and effort, Mr. Bussmann conceded, "It will be a miracle if a few good works come out of it." □

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The Grande Dame Of Jazz, but Don't Tell Her That

Nov. 15 '98

By TERRY TEACHOUT

EVEN if the only noteworthy thing Marian McPartland had done in her long life was play jazz piano outstandingly well, she would still be deserving of the all-star concert being given in honor of her birthday on Saturday at Town Hall. But Ms. McPartland, who was born in Windsor, England, 80 years ago Friday, is far more than just a pianist. She is also a strikingly individual composer, an excellent writer, the host of one of the longest-running jazz programs in the history of network radio and, as if all that weren't enough for one lifetime, the widow of Jimmy McPartland, the tough-talking cornet player from Chicago who replaced Bix Beiderbecke in the Wolverines when his wife-to-be was only 6 years old.

Confronted with a list of her achievements, Ms. McPartland, a small, delicate-looking woman with sharp eyes and a strong chin, is apt to make bashful noises and change the subject. "She's never had an ego problem," says Bill Crow, who played bass in her trio 40 years ago and will be rejoining her at Town Hall, together with the drummer Joe Morello, another McPartland alumnus who, like so many of her former sidemen, went on to have a stellar career in his own right (Mr. Morello's next stop was the Dave Brubeck Quartet). "She's always had a wonderful ear and harmonic imagination, and it's gotten better and better. But you wouldn't know it from talking to her."

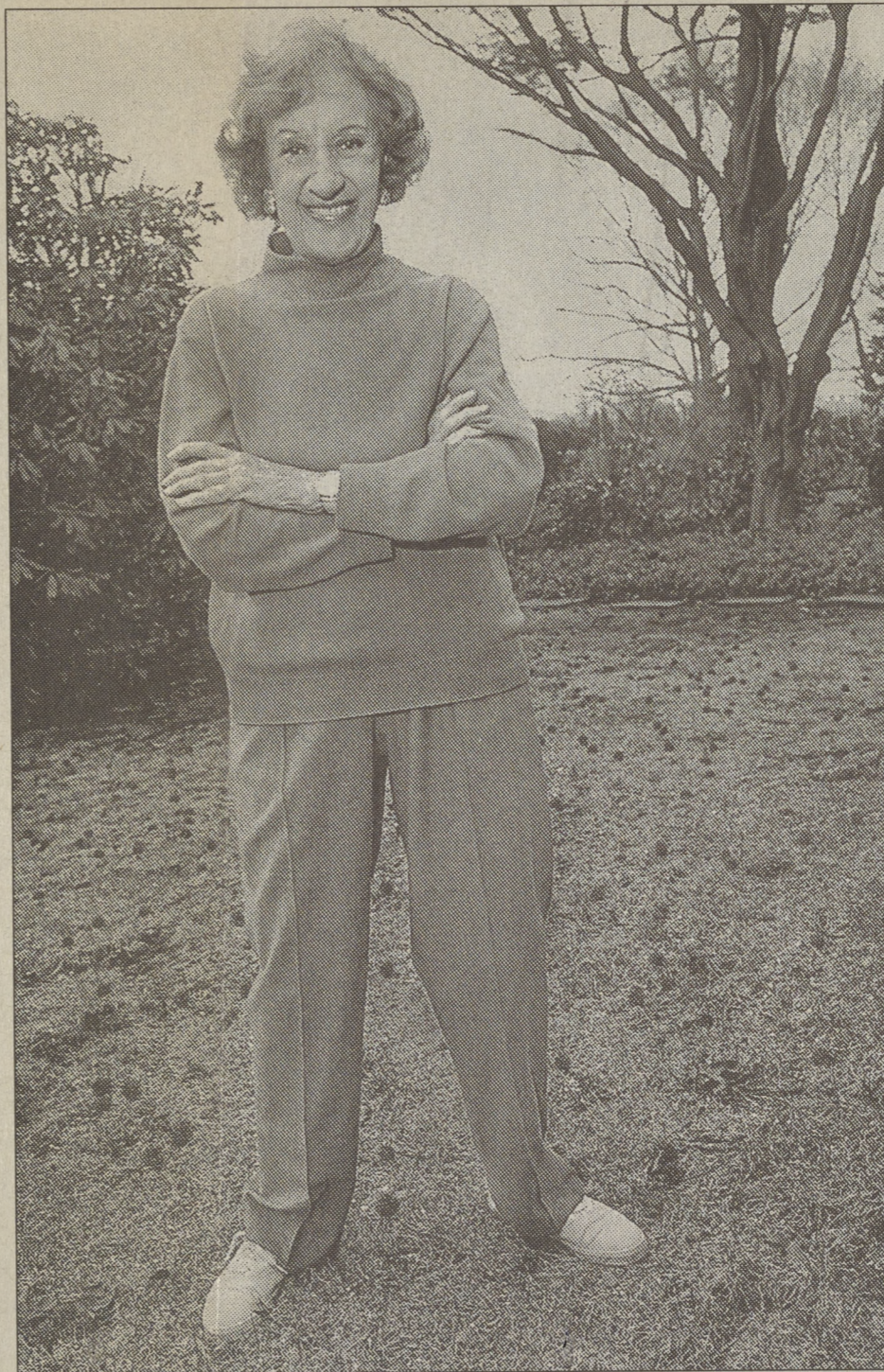
Ms. McPartland's soft-spoken demeanor

Terry Teachout, the music critic of *Commentary*, writes the Front Row Center column for *Civilization*, the magazine of the Library of Congress.

is easy to misread. You don't expect to hear so seemingly genteel a lady swearing — albeit decorously — or telling you with unmistakable relish about the high-flying bassist and drummer she once employed who spent half their spare time smoking marijuana and the other half trying to get her to join them (to no avail, she claims). "She has a beguiling presence, a rare mixture of elegance and impishness," says the jazz historian James Maher, a longtime friend. "And both are reflected in her music, in her cool command of labyrinthine invention and sudden bursts of pure fun."

The one thing she will admit to being proud of is "Piano Jazz," her interview series on National Public Radio, though she characteristically gives her guests the credit for its success. "We've been on the air 19 years now," she says, "and though I haven't exactly counted, I suppose we've had close to 400 guests. Very few repeaters. I'd usually rather find somebody new. I never get tired of listening to them. Often I catch myself thinking of how lucky I am to be sitting in a studio with some guy I really idolize, like Oscar Peterson. I learn a lot, even from the ones who aren't big talkers. Teddy Wilson, for example, wasn't known to be verbose, but I think he felt at ease on the show, and became quite expansive."

Missing from this otherwise accurate description of "Piano Jazz" is the pivotal role played by Ms. McPartland herself, who serves as a combination of oral historian, inspiring duet partner and, when necessary, resident therapist for nervous guests. "Marian came to hear Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers in Los Angeles in 1989, back when I was with the band," recalls the pianist Benny Green, another longtime fan who is performing at her birthday concert. "She took my phone number and asked if I'd do the show someday. Well, she called a



James Hamilton for The New York Times

GROWING 'RECKLESS' AT 80 Marian McPartland outside her Long Island home.

The pianist (and composer and radio host) Marian McPartland is too modest to make a fuss about turning 80. Her fans aren't.

couple of weeks later: someone had bowed out at the last minute, and was I available? Now I'd never done any kind of radio interview, let alone something as important as 'Piano Jazz,' and on the way to the studio I was suddenly hit by a ton of stage fright. But as soon as I entered the studio, she put me at ease, she made me feel like I was supposed to be there, put all the weightiness of the occasion out of the way, allowed us to have a good time together."

Ms. McPartland's inclination to draw back and let others shine may make her the perfect host, but it has also stood in the way of her winning the recognition as a composer that she unquestionably deserves. Her songs have been recorded by the likes of Tony Bennett, Peggy Lee and Sarah Vaughan, yet when praised for the poise and subtlety of such graceful melodies as "Ambiance" and "Twilight World," she deflects the compliment. "I never had all that much faith in myself as a composer," she says. "I've never pushed my tunes on lyricists, or on other musicians. And I never wanted to play only my own things, either, the way some people do, though I now play a few of them more often than I used to. They've been tested now, and so I don't feel chicken about doing them."

It is hard not to wonder whether Ms. McPartland's modesty about her accomplishments arises in part from the fact that she is a woman who has made her way in what for a very long time was almost exclusively a man's world. This diffidence stands in surprising contrast to the bright clarity of her piano playing, which grows more harmonically adventurous with each passing year. "I've become a bit more — reckless, maybe," she says. "I'm getting to the point where I can smash down a chord and not

Continued on Page 37

13. Spain
14. United States
15. Jordan

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*International Math/Science Tests, 13-year-olds, 1991.



QUIET PRESENCE *Marian McPartland in 1976. Playing with a bright clarity.*

Jazz's Grande Dame

Continued From Page 34

know what it's going to be, and make it work. And though I'll never swing like Mary Lou Williams, I'm better at it than I used to be."

But here as elsewhere, it is not necessary to take Ms. McPartland's self-deprecating word for it: One can instead turn directly to the 13 CD's she has recorded since 1978 for Concord Jazz, which reveal her to be among the freshest and most creative pianists in jazz. Perhaps the finest of them is "Silent Pool," released last year, on which she plays 12 of her own compositions, sensitively accompanied by the exquisite string arrangements of Alan Broadbent. It is the high point of a deeply satisfying oeuvre, the late harvest of a lifetime's musical wisdom.

A harvest of another sort can be found in "All in Good Time," the much-admired 1987 collection of Ms. McPartland's essays about jazz and its makers, which will be reissued in an expanded edition as soon as she finishes the four new chapters urgently sought by her editor. "I'm trying to write a piece about Jimmy now," she explains, "which is awfully difficult." Small wonder, for her off-and-on relationship with Jimmy

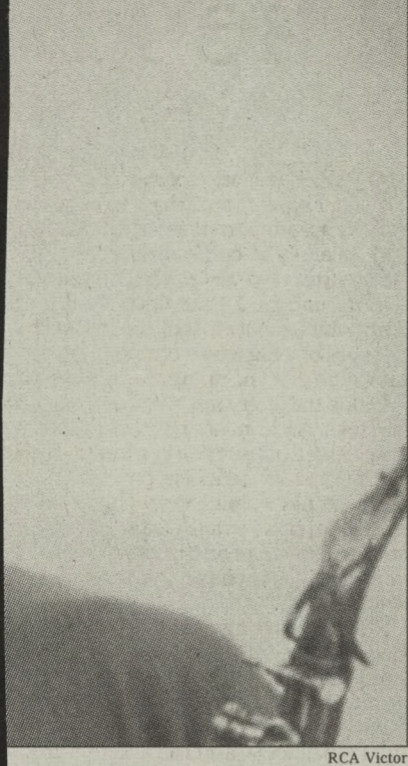
Writing about her late husband, Jimmy, is 'awfully difficult.'

McPartland, which began in 1944 when they met on a U.S.O. tour of Belgium, was the stuff of which double-decker novels are made. The McPartlands were married the following year and divorced in the 60's, thereupon becoming the closest of friends; they finally remarried in 1991, just before his death.

The house where they spent their last hours together, on a quiet block in the Long Island town of Port Washington, is cluttered with record albums, musical manuscripts and photographs by the handful, most of which seem to have Jimmy in the background, even as he is omnipresent in her conversation. "I really miss him terribly," she says, "even more than I thought I would."

Asked what she would like to do that she hasn't yet gotten around to doing, Ms. McPartland admits she has always wanted to appear as soloist with the Boston Pops Orchestra. You can't help but smile at the anticlimactic nature of her secret ambition, but looking back at her extraordinary career, it makes more sense. A rich and memorable body of recorded work, a radio show that has opened the ears of a generation of young musicians, a lifetime of quiet service as the No. 1 role model for women in jazz — what else could Marian McPartland possibly want or need to do at 80? The answer is simple: she wants to keep on playing.

"I feel that working is the best thing anybody can be doing," she says, "especially when you're doing something you like, and you're able to give other people some work, and generally be helpful all around. I certainly wouldn't want just to sit in the back yard and dig bulbs." □



RCA Victor

Caribbean and hip-hop idioms.



John Harrel/Concord Records

at, making the melodies ring.

In recent projects he has collaborated with rappers and the drum sounds from Yoruban religious ceremony. Now, rather than meeting hip-hop and Afro-Caribbean idioms halfway, he has simply taken from them what he needs to sharpen his own vision. "Genesis and the Opening of the Way," his 17th recording in 11 years, is a double-disk set, and it's a reliable gauge of where Mr. Coleman is now.

One disk presents an eight-piece version of his longstanding band, Five Elements, including the great Cuban conguero Miguel (Anga) Diaz. But it's "Genesis," a 70-minute big-band work about the seven days of creation, that provides most of the pleasures.

"Genesis" is played by a group called the Council of Balance, including a string section and a battery of percussionists; we haven't heard music of this size before from Mr. Coleman. He proves himself an elegant arranger with the huge weight of the band; the funky rhythms are never buried. Chattering brass figures knock against the saxophonist's tart, winding paths in "Day One," and a lilting polyrhythmic groove works up to marvelously balletic cacophony. "Day Seven," moving at a crawl, has some of the tragically beautiful qualities of Henry Threadgill's music.

JOHNNY BUSH: 'TALK TO MY HEART'

Watermelon/Sire

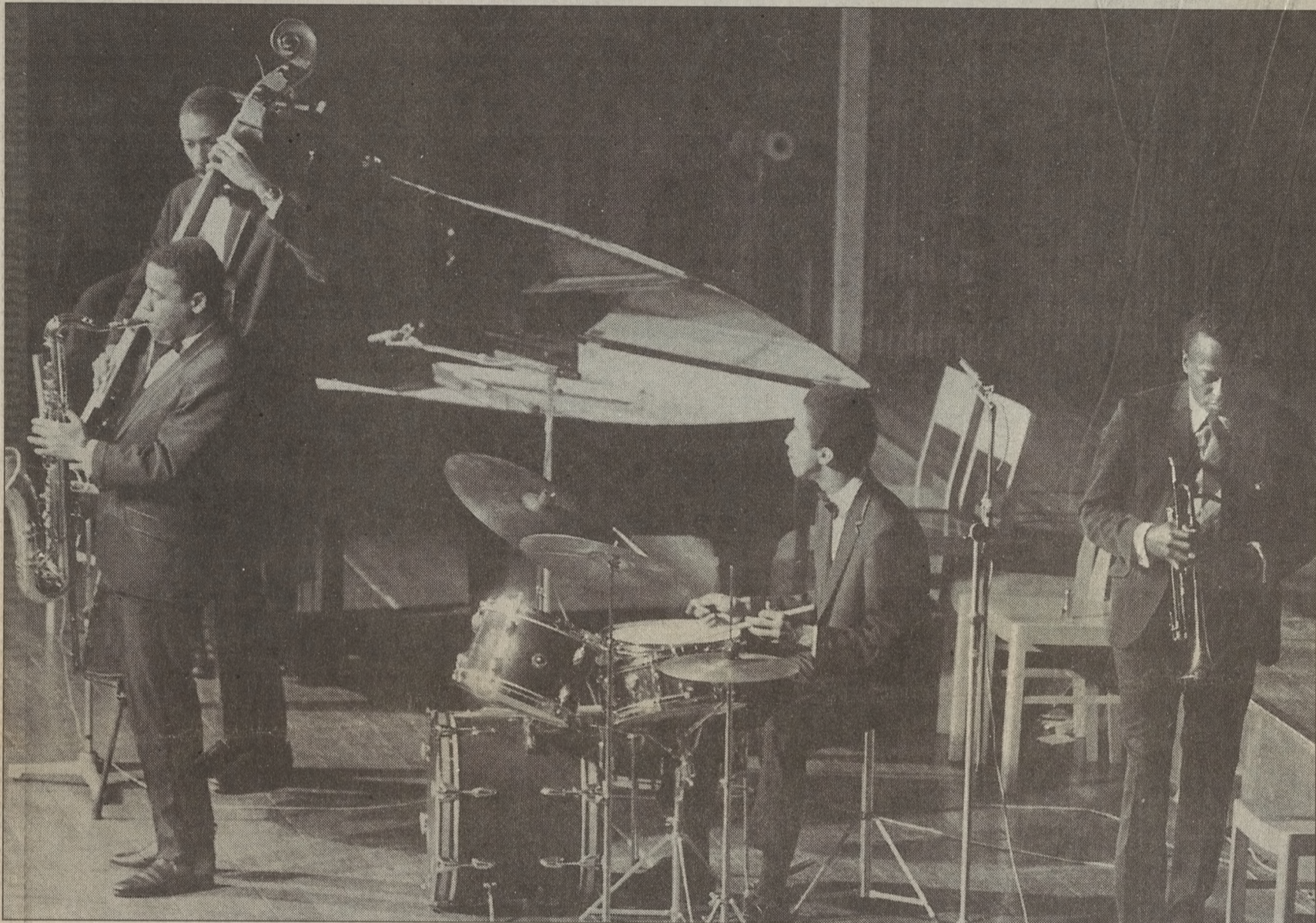
Back in the 1960's, when rock had steamrolled country and independent-labels were taking wild chances with hard honky-tonk material, Johnny Bush's operatic tenor lit up some fabulously bleak records. "Green Snakes on the Ceiling" and "Darkness on the Face of the Earth" were major-key songs of heartbreak and bar-stool terror; they sounded as though the singer's heart might explode out of the speakers. ("You make my eyes run over all the time/ you're happy when I'm out of my mind" goes a typical couplet from that period.)

But Mr. Bush, from Texas, never had a high-profile career; a voice ailment thought to be psychosomatic but finally diagnosed as a neurological condition knocked his work off track for years.

"Talk to My Heart," his first record with distribution enough to get a decent hearing in at least 15 years, gets back to that familiar 1960's sound. Mr. Bush's voice, only slightly diminished, is now an avuncular lovesick wail; it's got authority. The music, in the classic steel-guitar and fiddles set-up, rolls along cheerily, and the lyrics are flush with self-doubt. His metaphors for pain are as florid as ever: in "The Cheating Line," one of his own songs, he brings in weather and wine imagery to his self-portrait of misery: "Clouds of deceit cast bitter shadows on the vine/ that you harvest just a two-step across the cheatin' line."

RECORDINGS VIEW

Miles Davis's Mid-60's Quintet Reverberates Inside Jazz's Head



Jan Persson

MASTERS OF MOODY The Miles Davis quintet (Wayne Shorter, saxophone, Ron Carter, bass, Tony Williams, drums, Herbie Hancock, piano, and Davis, trumpet), performing during the mid 1960's. The band changed the parameters of group improvisation in jazz.

By PETER WATROUS

MILES DAVIS'S second great quintet — Wayne Shorter on saxophone, Herbie Hancock on piano, Ron Carter on bass and Tony Williams on drums — left behind four of the more perfect albums in acoustic jazz history. The records — “Miles Smiles,” “E.S.P.” “Sorcerer” and “Nefertiti” — brought jazz to an extraordinary level of interaction, changing the parameters for group improvisation. Then in 1967, everything changed: Davis and the group started playing with electric instruments and pop textures, and the albums receded into history, albeit beautiful history.

At the time, the achievements of these four albums were overshadowed by music that was more extreme. The music of John Coltrane and Ornette Coleman and even Davis's own subsequent electric music grabbed more attention. There was little indication that the four quintet albums would become some of the most influential recordings in jazz. But they are now acknowledged as masterpieces, the paradigm for the great jazz revolution of the 1980's led by the Marsalis brothers. And for completely different reasons, they have become extremely influential with young jazz musicians in the 90's as well.

The albums have just been repackaged and reissued by Columbia Records as the six-CD boxed set “Miles Davis Quintet, 1965-68.” The set is the third installment in a series devoted to the music of Davis (who died in 1991), with at least seven planned. Future boxes, for example, include a three-CD set given over to a single album, “In

Silent Way.” The series is one of the most ambitious reissue programs in jazz.

The quintet albums became templates in the 80's in part because Columbia shrewdly kept them in print, just in time for the CD explosion and the growing interest in all things American, including jazz. But more important was the music itself. Heavy with the moody and introspective atmosphere of the group's main composer, Mr. Shorter, it was ideal for students who were interested in learning the complexities of harmony and form. And unlike more expressionistic groups in

The introspective harmonies of seminal recordings are helping to inspire succeeding generations.

the 1960's, the quintet manipulated rhythm and time with a sense of swing.

By the time the 1990's rolled around, students were hearing something else in the music beyond its compositional structures. They were enthralled by the band's fluid collective improvisations, in particular the way the rhythm section worked. Much of that percussive sound was generated by the drumming

of Tony Williams (who died in 1997). All over these recordings, Williams instigated interaction at a level that had not previously existed in jazz.

On the first track the band ever recorded, “E.S.P.,” from 1965, Williams's ride cymbal doubles the time of the melody and drives the band so ferociously that Davis has no chance to relax during his solo. Williams provides a context for the soloists, orchestrating the background by concentrating on one texture at a time from his kit, changing the weight of his tumult. Tempo, the drummer Max Roach once remarked, takes care of itself, and a good musician always carries it around in his head, without the need to mark off time. And Williams plays that way, willing to slow down tempos or speed them up, slowly or abruptly. His inventions are an act of bravery, and the glory of the music comes from the group's ability to move along with Williams. He hears everything, and his responses are an ongoing criticism to the action that surrounds him.

That interactive brilliance is found to a greater degree on the first installment in the series of boxed sets, “Live at the Plugged Nickel,” from 1965. During that extraordinarily fertile period, Davis, instead of performing the new compositions from the quintet albums, kept playing his standard repertory. Mr. Carter has said that the group was able to reach such a high level of interaction because of the musicians' familiarity with those compositions. The constant playing of the same few tunes drove the musicians to improvise so profoundly.

By the time the band got to the last of its acoustic recordings, “Riot,” in July 1967, it had become a radically looser group than before. Williams is even

more abrupt in his playing and more willing to perform duets with the soloists, leaving the keeping of time to the bassist. Then the electric music began, and the group, now expanded beyond a quintet, created music that was static, riff based and utterly gorgeous.

Though played by essentially the same musicians, it is also completely distinct from the acoustic music that preceded it, and the inclusion of this electric material in this boxed set makes no historical sense. Instead, the producers have decided that the esthetic split that occurs in Davis's music comes with the substitution in 1968 of Chick Corea and Dave Holland for Mr. Hancock and Mr. Carter. Unfortunately, the personnel change comes in the middle of the album “Filles de Kilimanjaro”; incredibly the producers have only included half the album on the boxed set. Add that strangely surgical decision to the newly chronological ordering of the material — instead of the careful, sensitive arrangement of the original albums — and one has the triumph of collectors over listeners.

DAVIS, by adding electric instrumentation and turning to pop, began a rupture in his music and in jazz; fans and critics continue to argue about it. Young musicians in the 1980's took up where Davis left off, reworking the music for their purposes. Those in the 1990's have taken up a different set of innovations offered by the recordings and are reworking the music for another set of esthetics. One test of greatness is whether succeeding generations pay attention to a work of art. In this case, a lot of people are paying attention, for a lot of different reasons. □

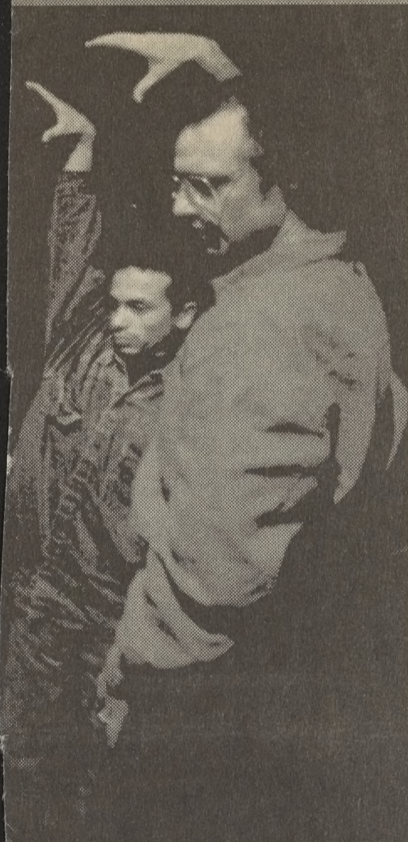
46

TELEVISION

Succeed Where Politicians Haven't



Photographs by Will Yurman



Robinson, right, with Palest-
ndouki, left, and Fadi al Ghol.

MIDEAST TALKS *Muppet stars, above — Dafi, an Israeli monster, left; Haneen, a Palestinian monster, and Karim, a Palestinian rooster — with Hussam Abu Aisha, who plays Adel.*

bewildered-looking young puppets. (American "Sesame Street" Muppets like Bert and Ernie would appear in dubbed segments from American episodes.)

Meetings with the Palestinian team were always accompanied by a virtual rhythm section of ringing cellular phones. The scarcity of telephone lines in the West Bank has made cellular phones as necessary as pita bread, and no self-respecting Palestinian with a good job was ever without one. So essential are these phones, in fact, that last spring after our executive producer, Daoud Kuttab, was released from a Palestinian prison for broadcasting meetings of the Palestinian Legislative Council, our show's producer, George Kheleifi, was asked if Daoud had been tortured in prison. George was quoted as saying, "Yes, they took away his cell phone."

Our script review meetings always began in English, mostly for my benefit, then quickly reverted to Arabic whenever anybody felt strongly about anything, which was just about all of the time. The topics of these scripts — embroidery, fishing, Jerusalem — reflected the everyday aspects of their culture that Palestinians wanted the world to see. For them, "Sesame Street" was a chance to counter the stereotypes they had seen on television for decades: images of Arabs as camel riders, thieves

and terrorists.

Involvement in the "Sesame Street" project did not come without a price for the Palestinians on the team. They were often subjected to severe criticism from other Palestinians for what was seen as a form of "normalization" with the Israelis. So why did they agree to work on the show? I asked our animation producer, Ayman Bardawil, this question one night over drinks. "I am doing it for my children," Ayman said, "so they will not hate the Israelis." This was quite a statement, given that Ayman had twice been "interrogated" by the Israelis, a process that included, he said, the crushing of his testicles.

The Israeli "Sesame Street" team was based in Ramat Aviv, an upscale Tel Aviv suburb. It was, without a doubt, the most heavily armed television studio I had ever been to. In addition to the three guards at the gate with automatic weapons, another guard was permanently stationed outside the studio where the Palestinian team was taping. I don't know if this was standard policy or if the Palestinian puppets just looked particularly dangerous.

ONLY a few members of the team from the original Israeli "Sesame Street," first broadcast in the early 1980's, worked on this new production. (There are currently "Sesame Street" co-productions or broadcasts of the English version in 86 countries.) The new team was made up of young professionals who were deeply committed to the show's themes of tolerance and mutual respect. During my first visit to Tel Aviv, one staff member, Adi Vinitza, took me to a service commemorating the one-year anniversary of the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin. With tears in her eyes, Adi told me that for her working on "Sesame Street" was a way of keeping Rabin's dream of peace alive.

Working on a joint Israeli-Palestinian 'Sesame Street' teaches an American producer about hopes for peace and the next generation.

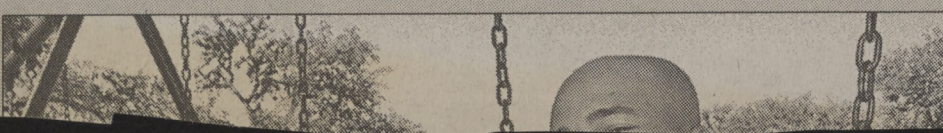
There were difficult meetings, especially those in which we discussed the crossover segments. Disagreements usually centered on how and why the puppets would visit one another. The Palestinians felt that the Israeli puppets needed a clear reason for their trips to the Palestinian street, so as not to be confused with Israeli settlers who were just popping by for tea. Furthermore, they wanted the puppets to be, at first, somewhat fearful of one another. As one of the Palestinian writers, Sami-Al Kilani, said, "These segments should exist in a place between hope and reality."

The Israelis, on the other hand, wanted everyone to become instant friends and happy neighbors, a position that I found quite paradoxical given that the Israeli team had visited the Palestinian offices only once and had done so with an armed security guard in tow. In the end, a compromise on the crossovers was reached: the puppets, after a short, nervous introduction, became as friendly as Arafat and Rabin on the White House lawn.

Once in the studio, the two teams themselves mingled cautiously and the atmosphere was not unlike a high school dance before anyone has started dancing. Fortu-

Continued on Page 50

ly,



scious connection to "Sesame Street's" Maria character). He currently attends community college, prepares tax returns for an electronic filing company and is planning to open his own account. He is

All That You-Know-What

Without even trying, Gary Giddins has written an important history of jazz.

VISIONS OF JAZZ

The First Century.
By Gary Giddins.
690 pp. New York:
Oxford University Press. \$35.

By Alfred Appel Jr.

THE publication of "Visions of Jazz: The First Century" is a major event because Gary Giddins is our best jazz critic. This enormous book contains 79 essays, many of which originally appeared in different form in *The Village Voice*. "Need I add," he rhetorically asks in his acknowledgments, "that at no time in this work's long gestation was it conceived as a conventional critique or history?" He insistently tells us at the outset that he has failed to discuss several important musicians. As it turns out, "Visions of Jazz" is the finest unconventional history of jazz ever written — a brilliant, indispensable book, comprehensive enough given the certainty that a total history of jazz at this point, the century mark, invites a shallow inclusiveness.

Invariably, Giddins writes out of admiration and love. (His characterization of the estimable pianist Tommy Flanagan holds true for him as well: "a deep lyricism that eschewed sentimentality.") The traps and temptations of such a tack are obvious, but his temperament seems to insulate him against blind enthusiasm.

The essays do indeed cover jazz's first century, ranging from W. C. Handy to Cassandra Wilson. Giddins writes at some length about each subject, his essays falling into two types: a life-and-works retrospective survey of an older or deceased musician, or a less ambitious review of performances and recent recordings. Divided into eight parts, the book is roughly chronological, though Giddins is too wise to hold to any strict time line, especially since his history of jazz is the story of the most talented performers, their recordings the subject of the closest musical scrutiny; his book's index of songs and selected albums runs to 20 pages.

Giddins's opening section, "Precursors," begins with an essay on Bert Williams and Al Jolson, two blackface comedians. Purists and progressives alike may find this puzzling, but that reinforces Giddins's point: jazz has to be understood in the context of its origins as popular entertainment, 19th-century minstrelsy in particular. Louis Armstrong, one of the heroes of "Visions of Jazz," is a case in point. Many racially sensitive people still see Armstrong as an Uncle Tom, a buffoon, rather than as the daring, signifying minstrel-trickster who deconstructed and dispatched the racism of demeaning old-time songs like

Alfred Appel Jr. is a professor of English at Northwestern University. He is the editor of "The Annotated Lolita," and his book "Jazz Modernism: Hemingway to Armstrong" will be published next year.



Louis Armstrong and LaVern Baker at Basin Street East in New York.

POPSIE

"Shine" and "Carry Me Back to Old Virginia" — a great man, really, and Giddins writes about him superbly, as he did in his "Satchmo" (1988).

The opening section also includes the ragtime-to-riches saga of Irving Berlin, the Tin Pan Alley story incarnate: songs that at first tapped into black sources, then came to life independently, and, like George Gershwin's, would become part of American culture. The almost-forgotten singer and actress Ethel Waters is presented as no less a pivotal figure in the evolution of American song than Bing Crosby and Armstrong — a versatile crossover artist who could bring perfect intonation and articulation to vernacular material, influencing black and white singers alike.

The second section, "A New Music," discusses the classic figures, from Jelly Roll Morton, King Oliver and Duke Ellington to Coleman Hawkins, Chick Webb and Fats Waller. Giddins violates chronology sensibly enough by grouping sui generis instrumentalists, like Art Tatum, John Coltrane, Cecil Taylor and Ornette Coleman. This sequence of names suggests that he has an unusually wide range of musical interests and open-ended curiosity — unusual because jazz critics, like everyone else, often settle on a favorite period or handful of musicians. Not surprisingly, Giddins's ears are open to post-modernists like Henry Threadgill, Don Pullen, David Murray, Joe Lovano and, in the final essay, Don Byron, the black jazzman who plays Western and Jewish klezmer music. When Giddins considers the way another black musician, Dexter Gordon, the first great bebop tenor saxophonist, weaves musical quotations from other songs into his improvisations, he is describing the pan-racial, multicultural and even utopian essence of so-called modern jazz: "They

fold into his solos like spectral glimpses of an alternative universe in which all of Tin Pan Alley is one infinite song."

The section titled "A Modern Music" addresses bebop mainly, though an essay about the parodist Spike Jones fits in nicely, if loosely. Giddins does not push the importance of parody in jazz and modernism (a pairing explicit throughout "Visions of Jazz"), especially the wit-tiness of bebop quotations of pop songs effected by the likes of Gordon and Charlie Parker, comparable as they are to the allusiveness of literary modernism. The frequent use of the words "modern" and "post-modern" throughout "Visions of Jazz" seems to assume that readers share a definition and understanding of these widely applied terms, which isn't necessarily so. Brief, working definitions would help us all, and Giddins almost supplies one himself in his discussion of Armstrong's singing: "Implicit in the liberties Armstrong took, and in the rise of jazz itself, is the assumption that musicians are superior to the songs they perform — a radical stance by classical principles, where a performance is evaluated by its fidelity to the text. In jazz, performance is the text." This sounds exactly right, and is one step away from a comparison with collage. A majestic Armstrong transformation of a stupid song (like "Sweethearts on Parade") is analogous to the modernist art of collage, assemblage and the metal and raw wood sculpture of Picasso.

Vernacular, or demotic, modernism is the feat of creating more out of less or almost nothing at all; Giddins explains this art of musical rescue and reassemblage through singers of genius, in his explications of Billie Holiday's version of "A Sailboat in the Moonlight" (a 1937 Guy Lombardo hit) and Sarah Vaughan's "Thinking of You" (a winner for Eddie

Fisher and Don Cherry in 1950). "Make it new," Ezra Pound urged in 1914, and these jazz modernists do so by revivifying trite lyrics and melodies. "'Tain't what you do, it's the way that you do it," as Trummy Young sang with Jimmie Lunceford's band in 1939.

ELLINGTON is different from such collagists because he composed his own material. Ironically, serious discussion of Ellington is now vexed by the promotion of him as the greatest American or 20th-century composer, classical music included. It is therefore good to remember, in this prestige-conscious and very politicized time, that Ellington's reputation was enhanced as early as 1927 by highbrow praise of his miniatures alone, recordings that are, at most, three minutes long. Ellington's reputation, Giddins contends, does not depend on his extended compositions. Ellington's music, he concludes, is "Shakespearean in its reach, wisdom and generosity" — an uncharacteristically Miltonic chord. This said, Giddins can still ignore Ellington's current status as an unassailable classic. His perusal of Ellington's ambitious "Black, Brown and Beige" (1943-46) finds the "Black" section overlong and "The Blues" strangely "un-Ellingtonian" and eclectic, with its echoes of Debussy. He calls the very verbal "Second Sacred Concert" (1968) "outright proselytizing": "Some of the choral sections are reminiscent of school pageants." In the current jazz orthodoxy, this is apostasy, but such frank appraisal instead of hagiography only makes Giddins more credible and persuasive. When he turns to the most esteemed Ellington orchestra, the so-called Blanton-Webster band of 1940-42, he discovers that its most fa-

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Designing Woman

The author recalls her mother, who lavished much attention on her fashion career and little on her children.

MOMMY DRESSING

A Love Story, After a Fashion.

By Lois Gould.

Illustrated. 261 pp. New York:

Anchor Books/Doubleday. \$22.95.

By Margo Jefferson

TAKE a woman whose mother died giving birth to her, whose stepmother cared not a whit for her and who so dreaded bearing children that she had three abortions and would have had more if her father had not declared on his deathbed that since God had spared her life she could no longer flout His will. (There was also a husband determined to keep getting her pregnant.)

Then take this woman's daughter, the second of the two children she bore unwillingly. That daughter was confined to her room as if to servant's quarters for long periods of time, rarely spoken to except in passing, left in the care of sometimes ghoulishly cruel nannies and viewed largely as an object of questionable esthetic worth. ("Don't perspire in this dress. I never perspire. Why must you?" her mother complained regularly. "Is that a pimple?" "Why do you let your hair frizz up?")

Who would not sympathize with the child? Compared with their parents, children are always helpless and innocent. But what is so extraordinary about Lois Gould's memoir, "Mommy Dressing: A Love Story, After a Fashion," is that she, the child in question, makes us feel the helplessness, the awful emotional ignorance and deprivation that made her mother who she was, as a parent and as a woman.

Gould's mother was Jo Copeland, a successful and glamorous dress designer. Movie stars and society ladies wore her clothes with pride. The young Pauline Trigère once saw her whirling across a dance floor in Paris and asked who she was. She is a young fashion designer, Trigère's companion answered. "Really?" Trigère exclaimed. "Then that's what I want to be." During World War II, when Paris was off limits and fabrics were rationed like food, American designers had to turn deprivation into inspiration. Separates and sportswear flourished; clothes started to display less fuss and more wit. Gould writes, "Jo Copeland would create the classic tailored daytime ensemble that could turn into a sparkling dinner dress with the flick of a collarless jacket." And she would always be considered one whose ready-to-wear designs were of couture quality.

She wore her own clothes wonderfully, and she was never without admirers, sycophants or escorts. Unfortunately, her daughter was expected to be just as worshipful and undemanding. She should have been content to stand quietly in her mother's room, watching as she dressed

Margo Jefferson is a cultural critic for The New York Times.



FASHION INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY LIBRARY/FROM "MOMMY DRESSING"

Jo Copeland at work with a dress mannequin, about 1969.

or sat on her black velvet pouf, gazing into a vast mirror framed by silver columns, like "an ark of some covenant, with hidden doors that swung open to reveal fragrant jars and beautiful bottles, each of which held other secrets."

Both parents were like haughty deities who held their children in thrall. Belief was shot through with desperation (how can young children afford not to believe, or try to believe, in their parents?); rebellions brought swift and terrible punishment. Gould's father, who owned a cigar business and was always told he looked just like Cary Grant, left the family when Lois was 3 years old. When her mother moved into a new apartment on Park Avenue, she summoned the two children, the governess, the housekeeper and the housekeeper's son into the foyer, which had a diamond-patterned black-and-white floor. There, Gould recalls, "we stood in a circle and promised never to set foot on the white diamonds while traversing the foyer to reach our rooms, or when crossing in the opposite direction toward the kitchen. It was understood that we had little or no business in the dining or living rooms except to practice the piano."

When it came to her parents' marriage, that trusty old Astaire-Rogers formula had broken down. She wanted class, he wanted sex, and neither wanted a compromise. So Lois's father continued his longstanding affair with Red, the wife of his best friend, Charlie, from the haven of a bachelor apartment. Lois often spent her weekly paternal visit with the three of

them, naïvely basking in the attention his mistress gave her. (Which certainly gives added resonance to the title of Gould's novel "Such Good Friends.")

And just as she was hypnotized by her mother's elegance and solipsism, she was seduced by her father's virility and cruelty. Whenever he was summoned to their apartment to discipline her brother, she begged him to hit her instead. "All I ever wished then was for my sins to count, my failures to deserve the belt, the hairbrush, the closed door, the howling screams. The whistling sound of the descending weapon, and the other sound, the sickening smack as buckle sliced into flesh. How I had begged my father for it, hit me, not him! Me! And how they misunderstood, all of them. They thought I meant to defend my brother. I only wanted my father's wrath, which I mistook for love."

How does Gould manage not to get stranded between self-pity and self-loathing, not to lurch from unmodulated rage to those unconvincing pretenses of absolution that usually read something like: "It was monstrous of course. I could never do that to a child of my own. But I now see . . .?"

She has constructed her book so that her parents' lives, with and without her, come to us in many ways: as psychological revelations, as social and sexual history, as tales of New York life. One tale starts in Brooklyn, where a blouse peddler decides to train his daughter for a job in the fashion industry, partly because she is talented, partly because her earn-

ings can help put her brother through law school. Another takes place in Manhattan, where rich women's housekeepers investigate the financial assets of gentlemen callers. If George is really a Greek millionaire, then Sally will plant open boxes of Kotex in Jo's bathroom. That way he will know, without having to ask, that she is young enough to bear children.

When Gould was about 10, she visited her mother's workplace on Seventh Avenue in the garment district. There was Jo Copeland on her knees, pulling, draping and pinning fabric onto a model, sketching, selecting fabrics and accessories, shaping it all into a whole. That is how Gould writes; she even uses the language of fashion, with its mingling of rules and ambiguities, to frame her stories: "Models," "Mix & Match," "Separates."

A chapter called "Diamonds II" gives us Jo's triumphant description of how she brought herself diamond-and-ruby bracelets during the Depression. "How dare you?" her husband shouted. "I've earned them. I want them. I'm keeping them," she replied. But years later, when her daughter asked if she was proud to have been the only one of her friends to buy her own jewelry, she answered: "Proud? Every other woman's jewels came from a man who loved her. Only I was cursed with talent instead."

FOR Jo Copeland, the great Cinderella of modern times was Wallis Warfield Simpson, who certainly never bought her own jewels. Copeland was one of a handful of designers asked to send the best of her collection to the royal hotel suite when the Duchess of Windsor visited New York. For weeks she carried the Duchess's crested thank-you note around with her, displaying it to anyone who would look. She earned her daughter's embarrassed disdain. But after describing her mother's eager, childish snobbery, Gould's tone changes, and she writes: "Until I learned how Jo's mother died giving birth to her, I never understood why, for Jo, a great love story had to be one that didn't end with babies, a home and family. Wasn't that what 'happily ever after' meant? Yet to her, not having babies was literally life and death. How could I know it wasn't just her vanity, her consummate self-absorption?"

Dispassionate compassion is a very moving quality, and it marks "Mommy Dressing" from beginning to end. It is also a hard-won quality when we enter that private, even claustrophobic, territory that mothers and children inhabit. Like other recent books I admire, Gould's fuses this intimate material with social, national or political history. (I am thinking of Helen Epstein's "Where She Came From," Honor Moore's "White Blackbird," Wendy Gimbel's "Havana Dreams" and Beth Kephart's "Slant of Sun.") The result is to free, not burden, the narrator's voice. The memoir's future depends on this new kind of "I," one as fluid and potent as "Once upon a time." □

You-Know-What

Continued from page 18

mous recordings have been analyzed so often that, lest he become a bore, he must discuss the seemingly marginal disks long overlooked by writers. His close attention to "I Don't Know What Kind of Blues I've Got," "Jumpin' Punkins" and "John Hardy's Wife" unveils them as small new masterpieces, reinforcing the composer's greatness and also our sense that his extended works do not have to be deemed better than (say) Aaron Copland's for Ellington to remain "beyond category," to use the highest praise Ellington himself could bestow. Ellington's phrase should allow us to step fairly around the problematic tag "greatest."

The section "A Popular Music" covers the swing era (1935-45), extraordinary as a period when popular music was highly musical as well as popular — a time when the likes of Berlin, Gershwin, Cole Porter and Jerome Kern were composing for Fred Astaire-Ginger Rogers movies. Giddins writes not altogether uncritical celebrations of Ella Fitzgerald, Frank Sinatra, Jimmie Lunceford, Roy Eldridge, Count Basie, Lester Young, Benny Goodman and Artie Shaw. He can flatly say that "Goodman, like Elvis 20 years later, adapted black music for white tastes. He toned it down, cleaned it up" — and that's that. Giddins is not going to dwell, as cultural critics inevitably do, on Goodman as yet another white

poacher and prospector on the vast African-American mother lode. He simply won't let the race issue obscure the clarinetist's great musicianship.

The essay on Count Basie and Lester Young gives almost equal time to Young, the star tenor saxophone soloist of Basie's 1936-40 band and one of jazz's supreme improvisers. Giddins argues against the long-prevailing opinion that Young's talent was diminished after 1945 because of his traumatic Army court-martial and stay in a detention barracks (hence the title of his subsequent record, "D.B. Blues"). By pinpointing shifts in Young's style in pre-Army recordings from 1943, he shows that Young's postwar style had evolved naturally as a choice of expression. Only the jazz initiate may appreciate the radicalness of this point and how it defines Giddins's independence and immense value as a critic. Giddins pays proper due to the Basie-Young classics of the 30's, but again goes against received opinion by praising Basie's post-1950 bands, which are often denigrated as cold, impersonal swing machines. They "kept the game alive," says Giddins, who reminds us that the swing era did not entirely die around 1945 but persisted in the glorious post-1950 music of other enduring swing-era figures like Ellington, Sinatra, Fitzgerald, Artie Shaw briefly (his 1954 small group) and the less well-known Jimmy Rushing.

Giddins opens his heart when discussing singers. Rushing, he writes of a great reissue, "Rushing Lullabies," sings a certain blues "at a slow, bleed-

ing tempo." Of the first recordings of Billie Holiday and Lester Young, he writes how "Holiday's voice and Young's tenor entwined like ivy around the trellises of 'This Year's Kisses' and 'I Must Have That Man.'"

A *magnum opus* that could serve as a textbook, "Visions of Jazz" sorely needs a discography. Because Giddins's retrospective surveys are rarely specific about an artist's best available recordings, a relative newcomer to jazz needs some shopping advice. However, Giddins has brilliantly edited a compact disk as a companion to the book. Also titled "Visions of Jazz," and issued by Blue Note Records, the CD contains 38 selections programmed along lines traced by the book, with surprising, delightful twists, including its very generous running time of 151 minutes.

The CD includes certain well-known recordings by Thelonious Monk, Bud Powell, and Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, because they are discussed in detail in the book. But Giddins also seems to assume that his readers already own many of the most famous recordings of artists like Armstrong, Ellington and Basie, and therefore omits anthology chestnuts. His listeners are instead treated to relatively uncelebrated masterpieces like Coleman Hawkins's rapturous "Out of Nowhere" (1937); Bobby Hackett's stately, heart-stopping "Pennies From Heaven" (1945); Lester Young's almost defiant "D.B. Blues" (1945); Ellington's deliberate and tender piano trio rendition of "Passion Flower" (1953); and Sinatra's

lilting "Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams" (1954), probably selected because Sinatra lets three jazz soloists loose as in no other session from the tightly arranged 50's. Giddins is unfailingly fresh in his selections. Instead of drawing on music by Jelly Roll Morton to accompany the essay about him, he slips in Art Hodes's obscure 1945 version of Morton's "Mr. Jelly Lord." The book's Irving Berlin essay is complemented by the totally unexpected appearance on CD of Kay Starr splendidly singing "You're Just in Love" — retrieved from a long-out-of-print 1960 LP. This is inspired archeology.

Inspiring, too, is the return of another 50's singer, Rosemary Clooney. One of Giddins's final and finest essays in "Visions of Jazz" is devoted to Clooney's winning story, and it is a story — years of despair and obscurity followed by recovery as a person and as an improved performer and recording artist. Giddins reviews her more recent work for the Concord Jazz label, singling out the CD's titled "For the Duration" (1991), where the accompaniment of the tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton and the cornetist Warren Vaché recalls the Billie Holiday-Teddy Wilson sessions of the 30's; "Girl Singer" (1992); and "Do You Miss New York?" (1993). Giddins has "big ears," as jazz musicians used to say, and his jazz vision, his tireless listening habits, are in the public interest. If you follow up on his Rosemary Clooney recommendations, Gary Giddins will simply bring you pleasure and joy. Who could ask for anything more? □

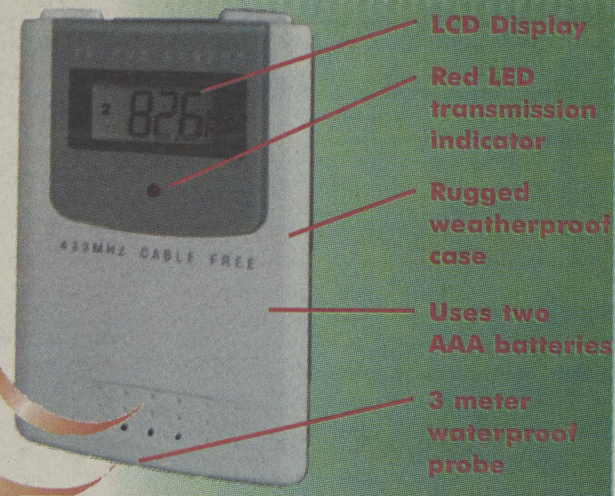
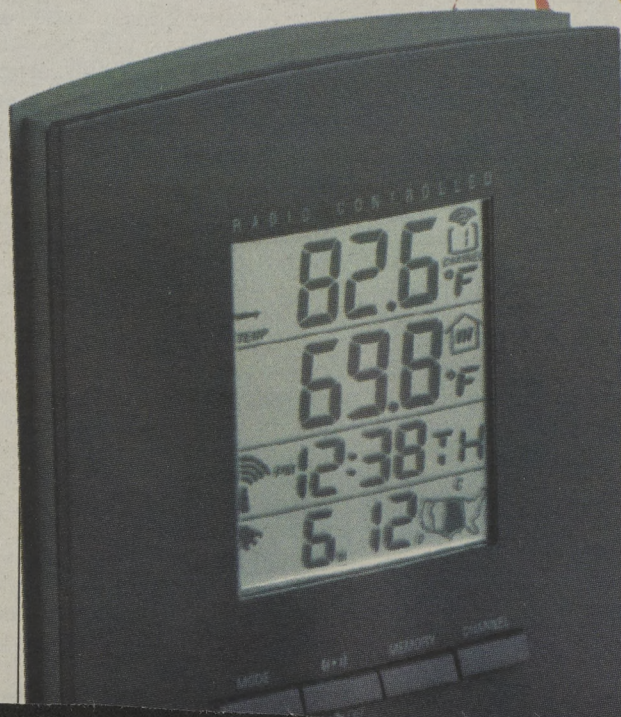
"Wireless" weather clock monitors temperature up to 90 feet away... through walls and floors

New alarm clock from Oregon Scientific sets itself automatically from the U.S. Atomic Clock and displays temperature as well as barometric pressure.

I went around the house and counted: we have eight clocks and four watches in our home, including three alarm clocks and my dad's old pocket watch. And you know what? They ALL display different times. Different by more than 15 minutes!

It's probably not much different in your home. You probably have a clock in nearly every room, and I'll bet some run fast, some run slow, some were set incorrectly in the first place, and some don't run at all. Face it: you don't EVER know what time it really is!

Am I being too fussy because I want to know the correct time? I don't think so. That 8:05 commuter train leaves without me if I oversleep. The school bus leaves without the kids. The meetings, the TV shows, the movies, the ball games...they all start without us if we're late. And I'd want to know the right time even if I didn't have appointments. I just like to be precise. But how do you know the RIGHT



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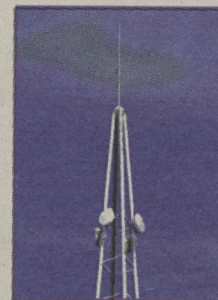
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that transmits temperature readings wirelessly, up to 90 feet away from the main display unit.

You can add up to two more, and continuously monitor conditions all throughout your property. There's even an automatic memory of highest and lowest temperatures!

On Disk: Jazz Voices of the Past

BY NAT HENTOFF

7-14-98

There was a time when some purist jazz critics caustically maintained that there was no such phenomenon as a jazz singer. Jazz was only and wholly music of instrumental improvisers. Louis Armstrong's singing was a mere novelty, they said.

Teenager though I was, I knew those critics were ignorant of the roots of jazz—field hollers, work songs, jubilees and the blues singers in juke joints and on streets.

And later, there was one overwhelming performance by masterful jazz singers that I have since cited to the few who still question the jazz legitimacy of the voice. It was after hours at Minton's in Harlem when a cutting contest (as jazz players called a musical duel) took place between Ella Fitzgerald and Sarah Vaughan.

For well over an hour, their voices became especially supple, multicolored horns, and they swung with deeply flowing, turning, soaring rhythms. I've been present at many cutting sessions between horn players, but these singers could have equaled them all. Sarah Vaughan, with her range and penetratingly sensuous sound, finally vanquished Ella Fitzgerald.

I thought of that stunning joust while listening to "The Jazz Singers," a 5-CD set issued by the Smithsonian Collection/Polymedia (1-800-863-9943 to order). This array of the highly diversified art of jazz singing illustrates the counsel of jazz drummer Kenny Washington: "Remember, folks, as serious as it may be at times, if it ain't fun, it ain't jazz."

The impresario of this overdue historical illumination of the vocal dimensions of jazz is Robert O'Meally, Zora Neale Hurston professor of literature at Columbia University. While a few of his selections are not jazz, no matter what he says—Gloria Lynne, Nancy Wilson, Marvin Gaye—the rest make this an indispensable collection that ranges from 1919-94. And his notes reveal resourceful research, some of which may surprise even old jazz hands.

There are classic recordings by Louis

Armstrong, Billie Holiday, Jimmy Rushing, Bessie Smith, Ivie Anderson (Duke Ellington's most vivid and swinging vocalist), Mildred Bailey, Sarah Vaughan, Dinah Washington and Bing Crosby with the Mills Brothers.

I have been telling skeptics for years that Bing Crosby, when he chose to, was a jazz singer of grace, wit and infectious swing as this collaboration with the Mills Brothers, "My Honey's Lovin' Arms," clearly shows. If you transcribe what Crosby does here and then have a trumpet play it, the result is unmistakable jazz.

The most intriguing and ominously evocative singing is a 1929 version of "West End Blues" by Eva Taylor, who is unknown to most jazz reference books. She worked in traveling shows and in the Broadway musical "Shuffle Along." Her controlled bitter sensuality has a haunting, murderous aura as she savors the destruction of her faithless lover.

Anybody can place Louis Armstrong and Billie Holiday in a tribute to jazz singers, but Prof. O'Meally merits credit for bringing Eva Taylor out of the mists of the past.

Also among Prof. O'Meally's rarities is a 1970 rehearsal by Ben Webster with a studio band in Copenhagen. Webster was never less than definite as a tenor saxophonist and here too he shapes these Danish musicians into an understanding of jazz phrasing and jazz time with relentless clarity. Webster sings some of the parts, scats through other lines, and the very cadences of his spoken instructions are those of his instrumental improvisations.

He teaches the players, as Prof. O'Meally writes, "not to play too many notes or hit certain notes too exactly or too softly and smoothly." And, to make a particular phrase inescapably real to them, he tells them to play it like "I'm tired . . . like the last breath in life."

I used to collect bootleg recordings of imperious Toscanini rehearsals, and except for the difference in genre, the rough but intensely musical directions of the maestros were not dissimilar.

Throughout the collection, Prof.

O'Meally goes beyond appreciations to an understanding of certain singers' complexities of career and desire. For example, he puts the underrated and often misunderstood Ethel Waters in realistic context. Early on, she was a vaudevillian ("Sweet Mama Stringbean") and then a blues singer who influenced Billie Holiday, among other jazz vocalists. An actress on-stage and screen, she never lost, as a singer, the ability to sound as if she had lived each song.

"She was," Prof. O'Meally says, "a cultural mongrel, an omni-American who worked the highly charged borders of these various forms that are, we should recall, also mongrelized, (neither black nor white alone but black-and-white in the American grain)."

To this admirer of Mildred Bailey, one of the most softly compelling of all jazz singers, Prof. O'Meally brings fascinating new information: "Her mother, who was part Indian, routinely took her to the Coeur d'Alene Reservation (near Spokane), where the family had moved and would often run through Indian rites and songs with her at home."

Bailey was another omni-American, crediting those Indian rites with "straightening out the clinkers" in her soprano "because you have to sing a lot of notes."

Another largely overlooked performer whose presence resounds again in this collection is Oran "Hot Lips" Page, a dramatic trumpet player and an even more impressive singer.

At the Savoy in Boston, as pure a jazz club as there ever was, musicians would come by after they finished their gigs elsewhere in town. Around midnight, there on the stand was Page. He sang the blues for over an hour without repeating a single lyric. It was like an anthology of innumerable black lifelines all told with such immediacy by his rough but poignant voice that the waitresses stopped in their tracks and the customers forgot they were thirsty.

Page later picked up his horn, but it was his singing that has stayed with me all these years.



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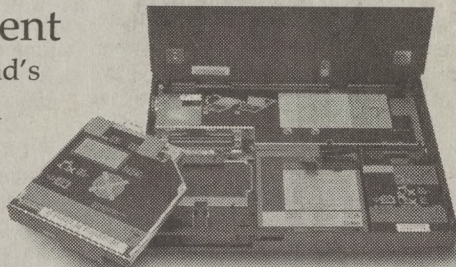
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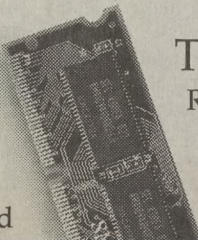
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