

THE
JAZZ
CENTRE

Centrepiece

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SNOWBOY INTERVIEW

+ FULL REVIEWS:

JACKIE KAY: BESSIE SMITH

IN THIS ISSUE • HUMPHREY LYTTTELTON • SNOWBOY • VAL WILMER: JAZZ PHOTOGRAPHY
• PETER IND OBITUARY • DESERT ISLAND JAZZ DISCS • CHARLIE WATTS TRIBUTE

Centrepiece



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The Jazz Centre UK is open from Wednesday to Sunday 11am - 5pm.
You can find us at The Beecroft Centre, Victoria Avenue, Southend on Sea SS2 6EX. Tel: 01702 215169.

OUR MISSION —
TO PROMOTE, PRESERVE AND CELEBRATE THE CULTURE OF JAZZ MUSIC IN ALL ITS FORMS

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SOUTHEND IS THE NEW CITY OF JAZZ!

When you've worked with someone who 'gets' what you're trying to do, will do their damndest to fight your corner and takes a genuine interest in ensuring your happiness, success and sustainability you know you're onto a winner.

Last month, evil took away a great friend, colleague and passionate supporter of The Jazz Centre UK. The unfathomable assassination of Sir David Amess—the man without whom our presence in the Beecroft Gallery would not likely have happened—will be forever imprinted on my still numb and dumbfounded brain. Both Digby and I were honoured to have been invited to join the board of local folk to ensure Southend Borough Council's bid for "City" status went through. Little did we know how things would pan out. I'm sure I join Digby, my fellow Trustees and all our volunteers and readers of Centrepiece in wishing his wife, children and family only fond and happy thoughts of "Mr Southend" . . . we most certainly will.

But Southend has always been the City of Jazz, hasn't it?

In the absence of a cathedral, we've always thought of the Beecroft Building as our place of jazz worship, brilliantly established by our own "bishop", a certain Mr Fairweather. Our cover feature on local lad Acid Jazz doyen Snowboy, tells more great tales of the influences Southend's jazz scene has had and still continues to do so.

The re-awakening of The Jazz Centre UK after lockdown has been a huge success with a panoply of live events that demonstrate just how incredible our cultural jazz offer is locally. October saw us pull together a fascinating Black History Month programme that showcased the significance of black music and black musicians on past, present and future jazz journeys.



Daryl Sherman and Digby Fairweather at The Jazz Centre UK. Saturday 6th November.

Our success has enabled and — watch this space— continues to attract some star names from the national and international jazz world including Rhode Islander, Greg Abate, New Yorker Daryl Sherman and not one, but two BBC Young Jazz Musicians of the Year, Xhosa Cole and Deschanel Gordon to perform phenomenal live music in our Atrium and Lecture Hall venues.

We've worked with the team at the Southend Jazz Festival to launch a movie about the music of Edmund Hall, partnered with local musicians to showcase the career of Miles Davis, and, through the hard work, efforts and kind generosity of Phil Waterhouse and Mike Deakin, have launched new seasons of our Jazz Film Club, Mick G's Listen-In Sessions (think 'book club' but with records instead of paperbacks!), and

Mike's fascinating new Hits & Myths seminars (not quite Royal Institution lectures . . . but not far off!).

And with this re-awakening and our successes so far, our trusty and amazing volunteers of all ages have continued to step forward to provide a fantastic visitor attraction that ensures The Jazz Centre UK is the go-to cultural centre for jazz. We regularly have visitors making special journeys from as far away as Birmingham, Bristol, Bournemouth and Boston —no, not the one in the USA— and enquiries from overseas are building fast!

But we do need more help . . . YOUR help!

Our new Sunday Afternoon Jazz Lounge live sessions presented brilliantly by our very own Carole Braithwaite and her band have proven there's a local and regional demand for jazz on both days at the weekend, and now the crowds are starting to gather.

So, if you can, please spare a few hours on a Saturday or a Sunday, or indeed any other time you may have, as we'd love to welcome you to The Jazz Centre UK volunteer family. If you're super-interested in supporting our work and have some time to spare to get involved in our fast-growing organisation, do get in touch today . . . like that poster says WE NEED YOU!

Welcome to the City of Jazz . . . and welcome to this fascinating edition of Centrepiece. We hope you enjoy, encourage you to feedback to us and, of course, to spread the gospel of the broad church that is jazz music.



Greg Abate at The Jazz Centre UK. Saturday 30th October.

Photo: Fred Morris.

Mark Kass

CEO & Trustee November 2021

PETER IND: A PERSONAL MEMOIR

By Digby Fairweather

From somewhere in the eroding chasms of my memory comes this phrase: 'Coleman Hawkins spilled out phrases like an old bearded God'. Well if whoever it was thought that Hawk looked like God, then Peter Ind, his one-time musical partner back on New York's 52nd Street, could easily pass for John the Baptist. Striking looking (even after a stroke had twisted his face) with flowing white locks and a fulsome white beard, it was a thrill for all of us when, at the age of 90, he visited The Jazz Centre UK a little over two years ago, to talk about his career.

By the time he came to the Centre I had known and worked with Peter on and off for fifty years. The first partnership had been for a project called Great Jazz Solos Revisited organised by his great friend and longtime colleague, the late flautist/cellist Bernie Cash; the two of them, Peter claimed, had founded the first fulltime jazz course at Leeds College of Music in 1967. This latest project —for which Bernie had harmonised famous jazz solos including Lee Konitz's solo on Lover Man, Charlie Christian's Stardust and Lester Young's Broadway — garnered what now seems like an outsize burst of publicity; a BBC Sounds of Jazz live broadcast from Maida Vale 3; a full edition of Melvyn Bragg's South Bank Show (quite a coup!), and of course an album on Peter's own Wave label. Joining Peter and Bernie was a saxophone section of Peter King and (the very underrated) Jim Livesey (altos) Bob Burns and John Holbrook (tenors) Joan Cunningham (baritone) and a rhythm section completed by Peter's long-time associate and fellow Lennie Tristano devotee Dave Cliff (guitar) and Art Morgan (drums). The album was recorded in two sessions in March 1978 at Peter's Wave Twickenham Studio; a grand-sounding title for what was actually the front room of his house called Amyard in Park Road Twickenham.

At that time —if not in awe of— I was certainly very aware of Peter Ind's long history in American and British jazz. From beginnings in the legendary Tommy Sampson orchestra (which later turned into a powerful nucleus of Ted Heath's mighty aggregation) in 1947 he had joined the on-board ensembles of Gerald's Navy in 1949 sailing from the UK to New York, and once there had studied with Lennie Tristano (a lifelong influence and inspiration) before emigrating full-time to America in 1951. There —first along the jazz crazy clubs of 52nd Street and later wherever jazz could still be found— he had effortlessly moved into international company for the next fifteen years; working and recording with Tristano, Lee Konitz (throughout the 1950s and beyond), Warne Marsh, Buddy Rich, Billie Holiday, Coleman Hawkins and Roy Eldridge and artists as stylistically divergent as Henry 'Red' Allen and Paul Bley. In 1961 he also founded his Wave label and put out his first album Looking Out with a variety of musicians including pianists Ronnie Ball and Sal Mosca, guitarists Joe Puma and Al Shackman, drummer Dick Scott and singer Sheila Jordan.

From 1963 to 1966, (with remarkable prescience at the dawn of the rock era) he moved from New York to Big Sur, California happily joining what could be described as the 'new hippy generation'. "I was researching cosmic energy and giving bass concerts" he remembered " —but no recordings". He also gave the first-ever solo bass concert on-campus at Hertz Hall, Berkeley, California. It was also during his tenure at Big Sur that Peter began painting

seriously (much of his oeuvre strongly recalls the Impressionist movement, and a collection of his works Painting the Energy of Nature is held at The Jazz Centre UK).

Then in 1966 he came back to Britain to continue to run his US-founded Wave record label; tour with Konitz and Marsh again in 1975-6, and —a couple of years later— to collaborate with his spiritual partner Bernie for Great Jazz Solos Revisited which is where I came in.

Regularly thereafter our paths would cross; on freelance jobs and notably for a British Council-financed residency in Manila with my group Velvet where he replaced Len Skeat. Unlike Len whose principal influence (and good friend) was Ray Brown and who seldom touched his bow unless it was on the part, Peter was swift —as he would be throughout his later career— to launch on virtuosic arco solos which occasionally threatened to overpower the contributions of his eminent guitarist-colleagues Denny Wright and Ike Isaacs. But it all added to the fun.

Although he never became more than a good and ever-amicable friend, I quickly realised that Peter was also a very spiritual man and a wise visionary whose thought processes moved far beyond music. In one of his books published in 2008 (The Environment and Cosmic Metabolism) his stated view that "with current pollution levels so high we are putting too much into the atmosphere and the metabolic balance of the earth is severely upset" would become a matter for necessarily urgent international attention a few years later. Other views were possibly more questionable and one (brought into the conversation on a journey to some gig or other) —that cancer was a mental condition that could be overcome by what used to be termed 'the power of positive thinking'— was a discussion I preferred to avoid. But the fact that Peter continued to live and largely to thrive both creatively and in the practical matter of getting on day by day well into his ninety-third year, certainly suggests that some of his highly-developed mental outlooks worked for him.

I saw a lot more of him after he opened the Bass Clef Club at 1 Hoxton Square; a brave addition to London's jazz scene which —along with Ronnie Scott's, the 606 and 100 Clubs— hosted dozens of UK and American stars between 1984-94. Its closure, after a devastating VAT enquiry (Peter had hired a small-time solicitor in Mid-Wales to handle this mighty project) was the most regrettable blow to the London jazz scene of the time and for the time being, quite understandably, badly depressed its one-time



Peter Ind at The Jazz Centre.

A Tribute to Charlie Watts, Patron of the Jazz Centre UK



When Gerry Mulligan wrote jazz classic *Walking Shoes* in 1954, little did he know that he would spark a flame in a little boy who would become the world's best-known rock and roll drummer, Charlie Watts.

Influenced further as a young teen by Charlie Parker and Chico Hamilton, graphics student Watts got himself picked up by Alexis Korner in a London coffee shop to play in his original line-up of the Blues Incorporated sextet, subsequently moving mountains in blues circles

throughout his career including joining the Rolling Stones but consistently thinking "blues was Charlie Parker, but played slow" until meeting Jagger, Richards and Jones in 1963.

Watts is famous for saying that "25 years with the Rolling Stones was 5 years of work with 20 years of hanging about" but he kept his jazz chops alive recording ten predominantly live jazz albums of regular touring gigs with his eponymous quintets, tentets, big bands and orchestras."

Watts was a founding Patron at The Jazz Centre and as ever, jazz connections abound when we were recently bequeathed a collection of jazz ephemera from bass man Ron Mathewson, a mainstay of Watts' backing bands and orchestra.

Watts' super-calm drumming style as at the heartbeat of the Rolling Stone, will ensure he will forever be remembered in that role. He remained the epitome of cool, a dapper, understated man-about-town and all-around nice guy and one who did his best to keep out of the rock and roll limelight whilst continuously shining in the world of jazz.

Rest in Peace Mr Watts from all your friends at The Jazz Centre UK.

Mark Kass
CEO & Trustee

founder. But, along the way, his organisation had its lighter moments too. Above the club Peter had built a recording studio (for Alistair Robertson's Hep label), where I recorded an album called *Anytime, Anyplace, Anywhere* with Slim Gaillard, Buddy Tate, Jay Thomas, Jay McShann, Peter and Allan Ganley. This particular session had been booked for 10am but in the event Slim turned up at 1.15pm and we finished recording at around 4pm; possibly some kind of record! Some time before however, the studio had hosted a session for a punk rock group and Peter had engineered the session. "I couldn't understand" he said "— why the bass guitar was so hopelessly out of tune! So finally I went down into the studio to tune it and the machine heads were immovable. I asked why and the guy said: 'my Dad bought me the bass guitar and when he got it home he welded the tuning keys so that the bass would never go out of tune!'"

When the CD generation arrived Peter and his devoted wife Sue decided to move with the times and put out much of the Wave catalogue —26 recordings in all— on the new medium (for me a particularly valuable issue was *The New Paul Whiteman Orchestra* recorded live at London's Roundhouse for the visionary American cornettist/author Dick Sudhalter). He also continued

to record with other friends including a new reunion with Konitz at Steve Rubie's 606 Club and albums with guitarists Tony Barnard, Jim Mullen and singer-pianist Ian Shaw. As late as 2019 he was still planning new projects; a new album with his longtime friend and collaborator, the

great Martin Taylor; a new recording of *Oriental Improvisational Rhythms and Rhymes* and educational courses for young people in the old art of recording to tape rather than to computer.

By the time he came to The Jazz Centre in 2019 Peter was ever-amicable but visibly older and less voluble than he had been and it fell to Sue to prompt him with answers about his phenomenal career, his recordings and old associates like guru Tristano, Konitz and other

friends of sixty years. But it was marvellous to have him here and to see young musicians like guitarist Harrison Dolphin and bassist Lorenzo Morabito gathering around him like disciples to hear the benign words of an old master. Though I try to step over clichés whenever possible for once the venerable bromide is hard to resist: we shall not see his like again.

11 October 2021.



Lorenzo Morabito and Harrison Dolphin with Peter Ind at The Jazz Centre.

HAPPY HUNDREDTH HUMPH!



'Humph'. The short dismissive single syllable —possibly suggesting a snort of disapproval— now seems inappropriate for the man who, for the whole of the years following the 20th century's second World War, was the unchallenged spokesman, celebrant and mediator for jazz music in the UK. But that's how we knew Humphrey Richard Adeane Lyttelton; Old Etonian trumpeter, bandleader, composer, author, broadcaster and all-round polymathemath. And for him that single-syllable nickname became our term of endearment for him for sixty years from 1948 until his death.

Unless however you belonged in one of the two Lyttelton families —his wife and children or his band (two totally separated entities)— Humph could indeed be dismissive too, and back in my college years I found out one evening at 100 Oxford Street. In 1965 I'd been playing regularly at Southend Rhythm Club with his old friend (and favourite tenor player), the irrepressible Jimmy Skidmore. "When you see 'Umph next" said Jimmy "say 'hello' from me". So, making my way through the packed club I made my way to my hero's side, while he was talking to pianist Eddie Harvey and stood there until he turned round.

"Excuse me Mr Lyttelton" I said "but I've been playing most weeks with Jimmy Skidmore in my local club and he said I might say 'hello'". Humph turned and looked at me frozen-faced.

"Oh" he said "well in that case (a pause) 'hello'". And turned straight back to carry on talking to Eddie. It was one of the the shortest jazz conversation I'd ever had up to then, but the second is another story for another time.

It was good to find out, sixty years later when I was compiling the Jazz Centre's new book *Ace of Clubs* (the story of the 100 Club) that I wasn't alone. His first clarinetist (and lifelong friend) Wally Fawkes knew it too. "With people he was close to, he was really close, but anybody outside the magic circle he wasn't aware of" Wally recalled. "I remember in the Blue Posts" (the watering hole on the corner of Newman Street for any 100 Club performer from the 1940s on) —a young chap came up and said 'Humphrey,

do you remember me in school'. Humph turned and looked at him closely and then said 'No', and turned away. He had no desire to ease the pain".

Wally's recollection came from the days when Humph had arrived on the scene, joined George Webb's Dixielanders—the first New Orleans band to be formed in Britain after the war— and gangbusted through its ranks taking most of the members with him to form his first band in 1948. "It was rather like Gulliver arriving in Lilliput" Wally recalled, "this giant figure and giant talent and we didn't have quite enough string to tie him down!". For the next ten years Humph morphed from what appeared to be an all-traditional style to a player who audibly acknowledged most styles up to (but not including) bebop; a progress charted to perfection in the numerically neat 100 Parlophone sides he recorded and which were subsequently reissued on four essential CDs on his own Calligraph label. By 1959 however —with his legendary 'three-saxophone band'— Humph had entered on what (for me) is his most gloriously artistic period with such albums as *Triple Exposure*, *Humph in Perspective*, and *Blues in the Night*, where the vinyl artwork is as beautiful as the music on the records and the arrangements are by masters, including Eddie Harvey, Kenny Graham and Harry South. But there are literally dozens more Lyttelton albums to explore in the post-Beatles era; first on Alan Bates' Black Lion label and later on Calligraph. And this prolific oeuvre (including over 400 of his compositions) is yet to be fully explored; not only by me but (I suspect) a huge group of post-Lytteltonians

who have yet to make the journey of rediscovery back through six recorded decades.

Despite my admiration for him it took a very long time to begin to extend the boundaries of that 100 Club conversation. Humph was, in fact, a shy man —he eschewed the lucrative opportunities of after-dinner speaking because (as he told me once) "I don't like being in a roomful of strangers". Over the years we shared many stages; a (very brief) project called *Humph meets Digby* (organized by my old friend Liz Lincoln), South Bank concerts for the distinguished London promoter Michael Webber, and jazz festivals in London and beyond. We knew each other well enough for Humph to call me when his longtime (and greatly beloved) friend and alto-saxophonist Bruce Turner was diagnosed with terminal cancer in 1993. "Go and see the old boy" Humph advised (he was four years older than Bruce at the time!) and it's to my eternal shame and discredit that I didn't make it. But, right or wrong, my personal belief is that we became real friends in the early noughties, when George Melly and I shared theatre stages with Humph and his band (plus Kenny Ball or Acker Bilk) in a package show called *The Kings of Jazz* promoted by the powerful jazz agent Jack Higgins who represented me on and off for over forty years, and whose place in Britain has never been comprehensively replaced. During my Christmas tenure at Ronnie's with George I'd spotted, in a bookshop on the Soho borders, a handsome volume (not much smaller, it seemed to me, than the Gutenberg Bible!) collecting all the cartoons of the *New Yorker* magazine. And knowing Humph as a cartoonist of supreme skills (some of his greatest ones are preserved in the little volume *Faces of Humph; Caricatures and Memories*, held at The Jazz Centre UK. I mentioned it to him and saw his eyes light up. "Don't worry Humph" I said "—let me pick up a copy and send it to you at home". I did so and a week or two later my cell phone rang. "Humph here!" said the voice "—and my postman has just had a heart attack delivering your parcel!". From then on I believe we were friends; co-delivered the eulogies for his (and my) great friend the trombonist Pete Strange for his funeral in 2005, and talked together regularly in dressing rooms before concerts until Humph's own departure in 2008. And on my office desk, as I write this, is the cover to a late CD *Sad Sweet Songs and Crazy Rhythms* (Humph had a well-concealed sentimental side). "To Digby" reads the inscription "from one trumpeter to another cornet-player, and good friend. Humphrey Lyttelton".

There is no doubt that Humph possessed what every jazz performer needs —an ego— and on rare occasions this could rebut on his band. Alan Barnes recalls one evening when things hadn't gone well and his leader warned his sidemen: "remember, I'm bigger than any of you". This rare outburst, in my view, revealed more about Humph's insecurities than his beliefs. But the fact was —in those polymathic terms— he was bigger than most of his players who (unlike Alan) confined themselves just to blowing their horns. Humph on the other hand, it seemed,

was good at everything to which he set his mind and hand. He was a fine television host for years and searchers on Youtube can even find him swapping gags in scripted sketches with comedian Les Dawson. But perhaps (at least for me) it's his series of books that were his most impressive sideline. Beginning with his self-defining *I Play as I Please* autobiography in 1954, they were the first in the —then— highly limited bibliography of jazz to prove that a top-line jazz trumpeter in the UK (or come to that beyond it too!) could write with style, intelligence, lack of posture and, of course, the matter of humour which Humph saw as a basic essential to life. *I Play as I Please*, and his second in 1958 *Second Chorus* were —for senior-generation doubters who were (to say the least) suspicious of Mezz Mezzrow's purple prose (in *Really the Blues*), the more obscene passages of Alan Lomax's *Mr. Jelly Roll* or the almost naïve simplicity of Armstrong's *My Life in New Orleans*— proof that real literacy existed in the UK jazz world at a time when our still-notorious music needed every well-expressed word it could find.

As I've said, Humph was so good at so many things that he ran every jazz musician's risk of not possessing a clearly-defined role in the jazz arena. And it was one of his most loyal and long-standing friends, tenorist Kathy Stobart, who once confided the friendly criticism to me that "Humph is just too good at too many things". This —as other polymaths like Dick Sudhalter, Ian Carr, Simon Spillett (and me) have found over the years— can be a matter for midnight doubts and fears. However, once for an interview on Jazz FM I asked my guest if he thought trumpet-playing on its own would be enough, and his answers interested me. "Yes", he said immediately, and then after a pause: "I've never been asked that before. And I think the answer would be 'no'". So like many musicians, including Sudhalter, Spillett and the late Bob Wilber (who titled his autobiography with the phrase) the 'music was not enough' But it's much to Humph's credit that (at least until very late on in his career, when new-generation listeners knew him mainly as the much loved Chairman of Radio 2's *I'm Sorry I haven't a Clue*, that he managed to remain primarily known as a trumpeter-bandleader. 'Clue', which celebrated silliness for its own sake, ticked Humph's box as something very much worth being involved in —and indeed celebrating— and for many years, (so he told me), he continued to host it for the minimal fee of £200 per show. Along with such extra-musical activities however he continued to play and lead his band and his last-ever gig (at the venerable Bulls' Head at Barnes where for years he hosted a monthly residency) was three days before, in his own words, "it was time for me to pop off!" Undemoralized by the rising power of the rock generations he also continued to run his own Calligraph label producing at least one album a year until his last which was completed after he died by trumpeter Tony Fisher who took his place in the band.

And yet so far, amid all of this, we haven't mentioned his broadcasting. And as a broadcaster on his most



beloved subject Humph was incomparable. He took trouble over it too; scripting every edition of his *Best of Jazz* show (in that elegant calligraphic hand) which ran for four decades on Radio 2; making sure that every style of jazz was fully represented, celebrating all the classic jazz recordings, and equally offering praise to contemporary performers in and beyond the UK. I remember personally the broadcast of a track from my first album *Having Fun* in 1978 and his generous encomium that: "I foresee that within the next twelve months or so we are going to have a spate of fine recordings by Digby". Of course this made my week, month and year! But that's forty years ago now and thereafter Humph faithfully promoted not only younger musical contemporaries (other less generous performers enjoyed sabotaging newcomers) but all the greatest jazz from King Oliver to Joe Zawinul as well as more (one-time) newcomers like Stacy Kent and Courtney Pine.

We also shared many appearances on Richard Willcox's remarkable Radio 2 series *Jazz Score* which was recorded live in front of an audience, hosted by Benny Green and (somehow) ran for sixteen years from 1981 to 1997 amid the rock years before it came to an end with Benny's death. The idea was that we should listen to a piece of recorded jazz, identify the player and then tell a story about him. We all tried to be funny (and sometimes succeeded), but I'd have to say that the only two contestants who managed it genuinely were Humph and Acker Bilk, who were naturally witty (as well as funny) and both of them lightning-quick with a one-liner. I'm also able, at this length of time, to reveal that we were asked to select the (supposed) 'mystery player' by Richard's secretary well in advance of recording so that we would have a story—very frequently typed out and secreted on our knees under the table!—ready to tell! But it was at one point that Humph re-assumed his military ability to aim a shot at the supposed 'opposition' quizlings, and one evening

at the Paris Theatre Lower Regent Street (where the show was first recorded before it progressed to live jazz venues including the 100 Club and Ronnie Scott's) he drew himself up to his impressive height and barked: "Right! Who's been told the answers?" Ties were fiddled with, furtive guilty glances at watches were cast, and from then on we tried to play the game straight—with dramatic adjustments in the scores. But Humph was right. "I'm damned if such and such from whoever's Trad band knows who played a trombone with the Chocolate Dandies in 1928", he said (or something of the sort). And of course he was right.

So was Humph a workaholic? Several times he denied the idea to me; first on that Jazz FM interview and later at two Celebrity Interviews which I hosted for him at the National Jazz Archive in the '90s. But whatever the precise definition of the word is, he was certainly working non-stop most of the time and on the occasions when I would call his manager (and my old friend) Susan Da Costa—still, happily, a regular visitor to The Jazz Centre UK—she would always say that Humph was, as ever, rushed off his feet. Perhaps the fact that he was so good at everything helped; at various times he dashed off a superb cartoon of Stan Barker and I for the cover of our album *Let's Duet* and wrote a foreword for my biography of our old idol Nat Gonella—apparently within the space of a few minutes. So perhaps it would be fairer to say that—quite simply—he loved the work and however much it kept him awake at night or preoccupied him during the day he wanted to do it. Just at the moment I can't find the quote (I think it's from *Second Chorus*) which says something like: "I can be lying on the bed blowing the trumpet and Jill (his wife) will come in and say 'I thought you were going to work'". Of course he was working; keeping the trumpet nearby to blow in order to keep his chops in some kind of shape, but also—probably—thinking about the next liner-note, the next article, the next musical project or whatever.

What Humph would be like were he hale and hearty—and still busy—in his hundredth year is anybody's guess. But mine is that he would still be playing, composing and just as ready to greet and applaud the new generation of jazz which includes such as Shabaka Hutchins, Nubya Garcia and Moses Boyd. I'm glad that we have his collections at The Jazz Centre UK: his magnificent roll-top desk (with size 14 slippers underneath in case he wants to get back to work); his last and best trumpet; his acres of correspondence including letters turning down first a CBE, then a knighthood (left-wing Humph didn't believe in the Empire), his books, his many awards, and much else of what he believed in and loved. I'm glad that we were friends, and continue to miss the man who, in 1956, Louis Armstrong called "the finest trumpeter in Britain today". But he has left us a fulsome and immovable legacy. So perhaps all that's left to do in Humph's hundredth year is to wave him an earthbound 'happy birthday', and revisit those memorable lines of Will Shakespeare: "Goodnight sweet prince - and flights of angels sing thee to thy rest".

Digby Fairweather

12 October 2021

Banks ♦ Canha ♦ Porter ♦ Taylor August: Live at The Jazz Centre UK

Saturday 7 August, 2pm in the afternoon, five hundred plus days of lockdown ended with a full house at The Jazz Centre, and a glorious two hour set from the Trevor Taylor Quartet. Robin Porter on tenor sax; Dan Banks on piano; Jose Canha on bass, and Trevor on drums. Starting with some compositions by Chick Corea, the set largely consisted of Dan Banks originals from the Quartet's album *Lost at Sea*. Introducing each tune Dan explained that they were all inspired by the music of Icelandic band Sigur Rós, which he arranged as jazz compositions. The Quartet then commenced to perform one of the most original, and beautiful sets ever heard at The JCUK.



Photos: Fred Morris



Photo: Phil Waterhouse

September: Live at The Jazz Centre UK

Tim Huskisson's Jazz Centre 4

Jazz is many things to many people, so when it was suggested we should put on some traditional jazz instead of the usual sax plus piano and rhythm section, I wasn't quite sure what was expected. Some tailgate trombone? A 1920s New Orleans marching band? The fancy waistcoats some musicians feel obliged to wear when playing at a summer garden fête?

Locally-based musician Tim Huskisson was asked to put together a band for the occasion. Tim, who once described himself to me as a mainstream pianist and traditional jazz clarinetist, a gross over-simplification for someone who has a wealth of experience in popular music and musical theatre, as well as deep knowledge of blues and traditional jazz, brought in some of the finest exponents of the genre currently working in the country.

Playing cornet there was Mike "Magic" Henry, who has spent the best part of the last 20 years touring Europe with The Big Chris Barber Band; on guitar Nils Solberg, who travelled up from the south coast and has played and recorded with so many of the great jazz performers; bassist Roger Curphey, who has also played with many of the well-known jazz names including Dick Morrissey, Pete King, Ronnie Scott, and Yank Lawson; and, of course, Tim Huskisson himself playing clarinet.



A quartet then. "Who's the drummer?" someone said "You can't have traditional jazz without a drummer!" Oh yes, you can.

What we got from Huskisson's Jazz Centre Four on Saturday 18th was an afternoon of absorbing and melodic tunes played in the foot-tapping traditional style by musicians at the top of their game which prompted at least one audience member to remark on social media that he was "Watching four master craftsmen going through a lovely selection of unamplified jazz classics."

Not a fancy waistcoat in sight, nor a banjo within earshot, just the sound of their instruments undistorted by the vagaries of electronic amplification, and proof that the best of jazz, in whatever form, is played by the best of musicians.

The Nigel Price Trio with Vasilis Xenopoulos

The JC's live music revival continued with the first Spike's Place presentation, from promoter Susan May, since lockdown descended. Fittingly, she brought us the man who did the very first gig in her long running series —top British guitarist Nigel Price, and his quartet. Nigel is one of the hardest-working British players, regularly stringing together improbably long tours and racking up hundreds of appearances at Ronnie Scott's; but it was the turn of the ubiquitous and brilliant tenor saxophonist Vasilis Xenopoulos to impress us with the indefatigability of the touring jazz musician this time, preparing at the end of this JCUK session to set off for an appearance onstage at 9pm in Liverpool...

The quartet delivered two fine sets of tight, intricate jazz, their repertoire paying tribute to other memorable sax-and-guitar partnerships in jazz. Nigel and Vasilis were complemented by the alert, responsive rhythm section of Simon Thorpe and Matt Fishwick. Nigel's Wes Montgomery based style is notable for its restraint and taste, with a subtle bluesy drive, while Vasilis impressed again with his unfailing invention and instrumental command.

A reasonable audience turnout suggested that the JC is —at last!— back in business: spread the word and look out for the What's On leaflet outlining the next few months...



Photos: Fred Morris

BBC YOUNG JAZZ MUSICIANS OF THE YEAR

November: Live at The Jazz Centre UK

Saturday 20 November, The JCUK presents **The Xhosa Cole Quartet** (BBC young Jazz Musician of the Year, 2019), featuring pianist **Deschanel Gordon** (BBC young Jazz Musician of the Year, 2020). They will perform their incredible sound, ably supported by Joel Waters on drums and Josh Vadeviloo on bass.

At just 24, Xhosa is now an highly acclaimed saxophonist, flautist and composer; Deschanel (23), a pianist in great demand in his own right, and as a sideman in many of today's leading contemporary collectives, bands and to soloists, such as Mark Kavuma, Cassie Kinoshi and Judi Jackson.



"Cole's maturity and strong vision that freshen the content of an established jazz form and marks him as more of a 'must-see' than a 'one-to-watch' Cole's centred tenor sax sound has the warmth and complexity to carve a personal voice out of a demanding jazz tradition."

from the review of his first album *K(no)w Them, K(no)w Us*: Mike Hobart

Birmingham-born and based, Xhosa Cole is a product of that city's community arts programmes, specifically the Town Hall – Symphony Hall (THSH) Jazzlines Summer Schools. Xhosa explains: "It was a new thing to get students from the inner-city creating jazz and playing jazz. It was in partnership with Birmingham Conservatoire and we had some amazing tutors and guests." He was given the opportunity to play alongside seasoned professionals like Jeff Williams.

He also gigged with Birmingham's tenor sax legend Andy Hamilton at the Ladywood Community Music School.

At the Jazzlines 2015 school Xhosa could choose the classical or jazz studies. Luckily for the jazz world he chose the latter. In 2018 he was voted BBC Young Jazz Musician of the Year, performing a piece by John Coltrane and his own composition *Moving Ladywood*, a reference to his Birmingham roots.

Of his win, Xhosa said: "It's been amazing to represent and have been represented at this prestigious celebration of jazz music. The calibre of musicianship and passion for jazz music

has been incredibly inspiring to be a part of."

Accompanying Xhosa Cole in November will be another BBC Young Jazz Musician of the Year, pianist Deschanel Gordon. His victory came in 2020. In the final he bravely ventured a solo interpretation of a jazz classic, Thelonious Monk's *Round Midnight*, alongside his own reggae-tinged number *Awaiting*. Finals judge Orphy Robinson commented: "Deschanel displayed a wonderful mature sound and approach. He possesses an assured command of different styles, while at the same time adding his own individual touch, flair, and technical competence."

London-born, from Hackney, Deschanel developed his skills in the Julian Joseph Jazz Academy and the Hackney Creative Jazz Ensemble. Oscar Peterson was an early inspiration, and led to his preference for jazz over a classical music direction.

He now performs with his own trio as well as with the SEED ensemble and with Mark Kavuma's The Banger Factory. London Jazz News has dubbed him "the piano man to watch".

You can read their review of his gig at the 606 club: <https://londonjazznews.com/2021/06/28/deschanel-gordon-quartet-at-the-606-club/>, and an earlier interview with LJN: <https://londonjazznews.com/2020/11/09/pianist-deschanel-gordon-606-club-efg-london-jazz-festival-16-november/>

You can access a wonderful performances by The Xhosa Cole Quintet on Youtube: Jazz 1080: The Xhosa Cole Quintet: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m_ZHWC48_Mw&t=114s

THSH: Xhosa Cole's Quintet: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d5S8zWkNjPQ>

Or try Deschanel Gordon at Kansa Smitty's Jazz Bar this February: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ez-5pWOswo>

See them both live at The Jazz Centre UK. The whole band are energetic, passionate and exciting to witness ... these guys were once the ones to watch, now they're the ones you must see.

Tickets £15 from the website.

As Serious as Your Life

SEE HEAR! Val Wilmer: An appreciation

In a modest publication such as *Centrepiece* there is neither the page space or word count to offer the comprehensive survey of words and images that Val Wilmer's prolific career justifies. So, dear reader, the focus of this assessment is based on just some of the work she produced during the course of a few active years in the mid-to late 1960s and one image taken in 1971. I know that size isn't everything but it's beyond me why Val Wilmer's work has never —as far as I know— been published in what is somewhat pejoratively described as coffee-table format or size. The closest was the A4 sized *The Jazz Scene* published in 1970 and written by Jazz Today BBC Third programme presenter Charles Fox featuring 'special photographs by Valerie Wilmer' but which also includes some imagery by David Redfern, Jan Person and others. Maybe because Val was a photographer and an author, books like *As Serious As Your Life* (1977) and *Jazz People* (1970) were published as modest paper-back sized books.

I must have first seen her work as a schoolboy by way of the pages of *Jazz Journal*, a subscription to which was loosely split between my father and myself. Fifty plus years later I am looking through the pages of those same magazines at The Jazz Centre in Southend. The predominance of text in

there were certainly no galleries dedicated to photography during this period. After a hesitant start Val Wilmer eventually completed her formal photographic studies at Regent Street Polytechnic, one of only two or three HE institutions to offer undergraduate studies in the medium. Indeed, this remained the case until well into the 1980s; today photography can be studied at GCSE, A-level, BTec or degree level pretty much anywhere.

Paul Trynka's *Portrait of the Blues* —his name is on the spine of the book, 'with photographs by Val Wilmer' is on the front-cover— is a beautiful book, its size, design, printing and layout rendering her imagery in crisp monochromatic detail. The variety of subject-matter included here shows that for Wilmer it was never just about photographing the musicians, it was about photographing the families, the neighbours and all the places that made the communities from which this music emanated. A photograph taken in Bentonia, Mississippi in 1973 shows a mother and child standing by a jukebox browsing the selection.

Almost a photographic genre in its own right — Robert Frank, Lee Friedlander et al— the jukebox anchors the importance of music, but we can only speculate what the selection might be.

Significantly, John Lee Hooker wrote the forward to the 1996 Hamlyn edition and he's also the subject of the last photo in the book. John Lee Hooker was one of the first real blues men to be seen on broadcast TV, and in comparison to just about everyone else appearing on the programme — dancers, singers,

THE NEW BOYS

photographs by Valerie Wilmer



Double-page spread: *Jazz Journal* 1967

Jazz Journal from this period made any pictorial content more dynamic, most of it being advertising rather than editorial. But just occasionally there might be a double-page photo-spread such as 'The New Boys' feature illustrated here from 1967. It took a few years for these images to be eventually published in book form in *As Serious As Your Life*, by which time the subjects were certainly no longer 'boys.' I know that this was 1967 and I'm probably being too woke but didn't the term 'boys' carry negative connotations? I imagine a sheriff in the Deep South using it, but did we just not know any better then? Maybe it was the sub-editor's decision. Sinclair Traill, the editor of the magazine at this point reviewed *As Serious As Your Life* (quite) positively commenting that the book "was very finely produced, printed on exceptionally good paper and containing some good camera studies by the authoress." It's also worth considering that photography as a creative medium in this country was certainly not then what it subsequently became and



Bentonia, Mississippi, 1973.

bands he seemed ancient. Hooker's date of birth is difficult to pin down so he may have been in his late 30s, but whatever he was definitely more hip than co-compere Keith Fordyce whose role on RSG appeared to be as a fun-loving uncle chaperoning his wayward niece Cathy MacGowan. Ready Steady Go was just about the only TV programme that teenagers like me would have been able to see originals like JLH but also all the British blues-explosion bands like The Stones, The Yardbirds, The Pretty Things, The Downliners Sect, The Animals, Manfred Mann et al whose careers were formed by listening to records by bluesmen like Hooker. And Val Wilmer's John Lee Hooker at Ready Steady Go photograph is well worth considering here. Very broadly,



'Hey Val! Can you believe this?' John Lee Hooker at Ready Steady Go studios 1965.

when we consider photographs of people we could say that there are some photographs in which the subject is aware of the photographer's presence and there are other photographs —because the subject is not looking directly at the camera— appears to be unaware of the photographer's presence and unaware of the act of being photographed. But for me, what makes the John Lee Hooker picture that Val took on Ready Steady Go special is that it seems to be about the moment that he realises he's being photographed by his friend. There's a mohair suited John Lee Hooker with his big white Epiphone slung loose over one shoulder wearing a (denim?) button-down collar shirt with radiussed collar and a tie-clip holding down his dark knitted slim-jim tie. With John Lee grinning this big gap-toothed smile, the photograph seems to be about the moment that he recognises who it is who is photographing him as though he's saying 'Hey Val! Can you believe all of this?'

A conversation I'm certain Val Wilmer will have had to endure on countless occasions when asked by an OAP whether she'd be kind enough to sign their copy of any/all her books would concern HOW some of these photographs were 'read' or understood at the time of their publication. Yours truly just happen to be part of that generation for whom decoding or deconstructing album sleeves was an integral component of the multi-sensory long-player experience. For example, until I learned more about the circumstances facilitating an Archie Shepp photograph taken in New York in 1971 I got it into my —admittedly confused— head that the angry gruff man with the sweetest tone



Archie Shepp, New York 1971.

actually had a Jimi Hendrix poster on the wall of his pad! It might have even been a poster that came with the American pressing of one of his albums where it seemed the buyer always got more bang for their buck. At the time I thought why would Shepp not have a Hendrix poster —as ubiquitous at the time as posters of Dylan or Che— on his wall? Miles had started using guitarists but nothing like the extent to which much of his subsequent recordings would fuse Hendrixisms into his soundscapes and sonic assemblages. To me it was a sign; a sign that it was possible to dig it all. Taken with a wide-angle lens framing Shepp centrally, it's an image that uses the key visual compositional element of a 'frame within a frame'. Val Wilmer has framed Archie Shepp beneath a frame of Jimi Hendrix. Also on the wall is the iconic image of Olympic medallists Tommie Smith and John Carlos at the Mexico City games. Another frame is formed by the TV which appears to be turned off. Alas, not for the first time though and only through reading Val's autobiography did I learn that some of my reading was at odds with the actual circumstances. Duh!! It turns out that the picture was taken in a musicians/community arts space in Cooper Square in Greenwich Village.

In retrospect it is clear that Val Wilmer covered some considerable geographical distance producing this work and it won't have been because she was being subsidised by way of an all-expenses paid account from Jazz Journal or one of the Sunday supplements that was increasingly foregrounding photography as a creative print medium. As a white woman, simply going to some of these locations was extremely difficult. Suspicion and prejudice made Val Wilmer's work extremely challenging. When interviewed by Hannah Rothschild, the niece of Pannonica for her book *The Baroness: The Search for Nica*, the rebellious Rothschild, Val Wilmer commented: "When I first went to New York in 1962 there were many bars where women wouldn't be served on their own, because the

implication was that you were a prostitute. White women who mixed with black men were in a very difficult situation because although the jazz world was more liberal, more progressive than other sectors of society, there was still enormous racism and sexism."

In her autobiography Val Wilmer offers some



Michael Deakin Presents Hits and Myths

Our "Hits & Myths" series takes a sideways look at all aspects of jazz, using wide research to reflect recent academic additions and modifications to reported history. Did Mary Lou Williams really teach herself piano, or did her classically-trained mother teach her to play in her father's church? Did WC Handy really arrive in Chicago six months before the World's Fair, and did he take a vocal group, a string quartet or a band? Did Scott Joplin really play at the World's Fair?

Jazz is an impromptu art form, constantly created by exceptional people. By searching through stories of artists, bands, venues, recording companies, critics and labels Michael Deakin has collected a series of participative anecdotes, connected by familiar and not-so-familiar jazz tracks. Each event presents a themed playlist, describes related musicality, venues and adds personal stories that made each track. Attendees are invited to contribute their own experiences, anecdotes and reactions.



Next in the series, on Sunday 31st October, is entitled *Influencers: Spreading the Flame*. As part of The JCUK marking Black History Month Michael takes us through a journey of those, surprisingly few people, who have played a big part in spreading the jazz flame. Some, like Louis Armstrong, are very familiar: others, like Katie Crippen, not so well-known.

Sunday 28 November will feature a presentation about the great, and to some controversial, impresario and producer John Hammond.

Come and listen to some landmarks in jazz, to participate and learn about the great cornucopia that is jazz. Come and add your opinion!



John Coltrane, London 1961

background to the Trane photograph included here." For example, when I went to interview John Coltrane in his Mayfair hotel room, I had to run the gauntlet of sneering hall-porters and an under-manager who insisted I explain what I was doing going up to his room."

The photograph of John Coltrane from *As Serious As Your Life*, snatched by Wilmer between his relentless practice and performance in 1961 is very different

to most photographs of him from this period inasmuch as he is almost smiling. Think about the majority of the photographs that render Trane as serene, serious, earnest and beatific; a man on a quest for some kind of spiritual truth or enlightenment. Indeed, Val Wilmer uses the word 'spiritual' to describe the atmosphere surrounding him and his band at this time. But, if we've read anything about Trane we may have learned that there were perhaps more mundane, practical and earthly factors at work; Trane didn't do smiling in photographs because he was self-conscious about his teeth. According to the myth or legend, whilst Trane was able to conquer his addiction to booze and smack, his sweet tooth made giving up sugar, particularly sweet-potato pie, far more challenging. Another factor in this being

an image of Trane unlike most images of Trane is that it's also quite bright and light. Coincidentally, I saw on YouTube recently an interview with Alan Skidmore who was filmed in front of a Trane image from the same shoot. He mentioned how, during a period of hospitalisation, Val Wilmer had given him a print —printed darker with some vignetting and thus moodier— which guided him through his recovery. Saint Trane?

Finally, in *Mama Said There'd be Days Like This* —a book you don't have to be into jazz, photography, soul, r'n'b, pop-culture, youth culture, post-war history, gender politics etc to appreciate— Val Wilmer recalls seeing Dusty Springfield — arguably Britain's greatest soul-singer—



Dusty Springfield, Ready Steady Go rehearsal 1966.

rehearsing for Ready Steady Go with her characteristically distinctive take on Marvin Gaye's *Can I Get a Witness*. Writing about how for the fan, "the music becomes deeply personal, as if the player is talking to you alone, the musicians are reaching out and telling you their own life history, their experiences, They are testifying." Thankfully, whilst Dusty, John Lee Hooker, John Coltrane, Archie Shepp and countless others were testifying, Val was our witness. Again.

Mick Gawthorp



YouTube Jazz on Film

Continuing our selection of jazz on YouTube. This time we have highlighted some clips to augment the Centrepiece contents. So we have a fascinating interview with Val Wilmer, a selection of Humphrey Lyttelton reflecting his all-round talents, Snowboy and the Latin Section in scintillating form, and a mixed trio from one of Britain's top bassists, now sadly departed.

Jazz On A Shoestring: Peter Ind Documentary

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQhPYIacNzg>

Here is some stories from joining the band on the Queen Mary, arriving in the NYC Jazz Scene and returning to London to set up the studio and jazz clubs.

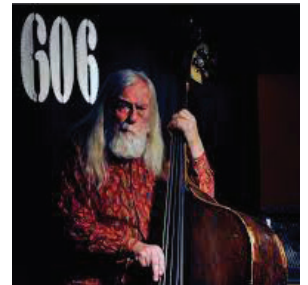
In conversation with Peter Ind: How he started in Jazz

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pzCfBUHI4vI>

Louis Stewart/Peter Ind: Baubles, Bangles and Beads

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RP3ytqF90Iw>

From an edition of Spike Milligan's 1977 series Q7, here's the great Irish jazz guitarist Louis Stewart, aided by Peter Ind on bass.



Humphrey Lyttelton Band: Part One

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=97I7_mVbwRw

Humphrey Lyttelton Band: Part Two

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_8Ph9CeB2s8

Humphrey Lyttelton Band at the Bulls Head, Barnes. Filmed on 20th January, 1998. With Humph is Pete Strange (tbn), and Kathy Stobart (sax). In 1998 Humph gave permission to film this Bulls Head session on condition it wasn't going to be sold to Channel Four!

Humphrey Lyttelton: South (Live and never before released)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6INbe5IC3LI>

A birthday gift for all Humphrey Lyttelton fans. Humph, with Bruce Turner and Roy Williams, was part of the Salute to Satchmo Tour that visited Australia in 1978. Rolling back the years and delving back into the New Orleans catalogue, Humph is joined by a local band called The West Coast Jazzmen from North Freemantle, Australia. The gig was a 'loosener' before the main concern the next day and the band let rip with their version of *South*.

Humphrey Lyttelton: Bad Penny Blues

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RDUkHoo8iI>

Humph has a chat with Les and then performs *Bad Penny Blues*, from the second episode of Dawson and friends. Wonderful comic banter. Glorious stuff.



Tusk Virtual 2020: The Wire Talks to Val Wilmer

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hD3eNhyE_o

Jost's Free Jazz, Wilmer's As Serious as Your Life

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9bJgyfqVNOg>

A talk about a couple of books. Two very good books about the New Music of the 60s/70s: Ekkehard Jost's *Free Jazz* and Valerie Wilmer's *As Serious as your Life*.



Part 1. Mambo Rage: Snowboy & the Latin Section Live in Venice

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Q6vVLdzuVs>

Part 2. Snowboy Special: Snowboy & the Latin Section Live in Venice

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZdjzOgblyu4>

Snowboy & the Latin Section headline at the Nuits Du Sud festival in Vence, France. Snowboy (aka Mark Cotgrove) is a British Afro Cuban percussionist, bandleader, DJ, music critic, journalist and music promoter. Snowboy with his band The Latin Section, comprising the cream of the UK's Latin Jazz musicians, carries the torch with their authentic Latin Jazz style. Together they create a sound which, whilst encompassing the influences from the masters of the genre, is also highly capable of intense swing and verve.

Snowboy and the Latin Section have developed a unique and often identifiable sound in Latin dance music, something that is apparently hard to do, especially in the Latin jazz arena. Percussively explosive uptempo original compositions, at times tinged with folklore, that continues their quest to keep the music exciting and to keep the dancers dancing.





Jazz Centre UK interview with Snowboy

Mark Kass. How have you been over the last 18 months? Have you stayed sane?

Snowboy. What happened is I saw a lot of people almost giving up their playing. I did the opposite. I practised as much as I did when I first started 40 years ago. I was coming into my music room here practising every day, and doing a lot of teaching. The teaching has been really great, it has been a really good focus. I've always done teaching but it has really gone onto another level in this last 18 months. And for as bad as it has been I have come through it and been really positive.

MK. How would you describe Snowboy? Why Snowboy, what made you choose the name Snowboy?

S. I'm an Afro-Latin percussionist, a bandleader, a composer, journalist, and DJ.

I used to be in a local Am-Dram company called the Little Theatre Club. In 1978 I was in my first show, *West Side Story*. The character I played was one of the lesser Jets called Snowboy. Going forward 7 years when I released my first record in 1985 it was a studio project someone had financed to start a record label and said is there anything I fancied doing. So I went in the studio and recorded it, this project, some funk, some Cuban rumba and some hip hop, three different songs. I recorded it and then thought, then what? I was starting doing some professional percussion for pop artists, but never released anything under my own name, Mark Cotgrove, such a local Leigh on Sea name, I didn't want people going Cosgrove, Cosgrave. Also not much of a stage-name. So, all of a sudden, out of the blue, Snowboy came to mind, from *West Side Story*, from when I did it 7 years previous.

As a DJ when I started back in the 70s, in those days most DJs had a roadshow, you had your full mobile stuff. When I was 15-16 I had the name (stupid name) Mad Mark's Roadshow, then Mad Mark's and then people called me Max. When my first record came out in the 1980s, when I was DJing places people didn't know whether to put Mad Mark or Snowboy, because by that time I was established as a DJ. In the end I dumped the whole Mad Mark, I never did like the name, and it almost felt embarrassing really. Snowboy took over luckily.

They still use the name Snowboy when I go out DJing. I'm established in that world as well, it has always been part of my living, but I prefer the separation.

I have had people introduce me sometimes on stage as a percussionist, a DJ and author. First and foremost I am a percussionist. That is why I practise eight hours a day to do what I do. I'm not ashamed of being a DJ and there are people who know me as a DJ and are surprised I have made all these records. In some world it is all about DJs and they don't consider the live musicians.

M. It is all about boundaries and pigeon-holes. The remarkable thing about Essex is that we have this phenomenal RnB history, rockabilly history, punk history, indie history, jazz. And you pretty much kick-started the jazz-funk thing here didn't you?

S. No I didn't kick-start it. I was piggy-backed in there as a naïve youngster. A massively influential club, one the biggest in the country, was actually on Canvey Island; the Gold Mine with the mighty Chris Hill. Chris was such an influence on me from the music he played. I'm proud to say he is one of my best friends to this day. Chris is 75 but we are very close. I took him as DJ support for me on the last Japanese tour I did about 5 years ago.

There I was as a young 17-year old, looking up to him, thinking I wish I could be Chris Hill. His music was incredible, very jazzy, and it was him that introduced me to the jazzy flavours of music, and started me collecting. And because I loved the Gold Mine so much at 17, 'I think I'll hire the Gold Mine and put my own nights on'. (I had already been my school DJ in Thundersley so it was no big deal for me.) A was a very stupid 17.

I was at age 17 so influenced by what Chris was playing, a lot of jazz, a lot of Blue Note amongst the disco and soul. I started hiring the Gold Mine on Wednesday nights once a month to put my own jazz-funk nights on. I shouldn't even have been there legally, let alone hiring it.

The owner, Stan Barrett, said the hire charge is £100 —about £800 now— but if you get 100 people in there is no charge. It never occurred to me that I would get less than 100 in, and luckily I never did. After the first couple they never charged me anyway. It was half-full probably each month and that went on for about 4-5 years.

MK. How did that pre-Chris Hill music shape you in terms of 70s jazz?

S. Jazz was very alien to me up to that point. There was always music played in our house, the regular stuff; Jim Reeves or Nat King Cole or ABBA, whatever kind of music my parents liked at the time. A bit of Glen Miller. I liked the chart music like any other kid did, the glam rock, David Bowie and Gary Glitter, but my first music passion was when there was that massive rock and roll explosion in '72-'73. Southend was one of the main centres in the country for that 1950s rock and roll revival. My brother was a second-generation Teddy Boy, only 13 or 14 himself. It was when that film *That'll Be the Day* came out. That film made such a big impression on me, my brother was playing that music all the time.

As a young 12-13-year-old, hearing this rock and roll stuff in the house all the time, and my brother going out to rock and roll clubs. Then the following year, in 1974, *American Graffiti* came out. The sound track had a lot of doo-wop as well as rock and roll. And there I am, a 13-year-old listening to rock and roll and doo wop, and through that I got into blues,

rhythm and blues, hillbilly, Western Swing, 1940s swing, Cajun, all kinds of permutations. By the time of was 16-17 my head was absolutely brimming with all these many styles of music.

MK. How much pure jazz can you recall from those early days where they would put on a Coltrane track and then put on some dance grooves over the top? How much of that was a major influence to you?

S. The jazz that was being played in those days was anything from *Mr PC*, Coltrane, to Miles Davis' *Milestones*, to *Sidewinder*, Lee Morgan, to *Night in Tunisia*, Art Blakey (the 1,000 mile per hour version), to many of the tracks by Chick Corea from the mid 70s to early 80s period, from *Central Park* to *The Slide* from *Tap Step*, to *You're Everything* from the *Return to Forever* album.

By age 17,18,19 I was buying Coltrane, Art Blakey, Blue Note and Charlie Parker and be-bop. It was getting played in the clubs.

There are a lot of musicians who have no time for DJs, who go 'all they are doing is playing records'. I see it all the time and I have known that attitude of a lot of friends of mine. But the DJs play that music and I, me and thousands of others, want to know what it is. All the DJs would use the mic in those days and we knew what we were dancing to.

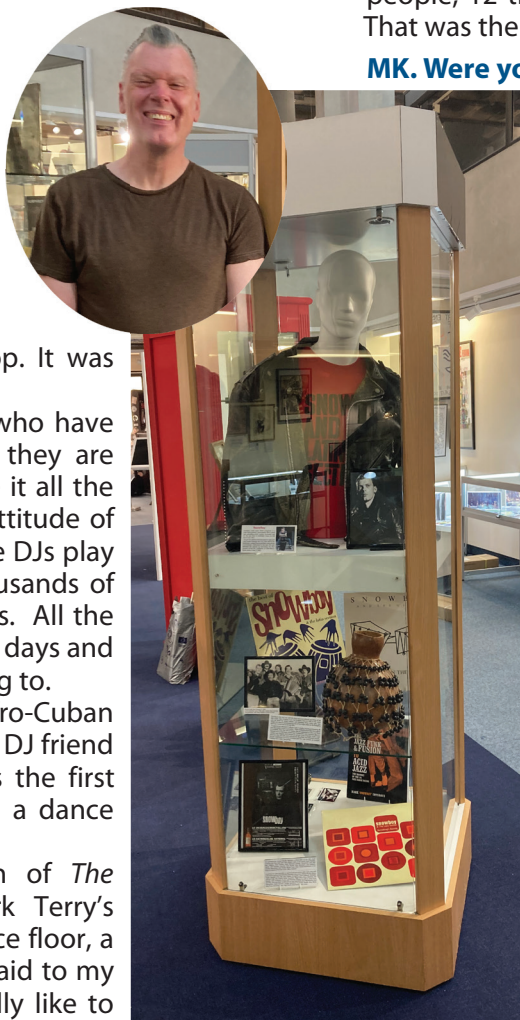
That is why I recorded an Afro-Cuban version of *Mr PC*, in tribute to a DJ friend of mine, Bob Jones, who was the first brave enough to play that to a dance floor in a club.

The reason I did a version of *The Flintstones* was because Clark Terry's version was so big on the dance floor, a really fast bop version of it. I said to my sax player at the time. I'd really like to do a version of it and he said that would be really great because *The Flintstones* is written around the chord changes to *I Got Rhythm*; half of Charlie Parker's compositions were written around those chord changes. They are the chord changes all jazzers love to blow over. There were many reasons for recording *The Flintstones*; it is instantly recognisable, jazzheads love playing on it.

M. You've played with pretty much the same band throughout your career haven't you?

S. Yes, there have been a few changes over the years. On the original recordings it wasn't the same line-up, I wasn't playing live at that time. I made the name Snowboy and the Latin Section on records, but it wasn't until my third album that we started performing live. Up to that point I was using all kinds of musicians that didn't end up playing live with me initially in the early nineties. It was a very different line-up altogether

MK. What held you back from going out live? Did you want to concentrate on DJing?



Snowboy in The Jazz Centre with his display cabinet.

S. No, not at all. I was already established as a musician and I was constantly on tour, doing pop work, in the studio. I was playing with the James Taylor Quartet. Between that and all the pop work I was amazed that people would release records by me, because I couldn't go out there and promote it other than do interviews because I was too busy touring round the world with various artists. James was enormous at that point. I remember the first year I played with him in '89 he played the Forum (then called the Town and Country Club) in Kentish Town, 1,800 people, 12 times that year, sold out 11 out of 12 times. That was the power of the acid jazz explosion.

MK. Were you one of the founding bands on the Acid Jazz label?

S. I was the third release on Acid Jazz records, my debut album. At that point the label was owned by Eddie Piller and Gilles Peterson. Eddie carried on with Acid Jazz when Gilles Peterson left to start Talking Out Records. It was Gilles that wanted me on the label, he came down on the train to a studio in Southend with cash in an envelope to pay the studio. He came in, paid the studio and was on the next train back to London.

MK. One of our volunteers has been reading up on the Latin side of things and found out that there was an American guy that would fly over just to see your gigs on a Sunday then fly back the next night, or the same night.

S. It wasn't once a week, but one year he flew over nine times. You are talking about Professor Robert Farris Thompson. He is the longest serving master at Timothy Dwight College at Yale. He is one of the most important people as an historian, his many books are text books at universities all over the world. Quite often when you talk to people from the Latin world about the folkloric side of things and you mention Robert Farris Thompson and they all know who he is, because he is the most important man in that world. My band were overawed when he first came over to watch us play. He was still coming over after twenty years to see us. The last time he saw us play was at Ronnie Scott's two years ago. By then he was in his mid-80s. Unfortunately, he is not in great health now.

MK. How amazing that you are featured in text books in these colleges in the United States.

S. Hopefully it will get finished. The book he has been working on the last eight years, the history of mambo. It will be definitive; the last chapter is on me. He believes mambo still exists, and it exists in me. He was making slogans like 'the axis of mambo is no longer New York, it is London'.

MK. You nearly said Southend then, didn't you? That would be a very cool quote.

S. No, no I didn't... (laughing).

This is part one of an extended interview with Snowboy. Part two in the next issue of Centrepiece.

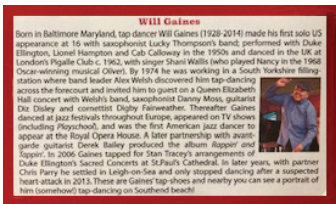
ADRIAN GREEN: ALL THAT JAZZ

Adrian Green, promoter of Southend Jazz Club, was originally inspired by the New Orleans roots of jazz. Growing up in the 50's and 60's it was easy to be directly motivated by the music available. With many live venues playing jazz as well as blues, young people could experience the emerging jazz genre more organically.

Adrian reflects these memories as he works to keep traditional jazz alive today through promoting live performance.

The two selections here are from his volume of poems *All That Jazz and Other Poems*.

Published in *All That Jazz and Other Poems* (Littoral Press, ISBN 978-1-912412-11-2)



Will Gaines

Born in Baltimore Maryland, tap dancer Will Gaines (1928-2014) made his first solo US appearance at 16 with saxophonist Lucky Thompson's band; performed with Duke Ellington, Lionel Hampton and Cab Calloway in the 1950s and danced in the UK at London's Pigalle Club c. 1962, with singer Shani Wallis (who played Nancy in the 1968 Oscar-winning musical *Oliver!*). By 1974 he was working in a South Yorkshire filling station where band leader Alex Welsh discovered him tap-dancing across the forecourt and invited him to guest on a Queen Elizabeth Hall concert with Welsh's band, saxophonist Danny Moss, guitarist Dai Dingle and cornettist Digby Fairweather. Thereafter, Gaines danced at jazz festivals throughout Europe, appeared on TV shows (including *Royals*), and was the first American jazz dancer to appear at the Royal Opera House. A later partnership with avant-garde guitarist Derek Bailey produced the album *Rapper and Tapper*. In 2006 Gaines tapped for Stan Tracey's arrangements of Duke Ellington's *Sacred Concerts* at St Paul's Cathedral; in later years, with partner Chris Perry he settled in Leigh-on-Sea and only stopped dancing after a suspected heart attack in 2013. These are Gaines' tap-shoes and nearby you can see a portrait of him (somewhat) tap-dancing on Southend beach!



Will Gaines tap shoes and cap in The Jazz Centre UK.

Hoofer

(i.m. Will Gaines 1928-2014)

I saw you invade the stage
with flying feet
and your tricky taps,

then strutting syncopation
to the band in the street,
and again on the festival floor.

You brought your dancing board to gigs,
to the pubs with hardly room
for your flamboyant moves.

Your journey from Maryland
to Leigh-on-Sea via Michigan
and Rotherham punctuated life

with theatres, film, the commonplace
of ordinary work and dancing
to the music shows,

but now the tapping board is silent
we are left with YouTube clips
and memories of your extraordinary beat.

Adrian Green

Free Improvisation

There are minds at odds
with counterpoint and scores,
arrangements and the bounds
of musical notation
as players watch and listen,
learn each other's touch
and echo phrases,
harmonies
dis-harmonies

the drummer
marking time
in a syncopated ride
across competing melodies -
relentless rhythm of cymbal and snare
against chords building
to a wall of sound crescendo
resolving
into a saxophone cascade
of unexpected notes
and solo

while the bass stands lonely
on the stand, abandoned
as the player rests,
picks up a camera
snaps the solo mid cadenza.

Adrian Green

Desert Island Jazz Discs



Jazz Centre UK Trustee Gary Evans chooses his Desert Island Jazz Discs. Second in a regular feature.

Picking eight tracks from the wonderfully diverse 100+ year 'library' of jazz recordings is, of course, very difficult. I could easily have picked eight tracks by Miles Davis but I have tried to make this as varied as possible.

JOHN COLTRANE GIANT STEPS

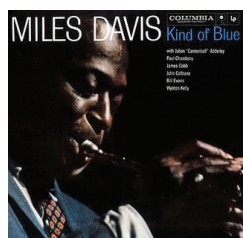


Giant Steps — John Coltrane

We'll start with an obvious classic. The first track from the album of the same name. It's very easy to listen to but is musically very complex and, at the time, ground-breaking. I recommend finding the YouTube videos that explain the chords and key changes that Coltrane used. I never tire of it.

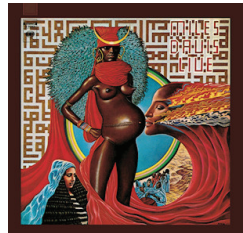
So What — Miles Davis

Another absolute classic. So What is the opening track of *Kind of Blue*, the biggest selling jazz album of all time. Not for the first time in his career, Miles broke the mould with this record and it is easy to see why it is so popular. It's great jazz but accessible as well so that non-jazz fans are often surprised that they enjoy it.



CB Express — Count Basie

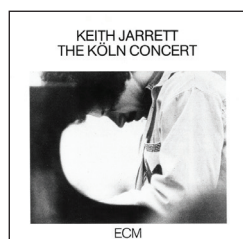
I've never grown out of my adolescent infatuation for Basie, and thought I'd I would have to have a big band track in my eight and the Basie band is my favourite. This is the opening track from the first Basie album that I bought. It comes from the album *Warm Breeze* which seems appropriate for a desert island. It was digitally recorded and the sound is excellent.



Hckhh Blues — Jack Bruce

This is a track from the Lockdown album that I wrote about in the summer edition of Centrepiece. It features John McLaughlin (guitar), Jon Hiseman (drums) and Dick Heckstall-Smith (saxophones) as well as Jack Bruce on bass. This is one of the first jazz albums I bought, in my teens, guided by the Melody Maker reviewers, Richard Williams in particular. It is an excellent showcase for McLaughlin who we will meet again on the next selection.

Funky Tonk — Miles Davis



This is a million miles from *So What*. It is from the *Live Evil* album that followed the iconic *Bitches Brew*. Miles reinvented his music many times in his career and was perhaps the prime mover in the fusion of jazz and rock. This is very much a 'Marmite' track! Don't ask me to explain why I enjoy it but I do. This was recorded just a few years after *Hckhh Blues* and John McLaughlin had got the call from Miles. He makes a brilliant contribution here.

The Köln Concert — Keith Jarrett

Keith Jarrett was playing electric piano on *Funk Tonk* and just a few years later made this famous solo piano recording live in Cologne, Germany. The contrast is extreme. It is divided into four sections but you really have to listen to it as a complete piece so I haven't chosen a favourite part. I saw him play a solo concert in London —quite unforgettable in all sorts of ways!

Paranoid Android — Brad Mehldau



More solo piano. There are similarities between Brad Mehldau and Keith Jarrett. This track is taken from the *Live in Tokyo* album and is his take on the song by rock band Radiohead. Perhaps another 'Marmite' pick but I probably prefer it to the original.

A Foggy Day (in London Town) — Ella Fitzgerald & Louis Armstrong

We'll finish with another classic. I would have to have a vocal record on my island and this would do nicely. Relaxed but wonderful performances from jazz royalty, supported by Oscar Peterson, Herb Ellis, Ray Brown and Buddy Rich. It would remind me of home and hopefully I could have the whole album, the first of three they made together for Norman Granz's Verve label.

Bessie Smith by Jackie Kay

Bessie Smith's life saw her scale the greatest heights accessible to a black woman in the 1920s: as the greatest of the blues queens of the period, she toured in her own Pullman railway car, bought properties for her family and satisfied her appetites without inhibition. . . In death, though, she became anonymous, laying in an unmarked grave from 1937 until 1970. The first biography of the woman whose debut record sold three quarters of a million copies appeared in 1971; its author, Chris Albertson, made some extraordinary discoveries, being able even at that late date to interview surviving relatives who had never been spoken to before.

Jackie Kay, whose own 1996 study of the Empress of the Blues has recently been republished, approaches Bessie Smith as a personal heroine, writing in a freewheeling, subjective style. Kay's love of Bessie's blues began in childhood, and her lifelong feeling for the singer gives her much to say not just about Smith, but about the way we all respond to those special performers who seem to speak to us more directly and deeply than others. As an adopted black girl in an all-white Glasgow



community in the 1960's, Kay's discovery of Bessie Smith and her world contributed to her own self-awareness and sense of identity—"I reached out and claimed Bessie".

In telling Bessie's story, Kay takes creative liberties that other biographers

might shy away from: she happily ascribes thoughts and emotions to her, bringing situations alive with the empathy of the poet and novelist that she is. She freely imagines extended internal monologues by Bessie, and others. Exploring the complex relationship between Bessie and an aspiring singer called Ruby Walker, she composes a letter that Walker might have written to Bessie—"I like to imagine that Bessie's great love of her life was Ruby Walker"—and recalls her own deepest friendship in childhood, as a parallel of sorts.

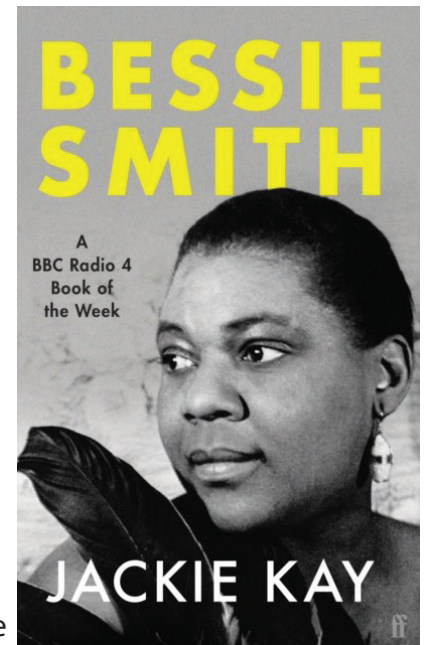
Bessie's marriage to the exploitative Jack Gee, her devotion to her adopted son (whose very existence was unknown until Albertson's research in 1971), the themes of her songs, the power of her performing persona, her lesbianism and uninhibited sexual adventures—all these and more are explored in the most vivid, evocative writing, which pays due respect to previous writers on the subject, often quoting others, but is always expressive of

a deep personal understanding of the woman and her art.

The history is there, but Kay believes that "Bessie's blues are current . . . she calls and, across the years and miles, we respond".

Bessie Smith's death is a legend in itself. The version widely disseminated soon after her fatal car crash in Clarksdale, Mississippi, had her being refused treatment at a white hospital, and vital time being lost while she was taken elsewhere; Chris Albertson, though, showed that this was quite unsubstantiated, and that she would certainly have been taken directly to the black hospital by any ambulance driver. Jackie Kay suggests though, that racism did contribute to her death in several ways, and examines the persistence of the legend, which, she suggests, answers a need in people "to believe Bessie died in this way because it confirmed their own experience of racism". A final episode imagines Bessie's subjective experience of the accident and her dying . . .

Whatever you may or may not know about Bessie Smith, you'll enjoy in this account a joyous, thought-provoking celebration of a key figure in early jazz and blues, growing out of Jackie Kay's lifelong love for the Empress of the Blues.



A.S.C.