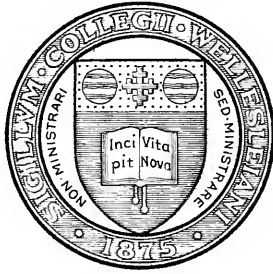


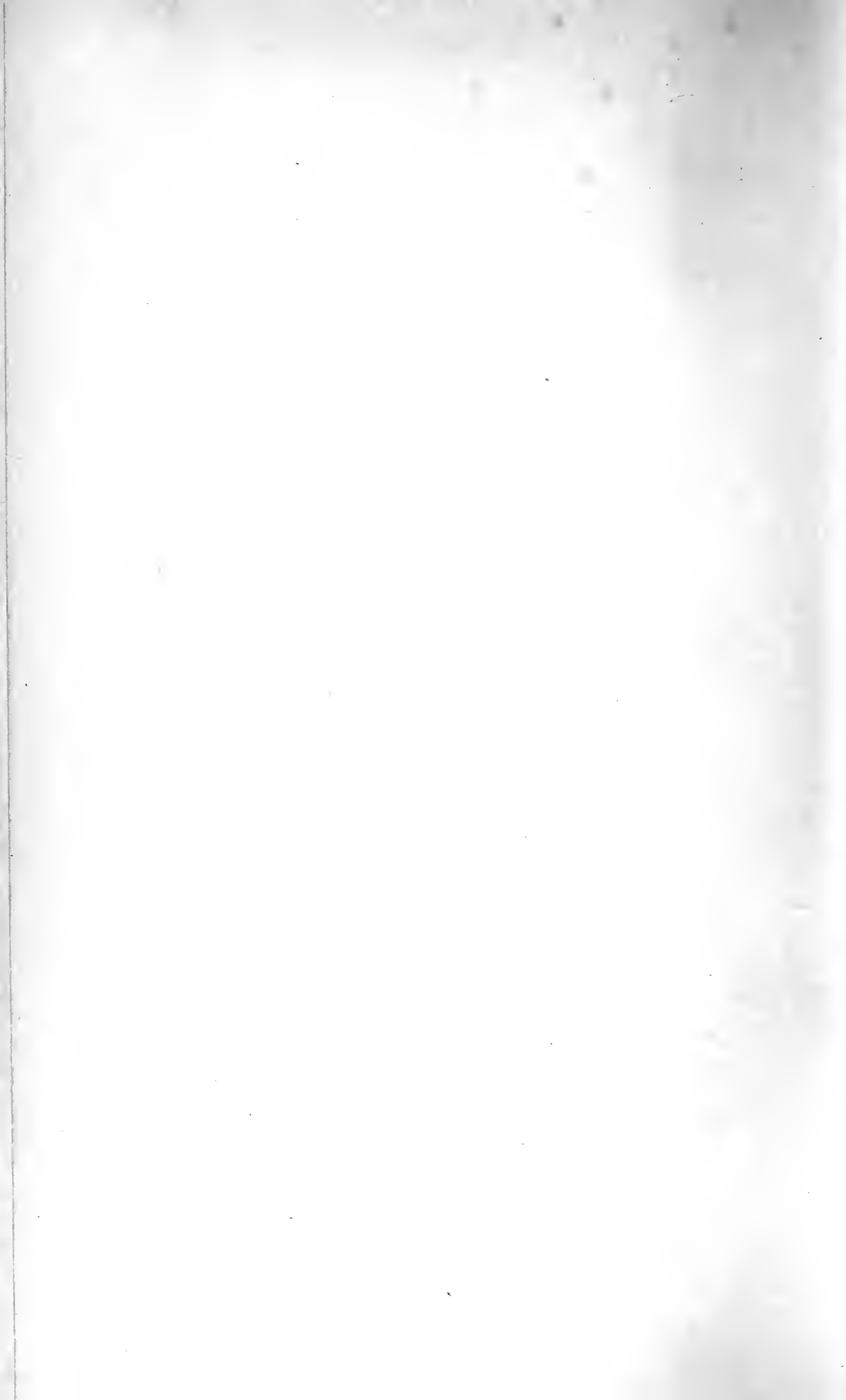


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**ROBERT GOFFIN**



**INTRODUCTION BY ARNOLD GINGRICH**

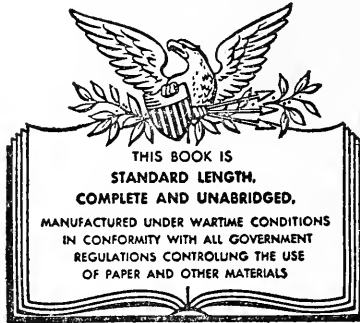
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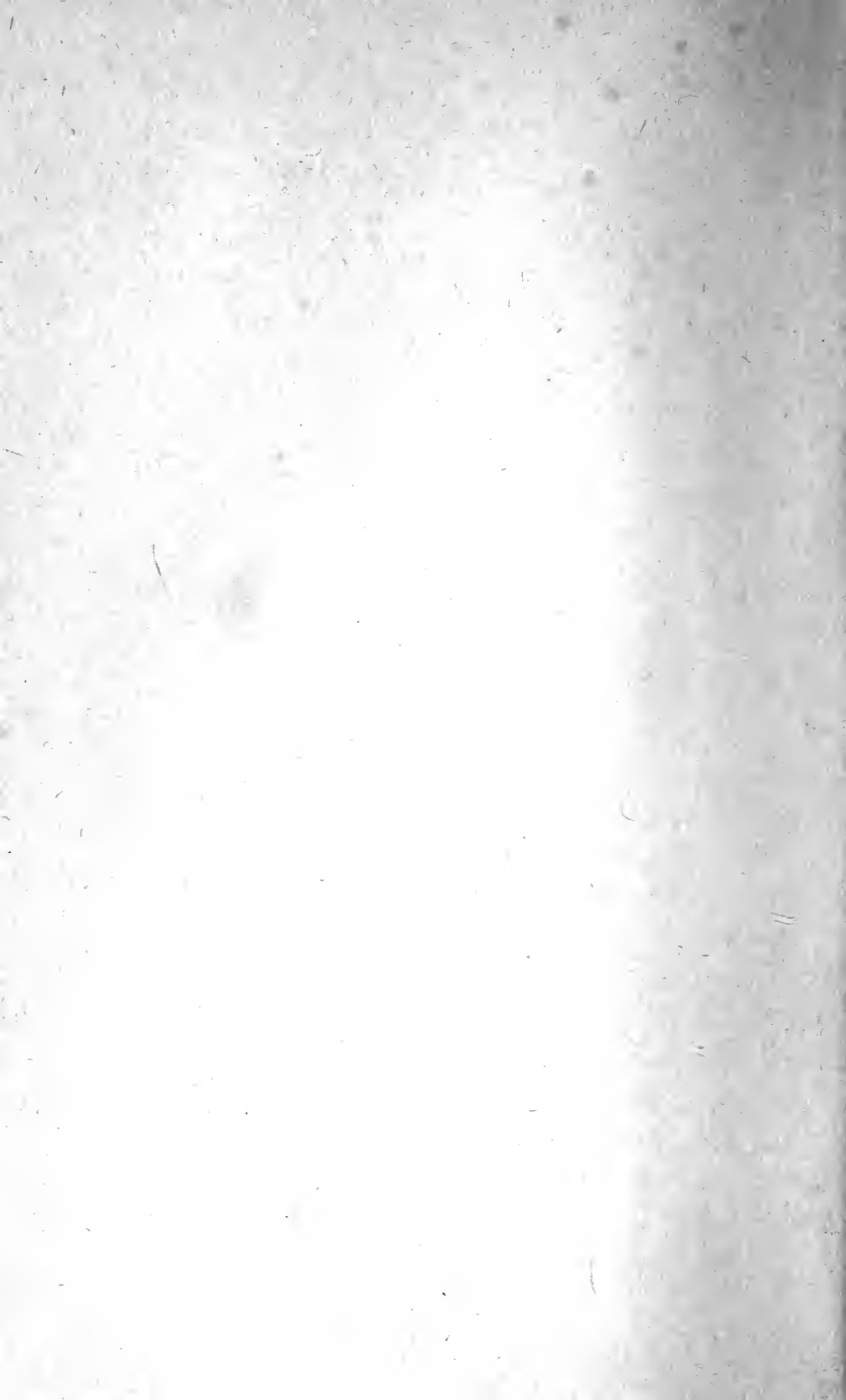
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*"Improvised Jazz is the most potent force in music at the present time; long may it remain so."*

ANDRÉ CŒUROY



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## INTRODUCTION

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By Arnold Gingrich

Editor of *Esquire*

ROBERT GOFFIN was the first serious man of letters to take jazz seriously enough to devote a book to it. That was back in the early days of that other World War, when the word "jazz" was still so new that some people were still spelling it "jass." That book, as it happened, was a book of poems. It was not until 1930 that Goffin devoted a full-length critical book treatment to the subject, in *Aux Frontières du Jazz*. After that came Panassié and *Le Jazz Hot*, and Delaunay and the *Hot Discography*; and after all that came the belated American appreciation of jazz as a main current, if not the main current, of authentic American music.

In other words, it took this Belgian, Goffin, and the two Frenchmen, Panassié and Delaunay, to get us Americans to sit down and listen to jazz, even though we'd been hearing it, simply as something to dance to and talk about, for years.

Oh yes, it can be argued that there was a guy named Gershwin and a bandman named Whiteman and a concert away back in the twenties at Carnegie Hall. But all that only confused the matter and delayed the recognition of real jazz. The only true jazz presented on that intended-to-be-historic occasion in '24 was one number offered purely as a novelty and meant to be considered only as comic relief.

It took another ten years, really, before the differentiation between the real thing and the fake began to be clear to us over here. What they knew about American jazz in the twenties in Europe, and articulated clearly in critical articles, was not even dimly suspected on this side of the water until the thirties.

It was almost a decade after the "false dawn" of that Gershwin-Whiteman concert that the light broke over here, with Charles

Edward Smith's first article in February '34, called "Collecting Hot." From then on, the way of the righteous, in the recognition and appreciation of hot jazz, was clear—as clear as Goffin had made it, in comparable articles in French, ten years earlier.

And now it has taken another full decade, in turn, to get Goffin on Jazz at last between book covers for American readers. It's odd that he, who was the first of the three great Gallic missionaries of the now-at-last accepted gospel of hot jazz, should be the last to take his place on the short shelf of "must" books for every jazz enthusiast. College kids with crew-cut hair, those passionate votaries who have made of jazz record collecting an eighth lively art, were suckled on Panassié and cut their teeth on Delaunay's *Hot Discography*, but they have had to wait till now for their Goffin. (The delay is readily accounted for by the fact that the man had to get out of Belgium with his life, to say nothing of his manuscripts, but that's beside the point.)

Maybe it's just as well to come to Goffin after the others, at that. While it is hard to imagine a more delightful initiation into the mysteries of hot jazz than would be provided by this book, still it must be obvious that it can be most rewardingly read, or reread, after you have acquainted yourself with the literature of jazz that has preceded its publication. Goffin takes you over the subject as a whole, it is true, and he does go back to the beginning every time he takes up another phase of it, but he augments and supplements and goes beyond the other writings, rather than attempting to supplant them. In other words, this book is a pretty advanced course in jazz appreciation, and while you can read it without ever having seen a copy of either the *Hot Discography* or *The Jazz Record Book* or *Jazzmen*, you can hardly get everything out of it that's in it for you unless and until you've read at least that far in the writings that are a prerequisite to going all the way with Goffin in this book. It's a little like coming in off the street to a seminar course in college, without at least having looked in on the high school first.

This is not to try to say that Goffin is necessarily the last word on the subject, or even that this book represents *his* last word on it. But it is to serve fair warning that you can't expect to argue

with him, or even to agree with him, on some of his more startling conclusions, without doing some reading, and a lot of earnest listening, outside these pages.

That there is a lot of grist for arguments should not be surprising. There's no field in which the experts are so embattled as this realm of hot jazz. Some of them would have a hard time agreeing with themselves, from one day to the next. And I can think of half a dozen of the more rabid expert-cultists who will have conniptions over Goffin's high rating of the records of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, to cite just one of the many new stands he takes in this book. It has been fashionable to sneer at those early Victors, dating back to '17 and '18, as possessing merely a rather quaint historical interest. This is reflected in the fact that, even though these are the first listed items in the *Hot Discography*, and as such should form the foundation of every record collection, you can still get them with ease, through the regular collecting channels, at about a dollar apiece. On the other hand, the collectors are now driving each other delirious over one particular Johnny Dodds disk (*Weary Blues* on Vocalion 15632) with bids of forty dollars currently commonplace and no deals developing. That record was made a good ten years after those latterly despised and low-rated Original Dixieland Victors.

It will be fun to watch what happens, within a measurable length of time after the appearance of this book, to those Dixieland prices. After all, when a critic of Goffin's stature swings his weight behind a band's recordings, the effect on collectors ought to be tantamount to the proverbial value of having been seen walking across the Stock Exchange floor with Morgan.

Here at *Esquire*, where we've published some of the ranking jazz experts, indigenous and imported, over the past ten years, we're inclined to think of Goffin as the most mature, artistically, of them all, and as well balanced, in his judgments, as any of them. He's picked All-American bands for us, all by himself, only to have the correctness of his choices later confirmed by the consensus of a baker's dozen of the rest of the acknowledged experts. That's a remarkable feat, not the least surprising aspect of which is the fact that there ever could *be* a consensus, since

you couldn't print what most of these experts think of all the others!

In the light of that, perhaps the obvious thing to do, after buying this book and reading this far, would be to lay it down and rush out and buy some Dixieland Victors. You might ultimately get the price of the book back, on the investment.

In fact, that's precisely what *this* impressionable reader has just decided to do. Right at this point.

May you find Mr. Goffin's words equally stimulating!



**JAZZ**



## I. TOM-TOM IN NEW ORLEANS

---

IT MUST HAVE BEEN about 1891 when a Negro barber in New Orleans, named Buddy Bolden, picked up his cornet and blew the first stammering notes of jazz, thereby unconsciously breaking with several centuries of musical tradition. A half-century later, jazz, America's great contribution to music, has crossed the threshold of the university and is about to be seriously, even religiously, considered.

At the outset of this study, it is imperative that I dwell, if only for a moment, on the truly profound meaning of this innovation. The history of jazz has a social significance of which I am quite aware and which I am fond of stressing. At the very moment when America goes to war to defend the democratic spirit against the totalitarian challenge, it is fitting to remember that, in the last twenty years, jazz has done more to bring blacks and whites together than three amendments to the Constitution have done in seventy-five.

It's about time that America take pride in the tremendous contribution of a music whose originality and character have already captivated the European mind. It's about time that America take pride in those who will surely rank high on the honor roll of artistic immortality: Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and some others. It's about time that American intellectuals adopt, as their own, a thing in which all Europe fervently believes, and find in it a source of a new and truly moving form of sensibility.

It would be pretentious on my part to say that I discovered jazz, but I can claim to be the first to have paid serious attention to it. In 1919, enchanted by the Negro jazz of Louis Mitchell, I

wrote a long article in a literary review, *Le Disque Vert*. Completely carried away by this new form of artistic sorcery and, I am proud to relate, by the playing of Sidney Bechet, who was a member of the orchestra, I stated, rather clumsily it's true, that jazz could touch only the primitive hearts among civilized people. I liked it, I said, because it was a music which appealed to the senses and because, to feel it, you didn't have to close your eyes ecstatically and cup your hands around your ears in the manner of the audience at a concert of serious music. I had already noticed the difference between jazz musicians, real creators who openly manifested their joy in playing, and our classical musicians, who too often affected a melancholic passivity.

In a slender book of poems which appeared in 1920 with a preface by Jules Romains, and bearing the title *Jazz Band*, I sang in verse of all the elusive and diabolical emotion awakened by this new lyrical challenge. In 1927 I was busy with the first jazz magazine in the world, *Music*, and a little later I published in it chapters from my book, *Aux Frontières du Jazz*, which was to appear in 1931. The American magazine *Fortune* was nice enough to acclaim this book as the first work to completely explain America's new artistic message. The author of this article declared further that I seemed to know more of the Negroes than did Carl Van Vechten himself, even adding that many details in my book testified that I must have spent every night of my life in Harlem.

Needless to remark, at that time I had never set foot in America! But such was my love and enthusiasm for jazz that, together with all the experience which I had accumulated in almost a quarter of a century during which jazz had been constantly at the base of my emotional activity, this impression was created.

I am rather proud to think that I was the first in the world to draw the distinction technically between hot and commercial jazz. I even had the audacity, on the strength of a few records, to dedicate my book to Louis Armstrong, "the real King of Jazz," explaining that Paul Whiteman had been wrapped in an unmerited mantle.

My book was not translated because of its decidedly uncompromising attitude. In restoring their true artistic meaning to musical values which had been upset by clever if not intelligent commercializers, I think I helped to clarify the issue. I attacked, with violence, Paul Whiteman, Ted Lewis, and Jack Hylton, who were then at the summit of their renown; I praised orchestra leaders like Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and Fletcher Henderson.

Before anyone else, I said that the great geniuses of jazz were none other than Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Earl Hines, Bix Beiderbecke, Coleman Hawkins. I still back this choice—even at the present time no more than two or three names can be added to it. My right to approach this subject again is vindicated by the lines with which I closed my first book:

If I wished to be complete, I am afraid that many more chapters would be necessary. But, since jazz does not stop but goes on, how is it possible to complete its story at any one point? I realize that events which I believed current have already slid back into the past which levels all impressions; I know that things which I liked are no longer pleasing when seen through the prism of distance; I know that contacts which were intimate only yesterday will be forgotten tomorrow.

Nevertheless there has been, "on the frontiers of jazz," a choking atmosphere, a fiery climate, a strange poetry, which has agitated our youth. . . .

In the wonderful simplicity of jazz songs, I have rediscovered poetry in its purest state; the prophetic sobbing of popular tunes has gone straight to my heart; nor can I think without a shudder of that marvelous Negro lyricism which Europe knows only by a few revues and dances and songs which are but the hellish sign of a deeper beauty.

To discover jazz, one must go to the poems of Langston Hughes, and feel the syncopated pulse beating in the solos of Louis Armstrong or in the irrational outbursts of the *St. Louis Blues*. . . .

Jazz was the first form of surrealism. The Negroes felt the prime necessity of neutralizing rational control in order to give free play to the spontaneous manifestations of the subconscious. . . . Jazz is the highest manifestation of surrealism because it was practiced by musicians, sometimes anonymous and never cultured, who submitted

to this passion without having first rationalized their adherence to this frenzied lyricism.

I might have concluded by speaking of the future of jazz and of its influence on "serious" music. I might have mentioned the influence of *Aunt Hagar's Blues*, whose theme was of tremendous service to Darius Milhaud in his *Creation of the World*. I might have examined a certain pretentious form of jazz which I dislike in spite of the musicologists who have acclaimed the *Rhapsody in Blue* as the greatest contribution of jazz. I might have spoken of the arrant stupidity of certain critics, one of whom wrote only a little while ago that he preferred the Ted Lewis version of *St. Louis Blues* to the Armstrong.

Alas! I might have said so many more things, but I have thought it better not to overburden the chapters of a book, the most beautiful part of which has not been written.

I published that in 1932, and I do not retract a word of it. But today I turn my attention back to those pages which I left untouched some fourteen or fifteen years ago. Since that time our knowledge of jazz has been considerably widened; *Le Jazz Hot* by Hugues Panassié, *American Jazz Music* by Wilder Hobson, *Jazzmen* edited by Frederic Ramsey, Jr., and Charles Edward Smith are solid contributions to the study of syncopated music. I propose to examine here the essential elements of the history of jazz, together with certain corollary artistic, emotional, and philosophical considerations.

Jazz is the American Negro branch of music. It has interested the intelligence of Europe and the world inasmuch as it has been a revolution, a rupture with musical tradition and a new point of departure. It often happens that intelligent but ill-informed persons ask me, "Do you prefer jazz to classical music?" or else, "Is jazz better than classical music?" These questions are, of course, idiotic.

In order really to understand the evolution of jazz as a parallel to, or better, as one result of, classical music, the most intelligible thing that can be said is that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, music experienced an evolution which was common to all the arts.

This fact must be fully grasped from the very start, as it is essential for the comprehension of the true importance and the present significance of syncopated music. At the beginning of the present century there was a sort of qualitative change in artistic feeling. Up to that time the canons of beauty were based on clear, logical, and reasonable concepts which were under the control of the intelligence. A whole sphere of human activity, the subconscious, had been ignored; man acknowledged the importance only of logical clarity. If one examines the fields of activity which had been reserved for art, one perceives that the creative work of our ancestors was under the impulse of a harmonious equilibrium between reason and sentiment. This conception was overwhelmed by the discoveries of Freud, and art was quickly modified thereby.

All modern poetry in the tradition of Arthur Rimbaud and Lautréamont can be truly estimated only by the yardstick of this modification. Maeterlinck, Blaise Cendrars, Guillaume Apollinaire, James Joyce, Archibald MacLeish, Wystan Auden, and all the surrealists have collaborated in this realization of a new aspect of human grandeur. In painting, the whole Parisian school sought after newer, more audacious conceptions, as witness the progression from James Ensor to Jean Delvaux, including such names as Chirico, Magritte, Max Ernst, Salvador Dali, and, above all, the one who was the ideal illustration for our comparison—Rousseau, the customs inspector, who like jazz musicians created things of beauty without knowing just how.

It is the glory of America and of the Negro people to have been the starting point of a profound revolution in musical art. It is not a new music; it is a new form of music based on rhythm, whereas classical compositions arise from great melodic lines.

I have brought up this comparison of jazz and the other arts only to show exactly where I stand as a critic of this new artistic phenomenon, and also to demonstrate the sheer stupidity of attempting to oppose jazz and music. One might as well ask whether modern poetry is better than Shakespeare, Milton, or Racine, or whether surrealism is as good as Rubens, Rembrandt,

or Raphael. One must seek not the opposition, but the sense of continuity and the new contribution.

The discoverer's lot is not a happy one. When the modern poetry of Walt Whitman or of Rimbaud was being born, not even the most highly qualified persons understood its message. Even today the great surrealist endeavors of Breton, Eluard, and others are misunderstood. This is because a new art generally breaks with the existing rules, and, as there are no standards upon which to base criticism, it can be studied only with difficulty. It is only when this art has attained its full vitality and gradually won popularity that it can be successfully codified.

Thus after twenty years a form of poetry which was derided as unintelligible has won its way into the theater and music hall. Similarly, the window dressers of Fifth Avenue have rounded the cape of surrealism. And jazz, which only yesterday was a source of ridicule, has today won its struggle—a victory which is acknowledged by all save the older generations whose minds are still in the past.

All this must be explained. I should like this survey to indicate the reaction of the intelligent youth to this new phenomenon whose true importance will be revealed only later. I should like this study to signify the beginning of a new consciousness, one which will demonstrate its constructive power in both the critical and the technical field, and, more particularly, in the relations which jazz can and must have with the theater and the cinema.

We shall speak of the history of jazz from both the scientific and the poetic points of view. At each stage we shall consider certain ideas which, till now, have been neglected by the critics. The activity of the *aficionados* of jazz has too often been limited to listening to records or orchestras and to drawing comparative conclusions as to the value of the instrumentalists concerned. It is high time that jazz be subjected to a serious and methodical analysis.

Not long ago, a Columbia professor presented a scientific paper in which he asserted that jazz owes nothing to African music. I have a good deal of respect for science in general, and anthropologists in particular, but I consider such an opinion as a very



serious misconception which only supplements the partial attack published in September 9, 1909, by the *New York Sun*:

### THOSE CONGO MELODIES

When Lafcadio Hearn went to New Orleans in 1880 or 1881 he was inspired by very much the same purpose, though in a more concentrated form, that animated Gottschalk in the 50s. He went there to trace to their original sources the Congo melodies and their strange words. He did other things for a living for then he was very poor. He wrote editorials and other matter for the *Times-Democrat*; he also translated into English some of the works of Théophile Gautier, Pierre Loti, Guy de Maupassant, and other French writers. But the real underlying purpose of his quest was the Congo songs, and that purpose he pursued with heightened and sleepless energy, unknown to his fine "society" friends who made much of him and have since talked and written much with strange fervency.

Hundreds of people knew all about Lafcadio Hearn in those days, and they bridled and chattered accordingly, but in the hour of his poverty and enthusiasm he lived among the voodoo, was housed in fact with Marie Lavoux, the titular queen, and he studied the wild chant and the awe-sounding voices of the Congos in the hope of locating their primal spring. A quarter of a century before him Gottschalk had undertaken the same quest. He was a musical genius, a pianist of the highest order, and into the Bamboula and other astonishing arrangements of "Congo" melodies he injected his divine afflatus. Hearn was a poet, a dreamer, and a literary genius. But he had heard the music that Gottschalk wove into his compositions. He felt he knew in his amazing mind that throb and spur of the wild symphonies and antiphonies that enchanted the bayou Saint John and the Pontchartrain that stirred the souls of students; but he like Gottschalk realized at last that there was no Negro music. The strains he heard were barbaric, yet familiar, and it came to him at last as it came to all other enlightened investigators previously that the sterling tunes he heard were more or less adaptations. The French and Spanish songs and lullabies the slaves had heard in Hayti, San Domingo, or Louisiana, through the windows of the "big house," they translated according to their capacity into coherent Congo chants. It is now known that the crooning songs the old Negro mammies of New Orleans utter to their little charges—"Les Crocodiles," "Les Deux Canards"—and a hundred other nursery cadenzas

are nothing more nor less than fumbling transpositions and arrangements of civilized music.

There is in this country, at least, no African or Congo music. The descendent native chants to the accompaniment of the tom-toms are not music in any sense of the term. Certainly they are not the inspiration of the beautiful if melancholy music to which the Negroes of America have devoted their talents and instincts. Nothing of course will arrest the chase after African music.

In 1909 Professor Krehbiel wrote an answer to prove that his friend Lafcadio Hearn was convinced of the African origins of the New Orleans folklore.

But Lafcadio Hearn himself had given an eloquent reply to this inaccurate accusation when he had described an impression of syncopated scenes in *Two Years in the French West Indies*, about 1878:

The melancholy, quavering beauty and weirdness of the Negro chant are lightened by the French influence or subdued and deepened by the Spanish. Down the street he goes leaping nearly his own height—chanting words without human signification—and followed by three hundred boys, who form the chorus of his chant—all clapping hands together and giving tongue with a simultaneity that testifies how strongly the sense of rhythm enters in the natural musical feeling of the African—a feeling powerful enough to impose itself upon all Spanish-America and there create the unmistakable characteristics of all that is called Creole music. . . .

His chant is cavernous, abysmal—booms from his chest like the sound of a drum beaten in the bottom of a well . . . and all chant after him, in a chanting like the rushing of many waters, and with triple clapping of hands.

Albert Friedenthal has explained in his book *Musik, Tanz und Dichtung bei den Kreolen Amerikas*, how rhythm passed from the Congo to America:

From a musical point of view, the influence of the African on the West Indian Creole has been of the greatest significance, for through their co-operation there arose a dance form—the Habanera—which spread itself through Romanic America. The essential thing in pure Negro music, as is known, is to be sought in rhythm. The melodic

phrases of the Negroes consist of endless repetitions of short series of notes, so that we can scarcely speak of them as melodies in our sense of the word. On the other hand, no European shall escape the impression which these rhythms make. They literally bore themselves into the consciousness of the listener, irresistible and penetrating to the verge of torture.

This was the music described by Verney Lovett Cameron in his book *Across Africa*, speaking particularly of a Congo musician:

On arrival he seated himself on the ground, surrounded by his friends, and then commenced a monotonous recitative. In this he accompanied himself by shaking a rattle made of basketwork shaped like a dumbbell, while the circle of attendants joined in a chorus, sometimes striking their bells and at others laying them down and clapping their hands in a kind of rhythmic cadence.

This rhythmical influence of the tom-tom had been remarked also by Professor Wallaschek in his *Primitive Music*:

The general character of African music, then, is the preference for rhythm over melody (when this is not the sole consideration); the union of song and dance; the simplicity, not to say humbleness, of the subjects chosen; the great imitative talent in connection with the music and the physical excitement from which it arises and to which it appears appropriate.

Jazz, like any artistic phenomenon, represents the sum of an addition. The factors of this addition are, to my mind, African music, French and American music, and folklore.

It would take too long and be hardly worth the trouble to draw up a complete balance sheet of the relationship between jazz and African music—it would require a full book to do it well. I should like merely to point out that Cœuroy and Schaeffner have paid particular attention to this question in their book, *Le Jazz*. We shall content ourselves here with an attempt to gain some insight into it through a brief review of the history of slavery.

The white European colonists needed labor to replace the Indians, who had the unfortunate habit of dying off when in enforced servitude. They found the answer in a third race on a third continent. From the beginning of the seventeenth century,

the cruel and inhuman slave traders were seizing the black natives of Africa and transporting them in foul, overcrowded vessels to America.

The poor slaves, roughly torn away from their native soil, their homes, and their families, were treated like cattle. What could they bring with them from their native villages in the Congo? Nothing—or rather, no material goods. There remained only the hidden might of memory, and this, deep down in their hearts, colored their former life with an emotional significance.

This explains why African music—in all its simplicity, and reduced to its lowest common denominator, the tom-tom—retained its influence, symbolic of a happier existence.

Whoever has visited the Congo and been present at tom-tom ceremonials will recognize the same expression still flourishing in our present-day drummers.

At first the Negroes of Louisiana had more liberty than those of the English colonies. This partly explains why the necessary crystallization was later to take place in New Orleans and not elsewhere.

The control of the puritanical Anglo-Saxons over their slaves was such that it quickly stifled any ancestral survivals. On the other hand, the Negroes in the cotton fields of the Mississippi Valley could continue to express their artistic folklore. For several generations the cult of the tom-tom survived as an essential and all-powerful element in the social life of the slaves.

Lafcadio Hearn had been much interested by this new form of music and had noted in his book, *Two Years in the French West Indies*:

The old African dances, the *Caleinda* and the *Bélé* (which latter is accompanied by chanted *improvization*), are danced on Sundays to the sound of the drum on almost every plantation in the land. The drum, indeed, is an instrument to which the country-folk are so much attached that they swear by it, *Tambou!* being the oath uttered upon all ordinary occasions of surprise or vexation. But the instrument is quite as often called “ka,” because made out of a quarter-barrel, or quart, in the patois “ka.” Both ends of the barrel having been removed, a wet hide, well wrapped about a couple of hoops, is driven

on, and in drying the stretched skin obtains still further tension. The other end of the ka is always left open. Across the face of the skin a string is tightly stretched, to which are attached, at intervals of about an inch apart, very thin fragments of bamboo or cut feather stems. These lend a certain vibration to the tones.

In the time of Père Labat the Negro drums had a somewhat different form. There were then two kinds of drums—a big tamtam and a little one, which used to be played together. Both consisted of skins tightly stretched over one end of a cylinder, or a section of a hollow tree-trunk. The larger was from three to four feet long, with a diameter of from 15 to 16 inches; the smaller, "Baoula," was of the same length, but only eight or nine inches in diameter.

The skilful player (bel tambouyé) straddles his ka stripped to the waist, and plays upon it with the finger-tips of both hands simultaneously, taking care that the vibrating string occupies a horizontal position. Occasionally the heel of the naked foot is pressed lightly or vigorously against the skin so as to produce changes of tone. This is called "giving heel" to the drum—bailly talon. Meanwhile a boy keeps striking the drum at the uncovered end with a stick, so as to produce a dry, clattering accompaniment. The sound of the drum itself, well played, has a wild power that makes and masters all the excitement of the dance—a complicated double roll, with a peculiar billowy rising and falling. The creole onomatopes, b'lip-b'lip-b'lip-b'lip, do not fully render the roll; for each stands really for a series of sounds too rapidly flipped out to be imitated by articulate speech. The tapping of a ka can be heard at surprising distances; and experienced players often play for hours at a time without exhibiting weariness, or in the least diminishing the volume of sound produced.

The evolution which took place can readily be imagined. By the second generation the French language had become the means of communication. Some remnants of Katanga or of the Ueles' tongue were mixed in, but little by little the linguistic heritage died away. Lafcadio Hearn even discovered some traces of Voodoo influence, and he wrote in a letter:

Your friend is right, no doubt, about the  
 "Tig, tig, malaboin  
 La chelema che tango  
 Redjoum!"

I asked my black nurse what it meant. She only laughed and shook her head: "*Mais c'est Voodoo, ça; je n'en sais rien!*"

"Well," said I, "don't you know anything about Voodoo songs?"

"Yes," she answered; "I know Voodoo songs; but I can't tell you what they mean." And she broke out into the wildest, weirdest ditty I ever heard. I tried to write down the words; but as I did not know what they meant I had to write by sound alone, spelling the words according to the French pronunciation.

But the African origin of certain words and of the music was demonstrated before 1914 by H. E. Krehbiel when he explained:

There is nothing peculiar to these American folksongs in this recurrent refrain, but it is worth noticing that the feature in the form of an alternating line of improvisation and a reiterated burden is found throughout Africa. "Their style is the recitative broken by a full chorus," says Sir Richard Burton, speaking of the people of the lake region of Central Africa. Carl Mauch, in his "*Reisen in Süd-Afrika*," says of the music of the Makalaka that it usually consists of a phrase of eight measures, repeated ad infinitum, to which are sung improvised verses with a refrain.

Hearn was so deeply moved by this African music that he had decided to study the evolution of this expression, and he wrote to Krehbiel about his intentions:

Something about the curious wanderings of these griots through the yellow desert northward into the Maghreb country, often a solitary wandering; their performances at Arab camps on the long journey, when the black slaves came out to listen and weep; then the hazardous voyage into Constantinople, where they play old Congo airs for the great black population of Stamboul, whom no laws or force can keep within doors when the sound of griot music is heard in the street. Then I would speak of how the blacks carry their music with them to Persia and even to mysterious Hadramant, where their voices are held in high esteem by Arab masters. Then I would touch upon the transplantation of Negro melody to the Antilles and the two Americas, where its strangest black flowers are gathered by the alchemists of musical science and the perfume thereof extracted by magicians like Gottschalk. (How is that for a beginning?)

The means of expression which did survive was the music, because it was international, common to all the Negroes, and did not have to be translated. In the evenings, chained to their niches in the slaves' courtyard, they resurrected the splendors of the tropical night.

Travelers have described to me certain unforgettable scenes—Negroes dancing and singing to the eternal, monotonous rhythm of the drum. At the first drumbeat the dancers are literally entranced—out of the world. Reason and sensibility no longer restrict their actions. It is a scene of religious ecstasy—the mystical enchantment of pure rhythm. Both men and women dance, stamping their feet and twisting their bodies with a continuous movement. They keep going until exhausted, and such dances often last all night.

What remained of such rhythmic orgies at the time jazz was born? This is the point which interests us here. The book *The French Quarter* by Herbert Asbury devotes an entire chapter to very similar public spectacles in New Orleans which dated back to the time of the Louisiana Purchase.

When the slaves began to use the site for dancing, the whole area was popularly known as the Place des Negres, and later as the Congo Plains; and the square itself, to which the slaves were restricted when the Plains were divided into building lots, was called Congo Square, and is still so known among the Negroes of New Orleans.<sup>1</sup>

The slaves usually began to assemble in Congo Square an hour or so before the time fixed for the dancing, the men strutting proudly in the cast-off finery of their masters, and the women in dotted calicoes, with bright-colored Madras kerchiefs tied about their hair to form the popular headdress which the Creoles called the *tignon*. With them were their children, in nondescript garments relieved by bright feathers or bits of gay ribbon. On the outskirts of the chattering crowd were the hawkers of refreshments, some with great trays slung around their necks and others with deal tables screened from the sun by cotton awnings, and all offering ginger beer, pies, lemonade, and little ginger cakes called "mulatto's belly." At a signal from a police official, the slaves were summoned to the center of the square by the

<sup>1</sup>Herbert Asbury, *The French Quarter* (N. Y., 1938), p. 240. Published by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.

prolonged rattling of two huge beef bones upon the head of a cask, out of which had been fashioned a sort of drum or tambourine called the bamboula. As the dancers took their places, the rattling settled into a steady drumming, which the Negro who wielded the bones maintained, without a pause and with no break in the rhythm, until sunset put an end to the festivities. The favorite dances of the slaves were the Calinda, a variation of which was also used in the Voodoo ceremonies, and the dance of the Bamboula, both of which were primarily based on the primitive dances of the African jungle, but with copious borrowings from the *contre-danses* of the French. The movements of the Calinda and the dance of the Bamboula were very similar, but for the evolutions of the latter the male dancers attached bits of tin or other metal to ribbons tied about their ankles. Thus accoutered, they pranced back and forth, leaping into the air and stamping in unison, occasionally shouting "Dansez Bamboula! Badoum! Badoum!" while the women, scarcely lifting their feet from the ground, swayed their bodies from side to side and chanted an ancient song as monotonous as a dirge. Beyond the groups of dancers were the children, leaping and cavorting in imitation of their elders, so that the entire square was an almost solid mass of black bodies stamping and swaying to the rhythmic beat of the bones upon the cask, the frenzied chanting of the women, and the clanging of the pieces of metal which dangled from the ankles of the men.<sup>2</sup>

This evidence leaves not the slightest doubt as to the survival of the African tradition. I think it certain that the important role of the drummer, from the very beginning of jazz, may be traced back in direct line to the African tom-tom beaters. At the base of jazz, then, we find African rhythmic expression forming a counterpoise to the traditional music of the inhabitants of the Mississippi Valley.

A friend of mine, who had just arrived from the Belgian Congo, accompanied me to the Savoy in Harlem a few months ago. For quite a while we stood watching the drummers of Lucky Millinder and the Savoy Sultans. My friend was bowled over with surprise, for, he explained, certain solos by each drummer had exactly the rhythm of the Congo tom-tom, and furthermore their gestures reproduced the physical motions of their ancestors

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 242-43.



of two centuries ago, in so far as these are exemplified by the identical movements of the contemporary Congo.

He added that certain parts of the Lindy Hop are very similar to analogous movements of the Congo dancers, aroused by the tom-toms hammering out a simple but very moving rhythm into the tropical night.

(What was the second factor which went to make up jazz? In Louisiana, and particularly in New Orleans, the tradition of French popular music survived. To understand exactly what took place, gaps in the remaining historical evidence must be bridged by the use of poetical imagination.

The slave trade was a monopoly of the Mississippi Company, which landed the first Negro slaves in Louisiana in 1712. By 1725 the Negroes outnumbered the whites in a population of about five thousand. This was the time when Governor Bienville promulgated his Black Code, the first article of which, strangely enough, was directed at the Jews.

Toward the middle of the century the new governor, the Marquis de Vaudreuil, tried to transplant the splendor of Versailles to the far-off colony. It was a period of considerable development for New Orleans. It contained six taverns. The sale of alcohol to Negroes and Indians was prohibited. It was a colorful period in which the only inhabitants of Louisiana were white adventurers who made the perilous journey to the far-off banks of the Mississippi. The problem of marriage became acute, and the French Government tried to solve it by the wholesale expedition of women of easy virtue, such as Manon Lescaut. These were married off as soon as they landed, regardless of the fact that they came straight from prison.

The presence of handsome children of mixed blood in the following generations demonstrated that the settlers took great care to break their own inhuman laws. This intermediary population of quadroons and octoroons was generally released from the bonds of slavery.

The end of the century was the period of Spanish rule, a period which left few traces, inasmuch as France became once again the mistress of Louisiana in 1800. Soon the expansion of

commerce and the development of New Orleans multiplied the numbers of taverns, cafés, gambling dens, and joints in general, which, nestled in its picturesque slums, gave the port its reputation as a great city of pleasure.

Soon a new century brought considerable changes; France sold Louisiana to America, and, one by one, the French traditions glimmered away. This was the attractive period of rich Creole cotton planters, with their hospitable mansions and their romantic duels under the mossy oaks. Meanwhile, French music, which had been temporarily steeped in the Spanish, maintained its vigor. A French opera house was built, and it became a center of the social life of New Orleans.

But the Negro slaves did not frequent the theater. The musical patrimony to which they did have access was French popular music. Folk songs, dance tunes of the period, polkas, mazurkas, quadrilles, military marches, funeral marches—these were the songs with which the Negroes were in contact.

As generation succeeded generation, the two musical poles of African rhythm and folk song fought against each other for control of the interior life of the Negro. By some strange process of osmosis, mutual influence, and fusion, the two gave birth to jazz many decades later.

The middle of the nineteenth century was the troubled and passionate period in which an aristocratic society, with its social traditions, outmoded codes, and formalistic duels, was slowly withering away, to die in the convulsions of the Civil War.

At various affairs—for example, the celebrated Quadroon Balls at which the gallant planters selected mistresses from among the beautiful girls of mixed blood—the Negroes learned the popular tunes. These they unconsciously transformed, because their instinctive rhythmic sense altered the melody of the French songs to fit a syncopated background.

Toward 1850 certain masquerade groups organized remarkable parades, replete with song, which developed later into the internationally famous Mardi Gras celebration.

This was the cultural medium in which was nourished the germ which was to develop into jazz.

Freed by the Civil War, the Negroes could celebrate in the open what they had previously performed in the shadows. After 1880 the tradition of the dances in Congo Square continued. Dancing to the tom-tom was still a source of high elation to the Negroes.

The picturesque scenes of Congo Square came to an end when the city administration divided the place into lots. Henceforth, on Sunday afternoons, the Negroes of the town and its environs came together in an abandoned yard on Dumaine Street. The spectacle hadn't changed; entranced couples swayed and stamped their heavy feet, and the same grimacing and ecstatic black buck beat out the rhythm on a donkey skin. Asbury cites the words of a correspondent of a New York newspaper who attended one of these African orgies:

A dry-goods box and an old pork barrel formed the orchestra. These were beaten with sticks or bones, used like drumsticks so as to keep up a continuous rattle, while some old men and women chanted a song that appeared to me to be purely African in its many voweled syllabification. . . . Owing to the noise I could not even attempt to catch the words. I asked several old women to recite them to me, but they only laughed and shook their heads. In their patois they told me—"no use, you could never understand it. *C'est le Congo!*—it is the Congo!" The dance was certainly peculiar, and I observed that only a few old persons, who had probably all been slaves, knew how to dance it. The women did not move their feet from the ground. They only writhed their bodies and swayed in undulatory motions from ankles to waist. . . . The men leaped and performed feats of gymnastic dancing which reminded me of some steps in the *jota Aragonesa*. Small bells were attached to their ankles. "*Vous ne comprenez pas cette danse-là?*" an old woman asked me. I did not altogether understand it, but it appeared to be more or less lascivious as I saw it. I offered the woman some money to recite the words of the Congo song. She consulted with another and both went off shaking their heads. I could obtain no satisfaction.<sup>3</sup>

After the Civil War the generation of former slaves kept their sense of inferiority. Their children made better use of their

<sup>3</sup>Herbert Asbury, *The French Quarter*, pp. 252-53.

liberty. Young Negroes tried to escape the strenuous labor of plantation and port, attempting to make out of their love for music a supplementary profession at least.

Soon the Negroes began to imitate the musical ceremonies of the whites. At picnics, balls, and burials, music was a necessity. Slowly but surely a hybrid form of music—without rules and without limits—was developed.

To understand this phenomenon, we must try to recapture its atmosphere. About 1890 some Negroes who could not read music compensated for their ignorance through exceptional qualities of inventiveness and memory. Out of such an insignificant fact was to spring an essential and permanent feature of jazz music.

These Negroes were poor and illiterate, but from father to son they had handed down the melancholy work songs of the cotton fields and docks. The song was altered to suit the circumstance: the stone breakers accompanied their hammer blows with tunes marked by a strongly accentuated beat; the water vendors uttered long, syncopated wails. All of these intermingled and developed, working toward a now-imminent crystallization.

Those who had the inclination were chosen for the occasions which called for musical celebration. Being poor people, they possessed only the cheapest instruments. There was a sort of class struggle going on among the musical instruments. Only the rich owned the nobler instruments—violins, cellos, pianos—the Negroes had little contact with them. In the beginning they had to content themselves with lesser instruments, particularly those practicable for military bands. The purchase of an old tuba or a clarinet was an important event in the life of a Negro. It was a form of liberation which permitted the musician to avoid the more arduous labors.

In certain unmentionable dives reserved for criminals and longshoremen, the musical labor of Negroes replaced that of whites because it was cheaper. Thus gradually the dregs of the New Orleans population were subjected to a hybrid music, without a name but with certain characteristics which revolted respectable people and which they mocked.

The first performers enriched their repertory with local French tunes which they had memorized and which they played in their own peculiar way. They manhandled polkas and mazurkas, imposing the raggedy beat, unusual stresses, and breaks of their rudimentary artistic comprehension of the European music. Their playing was characteristic of the music of unlettered people who had somehow to make up for their lack of education. One should not be astonished to find them with an admirable sense of rhythm, a gift for improvisation, a vivid sensitivity, and an instinctive sense of the measure.

The heyday of the quadrille was from 1880 to 1900. A complicated dance with formal and regular patterns, the quadrille passed from the salons of the Second French Empire to the provinces, and thence abroad. The very same airs which had charmed the halcyon days of lovely ladies in crinoline could be heard in provincial ballrooms some twenty-five years later. From 1880 to 1914 Europe still danced to these old refrains. It was a genuine emotional experience for me when I discovered that the famous *Tiger Rag* was none other than the distorted theme of the second tableau of a quadrille I used to hear as a boy at all the balls of Walloon Belgium. I used to know by heart this part of the quadrille, during which the four couples turned and crossed each other until a crescendo stopped the dancers, who honored their partners and even kissed them.

This tune had a somewhat different fate at New Orleans. It scored its first successes at the Quadroon Balls, and then passed to the swankiest affairs of Negro society. The first Negro orchestras dubbed it *Praline* and really pulverized it. It was all the rage during the Golden Age of jazz, and the chorus improvised by the early clarinetists has changed but little in half a century. You can still hear musicians like Sidney Bechet and Buster Bailey play it in pretty much the old style.

At this time the word "jazz" was not yet invented. These pieces were locally termed "shouts," "rambles," or "rags." The fact that all these early tunes were deformations of old French songs cannot be overestimated.

Handed down from father to son, the memory of many French

tunes persisted for several generations. For example, there was a march played by the bands of every French village, which was transformed into *High Society*. Just remove its syncopated rhythm and you'll have the original theme.

There should be musical scouts entrusted with the task of tracing these songs to their sources. Another piece on the repertory of the military band of my village in Belgium was a quick-step whose melodic line was modified at New Orleans, where it became known as *Panama*.

This kind of reincarnation is one of the most important and interesting phenomena in the study of this American music. It is really incredible when you think about it: tunes born in France and popularized some five thousand miles away by trained musicians, then passing into the realm of folk song, where they were transmuted by ignorant musicians who repeatedly altered them until the day arrived when a more gifted instrumentalist fixed their basic themes forever.

Before arriving at this final stage, that of jazz, Negro music passed through a number of more or less transitory types. There were the coon-songs or lullabies, plantation songs, and the songs which the Negroes sang while dancing the cakewalk, that grotesque dance which dated back to the dark days of slavery. There were the melancholy plaints which were finally to become the blues, and there were the spirituals, an arranged music, codified and controlled by the preachers.

John Mason Brown, in the *Lippincott's Magazine* of December 1868, analyzed the primitive music of the slaves in the Southern states and traced the following subdivisions:

1. Religious songs, e.g., "The Old Ship of Zion," where the refrain of "Glory, hallelou" in the chorus keeps the congregation well together in the singing and allows time for the leader to recall the next verse.
2. River songs, composed of single lines separated by a barbarous and unmeaning chorus and sung by the deck hands and roustabouts mainly for the howl.
3. Plantation songs, accompanying the mowers at harvest, in which the strong emphasis of rhythm was more important than the words.

4. Songs of longing; dreamy, sad, and plaintive airs describing the most sorrowful pictures of slave life, sung in the dusk when returning home from the day's work.

5. Songs of mirth, whose origin and meaning, in most cases forgotten, were preserved for the jingle of rhyme and tune and sung with merry laughter and with dancing in the evening by the cabin fireside.

6. Descriptive songs, sung in chanting style, with marked emphasis and the prolongation of the concluding syllable of each line. One of these songs, founded upon the incidents of a famous horse race, became almost an epidemic among the Negroes of the slaveholding States.

The birth of jazz was now imminent. The music was no longer folk song and not yet jazz. It was something strange and indefinable; it was a cry of lament and of joy piercing through the night from the fabulous red-light district, Storyville. Among the unbelievably numerous bars of Basin Street, inside the legendary hot spots in which gambling, alcohol, and vice flourished, there came into the world an as yet unbaptized music.

An incredible period which was later to prove a gold mine for the American stage and screen! Storyville was the only section of an American town legally set aside for vice. Guidebooks gave all the available information about the best addresses: *The Green Book or The Gentleman's Guide to New Orleans*, the *Red Book*, the *Blue Book*. Here were listed all the names of creatures who already belong to the past: Tom Anderson, the evil saloonkeeper and boss of the reserved quarter; Mamie Christine; Lulu White, the madame of Mahogany Hall; Abbie Reed, madame of a house on Delord Street, who was seriously wounded by her lover; Gertrude Livingston—"Queen Gertie" of the red-light district; Kate Townsend; Minnie Haha; the elegant mansion of Josie Arlington; Countess Willie Piazza, and the evil frequenters of "The Real Thing."

The red lights gleamed in the warm nights. A clarinet wailed out its woes into a narrow gaslit street which never felt the heavy tread of the policeman. Customers drank hard liquor, the girls only half listened to the music as they discussed the latest scandal.

Nothing remains of all this but a music which has conquered the world. Nothing remains but the cruel memory of the days of slavery, when Creole planters spent money recklessly, fought duels on the slightest provocation, and kept beautiful quadroons as mistresses.

Walk through the streets of New Orleans. You may glimpse the shades of these haunted figures of the past—see! perhaps that face which fades into the blackness of the night at the corner of Perdido Street is the phantom of the handsome Marquis de Vaudreuil. There, a bit farther on, is the asylum where the first great jazz musician gasped out his last breath in 1931. The echo of a sob still reverberates in the deserted streets of the French Quarter . . . but it is only the first tragic cry of a new art . . . that jazz to which the gates of every city in the world were to open. There, if you but look, lie the romantic and passionate elements of the music which we all love.

## II. BETWEEN TOM-TOM AND RAGTIME

IT IS GENERALLY made to appear that by some miraculous stroke of good fortune Buddy Bolden appeared like a bolt from the blue, and jazz was born. That is the impression given by most accounts of his career. The evolution of jazz as described in *Jazzmen* had no intermediate stages between the tom-tom and King Bolden. For Ramsey and Smith have taken the description of the Congo Square tom-tom background from Asbury's *French Quarter*, and have proceeded immediately to Bolden's syncopated playing.

Until very recently I too thought that this was indeed the case. I was wrong. This inaccurate impression was due to the lack of dependable information as to the popular music of New Orleans.

From the description given by Herbert Asbury we have been able to reconstruct the origin and the culmination of this New Orleans music, but not the intermediary period of transition. As a matter of fact, a long and unknown evolution had slowly trans-



formed the tom-tom beat into jazz music considerably before the first great cornetist of the Delta City made his appearance in 1891.

Asbury describes the dances of Congo Square as a veritably African scene in which one or more tom-tom beaters hypnotized the Negro participants.

So it was when these Congo Square dances were first inaugurated, and during the first half of the century. But, little by little, the Negroes were affected by contact with the melodic music of the whites. The process is readily comprehensible. The Negroes, underprivileged, were impressed by the music of their rich masters and incorporated it into their playing. On the other hand, the whites, proud and complacent, disdained the crude beauty of the African rhythms.

Slowly but surely the music of Congo Square evolved. An orchestral music was substituted for the primitive tom-tom. Evidence is necessary to prove that this natural transformation actually took place, and I had the good fortune to discover a few extremely important pages which illustrate this process of evolution from pure rhythm to polyphony.

Lafcadio Hearn has given a description of the music which originated in New Orleans between 1860 and 1880:

I fear I know nothing about Creole music or Creole Negroes. Yes, I have seen them dance; but they danced the Congo and sang a purely African song to the accompaniment of a drygoods box beaten with sticks or bones and a drum made by stretching a skin over a flour barrel. That sort of accompaniment and that sort of music you know all about; it is precisely similar to what a score of travellers have described. There are no harmonies—only a furious contretemps. As for the dance—in which the women do not take their feet off the ground—it is as lascivious as is possible. The men dance very differently, like savages, leaping in the air. I spoke of this spectacle in my short article in the "Century." . . .

The Creole songs which I have heard sung in the city are Frenchy in construction, but possess a few African characteristics of method. The darker the singer, the more marked the oddities of intonation. Unfortunately, the most of those I have heard were quadroons or

mulattoes. One black woman sang me a Voodoo song, which I got Cable to write—but I could not sing it as she sang it, so that the music is faulty. I suppose you have seen it already, as it forms part of the collection.

After many researches Lafcadio Hearn had even discovered a Creole song with direct African influences. *Afro-American Folk Songs*, by H. E. Krehbiel, quotes this private letter:

Here is the only Creole song I know of with an African refrain that is still sung—don't show it to C., it is one of our treasures.<sup>1</sup>

(Pronounce "wenday," "makkiah.")

Ouendé, ouendé, macaya!  
 Mo pas barrassé, macaya!  
 Ouendé, ouendé, macaya!  
 Mo bois bon divin, macaya!  
 Ouendé, ouendé, macaya!  
 Mo mangé bon poulet, macaya!  
 Ouendé, ouendé, macaya!  
 Mo pas barrassé, macaya!  
 Ouendé, ouendé, macaya!  
 Macaya!

I wrote from the dictation of Louise Roche. She did not know the meaning of the refrain—her mother had taught her, and the mother had learned it from the grandmother. However, I found out the meaning, and asked her if she now remembered. She leaped in the air for joy—apparently. Ouendai, or ouendé, has a different meaning in the eastern Soudan; but in the Congo, of Fiot, dialect it means "to go," "to continue to," "to go on." I found the word in Jeannest's vocabulary. Then "macaya" I found in Turiault's "Etude sur le Langage Créole de la Martinique": "ça veut dire manger tout le temps"—"excessivement." Therefore, here is our translation:

Go on! go on! eat enormously!  
 I ain't one bit ashamed—eat outrageously!  
 Go on! go on! eat prodigiously!  
 I drink good wine!—eat ferociously!  
 Go on! go on! eat unceasingly!—  
 I eat good chicken—gorging myself!  
 Go on! go on! etc.

<sup>1</sup>H. E. Krehbiel's, *Afro-American Folk Songs*, published by G. Schirmer, Inc.

How is this for a linguistic discovery? The music is almost precisely like the American river music—a chant, almost a recitative, until the end of the line is reached: then for your mocking music!

And in the *Nation* of May 30, 1867, we find this important description of the passage from the “spiritual” to singing scenes:

But the benches are pushed back to the wall when the formal meeting is over, and old and young, men and women, sprucely dressed young men, grotesquely half-clad field hands—the women generally with gay handkerchiefs twisted about their heads and with short skirts—boys with tattered shirts and men’s trousers, young girls bare-footed, all stand up in the middle of the floor, and when the “sperichil” is struck up begin first walking and by and by shuffling around, one after the other, in a ring. The foot is hardly taken from the floor, and the progression is mainly due to a jerking, hitching motion which agitates the entire shouter and soon brings out streams of perspiration. Sometimes they dance silently, sometimes, as they shuffle they sing the chorus of the spiritual, and sometimes the song itself is also sung by the dancers. But more frequently a band, composed of some of the best singers and of tired shouters, stand at the side of the room to “base” the others, singing the body of the song and clapping their hands together or on the knees. Song and dance are alike extremely energetic, and often, when the shout lasts into the middle of the night, the monotonous thud, thud of the feet prevents sleep within half a mile of the praise-house.

To tell the truth, by 1880 the dances of Congo Square no longer were as described by Asbury. The author of *The French Quarter* was deceived by outdated witnesses. No one has yet noticed that his account of that extraordinary spectacle was taken from the diary of J. G. Flugel, a German traveler who had been in New Orleans in February 1817.

That is why the book *Jazzmen* leaped all unknowingly from the primitive period to jazz itself. By 1880 jazz was in gestation, the conditions which were to make its birth possible were under preparation. What had become of the music which had set the Negroes dancing in Congo Square? The lines which follow will show how the orchestra was gradually built up. The evolution of

the drum toward its present manufactured form was clearly indicated. The banjo appeared as the indispensable instrument it was to be for the early jazz orchestras. Finally came the wind instruments. One fact stands out clearly in the following document: until this time the orchestra was almost exclusively rhythmic, and rhythm was to remain as the solid background of a jazz orchestra. The time was at hand for the melodic instruments to be added.

This magnificent page, which reveals hitherto obscure facts, was written by George W. Cable in the *Century Magazine* for 1885:

The drums were very long, hollowed, often from a single piece of wood, open at one end having a sheep or goat skin stretched across the other. One was large, the other much smaller. The tight skin heads were not held up to be struck; the drums were laid along on the turf and the drummers bestrode them, and beat them on the head madly with fingers, fists, and feet, with slow vehemence on the great drum and fiercely and rapidly on the small one.

Sometimes an extra performer sat on the ground behind the larger drum, at its open end, and beat upon the wooden sides of it with two sticks. The smaller drum was often made from a joint or two of very large bamboo, in the West Indies where such could be got, and this is said to be the origin of its name, for it was called bamboula. . . .

One important instrument was a gourd partly filled with pebbles or grains of corn, flourished violently at the end of a stout staff with one hand and beaten upon the palm of the other.

Other performers rang triangles, and others twanged from jew's-harps an astonishing amount of sound! Another instrument was the jawbone of some ox, horse, or mule, and a key rattled rhythmically along its weather-beaten teeth. At times, the drums were reinforced by one or more empty barrels or casks beaten on the head with the shank bones of cattle.

The author continues his description of this ensemble, which included at least six musicians, and adds others, including one who played a sort of marimba, and then notes:

But the grand instrument at last, the first violin, as one might say, was the banjo. It had but four strings, not six: beware the dictionary. It is not the "favorite instrument of the Negroes of the southern

states of America" . . . but for the true African dance, a dance not so much of legs and feet as of the upper half of the body, a sensual, devilish thing tolerated only by Latin-American masters, there was wanted the dark inspiration of African drums and the banjo's thrump and strum.

And then there was that long drawn cry of tremendous volume, richness, and resound to which no instrument within their reach could make the faintest approach:

Eh! pour la belle Layotte ma nourri 'nocent  
oui 'nocent ma nourril

All the instruments silent while it rises and swells with mighty energy and dies away distinctly, "Yea-a-a-a!" Then the crash of savage drums, horns, and rattles.

To all this there was sometimes added a Pan's pipe of but three reeds, made from single joints of the common brake cane and called by English-speaking Negroes "the quills . . ."

Such was the full band! All the values of contrast that discord can furnish must have been present, with whatever there is of ecstasy in maddening repetition, for of this the African can never have too much.

The presence of jazz can already be sensed from this description. The two-to-the-bar rhythm of the bass drum and the faster beat of the traps, the added melody of the banjo and the pipes of Pan, the raucous voices of the singers, the sudden stopping of the instruments for a break, their savage re-entry, the shouts of satisfaction punctuating the music—all these are present. The author adds, "Its contact with French taste gave it often great tenderness of sentiment."

Consider for a moment the state of this music. It is no longer a simple percussion, as Asbury would have us believe; we are in the presence of an organized body of music. This is no longer pure rhythm, but, on the contrary, a genuine orchestra providing a full rhythmic background for the low-voiced singers.

For the first time we have written proof that sung tunes were an integral part of the ceremonies of Congo Square.

What were these tunes?

They were Creole songs! The extract quoted by Cable was from an old Louisiana ditty called *Ma Layotte*. The Negroes, who had long ago broken down the French of their masters into a delightful *patois*, handed down touching plaints in this dialect from generation to generation. The French words were mutilated: for instance, the old Negroes were called *cocodrilles* (a corruption of crocodiles. Can this have any relation to the "alligators" of today?), and the younger were baptized *trouloulous* (corruption of a slang word for crabs).

Specialists are needed to study these moving songs which dot the threshold of jazz. The primitive psychology of their authors merits particular attention. As Cable remarks, they have a poetical aspect which is most interesting. They are the songs of a down-trodden and long-suffering race for whom outward nature offers little of interest. There is no trace in these naïve couplets of the beauties of landscape or season, of verdure or flower, of sun or sky.

The Negro confined his song to the five or six functions which encompassed the whole of his earthly existence. "Love was his, and toil, and anger, and superstition, and malady." Love his immediate and most important goal, sleep his balm, food his strength, dancing his pleasure, rum his cup of forgetfulness, and death the gateway to the great unknown which might permit the disinherited to return to the African paradise of his ancestors—these were the things of which the Negro sang.

Such airs were very popular between 1880 and 1890. Some had different rhythms and were the accompaniments for various dances called the Babouille, the Cata, the Counjaille, the Calinda, the Voudou, and the Congo. In these dances we can find all the choreographic elements of the contemporary Susy Q, Big Apple, and Lindy Hop. Cable noted particularly that the movements of the dancers were unique in that they were of the upper body rather than of the legs and feet.

Certain parallels are most intriguing. I couldn't help thinking of the Saturday night amateur contests at the Savoy in Harlem when I read the following description of the Congo Square orgies of the '80s:

Now for the frantic leaps! Now for frenzy! Another pair are in the ring. The man wears a belt of little bells, or, as a substitute, little tin vials of shot "*bram-bram sonnette*." And still another couple enter the circle. What wild—what terrible delight! The ecstasy rises to madness; one—two—three of the dancers fall—bloucoutoum! boum!—with foam on their lips and are dragged out. . . . The musicians know no fatigue; still the dancers rage on.

*Quand patate la cuite na va mange li.*  
(When that tater's cooked don't you eat it up.)

The author mentions certain "nonsense lines" which are a clear indication of the scat songs of a later date.

No one has yet studied this very interesting period of Louisiana folklore. Yet this music is highly important. It is indeed surprising that the Americans of the time did not savor its appeal. It was almost universally disdained as an unworthy manifestation of art. Not until after the birth of jazz was this rich poetical vein first tapped, and then by a New Orleans composer who had studied in Paris, Louis Moreau Gottschalk. Between 1890 and 1905 Gottschalk devoted his time to recapturing the moods of the plaintive and fervent Creole music. During his concert tour in Europe at the beginning of the present century he seems to have enchanted Dvořák with these new rhythms.

His sister, Clara Gottschalk, wrote in 1906:

Dr. Dvořák has claimed there is in time to be a native school of American music based upon the primitive musical utterances of the Indians and the Negroes among us. Then truly these melodies of the Louisiana Negroes, which, quaintly merry or full of a very tender pathos, have served to rock whole generations of Southern children, are historical documents of some interest to the students and lovers of music.

After a concert of Louis Moreau Gottschalk, a European critic wrote: "Nothing is more interesting to hear than the compositions of these young Creoles. Listen to the *Bamboula*, and you will understand the poetry of this tropical clime."

These various popular songs which inspired Louis Moreau Gottschalk are collected in a book of *Slave Songs from the United*

*States*, edited by Charles P. Ware. The titles alone illustrate the naïve poetry of these ditties: *La Belle Layotte*, *Voyez Ce Mulet-la*, *Po' Peti' Mamze*, *En Avant*, *Grenadier*, *Papa Va a la Riviere*. Here is the translation of the final triplet of this last song, which is about the *calalou*, a Creole soup made with crabs:

*Papa goes to the river.*  
*Mamma goes to fish for crabs.*  
*Sleep on, sleep on, crabs in calalou.*

Here are the unexplored headwaters of jazz. About 1890 the African scenes of Congo Square came to an end when the Negroes transferred their activity to the vacant lot on Dumaine Street.

Little by little the great choreographic Sabbath changed its aspect, as contact with the whites increased. Certain colored musicians were permitted at the Quadroon Balls, as we are reminded by another old couplet which informs us that only the *trouloulou* musicians could penetrate into the sanctum where the white patricians received the beautiful quadroons.

*Yellow girl goes to the ball,*  
*Nigger lights her to the hall.*  
*Fiddler man!*  
*Now what is that to you?*  
*Say what is that to you?*  
*Fiddler man!*

Thus Cable concludes his vibrant testimony, in 1886:

Times have changed and there is nothing to be regretted in the change that has come over Congo Square. Still a glamour hangs over its dark past. There is the pathos of slavery, the poetry of the weak oppressed by the strong, and of limbs that danced after toil, and of barbaric love-making. The rags and semi-nakedness, the bamboula drums, the dance, and almost the banjo are gone but the bizarre melodies and dark lovers of rhythm live on. . . .

Times had changed and a new era was beginning—the era of ragtime. Ragtime music existed before it was so christened, and it



was to retain that name until about 1915, when it was rebaptized "jazz." Many of the attributes of jazz music already were present in the earliest rags.

In 1914 Irving Berlin, when interviewed about the new musical phenomenon called syncopation by the magazine *Theatrical Mirror*, stated, "Syncopation is nothing but another name for ragtime. The compositions of the old masters possess it in a stiff and stilted way. Modern ragtime is syncopation."

Just what was ragtime, really? Irving Scherke, an American music critic, gave a long explanation of it, which I quote:

The musical term ragtime is not of recent invention. It originated years ago at a southern dance when one of the darkies present asked the band to repeat a certain piece. To their question which piece he meant, the darky replied, "The one that had a ragged time to it, a sort of ragtime piece." His explanation was so nice that, years after they had forgotten the originator of the expression, the players continued to refer to the piece as "the ragtime number."

About 1890 some Negro amateurs had digested and unified this multiple musical folklore: African music, Creole songs, popular French tunes, Congo Square tradition. Colored musicians had attended the Quadroon Balls, where they had picked up the popular dances: polkas, mazurkas, quadrilles. At the time, this dance music was so important that explanatory books were published. A man named Wirth published a *Complete Quadrille Call Book* in which he describes the five figures of the new dance:

1. First four forward to center
2. Chase by couples to right between side four in a star
3. Join right hands, circle in a star
4. Circle back with left hands
5. First four chase to the left to center.

At the time there was a considerable number of tunes which had been imported from France and other countries, notably *Sheldon's Polka Quadrille*, the *Presidential Polka*, the *Lancers*, the *Prairie Queen*, the *French*, and the *Cake-Walk Quadrilles*.

There are some who assert that ragtime began at St. Louis and then worked its way down to New Orleans via the Mississippi River boats before 1890. There was a great improviser named Louis Chauvin who played tunes by ear, since he couldn't read. This is the period when the rags of Scott Joplin, a colored musician who even essayed an operetta, were in vogue. Played by illiterate pianists like Louis Chauvin and Tom Turpin, the Scott Joplin rags were all the rage about 1890.

Such tunes as these were the music heard by fifteen-year-old Negro boys of the '90s. They knew the veritable African scenes of Congo Square only by reputation, and their musical folklore was already the *mélange* we have mentioned. Was jazz originated by choral and orchestral groups of such youths? It is a possibility. Here is what Herbert Asbury has to say about the origin of jazz—an account used by Edna Ferber to provide the background to her best seller, *Saratoga Trunk*:

One of the most popular of these combinations—though not for dancing—was a company of boys, from twelve to fifteen years old, who called themselves the Spasm Band. They were the real creators of jazz, and the Spasm Band was the original jazz band. There were seven members besides the manager and principal organizer, Harry Gregson, who was the singer of the outfit—he crooned the popular songs of the day through a piece of gas-pipe, since he couldn't afford a proper megaphone. The musicians were Emile Lacombe, otherwise Stalebread Charley, who played a fiddle made out of a cigar-box; Willie Bussey, better known as Cajun, who performed entrancingly upon the harmonica; Charley Stein, who manipulated an old kettle, a cow-bell, a gourd filled with pebbles, and other traps and in later life became a famous drummer; Chineé, who smote the bull fiddle, at first half a barrel and later a coffin-shaped contraption built by the boys; Warm Gravy; Emile Benrod, called Whisky, and Frank Bussey, known as Monk. The three last-named played whistles and various horns, most of them home-made, and each had at least three instruments, upon which he alternated. Cajun Bussey and Stalebread Charley could play tunes upon the harmonica and the fiddle, and the others contributed whatever sounds chanced to come from their instruments. These they played with the horns in hats, standing upon their heads, and interrupting themselves occasionally with lugubrious

howls. In short, they apparently originated practically all of the antics with which the virtuosi of modern jazz provoke the hotcha spirit, and sometimes downright nausea. The Spasm boys even screamed "hi-de-hi" and "ho-de-ho"—and incidentally these expressions, now the exclusive howls of Negro band-leaders, were used in Mississippi River songs at least a hundred years ago.

The Spasm Band first appeared in New Orleans about 1895, and for several years the boys picked up many an honest penny playing in front of the theaters and saloons and in the brothels, and with a few formal engagements at West End, Grand Opera House, and other resorts, when they were advertised as "The Razy Dazy Spasm Band." Their big moment, however, came when they serenaded Sarah Bernhardt, who expressed amazement and gave them each a coin. About 1900—the date is uncertain—Jack Robinson, owner of the Haymarket dance-hall on Customhouse Street between Dauphine and Bourbon, engaged a band of experienced, adult musicians, who imitated the antics and contortions of the Spasm Band and, moreover, used their billing—Razy Dazy Spasm Band. When the members of the original Spasm Band appeared at the Haymarket with their hands and pockets filled with stones and bricks and made violent protest, Robinson repainted his advertising placards to read: "Razy Dazy Jazy Band!" Thus it began. And now look!

We must not give too much importance to this account. There were undoubtedly several groups similar to the Spasm Band, and even before its formation in 1895 real orchestras of true musicians had made their appearance.

Precise details about the period are lacking. Near as it is, we can grasp its character only through the statements of the heroic originators who still survive, and their accounts tend to exaggerate so that truth has become legend.

We owe to *Jazzmen*, to *Jazz Information*, and to the *Hot Record Society Rag* most of the facts we have about the men who made jazz. Buddy Bolden was a barber who played cornet in a local band where he learned quadrilles, polkas, and mazurkas, which he played spontaneously with the syncopated inspiration of the Congo Square tradition. At this time the technique of the Negroes was not fixed by any rules. Most of them taught them-

selves or learned a friend's style of playing, and thus the very methods of playing instruments were transformed.

The European school taught the technique of the "slap tongue" for the brasses; that is to say, the player didn't puff out his cheeks, and he minimized the work of the breath. For this, the Negroes substituted an empirical system which may seem grotesque at first, but which gave such extraordinary results that professors in European conservatories couldn't believe their ears when they heard Louis Armstrong play.

The new Negro school went its own way. At the time when Buddy Bolden began to play, there were several orchestras which functioned at private parties, picnics, and burials. One such band was that of Adam Olivier, which had Tony Jackson on piano and Bunk Johnson on cornet. New Orleans was indeed a city with an enormous appetite for music. During the Mardi Gras carnival some two hundred musicians—professionals and amateurs—were mobilized into active duty.

Many of these musicians were hired during the day to play on large wagons which toured the streets, advertising dances or other events. It would have taken a very clever person to predict the future of this embryonic art. There were no fixed laws regulating even the most essential elements of jazz. There was only a group of Negroes who had unconsciously discovered a new process, and who continued to play without knowing just how to go about it. Its environment inevitably reacted upon the formation of the syncopated music. The early orchestras, having to march in the streets of uptown New Orleans or to play in the limited space of a moving wagon, were forced to discard heavy and unwieldy instruments like the piano, and sometimes even the drums.

For several years the soul of jazz was absent from its music—jazz was at the crossroads. What remained of the great fusion of the African music of Congo Square and the French music of the Quadroon Balls? The Negroes were now using European instruments and seemed to have abandoned the complicated percussion apparatus which had served them so well in the past.

Then Buddy Bolden brought his group together behind his shop in Franklin Street. By day he cut hair and shaved beards; by night he blew his horn at dances. Soon his talents as improviser and instrumentalist made him a celebrity, and there was a great demand for the services of his five-piece band, which included Willy Cornish on valve trombone, Jimmie Johnson on string bass, Brock Mumford on guitar, and Willy Werner or Frank Lewis on clarinet.

At the present time Buddy Bolden is made out to be an epochal figure, his importance in the history of jazz seems to be overwhelming, and legends are woven about his person: he was somewhat of a scoundrel and sot, he never paid his musicians, he delighted in regaling or shocking his audience by singing obscene couplets, his instrumental talents and his powers of improvisation earned him the sobriquet of "King" Bolden; he used to place himself near the open window and blow his horn like a maniac, he could be heard miles away across the river, and all within range, attracted as if by a magnet by this clarion call, would flock around the great cornetist. We are witnessing the birth of an epic of our own times.

Whatever be the actual truth of the matter, King Bolden was indisputably the greatest trumpet of the Delta City. He was the idol of all the kids from Perdido to Rampart and from Franklin to Basin Street. King of the rag and the ramble, he was adored by countless women who carried his paraphernalia and gave him presents. When two of the musical advertising wagons met in the street and locked wheels for a "cutting contest," woe betide the band that dared to contest the sway of King Bolden.

In 1895 he modified the composition of his orchestra. After having played without a drummer for five years, he added Cornelius Tillman on drums. Then Frank Lewis, the clarinetist who sometimes played together with Warner, joined another band, and Bolden had to find someone to replace him. Clarinetists not being easy to find, Bolden decided to add a second cornet instead. Thus came into being the classical form of the New Orleans jazz band. The new cornet was Bunk Johnson, another legendary great, who is still living and to whom we are indebted for much

of our information. A little later Frankie Dusen replaced Willy Cornish on the trombone. During the succeeding years several changes modified the composition of the group: Bob Lyons, bass; Sam Dutrey, clarinet; "Zino," drums; and even Jimmie Palao, violin, became members of the band. These changes are similar to the personnel changes of present-day orchestras.

In the beginning jazz was restricted to a limited field—the city of New Orleans and the surrounding territory. Then it spread up the Mississippi Valley on the river boats, which employed Negroes only for the most menial tasks and for playing music, the latter a step or two higher in the social hierarchy.

A group of two or three dozen musicians created jazz and first breathed life into it; we know the names of the best of them. There were two or three good orchestras headed by featured stars, and ten or so others of lesser quality. The same names bob up at one time or another in several of these orchestras. Some of these bands have left us a legendary reputation. There was, for example, the Olympia Band with at least two peerless musicians, Freddie Keppard the cornet and Picou the clarinet, as well as Joseph Petit on trombone and "Ratty" John Vean and later Louis Cottrelle on drums.

These orchestras shed their names almost as readily as they changed their personnel. After King Bolden was put away in an institution the group was re-formed as the Eagle Band with Bunk Johnson on cornet. The Olympia Band became the Original Creole Band, with Freddie Keppard on cornet, George Baquet clarinet, Eddie Venson trombone, Jimmie Palao violin, and Norwood Williams guitar.

There were other groups, such as those of the "Frenchmen," so called because they came from the downtown Creole section and stemmed from the French rather than the African musical tradition. These included the Imperial Band, with Emanuel Perez, and the orchestras of John Robichaux and Piron.

Little by little these bands evolved a set pattern. The drums, which had been momentarily cast aside in the beginning, once more held free sway as the main counterpoise to the melodic instruments and soon were to see a spectacular development.

At this glorious epoch, inspiration made its own rules. The drum came back, never again to leave the jazz orchestra. The piano, once so neglected, suddenly found itself in great demand, thanks to fortuitous circumstances—namely, the need of the sporting houses of Storyville for “professors” to entertain their inmates and guests. For the dawn of a new century brought a boom period to the reserved quarter of New Orleans. The houses of ill repute, bars, gambling dens, and barrel houses, where raw alcohol was sold, needed music to bolster up their artificial gaiety.

Once again its environment was to condition the orchestra. The raucous outfits which played on the wagons would be unbearable indoors. Plush interiors called for nobler and more subdued instruments. The coarseness of the early jazz bands gave way to the piano, and, thanks to some musicians of great talent, a moving polyphonic style was developed on that instrument. When the piano was joined to the other instruments, the balance of a perfect rag band was created.

Many of these pianists who won the applause and the small change of their pleasure-seeking audience are anonymous. Others, like Jelly Roll Morton, Clarence Williams, and Richard M. Jones, have become famous. This infiltration of the piano into the sporting houses had an important aftermath for the music which was still developing. Until this time ragtime minstrels were self-taught amateurs, but the piano cannot be learned in the same way as the trumpet. The pianist, with few exceptions, has to know music, and he thereby added a bit of co-ordination to the savage and untrained art. Gradually the music was adapted to its function.

A young lad named Sidney Bechet was intrigued by this new music. He began to play clarinet, learned how to read, and soon became a member of the Eagle Band, where he was considered a first-rate instrumentalist. Still in knee pants, he played next to such musicians as Bunk Johnson, Frankie Dusen, Tubby Hall, Pop Foster, and Cliff Stone.

By degrees these orchestras gathered a repertory. Each group had its favorite tunes: the Eagle Band inherited the compositions of Buddy Bolden, the Olympia Band featured Picou's numbers. Many of these old tunes are still popular: *High Society*, *Panama*,

*Tiger Rag, Muskrat Ramble, Snake Rag, Alligator Hop, Frog's Legs, Olympia Rag, Steamboat Blues, Pepper Rag, Maple Leaf Rag, Rose Leaf Rag, Lowdown Blues, West End Blues, Gettysburg, Get It Right, The Old Cow Died, Let's Go around the Belt, Milneburg Joys, Didn't He Ramble, King Porter Stomp, etc.*

What was the real worth of these pioneers of jazz? In the first chapter of *Jazzmen*, William Russell and Stephen W. Smith praise them to the sky. They give, in addition to the mine of information which has been of great help to me, an aura of almost godlike genius to the reputation of these early musicians. Whether they are right or wrong depends on your point of view.

Taking their era and their local reputation into account, there can be no question but that King Bolden was a very great musician, that Bunk Johnson played with sincerity and feeling, that Picou was a fine clarinetist, and that Keppard really earned his wide renown. On this reduced scale, there can be no debate.

But it is a different matter to try to judge these dead and extinguished stars by the same criteria as Louis Armstrong or Bix Beiderbecke. For we have no way of evaluating their way of playing except by hearsay, which is a decidedly different thing from actually hearing them play, if only on wax.

How is it possible to compare the pioneers of jazz with the giants who followed them? An absolute judgment is impossible; at best we can attempt only a relative verdict.

We mortals are inclined to overembellish the past and endow the great names of yore with more glory than they perhaps deserve. I think it pretty certain that the playing of Buddy Bolden and his contemporaries was but a confused, albeit moving, stammering next to that of men like King Oliver, Bix Beiderbecke, and Louis Armstrong.

I have, moreover, a certain point of comparison which enables me to make such a statement with some authority. In 1918 I heard the orchestra of Louis Mitchell, the first to arrive and remain in Europe. As I shall explain later, it was one of the best to be heard at the time. Suffice it to say that Sidney Bechet was a member of it and that his partners were up to his level, to give



you an idea of the excellence of the orchestra, an all but unknown orchestra to which American critics will one day pay homage. The composition of the group was: Louis Mitchell, drums; Cricket Smith, drums; Vance Lowry, banjo; Walter Kildare, piano; Frank Wittess, trombone; and Sidney Bechet, soprano. Cricket Smith was an improviser of the highest class, and Sidney Bechet continually demonstrated that he lay in the direct line of the New Orleans masters.

In 1920 the orchestra left Brussels for Paris. I retained the most marvelous impression of it, paying particular veneration to Cricket Smith. For many years I considered him the King of the Trumpet, and later, even after hearing such masters as Arthur Briggs, who has played with Noble Sissle and the Georgians, I still kept Cricket Smith at the apex of my hierarchy of trumpets. In 1926 he returned to Brussels, leading his own orchestra this time, but still playing in the old way. A few minutes sufficed to convince me that I had been grievously mistaken. My error was in continuing to judge the Cricket according to the enthusiasm he had aroused in me seven years earlier. My illusions were shattered; I had poeticized the past. There was really no comparison between Cricket Smith and the later musicians who followed him.

I have told this story to show how the emotions and enthusiasms of the past can lead a critic astray. Those who have heard King Bolden and Bunk Johnson have retained the impressions they then received, but critics who accept these impressions at their face values err in judging from an absolute point of view.

My own impression is that these pioneers were somewhat more than mere discoverers, but the halo with which they have been crowned is a good deal exaggerated. Let's continue to reverence them, but let's reserve our real praise and emotion for those whom our own ears have confirmed as belonging to the Valhalla of great jazzmen.

One man who has remained on the top for thirty years is Sidney Bechet. He himself has confessed to me that there are layers and layers of quality between his earliest style and the way he plays today. Each epoch has its own standards of judgment

and points of reference. There are only two or three geniuses of jazz whose personalities have surpassed their periods. The others are only unconscious discoverers who accepted the heritage of ragtime and did their bit toward further fertilizing it until jazz itself was ready to take name and substance.

To give oneself a rough idea of what the music of the early epoch was like, one must listen to two record albums which have appeared in the last few years.

The first is the Jelly Roll Morton album of "New Orleans Memories" to which Charles Edward Smith has contributed a descriptive "Blue Book" named after the once-famed publication of Tom Anderson. Here we find some admirable solos of that fine pianist who, alas, passed away two years ago.

Jelly Roll sought to convey the impression of that troubled period in which jazz was being formed. He plays the old themes and tries to revive the emotion which he felt as a youth back in 1890. I shall not mention the blues here, but I should like to point out that the rags—*Original Rag, Mister Joe, King Porter Stomp*—have a simplicity of interpretation in which the sweet naïveté, marked with the imprint of sensibility and beauty in its purest state, succeeds in re-creating the atmosphere of those early days.

It is well to point out that the first pianists were self-made men who had to create their own peculiar style. This fact accounts for their plentiful use of a powerful left hand, a tradition which persists in the playing of certain great pianists of the present day, including Fats Waller and especially the boogie-woogie specialists.

The album put out by Delta Records goes even more directly to the heart of the problem. Heywood Broun, Jr., who had it recorded, went to the trouble of digging up some genuine New Orleans old-timers and let them play the good old tunes: *Low-down Blues, Gettysburg, Panama, High Society, Weary Blues, Get It Right, Clarinet Marmalade, Milneburg Joys*. Listen to these records and you will get a rather exact idea of the beginnings of jazz. Bear in mind, however, that the musicians used on this date were old men and that some of them had not played for many years.

Note that the titles are alternately blues and rags, though titles are sometimes deceptive on this point. Zutty Singleton has this to say on the subject:

In my time they had the blues and ragtime. They played the blues about once or twice a night. A special number, kind of set off by itself. Dippermouth Blues was a rag. Just because they named it a blues didn't make it a blues. They played it stomp. That was the typical New Orleans style of playing ragtime. They would swing.

The musicians were intelligently chosen for the date: Henry Rena, trumpet; "Big Eye" Louis Nelson, clarinet; Alphonse Picou, clarinet; James Robinson, trombone; William Santiago, guitar; Joseph Rena, drums; and Albert Glerny, bass.

These records support my point of view. The musicians cannot be compared with those of the present day; their technique is faulty, they are often out of tune, and they fail to get together on the ensembles.

So it is impossible to rate the early musicians on the same scale as contemporary ones despite Jelly Roll Morton, who says definitely that King Bolden was the most powerful trumpet he ever heard, the most powerful figure in the history of jazz.

Such a statement coming from a musician like Jelly Roll Morton cannot be easily ignored. Anyway, there is one important point upon which there is no disagreement. These records are a rather exact reproduction of the spirit of the golden age of jazz, and this spirit counts for far more than mere individual skill.

It is as if we have traced jazz back to its sources. We are face to face with what was the greatness and the potentialities of syncopated music. That's what I like about it. With all their imperfections of technique, these old musicians profoundly touch me.

The present conception of jazz has lost this power of enchantment. American music must return to its source, and begin again at the beginning. It has been led astray by commercialism, just like the movies.

The cinema was an independent art which should have been left to develop as the pioneers wished, independently of the

theater and literature. Chaplin and a few others have made motion pictures; the rest have made plays.

Jazz was an independent art of improvisation which should have been left to develop as the pioneers wished, independently of past orchestral conceptions and overarranged combinations. King Bolden, Alphonse Picou, and a few others made jazz; the rest, those of today, have made music.

What charm and what power beneath the awkwardness and naïveté! There are more potentialities in this simplicity than in all the arrangements of the world. This music really demonstrates that jazz is a new phenomenon which comes from the heart and goes to the heart. Technique is only a means; the end is the trance.

Ancient authors used to say about eloquence, "*Si vis me flere dolendum est* [If you wish to make me cry, first cry yourself]." Certain talented and clever musicians have tried to supplant the spontaneous creation which comes from the heart, with a reasoned organization which comes from the intellect. As far as I am concerned, this would signify the bankruptcy of jazz. Collective improvisation—of itself—sometimes throws off sparks of genius. A written arrangement is but a difficult and complicated substitute. Only geniuses like Duke Ellington can successfully replace the sensibility of improvisation by cold intelligence.

What excites me about jazz is not the product of a learned skill, but, on the contrary, the naïve art of men who have something to say. Jazz is a return to primitive instinct, and those who attempt to transform it into an art of the intellect are wrong—they are quite as misguided as an aesthetic dilettante of Congo wood sculpture would be if he tried to transform these fetishes by a technical expression comparable to the perfection of Rodin.

Jazz has no need of intelligence; it needs only feeling. The musicians of New Orleans had plenty of feeling to spare. That is what I love about them, and I fervently express the hope that their message will not be forgotten.

### III. BIRTH OF JAZZ

WE HAVE TRIED TO DEPICT the origins of jazz and its first hesitant notes. We find ourselves now at the point where syncopated music—in the form of rags, rambles, and stomps—had been flourishing for several years but was still a purely local phenomenon, confined to New Orleans.

We have already shown how its formative process was due to a series of interdependent causes. This was an evolution which proceeded along logical lines. The most favorable circumstances prepared the way until the point was reached when custom and experience fixed certain laws which would endure, although they were to be continually revised.

At the very beginning the forms of this new music were closely allied to burlesque and all that was grotesque in the world of entertainment. Just as in comedy scenes certain Negroes dressed up in top hats and painted their mouths white and their faces even blacker in order to gain a few cents, so did rag music earn its way. It was a music symbolic of the proletariat, a revenge of the people who suffered from the apathy of the bourgeoisie.

The intellectuals and the whites of New Orleans easily confused these two forms of a single manifestation, and tended to group the music together with the buffooneries of the cakewalk.

But soon the rag developed, thanks to the workings of the law of supply and demand. Jazz players, dressed like clowns, played the buffoon on the musical advertising wagons, to the great joy of the neighborhood kids and the rather shocked amusement of respectable people; they accompanied funeral processions, again followed by a "second line" of kids proudly aping the movements of their favorites; small orchestras were an integral part of picnics on Lake Pontchartrain or at Milneburg; singers were invited to private parties or clubs; Negro bands were used for dances in the red-light district, as their music seemed to fit the atmosphere and

certainly was more suitable for the low-down dancing. In all these ways the seed was sown, and soon it was ready to spread.

A few musicians had unconsciously inspired a new gospel, and their message was received by certain youth, predestined to glory by some strange form of divine grace, who in turn devoted their own lives to spreading the new gospel.

This evangelical power of jazz is a thing which has always impressed me. Even in Europe I knew some young men of promise with distinguished and well-paying positions who chucked their future in order to play trumpet or saxophone in a jazz band.

What is this extraordinary effect, which I have felt myself, and which is quite unparalleled save by the attraction of certain poets to a few kindred elite souls? Jazz has an obvious appeal for simple and sentimental souls, but it has likewise gained numerous converts among the intellectuals of Europe. Try to understand how its call was received by a young and impetuous throng which was converted into fervent devotees of a cult only half a century old.

What is astonishing is that a new musical spirit has been born in this way. At a moment when all art was in a state of flux and ready to burst the chains which bound it to outmoded classic forms—at this very moment, the phenomenon of improvisation in a trance-like state came into being. Poetry broke out of the confines of the academies and set out to search for adventure. Before long the naïve and fervent fantasies of the Douanier Rousseau were widely appreciated. European intellectuals began to understand the beauty of primitive Negro art; poetry tried to find its stride along the tortuous paths of dadaism and surrealism.

Something new was in the air, something new in human hearts and sensibilities. Soon even the white folks of New Orleans were interested in the curious phenomenon of syncopation. We must try to understand what took place.

At that time there were several white orchestras used for the same sort of work as the Negroes. The success of the colored bands soon forced these whites to adapt their playing to the new music. Jack Laine, a drummer, rapidly transformed his orchestra into "Jack Laine's Ragtime Band."

It even appears that the new music helped to reconcile the two proletariats. Racial mottoes are useful only to a leisure class which wishes to protect its goods, and not to those whites who are just as poor as the Negroes. Having the same task to perform and the same bread to earn, the musicians of both colors even united.

Thus Jack Laine's band was composed of both colored and white musicians, although the color of the former was light enough to permit the orchestra to pass for white. For the first time music constituted a factor of social reconciliation.

The orchestra consisted of Jack Laine, drums; Achille Baquet, clarinet; Lawrence Vega, cornet; Dave Perkins, trombone; Willy Guitar, string bass; and Morton Abraham, guitar. Note that this first group had no piano.

The band was quite successful. It had its own repertory; one old plaint which they called *Meat Ball* has been handed down to posterity as the well-known *Livery Stable Blues*.

About 1905, still in the heroic age, the composition of the orchestra changed, and it assumed the name of "Reliance Brass Band," with Yellow Nunez on clarinet, Johnny Lala and Manuel Marlow on cornets, Jules Casoff on trombone, Mike Stevens on small drum, and Jack Laine on bass drum. The presence of two drummers is probably due to the fact that this was a marching band rather than a dance band.

It is not easy to depict the atmosphere of New Orleans during the first decade of this century. Jazz was growing up in spite of the scorn of the bourgeoisie, who considered its enthusiasts as raving maniacs.

To get an idea of the extent of this scorn on the part of the "wiser" population of the Crescent City, listen to this quotation from an article in the *Times-Picayune* of 1918:

Why is the jass music, and therefore, the jass-band? Jass was a manifestation of a low streak in man's tastes that has not yet come out in civilisation's wash. Indeed one might go farther and say that jass music is the indecent story syncopated and counter-pointed. Like the improper anecdote, also, in its youth, it was listened to blushing behind closed doors and drawn curtains, but, like all vice, it grew bolder until it dared decent surroundings, and there was tolerated

because of his oddity . . . on certain natures sound loud and meaningless has an exciting, almost an intoxicating effect, like crude colours and strong perfumes, the sight of flesh or the sadic pleasure in blood. To such as these the jass music is a delight. . . .

In the matter of jass New Orleans is particularly interested, since it has been widely suggested that this particular form of musical vice had its birth in this city—that it came, in fact, from doubtful surroundings in our slums. We do not recognise the honour of parenthood, but with such a story in circulation, it behoves us to be the last to accept the atrocity in polite society, and where it has crept in we should make it a point of civic honour to suppress it.

These grotesque words form a fitting companion piece to the Jim Crow laws as evidence of the stupidity and injustice prevalent in the South (though not only there).

The man who penned those lines is a lineal descendant of those centuries ago which couldn't forgive the theater its low origin and likewise dreamed of suppressing it as a matter of civic pride. For the theater too was born in circumstances which educators have tried hard to forget. Everything that has been said about jazz can be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to the theater. To my mind this is no reproach to jazz; it is, rather, the indication of an exciting parallelism which gives us good cause to believe that jazz will know the same glory as its fellow art, which has risen from the baptismal font of vice.

Not more than three or four years after the publication of the *Times-Picayune* article, Aragon, a leader of the surrealist school, characterized the new form of poetry in just about the same terms as the New Orleans reporter used, but praised its consequences instead of damning them.

As for the expression "musical vice," the unknown journalist never wrote a truer word. From the viewpoint of the intelligence, it is a musical vice. Those who have been caught up by these bewitching melodies are so oblivious to the rest of the world that syncopated music becomes the very reason for their existence. I know a dozen or more musicians, whom I am proud to call my friends, all of whom are gifted with a high and lucid intelligence.



For them, jazz is a vital necessity, one which occupies their every instant.

But don't speak to me of a "sexual art." Exactly the opposite is true. A devotee of jazz does not slacken the rein which checks his lower passions. On the contrary, when I hear a good jazz band nothing exists outside this all-sufficing, shadowy power which acts on my emotions like pure poetry. And I am not the only one who feels this way.

If this was what the reporter meant, it's true enough. If he wished to indicate the bizarre and sordid atmosphere in which jazz developed, he wasn't mistaken. But his conclusions from these facts are ridiculous.

Until about 1910 jazz was a plant which could only grow in the fertile Mississippi delta.

When white men spoke of it, they would indicate, with a gesture in the direction of the Negro quarter, "Jazz came from there." The meaningful gesture conveyed the feeling that it came from the red-light district.

- The French Quarter! Those narrow and sordid streets whose names already are famed in song and legend. A district which came to life only after the bedtime of respectable people. A neighborhood into which the bourgeois never strayed at night unless guarded; dim, gaslit streets whose mysterious atmosphere made their ladies shiver in frightened anticipation.

- Through the night the great port hummed with activity. At nightfall, illicit pleasure came out with the moon, to reign as mistress of the Crescent City. The nocturnal revelry began.

Doors closed, others opened. The red lights blinked on, one by one. The women who had slept through the day, those women of the night who hadn't seen the sun for years, awoke and began to ply their trade. There was pleasure to fit any purse. Like moths attracted by a flame, a motley group of men fluttered around the red lights, symbolic of the warmth to be had within.

† Soon a syncopated wail of music rose above the fetid atmosphere of the low-down dance halls, the reeking fumes of the vile liquor of the barrel houses, the verminous cribs, and the marble-

plush-, and gilt-decorated public houses. But this spasmodic melody did not cater to the lecherous beast which sleeps in every man; it enhanced, rather, the melancholy and tragic aspect of these denizens of the night. Jazz was a balance wheel to their passions, an essential backdrop to the scene.

Tom Anderson, boss of the reserved quarter, ran a saloon which served as the vice-City Hall as well as the City Hall of vice. This king of the underworld knew all his subjects—gangsters, gamblers, idle rich, perverts, and playthings of passion—and greeted them by their first names. They swelled his coffers with an unending flow of tainted gold. Much of this was diverted in turn to those who made their living by catering to the passions of others: barmen, dope-peddlers; ample-bosomed madames with pearl necklaces, prostitutes with faces ravaged by liquor, insomnia, and sin; scar-faced pimps, hustlers who could tell you the price of each miserable girl; white musicians; colored trumpeters with rosy lips; pianists who partially dismantled their instruments so that they made more noise and kept the customers awake.

Listen to this great cry of melancholy, the melody surging from the heart of an oppressed people, singing out its sadness and woe. This slow and majestic cantata, akin to the spiritual and the funeral march, is the blues. No one yet knows what it is, nor just what there is about it, but sensitive souls weep.

At Countess Willie Piazza's, at Ranch 101 and later Ranch 102, at Lulu White's Mahogany Hall, at Josie Arlington's, at Pete Lala's—in short, everywhere in the quarter bounded by Perdido, Rampart, Bienville, and Basin streets where nocturnal revelry was the rule, musicians forgot the night, the stifling atmosphere, the drunks, and the prostitutes, and shut their eyes in order better to express the passion of the hot art which was a driving force within them.

This is the great period of the as yet unnamed art. Through open doors the rhythms pulsed out into the night. All the musicians thought of the giant who had crystallized the soul of a generation in the shouting notes of his trumpet. Buddy Bolden, King Bolden, surpassed them all in talent. He became famous;

women followed the King in the street and fought to get near him; the kids adored him.

Already newcomers kept up the tradition, and added the imprint of their personalities and emotions to the new music. There was Pete Johnson; Joe Oliver; Jelly Roll Morton; Tony Jackson; Ann Cook, one of the first blues singers; Clarence Williams, who dedicated one of his famous tunes, *Mahogany Hall Stomp*, to Lulu White; Perez, Lorenzo Tio, Fred Keppard, Buddy Petit, and others who banded together and broke up as circumstances dictated.

Soon a new white orchestra was formed—Ernest Giardina's Ragtime Band, with Giardina on violin, Vega on cornet, Edwards on trombone, Baquet on clarinet, Ragas on piano, and Sbarbaro on drums.

The house presided over by Josie Arlington was one of the most popular in Storyville. A luxurious mansion on Basin Street, it was described in Tom Anderson's *Blue Book* as "a palace fit for a king." Flitting from red light to red light, she ran sporting houses successively or simultaneously on Customhouse, Basin, and Esplanade streets, Storyville, selling liquor and octoroons indiscriminately.

A young pianist was engaged by the Arlington to provide music for the nightly revels. His name was Ferdinand Morton, and the women of easy virtue soon christened him with the grotesque title of Jelly Roll. He had been born in 1885 and had been apprenticed, as a child, to a barber. One evening he heard the exciting horn of Buddy Bolden in Johnson Park, and thenceforth this music was to be his life. Still a child, he heard a certain Mamie Desdume sing the primitive blues. The music went to his head like alcohol. In later years he was fond of thinking back to the pioneer days and their legendary heroes, and he said with characteristic exaggeration:

Yes, any time it was a quiet night out to the Lincoln Park which I before stated was about ten or twelve miles from the corner where we used to hang out, maybe an affair wasn't so well publicized. So in order to get it publicized in a few seconds, old Buddy would take his big trumpet and turn around towards the city and blow this very

tune . . . and the whole town would know that Buddy was there, and in a few seconds, why, the park would start to get filled.

Of course, no trumpet ever could be heard five miles away, but the giants of jazz have assumed the Gargantuan dimensions of folk heroes anywhere. Roland once played a powerful horn too.

Jelly Roll Morton played on Josie Arlington's piano the themes he had heard as a boy, and a new bunch of kids hung around the open door to hear the hot music. There were dozens of them—many now famous: Zutty Singleton, Wingy Mannone, Spencer Williams, Shelton Brooks. Pale-faced white boys stood next to coal-black pickaninnies drinking in the sound.

A friend of mine who left New Orleans before the first World War once described this enthusiasm to me:

We planted ourselves against the wall, ears wide open. A policeman passed slowly along the sidewalk, and we shrunk back until the heavy hobnailed tread had faded in the darkness. Then we resumed our vigil. The giggling of drunken women seeped through the open doorways. We were already well acquainted with the violent odor of alcohol and vice. Then a sudden silence split the night. Our hearts stopped beating. The night became alive with an everlasting song which throbbed out to us and quickened the blood in our veins, and we returned home singing the blues and the stomps.

Spencer Williams has written:

All along this street of pleasure there were the dance halls, honky-tonks, and cabarets; and each one had its music. My old friend Tony Jackson who composed "Pretty Baby" and "Some Sweet Day" used to play piano at a house run by Miss Antonia Gonzales who sang and played the cornet. The largest of the cabarets on Basin Street was the Mahogany Hall, owned by my Aunt Miss Lulu White and when my mother died I went to live with her and became her adopted son. I'd go to sleep to the sound of the mechanical piano playing ragtime tunes, and when I woke in the morning it would still be playing. The saloons in those days never had the doors closed and the hinges were all rusty and dusty. Little boys and grownups would walk along the avenues swaying and whistling Jazz-tunes.

Soon a young Negro formed the Magnolia Band. It was Joe Oliver, who, fascinated by the new art, had learned to play cornet. His orchestra had Edward (Kid) Ory on trombone, Johnny Dodds on clarinet, Edward Polla on violin, Edward Garland on bass, and Henry Zeno on drums.

The great individuals of ragtime had finally appeared on the horizon. The musicians who were to compose the nucleus of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, which was to stand New York on its ear, and King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band, which was to do the same for Chicago, were now working musicians. Others there were—Albert Nicholas, Sidney Bechet, Buster Bailey, Shelton Brooks, the future composer of *Darktown Strutters Ball*, the Brunies brothers, Tom Brown, Larry Shields, Emmett Hardy.

From door to door they flitted, these boys whose heritage was to bring them greatness. Among them you might have seen a coal-black newsboy with coral-colored lips and intelligent eyes standing, silent, next to a pale lad with feverish eyes and moist lips—Louis Armstrong and Leon Rappolo.

We all know Louis, the King of Jazz, who, more than any other, molded the new American music. But Rappolo was not long enough with us to create so profound an impression.

What was to be the strange destiny of these two boys? Louis Armstrong found his father's pistol in the house, one Christmas morning, took it out with him, and fired it to celebrate. He was immediately arrested and sent to reform school. At the reformatory he learned how to play bugle and cornet, and was thus launched on the career which brought him world-wide fame.

As for the other boy, he learned the violin and then the clarinet. He had to learn fast, for his days were numbered. Jazz bewitched him, seared him, and finally consumed him. Rappolo had just enough time to wax a scant dozen improvisations, which would preserve his name for eternity. Then he blew himself out, and the great Leon Rappolo spent the rest of his wretched days in a sanitarium, where jazz was not permitted.

The war of 1914 was not far off. The bawling baby which was jazz had developed into a sturdy brat, and its lusty manhood was in the offing. At the time the path it was to take in its peregrina-

tions about the United States had not yet been determined. But the river boats of the Mississippi provided a logical exhaust valve for the New Orleans music.

Soon both singers and musicians were hired to ply the Mississippi. At first their rags were but an entertainment music, played in front of a humorous backdrop for the amusement of week-end outing parties. The drums became a spectacular part of these river-boat bands. No mere skin-beater, the drummer vented his ire on a whole battery of cymbals and other percussive instruments, to the delight of the audience. There were any number of grotesque utensils to replace the drums of Congo Square. The noisemaker had made its appearance. After seeing such an array of percussive paraphernalia in Europe in 1918, I described it in my first book:

An enormous bass drum with a bold inscription which is illuminated from within, a kind of continuous-action pedal to work the drumstick, a drum mounted on a tripod for introductory rolls, gourds reserved for delicate passages with oriental shadings; a cowbell mounted over the drums, smaller bells, wooden blocks with a tuneful sound, noisy metal boxes, a miniature xylophone, a metallic fan for beating out crescendos, numerous cymbals beaten with blows that would fell an ox, covered pots, bottles filled in graduated series, ear-splitting sirens, barrels studded with copper-headed nails, whistles blown with deep breaths, noisy traps with eccentric actions, and many other utensils.

And I added luckily: "That is not what I like about jazz, and had this been my only contact with it I should probably share the opinion of all those who hate its infernal racket and have remained prejudiced against it."

And I should like to add further that jazz had to have many admirable qualities to escape this infantile malady.

A comedian, destined for fame, happened to be in New Orleans when he was hired for a Chicago engagement. He decided to bring along Tom Brown's Band, then the sensation of Lamb's Café.

But even before this, the contagion of jazz had spread to every city touched by Old Man River. Memphis, St. Louis, Kansas

City, all succumbed to the feverish new music. Every time the showboats docked, the kids would rush out, and some of them would return home humming the melodies to themselves.

A Memphis Negro, William Christopher Handy, played in minstrel shows and heard a tune which ripened in his head until it blossomed as the *St. Louis Blues*.

E. Simms Campbell recalled those wonderful days when ships laden with syncopated cargoes sailed majestically down the river:

They streamed up from New Orleans and Memphis and played Jazz the length and breadth of the Mississippi and many was the hot sticky summer night when I, along with many of my friends, listened breathless as these masters of weird melodies shot their golden notes out over a muddy river. During the summer on Monday Nights, the Negroes of St Louis were privileged to use the older of two paddle-wheel steamers for their boat excursions. I remember the names of both of them—the *J.S.* and the *St Paul*. The *St Paul* was the one we used. Lodges and fraternal orders of all sorts would get together and have a benefit—to this day I have never found out what the benefits were for—but they always meant plenty of ice-cream and cake for us, and above all—music, the blues. These boat rides usually ended up in fist fights, knife fights, and bottle throwing contests. Drinking St Louis corn, packed on the boat like cattle, bunny hugging to the tunes of Jelly Roll Morton, some too ardent boy friend would cut it on another's girl . . . then fireworks! I can still see an excited crew, red-faced and panting among a sea of black faces, trying to restore order—and then the clear strains of Charlie Creath's trumpet drowning out the noise and the scuffling. Charlie had cut loose on the "St Louis Blues."

Charlie Creath led one of the first river-boat bands. A powerful trumpeter, he was famous in his day. On another boat Fate Marable, a pianist, directed the rhythm.

About the same time jazz was spreading also to the rest of America. Companies of singers and entertainers traveled from city to city. It would be a grave mistake to believe that New Orleans still enjoyed a monopoly of the syncopated music.

In a small town in New Jersey a young Negro named James P. Johnson heard the early jazz. Even sleepy Philadelphia was

stirred by the new music; another young Negro, Louis Mitchell by name, decided to give up his theatrical ambitions for this music. Mitchell went traveling with minstrel shows about 1910 and after, while Johnson played with Barron Wilkin's orchestra in a New York cabaret.

In New Orleans orchestras succeeded each other, passing away and resurrecting themselves like the phoenix. The sporting houses changed their names, but the red lights remained. Spencer Williams passed his childhood as the adopted son of Lulu White, the madame of the celebrated octoroon house of North Basin Street, Mahogany Hall. On the same street was the house of Mamie Christine, and a bit farther on was Queen Gertie's. After going to bed, Williams used to hear the popular themes which he was later to write down as *I Ain't Got Nobody* and *Basin Street Blues*.

Larry Shields was hired by Tom Brown. Every day at Ranch 102, three young white musicians rehearsed their syncopated repertory of the traditional tunes. These were Alcide Nunez clarinet, Henry Ragas piano, and Johnny Stein drums.

The celebrated madame, Josie Arlington, died in 1914. One winter's morning she was buried in the grand style, piped to the grave by the traditional band, playing funeral marches on the way to the cemetery and rags on the way back. The marble and gilt of her famous mansion were duplicated in her elegant tombstone.

Fate plays its ironical tricks. The cemetery was skirted by a railroad line, and, as an almost unbelievable coincidence would have it, a red signal lamp shone full on the white shaft of Josie's tombstone. Even in death, she kept watch over a red-light district.

This lovely anecdote has been used by Edna Ferber. But I can vouch for the truth of it. A friend of mine returned to New Orleans from a long trip and wanted to hear the orchestra at the Arlington Annex. He asked a cabdriver to take him to Josie's, in the red-light district. He was surprised to see the cabby take a roundabout route, and completely flabbergasted when the cab stopped at the cemetery. He understood what it was all about only when the driver pointed out the stone of Josie Arlington



with its halo of red light. Then they drove slowly back to the city.

Clusters of kids still hung around the open doors of the Storyville establishments listening to the same old music, but some of them had graduated into positions with the bands. At Ranch 102 Ragas caressed the ivory keys of the piano. A woman sang a rather fast tune the orchestra had taken from an old quadrille. . . . She was called "The Tigress." . . . Ragas was in love with her. . . . So he called the number *Tiger Rag*. Meanwhile the names of the Original Creole Band, the Louisiana Six, and Kid Ory's Band were already celebrated.

#### IV. THE PIONEERS OF JAZZ

IT IS DIFFICULT to draw an exact distinction between the important stages of the history of jazz. The periods bestraddle one another, the orchestras are continually changing their personnel, musicians sink back into obscurity and then return to the spotlight.

By 1910 jazz was still without a name. But the infant had left its cradle. Jelly Roll Morton was in Chicago, and Tony Jackson was on the way. Ragtime was still associated with burlesque comedy scenes, and even in Chicago colored bands blared forth their music on publicity wagons.

Negro musicians were seeking employment throughout the world. I remember that at the Brussels Exposition of 1910, crowds were drawn by a cakewalk act. This consisted of Negroes with whitened mouths and loud-checked suits, who danced to the accompaniment of a piano, banjo, and traps.

Who were these scattered missionaries?

In 1920, when I was first possessed by the jazz demon, I shopped in all the record stores and was particularly attracted by the records of one orchestra. Although no one has ever spoken of it, the Southern Rag and Jazz Band which recorded *Tiger Rag* and *Mammy o' Mine* was certainly the first to reveal pure synco-

pated music to me. When I wrote my first book on jazz, I remembered the group and had this to say about it: "A very old Negro orchestra with an amusing name . . . A rather confused and tormented music; not yet is there any great individual improvisation, but rather a kind of ragged bouncing by all the musicians."

It would be interesting to find these early records, which had been reissued by "Winner" in England. They might enlighten us as to whether we have any illusions about the nature of the first jazz.

We can only judge the early orchestras by their recordings and by the words of those who heard them. As to this hearsay evidence, it is hardly trustworthy. They speak of the orchestras, they praise the musicians, but they neglect to inform us as to the real character of the music.

Many musicians tell us that Buddy Bolden was the greatest. George Brunies says Emmett Hardy was the best. Preston Jackson grants the palm to Mutt Carey. Many remember how Joe Oliver and Mutt Carey met one day and decided to settle their old rivalry by a trumpet duel. Mutt Carey was proclaimed the victor, and King Oliver threw away his cornet in disgust, vowing never to play again.

Such facts we know. But just how did they play? On this point it is impossible to deliver a documental opinion. It is my impression, however, that the music played by these uncultivated musicians consisted of confused and syncopated ensembles rather than solos.

I base this opinion on my remembrance of the early recordings which I tenaciously sought out and listened to. I remember hearing, when they first came out, the records of the Southern Rag and Jazz Band, Naylor's Seven Aces, and the first King Olivers, all of which presented this character. I may be mistaken, but I believe that I first heard improvised solos on records by white bands, especially the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, whose originality and importance have not been sufficiently recognized.

Many people believe that jazz first hit New York with the Original Dixieland Jazz Band. This is not the case. It is indeed strange how many erroneous ideas are in circulation about a

period whose leading figures, in large part, are still living. Nobody has ever spoken of Louis Mitchell, who played a role of capital importance in the development of jazz. It was he who first introduced jazz in New York and brought it triumphantly to Europe.

Louis Mitchell was born in Philadelphia in December 1885, and sang, as a lad, in choirs and on the stage. Soon possessed by the demon of jazz, he left the stage and began to form an orchestra which he called the Southern Symphony Quintet. They opened on April 15, 1912, at the Taverne Louis in the Flatiron Building. I have seen programs of the period which proclaim "refined music and singing" with a "turkey trot" specialty number. This is the ragtime era. A newspaper reported:

New York naturally attracts musicians such as the Southern Symphony Quintet who have been appearing at Taverne Louis (Flat Iron Building) and Café des Beaux-Arts (40th and 6th avenue). They are regarded as the best colored bands extant and play besides ragtime an extensive repertoire of high class music.

Their success must have been considerable, since the band remained several months at the Beaux-Arts. The bizarre composition of the orchestra demonstrates that jazz had not yet found itself: P. Jones, piano; Vance Lowry, banjo; J. Hope, bandoline; W. Riley, cello; Louis H. Mitchell, drums.

Enjoying a great reputation as a ragtime artist, Mitchell was engaged by Reisenweber's on February 15, 1914. This successful engagement was played three full years before the Original Dixieland appeared there. Their boss at Reisenweber's considered Mitchell's Quintet as the best band in America, and when an important producer arrived from London in search of a sensational attraction for Europe he hired the orchestra of Louis Mitchell. Accompanied by the dancing team of Louise Alexander and Jack Jarrett, the band left for London shortly before the war and scored another triumph at the Piccadilly. The London newspapers at the time hailed Mitchell variously as "the world's greatest trap drummer" and the "noise artist supreme." But the war broke out, and Mitchell returned to America, where he toured

with the seventy-five-piece colored orchestra of the Clef Club. As a tenor soloist, he played Philadelphia, Baltimore, Richmond, and Washington. At Richmond a local journalist wrote:

In many respects the most remarkable concert ever given in Richmond was offered in the City Auditorium by the Clef Club, an organisation of Negro Singers and instrumentalists under the direction of the well known James Reese Europe, assisted by William H. Tyers. . . . Louis Mitchell in the marching song of the English soldier "Tipperary" has his whole audience with him.

This James Reese Europe is the celebrated Jim Europe who later won a European reputation with a band which included Noble Sissle. At this point it is well to remark that jazz was still at the crossroads. The musicians still sought a definite solution as to the nature of their art. Jim Europe believed that the rag should be interpreted by enormous ensembles of singers and instrumentalists. For several years this was the commonly accepted formula.

Louis Mitchell soon left this group and returned to London, where he opened on August 6, 1915. At the Empire in London he received equal billing with Helen Hayes. He was later engaged by Ciro's. His greatest hits were ragtime numbers which he sang with Jordan.

Bustanoby, the proprietor of the Beaux-Arts, wrote Mitchell in October 1915 begging him to return to New York. He had combed the country looking for an attraction to replace Mitchell. Alas! he wrote, Mitchell was irreplaceable and he had to content himself with an Argentine quartet which didn't bring in as much business as the syncopated group had.

At Ciro's Mitchell was billed as a ragtime drummer; his famous orchestra, the Seven Spades, consisted of Vance Lowry, banjo; Walter Kildare, pianist; Set Jones, rag singer; Ferdie Allen, bandoline; S. Edwards, bass; F. Jones, mad dancer.

They were a hit and drew big crowds. They were called either rag band or coon band, the word "jazz" not yet having been coined. A journalist who heard the Seven Spades wrote, "There

was a coon band, but a coon band can be almost pleasant in a very large building.”

Another devoted a long article to *Ciro's*:

*Ciro's* is altogether charming—first-rate food and surroundings pleasant. But, if I may venture to offer a tip, I should say: Water down the music a bit! One goes to a place like this not only to dance, but to talk. At *Ciro's* only the loud lunged have a chance. For at one end of the room are many indefatigable black men who bang drums and cymbals and even sound motor horns.

During this engagement Mitchell once played at a private ball in the home of Mrs. Evalyn Walsh McLean. It was a big society affair with the Prince of Wales, Tallulah Bankhead, and the Dolly sisters among those present. A special reception was organized for the prince in a salon on the second floor. The poor Seven Spades, flanked by the Dolly sisters, were installed on the ground floor far away from the reception. But when the Prince of Wales arrived he spent the whole evening listening to the orchestra and encouraging the musicians. The swanky reception upstairs was ignored and had to be called off.

About the same time Al Jolson was in London and tried to engage the orchestra permanently, to accompany his mammy songs. On another occasion the famous dancer, Vernon Castle, who considered Mitchell's group one of America's best, sent Mitchell a letter: "Send me . . . some piano copies of rags, *Memphis Blues*, or some real rags."

New Orleans, 1915—Freddie Keppard, the celebrated cornet, had left for Chicago; the heyday of Storyville was drawing to a close; Spencer Williams wrote his first tunes; the Original Dixieland Jazz Band was soon to be formed, and three of its members were playing together at Ranch 102; a new star, Joe Oliver, had appeared in the musical firmament.

On the banks of the Mississippi more than a hundred Negro and white musicians played syncopated music. Most had been inspired by the playing of Buddy Bolden, whose career had come to an end.

The poor fellow had played himself out in a few years. Accus-

tomed to earning only a few cents a day as a barber, he had begun to make real money, which he spent like a drunken sailor. Lack of sleep, liquor, women, hot music, gradually sapped his strength.

Only at certain moments did he still sound like the great King Bolden; at other times his sidemen noticed that he played his cornet as if mad. Possessed themselves, they came to fear this insane music which attacked their minds. Finally, in 1914, it became known that Bolden had to be put into an asylum. Keppard took his place in the Eagle Band, and when he left for Chicago young Joe Oliver began his career.

He was born in New Orleans in 1885 and, at a very early age, learned to play. His talent did not become rapidly apparent, and, at the age of seventeen, he played with an amateur band of youths. On an outing, one day, he got into a fight and was wounded in the eye. The injury was permanent and earned him the nickname of "Bad Eye Joe."

There were mighty few occupations left open for Negroes. Oliver became a butler and spent several years of his life serving a white family, with respectful "Yessirs." All his leisure time was devoted to mastering the cornet. Bunk Johnson helped him to learn the instrument, and the day arrived when Joe was capable of filling Keppard's place in the Eagle Band, then composed of Joe Oliver on cornet, Frank Dusen on trombone, Frank Lewis on clarinet, Alcide Frank on violin, Brock Mumford on guitar, Bob Lyons on bass, and James Philip on drums.

For two years Joe Oliver remained with the Eagle Band in New Orleans. At first he was greatly inferior to King Bolden or Freddie Keppard. Gradually he improved, and he composed his famous improvisation on *Dippermouth* which later became the *Sugar Foot Stomp*. Joe left the Eagle Band for the Onward Band, directed by Manuel Perez, which played in Storyville.

Here Oliver gradually gained his reputation. Intense rivalries flourished among the several bands, which played practically next door to each other. When two music wagons bumped into each other on Basin or Perdido Street, they would lock wheels and hold a cutting contest. It was a regular musical bombardment, a barrage of syncopation in which trumpet and trombone, the

units of heavy artillery, fired broadside after broadside of hot and heavy notes. Thus Joe Oliver found himself pitted against the leading lights of the time, and he won a reputation equal to Bunk Johnson or Perez.

By this time Joe was playing with his own orchestra in a cabaret on Bienville Street. With him were "Big Eye" Louis Nelson on clarinet, Richard Jones on piano, and Deedee Chandler on drums. One night he successfully challenged both Perez and Keppard, by striding out into the street, blowing loud and beautiful horn in their direction. After this feat Joe was "King" Oliver as well as "Bad Eye."

The new King soon organized the Magnolia Band, with Zue Robinson on trombone, Lorenzo Tio on clarinet, Buddy Christian on piano, and Zeno on drums, to fill an engagement at Pete Lala's cabaret.

At the beginning of the first World War the Original Creole Band left California for Chicago, its drummer, Dink Johnson, remaining on the Coast to organize his Louisiana Six. Another group followed Horace Greeley's advice, and Kid Ory's Band, with Mutt Carey on cornet, played the Coast. Texas was visited by a band which boasted Bunk Johnson, Sidney Bechet, and Clarence Williams among its members.

Chicago had called the Original Creole Band—Eddie Venson, trombone; Jimmie Noone, clarinet; Lottie Taylor, piano; Bill Johnson, bass; and Paul Barbarin, drums—which had an engagement at the Royal Gardens Café, as well as another New Orleans band composed of Sugar Johnny, Lawrence Dewey, Roy Palmer, Herbert Lindsay, Louis Keppard, to which were added, in Chicago, Sidney Bechet, Lil Hardin, Wellman Braud, and Tubby Hall. Both these bands needed a cornet star, as Keppard had left the Original Creole and Sugar Johnny had made too much whoopee for his own good.

So both these orchestras sent for Joe Oliver to come up to the Windy City. The King had to decide which group of friends to join, and he solved the dilemma neatly by playing with both. With the arrival of King Oliver in Chicago, the era of jazz can be said to have begun.

In *Aux Frontières du Jazz* I delved into the question of the derivation of the word "jazz" and the origin of jazz music. I had this to say:

Many have doggedly but vainly sought to find out when, where, and how jazz was born. A thousand and one explanations have been advanced, each believes that he alone has the truth, every city in America puts forth a story on the strength of which it claims the credit for the origination of jazz; profound mystery of human motives and actions, jazz, born only yesterday, already is entering the realm of legend and overtaking the glory of old Homer, of whom seven Grecian cities claimed to be the birthplace. . . .

The word "jazz" owes its origin to a colored musician named Jess who played in a certain raggy way; he became so popular that the common expression was "to play like Jess," and by contraction "to play Jess," and by corruption *jazz*; such is the explanation which was given to me by many Negroes I've questioned. Others say, as do Cœuroy and Schaeffner, that a common expression in the New Orleans barrel houses was "Jazz them, boys," or else that jazz came from the name of a performer in a Negro cabaret, Jasbo Brown, to whom his enthusiastic audience cried: "More Jasbo, more Jas."

Others, such as Schwerke, . . . fix rather clearly on New Orleans, an old French town, as the cradle of jazz, declaring . . . that the word "jazz" is from the root of the French word "*jaser*," and jazz would be a cackling.

That isn't all; an English author, Stanley R. Nelson, wrote an important article on the etymology of the word in the May 1930 number of *Rhythm*. You will note that none of the hypotheses which he reports coincides with those I've given. Here is what he says:

"What is this word 'jazz'?"

"How many times has it been said that jas, jass, jaz, jazz, jazs, or jazsz, originated in the African dialect of the Negroes in their native country."

In the *Literary Digest* (August 25, 1917) Walter Kingsley advances this theory, saying that the Negroes, newly transported to the cotton fields of the early plantations, used it to induce in themselves a delirious joy.

We could also cite that dilettante writer, Lafcadio Hearn, who, forty years previously, expressed the same opinion, writing that "the creoles of New Orleans used the word Jazz, taken from the Negro



patois and signifying 'excité,' to designate a music of syncopated and rudimentary type."

Another rather ingenious theory mentions a quartet which played in New Orleans about 1903 under the name of "Razz Band": the initial consonant *R* was in the long run transformed into *J*. This explanation is scarcely plausible, for phonetic transformations generally are into a harder sound (rather than from the resonant *R* towards the softer *J*).

The oft-cited explanation of Vincent Lopez attributes it to a star drummer called "Charles Washington," whose name was contracted to "Chas" or "Chaz" (as is often the case). This man possessed an extraordinary talent and sense of rhythm. . . . It is said that he generally had to be reprimanded at rehearsals, and the orchestra leader used to say, "Come on, Chaz," when it was time for this contortionist to do his number.

From this it was deduced that any form of exaggerated syncopation was called chaz and later jazz.

It was further suggested that the word originated in the dance halls of Western mining towns, where one had to be a bit ribald simply as a release. The word was used with an obscene meaning, and the contemporary suggestive dances are analogous (in the opinion of the propounder of this theory) to the antics of these drunken miners and their loose companions.

After examining all these explanations, it can be safely assumed that the opinions of Kingsley and Lafcadio Hearn are closest to the true origin of the word.

Ferdie Grofé has said that it was commonly used in San Francisco before the war with the meaning "ensemble"; but this can be taken as an example of a geographical difference in interpretation, a frequent philological phenomenon.

After this long citation, I concluded:

Of course, I am not content with the opinions of Nelson or of Lafcadio Hearn for the very good reason that we have no precise knowledge about this etymology, which will provide a really tough job for the linguists and epigraphers of a hundred years hence. The only thing that matters is that jazz was not born on a certain day. It existed before it was given a name; the ragtime era encroached on the jazz era, just as the blues, which became a classification about 1925, was at first only the title of a few nostalgic tunes.

But examining these same theories today, twelve years later and in America, I hesitate to express any judgment. A new theory, adopted by *Jazzmen*, has it that the word "jazz" was born in Chicago during the engagement of Tom Brown's band at Lamb's Café in June 1915. As his musicians were not union members, the local musicians' union picketed the place, carrying signs saying that the music in Lamb's was a "jassmusic." This meant that Tom Brown played whorehouse music. The word was actually the ugliest slang term to designate relationships in houses of prostitution. As it happened, however, the picketing boomeranged, people wondered what jass music was like, and the café proprietor took advantage of this interest and billed the orchestra as "Tom Brown's Dixieland Jazz-Band." Thus was born the word "jazz" as applied to hot music.

All this is open to extreme doubt. According to this story, the word "jazz" had never been used in New Orleans. If Lafcadio Hearn's statement is true, this omission seems very astonishing.

Also, if the word "jazz" was first used in 1915 it must have spread with incredible rapidity, since Louis Mitchell was already using it in London by 1917.

Meanwhile, a catastrophic event had occurred in New Orleans. After the United States entered the war the Army made the city government close down Storyville. One night in November 1917 the police began to enforce rigorously the decision of the Secretary of the Navy, and the doors of those elegant mansions, decorated with mirrors, gilt, and marble, were closed once and for all.

Tommy Ladnier, a few days before his death, told me the story of this episode. At the appointed hour the girls, madames, dancers, pimps, and musicians were moved out, and they remained in the streets until daybreak, playing, drinking, and discussing this change in the old order of things.

So were thrown into unemployment more than one hundred New Orleans musicians, and the musical proletariat of Louisiana was subjected to a severe depression. The sudden loss of the chief market for New Orleans musicians explains why the Delta City has not since developed any great musicians.

Gradually, the better and the more adventurous part of these

unemployed musicians expatriated themselves and went up north. Chicago became the great ragtime center. A number of orchestras found employment in the neighborhood of 35th and Calumet, and, during the boom days of Chicago racketeering, even made a good deal of money.

So, little by little, all the good New Orleans musicians made their way to Chicago. Only a few orchestras continued to eke out a precarious existence in the Crescent City. Some old-timers like Bunk Johnson remained and adapted themselves to the misfortune which had fallen upon them.

When King Oliver was given the chance to emigrate, he seized it without a moment's hesitation. As we have said, he played in both the orchestras which had summoned him. He found many old friends in Chicago, including the clarinetist Sidney Bechet, still one of the glories of jazz. Other younger musicians, like Tommy Ladnier, Pop Foster, Red Allen, Zutty Singleton, were looking for work, and many found jobs on the river-boat bands.

For two years King Oliver was little more than one of many musicians. His reputation was spreading, however, and when Dreamland asked him in 1920 to organize an orchestra, he had arrived. The great King Oliver period was about to begin. At Chicago he was considered the greatest cornet in America. The only luminaries to challenge his sway were the already-beaten and fading star, Freddie Keppard, and the obscure young man who had taken Oliver's place in New Orleans, a fellow named Louis Armstrong.

To form his orchestra, he got together Lil Hardin, a bright young pianist from Memphis; Honoré Dutrey, trombone; Ed Garland, bass; and Minor Hall, drums. He tried to get Jimmie Noone, a clarinetist in the moving tradition of "Big Eye" Louis Nelson, but Noone was engaged elsewhere. The King had to send for the best clarinet remaining in New Orleans. So it was that Johnny Dodds arrived in Chicago to join King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band.

The band made a trip to California, at which time Baby Dodds replaced Minor Hall on drums. Then it returned to the Lincoln Gardens Café in Chicago. Then began the period of King Oliver's

greatest glory. The King brought young Armstrong up from Pete Lala's in New Orleans, to play second cornet in the Creole Jazz Band.

During this period the band was recorded by both Gennett and Paramount. These disks are a milestone in recorded jazz, and they constitute a new point of departure which enabled Negro jazz to develop into the magnificent thing it was to become. I must confess that, contrary to the opinion of most critics, I am more deeply moved by the records which certain white bands—the Original Dixieland Jazz Band and the New Orleans Rhythm Kings—had been making since 1917. These King Oliver records feature improvised ensembles which are somewhat more uneven and confusing than those of the above-mentioned white bands, but, in spite of the poor recording of the music, they stand out for their biting ensembles and for the first recorded solos—and very good ones, too—of Louis Armstrong and Johnny Dodds.

Little by little the pre-eminence of King Oliver was challenged by the rising glory of Louis Armstrong. In 1924 the Creole Jazz Band was broken up for the first time; Oliver, Louis, Lil Hardin, Buddy Christian on banjo, John Lindsay on bass, Albert Nicholas on clarinet, Rudy Jackson on saxophone, and others, went on the road; while the Dodds brothers and Dutrey remained behind with another group.

After this trip the star of King Oliver began to fade in the brilliance of the newly arisen sun. Everyone who knew the two men affirms that Oliver taught Armstrong, but all the musicians recognize that the pupil surpassed his master. Nobody knew yet that Louis was the genius who would be the very body and soul of jazz, but he was obviously the most original man they had ever heard. King Oliver's renown declined. Louis married his pianist, Lil Hardin, and left the band. His great period over, Oliver had to join Peyton's Symphonic Syncopators at the Plantation Café, as a featured soloist but not the leader. His eaglet flew on its own wings toward a greater glory, one which we shall examine later.

In 1925 King Oliver formed another fine orchestra, the Dixie Syncopators. It is astonishing to see the unparalleled sureness of judgment with which Joe Oliver chose the members of his suc-

cessive groups. This one had Luis Russell (piano), Paul Barbarin (drums), Al Nicholas (clarinet), Barney Bigard (tenor), and Kid Ory (trombone)—a first-rate outfit.

In 1927, when playing at the Savoy in Harlem, he added two great musicians: Henry Allen, Jr., as second trumpet, and Pop Foster as string bass. From among hundreds of trumpets, Oliver had unerringly chosen the one who was to be second only to Armstrong, "Red" Allen.

In 1928 King Oliver turned down an engagement at the Cotton Club, and his place there was taken by the obscure band of a young pianist, Duke Ellington. From then on, misfortune after misfortune beset the King, who died in obscurity in April 1938. The letters he wrote his sister during the months before his death, as reported in *Jazzmen*, bear witness to the fact that King Oliver was a great man as well as a great musician.

The importance of King Oliver is that, arriving at a difficult period when jazz still knew no law, he definitely established the classic New Orleans formula for the composition of the orchestra and for its music of collective improvisation. His intelligence and instinct cleared the way for Louis Armstrong. Himself a very sincere and very touching musician, he stamped a whole period with his influence. In Louis Armstrong, you will still find many of King Oliver's ideas, albeit developed, digested, and perfected. Louis Armstrong had something more than King Oliver and the rest—genius. But that's another story.

But just consider the magnificent procession of musicians who passed through the school of King Oliver. Draw up a list of their names. True, some have disappeared from the firmament of jazz, but not one was a mediocre musician. Most still shine forth among the greatest names of the jazz of today. So we can say that the greatness of King Oliver still lives in the playing of those who were his pupils.

## V. JAZZ IN EUROPE

UNTIL THE PRESENT TIME, American critics have ignored those early jazzmen who, far from their native soil, remained isolated from the mainsprings of jazz but nevertheless had considerable historic importance, inasmuch as they gave rise to that curiosity about the new music which was prevalent in Europe before it was in America.

We left Louis Mitchell, the first to bring a jazz band to Europe, at the time of his second visit, when he was leading his own band in London. He went to Paris for a three-week engagement and then returned to England. Here he picked up a dancer who was none other than the handsome Rudolph Valentino. The English press, it must be said, was far more partial to Louis Mitchell, "the genius of agility and noise," than to the future Sheik and his beautiful partner, Leonore.

In 1917 the orchestra, still known as the "Syncopated Band," was playing in Belfast, Ireland, but soon it returned to Paris, where it assumed the title of "Mitchell's Jazz Kings." His orchestra, the first Negro jazz band I ever heard, was composed of Louis Mitchell on drums, Cricket Smith on trumpet, Joe Meyers on guitar, Dan Parish piano, Walter Kildare bass, Frank Withers trombone, and James Shaw saxophone. Vance Lowry, unless I am mistaken, had gone to the celebrated Bœuf sur le Toit, where Wiener and Doucet were to be such a great piano sensation that Jean Cocteau, Picabia, Radiguet, and other poets took turns in sitting in on drums. Mitchell went from the Alhambra to the Casino de Paris.

One extremely important fact must be noted. When Louis Mitchell left London for France, he was replaced by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band. Mitchell's band was then being handled by Volterra, who, with an eye for business, left Mitchell with a three-week contract in Paris and went back to London to hear the band which had replaced his. Unconvinced by the music of

the white musicians, he decided to keep his colored orchestra, whose reputation was increasing by leaps and bounds.

An American correspondent, Ralph Tyler, reported:

The big attraction at the Casino Theatre here and the big attraction for every Parisian theatre that can bid high enough for his services, is Louis A. Mitchell, a colored American, who just drummed his way to Paris and into the hearts of Parisians. Mitchell over here is known as "the lightning trap drummer" and "noise specialist" who has introduced into his business over fifty effects and who, by his "noise," has set Paris theatre-goers wild.

Paris, at the end of the war, was a wide-open and exciting place. Louis Mitchell earned money hand over fist. He received seven thousand francs for a week's engagement, or just about ten times the salary of a Cabinet member.

The band supplied the music at the gala opening of the Perroquet of sainted memory. It scored another triumph; Louis Mitchell had become the most popular star in Paris. He recorded some sides for Pathé, the first jazz recordings made in Europe, records which remain completely unknown over here. It is unlikely that any copies are still in existence, but, if found, they would make an important and highly interesting addition to our store of recorded jazz. I remember a few of the numbers: *When Buddha Smiles*, *Peaches*, *Bright Eyes*, *Jada*. Cocteau, who was correcting the proofs of his *Coq et l'Arlequin*, expressed his amazement in a note which became celebrated:

The American band accompanied them on banjos and big nickel-plated horns. On the right of the small black-clad group was a barman of noise behind a gilded stand laden with bells, rods, boards, and motorcycle horns. He poured these into cocktails, putting in a dash of cymbals every now and then, getting up, strutting, and smiling to the angels.

M. Pilcer, in full-dress suit, gaunt and well rouged, and Made-moiselle Gaby Deslys, a great ventriloquist's doll with porcelain face, corn-colored hair, and ostrich-feathered gown, danced through this tornado of drum and rhythm, a sort of domesticated catastrophe which left them, intoxicated and myopic, beneath a shower of six anti-aircraft searchlights.

Mitchell, the king of noise, won fame and fortune far away from his country, long before any other American orchestra. The papers adulated him and made much of his accomplishments. His programs announced that he would pay five francs for any new noisemaker which he could use.

On January 18, 1919, Louis Mitchell signed a contract with Volterra which provided for the formation of a fifty-piece Negro orchestra. He left for New York to recruit his musicians, and Harlem received him like a god. The *New York Age* headlined: "FRENCH NOW WANT COLORED MUSICIANS."

If you will cast your mind back to that time, you will realize that jazz had reached a turning point. A new formula was in the wind. We have seen the sort of huge orchestra that Jim Europe envisioned. And at the very same time King Oliver was in Chicago with his small band, which was to be the seed for the future development of jazz.

At the time, who could have predicted which would win out? Jazz narrowly missed taking the other path.

Will Marion Cook organized a big jazz group in 1918 and, after having trained it in Philadelphia, left for London in May 1919. The name of the band was "Southern Syncopated Orchestra." The composition of the musical sections was pretty strange and revealed some West Indian influence, even in the choice of some horns and musicians. Here is the complete formation as given me by the pioneer, Bobby Jones: two pianos: Mattie Gilmore, Ambrose Smith; four bandolines: Joseph Caulk, Carl Morgan, Lawrence Morris, Henry Saparo; two basses: Santos Riviera, Pedro Vargas; one drum: Buddy Gilmore; one tympanum: Bernie Peyton; two trumpets: Arthur Briggs, Bobby Jones; three trombones: Frank Withers, John Forrester, Jacob Patrick; one cello: Joseph Porter; one clarinet: Antonio Riviera; one flute: Salnave; two saxophones: Mazie Mullins, Fred Coxito; two violins: Angelita Riviera, George Smith.

With these exponents was a choir directed by a leading lady singer, Hattie Revis, and helped by Lottie Gee. In this singing group was a quartet: John Payne, Earl McKinney, C. C. Rosmond, Bob Williams; two baritones; one bass; and four extra



singers: William Fatten, Bert Marshal, George Baker, and Frank Denny.

The success of the band in London was terrific. The best jazz musicians of the time had been chosen, and the London papers explained the general appreciation. The London *Daily Chronicle* said: "They bring new blood into the cultured music of Western civilizations. . . . The syncopated orchestra has certainly something to teach musicians of older tradition." And the London *Times*: "It is an entertainment which all would feel better for seeing and hearing." And the *Cambridge Magazine* qualified their music: "The most delightful entertainment which has yet been offered."

Financial difficulties very quickly broke up this orchestra. It had whole sections of string instruments which had to be fired and sent back to America.

Meanwhile, Louis Mitchell was having trouble recruiting his fifty pieces. Instead of five weeks, as planned, he spent five months in America. Finally, everything was set, the musicians were collected, their visas and contracts in order. Then, on the very eve of their sailing, there came a laconic cable:

"ENGAGEMENT TOO LATE FOR MEN. RETURN YOURSELF ONLY."

The forty-five men were rehearsing at the Lafayette Theatre on 131st Street in Harlem when this thunderbolt struck. You can imagine their consternation. All had been prepared to sail on the morrow. Louis Mitchell visibly paled when he told me about it at a later date: "My God, it was enough to start a revolution in Harlem."

I have seen these contracts and even the programs, which had already been printed. It is well that the names of these men be set down in this history of jazz, for they were chosen from among the best musicians of 1918. Here is the complete list: Cricket Smith, Dewitt Martin, cornets; Frank Withers, Herbert Fleming, trombones; Morrie Mullen, Adolph Crawford, Sadie Crawford, Herbert Dunar, saxophones; Albert de Rosa, Joseph Porter, Joseph Meyers, Walter Cooper, cellos; Pedro Vargas, Alston Hughes, bass; Sidney Bechet, Jonathan Thompson, clari-

nets; Gustave Gregh, W. Nehecomb, violins; Dan Parish, Ambrose Smith, Jessie Williams, James Short, George Davis, pianos; Peggy Holland, Victor Greene, Edgar Miller, drums; Ed Hardie, banjo; C. Jackson, O. Jackson, E. Ross, James Wheeler, Joseph Could, Robert Young, bandolines; Andrew Copland, Bernard Debs, James Parker, singers; Harry MacDaniel, Nathan Nunez, Harry Sapiro, trio.

After receiving the cable, Louis Mitchell left for Paris, bringing only Dan Parish, Cricket Smith, Joe Meyers, Walter Kildare, Frank Withers, and James Shaw with him. He brought this orchestra to the Alhambra in Brussels in 1919, and, shortly after, I heard them there with Sidney Bechet playing soprano sax.

It was the greatest emotion I had ever experienced. A sort of physical shock marked me for life. As far as I can remember, their music consisted mainly of raggy and bumpy ensembles. They left an extraordinary impression. That night something new was born for me and took its place beside the poems of Guillaume Apollinaire and Blaise Cendrars and the paintings of the Douanier Rousseau and Chagall.

What were my previous experiences with syncopated music? In 1918 I had been the civilian interpreter for the 72nd Scotch Battalion from Vancouver. Among the soldiers there were some Americans who taught me their songs: *Are You from Dixie*, *I Want to Be, Robinson Crusoe*, *Smiles*, *Over There*.

Then, as a student at the University of Brussels, I heard Belgian and French orchestras play jazz. An Englishman, Billy Smith, was the first person to bring to Belgium a bass drum worked by a foot pedal.

I still remember the words of a friend who told me to go to hear Mitchell: "It's funny. You can't recognize the tunes, but you are electrified by them."

Of course I spent most of my days listening to Bechet, Mitchell, and the rest. I didn't know Bechet at the time, nor did I get to know him until twenty-two years later, when I heard him at the Mimo in Harlem.

As I say, this orchestra introduced me to one of the great passions of my life, but what was the exact impression I received?

Under its influence I contributed my articles to the *Disque Vert* in 1920. Possessed immediately by a sort of frenzied lyricism, I wrote *Jazz Band*, a collection of poems in praise of the new music, about the same time. A great cubist artist contributed four woodcuts representing musicians, to illustrate it. No more copies of this book are to be had, and I doubt if more than twenty still exist.

As for my impression, I transcribed it a bit later in my book *Aux Frontières du Jazz*:

Mitchell was the leader and presided over the destinies of the group. There were seven of them, these men who were plotting against the future of music: Mitchell, a fine Creole head, supple and happy, always dressed meticulously in the latest style, as are all the Negroes in Europe, a marvelous jazz drummer with a world of imagination, irradiating nervous tics which he delicately transmitted to his instruments, to the amazement of the women who adored him; after Mitchell, the one who conducted the orchestra, always on his feet, exhaling his nostalgia into a short cornet, Cricket old boy, with his appearance of sturdy bamboula and an embouchure of steel, with the fine eyes of the good Negro, expressive and humid; then there was Joe [Meyers], an extraordinary banjoist whose hands fluttered, without a pick, over the taut strings of his instrument; a melodious saxophone who moved his reed from side to side of his puffed-up mouth while playing [I was alluding here to Sidney Bechet, whose name I didn't yet know]; Parish, an enormous pianist, who partially dismantled his piano to make it noisier; a bass fiddle; and finally Frank Withers, called the king of the trombone.

The Mitchells, as they were called for short, brought over a fine cargo of American tunes which soon became all the rage; translated, they were sung by such stars as Mistinguette and Rose Amy, and some, including *Hindoustan* and *La Pâquerette et le Ver Luisant* [translated from *Just a Baby's Prayer at Twilight*], became POPULAR French songs which are now tolerable thanks only to the beneficent action of memory.

Oh for those first cocktail hours I spent, tucked neatly into a little corner of the bar, religiously taking in the cadenced scrollwork of the Mitchells; the illumination behind me, the difficulty of setting the hiccoughs, the breaks, and the counterpoint, in order, so that a diffuse and intangible melody could seep through; the joy of finding the

same friendly faces installed at the same places and reflected in the same mirrors, and especially those moments when the entire audience, carried away, was shaking and clapping hands in accompaniment to the music and demanding another number when the jazz was turned off.

The enumeration of these early tunes enables me to recapture my state of mind: *Jada, Pelican, I'll See You in C-U-B-A, Swanee, Crocodile, Peaches, Sand Dunes, Mammy o' Mine, You'll Be Surprised, Old Man Jazz, Panama, By Heck.*

How can I give you precise indications about the music of that time? The problem presents enormous difficulties, as I fully realize. To get a rough idea, you can listen to the music of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, but Mitchell's technique was less vibrant and bumpy. The instruments were interwoven into the ensembles and seemed to answer each other, as in the first Gennett recordings of King Oliver.

The bass drum, of course, kept up a two-to-the-bar beat, while the hands kept up a rapid and bewildering percussive action. The banjo was more of a melody than a rhythm instrument. Sidney Bechet was already improvising moving solos, which differed from the raggy style of the orchestra. Frank Withers, who unless I am mistaken succeeded Bechet, was a great musician. He played a very hot trombone somewhat in the style of George Brunies with the New Orleans Rhythm Kings on Gennett.

Louis Mitchell soon left to return to Paris, and his place in Brussels was taken by Joe Clark and His Hawaiians, which couldn't be called a jazz orchestra even with the greatest stretch of the imagination. Paris, which had been dying of boredom without Mitchell, welcomed him back with open arms. A little later, Mitchell won enough in a crap game to take over the Grand Duc night club, whose reopening was another triumph.

Revelers in full-dress suits and their elegant ladies covered with jewels frequented the Grand Duc. The patronage which jazz enjoyed presents a curious paradox. In New Orleans and in Chicago at this time jazz was the preserve of the dregs of the population. In Paris the cream of society went to hear Mitchell.

In the short space of two or three days the following personages passed through the portals of the Grand Duc: Mrs. George Gould; M. van Dongen, the great painter; Nita Naldi, the famous cinema star; Mrs. Forester Agar; Billy Jordan; Miss Elizabeth Marbury; the Duchess of Sutherland; the Marquis de Polignac; Deering Davis; Weston Stevens; Lady Aldy; Princess Cystria; the Marquesa de Salamanca; and the Grand Duchess Marie of Russia. Included among the frequenters of the Grand Duc were the Prince of Wales and Carol of Rumania.

Who do you suppose was the doorman of this famous establishment? None other than the fine Negro poet, Langston Hughes, who was later to write *Weary Blues*.

Today, Louis Mitchell is back in Harlem, and I sometimes see him, looking exactly the same, in front of a Seventh Avenue bar. We speak of the present day, but the former King of Paris only lives among his memories. He earned millions in Paris, but he liked to play the horses and shoot dice. Today he passes unnoticed, a member of the anonymous throng, and nobody knows that this still elegant man, now approaching his sixtieth year, was once the idol of Paris, the man who introduced jazz to Europe, a man whose importance in the history of syncopated music was unsurpassed in his day.

Meanwhile, the Syncopated Band had broken up. Will Marion Cook returned to America with his string sections, and the musicians who remained naturally grouped themselves into small orchestras. I still have fond memories of one of them, Wilson's band, which played at the Gaieté. I found the band even better than Mitchell's. Its members were an admirable trumpeter, Bobby Jones, Frank Withers, later to be the trombone with Mitchell's Jazz Kings, Wilson at drums, Felix Vernar on piano, and Narciss on banjo. Wilson's band brought some new tunes with them: *You'll Be Surprised*, *Margie*, *Avalon*, *Sand Dunes*, *Dardanella*, *Chérie*, *Alice Blue Gown*. I can still picture it all in my mind. I can see the cellar of the Gaieté in Brussels or of Chez Pan in Ostend where the orchestra played. I remember the coal-black banjoist, a hot singer, who moved his Adam's apple with his left

hand, to the great amusement of the audience. This action, as a matter of fact, gave him an unusual vibrato. Bobby Jones was an excellent cornet who doubled on alto sax (one seldom saw a tenor sax in those days). It's strange, but this fine musician, who would surely have become a star in the American jazz world, remained in Europe all those years. Every time I went to Paris I used to see him there; even on that last occasion, on May 10, 1940, after the chutist attack on Belgium, I found him sitting with Arthur Briggs in a bar on the rue Pierre Charon. Bobby Jones was to return to America a few days later, and, after twenty-two years in Europe, he immediately joined an American band.

Another one of these groups which was formed in England soon left for the Continent. It featured the drummer Harry Pollard, who, to my mind, was the greatest drummer of the heroic age. He already possessed that wonderfully supple sobriety which only Chick Webb was later to equal. Strangely enough, Pollard was the first and the only one to use a four-to-the-bar rhythm on the bass drum. With him was Arthur Briggs, the first Negro to use the trumpet instead of the cornet. Briggs was the very backbone of transatlantic jazz. Possessing an amazing technique, an exciting feeling for hot music, and a characteristic swing (long before the swing era began), Briggs was one of those great American pioneers who taught jazz to all of Europe.

In 1922, when I played trumpet in a humble orchestra which some friends and I formed, Briggs gave us lessons. It was he who explained hot or, as we then called it, New Orleans music to us. Today, Arthur Briggs, that great and sincere musician, is imprisoned in a German concentration camp in France. Only one witness is necessary to prove the class of this musician: Louis Armstrong, himself, was a great admirer of Briggs and complimented him on more than one occasion.

Besides Briggs there was Burnett on alto sax, a trombone who must have been Forrester, and a white Italian pianist named Gabriel. They played more new tunes: *Stumbling*, *Sweetheart*, *Young Man's Fancy*, *Montmartre Rose*, *Red Head Gal*, *Dapper Dan*, *Sunny Jack*.

Another outfit, the International Five, arrived in Paris. This

consisted mainly of choral sections which, swaying to the slow rhythm of the piano, sang sorrowful blues which enchanted the heart of Paris.

About the same time I heard a mixed band which was led by a famous contortionist drummer, Buddy Gilmore, whose reputation was great although, to my mind, he was not Harry Pollard's equal. I mustn't fail to mention another orchestra, which succeeded Louis Mitchell at the Alhambra in Brussels. I even believe that it was organized by Mitchell himself, since the twelve young colored musicians billed themselves as "Mitchell's Jazz Finzz." The only thing I remember of them is that they played a new tune, the *Wang Wang Blues*. I hope that someday we shall know the names of these completely forgotten musicians.

I think it was about 1923 that I first heard the Georgians at the Claridge in Paris. Although few Americans know it, they were extremely important in their day. When the recordings of Bix Beiderbecke and Red Nichols began to arrive in Europe, the European jazz fans took them in their stride, since they had heard a similar and equally fine music from the late Frank Guarente and his Georgians.

The importance which Mitchell had had at the end of the war had been gradually dissipated, and the halo of glory had passed to the Georgians. I must dwell quite a bit on the importance of this group. The course of jazz was marked by its influence, yet since Penassié was too young to have heard it, and since the American critics had no contact with the European orchestras, it too has unfortunately remained obscure.

Frank Guarente, more than any white musician, helped the uncultivated Negro jazz to evolve toward a clearer and more musical medium. An excellent musician, he had an extraordinary classical training and as a trumpeter could be compared only to Louis Armstrong. He didn't have Louis's savage power, but at certain moments, playing without a mute, he held notes which had the tone of a violin.

He was born in Ajaccio, Corsica, spent his childhood in Italy, and was hired by the Creatore orchestra which toured America. He fell ill in New Orleans in 1913, and this enforced stay in the

Crescent City changed his plans for the future, which he had intended to devote to classical music.

Frank Guarente was fascinated by the ragtime orchestras of New Orleans. He haunted the night clubs and cafés, enchanted by this music, which had so little in common with his traditional training in the European conservatories. Gradually he mingled with the musicians. Joe Oliver was his friend! They admired each other considerably; Frank was impressed by the original ideas of the uncultured musician, and Joe was impressed by the amazing technique of the European, from which he profited. For hours he used to try to swell or to thin out his notes.

In 1914 Frank Guarente was the featured soloist at the Kolb Restaurant, and then he joined the Mars Brass Band, one of the first white orchestras. They accompanied outings to Pontchartrain and Milneburg, and during the Mardi Gras parade all the kids in New Orleans followed Guarente, the city's best trumpeter. In 1915 Tom Anderson himself hired Frank for one of his Rampart Street houses. At the same time the Original Dixieland Jazz Band was opening a few blocks away on Iberville Street.

Soon Guarente's reputation spread. He toured Texas as a featured soloist and was known as "Ragtime Frank." Then he played Coney Island with the Alabama Five. His career was interrupted when he joined the Army.

Back from the war in 1919, Frank joined Charley Kerr's orchestra. In Philadelphia he met a wandering guitarist named Eddie Lang, and, a little later, he found a young unemployed Italian violinist named Joe Venuti who had amazing qualities which he developed.

Jazz was going full blast at this period. Until this time it had recruited only untrained musicians. Frank Guarente was to bring rhythmic co-ordination to jazz. After a period with Paul Specht's orchestra he headed the Georgians, with Arthur Schutt on piano, Jimmy O'Donnell on clarinet, Chauncey Moorehouse on drums, and Ray Stillwell on trombone. They recorded early, waxing *Chicago* and *Sister Kate* for Columbia, the first record on which the transitions were orchestrated (by Guarente and Arthur Schutt) while the solo parts were left open for improvisation.



When Frank Guarente left for Europe, Paul Specht replaced him with Red Nichols, then Charlie Margulies, and finally with Charlie Spivak, but as Specht himself confessed, Guarente was irreplaceable. Before leaving for Paris, the Georgians had made several recordings which greatly influenced the contemporary American musicians: *Shake Your Feet*, *Minding My Business*, *Farewell Blues*, *Way Down Yonder in New Orleans*, *Old Fashioned Love*, *Mama Loves Papa*. Harl Smith, the Georgians' drummer, who was responsible for Bix and the Wolverines coming to New York, told me on several occasions that Bix had been strongly influenced by Frank Guarente's playing, and when the first Beiderbecke records arrived in Europe we were able to note this influence.

The Georgians were so successful in Europe that they remained there long enough to lose all contact with America. The group as I knew it contained many front-rank musicians, such as Russ Morgan or Buck Weaver, whose trombone solo on *Doodle Doo Doo* in 1923 pointed the way to those who followed. Joe Murray was an excellent pianist, and the two saxes, Rudy Adler, now with the Chamber Music Society of Lower Basin Street, and Ernie White, were the equals of any other saxophones of the time. A later composition of the Georgians included, in addition to Guarente and Murray, Eddie Bare and Harold Connelly, altos; Hutchinson and Ted Noyes, tenors; Ben Pickering, trombone; Johnson, banjo; Jack Ryan, bass; and Harl Smith, drums.

Frank Guarente's conception of jazz was actually very close to that of the great band leaders of today, such as Benny Goodman and Glenn Miller, and the Georgians had a sense of swing which far outdistanced the white bands of the pre-1923 era.

About the same time I heard the Lido-Venice orchestra in Brussels, the band which left me with the greatest impression, since it played pure improvisation. The leader was Harl Smith, later the drummer of the Georgians. The orchestra must have been formed in 1922.

The jazz critics who never have heard this band have really missed something, for I place it in the first rank of the bands

which relied on pure improvisation. Whereas the Georgians were an orchestral forerunner of Benny Goodman, the Lido-Venice was the equal of any hot orchestra of its time. It was as good as or better than the Wolverines or the New Orleans Rhythm Kings.

The Lido-Venice failed to match the success of Arthur Briggs in Brussels for more than a month. Their formula was so advanced that they disappointed the dancers. I well believe that it was the hottest music I have ever heard, since I never had the good fortune to hear the Original Dixieland Jazz Band. Alas! the Lido-Venice band never played in America. If it had only left us some recordings, it would perhaps be even more famous than the Chicagoans.

It is strange that none of these musicians acquired great fame. Circumstances were against them. When they arrived in Europe there were only a few of us who could understand their message. Each afternoon this faithful handful stuck to their posts, entranced from the first note to the last. Judging from the comparative impression which I felt, these were the most immortal moments I have ever spent.

After their short stay in Brussels the Lido-Venice band moved on to Berlin, and then to the Four Hundred Club on rue Daunou in Paris, where I heard them for the last time. At this time, when all the dance halls in Brussels sought hot orchestras, the Paris market wished only melodic jazz. After only a few days the Lido-Venice was replaced by Sleepy Hall's orchestra which had, on saxophone, Rudy Vallee, who was replaced by Jim Moynahan.

The Lido-Venice band broke up, some of its members returning to New York, and others trying their luck in Paris. The most extraordinary band of its time had passed out of existence. It had left behind it an overwhelming impression, one which was to shape my taste for hot jazz. Let me quote a piece I wrote around 1929:

One fine afternoon the Lido-Venice made its appearance before a curious public, which was rather disconcerted by the new rhythms. It was the first hot orchestra in Brussels. A huge pianist, Willy, whose features I think I have recognized in a photo of Red Nichols' orchestra; an exciting violinist, Nathan, who played in the style of Joe

Venuti; Barney, who alternated between the trombone and the bass sax; Davie, the banjoist, who soon joined Billy Arnold's orchestra, and who also played soprano sax; Harold Smith, an excellent drummer; and a peerless saxophonist who must be playing with Ray Miller's orchestra at the present time.

These musicians brought us, for the first time, wide, light-colored trousers, square-toed shoes, small pointed mustaches, and, in the bargain, a musical well-being which astounded us from the first.

The orchestra played only hot; a crisp lyricism grasped them all as acrobatic solos succeeded sinuous ensembles. They were individual to such an extent that after one of them had played a particularly fine break, the musicians all laughed and applauded, or else made the very American gesture of striking the right fist into the left palm.

The Lido-Venice boys improvised to such an extent that we were sometimes surprised to find that we failed to recognize a number which we ourselves played. The strange perfume of their frenzied playing still haunts me after all these years. I still remember *Southern Roses*, *Yes Sir I'm Going South*, *Please Don't Shimmy while I'm Gone*, *Some of These Days*, *Hard Hearted Hannah*, and especially *Somebody Stole My Gal*, which Barney used to sing in his nasal, froggy voice, that old and very American tune which had such incomparable success with all the bands.

In spite of this overflowing enthusiasm, I did not do the orchestra justice when I wrote my first book, because I was not objective enough. Had I compared their performances with the records which were then arriving in Europe, I should have said that, next to the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, the Lido-Venice was the best group of the heroic era of jazz.

What a shame that they never recorded! A small orchestra which somehow or other gets off for only two minutes on wax will live eternally, while nothing remains of a marvelous group like this.

Nathan, the violinist, actually played clarinet and sometimes even trumpet as well. He was one of the hottest characters to be found. I know whereof I speak, since I heard some Gennett records in 1929 and discovered Rappolo. I contribute this great truth to the history of jazz: Nathan was at least as good as Rappolo. No other clarinetist has left so great an impression on me.

What has happened to him? I have never since heard of any of them. Some months ago, however, while walking along Central Park South, I happened upon a face which I hadn't forgotten after nineteen years. It was the pianist, Willy Heidt. It turned out that he was playing in a waltz and rumba band at the Essex House. Last year in Maine I discovered at least the name of the trombone: Benny Russel; but he had died four years ago.

With the Georgians and the Lido-Venice band, the European heroic age came to an end. Not until 1930 did new groups bring further obscure personalities to the honor roll of jazz.

However, we cannot leave the subject of jazz in Europe without discussing its great influence on European culture. Besides the crowds which went wild over certain colored revues and especially stars like Florence Mills and Josephine Baker, the intellectuals found food for thought in it.

It is important to note that during this whole period jazz and surrealism, the two sides of the same coin, developed along parallel lines but without any mutual influence. As most of the American jazz musicians had little general culture, the artistic problem for them was limited to their musical experience. Likewise, André Breton and others like him have never attacked the important question of the relationship between the school of which he is the chief and the new musical means of expression, for Breton claims to be impervious to music. I have at various times tried to interest him in the question, but he simply replies that music is a confusionist art.

European intellectuals rapidly succumbed to the charm of the American music. What is the reason for their discovering it before the Americans themselves? The answer is rather simple: race prejudice played, as it still plays, an important part in the critical considerations of many Americans. It was inconceivable to them that a race which they looked down upon could possibly have contributed an immortal art to their country.

Consequently, the orchestras which emigrated to Europe were just as important as those that remained in America. If it was in America that jazz developed and was propagated, thanks to the invention of the phonograph, it was the European orchestras

which introduced jazz as a cultural phenomenon, and the European critics who showed the way to the American jazz fans.

Who can deny that Europe had the first jazz critics: Hugues Panassié in France, Carlos de Radzitzki and Bettonville in Belgium, Joost van Praag and several journalists in Holland. Before there was any magazine devoted to jazz in its homeland, there was *De Jazzwereld* in Holland, *Jazz* in Switzerland, *Jazz Tango Dancing* in France, *Melody Maker* and *Rhythm* in England, *Musik Echo* in Germany, and *Music* in Brussels.

No one can deny the great influence, and indeed the capital importance, which my friend Hugues Panassié has had in the history of jazz. What is for me simply one among many artistic problems has become his specialty and practically his sole interest in life. One need not always agree with him, but his viewpoint has always been enlightening, and will continue to be so.

Furthermore, America should know that jazz immediately commanded the enthusiasm of European musicians and composers. The prejudiced Old Guard fought it to the last ditch, but jazz justified itself before the tribunal of classical music. For the piece that inspired Darius Milhaud's *Creation of the World* was none other than *Aunt Hagar's Blues*, and Stravinsky was so delighted by the marvelous tonal qualities of jazz that he changed the composition of his orchestras, and even wrote a suite for Jack Hylton.

Ravel himself was moved by jazz. I published an article by this great genius in *Music* magazine, in which he ardently defended jazz against its unintelligent critics.

Need I add that jazz has not made any important contribution to serious American music. Composers like Gershwin and Ferdie Grofé made a mistake in trying to develop a concert jazz, since they were trying to intellectualize a phenomenon of sensibility. Behind their musical constructions one senses the mind rather than the heart. That isn't and can never be jazz.

Those who love pure improvisation can never wholly like the *Rhapsody in Blue*, although they find worthy objects for their attention in fine numbers like *Nashville Tennessee*, in which Gershwin gives a better account of himself.

Darius Milhaud understands this essential distinction. A few months ago he told a friend, who passed it on to me, that he would trade his whole work for the *St. Louis Blues*. I would not go as far as that, but this is a further proof that good jazz must come from the heart. And to paraphrase Verlaine, all the rest is literature.

## VI. ORIGINAL DIXIELAND JAZZ BAND

THIS BOOK DOES NOT PROCEED in strictly chronological order; every now and then the author is compelled to anticipate himself or to cast a backward glance. Having thus far studied the history of black jazz from its origins to the epoch-making entry of Louis Armstrong, we shall return to the beginning of jazz as such, about 1916, and concentrate on the history of white jazz.

Until this time syncopated music had been considerably developed by Negroes, whose extraordinary lyrical potentialities compensated for their lack of musical knowledge. Their strivings were sincere and praiseworthy, but it must be acknowledged that the hearts of these musicians were greater than their fingers. I mean, by this phrase, that their feeling for music was superior to their technique.

Then, in 1917, appeared the white orchestra which, like the dislodged pebble on a mountain peak that sets an avalanche in motion, was to set going the great movement of syncopated music.

After twenty-five years we can look back objectively at the phenomenon called jazz, and attempt to define its main currents. Jazz really brought something incredibly new into the world. Until it appeared, a piece of music continued to be played according to the same unchanging conception; Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, for example, will remain identical to the last syllable of recorded time. Once a composer of genius has translated into written terms an opus conceived in his brain, the work has exhausted its lyrical potentialities. The musician's task is simply to

interpret, as faithfully as possible, the conception of the composer.

Unlike musicians, actors can modify their vehicle by putting in a greater or lesser amount of emotional expression or stage business. They are interpreters whose mission is to convey the emotion conceived by the dramatist in whatever way they deem best. Musicians, however, are subordinated to the composer's prescription, the written text; their personality is perceived only through that of the creator; they are but the projections of another genius, whose sole duty is to reflect his greatness as perfectly as possible.

Jazz is another matter entirely; it is a sort of *commedia dell'arte*. The original manuscript is only a rough outline, to be given body and soul by the musician. What is important in jazz is not the written text, but the way it is expressed by the musician. Zola once defined art as nature perceived through a temperament. For classical music, it is nature (or beauty) perceived through a composition; for jazz, it is beauty perceived through a performer.

In classical music, the composer is the prime element; in jazz, it is the musician. Jazz, as I remarked a decade ago, is a sort of musical revolt of the proletariat against the sacrosanct caste of the creators. For the first time in the history of music the power to create has been torn from the hands of the masters and passed into those of the servants who have endowed it with a strange and savage sense of beauty.

A symphony is "eternal"; jazz is dynamic and many-sided. In the words of Baudelaire's famous sonnet, "It shifts its lines daily." And the most extraordinary thing is that this revolution (whose tremendous significance for the history of all music will be fully appreciated only in a century's time) was prepared and launched by simple folk with no knowledge of music.

Jazz has gone along its own way, a strange untrod path which must be retraced conscientiously and objectively by the sincere critic. I see first of all in jazz a perpetual struggle between the revolutionary elements and the traditional elements of music. This struggle is but a recapitulation of the history of all art, which is the recital of the eternal triumph of new ideas over tradition.

When a new school of poetry, painting, or sculpture first makes its appearance, it is not understood, because of its newness. It's the old, old story of the failure of the public to appreciate great artists during their lifetime. Poe, Whitman, Rimbaud, Oscar Wilde, Manet, Renoir, Zadkine, Modigliani—none of these were understood when they started.

As soon as they made their appearance, conservatives entrenched in high places attacked the newcomers to defend their own unmerited glory. Then, through a gradual transitory process, the new artistic truth came to be accepted and appreciated.

Jazz proceeded in the same fashion. When syncopated music first entered the worldly scene, it was greeted by the glacial scorn of nearly all musicians. Just as the formally attired purveyors of "music" were shocked by the informal and loud garb of the disciples of the new music, so was their attitude of academic formalism outraged by what they called the "cacophony of savages."

Then some of the best of them fell under the spell of syncopation. Immediately the conservatives resorted to half-measures and compromises which deformed the new music in order to flatter the taste of the public. America fell under the sway of Paul Whiteman, and England under that of Jack Hylton.

I am getting a bit ahead of my story, since other phenomena deserve our attention before we reach the era of Whiteman and Hylton. The most remarkable thing about the first school of jazz is its characteristic collective improvisation. All the instruments, generally no more than seven in number, improvised as they went along. Clarinet, cornet, and trombone played together, the ideas of each intermingling with those of the others. Usually one of the three instruments held the lead, which it relinquished in turn to each of the others. Occasionally one of them took off in a solo. Such a technique was possible only when the players were real creators, linked together by a sort of common trance. Reason had nothing to do with this spontaneous miracle; sensibility and the subconscious were the sole guides of the musicians.

Extraordinary qualities on the part of the instrumentalists were necessary to obtain this ephemeral beauty. The heart alone



was the creative element; when its potentialities were filtered through a horn, a music of a haunting loveliness was born.

But the laziness of man soon forced this school, despite its universal artistic interest, to succumb to the principle of the least effort. There gradually appeared compromising schools which mingled improvisation with prearranged patterns. Then there came the schools of ersatz jazz in which improvisation disappeared under the weight of melodic and symphonic orchestrations. Then, at last, with the appearance of the big bands, a variety of new formulas were introduced.

With Louis Armstrong, the great genius of jazz, we have the impact of a unique personality upon an orchestral backdrop whose function is to set off the star. With Duke Ellington, we have the expert fusion of musician and orchestra, the measured and rational maturation of an improvisation which leaves nothing to chance. With Jimmy Lunceford, we have a tumultuous orchestra which has found itself thanks to the centripetal qualities of its arranging staff supported by the talent of its members. With Benny Goodman, the King of Swing, we have an admirable improviser who has supplanted hot improvisation by a more mechanical music which nevertheless produces the same delirious impression as spontaneous creation.

But, as yet, we have reached only the stage of collective improvisation as exemplified by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band. The remarkable careers of Dominick La Rocca, Larry Shields, Daddy Edwards, Henry Ragas, and Tony Sbarbaro make an extraordinary story.

We can picture their thankless youth in New Orleans in the days when a nameless music took form. All of them were born before the present century—Eddie Edwards in 1891. They lived in uptown New Orleans: La Rocca on Magazine Street, Shields on 3rd Street, Edwards on 4th. Inspired by the music they heard around them, they formed an amateur orchestra to which Tony Sbarbaro, a downtown boy from Louisa Street, was soon added. It is astounding to note that, although the colored band of Buddy Bolden and the white band of Papa Laine were the outstanding orchestras of those halcyon days, Daddy Edwards frankly con-

fesses that he never heard Bolden, and that his recollection of Papa Laine is of a cacophonous band.

The little group was led by La Rocca, the left-handed cornet, and before long there was a new band playing such tunes as *Under the Bamboo Tree*, *Chinatown*, *My Little Dream Girl*, *Panama*, *Down Home Rag*, at Crescent City affairs. They had three melody instruments which improvised continuously while piano and drums marked the rhythm. A sort of majestic divination led them toward the musical texture which was the very essence of jazz.

But the boys couldn't find a steady job. The Brunies brothers were working at Ranch 102, but La Rocca and Shields had to go far afield to seek employment.

In 1916 Harry James (not *the* Harry James) signed them up for the Schiller Café in Chicago. Judging by the words of some reporters, people of culture did not conceal their aversion to "the blatant shrieks of the Original Dixieland."

Why was their name changed from "New Orleans" to "Dixieland"? I asked Eddie Edwards, who told me that it was because they were disgusted with New Orleans, which had rejected them: "The town was like a mother which disowned her child." Casting around for a new name, they lit on "Dixieland." About the same time the word "jazz" was introduced, and Harry James added "Jass Band" to their billing.

At first they flopped at the Schiller. Only the appreciation of Harry James kept them there after the first disastrous week. They were not so popular as another New Orleans band, directed by Tom Brown, which was playing a few blocks away. This band boasted a marvelous sax named Gus Miller, who is still greatly admired by those who heard him.

Gradually the patronage as well as the repertory of the Dixieland Band began to grow. One of the first great successes added to their repertory was the *Tiger Rag*. This was taken from an old theme, familiar in New Orleans, where the boys had picked it up bit by bit from a Negro pianist. La Rocca published it under his own name, which started a quarrel which nearly broke up the band since all claimed equal paternity.

Among the foremost admirers of the band was the famous gangster, Johnny Torio, who showered them with gifts. He wanted to hear more of them than Chicago's one o'clock closing hour would permit, so he opened a place called "Coney Island" in Burnham, Illinois. Every night when the Schiller closed its doors, the members of the Dixieland band could be seen piling into Torio's powerful limousine, which took them out to "Coney Island," where they played till dawn.

While the Original Dixieland Jazz Band was playing at the Schiller, there was a mediocre pianist, Ernie Erdman, who accompanied the singers. Inspired by their syncopated music, he wrote *Oceana Roll*, one of the year's big hits, and *Oh for the Life of a Fireman*, which made a fortune for the publisher, to whom he sold it for a few dollars.

Meanwhile Eddie Edwards became the band's manager and began to improve its financial status. Chicago was getting used to jazz and even liking it, although nothing in the column of Drury Underwood of the *Chicago Herald* indicated particular tenderness toward the new music or the men who made it. Obscure musicians appeared on the scene. A colored pianist at the Elite (whose clientele did not live up to its name) sang the words and played the tune which was to become famous as the *Darktown Strutters Ball*.

An agent named Max Hart became interested in the Dixieland Band and procured it an engagement at Reisenweber's, in New York. They opened on January 27, 1917, and promptly fell flat. The public, accustomed to the Hawaiian orchestras of Joe Clarke and Doreldina or the waltzes and mazurkas of Joe Figey, the gypsy violinist, turned a deaf ear to the infernal Dixieland racket. Only a few kindred spirits sensed the inner beauty behind the unaccustomed noise. One friend had them appear at a big charity affair at the Century Theatre, where the program featured such diverse entertainment as Billy Sunday and the great Caruso.

Then, suddenly, they were a success, the rage of New York. Ragas, the pianist, did not live long enough to enjoy the fame and fortune which followed the hard upward climb. He died, and the others found Sidney Lancefield, whom Edwards con-

siders the best pianist the band ever had, to replace him, but Lancefield soon quit.

With fame came a recording contract with Columbia and a long string of records which made them the world's best-known band.

The personnel of the band underwent several changes. Edwards went to the Army and was replaced by Emil Christian on the trombone. Robinson succeeded Lancefield on the piano, and in turn gave way to Billy Jones for a while.

At the height of their glory they were engaged by Albert de Courville for a show starring George Ruby and Frank Hale, and they toured the country on the Keith circuit. Then they left for London in March 1919 and scored a success in *Joy Bells*, in which the big hit was *The Bells of St. Mary's*. Successive engagements at Rector's, the 400 Club, and the Dance Palace followed.

They returned to New York for a sensational engagement with the Folies Bergeres, the culminating point of their career. Eddie Edwards, back from the Army, resumed his trombone chair. Record after record popularized the Dixieland style. They won any number of eager converts—Frisco, Frankie Farnham, De Sylva. Other musicians tried to imitate them.

In 1923 they were playing at the Balconades on the corner of Columbus Avenue and 66th. Every night regularly, at a few minutes before one, a slightly tipsy young man entered the dance hall and drank deeply of the intoxicating music. Sometimes he went to the bandstand and played his own composition, *In a Mist*. It was Bix Beiderbecke. About this time Frank Signorelli replaced Robinson, who quit the orchestra in a huff because they didn't play his numbers enough.

But the fickle public began to demand new stars, and the popularity of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band waned. For six years the group of friends had remained together. Success had not turned their heads; they had kept intact the excitement which flamed in their music. Now dissensions split their ranks.

One of them quit and went back to New Orleans. Unable to find a capable replacement, the orchestra broke up. Shields and La Rocca went back south, and Robinson joined the police force.

In 1937 the Original Dixieland Jazz Band was resurrected, and for a brief moment these men who made jazz history played together again. They made some records, they played at the Texas Exposition, and that was all. Their time was past; their formula was outmoded. Once again the Dixieland Band broke up. Daddy Edwards, the great trombone, went back to coaching sports at a Y.M.C.A.

It is my impression that the critics haven't paid enough honors to the Original Dixieland. They have been quite unjust to the first great white orchestra, which, to my mind, made jazz. They have turned the spotlight on the Negro New Orleans pioneers, but they have left in the shadow the group which was the first to preserve on wax musical performances which were years ahead of their time. I have listened to these records again—twenty-five years later—and am in a position to judge them comparatively.

I know that some critics say the Original Dixieland lacked swing. But how could they possess a thing which did not yet exist? Furthermore, these same critics would be hard put to it to define the swing which they say is lacking. For my part, I should say that swing is an element which didn't appear until some fifteen years later, and is inapplicable to bands based on pure improvisation.

I know at any rate that men like Bix Beiderbecke, Brad Gowans, and Jim Moynahan swore by the Dixieland Band, and strove to bring themselves up to the level of their predecessors. Taking into account the necessary evolution of jazz style, I do not believe that any orchestra has ever topped the Original Dixieland Jazz Band.

Each time I hear their records I experience a new and overwhelming joy. I can't imagine how this miracle of balance was ever possible. How did these ignorant musicians of genius produce such spontaneous displays of beauty, which are beyond the grasp of our highly touted contemporary orchestras?

Although more refined ensembles and more creative personalities, like Armstrong, have been recorded, my critical consciousness compels me to say that never in the history of jazz have there been such interdependent creations and such tightly

knit ensembles. In one fell swoop the Original Dixieland Jazz Band reached the summit of all beauty, the highest emotional level, and this without any compromise with commercialism, with new and original means. Aided by a new spirit whose technique they had not quite mastered, they played their raucous melodies and broke decisively with all musical tradition. So magnificent a gesture of independence would not have been possible for a musician with even the rudiments of traditional schooling to have dared.

The Dixieland ensembles were so frenzied that anyone with the slightest idea of what jazz is about realizes that such creation is possible only for completely entranced musicians. Here is one group at least that didn't give a darn about the commercial conditions of their art. They played as their hearts dictated, and that was all they needed. Sudden halts in their playing, unexpected outbursts, growls, contrasting breaks, showers of drumbeats, incessant repetitions of cowbell sounds—these were their stock in trade.

Today all this seems a bit outmoded and "corny." But it is outmoded because later musicians didn't completely digest their message and didn't have the courage to keep their music unadulterated. Their technique in attacking the beat is also called corny because the Dixieland Band hit after the beat, whereas modern swing bands hit before it.

Wilder Hobson has explained this evident basis of syncopated music: ". . . often in a jazz performance the only instruments playing regularly *on the beat* are, say, the bass drum and string bass; the rest are playing rhythms variously suspended around the beat . . . often, in fact, *no one* is on the beat, which is 'felt' but not heard."

I am sure that, in fifty years' time, the Original Dixieland Jazz Band will stand out in all its glory, blotting out the insignificant musicians of today who play meaningless riffs and copy each other's phrases without putting the least bit of feeling into their playing.

The Dixieland Band didn't possess swing, because they didn't need it. They had something better. They were right in the

pulsing heart of jazz, where improvisation was at its purest.

The only thing that interests me in jazz is its original contributions. The later musicians content themselves with seeking technical proficiency. If only they had followed in the path which the Original Dixieland had marked out for them, what might they not have accomplished with their superior gifts?

I will go even further and say that the future of jazz lies along this path, and nowhere else. And as I write these words, I cannot help but think of the phrase of Lautréamont, the great surrealist prophet, "Poetry will be made by all, not by one alone." So too will jazz be made by all and not by one alone.

No one admires the great figures of jazz more than I do, but, as in football, it is the great team, not the great star, that wins games. Besides, no truly great figures have appeared in recent years, since our present conceptions stifle that precocious enthusiasm which has been the mark of every great jazzman.

What excites me is the spectacle of a group creating together, infused with a spirit which makes each one surpass himself and the others so that a unified pattern of beauty is achieved. The subconscious and the sensibilities, not logic and technique, collaborate to produce this sort of beauty. This new process of creation proved so awe-inspiring and so difficult that it had to be abandoned.

The miracle of the uncultured musicians of New Orleans was duplicated by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band. The former group produced many fine themes which remain as vibrant witnesses to their greatness: *Milneburg Joys*, *High Society*, *I Ain't Got Nobody*, *Perdido Street Blues*, *King Porter Stomp*, *Shim-meshaw-wabble*, *Basin Street Blues*, *Panama*, and a host of others. What was the original contribution of the latter group? It was something which has never since been equaled. Nearly every number they waxed was their own creation, nearly every tune was a model of simple, yet powerful, composition. Many of their themes have been used or just plain plagiarized by other composers. *Ostrich Walk*, for one, was shamelessly copied to produce *Wang Wang Blues*.

What was the impression on those who actually heard the

orchestra? I have met some of them, and I was astonished to see how the memory lights up their faces, even after a quarter of a century. I am told that Bix Beiderbecke received one of the greatest impressions of his life, one that helped stamp the character of his future greatness. When you speak of these super-human pioneers to Muggsy Spanier, Frank Guarente, Brad Gowans, or Jim Moynahan, they just shake their heads. They know they'll never find the words to express what they feel.

How could it be otherwise? After twenty-five years, the reign of the clarinetist Larry Shields is still acknowledged by countless musicians who use his ideas and phrases on that instrument. Larry Shields was for the clarinet what Louis Armstrong has been for the trumpet. He organized the role of the clarinet and breathed life into it; he gave it his vitality of improvisation, his excited expression, his liquid tone, and his crackling breaks.

As for La Rocca, he was the first great classic trumpet. Much has been said about Bix's debt to King Oliver and Louis Armstrong, but not enough about the inspiration he drew from Nick La Rocca. La Rocca had the perfect temperament for a hot musician. He excelled in playing the tune almost note for note, his tone and his mastery of the attack before the beat producing a simple yet amazing effect.

Listen closely to *Palesteena* or even *Margie*, for example. La Rocca accented the notes very simply by swelling or fluttering them. Listen next to *Singing the Blues* and you will note how deeply Bix was inspired by La Rocca. In Beiderbecke's lovely solos it seems that he is trying to recapture the general impression of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band. He attempts to achieve the interwoven play of trumpet, clarinet, and trombone, but is frustrated by the inadequacy of his musicians.

This is not said in depreciation of Beiderbecke; far from it. I realize the greatness of Bix's character and the contribution he has made to jazz. But knowing him so well, I can justifiably assert that Bix's records may well be forgotten long before those of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band. I hope this is not blasphemy, but I listened studiously to most of Bix's recordings the other day, and, with two or three exceptions, they were not worth listening



to. Nothing is more old-fashioned or corny than his orchestral accompaniment.

Whereas the Dixieland Band was composed of a group of master musicians from the very first, the fact that Bix never surrounded himself with musicians of his own class must be recorded on the debit side of his ledger.

I must not neglect to mention the efficient drum work of Tony Sbarbaro, whose natural sense of rhythm has seldom been equaled. As for Eddie Edwards, he was a phenomenal musician. He founded the great school of trombonists which reared two of our best contemporaries: Brad Gowans and George Brunies. Modern trombone playing has been greatly refined and its role in the ensemble has changed, but nevertheless I cling to the opinion, which many will laugh at, that the old Dixieland trombone style was more effective than any which has followed.

With the passing of Brad Gowans and George Brunies, the line of trombonists who rely on pure improvisation will have come to an end. The swing trombonists of today rely on the arranger to determine their ensemble playing. It's not at all the same thing.

Honor is not always given where honor is due: the laurel is often placed on the brow of an undeserving person, and many worthy figures pass neglected. I hope that this situation will soon be remedied, that the American public will pay its respects to those who have given it a great music. It will realize one day that Eddie Edwards, Brad Gowans, and George Brunies deserve more homage than certain highly paid orchestra leaders whose creations are so devoid of significance that they are forgotten in two months' time.

Can one draw a parallel between the Original Dixieland Jazz Band and the other orchestras? Jazz critics have conscientiously avoided the very difficult task of judging orchestras comparatively. The first school of criticism consisted entirely of an exposition of the comparative value of individual musicians. Hugues Panassié and others who followed this critic have drawn up a highly important graded honor roll of instrumentalists; it is time that the same thing be done with orchestras.

I interrupt myself a moment to point out a strange truth. At

first the role of the Negro musicians had been ignored. Then their importance was fully recognized, and certain critics—grouped around periodicals like *Jazz Information* and books like Smith and Ramsey's *Jazzmen*—have dug out innumerable details on Negro jazz from Bolden to Armstrong. These groups have dealt almost exclusively with the Negro pioneers, so that now, amazingly enough, the importance of the early white musicians is hidden behind the glory of their colored colleagues.

Nobody has been more appreciative than I of the role of the Negro in the development of jazz, and therefore I am entitled to express the opinion that the music would never have become what it is if it were not for orchestras like the Original Dixieland. I am a great admirer of the colored New Orleans musicians who made their headquarters at Chicago, but the willful and systematic neglect of their white contemporaries is cruel and unjust. Before Louis Armstrong and Fletcher Henderson, no colored orchestra reached the level attained by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band or the New Orleans Rhythm Kings. Great as he was, the recordings of King Oliver are confused and fumbling next to those of the New Orleans Rhythm Kings.

Where can you hear a pre-1924 Negro ensemble with the unity, consistency, character, and continual explosiveness of the Original Dixieland? Only sporadically did black jazz reach those heights. Later, it is true, the balance swung in the other direction, when white jazz was sidetracked away from the paths of pure jazz.

I am certain that those who, like me, prefer music of pure improvisation will confirm my opinion if they have taken the trouble to listen to the miraculous polyphony of the Original Dixieland.

The two records they made in 1917 (*Dixieland Jass One Step—Livery Stable Blues*, *Darktown Strutters Ball—Indiana*) are admirable. Larry Shields is astounding, the hard and clear rhythm of the drums is eloquent in its simplicity, the low notes of the trombone go straight to the heart.

The 1918 recordings attain a peak of musical interpretation. The trombone sometimes plays in a very original staccato style; Shields's clarinet is as good as ever. Shields's work and Sbarbaro's

drumming, especially in *Ostrich Walk* and *At the Jazz Band Ball*, are ample proof of the debt of jazz to New Orleans march music. Jazz was not yet an exclusively dance music.

These first recordings are highly important, since they give the conscientious critic valuable information about the various influences which shaped New Orleans jazz. A bizarre tango rhythm in *St. Louis Blues*, for example, reminds one that Spanish music played its part in the Mississippi delta.

In these recordings and those of 1919, Larry Shields demonstrates the greatness of his talent. The three melody instruments (cornet, clarinet, and trombone) supported by the two rhythm (piano and drums) interweave their improvisations very cleverly. One of them always leads this collective creation, directing its movement and animating the play of the others. This is the admirable formula which later musicians were to discard in favor of more commercial compromises.

La Rocca, as we have said, plays simply a bare skeleton of the theme as compared with the surging notes of Bobby Hackett, for example. Shields's style of playing has unfortunately disappeared, as all modern clarinets insist on using a stereotyped and colorless style. He didn't give equal value to all his notes, holding some, glissing some, swallowing some, as his inspiration dictated. Larry Shields played after the beat, unlike the technique perfected by Benny Goodman, which hits before the beat. The influence of Benny Goodman has been so considerable that everybody since has followed his formula, except for a few musicians of the old school such as Jimmie Noone and Sidney Bechet.

Following the five records waxed in 1919, of which *Tiger Rag* and *Clarinet Marmalade* (played more slowly than in the later version) are my favorites, the composition of the band was changed: Emil Christian replaced Daddy Edwards, and J. Russell Robinson succeeded Henry Ragas, who died in his hotel room only a few days before their departure for England. At several recording sessions in London from April 1919 to July 1921, they waxed many fine, and a few not so fine, disks. *Barnyard Blues*, for instance, a faster version of *Livery Stable Blues*, is not nearly so good. *Satanic Blues*, on the other hand, is marked

by a diabolical kind of beauty. On the return of the orchestra to the United States, they found the situation had changed in their absence, and wrongly decided to modernize their band by adding Benny Krueger on sax and Al Bernard as vocalist.

For a while they enjoyed the same success as of yore. They were a big hit at a number of balls, and they inspired a host of musicians. Brad Gowans sometimes took La Rocca's place on the bandstand. Bix, as he confessed to his friends, modeled his playing after the pattern of the Original Dixieland.

*Margie*, a composition of the new pianist, became a hit tune and a standard, but, on the whole, the band had exhausted its creative vein, and did nothing but repeat itself. Daddy Edwards came back on trombone, but Larry Shields gave way to Artie Seaberg, Benny Krueger to Don Parker, and Russell Robinson to Henry Vaniselli.

The band had had five years of glory and had given the world many tunes which are now established classics. But the first band in the discography of jazz outlived its great period. At the end it composed no new numbers, playing its big hits—*Toddlin' Blues*, *Some of These Days*, *Tiger Rag*, and *Barnyard Blues*—over again on its record dates. Like poets who have said all they have to say, they went on repeating their old stuff wearily. The old feeling was gone, their numbers did not have the drive of yesteryear. As always when heart and youth have given way to routine, all lyrical quality was missing.

What does it matter? The Original Dixieland Jazz Band had five great and fruitful years. There are very few instances of such character and unity in the history of American music. And they have left us a pile of records which I play over and over again, as they represent the purest sort of jazz.

Eddie Edwards today is the coach of a Y.M.C.A. football team, and has been completely forgotten by those who have photographed and reprinted all the minor details concerning the most insignificant banjo-strummer of New Orleans. It is all right for researchers to try to re-create the conditions of New Orleans jazz, but it is high time that we pay just homage to the first white jazz immortals: Shields, Edwards, Sbarbaro, and the rest.

You can imagine the feelings of these men who are all but forgotten even while their work is still being copied and plagiarized. I saw Eddie Edwards pass in front of Reisenweber's some months ago. He didn't even raise his eyes, for his memories are too burning to permit him to grasp the grim reality. I followed him down Broadway to 52nd Street. It was a hot summer's night, and puffs of jazz wafted out of the open night club doors. From behind the façade of Kelly's Stable one caught wisps of *Tiger Rag*. The clarinet was playing Shields's part, and the trombone was trying to copy Edwards. Edwards listened for a moment—a shade among the shadows—then lowered his head again. His imitator was soon to be hailed as an immortal of jazz.

## VII. THE FORGOTTEN WHITE BANDS

New Orleans Rhythm Kings, Cotton Pickers,  
California Ramblers

WHILE THE Original Dixieland Jazz Band was in Europe the memory of their wonderful message continued to inspire many American musicians. They had scattered sparks which fell on the hearts of white youths in New York, New Orleans, and Chicago. These young musicians, improvising in woodsheds throughout the country, sought outstanding personalities around whom their music could crystallize. In New Orleans there were the clarinetist Rappolo, and the trombonist Brunies; from the Midwest came Bix Beiderbecke and Muggsy Spanier, trying to recall La Rocca's improvisations, and Frank Teschemacher, who had not yet decided on the clarinet as his medium of expression.

Many orchestras had sprung up in the tradition of the Original Dixieland Band, including the Georgians, the Original Memphis Five, the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, the Bucktown Five, the Wolverines, the Cotton Pickers, and the California Ramblers. I have spoken at great length of the Georgians, but I have more to

say about this great band, which has been so unjustly and so completely forgotten these many years. Neither the *Hot Discography* of Charles Delaunay nor Charles Edward Smith's *Jazzmen* mentions them. Yet they were great in their day.

To realize this, you have only to listen to their records: *Mama Loves Papa*, *Land of Cotton Blues*, *Snake Hips*, and *Farewell Blues*. Played in the blended style of the Memphis Five and the Cotton Pickers, these records are bathed in an invigorating atmosphere. In 1923 Frank Guarente was the best white trumpet to be found. His playing in *Land of Cotton Blues* will indicate the debt Bix owed him, and *Dancing Dan* might be said to be Bixian before Bix. The imagination of the Georgians is brilliantly displayed in the unusual ending of *Snake Hips*, and *Lovey Come Back* is fine from the rhythmic bouncing trombone of the beginning to the soulful clarinet improvisation of the end. Johnny O'Donnell, the clarinet, improvises a solo on *Farewell Blues* which is identical to Rappolo's on the same tune. I leave it for others better informed to decide which came first.

This was one of the great periods of white jazz. Colored orchestras had not progressed nearly as much; contact with the whites was necessary to set them going again. Only with King Oliver did Negro jazz live up to its earlier promise. At the same time the New Orleans Rhythm Kings were very close in many respects to King Oliver. If truth be told, both white and Negro bands reacted on each other; each copied the other's inventions until the point where they became a part of the public domain.

The core of the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, a band which had a preponderant influence on the musicians of the time, consisted of Leon Rappolo and the Brunies brothers. They were born in New Orleans about the turn of the century and, as kids, followed the marching bands at Mardi Gras time. They studied music at an early age, Rappolo learning the violin, which he discarded for the clarinet, and the Brunies studying with Papa Laine. Their first job was in Storyville.

The band was organized about 1919, and it continued to play in the New Orleans tradition of collective improvisation. Before their trip to Chicago and fame, they played in their native city

and toured Texas, which was a sort of testing ground for Delta City bands.

At this point I interpolate a long aside to consider a little fact which has had tremendous repercussions on the history of jazz, a fact which might be glossed over were it not for the insight it gives into the psychological problem of jazz. Leon Rappolo smoked marijuana, a narcotic weed growing wild in Mexico and all over the South, and peddled at prohibitive prices in all American population centers.

Yes, Rappolo smoked marijuana, and it helped him along the road to madness. I hesitate to delve into his private life like this, and if addiction to reefers had remained a foible of Rappolo alone, I should not. But the habit spread to a great many musicians and even today is not uncommon. Why is this so?

I have already explained that jazz is based on improvisation, which, to be successful, must be free from the control exercised by the superior brain centers. Every man possesses a faculty known as intelligence or reason, which controls the actions of the sensibilities and the subconscious mind. It is a sort of head supervisor which maintains the equilibrium of its subordinates. Every psychologist is acquainted with this distinction in the organization of the human mind.

Jazz and surrealism upset this balance. No longer is the intelligence the faithful superintendent of the mind; its action is reduced and the other faculties are given free rein. The great jazzmen are those who can, of themselves, neutralize the role of reason. Men like Louis Armstrong can do it; this is the psychological explanation of their genius. Louis Armstrong can put himself into a trance-like state in a few seconds, and, from then on, he is out of the world, speaking only from the heart.

This phenomenon of trance or frenzy is the musician's means of inspiration. Nor is this to be wondered at! Poetry springs from the same source. A true poet cannot write with his intelligence. The highest lyrical peaks have been scaled only by frenzied poets. Unfortunately, exalted moments are rare; one cannot enter this state at will. The great moments of poetry are few and far between. The same is true for that other form of poetry, jazz.

I affirm that such a trance is the very base of all jazz, and those who love and create this music ceaselessly strive toward it. When I hear an orchestra which reaches straight into my heart, I know that its members are carried away by this frenzied spirit and welded into a miraculous unity. There can be no jazz without frenzy. The Original Dixieland Jazz Band was frenetic; so was King Oliver; and so was and is Louis Armstrong. Rappolo, too, for Rappolo had found, in marijuana, an artificial means of inducing the trance-like state.

The great clarinetist had noted that it was difficult to enter into the necessary state of grace. He realized that two or three mouthfuls of marijuana fumes would neutralize the severe control of reason and leave the sensibilities free to examine the unexplored possibilities of music. He discovered for himself and for others an easy way of inducing this condition. It appears, furthermore, that the weed enhances the musical qualities of its addicts; no longer checked, their auditory faculty expands and triumphs over both time and space. I have asked many of these unfortunates just what was the power of their drugged elation. Most tell me that they hear better, create better, and take more pleasure in the music. This is purely illusory.

Many musicians still smoke marijuana, and the habit has given jazz much of its vocabulary (and very likely many of its best efforts), as the following titles indicate: *Muggles*, *Sending the Vipers*, *Texas Tea Party*, and *Chant of the Weed*.

This is the reason for the prevalence of the habit among jazz musicians. It serves the same psychological function as an aid to the creative power as opium does for Jean Cocteau. It is regrettable, however, that the most insignificant saxophonist in Harlem thinks that all he has to do to become a great creator is to smoke muggles. Needless to say, not everyone is a Rappolo or an Armstrong. Marijuana is a means, not a cause. Those who have nothing to say deep down inside of them can smoke tea all their lives without creating one single bar of beautiful music.

Moreover, in the long run it will be found that the production of a man who is under the influence of drugs will end in incoherence. The artificial trance leads to exaggerations which a natural



trance does not produce. It is like manufacturing pearls. There are artificial ways of producing pearls, but a specialist has no trouble in telling them from the real thing. And, as in jazz, only real pearls are highly valuable.

Leon Rappolo, poor fellow, was finally consumed by the weed. On certain nights after having smoked, he was completely out of the world. Floating on top of the music like a cork on a stream, he seemed a personification of music itself. When spoken to, he did not answer; he was completely wrapped up in his inner dream. Eyes closed, he strained every fiber of his being in order to find expression for the creative turmoil inside. His reason was annihilated, no longer able to command his body. All that remained was his enchanted heart, his pale lips, and his moist hands flowing up and down the keys of his clarinet.

The New Orleans Rhythm Kings had their great moments. Their audience remained open-mouthed, unable to grasp fully the tonal miracle being performed before them. Their music was in the direct line of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, but somewhat modified and more musical. It was still collective improvisation, but certain passages were prepared beforehand. This first defection from all-out improvisation became more and more pronounced with the Memphis Five, the Bucktown Five, the Cotton Pickers, and the California Ramblers.

Nevertheless, what beauty they produced! As far as I am concerned, the superiority of the white orchestras was unchallenged until Louis Armstrong made his appearance. Even King Oliver, whom I greatly admire, never equaled the fluid and melodious sensibility of the New Orleans Rhythm Kings. The Original Dixieland excites me by its savage power, the Rhythm Kings by their flexible and ingenuous sensitivity.

I am extremely proud that I appreciated them, and said as much, way back in 1930 when I knew them only through a couple of records, and had never heard of Dixieland.

May I quote what I said then in *Aux Frontières du Jazz*?

I shall now speak of the general style of the orchestra—a rather risky thing to do, since I have heard only a few of their recordings, and that, some five years ago. These were *Tiger Rag*, *Angry*, and *Mo-*

*bile Blues*. [This last was really *Tin Roof Blues*, which I had confused with *Mobile Blues* as both belonged to the Melrose collection.]

If my memory is accurate, the group played very hot polyphonic ensembles such as no orchestra has since attempted, yet which portended great things for the evolution of jazz. This formula, to my mind, is not a forgotten experiment—these records can stand comparison with the best of today. The accompaniments are perfectly balanced, and I particularly remember the trombone's counterpoint in *Shim-me-sha-wabble*, whose savage beauty tops anything I have heard since.

I would willingly sign this statement today, and I am happy to mention in passing that the trombonist was George Brunies, whose playing still hits me square on the button.

Besides Brunies, the fine musicians of the orchestra included Rappolo on clarinet, Paul Mares on trumpet, Elmer Schoebel on piano, Lew Black on banjo, Arnold Loyocano on bass, Frank Snyder on drums, and Jack Pettis on sax.

You will notice that this composition is a reinforced version of the Dixieland setup. The Rhythm Kings, like the Original Dixieland in 1923, added a saxophone and amplified the rhythm section. Their personnel changed frequently as they moved from their Wisconsin debut to the Cascade Ballroom and Friar's Inn in Chicago.

It is interesting to trace their evolution by means of their discography. Very few of their fine recordings are available in America today, and this is greatly to be regretted. They should be reissued, for, as jazz advances, records like those of the Rhythm Kings stand out in bolder relief.

Their first recorded period consisted of seven sides on Gennett (*Oriental*, *Farewell Blues*, *Discontented Blues*, *Bugle Call Blues*, *Tiger Rag*, *Panama*, *Eccentric*) played by the musicians listed above, except that Steve Brown had replaced Loyocano.

Note the propulsive power of the rhythm section, especially the rhythmic rebound of the banjo supported by the bass and drums. The playing of the three melody instruments is interwoven in true Dixieland style. Here you will find two great jazzmen, Rappolo and Brunies. Paul Mares is good, but he lacks the

power of his two friends. After due reflection I have come to the conclusion that the band's chief driving force was George Brunies, a contemporary yet ignored giant. Without him the orchestra is lifeless. Three or four other musicians of almost equal talent could have been found to replace Rappolo.

A bit later the orchestra was somewhat smaller, consisting of the same melodic base—Mares, Brunies, Rappolo—and a rhythm section composed of Mel Stitzel, piano, and Frank Snyder, drums. They made *Weary Blues*, *Wolverine Blues*, *Da-Da Strain*, *Shim-me-sha-wabble*, *Sweet Loving Man*, and *Maple Leaf Rag*, all tunes which bring back the memory of the days when jazz first hit me. *Da-Da Strain* and *Shim-me-sha-wabble* are and will remain among the peaks of recorded jazz.

The orchestra was enlarged after 1922, the solid basis of Mares, Brunies, and Rappolo remaining to breathe life into a new body. Jack Pettis, Don Murray, or Glenn Scoville played sax, and the rhythm section consisted of Lew Black and Steve Brown back again, Charlie Pierce on piano, and Ben Pollack on drums. They waxed *Angry*, *Sobbin' Blues*, *Clarinet Marmalade*, *Mr. Jelly Lord*, *Milneburg Joys*, *Marguerite*, *London Blues*, *Mad*. Many of these were beautifully played; the ensembles of *Clarinet Marmalade* and especially *Angry* were among the records which inspired me most.

After this group of recordings the individuality of the New Orleans Rhythm Kings was lost. Its great triumvirate was broken up, Rappolo or Brunies being absent on each occasion. The loss of its two greatest musicians was irreparable. Without the purity of Rappolo and the power of Brunies, the orchestra no longer came up to its earlier standard.

The end of Rappolo's career is a tragic story. His dependence on marijuana increased from day to day. He had begun by taking two or three mouthfuls, which was enough to send him into a trance. Friends have described him to me—feverish, thin, panting, with dark rings around his eyes. He played marvelous solos, eyes closed in ecstasy, then rushed into the alley to relight his reefer. He took a few puffs, holding it with the ends of his fingers so as to breathe in smoke and air together, extinguished it again,

and went back to the band. He would remain high for an hour. His creative power was raised to a high pitch, and few who saw him realized that here was a person who was committing suicide in order to produce beauty.

Before long the dose needed to affect him was doubled and tripled; he now smoked five or six reefers a day. He had terrible fits, no longer ate, no longer drank. He passed the stage where creativeness was stimulated, and spent all his time in a dream. Frightful apparitions haunted him; he alternated between the heights of musical passion and the utmost depths of despair. Finally he reached the point where, half dead from the weed of despair, he flung his clarinet into Lake Pontchartrain. The great musician, Leon Rappolo, was no longer a musician—he was scarcely even a man. Laid low by the malevolent fumes, he spent the rest of his life among the fantasies which the drug had produced. A man without a mind, he became an inmate of a lunatic asylum. His fingers ran idly up and down the keys of a clarinet which someone had given him. He still had the fingers, but his control was gone, his sensibility was gone. Such is the frightful story which must be told to all. Rappolo died in the sanitarium in 1943.

In the folklore of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band and the New Orleans Rhythm Kings lies material for two of the most touching films imaginable. I feel their attraction, I know their story. God grant that someday I may produce them.

When the Original Dixieland broke up, its great founders disappeared from the musical scene, and no vestige of it remained. The story of the Rhythm Kings is somewhat the same. Though the Brunies brothers tried to resurrect the orchestra in 1925 under the name of Meritt Brunies and His Friars Friends, the attempt was not very successful. Very seldom does a jazz orchestra give birth to a direct descendant.

Santo Pecora, the last trombonist of the Rhythm Kings, and Ben Pollack, its drummer of 1924, formed a small orchestra known as the Bucktown Five. In this group we find the initial appearance of Muggsy Spanier, who was to become one of the greatest white cornetists; Volly de Faut, a new clarinetist; and

Mel Stitzel, who had also been with the Rhythm Kings on piano.

This fine band recorded only seven sides, on Gennett. I heard two of them, *Buddy's Habits* and *Someday Sweetheart*, back in 1925, and they made a terrific impression on me. They had a flair for improvisation, and the new ideas of Muggsy Spanier were a welcome addition to the elements inherited from the Kings.

As for George Brunies, he played with the Wolverines for a short period, then joined Ted Lewis and was reduced to a clownish role. In the last few years he has played with Muggsy Spanier, Art Hodes, and recently with Jimmy MacPartland and Pee Wee Russell or with Chelsea Qualey and Rod Cless. My opinion of him has never changed—he moves me more profoundly than any other trombone.

During the period when the New Orleans Rhythm Kings struggled up the glory road, another orchestra was formed which included two sometime members of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, Frank Signorelli and Jimmy Lytell. This group had Phil Napoleon on trumpet, Miff Mole on trombone, Lytell on clarinet, Signorelli on piano, and Jack Roth on drums. The Memphis Five had a long career, during which they recorded for many labels, leaving some very good records and some very mediocre ones.

The memory of this orchestra and of its variant, the Cotton Pickers, has grown dim, yet it played an important role in winning converts in the twenties. This neglect is most unjust. I grant that it had no transcendent figure who has emblazoned his name on the list of jazz greats. What does that matter? I know that it does not rank as high as the Original Dixieland on my book. Already the spirit of compromise which was to gnaw away at the heart of jazz had begun its work. The conception of collective improvisation and perpetual trance had proved too difficult to maintain itself; these musicians still improvised, but they arranged certain transitions, practiced brass effects, and wrote introductions.

Many musicians played with this group, which lasted from 1922 to 1928. Its core consisted of Phil Napoleon and Miff Mole, who infused their ideas into the other musicians. Phil Napoleon was not himself an outstanding hot musician; Miff Mole was far

superior. He is the one who modified the staccato style of George Brunies. I believe that Panassié has pronounced a wrong verdict on this trombonist. Miff Mole's influence on jazz has been equaled by very few others. In jazz there are not only the instrumentalists of genius; there are also the musical organizers, those who shape the characters of the orchestras with which they are associated. From this point of view Miff Mole was an ace. He was the very life of the Memphis Five and the Cotton Pickers. And those who say they don't like the way Miff Mole played make me laugh. He was the equal of almost any present-day trombone, and the best of today, like J. C. Higginbotham, who has progressed considerably in the last few years, are very close to the nuanced style of Miff Mole. No longer do we find Higgy playing the passionate outbursts of Jack Teagarden or Brunies. On its own level, the Mole style has a melodious unity which only the obtuse will fail to see.

The Memphis Five and the Cotton Pickers had a great character which was all their own. Like the Dixieland style and the Rhythm Kings style, there was a Cotton Pickers style. It was a great orchestra, one which I really loved. If its critics would be silent long enough to listen closely to the admirable polyphony of *State Street Blues*, *Down and Out Blues*, *Got to Cool My Doggies Now*, *Copenhagen*, *Rampart Street Blues*, and *Just Hot*, they would realize the many fine qualities of Miff Mole and the band.

I admit that their performances were not so pure as those of the Original Dixieland, yet anyone who faces the fact will realize that they had more personality than most of our modern bands; this orchestra had a soul, not a motor. . . .

At the present hour there are no more ensemble personalities. Excepting a few orchestras, which can be counted on the fingers of one hand, they all play alike. I don't want to hurt anyone's feelings, but nothing sounds so much like one colored orchestra as another colored orchestra. They are reduced to the same level by the mediocrity of arrangement. And the same goes for the white bands. The spirit is gone. For a price, they deliver the same cold dish every night in the week.

The Cotton Pickers were head and shoulders above 90 per cent of the big mechanized bands. Among the whites the only thing I find acceptable is the small Dixieland outfits of the Chicago group. And unless some big bands return to the old tradition of pure improvisation, the only real jazz will continue to come from similar small groups.

For two years I have heard the New York bands time and again. Save for two or three, I am extremely bored by their shallow and spiritless performances. If a band like the Cotton Pickers could be formed—of course, the evolution of jazz would make certain changes in its style necessary—it would eclipse the reputations of all the highly publicized name bands as far as any true lover of jazz is concerned.

I have just spoken of several successive and even parallel groups. The strength of the white orchestra of the heroic age has come down to us only through examples preserved on wax. Who now remembers that the Memphis Five played at the Balconades on Columbus Avenue in New York?

Jimmy Lytell was an excellent clarinetist who is almost worthy of being ranked among the greatest. His style reminded me of that of Nathan, of the Lido-Venice band. It is with emotion that I remember three of the tunes of the golden age—*Aggravatin' Papa*, *I Wish I Could Shimmy Like My Sister Kate*, and *Runnin' Wild*, whose hot and savage style indicates that this was the early period without the balance of the Dixieland Band.

Among the best of the pile of interesting records which demonstrate the band's vitality, I cite *Shufflin' Mose*, *Sioux City Sue*, *Way Down Yonder in New Orleans*, *Snake Hips*, and especially *Just Hot*.

These last recordings were attributed to the Cotton Pickers. The true Cotton Pickers was a somewhat different organization, consisting of Napoleon, Mole, Chuck Muller on clarinet, Lucian Smith and Frank Trumbauer on saxes, and Rube Bloom on piano.

At a later period Red Nichols replaced Phil Napoleon. This band produced two excellent records: *Stomp Off Let's Go* and

*Carolina Stomp* (without Trumbauer), and *Fallin' Down* and *What Did I Tell You* which was the last Cotton Pickers record which reached Europe.

The character of this band was very different from that of the Dixieland Band or the Rhythm Kings, which had been dominated by an improvising triumvirate. The influence of Nichols and Trumbauer led it along another path. After the Red Nichols period, or perhaps concomitantly, Phil Napoleon was associated with the Dorsey brothers and Arthur Schutt, who had been the Georgians pianist. On certain records Eddie Lang and Hoagy Carmichael were among those present.

But the same process that we have already noted in the other bands was repeated. The personality of the group was dead; its offspring had very few hereditary traits. I should like to set down here what I had to say about the Cotton Pickers some fifteen years ago:

From the first, the Cotton Pickers took care to avoid melodic banalities, and to seek tunes which were not dominated by the ritornello. For this reason they were naturally led to improvise and even to compose tunes suited to their talent and mood. Their exciting character is revealed in *Just Hot* and *Shufflin' Mose*, especially in the former, which is so knocked out that all that remains is the rhythm which introduces a completely new cadence which has since been copied by all the bands—for one, the Georgians, who have incorporated the famous theme “mi sol mi sol mi sol sol mi” in *Copenhagen* and *Sweet Sixteen*. [The Wolverines' *Copenhagen*, it should be noted, is an exact duplicate of the Cotton Pickers', unless it is the other way around.]

In *Just Hot* the Cotton Pickers attained an irreproachable perfection; no flourishes, no squalling, no static, just a pure and moving line without any of the few errors in taste (wa-wa, corn-fed rhythm, etc.) which mar their earlier work. It is interesting to study their evolution from these records; the trumpet becomes more and more sober, and the clarinet uses a style which we will find further developed by Pee Wee Russell. By the time they recorded *Blue Rose*, one of the summits of jazz music, they had a sureness and animation which was no longer found in the otherwise excellent *Fallin' Down*. Here one can sense the profound change brought about in jazz by the considerable



contribution of Red Nichols and the Red Heads. . . . Finally the Cotton Pickers broke up, with the satisfaction of having accomplished a great work, one to which I hereby pay homage.

There is nothing to be added or subtracted from these lines, which, I trust, will serve to gain for the Cotton Pickers a little of the appreciation they deserve.

I should like to speak now of an orchestra which has been totally forgotten—the California Ramblers. You will not find this name in Panassié's *Hot Jazz* or in Delaunay's *Hot Discography*; *Jazzmen* merely mentions it in three places; my first book is the only one which consecrates space to it. Yet this orchestra was a rallying point for many white musicians who were to be among the major figures of the following period, and some of whom are today stars of the first magnitude. It is interesting to study their evolution as an indication and an illustration of the continuing struggle between pure and composed jazz, between art and commercialism. The early period of improvisation gave way to one of prefabricated organization of jazz and finally to the showy formula of the big bands.

I haven't been able to hear their records recently, because music shops and collectors have neglected these old disks. So I can only transcribe my impressions as I noted them at the time:

It is certain that different musicians played in the orchestra at different times, and one can't be sure whether anyone was permanently in it. *Melody Maker* cites the following musicians as members of the Ramblers: Red Nichols, Bill Moore, Roy Johnstone, Chelsea Qualey, trumpets; Jimmy Dorsey, Arnold Brillhart, Bobby Davis, Pete Pumiglio, Fred Cusick, Fud Livingston, saxes; Tom Dorsey, trombone; Adrian Rollini, Spencer Clark, bass sax; Tommy Fellingine, banjo; Irving Brodsky, Jack Rusin, piano; Stan King, Herbert Weil, drums.

Who was the leader of the California Ramblers? Who organized it and gave it its ideas? I know not. At any rate, the band followed a formula which, at the beginning at least, represented a compromise between straight and hot jazz. Each number began with a melodic ensemble in which tone and expression were stressed, then in sharp contrast came a crackling hot solo, which was answered on another instrument, which was followed by the final ensemble.

Three kinds of instruments played the hot parts—sax, clarinet, and trumpet. I think this was due to the increasingly evident superiority of Adrian Rollini, Jimmy Dorsey, and Red Nichols. The role of the trombone was limited to accompaniment, and, on the records I heard, the banjo simply played rhythm, using all four chords and not demonstrating anything unusual in the way of technique. Jimmy Dorsey very quickly attained a fine hot style which had more to it than the trumpets. I am not sure who played this last instrument [it was actually Red Nichols], but on the records I've heard—*Southern Rose*, *Little Old Clock*, *Nashville Tennessee*, *Red Hot Henry Brown*, *Nobody Knows*, and some others—it seems to me that he had not acquired either the virtuosity or the sense of jazz which was later developed, and which the New Orleans [Rhythm Kings] trumpet had already foreshadowed.

How can I help but feel grateful to the Ramblers? They were the first to introduce me to jazz in which individual improvisation was substituted for the collective improvisation I already knew and loved.

I propose that the record companies reissue an album of the Cotton Pickers and California Ramblers. I should like to be able to choose these records at my leisure, since I am sure that both bands made at least a few records which would suffice to rescue them from their present state of neglect. Remember that the reputation of many a musician is founded on one record, and consider that here is more than merely a solo inspired in a happy moment: there is a spirit of cohesion, a character, and a lyrical soul, which constitute a veritable trade-mark which makes them identifiable after only a few bars.

One very important critical observation on the history of jazz must be made here. As orchestra succeeded orchestra, the stream of jazz became more and more polluted. The spirit was watered down continually. Paul Whiteman became known as the King of Jazz. He organized a huge orchestra which played melodic or even "symphonic" jazz, and was extremely successful. Hot musicians swallowed their principles and catered to the public taste.

The purest orchestra of them all was the Original Dixieland Jazz Band. The New Orleans Rhythm Kings were somewhat

more musical and made some concessions to the public taste. The Cotton Pickers went even further, mixing written arrangements with inspiration; the Georgians subordinated improvisation to a central idea; and finally the Ramblers completely revolutionized the creative principle. Instead of a tripartite collective improvisation, they relied on a melodic part and the improvisation of a single instrument accompanied by an ensemble background. This marked the beginning of the big-band formula which was to lead jazz into an impossible impasse, since really creative improvisation demands that all the musicians be in a trance. It looks as if the great soloists of the future will not be *inspired* men singing from their hearts, but *mechanical* men with dexterous fingers. The present formula stifles any great individuality, which can no longer develop freely as in the heroic age. We shall return to this question later, when we discuss the big bands.

Anyway, no one can deny that the evolution of jazz at this time was chiefly due to white musicians. The contribution of the classic white bands has given me many lasting memories. The Negro bands of the same period had little to say, if truth be told. Their performances certainly cannot be compared to those of the whites. Yet in Chicago there was King Oliver's orchestra, which contained elements which were to shape the future of jazz. All future ensembles were to profit from Oliver's example, just as all future improvisers were nourished, consciously or unconsciously, from the genius of Louis Armstrong. The present Negro orchestras are a projection of the creative spirit of King Oliver. The white name bands have unfortunately forgotten the marvelous flowering of white hot music and now try to play like Negro bands. They have not profited from the example of their predecessors. Who will be the first great white musician to get out of the rut and return to a really creative formula? For my part, I should like to see someone like Benny Goodman return to the tripartite "hot" conception he has loved so well, acting in conjunction with the Chicagoans, who are at present the only ones who have profited from the teachings of their great forerunners and who have strenuously avoided commercialism by playing, in the old lyrical vein, a music which sends me each time I hear it.

## VIII. LOUIS ARMSTRONG

WHEN I WROTE *Aux Frontières du Jazz*, Paul Whiteman was known as the King of Jazz. No one in either America or Europe dared to deny his right to this symbolic crown. He had emulators, all right; Jack Hylton, in England, for one. The purpose of my book was to smash these two popular idols, whose music was utterly worthless as jazz. The history of these usurpers had to be retold in order that people might realize that the real king was someone else entirely. I dedicated my book to Louis Armstrong, the true King of Jazz, as an expression of my fervent admiration for him. I made this decision after hearing a dozen or so Armstrong recordings, so overwhelming was the impression, and I have never had cause to regret it.

This choice still holds good. Armstrong is more than the King of Jazz; he is its soul, he is jazz itself, he is the great standard against which all other jazzmen are measured. To my mind he is the one indisputable genius American music has produced, and, as years go on, he appears ever more outstanding. No true lover of jazz denies his predominant position.

Still alive and active, he is already a legendary figure. His career is now well known, and I do not intend to repeat the many details which have been recounted in Armstrong's autobiography, *Swing That Music*, and elsewhere.

He was born in New Orleans at the beginning of this century, and lived the banal day-to-day existence of the Delta City pickaninny. With his friends, he wandered through the picturesque streets of the uptown Negro quarter.

The reveille of jazz had already been sounded by the cornet of King Bolden by the time Armstrong was a lad. The strange melodies which floated through the open doors of Storyville establishments went straight to his heart.

Young Louis used to earn a few cents by picking up stray chunks of coal along the docks. Then, one day, he found a gun and fired it in the streets to celebrate New Year's and impress his friends. He was picked up by the police and sent to reform school. Here he first learned to play the bugle and the cornet. His will to learn was so great that he clipped his mouthpiece in order to fit it better to his lips.

At fourteen Louis was released from the Waifs' Home and sent back to his family. For a couple of years he worked at odd jobs, at a grocery and a dairy. But music had already become the focal point of his existence. With some of his friends, he organized a choral group which formed a part of the "second line" at marches, funerals, and Mardi Gras parades.

He knew all the men who first made jazz, from Bolden on down. On a spring evening when the Spanish moss was beginning to turn green again, he would sit on the stoop of his James Alley house and listen to the tormented wail which arose over the quiet of the night in the poor district. King Bolden was blowing his soul from Lincoln Park. At the first sound, black heads popped out of the windows, and pretty soon a crowd would be streaming in the direction of the trumpet call. There were others too—Bunk Johnson was playing at Masonic Hall, and Freddie Keppard was also around. Louis made no mistake; he knew what he liked, and he recognized their talent.

Meanwhile King Bolden had slipped from the scene. Worn out by liquor and vice, he had taken to playing weird and inhuman things on his cornet. Finally he had to be shut up in the asylum. And as dusk fell in the old French Quarter, Louis Armstrong, like hundreds of other Negro boys, dreamed of becoming the new king.

Still in short pants, Louis was playing the cornet and looking for professional engagements. From time to time he substituted for the better-known New Orleans cornetists. Then came 1917, and Storyville was shut up by government order. The jazz stars sought employment elsewhere, and Louis Armstrong was chosen to replace King Oliver when the latter left for Chicago. He already had a group of ardent admirers which included Picou,

Sidney Bechet, Albert Nicholas, Baby Dodds, and Zutty Singleton.

Armstrong was married about this time, but domestic bliss was interrupted by frequent spats with his wife. Deciding to get away from it all for a while, Louis quit his job and joined Fate Marable's orchestra, which played on the river boats. Together with such musicians as Boyd Atkins (sax), George Foster (bass), Eugene Sedic (sax), Johnny Dodds (clarinet), and Zutty Singleton (drums), he spent several seasons on the flowing stream of Old Man River. Then he went back to the Verger cabaret in New Orleans (which has contributed one of the figures of the Lindy Hop to posterity), and played with the Tuxedo Marching Band.

He was tops in New Orleans, and his reputation spread, by word of mouth, everywhere jazz was played. In Chicago, hometown musicians praised the boy wonder to King Oliver. Joe may have been worried about keeping his crown and desirous of safeguarding it from any direct challenge, but, whatever the reason, he decided intelligently to send for Louis to join his band at the Lincoln Gardens (31st and Gordon streets, in Chicago).

Armstrong quickly revealed himself as a star of the first magnitude, but so long as he remained as second trumpet to King Oliver he could not expand. He was ambitious, and others, especially Lil Hardin, the band's pianist, were ambitious for him. She was the one who took him aside and taught him music, transcribing for him some typical transitions which were to be the very base of Armstrong's style. She helped develop his talent and urged him to strike out on his own. Armstrong became first trumpet at the Dreamland.

Louis married Lil in 1923 and left in the winter to try his luck with Fletcher Henderson's orchestra at the Roseland in New York. He took advantage of his stay in Manhattan to make several recordings, with Henderson, with Clarence Williams, and as accompanist for featured vocalists. Returning in November 1925 to the Dreamland in Chicago, he doubled as a soloist with Erskine Tate's pit band at the Vendome Theatre.

As a cornetist, vocalist, and actor, Louis revealed himself a

peerless performer. A good-natured showman, he seemed the living expression of the enthusiastic soul of his race. His singing sounded ridiculous at first, but there was something to the warm vibrato of his throaty voice, something to the guttural slang he confided to his megaphone, something instrumental in his scat phrasing, that went straight to the heart once you got used to it. In his playing and singing was glory pure and simple.

When Louis Armstrong formed his own orchestra the first period of jazz, which may be called the New Orleans period, came to an end. Before we examine the new phase of his great artistic career, which opened in 1926, we might do well to consider the first part of his life in retrospect. During all this time Armstrong was little more than one musician among others. As a member of orchestras led by other men, he could not inspire them with his own conceptions. His own personal qualities, except for his talent as instrumentalist, were kept hidden. This explains the diverse character of the recordings he made during this period, with King Oliver, Fletcher Henderson, Clarence Williams, and as accompanist to Bessie Smith and other blues singers. During this stage of development he participated in ensembles whose atmosphere was generally that of New Orleans collective improvisation. It should be noted, however, that Fletcher Henderson's was a big band, impractical for pure improvisation, which had to resort to written arrangements to preserve its balance.

There is no doubt but that Louis is an extraordinary instrumentalist, head and shoulders above the rest. His playing on these early recordings is the most interesting thing about them. For example, *Chimes Blues*, on which is Louis's first recorded solo, is interesting to the extent that Armstrong participates in it. The great talents of the other musicians—Johnny Dodds and Sidney Bechet, to name but two—add additional sparkle to his improvisations. The spirit of the old New Orleans and river-boat orchestras can be found in these old tunes: *Canal Street Blues*, *Dippermouth* (better known as the *Sugar Foot Stomp*), *High Society*, *Buddy's Habits*, *Camp Meeting Blues*.

Playing with Louis in Fletcher Henderson's orchestra were

such jazz greats as Buster Bailey (clarinet), Don Redman (alto), Coleman Hawkins (tenor). Louis's outstanding greatness becomes evident when you compare his already-mature talent with the almost ludicrous playing of Hawkins at that time; listen to *Alabama Bound*, *Copenhagen*, and *I'll See You in My Dreams*. In records like *Sugar Foot Stomp* the trumpet section is better balanced, thanks to the addition of Joe Smith.

I am very fond of the records which Louis made at the same time with Clarence Williams' Blue Five, a band which played in the old New Orleans tradition of collective improvisation. It was composed of Armstrong, Sidney Bechet, Clarence Williams (piano), Buddy Christian (banjo), and Charlie Irvis (trombone).

During the second period of Armstrong's career he led small bands of his own which still relied on collective improvisation. This was probably his greatest epoch from the point of view of pure jazz. He was still a band musician, with his own part in the collective playing, but now he directed the ensemble. I hope you will grasp the difference between this and his previous role; it stands out clearly in the recordings. Until this time the general expression of each record was under the control of a band leader who had hired Louis along with the other musicians. From this point on the improvisations were directed according to Louis's own conception. He was the orchestra leader, cornetist, singer, and the driving force.

The band was generally known as "Louis Armstrong and His Hot Five," although it recorded under other names (such as "Lil's Hot Shots," in honor of his wife). Besides Louis, the group included Kid Ory on trombone, Johnny Dodds on clarinet, Lil Hardin Armstrong on piano, Johnny St. Cyr on banjo. They waxed a succession of beautiful sides, including *Georgia Bo-Bo*, *Yes! I'm in the Barrel*, *Cornet Chop Suey*, *Heebie Jeebies*, *Muskrat Ramble*.

In 1927 the Hot Five became the Hot Seven, with the addition of a bass and Baby Dodds, Johnny's brother, on drums. They continued the unbroken string of musical masterpieces, all the way from *Wild Man Blues* to *Savoy Blues*. Louis was now becoming



famous as the steel-lipped cornetist whose ideas and technique amazed all who heard him.

In 1928 we find him with a new Hot Five, one which has lost most of the New Orleans flavor. This band had Earl "Father" Hines on piano, Fred Robinson on trombone, Jimmy Strong on clarinet, Mancy Cara on banjo, and Zutty Singleton on drums.

Armstrong was now at the height of his artistic and technical powers. He was surrounded by other outstanding jazzmen who were, in turn, inspired by the power of their great leader. Earl Hines, for example, one of the greatest of all jazz pianists, never again possessed the magnificent punch of *Fireworks*, *West End Blues*, *Skip the Gutter*, *Knee Drops*, *A Monday Date*, *Sugar Foot Strut*, *Squeeze Me*, and *Two Deuces*, which rank among the summits of recorded jazz.

*West End Blues* particularly is a great recording which jazz lovers never tire of (listen to how closely Cootie Williams follows Armstrong's interpretation in his recent recording of the number). This is the period in which Louis definitely emerged as the greatest of them all. Not only was he the finest musician and the best improviser, but he became *the* man of jazz, indeed jazz itself. The genius of Louis Armstrong was henceforth to shape the destinies of jazz. All the trumpeters imitated him; they tried to copy his technique, his fingering, his breathing, his imagination, his phrasing. This plagiarism became so flagrant that many even copied his solos note for note, and even then only the best succeeded in making them sound anything like Louis. Only one trumpet was not subjected to Armstrong's influence, and developed his own lyrical style—Bix Beiderbecke.

The dominant role which Louis Armstrong has played in the development of jazz is hard for us fully to realize today. Not very many are aware of the fact that most of our present-day trumpets are simply repeating from memory ideas which Louis created almost twenty years ago. It was he who fertilized the new art, intensified it, animated it, and gave it the lift which has carried it to the present time.

Later Don Redman was added to the band as saxophone and arranger, and a long series of records, including *St. James In-*

*firmary*, *Basin Street Blues*, *I Can't Give You Anything but Love*, and *Ain't Misbehavin'*, followed. During this period Armstrong's fame spread far and wide. The whole pattern of jazz was changed by his influence. The white bands, whose development had been arrested, were completely obliterated by the new tendency. Armstrong's personality was so powerful, his improvising so pure, that nothing mattered besides him. So it happened that the admirable phenomenon of collective improvisation gave way to the individualist conceptions of Louis Armstrong.

I wrote as long ago as 1930:

Armstrong is sublime to such an extent that he has cleansed music from all unnecessary flourishes. His work is full of exquisite ideas, fresh and spontaneous. He has introduced themes and transitions which have been copied by his whole generation. A skyscraper musician, he is able to climb into the upper register with a facility which disconcerts all his rivals. A witty musician, he injects a bit of the *Rhapsody in Blue* at one point, a glimpse of *Kitten on the Keys* at another, incorporates the beginning of the *Black Bottom* into *After You've Gone*. In *Mahogany Hall Stomp* he holds a note for ten bars, and repeats a group of five notes seven times; and while this sort of playing might seem crude and barbarous at first, Louis's gift for rhythm and phrasing makes it extremely effective. . . . And this extraordinary interpretation will be copied by all the name bands; Duke Ellington's *Ring Dem Bells* uses the effects of *Mahogany Hall*. . . . Until Armstrong, jazz seemed to be baffled by words; Louis put heart and sensibility into his singing; he swallows his words, chews them, pulverizes them, forgets them, and substitutes inarticulate syllables which resound like trumpet notes. His singing is a veritable oracle, like the frenzied utterances of the Delphic pythoness possessed by the spirit.

There is nothing to add to these hyperbolic words of praise, save that Louis has maintained his unfailing greatness for twenty years now. As we shall see in examining his technical development during the third phase of his musical career, he remained the greatest of jazz musicians.

After many recording sessions, notably the famous *Knockin' a Jug* date when Jack Teagarden, Happy Cauldwell, Joe Sullivan,

Eddie Lang, and Kaiser Marshall played with him, Armstrong's genius was universally recognized. White musicians were proud to play with him. His spectacular qualities were so great that those of the accompanying band were ignored. The only thing that mattered was the genius of Armstrong. Louis's personality was used to fill the gap left by the discarding of the old collective improvisation formula. The orchestra was now no more than a backdrop designed to set off the superb qualities of its leader. The backdrop had little importance; the ringleader was all that mattered. There was enough passionate explosiveness in Louis to leave his accompaniment hidden in the penumbra behind him. The band no longer improvised as of yore. Playing arrangements, they acted as a springboard from which Louis could plunge into his dazzling solos. When one of them took an occasional solo, it was to give Armstrong a rest. Orchestral unity based on equality had given way to orchestral unity based on subordination.

This was the formula he adopted when playing with Carroll Dickerson's orchestra. Louis was acquiring his stage presence during this period, which produced *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *Black and Blue*, *That Rhythm Man*, *Sweet Savannah Sue*, *Some of These Days*, *When You're Smiling*.

Then he secured the solid assistance of Luis Russell's orchestra, with Henry Allen and Otis Johnson in the trumpet section; J. C. Higginbotham, second only to Jimmie Harrison among the colored trombonists; a reed section composed of Charles Holmes (alto), Teddy Hill (tenor), Albert Nicholas (clarinet); and a rhythm section consisting of Luis Russell (piano), Will Johnson (guitar), Pop Foster (bass), and Paul Barbarin (drums). This was another great period, about 1930, when *I Ain't Got Nobody* and *Rockin' Chair* were waxed. This was the band to which Louis returned several times during the whole decade, although he deserted it from time to time to play with other groups.

During 1930 Armstrong made three records—including *Dinah* and *Tiger Rag*—with a band which included Eddie Anderson as second trumpet and Cass McCord on tenor. That winter Louis was on the Coast with Les Hite's orchestra at Sebastian's New Cotton Club, which featured Lawrence Brown, who later became

one of Duke Ellington's trombones, and Lionel Hampton on drums.

Band succeeded band. Louis made a series of recordings with Zilner Randolph and some others; my favorites are *When It's Sleepy Time Down South*, *You Rascal You*, *Georgia on My Mind*, and *Stardust*. Then Chick Webb's band became Armstrong's supporting vehicle.

Meanwhile, Armstrong made a successful tour of Europe. Returning, he made a dozen or so more records with Zilner Randolph again, this time with Teddy Wilson on piano. On another triumphal jaunt through Europe he played with a bunch of colored musicians whom he found in Paris: Jack Hamilton, Leslie Thomson, trumpets; L. Guimaraes, trombone; Pete Ducongé, Henry Tyree, and Alfred Pratt, saxophones; Herman Chittison, a fine pianist; M. Jefferson, guitar; O. Arago, bass; O. Tines, drums. With this combination he waxed some very rare sides: *St. Louis Blues*, *Super Tiger Rag*, *On the Sunny Side of the Street* (two parts), *Song of the Vipers*, *Will You Won't you*.

Armstrong went back to America in 1935. He divorced Lil Hardin, from whom he had long been separated, and married Alpha. Luis Russell's band, which had been on tour, was hired again to play with Louis, and it has remained with him to this day, although its outstanding members—Red Allen, J. C. Higginbotham, Charles Holmes, Al Nicholas, Pop Foster, and Sidney Catlett—all left it about two years ago, and Russell himself left late in 1943. Louis has also recorded with several other groups of late—of the most diverse character imaginable: with white bands including musicians such as Jimmy Dorsey and Bunny Berigan; with exotic outfits like Andy Iona and His Islanders, the Polynesians with Lionel Hampton, the Mills Brothers, with a mixed Negro choir; and finally with a New Orleans band which included Bechet.

The mechanism of genius is a difficult thing to determine, the more so when the art is new and the artist still living. The task, however, imposes itself on the conscientious critic, and one could fix on no better case than Louis Armstrong. I have often pondered this problem, and wondered what was the reason for his superi-

ority. Why do so many excellent musicians recognize that Louis is way ahead of them, in a class by himself?

The answer is simple, but it doesn't explain very much. Louis Armstrong has the precise balance which is necessary for the full expression of a great jazz musician. All the necessary elements, and these of the required strength, are providentially brought together in him. He has the spirit which is needed in order to conceive, and the tool which is necessary in order to put into effect. These two qualities, developed to such a degree, are to be found in one man only once in a generation. There are other musicians who have the ideas, who have the creative power, but who have not been able to master their means of expression. Roy Eldridge, for example, is exciting and brilliant, but he lacks Armstrong's sureness and perfection. Some have the necessary intelligence and memory to serve their creativeness, but they do not have Louis's spontaneous spirit—they only repeat his ideas in dilute form. Others have somewhat less imagination and somewhat less technique than Louis but, even so, are top-flight trumpets.

After Louis, there are a dozen or so front-rank trumpets whom I greatly admire. For many of them, their misfortune is to have come into the world at the same time as Armstrong, whose trail blazing has limited the possibilities of their expansion. I can readily imagine that, had Armstrong never existed, men like Red Allen, Cootie Williams, and Roy Eldridge might have been able to develop on their own, eventually reaching a position as great as Louis has. But with Louis having shown the way, it becomes very difficult to develop a personal path aside from the one which Armstrong was the first to explore.

This sort of thing is common in any art form, as witness the various schools of literature. When a genius appears he gathers a group of disciples around him, and their influence is reflected even among artists of the second rank. The mold is shaped by the dominating genius, and it is well-nigh impossible for any of his school to develop a distinct personality of his own.

As I say, there are a dozen or so admirable trumpets with exceptional qualities, yet all lack a certain something. There is per-

haps one whose extraordinary balance of invention and technique merit him a higher position: I refer to Charlie Shavers. He has the individuality and the ingenuity which almost permit him to escape Armstrong's domination. He is exciting, bold, tasteful, witty, facile. Time will tell whether or not I am mistaken, but every time I hear him play at one of the jam sessions run by my friend Harry Lim, I sense an emotion which has become increasingly rare these days. I have but one regret: the splendid but overrefined formula of John Kirby's band may smother his power of improvisation.

But let's get back to Louis Armstrong. The most phenomenal thing about Louis is that it is as easy and as everyday a thing for him to create beauty as it is for an apple tree to bear apples. The second he hits a note, his emotions and his heartbeats flow into it.

I have previously spoken of the process which permits Louis to maintain his uniformly high level: namely, the trance. Besides the two qualities which I have just mentioned—imagination and technique—Louis possesses the great gift which permits him almost automatically to enter into a trance and then to express his sensibility by means of his instrument. The other two qualities are possessed to a greater or lesser degree by the musicians we have just compared to Armstrong. Here is a fact I want you all to mull over. Many musicians, particularly among the whites, have plenty of natural talent; yet, for these, the phenomenon of the trance is rare if not completely nonexistent. Armstrong's gift is present in a few Negroes—Charlie Shavers and Leo Watson, to name but two—but I know of no white musician who is able to forget himself, to create his own atmosphere, and to whip himself up into a state of complete frenzy.

Louis Armstrong is indeed an exception to the common run of mortals. I think I know other Negroes who can work themselves into a state of trance, but these, unfortunately, do not play the trumpet. And there are many other Negroes who play the trumpet but who seldom can get out of this world.

How then, you may ask, can I class certain white orchestras

among the greatest? Because what an individual cannot accomplish automatically, as Louis Armstrong does, a group of predisposed persons can do by suggestion and interaction. When one Negro becomes possessed at a baptism, the whole crowd is agitated and follows suit.

Except for gifted people like Louis Armstrong, this is impossible for any musician to accomplish, and effectively extinguishes any spark of excitement. It is not the untrammelled heart of the soloist of a large orchestra which inspires his playing, but merely his fingers, which produce a soulless music from memory.

We shall see later that this kind of excitement can still be found in a few small Dixieland bands, but here we are concerned only with the exceptional gift of Louis Armstrong.

I think that I heard my first Armstrong record in 1928. It hit me with a terrific impact, and I realized that something new and important had been born in jazz, something outside the limits of my previous experience, which went from the Original Dixieland through Red Nichols. My friend Ernest Moerman devoted a long poem, which appeared in the Negro Encyclopedia, to Louis. When I heard in 1932 that the star whom I knew solely through records was coming to England, I arranged to make the trip especially in order to see him in the flesh.

I remember how excited I was at the time; as far as I was concerned, London didn't exist except as the place where Armstrong was to make his miraculous appearance at the Palladium on a Monday. I immediately ran to the music hall, and its caretaker told me that Armstrong was waiting for some colored musicians who were to arrive from Paris at four o'clock, and that they were to rehearse at five, on Poland Street.

Shortly before the train was to arrive I was walking impatiently up and down the platform at Victoria Station, straining my eyes to catch a glimpse of Louis Armstrong. I looked in vain. I had the impression that everyone waiting there was, like me, drawn for love of jazz. I saw a gentleman with a loud tie, carrying a box which I thought was an instrument case. I approached him and asked if he were waiting for Louis. He didn't understand. (My

English then was a good deal more approximate than it is now.) He made a gesture to indicate his failure to comprehend me. I pointed to his case and asked, "Saxophone?"

"No," he replied, "fox terrier!"

I moved on toward a pretty girl with a bouquet in her arms. She looked at me with obvious English distaste. Finally I perceived a dark-skinned face. I went up and asked, "Are you waiting for Louis Armstrong?"

His rosy mouth opened to show his dazzling white teeth. "That's me, sir."

Ten minutes later he was calling me "Gate," and I was calling him "Satchmo'." I gave him a copy of my book, the first to appear on jazz. He saw the dedication and was very moved by it, even kissing it. We left for the rehearsal together with the musicians I knew from Paris—Charlie Johnson, Joe Haymes, and a few others.

Until late in the evening I remained in the hall listening to Louis rehearse. It was unbelievable. He shut his eyes, flourished his trumpet, twisted his handkerchief, sang in tears, climbed up to hit notes with his neck and cheek so distended that I thought they would burst. What a revelation it was!

This still was during the era of American prohibition. Suddenly Armstrong's manager, Johnny Collins, came into the hall, soaked to the gills. He had been making up for lost time ever since his arrival in London. He started drunkenly to argue with Louis, and then turned to leave. Blotto as he was, he tried to exit through a mirror which the actors used. He broke the tremendous cigar which he had been puffing so furiously.

Monday at the Palladium was a sensation. Never have I experienced such an emotion. *Sleepy Time Down South, Them There Eyes, When You're Smiling, Tiger Rag.* The place was rocking like a steamship in heavy weather. Young chaps sank to their knees; young girls wept.

I went to join Louis in his box. Jack Johnson, the old world's heavyweight champion, was there; so were Nat Gonella and some other British musicians, who could scarcely believe their eyes and ears. Some young trumpeters asked to examine Louis's



mouthpiece; they couldn't believe that anyone could achieve such power without some mechanical aid. Fanny Cotton, the handsome singer, came up in a taxi, having flown to London, but Alpha was keeping close watch over her man.

Together with the manager and Alpha, we left very late, to go to the Monseigneur, where Joe Crossman and Nat Gonella were playing. They seated us in the balcony. Only five minutes remained during which liquor could be legally served. Johnny Collins whispered a few words in the waiter's ear, and a few minutes later, up came a tray loaded with thirty big glasses of ale. After the sixth glass the manager had just about passed out. Louis's eye was still alert. I said to him, "What will you do if, when you get to Paris, you find you aren't well received because you don't sing French?"

Louis answered with a broad grin, "I'll sing 'em *I'll Be Glad When You're Dead You Rascal You.*"

At that moment Collins spoke to me, "Can you fight?"

"Yes," I said.

"Then I won't pay," Collins shouted.

This started a terrible riot. We had to carry Collins off like a sack of potatoes, and Armstrong signed for the check.

I saw Louis several times after that—in Paris, Brussels, and Rotterdam. I flatter myself that we became friends. When he came to Brussels he was received with great pomp at the home of the president of the Bar Association. He spent an evening at my house and sang *I Ain't Got Nobody* and *I Cover the Water-front* for us, with Chittison playing the piano. We played some records for him, and he listened appreciatively, keeping time to them. I played some Chicagoans, the Chocolate Dandies' *Got Another Sweetie Now*, and finally *No*. When he heard this last, Armstrong approached the phonograph, interested, and listened closely, rolling his eyes. "What's that fine band?" he asked.

"Louis Armstrong," we told him.

So diverse is his playing that he hadn't recognized himself.

Is Armstrong a moving musician? He is emotion itself. I should like to tell you a story to prove this point. I had often discussed the emotive power of jazz with Antoine Ysaye, son of the great

violinist. He had received a classical training, and denied that the new American music had any artistic value whatsoever. One Sunday morning I took him with me to hear Armstrong play in Rotterdam. On the train he laughed at my enthusiasm in anticipating the music we were about to hear.

I'll never forget that concert, which began with a terrific rendition of the *St. Louis Blues*. I closed my eyes to hear it better. It finished with a jolt. Suddenly I heard a strident yell next to me. I opened my eyes, and there was Ysaye standing on his chair, shouting, stamping, weeping. I had to calm him down. Louis Armstrong had convinced (and how!) a confirmed disbeliever in jazz. And Ysaye proclaimed, "Armstrong is the greatest musician in the world."

After this trip in Europe, Armstrong wrote:

During my own three years playing in England and on the Continent, the very first music critics would come back to my dressing room, or call upon me at my hotel, and talk with me for hours about the significance of our music and what they thought it meant. . . . That had never happened to me before in America.

Then came my trip to America, where I spent several evenings with Armstrong, and finally my exile during the bleak days of 1940. A half-hour after the parachute blitz on the Low Countries, I had broken with my past. Now, here I was in New York, worried about the future, and looking up all my old friends. I went to see Louis, who was playing at the Paramount Theatre. He was resting in a huge armchair and held out his light palms to me. His wife was putting on make-up. He didn't say anything in front of her but, in his dressing gown, took me out into the corridor. He took my hand, looked me in the eye, and said, while rolling his expressive eyes, "My dear friend, if you need money, no matter how much, don't you ask anyone else but old Satchmo'."

I went off, weeping. He was the only one of my friends who had given a thought to what my situation might be. Jazz meant a lot to me at that tragic moment of my life. I dried my tears, joined the anonymous throng in the theater, and listened to

Louis, far off on the stage, gargling the eternal lament of his *Tiger Rag*.

## IX. SMALL WHITE BANDS OF THE TWENTIES

### Pennies and Molers, Bix and Chicagoans

FOLLOWING THE HEROIC AGE of the great white bands, there came a period of varied musical currents which played a part in shaping the evolution of jazz. *Jazzmen* has given us a good many anecdotes about this period and the men who made it; we are interested here in its salient characteristics and its lasting effect on jazz music.

Pure jazz in orchestral form was no longer a paying item. The tendency was toward large, pretentious, symphonic bands. Paul Whiteman's debut in Carnegie Hall was symbolic of the era in which someone like Whiteman could be known as the King of Jazz. Other bands modeled themselves on his: George Olsen, Sam Lanin, Ray Miller, Don Voorhees, Roger Wolfe Kahn, Vincent Lopez, and so on.

The genuine hot musicians were themselves forced to seek jobs in the big bands of the day. They earned their bread this way, and they satisfied their craving for real jazz by after-hour jam sessions with other hot men from whatever big bands were in town. From time to time these small pickup bands were fortunate enough to hold recording sessions. Needless to say, the music they preserved on wax has been dealt with far more kindly by time than the pretentiousness of the symphonic swing bands.

The groups we shall discuss in this chapter carried on in diverse forms between 1925 and 1932. Their intentions varied widely, and so did their luck, but, in general, they can be described as small recording bands grouped around a few central figures and sharing a common conception of jazz.

The Pennies and the Molers, by which terms I include all the recording groups which were organized and inspired by Red

Nichols and Miff Mole, were easily the most prolific of these bands. Whatever be their faults, the stamp of their sensitive personality had an undeniable charm.

As for the second group, the centripetal power of a great musician, Bix Beiderbecke, drew together some transitory groups of musicians who lacked the team play of the Nichols group. But the lyrical qualities of Bix's flawless tone and imagination made up for this. The big bands with which he played even tried to re-create a similar atmosphere for him.

The Chicagoans possessed the spirit, the formula, and the feeling, rather than a unified ensemble of outstanding personalities. The name has been applied to a group of young white musicians from Illinois and Indiana who tried to follow in the direct line of the New Orleans Rhythm Kings and the Original Dixieland. Theirs was improvisation pure, featuring the all-out final ensemble. The group was not very definite; they got together from time to time but didn't record very often. But some of the records they made around 1928 were so perfect that, unlike those of the Nichols and Beiderbecke groups, every note still stands out as a thing of beauty and a joy forever.

Red Nichols was born in California and spent his childhood in San Jose, in the Sierra Nevada, near San Francisco. He used to play trumpet in the marching band of his natal town. He went east and played in the band of the Culver Military Academy. Here, George Olsen happened to hear him and hired him on the spot. Arriving in New York with Olsen, Nichols heard two cornetists who made a lasting impression on him: Louis Armstrong at the Roseland, and Bix Beiderbecke at the Cinderella.

Red also met a charming and well-mannered young man, Miff Mole by name, who had won a great reputation with the Memphis Five and the Cotton Pickers. The two hit it off immediately, and soon they were playing together with the California Ramblers. And the recording groups which we shall describe are but a prolongation of this old band.

The musicians who figured in these groups were, on the whole, an outstanding lot. There were the now-famous Dorsey brothers, Jimmy and Tommy, who had received musical training at an

early age. There was Arthur Schutt, who had been an insignificant small-town pianist who played in a motion-picture theater (those were the days before the talkies), when he was discovered by Paul Specht and featured with the Georgians.

Eddie Lang and Joe Venuti had been wandering troubadours before Frank Guarente came along and recognized their possibilities. Adrian Rollini, an important member of the California Ramblers, had a tremendous influence, though one which has disappeared completely, as a bass saxophonist. He went to England in 1928 to play with Fred Elizalde's band in London. We mustn't forget Fud Livingston, a great clarinetist, or his successors, Bobby Davis, Pee Wee Russell, Babe Rusin, Benny Goodman, Sid Stoneberg, Bud Freeman, Frank Teschemacher. Among the trombonists were Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey, Jack Teagarden—not a bad assortment!

The basses of the band during its first period consisted of Red Nichols, Miff Mole, Jimmy Dorsey, Arthur Schutt, and Vic Berton.

Red Nichols, who appears to have been the organizer and soul of the group, used it to express his reaction against the big bands. They tried to play hot, mingling the inspiration of improvised jazz with orchestrated music. Red Nichols and his friends retained the heritage of solo improvisation but dropped the tradition of collective improvisation.

The Red Heads was the first of these Nichols groups, all of which had their own personality and resonance. The contexture of the group—both in technique and in sentiment—is easily recognizable.

Nichols himself was an excellent instrumentalist but not a great improviser. This should not be held against him; neither are Duke Ellington and Fletcher Henderson, nor is their glory the least bit dimmer for it. For a whole decade Red Nichols conducted a work which played an important role in the evolution of jazz. At his side constantly was Miff Mole, an extraordinary trombone whose solos can be heard time and time again without losing interest.

I remember the first records which came over and captivated

our European hearts: *Fallen Arches*, *Hi Diddle Diddle*, *Dynamite*, *Hurricane*, *That's No Bargain*, *Heebie Jeebies*. To my mind, they represent something great, an effort which has been very unjustly condemned.

What else was there at the time? Nothing! The great originators had retired, the Chicagoans were still kids learning how to play, and even Bix had not yet decided what lyrical path to follow. When Hugues Panassié passed judgment on these three groups in 1932, it was simple for him to make the choice to which everyone has since concurred. His reaction against Red Nichols in support of the great tradition was quite unnecessary, yet there was a great deal of difference between this opinion and refusing all consideration of the many fine products of the Pennies-Molers group between 1925 and 1930.

Moreover, Nichols was the first to bring public attention to many great musicians who then were lost in the big bands around New York: Eddie Lang, for example, or Pee Wee Russell, or Adrian Rollini.

The period of Red Nichols and His Five Pennies which dates from 1927 has been shamefully mistreated. In the long series of their recordings are some unquestionable masterpieces. The band had a pleasing individuality, a moving expressiveness, and a genuine soul. Though Nichols was surely no Bix, his orchestra stood for a happy reaction against commercialism. And I think it likely that the Nichols ensembles will still be listened to with interest when the banal orchestral contexture which surrounded Bix will be absolutely unbearable to hear.

My particular favorites are *Washboard Blues*, *That's No Bargain*, *Buddy's Habits*, *Boneyard Shuffle*, *Bugle Call Rag*, *Ida*, *Feelin' No Pain*, *Riverboat Shuffle*.

What do I care if other musicians have greater power, if other records are more effective? There are many reasons for liking a band—because of its atmosphere, because of one musician in it, because of its swing, or simply for some intangible subjective reason. I like these Red Nichols records for their individual and sustained flavor, for certain solos by Jimmy Dorsey, for such masterfully orchestrated passages as in *Boneyard Shuffle*, for the

sweet melancholy of *Ida*, for Fud Livingston's playing in *Margie*, or Pee Wee Russell in *There'll Come a Time*, or Benny Goodman in *Chinatown*, *On the Alamo*, *Dinah*, and *Indiana*.

Success came to Red Nichols, and he became more ambitious. He increased the size of his orchestra and recruited front-rank musicians for it. But despite this, the future recordings no longer had the accent of sincerity of the earlier period.

Take *Peg o' My Heart* for example—a Glenn Miller arrangement. The band was composed of Red Nichols, Charlie Teagarden, Jack Teagarden, Glenn Miller, Benny Goodman, Babe Rusin, Joe Sullivan, Gene Krupa, and others. Despite this array of individual talent, the ensembles lack any outstanding qualities.

The band recorded under any number of pseudonyms: Red and Miff's Stompers, Arkansas Travelers, Louisiana Rhythm Kings, Six Hottentots, Alabama Red Peppers, Charleston Chasers, etc.

Around 1929, under the title of "Louisiana Rhythm Kings," a band consisting of Nichols, Jack Teagarden, Pee Wee Russell, Bud Freeman, and Dave Tough recorded some wonderful sides: *That Dada Strain*, *Basin Street Blues*.

Miff Mole began recording about 1926 as Miff Mole and His Little Molers. I have a warm spot in my heart for two of his records: *Alexander's Ragtime Band*, *Some Sweet Day*, and *A Hot Time in the Old Town*, *Darktown Strutters Ball*. I could listen to these four sides until the end of my days without growing tired of them. They have an unexpected spontaneity and freshness, and Eddie Lang really gets off.

As for *Shim-me-sha-wabble*, recorded by Miff Mole, Red Nichols, Frank Teschemacher, Joe Sullivan, Eddie Condon, and Gene Krupa, it is a true jazz masterpiece equal to the work of the New Orleans Rhythm Kings and the Wolverines on the same number. An album containing all these *Shim-me-sha-wabbles* should be issued; it would be interesting to hear and would illustrate the stages in the evolution of jazz.

Today the members of the Nichols-Mole groups are scattered, and fate has treated them in the strangest and most disparate fashion. Red Nichols, after playing with a long series of differing

bands until two or three years ago, has disappeared from the jazz world. Miff Mole confined his activity for many years to the radio, but was with Benny Goodman in 1943. The Dorsey brothers had a band, split, and now each leads one of America's most popular bands. Adrian Rollini now leads a trio at Jack Dempsey's or elsewhere, playing vibraharp. Benny Goodman has long since become the King of Swing.

Thus the spotlight has picked out some of these old comrades, and others have been left forgotten in the shadows. But those who laugh at Red Nichols and His Pennies fail to remember that the bands they praise to the skies are led by alumni of the Nichols-Mole aggregation.

Bix Beiderbecke has already become a legend, and it is difficult to distinguish between fact and fiction in his career. With jazz, as with painting and poetry, death imparts great qualities which are never discovered in living artists. Bix had no need of this halo, yet it is my impression that his importance had been deformed and made to appear more important by this attitude.

Make no mistake about it. When I cite the great hot musicians, I always mention Armstrong, Beiderbecke, Coleman Hawkins, and Earl Hines. Others perhaps have played equally important roles in the history of jazz, it is true. Yet, even though Louis Armstrong is the only one who has completely withstood the test of time and continues to play great jazz, I stick to this list. Others have assumed much greater importance in the last decade, notably Benny Goodman and Jimmy Lunceford, who have shaped white and colored swing respectively.

But we must reconsider our opinion of Bix Beiderbecke, the "young man with a horn." Already he has been the inspiration for a novel. All that his career needs is a good love story to make an extraordinary theme for the movies.

Leon Beiderbecke was born in Davenport, Iowa, where, as a boy, he first was stirred by the call of the new music. He used to listen to the river-boat bands, and, pale and deeply moved, he'd go home, his destiny whirling about in his brain. In the evening he listened to the phonograph and dreamed of being able to make music himself. He taught himself to play the cornet and later



remained faithful to that instrument even after it had been generally superseded by the trumpet.

There has been a good deal of verbiage wasted in discussing the various influences on Bix. King Oliver, Louis Armstrong, Paul Mares, and Emmett Hardy have been mentioned, and we have seen that Nick La Rocca and Frank Guarente also belong on the list.

Some have sought to include among these influences the name of Johnny Dunn, the reputed inventor of the wa-wa style. That's going a bit too far. I have often listened to Johnny Dunn, and I fail to see how his banal playing could possibly have influenced Bix's passionate style.

Around 1921 Bix entered Lake Forest Academy, near Chicago. At this time he was a shining-faced young man for whom jazz had become a daily need. Whereas I use up the better part of my time in listening to bands and buying records, Bix found a better solution to the problem of the jazz fan. He played it himself and mingled with those of his own age who felt the same enthusiasm.

Around 1922 a small group of pure musicians—half amateur, half professional—began to gig around in Ohio and Indiana. Among its members were Dick Voynow (piano), George Johnson (sax), Jimmy Hartwell (clarinet), Al Gande (trombone), Bob Gonzelman and later Vic Berton (drums). Bix soon joined this bunch and rapidly became its inspiring force. Except for Bix, the band, which left its Midwestern birthplace for the Cinderella Ballroom in New York, boasted no extraordinary musicians, although George Brunies and even Frank Teschemacher played with it for a while. Imagine what the triumvirate of Bix, Brunies, and Teschemacher might have accomplished if they had been allowed to develop together in the same band! But such conjectures are vain. In jazz, one plus one plus one does not necessarily equal three. Psychological factors are so important that a group of obscure musicians often produces better music than an all-star band.

This band is another convincing demonstration that musical inventiveness varies inversely with musical culture. Jazz, we should always remember, was the product of uncultured persons,

and many of its greatest moments were due to illiterate musicians. Such is the case here, since scarcely any of the Wolverines were able to read music. Why is this so?

Why? Because reliance on written music kills off inspiration. Bix was great because he taught himself and adapted his technique to fit his need and mood. Those who study music, and try to modify their own personalities to acquire the proper technique, should keep this in mind.

The Wolverines, in records like *Copenhagen*, inspired the whole white school of music. Bix, who had accompanied the band to New York, where he spent much of his time listening to the Original Dixieland, had already begun to drink heavily before he left it.

Returning to Chicago, Bix played for a while (so the books on jazz inform us) with Charlie Straight's band at the Rendezvous. The group was in rather close contact with Ethel Waters. But Bix was dissatisfied with Straight; he failed to find the echo to his emotional craving for creation, and quit. He left for St. Louis, where he joined Frankie Trumbauer at the Arcadia Ballroom. The two men understood each other and complemented each other perfectly.

When this outfit broke up, both Bix and Trumbauer joined up with Jean Goldkette, who was building up the best big band in America. Bix was teamed with Ray Ludwig and Fred Farrar in the trumpet section. But Bix was bored by the written section work and felt stifled by the general atmosphere, which left him free only for a bar or two here and there in its recordings. With Jean Goldkette, Bix made some lasting friendships with such musicians as Don Murray and Chauncey Moorehouse. The presence of Bix finally determined Goldkette to split his orchestra in two—a hot band, and a melodic band.

Mezz Mezzrow has often told me of the admiration and affection he felt for Bix. Mezzrow himself had fallen under the sway of jazz, and learned to play saxophone and clarinet in Chicago. He used to go out to hear Goldkette's band, half asleep at the table behind his bottle of bootleg liquor until the warm and flow-

ing phrases of Bix's cornet woke him up. Returning to Chicago, he sometimes sat in with a band which contained Teschemacher, Bud Freeman, and Jimmy MacPartland, who succeeded Bix with the Wolverines. They were playing in a cheap little Chicago spot. Mezz would listen to them, wet-eyed and silent, attracted to this pure music as by the Promised Land. But Bix's initiative was already sapped by liquor, and he found it easier to earn big money with the large orchestras. Yet, with all his heart, he yearned for the difficult life of the devotee of pure jazz.

Later, Bix, together with many of Goldkette's stars, left to join Paul Whiteman. He was received like the prodigal son.

Bix drank more and more, and the irregular hours of the musician did him no good. He lay abed all morning, sometimes dreaming of the big blonde who had stared at him all night at the Greystone Ballroom in Detroit, and who had abandoned everything in order to follow him for several days. What had become of her? Sometimes he felt like quitting and going back to Cincinnati. Then he'd drown his sorrows in liquor, or forget them under the strain of creating beauty on his cornet.

Finally Bix reached the point where he could no longer play with the band. He tried his best to reform. He made drastic resolutions, which he promptly forgot on the morrow. He was on the point of joining the Casa Loma band, but a drinking bout ruined this opportunity.

He went back with Paul Whiteman, but from time to time he had to rest up. Finally, he caught cold on a date at Princeton. Only a shadow of his former self, Bix did not have the resistance to overcome his illness. And so Bix, who day after day promised himself that he would return to Davenport to drink milk and play in the grass, finally went west in August 1931, but not the way he planned.

Bix brought to jazz one of the most original and highly perfected talents it has ever commanded. Had his will power not been destroyed by alcohol, this great improviser might have become the great man of jazz. But he failed to surround himself with musicians who could bring out the best in him. The list of

his recordings is a list of pitiful failures in which the beauty of the purest and hardest gem is marred by the inadequacy of its setting.

His first recording band, Bix and His Rhythm Jugglers, contained Don Murray and Tommy Dorsey. Next he recorded his deeply moving piano solo, *In a Mist*, or *Bixology*. Then came his best recording period, when he surrounded himself with a group of friends for a number of sessions: Bill Rank (trombone), Don Murray (clarinet), Adrian Rollini (bass sax), Frank Signorelli (piano), Howdy Quicksell (banjo), Chauncey Moorehouse (drums), were the basic group, although the personnel varied from session to session. *At the Jazz Band Ball*, *Jazz Me Blues*, *Royal Garden Blues*, *Goose Pimples*, *Sorry*, *Since My Best Girl Turned Me Down*, *Somebody Stole My Gal*, *Rhythm King*, *Louisiana*, are the numbers which will outlive most of Bix's recordings.

About the same time, recording under the name of Frankie Trumbauer, he made some fine sides, including *Singing the Blues* and *Clarinet Marmalade*. There are sparks of genius in the other recordings, but the constantly changing personnel never permitted the various groups to attain a real orchestral unity. The larger bands of a slightly later date, which produced *Crying All Day*, *Lila*, *My Pet*, and *Dusky Stevedore*, were insipid in character. *There'll Come a Time* and *Mississippi Mud*, however, are still moving renditions. The others, like the recordings with Goldkette and Whiteman, can scarcely be listened to with a straight face.

The all-star recording sessions organized by Hoagy Carmichael, when Bix, Bubber Miley, Benny Goodman, the Dorseys, Bud Freeman, Jack Teagarden, Gene Krupa, Joe Venuti, and Eddie Lang made *Rockin' Chair*, *Barnacle Bill*, and *Georgia*, did not produce the best Bix items. They were made when Beiderbecke was already well along the road to his premature grave.

During the winter of 1931 Paul Whiteman's band played with one chair left vacant—the chair of Bix Beiderbecke. His friends realized that a genius had committed suicide, and that his place could never be filled.

Somewhat later, when the "young man with a horn" had already become legendary, a group of musicians made the long pilgrimage to Davenport. They arrived early and went straight to the cemetery, from which they saw a woman in mourning emerging. It was Bix's mother. The men knelt before the grave of the great jazz hero, not saying a word. The sun was rising above the near-by forest; the wind was playing with the leaves and the flowers. The men remained wordless, but they spoke to Bix in the only language he ever understood. They took out their instruments, muted, and played *In a Mist*.

The "Chicagoans" and "Chicago style" are terms which were put into currency by Hugues Panassié. They refer to a small group of musicians, gathered in the Windy City during the late twenties, who played in the old New Orleans tradition, slightly modified. They fulfilled the same mission as the New Orleans Rhythm Kings and the Cotton Pickers had before them.

This, however, was no definitely constituted and durable orchestra. It was simply a bunch of fellows attracted to the old conception of pure jazz music. Its nucleus was drawn from several mediocre Midwestern bands, whose hot members got together, wherever the opportunity presented itself, for jam and recording sessions.

As a matter of fact, the Chicagoans contained amateurs as well as professionals. Love rather than necessity drew them to jazz. They were not after money; they were satisfying an emotional need. That is why their conception remained pure and their attitude uncompromising. That is why, amidst all the musical fans of recent years, they are still the ardent zealots of their youth. They prefer to play as they please in small bands rather than pull down big salaries as members of name bands. Their intransigence has saved their integrity, and we all owe a debt to Hugues Panassié for having helped in arousing their consciousness of their mission.

The groups of Red Nichols and Bix Beiderbecke compromised; both of them served as the well-paid stars of big bands. Nothing remains except musicians who felt the spirit, made a few fine recordings, and passed on the torch to others. The poet Lamartine

said that poetry made only those at the two extremities of life weep—the young from hope, and the old from regret. The same is true of jazz.

The nucleus of the Chicagoans was a group of schoolmates who met on the common ground of their admiration for jazz. They found idols in Rappolo and Beiderbecke. They listened to the Cotton Pickers and the California Ramblers, whose records were then popular, and grasped the distinction between true inspiration and its substitutes. They began to play instruments themselves. Once again, we have the astonishing spectacle of men who, from the academic point of view, scarcely knew music, yet produced some of the finest and purest music of all time.

There were the MacPartland brothers, Bud Freeman, Jim Lannigan, and Frank Teschemacher—all schoolmates at Austin High. To them was added a smiling, blue-eyed youth who had early joined the ranks of jazz musicians: Benny Goodman. For this child of a working-class Jewish family, jazz must have represented the noblest means of rising above his station in life.

Others were drawn into the circle: Joe Sullivan, the pianist, Dave Tough, the drummer, and Floyd O'Brien, a University of Chicago student who bought himself a secondhand trombone.

The boys went to hear King Oliver and the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, modeling themselves on the white band and calling themselves The Blue Friars after it.

Soon the young Chicagoans were launched professionally. Jimmy MacPartland was chosen to replace Bix with the Wolverines. Milton Mezzrow and Fud Livingston were playing in a carnival band. Those were indeed carnival days in Chicago, days of musical fireworks. The night air of the Windy City was split by the explosive trumpeting of King Oliver and Louis Armstrong.

Benny Goodman has told me the details of those nights, which were so similar and yet so different. Jazz, and only jazz, was the basis of the nocturnal life of those young boys: the jazz to which they listened, and the jazz they played.

A new rhythmic conception inspired them. They played on the beat, and their collective endeavors began to distinguish them from the other bands round about. New converts joined the

group. George Wettling sat in on the drums. Then Muggsy Spanier blew into town with the Bucktown Five. He speedily realized the spirit of the new band and resolved to team up with them whenever he could. Later came Jess Stacy and Wingy Mannone.

Often they met men from the Negro bands of Chicago after hours, and the two races vied fraternally in the most extraordinary jam sessions.

As more and more of the Chicagoans found regular jobs in various bands, further replacements came up. The very young Marsala brothers came around, and so did Bob Zurke, a pianist from out Detroit way. A whole book would be necessary to describe how they all came together: Bud Jacobson the clarinet, John Mendel the trumpet, Art Hodes the pianist, Rod Cless the clarinetist, and others.

Many of these lads of bourgeois families began by learning the violin. This was true of Pee Wee Russell, whose family had moved from Oklahoma to Illinois. In St. Louis he heard some Negro bands and decided to devote himself to the clarinet. He was the one who became acquainted with a trombone from far-off Texas whose new kind of technique ran rings around the old Miff Mole style—Jack Teagarden.

Then a jazz-crazy jockey, Red McKenzie, left the race tracks and mingled with these musicians. Unable to play any instrument, he fashioned a rudimentary one by blowing into a comb wrapped in tissue paper, succeeding in producing some interesting music. Nor must we fail to mention Eddie Condon, the organizer of many of their groups, who today is still one of the most ardent defenders of pure jazz.

“Chicago style” refers less to a style (which is really no more than modified Dixieland) than to a spirit. It is the generic term which Charles Delaunay, in his *Hot Discography*, used to classify a great number of recordings made by a wide variety of bands, mostly assembled specifically for the recording date, from 1927 to the present. “Chicago style” groups recorded under the following names: McKenzie and Condon Chicagoans, Chicago Rhythm Kings, Frank Teschemacher’s Chicagoans, Eddie Con-

don and His Footwarmers, Eddie Condon's Hot Shots, Milton Mesirov and His Orchestra, Mezz Mezzrow and His Swing Band, Bud Freeman and His Orchestra, Bud Freeman and His Windy City Five, Billy Banks and His Orchestra, The Rhythm-makers, Jack Bland and His Rhythmakers, Louisiana Rhythm Kings, Kentucky Grasshoppers, The Lumberjacks, Whoopee Makers, Ten Blackberries, Jimmy McHugh's Bostonians, Varsity Eight, Jack Pettis and His Orchestra, Irving Mills' Hotsy Totsy Gang, Benny Goodman and His Orchestra, Gil Rodin and His Orchestra, Arcadian Serenaders, Barbecue Joe and His Hot Dogs, Wingy Mannon's Orchestra.

"Chicago style," if we may generalize about it, consisted of a three- or four-part pure improvisation (clarinet, trumpet, tenor sax, and/or trombone) in which the clarinet was often the dominating instrument. As in Dixieland, each of the instruments soloed in turn, with backing supplied by the others, and final chorus was an all-out ensemble climax. This is, to my mind, the most successful formula which hot jazz has found. Such a combination permits polyphonic discoveries of a savage, haunting beauty.

The glory of the Chicagoans was firmly established by just three records made in 1928. These records are among the very few jazz masterpieces that will live forever. If I had to choose only twenty records, a quarter of them would be by the Chicagoans. I would have to include *Sugar and China Boy*, *Nobody's Sweetheart* and *Liza, I've Found a New Baby*, and *There'll Be Some Changes Made*, *Margie* and *Oh Peter*, *Muskrat Ramble* and *After a While* (the last two sides by Benny Goodman, whose *Room 1411*, *Basin Street Blues*, and *Beale Street Blues*, with Jack Teagarden, would be hard to leave out).

Yet, on May 10, 1940, I had to leave home on half an hour's notice, to flee the Nazi invaders. Which of my three thousand records did I take with me? The choice was too heartbreaking—I left them all behind!

But I could very easily spend the rest of my days listening to the best Chicagoan riffs. What wonderful musicians! Frank Teschemacher, Pee Wee Russell, and Benny Goodman are all



among the greatest and most moving clarinetists; Muggsy Spanier, Jimmy MacPartland, and Wingy Mannone are direct and sensitive trumpeters; Mezz Mezzrow's plaintive accents stamp him as one of jazz's leading personalities; Eddie Condon is swing itself on the guitar; Joe Sullivan was and is one of the world's hottest and most sensitive pianists; Wettling, Krupa, and Tough are three of the greatest drummers anywhere.

This spirit still persists with little change. Chicago musicians were among the first to attempt to break down the barriers between black and white. Mezzrow and Goodman were the first white band leaders to use colored musicians. And a Chicagoan record of 1929 mixed jazzmen of both races to produce one of the hottest sessions ever preserved on wax. The musicians were all good: Red McKenzie (blue-blowing), Glenn Miller (trombone), Pee Wee Russell (clarinet), Coleman Hawkins (tenor), Eddie Condon (banjo), Jack Bland (guitar), Al Morgan (bass), and Gene Krupa (drums).

Never was Coleman Hawkins a greater musician than on that day. His solo on *One Hour* is of the most serene beauty imaginable, and on *Hello Lola* he attains a savage fury which unleashes the greatest power a saxophone can produce. Excited by the great saxophonist, Pee Wee Russell surpasses himself. And the rhythmic section is extraordinary. All in all, it is another of the greatest records ever issued.

The Chicagoans have been treated by fate in her usual random manner. Frank Teschemacher, the chief animator of the group, was killed in an automobile accident some ten years ago. Others have deserted jazz, such as Jim Lannigan, now with a symphony orchestra. Some—Benny Goodman, Glenn Miller, Jack Teagarden, Muggsy Spanier, Gene Krupa, Bob Zurke, Wingy Mannone—have had name bands of their own.

Most, however, still continue the old tradition, playing together in small New York spots rather than seeking the big money of the large orchestras. I have heard them often, at Nick's and elsewhere: Muggsy Spanier, still the most moving of white cornetists; Bobby Hackett, Max Kaminsky, Jimmy MacPartland, Bill Davison, all still echoing the glory that was Bix; Brad Gow-

ans, a great trombonist humbly improvising a solid accompaniment; Pee Wee Russell, with his amazing throaty tone on the clarinet; Joe Sullivan, tinkling the keys beautifully.

These are the men who are giving me my greatest impression of contemporary jazz. I remember hearing them play a while ago at the Walt Whitman School. All of them were there, intelligent, sensitive people. Louis Armstrong was there too, and together they played a couple of palpitating numbers that I'll not soon forget. This is true jazz, jazz with a capital J, or, if you prefer, just plain jazz.

## X. THE BIG WHITE BANDS

WHEN PAUL WHITEMAN usurped the title of King of Jazz, he threw real jazz off its course. For his conception was utterly different from that of King Oliver or the Original Dixieland Jazz Band.

This man who had such a great influence on the course of jazz began very modestly as a violinist in insignificant orchestras on the west coast. His first big engagement was at the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco. His success was assured and his fame spread by a concert which he played in Carnegie Hall before his trip to Europe about 1921.

At the height of his glory Paul Whiteman organized concerts in most of the cities of America. He had a radio program and played in the first talking pictures. After a while he scarcely played for dancers at all, and his friends could hear him only on the phonograph and on the radio. He had a one-hour radio program sponsored by Old Gold which paid him ten thousand dollars a week. He recorded for Victor and later for Columbia, whose top star he became. His most important engagement took place in 1928, when the famous film *The King of Jazz* was built about him. The film showed him alone with a big bag from which he drew out all his musicians, whom he proceeded to inspire with

his creative breath. But Ferdie Grofé's orchestration was a cruel disappointment. Paul Whiteman had the opportunity to produce a completely original and modern work. His reputation was great enough to permit such audacity, and it would have been a marvelous piece of propaganda for real jazz. But he missed it; he preferred to submit to the banal taste of the public or of his producer. So what might have been a tremendous contribution was an artistic failure and has, by now, been completely forgotten.

Paul Whiteman was the first to find a compromise between real jazz and the prejudices of the bourgeois public, which could not swallow certain of the novelties of syncopated music. He realized that to be produced successfully, jazz music would have to be watered down unmercifully. His jazz band was a melodic, even a symphonic one. Its quality was, however, improved by the addition of many first-rate musicians. On the whole, his work was banal, for he had nothing to say. He sought after tonal effects which would flatter the cultural poverty of his admirers. His records between 1920 and 1927 are the perfect example of how jazz should not be played. Take, for example, *Mister Gallagher and Mister Shean*, *Doo Wacka Doo*, *Paradise Alley*, *I Love You*, *Somebody Loves Me*; these records have no originality, no bright moments, no relief, and they feature those frightful changes of key tempo which were so characteristic of the time and which seem so outdated today.

For a while, toward the middle of the twenties, it seemed as if the success of Whiteman would put an end to hot jazz. But the new music did not succumb, largely because the musicians themselves, even in the melodic bands, professed great admiration for real jazz. And, as the lovers of jazz became more and more numerous, the domination of Paul Whiteman ceased to be.

If you look at the composition of Paul Whiteman's orchestra as it was in 1926, not one of the names will be familiar. In 1929, however, Whiteman had to introduce hot elements into his band in order to rejuvenate his music. Many of these new men, such as Frank Trumbauer, Bix Beiderbecke, Fud Livingston, Joe Venuti, and Eddie Lang, came from Jean Goldkette's orchestra. This transfusion of new and useful blood kept the orchestra

going for several years, but Paul Whiteman ceased to be a significant figure after 1932.

Paul Whiteman had many imitators during the twenties. One of the most famous was Ted Lewis. Born Theodore Louis Friedman, he became known to his admirers in his native Ohio village as "the poet of Circleville." One day he heard an orchestra led by the barber of the town, one Cricket Smith, who may have been the same man who played trumpet in Louis Mitchell's band. It seems that this barber had the charming habit of singing spirituals or ragtimes as he served his customers. At any rate, Theodore Friedman decided he would become an orchestra leader and changed his name.

In 1910 he had a dance band in Circleville. After many odd jobs he left for Chicago, where he played minor parts in a few reviews; then he found a job with Earl Fuller, who had a well-known band in Coney Island. Next he went to Rector's in New York, and by 1917 he had acquired a reputation. By the time the Original Dixieland came to New York, Ted Lewis was already famous on Broadway, and he even opened a night club.

Speaking of his music, he himself said: "Sure, I used to make ten dollars a night and now I make five thousand a week. But this progress is only financial, for I still play the same music as in the old days at Circleville."

In other words, his music has always been banal, colorless, and unbearable. Yet, on other occasions, Lewis seems to have had illusions as to his own worth. After one of his trips to Europe the surrealist poet Robert Desnos wrote: "Ted Lewis, the King of Jazz, is never tiresome. Those who have had the privilege of hearing him at the Apollo know that the man is worthy of his voice. This big and singularly elegant brigand leads a band of rogues who create rhythmic noise in an atmosphere of mystery. And Ted Lewis recited poetry. . . ."

I heard him at Ostend in the summer of 1930. At the time Ted Lewis had some great soloists in his band—Muggsy Spanier, the Chicagoan cornet; George Brunies, the New Orleans trombone; and Jimmy Dorsey on saxophone. But I confess that I was greatly disillusioned by the band. These three fine musicians were com-

pletely stifled by the musical ideas and antediluvian jive of their leader.

It's a strange thing that Ted Lewis, a believer in melodic or novelty music, should have had the good taste to hire clarinetists like Jimmy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, and Frank Teschemacher, and use musicians like Muggsy, Brunies, and Fats Waller.

Europe too had its Whiteman imitators, of whom Jack Hylton was the foremost. In *Aux Frontières du Jazz* I attacked him mercilessly. I am sorry that I hurt him so, but my problem was to choose between two conceptions—Whiteman and Armstrong. I had made my choice. There is no need to enumerate all the melodic orchestras which followed the path indicated by Paul Whiteman. They have already fallen into the obscurity which they so richly deserve, and I, for one, do not intend to turn the spotlight on their pitiful endeavors.

Other orchestras, however, followed the line of Fletcher Henderson. The best of these was led by Ben Pollack, the former drummer of the New Orleans Rhythm Kings. He had in his band, in 1926, such stars as Jimmy MacPartland (trumpet), Glenn Miller (trombone), Benny Goodman (clarinet), and Jack Teagarden, who later replaced Miller. The hot musicians of the Pollack band formed a small recording band which made a fine series of records, under various pseudonyms, now generally grouped as the Whoopee Makers.

Pollack's band of the thirties was the nucleus of the present Bob Crosby aggregation, with such fine musicians as Charlie Spivak, Eddie Miller, Matty Matlock, and Ray Bauduc. In 1936 Harry James made his debut in big time with Ben Pollack, and a bit later Muggsy Spanier came out of retirement to play with Pollack.

For all this, Ben Pollack did not succeed in finding the formula which makes great swing bands. His band of the twenties was neither flesh, fish, nor fowl, sometimes swinging toward the Whiteman conception and sometimes toward that of improvised jazz. As a developer of fine hot musicians, however, Pollack has few equals.

The case of Jean Goldkette is very similar to that of Pollack.

Among his musicians he numbered such outstanding stars as Bix Beiderbecke, Frankie Trumbauer, Joe Venuti, Eddie Lang, Jimmy Dorsey, and Tommy Dorsey. Yet he too never succeeded in finding the formula which would allow free play for their talents.

The problem was indeed difficult. Fletcher Henderson had solved it, and other Negro bands had followed in his tracks. But the white bands stumbled about, slowly seeking something new. A change was in the air. The formula of collective improvisation gave way to a mechanized orchestration. Instead of individual discoveries based on a general trance came an incessant repetition of prefabricated phrases, known as "riffs," which substituted the power of loudness and repetition for the vital spirit of pure jazz. So, swing was born.

This transition from melodic bands to swing bands was not accomplished overnight. It took several years of adaptation, experiment, and perfecting. The problem appeared almost insoluble, and certain critics believe that it has not yet been solved and never will be. Spectacular jazz requires at least a dozen musicians, but where there are whole sections of instruments, improvisation is impossible. Band leaders hesitated between the two conceptions, and only after stumbling into many false passageways did they finally discover the empirical rules of swing, which is nothing more than a mechanization and a vulgarization of improvisation.

We have already told how, some months before his death, Bix Beiderbecke almost became a member of the Casa Loma band.

What made the friends of the great cornetist think that Bix would be comfortable among the musicians of this new band? It was because they thought that the Casa Loma band had come closest to the goal of all the large orchestras.

The Casa Loma band was formed by a group of obscure musicians who had had a long engagement at the Casa Loma, in Toronto, Canada. After that they played in many of the big American hotels, but their fame came chiefly from their engagement on the Camel Caravan radio program and a series of bookings at college proms throughout the United States.

The composition of the band was Joe Hostetter, Frank Mar-

tinez, Bobby H. Jones (trumpets); Walter "Pee Wee" Hunt, Russell Rauch (trombones); Glenn Gray (Knoblauch), C. Hutchenrider, Pat Davis (saxes); "Mel" Jensen (violin); Joe "Horse" Hall (piano); Gene Gifford (guitar and arranger); Stanley Dennis (bass); Tony Briglia (drums).

The band also recorded under the name of the "O.K. Rhythm Kings" and as "Glenn Gray and His Orchestra." Its personnel, in 1937, was Frank Zullo, Grady Watts, Walter Smith (trumpets); Billy Rauch, Pee Wee Hunt, Fritz Hummel (trombones); Clarence Hutchenrider, Art Ralston, Danny D'Andrea, Kenneth Sargent, Pat Davis (saxes); Joe "Horse" Hall; Jack Blanchette (guitar); Stanley Dennis (bass); Tony Briglia (drums); Glenn Gray (leader).

It is easy to understand the impression which Casa Loma made on its listeners. Its first records—*China Girl*, *Alexander's Ragtime Band*, *Casa Loma Stomp*, *Royal Garden Blues*—seemed to have something really new to offer. The arrival of the Casa Loma band gave an official stamp to the nascent swing music, thanks to the orchestrations of Gene Gifford, who created polyphonic effects supported by loudly played riffs. Improvisation was subordinated to this constant repetition, but it must be said that Casa Loma achieved its ends. For most of those who danced to it, this artificial excitement seemed to be the very trade-mark of real jazz.

The band had a character all its own. Most of its recordings are insignificant, but some present balanced section work, which is extremely fine. My favorite is *Indiana*. It has a meticulous ensemble, a power of attack, a simple transformation of the melody, which is immediately followed by an astounding saxophone solo by Pat Davis.

This orchestra, with slight changes in its personnel, recorded a hundred or more disks. Gene Gifford, whose arrangements had given the band its unique personality, left; and since then various arrangers have worked for it. Its orchestral unity has thus been disrupted.

Meanwhile, the word "swing" had been created to designate this new power, this artificial dynamism which had replaced en-

semble improvisation. The big bands had finally found a successful formula for commercial hot music.

For the flights of spontaneous fancy had been substituted the controlling force of the intellect. A vicious circle had been completed. Jazz is a musical revolution which broke the monopoly of the composer in order to give the musician a greater importance and a role in creation. But the new school tried to write out its arrangements beforehand, once again subordinating the individual musician. This was a backward step, a complete break with the New Orleans tradition and spirit.

We critics are often asked whether swing is better than the old Dixieland jazz. Let us make clear at first that no categorical answer can be given to this question. It is a question of whose swing and whose Dixieland. Just as improvisation depends upon the talent of the musician, orchestrated music depends on the talent of the arranger.

Nevertheless, it would take a musician of great genius to recreate by cold intellect alone the same atmosphere as improvisation. This is not merely theory—just look at the results. We believe that swing has done a good deal of harm to jazz. And from the tremendous production of the big bands of the last ten years has come only a quarter as many worth-while records as from the unpretentious groups of the past.

The problem is easy to understand. In pure improvisation the great individuals have free rein for their genius, and, playing together, the musicians are inspired to surpass themselves. For written music, the arranger must supply all this genius from himself alone. And this is where the trouble lies. For there are only two or three arrangers who stand out above the throng that provides the music for the daily consumption of America.

In reality there is only one great genius among these arrangers: Duke Ellington. He has succeeded in finding something new, in creating his own individual atmosphere, in establishing a new means of lyrical expression. After him come some other fine arrangers: Fletcher Henderson, Benny Carter, Sy Oliver, Don Redman, Gene Gifford. These are men of great talent, certainly, but there is no unity to their work. They worked first for one



orchestra and then for another, and, as each orchestra plays somewhat differently, the personality of the arranger is submerged and not permitted to develop along its own lines.

Around 1928 there were a dozen or so orchestras which employed genuine hot musicians in contrast to the purely commercial bands. In the following years all these orchestras tended toward swing and went after the big money. The leader of a successful big band coined money; it was possible for a saxophonist earning fifty dollars a week in an obscure orchestra to lead a big band a month later and become a Rudy Vallee—a tempting prospect. This explains why the best musicians moved from band to band in search of gold and glory. It is rather difficult to follow the movements of these men who played with one band for a month and then went on to the next.

One of the first swing bands was that of the Dorsey brothers, who gathered many outstanding musicians around them: Mannie Klein, Glenn Miller (whose day was yet to come), Joe Venuti, Eddie Lang, Arthur Schutt.

Looking back on the recordings of the Dorsey brothers, one realizes that it was never as great a band as it seemed at the time. They made some good records, such as their *Honeysuckle Rose*, but they lacked vitality.

Most of those who were to become famous band leaders in the succeeding period won their reputation as improvisers in small groups. Just look at the list: Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey, Jimmy Dorsey, Glenn Miller, Jack Teagarden, Gene Krupa, Wingy Mannone, Muggsy Spanier, etc. How many can you name who are the products of the big orchestras like Paul Whiteman's?

Yet these men who have risen from the ranks of a small band have never ceased to betray the kind of music that first gave them fame. It's hard to explain just why this is so. Just imagine what jazz might have become had they stuck to the old formula! But music is not made with might-have-beens. We must discuss the situation as it actually was and is, and try to understand it. Benny Goodman, to whom we shall devote the next chapter, made swing a success. His band was and is the best of the swing bands, and

all the others were to copy his style to a greater or a lesser degree.

A successful swing band is achieved through the fusion of the spirit of improvisation and the ability to dazzle by spectacular musicianship. And it must be confessed that showmanship has triumphed over art in most cases.

Look at the bands of Gene Krupa and Harry James, for example. Both earned their reputation with Benny Goodman—Krupa for his spectacular drum breaks, James for his brilliant trumpet solos. Fame assured, each went after the big money by organizing his own orchestra. Krupa's band, founded on the qualities of its leader, went in for long and wearisome drum solos, and Krupa is responsible more than anyone else for such noisy and contortionist exhibitions, which generally are not worthy of being called music. They certainly have nothing in common with good jazz.

Harry James, one of the youngest of the great jazz stars, broke into big time with Ben Pollack's orchestra in 1936 and then passed into Benny Goodman's outfit. His tremendous power, his ability to climb into the upper register, his gifts for improvisation, and the showy qualities of his playing made him the favorite trumpeter of America.

Soon Harry James formed his own recording bands, with musicians drawn from the orchestras of Benny Goodman and Count Basie. Finally he broke away from Goodman and formed his own group, a loud, blaring outfit featuring his own trumpet work in gaudy show pieces. As with Louis Armstrong's later bands, the orchestra is of little importance, serving only as a backdrop to show off the spectacular, skyscraper solo work of the leader.

I remember hearing Harry James play at the Savoy, in Harlem, one night in 1939, when he had already achieved the pinnacle of success, at least as far as the jitterbugs were concerned. His band was overloaded with brasses: Jack Palmer, Claude Bowen, Jake Schaeffer (trumpets); Truett Jones, Dalton Rizzotto, Bruce Squires (trombones); Dave Matthews, Drew Page, and Claude Lakey (saxes); Jack Gardner (piano); Red Kent (guitar); Thurman Teague (bass); Mickey Scrima (drums). No great jazzmen here, except possibly Dave Matthews.

But this personnel was only a temporary one; big swing bands are not made up so much of individual musicians as of interchangeable parts. Every week money questions come up, sometimes personal questions. At any rate, musicians come and go, and it is almost impossible for the band to develop a distinctive character. Thus Stearns and Buono replaced Palmer and Schaeffer; Vido Musso played tenor for a while and was later replaced by Johnny Fresco, the fine Dutch tenor, who came straight from Brussels, where he had played with Jean Omer at the Bœuf sur le Toit. In 1941 Harry James went so far as to add a violin section to his band, but the change was not nearly so great as one might expect.

The band is greatly admired by a good many jazz fans, for whom Harry James's trumpeting is the most wonderful thing ever. For my part, I do not care very much for the band. When the arrangement is good the band is all right, but otherwise it has nothing but James himself to offer. Still, we must praise Harry James's constant search for new rhythms and melodies. I would not be surprised if this spirit of initiative should lead Harry James to become, one day, the man who will break with the present banalities and create an integral jazz. But will he have the nerve?

The most popular band, some three years ago, was that of Artie Shaw. Shaw came up late in the twenties, became a friend of Bix's, and recorded with Frankie Trumbauer. At the time he alternated between clarinet and alto sax. Later he played on recording dates, supporting Mildred Bailey and Billie Holiday.

In 1935 he formed his own orchestra, a revolutionary group which included a string section as an integral part of it. The composition of this group at the time of its first recordings was: Willie Kelly (trumpet); Mark Bennett (trombone); Artie Shaw (clarinet); Tony Zimmers (tenor sax); Julie Schechter, Lou Klayman (violins); Sam Persoff (viola); Jimmy Oderich (cello); Fulton McGrath (piano); Wes Vaughn (guitar); Hank Wayland (bass); Sam Weiss (drums). Later, Tony Pastor became the featured tenor soloist, and George Wettling the drummer.

This band was more of an artistic than a financial success, and

Shaw was forced to give up the idea of a string section. He formed a conventional swing band which, at first, sounded like any other. Soon, however, the band found its stride and skyrocketed to fame, thanks to its clever arrangements and finished performances (for example, *Begin the Beguine*, *Indian Love Call*).

Shaw now enjoyed the success which his revolutionary *Sweet Strings* had never achieved. It was almost like a Horatio Alger story: he played at the best hotels, his records sold like hot cakes, he married a Hollywood star.

But Shaw was a strange fellow, and a cultured man in the bargain. From time to time he felt like giving up music and settling down to write. He had no compunctions whatsoever about insulting the jitterbugs who worshiped him. And, at the height of his career, he abandoned his orchestra on the spur of the moment and went off to dream in Mexico. He was by now the most sensational figure in the jazz world, and when he returned he began to organize a band according to his own conception. This meant the reintroduction of a string section in the orchestra. His most recent band was a huge group which featured hot stars, both Negro and white (Hot Lips Page and Maxie Kaminsky played side by side in the trumpet section). But neither did this band last very long; either its size proved too much of a financial strain or its capricious leader didn't care any more, I can't say which.

The band which succeeded Artie Shaw as the most popular in America was conducted by a very different character—Glenn Miller. Miller is a hard worker, a drill master, and a capable businessman upon whom fortune has smiled. He is a fine trombonist who used to play in bands like Red Nichols' and the Chicagoans' when Miff Mole, Jack Teagarden, or George Brunies was not available. On the Mound City Blue Blowers *One Hour* and *Hello Lola* he was certainly the weakest man on the date. But he was a good trombonist, as his career from the Wolverines and Ben Pollack down through Nichols, the Charleston Chasers, and the Dorsey brothers indicates. He developed into a fine arranger whose orchestrations were generally loud, finely balanced, and often inspired by the latest Negro technique.

For many years Glenn Miller was merely one musician among the others. He had a band which recorded, without very great success, in 1935. But in 1939 his big band, modeled along the same lines as Benny Goodman's and Tommy Dorsey's, became an overnight sensation. Its success was due to the quality of its arrangements and the precision of its playing rather than to any individual skill in improvisation. It had its hot stars, however, notably Miller himself and the tenor soloist, Tex Benecke.

The appeal of this orchestra to its jitterbug fans can readily be understood by listening to his greatest successes: *Tuxedo Junction*, *In the Mood*. All the ingredients in these performances are minutely counted, measured, weighed. The slightest effect is calculated, and a mechanical rhythm is maintained.

The Dorsey brothers, Tommy and Jimmy, have entered our story from time to time as they starred in various orchestras and recording bands. We have already seen how they organized one of the best big bands of the early thirties. A quarrel between the brothers put an end to its promising career, and each formed a band of his own.

Tommy Dorsey's band, as it was formed in 1935, had the following personnel: Andy Ferretti, Sterling Bose, Bill Graham, Cliff Weston (trumpets); Tom Dorsey, Ben Pickering, Dave Jacobs (trombones); Sid Stoneburn, Noni Bernardi, Clyde Rounds, Johnny Van Eps (saxes); Paul Mitchell (piano); Mac Cheikes (guitar); Gene Traxler (bass); Sam Rosen (drums).

He later added several hot stars, such as Max Kaminsky and Bunny Berigan (trumpets), Bud Freeman (tenor), Johnny Mince (clarinet), and Dave Tough (drums). Together with Tommy himself, on trombone, this made a nucleus for an excellent jazz band within the band—the Clambake Seven, which swung out in the Dixieland vein. The full band excelled chiefly in sweet and choral numbers (for example, the theme *Getting Sentimental Over you, Marie*, and later *I'll Never Smile Again*), although it has produced some fine jazz music (*Song of India*; *Stop, Look, and Listen*).

Since the sensational success of his arrangement of *Marie*, some seven years ago, Tommy has continuously ranked among

the leading three or four bands of the country. In recent years he has featured the arrangements of Sy Oliver and the trumpet work of Ziggy Elman.

Jimmy Dorsey took a longer time really to get going. His band at first was composed of the following musicians: Joe Meyer, Toots Camarata, Sy Baker (trumpets); Bobby Byrne, Bruce Squires, Don Matteson (trombones); Jimmy Dorsey, Fud Livingston or Dave Matthews, Charles Frazier, Leonard Whitney (saxophones); Freddy Slack (piano); Roc Hillman (guitar); Jack Ryan (bass); Ray McKinley (drums).

Jimmy kept his band on the Coast for several years and was scarcely known to Eastern listeners. He played mostly sweet music; his attempts at hot jazz were rather a hybrid, novelty swing featuring wacky breaks (for example, *Parade of the Milk Bottle Caps*, *Dorsey Dervish*, *John Silver*).

Since coming east, a few years ago, Jimmy has become one of Decca's best sellers. But nine tenths of his music is sweet and has nothing in common with hot jazz.

We might devote a few pages to the bands of Jack Teagarden, Charlie Barnet, Woody Herman, Will Bradley, Bunny Berigan, Tony Pastor, George Auld, Charlie Spivak, and Claude Thornhill. But what's the use? Their music is practically indistinguishable: they resemble each other like twin brothers. They have similar arrangers, similar musicians, similar ideas, and similar successes. That seems to be all they care for, and it is all their public demands.

There are a few bands worthy of special notice. Red Norvo, a wonderful xylophonist, has created a music all of his own. He has had the help of his wife, Mildred Bailey, one of the best vocalists, many outstanding musicians, and such fine arrangers as Eddie Sauter. But Red Norvo's type of music is a sort of jazz chamber music and is off the direct line of jazz tradition. Some months ago I heard him in the Three Deuces with a wonderful young pianist, Hank Kohout.

Special mention must be made of the one big band which has made a continuous attempt to keep up the Dixieland tradition: I refer to Bob Crosby's. Bob is a brother of Bing, and he sang with

him for a while in Paul Whiteman's Rhythm Boys. In 1935 he formed an orchestra whose nucleus was drawn from Ben Pollack's band. Its personnel was: Andy Ferretti, Yank Lawson (trumpets); Ward Silloway, Artie Foster (trombones); Matty Matlock, Gil Rodin, Deane Kincaide, Eddie Miller (saxophones); Gil Bowers (piano); Bob Haggart (bass); Milton Lamare (guitar); Ray Bauduc (drums).

The band took quite a while before it caught on. Joe Sullivan, who was to be his pianist, became ill, and had to be replaced by Bob Zurke. The band has had a wealth of talent: Charlie Spivak, Sterling Bose, Billy Butterfield, and Muggsy Spanier have graced his trumpet chairs at various times; Eddie Miller is just about the best tenor player of the present time, and Fazola and his successors are fine clarinetists; Floyd O'Brien, considered as the best exponent by Panassié, joined the trombone section; and when Zurke left to form his own band, Joe Sullivan and later Jess Stacy took over his duties at the keyboard.

The arrangers Kincaide, Haggart, and Matlock have given a unique flavor to the orchestra, which sometimes is reminiscent of the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, as they have played the old numbers: *Sugar Foot Stomp*, *Muskrat Ramble*, *Royal Garden Blues*, *Panama*, etc. I particularly like the fresh style of Eddie Miller on tenor, who plays with the direct emotion of the old days, and not like the overheated robot which most present-day saxophonists seem to be.

Bob Crosby has recently become a movie star. The band broke up in 1942, and Eddie Miller formed a similar outfit. It is to be hoped that he will go all out for Dixieland.

It goes without saying that all these bands are commercial, and scatter their worth-while music between unbearably saccharine pieces. A lover of true jazz can hardly stand listening to this music, which is devoid of any artistic content. It is my impression that most of the present recordings will sound pretty terrible in a few years and inside a decade will be as completely forgotten as those of Paul Whiteman and Ted Lewis. True, there are fine spots here and there, but the solos of the real hot musicians are lost in the banality of lifeless arrangements.

It must be stated that all these years of swing music have not given us one musician of the stature of the greats of the hot jazz era. The big bands impose a uniformity on all their members, and no longer can a great improviser develop freely. For me, this indicates the artistic bankruptcy of present-day jazz, in which nothing resembles one white band so much as another white band, unless it be a Negro band.

The name bands come and go. One musician alone has successfully withstood all his rivals, and he alone emerges from amidst the swing era. He is the man who started swing, the man to whom we devote our next chapter—the King of Swing, Benny Goodman.

## **XI. BENNY GOODMAN**

ONE WARM EVENING in the summer of 1941 a clamorous mob besieged the box office of Lewisohn Stadium and overflowed onto the street. But not a seat was to be had, and hundreds had to be turned away.

What was the magnet which had drawn these thousands so far uptown? They had come to pay homage to the King of Swing, who was scheduled to extend his sway to classical music as well as jazz.

Inside, the audience was going crazy. Thousands of shoulders shook to the intoxicating rhythm, thousands of hands clapped in unison, and thousands of feet went up and down in an automatic cadence reminiscent of a well-trained ballet corps or the violin section of a symphonic band. Special police were necessary to keep the enthusiasm of the horde within limits. After the third number a bunch of youthful enthusiasts tossed their hats in the air to indicate their approval; a dowager, sitting near me, even threw away her lorgnette and kept complaining thereafter that she couldn't read the program. Before the concert was over some irrepressible jitterbugs had burst the restraining cords and were



cutting the rugs of the aisles with their frenzied lindy hops. And above them all, the clarinet-scepter in his hand, stood Benny Goodman with a broad grin on his face.

Who is this King of Swing? Who is this musician who was unknown, except to hot jazz fans, only ten years ago, and who has led America's most popular jazz band for the last six years? Who is this boy who rose, through music, to fame and fortune, who married an heiress of an old American family? His story is made to order for Horatio Alger, though the theme of jazz which runs through it would have baffled old Horatio.

The Goodman family emigrated from Poland and settled in Chicago. The father was a poor tailor, a religious man who observed the Sabbath and the Commandments. Life was hard for him. He raised a family of nine children, and the thought of nine little bodies to clothe and nine hungry mouths to feed was not an entrancing one.

Benny's childhood knew no luxury; he lived from day to day. What could the future hold in store for him, his brothers, and his sisters? Jobs as clerks, perhaps—maybe even shops of their own—but certainly no more than that. Or so it seemed.

Benny had few toys, but he had the will to make a success of himself. The kids' band organized at Hull House provided him with both plaything and opportunity. The clarinet was his instrument; he was so young and frail, and this was the only instrument cut to his size. He joined the Hull House band and took lessons from a bespectacled music master named Franz Schepp. After a few months of scales and exercises, he attacked the easier pieces of Mozart and Brahms. This was to influence him for the rest of his life. He kept a nostalgic sentiment for serious music, and, even at the height of his jazz career, he remembered Franz Schepp's scorn for the noisy music of the streets. This explains his later excursions into the classics.

One day Benny asked his teacher about some strange numbers he had heard around town, in the night club section. It might have been King Oliver or Louis Armstrong, but whoever it was, it began to haunt the lad. Schepp, however, burst out laughing and ridiculed the idea that this was music.

But there was something about this low-down Negro music, its compelling and somehow tragic rhythm, which struck a responsive chord in the heart of the Jewish boy. Soon he was able to recognize some of the tunes. He saw the last of the musical publicity wagons and heard Kid Ory's tailgate trombone. More than once he felt the glare from Joe Oliver's bad eye, as he sought to hide himself behind the bandstand where he could hear better. He heard Rappolo, and his fingers strove to produce similar beauty from his secondhand clarinet.

One day when a musician at the small Central Park Theatre fell sick, the Goodman youngster took his place and got quite a hand for his Ted Lewis imitation. He began to gig around with other boys at Waukegan and on Lake Michigan excursion boats.

Legend has it that Bix Beiderbecke, playing a boat date, found a kid in short pants fooling around with the instruments during an intermission. He chased the boy away, but Bix was soon to have a great shock. For when he came back to the stand for the next set, there was this same kid in short pants, little Benny Goodman, playing clarinet with the band.

About this time the Chicago group began to come together. The Austin High gang began to play in a small café, the Three Deuces. There were half a dozen young men, friendly rivals on clarinet and sax—Frank Teschemacher, Bud Freeman, Pee Wee Russell, Milton Mezzrow, Benny Goodman—who tried to cut each other in jam sessions after work, or went around together to hear King Oliver and Louis Armstrong. Benny didn't make much money playing, but he could hear Larry Shields, Leon Rappolo, Johnny Dodds, and Jimmie Noone.

Then one fine day Ben Pollack, the New Orleans drummer, blew into town, looking for musicians. He signed Benny and Harry Goodman, Jimmy MacPartland, who had succeeded Bix with the Wolverines, Glenn Miller, and Gil Rodin. Later Jack Teagarden and Ray Bauduc came. Pollack organized one of the finest bands of the day.

In 1928 jazz was going strong: Louis Armstrong had succeeded to King Oliver's throne, Red Nichols and Bix were gaining recognition, the Chicagoans were waxing their greatest

masterpieces. All this time Benny Goodman was hard at work recording with Ben Pollack and with numerous small groups.

Most of these recordings were made with a bunch of Pollack stars who called themselves the Whoopee Makers (or masqueraded under various pseudonyms: Kentucky Grasshoppers, Jimmy Bracken's Toe Ticklers, Broadway Broadcasters, Lumberjacks, Dixie Daisies, Cotton Pickers, Ten Blackberries, Varsity Eight, Jack Pettis and His Pets, Gil Rodin's Boys, Mill's Hotsy Totsy Gang, etc.) or with Red Nichols combinations. During a period of six years or so, Goodman also recorded with Bix for Hoagy Carmichael, with Ted Lewis, Phil Napoleon, the Louisiana Rhythm Kings, the Hot Air Men, the Lang-Venuti All-Stars (*Farewell Blues*, *Someday Sweetheart*, *After You've Gone*, *Beale Street Blues* were the four great All-Star sides), Adrian Rollini, Bessie Smith, Reginald Foresythe, Red Norvo, the Charleston Chasers, Jack Teagarden, and others.

During this time Benny Goodman won recognition as the best clarinetist around. Teschemacher was dead, Jimmy Dorsey's reputation was slipping, and the colored clarinets of the New Orleans school were known only to a limited audience.

Benny was ambitious; like most of his fellow musicians, he wanted to cash in on his popularity by organizing a permanent band of his own. Furthermore, he realized the trend jazz was taking; he witnessed the rise and success of Fletcher Henderson, Duke Ellington, and the Casa Loma band. Big band jazz was the thing; small Dixieland outfits were out. If you put the emphasis on orchestration but left spots for instrumental solos, you might be able to produce good commercial jazz, or swing. Benny laid his plans.

It was around 1934 that his project began to take shape. A musical comedy, *Free for All*, was about to open on Broadway. Benny was chosen to direct the pit band, composed of Sam Shapiro, Russ Case, Jerry Neary (trumpets); Jack Lacey, Red Ballard (trombones); Benny Goodman, Ben Kantor, Hymie Shertzer, Arthur Rollini (reeds); Claude Thornhill (piano); George Van Eps (guitar); Hank Wayland (bass); Sam Weiss (drums). The band was no great sensation, although it had some

fine recording dates. The numbers were arranged by Benny Carter, Deane Kincaide, and Will Hudson and left the impression that Goodman tended toward the Negro style of Fletcher Henderson rather than toward the mechanical arrangements of Casa Loma.

Personnel changes took place which brought in Frankie Froeba on piano, Toots Mondello on sax, and Pee Wee Irwin and Nate Kazebier successively on trumpet. The band went into Billy Rose's Music Hall, improving all the time. Jack Teagarden sat in on trombone for a date or two, and one of the greatest of all white trumpets, Bunny Berigan, who died recently, became a featured soloist with the band. And the Henderson brothers began to contribute some of the greatest swing arrangements of all time to the Goodman books.

The use of Henderson arrangements was a logical step for Benny Goodman, who realized that Negro jazz had developed an exciting vitality which put the more restrained white bands to shame. A partial explanation for this apparently racial difference is that white orchestras generally played in big hotels and had to cater to the musically bad taste of their well-to-do clients, while colored bands generally played in dance halls for Negro dancers, who loved fast and marked rhythm and hot playing. Goodman realized that black jazz at this time was the only worth-while music, and he went to work to make his white customers appreciate it.

After the Music Hall period, Goodman signed a contract for a radio program, every Saturday for thirty-six weeks. Meanwhile the band played one-night stands around New York. Success was slow in coming, but the program was building up a considerable and very appreciative audience of young folks, and the name of Benny Goodman became one to conjure with. He was on the road to glory.

Goodman's style became more and more distinctive, beautifully balanced with full-toned brasses, delicately nuanced saxes, and a galaxy of fine soloists with Benny's own clarinet featured. One thing was lacking, however: Goodman himself was neither a composer nor an arranger. Fletcher Henderson might provide a

wonderful arrangement of *King Porter Stomp* and Edgar Sampson an equally terrific scoring for *Stomping at the Savoy*, for example, but the orchestral unity of Duke Ellington could not be achieved under such conditions. The full-time services of a great arranger are necessary to attain such unity.

Benny Goodman realized wherein lay his strength and his weakness. He realized that his full orchestra could not provide a wholly satisfactory solution to the basic problem of improvisation, and to remedy the situation he set up a smaller group alongside the band, which could give free rein to its improvisatory talents. With this dualist formula Goodman began, like Ellington, to veer toward the concert stage.

With a big swing band and a freer small combination, Goodman was able to secure a wider range of effects. This happy idea of a Goodman Trio was born one night when Benny played with Teddy Wilson and a drummer at a party in Mildred Bailey's house. Benny Goodman, Teddy, and Gene Krupa formed the first Trio, which scored a huge success both in person and on record. Most of the other big bands followed Goodman's lead in developing small jam combinations within the orchestra.

One interesting fact must be clearly brought out. Until 1934 Benny's musical career had been bound up with the Dixieland style, in the tradition inaugurated by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, continued by the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, and developed by the Chicagoans. Yet in organizing a jam band within his white swing band, he turned to Negro musicians and music rather than organize a small group à la Joe Sullivan, Pee Wee Russell, or Bobby Hackett. This was because Benny was a great admirer of Negro jazz, and he didn't lack the courage necessary for any white band leader who might have the audacity to want colored musicians in his orchestra. Benny was the first of the name leaders to break down racial barriers in this way, and others have since followed in his steps.

The Trio was certainly an exciting one. Benny played a clarinet which everybody was to imitate in a year or two; Teddy Wilson, playing his own modification of Earl Hines's style, at least came close to deserving his reputation as the best jazz

pianist; and Gene Krupa was demonstrating the talent which was to make all America drum-conscious very shortly. The Trio became a Quartet with the addition of Lionel Hampton, the master of the vibraphone.

This band within a band showed a persistent tendency to expand. The Quartet became a Quintet with the addition of a bass player (John Kirby or Artie Bernstein). One by one the members of the original Quartet left to form his own orchestra. Krupa, the first to go, was replaced by Goodman's drummer of the moment—Hampton, Dave Tough, Buddy Schutz, Nick Fatool; Wilson by the pianist of the moment—Guarnieri, Fletcher Henderson, Mel Powell, although Count Basie sat in on some recording dates. Hampton was irreplaceable, although a substitute was found in the person of the late Charlie Christian, a fine colored electric guitarist.

The Quintet became a Sextet and finally a Septet with the addition of trumpet (Cootie Williams) and tenor sax (George Auld). The Septet presented at least the external appearance of the old New Orleans and Chicago bands, with its four rhythm and three melody instruments. Its style of playing was very different, however. It was modern, smart—a bit like the small Negro groups of Fats Waller, Teddy Wilson, and Red Allen.

Goodman has had the good sense to leave pop tunes to the heavy orchestral arrangements, and the small group generally played jazz classics, usually the best pop tunes of the twenties and early thirties, but often old New Orleans or Dixieland airs.

But we've gotten past our story; let's get back to the birth of swing. The Goodman aggregation went through the heartbreaking struggle which all young bands experience—a dreary succession of one-night stands in the hinterland, with hundreds of miles to cover each day. There were moments of hope and moments of despair. The band was booked at the Hotel Roosevelt in New York, but Guy Lombardo was hurriedly called back to replace them after two unsuccessful weeks. They secured a nice contract to play at a Denver spot, but the horrified proprietor sent them packing after just two days. They wound up this disheartening transcontinental trek at the Palomar Ballroom in Los Angeles.

Benny was pretty well discouraged and convinced that hot music didn't pay. But to his amazement, the enthusiastic Palomar crowd clamored for real jazz, for the stuff they had heard Goodman play on the air. The band was an overnight success, and the Swing Era had commenced. In contrast to the trip west, the return from the Coast was a triumphal procession, what with six big weeks at the Congress Hotel in Chicago and the Manhattan Room of the Pennsylvania in New York awaiting him. By the time he got back to New York Benny Goodman was the King of Swing, America's Number One Jazz Band in all popularity polls for several years.

Needless to say, the band's personnel was in an almost continual state of flux, and it is not possible here to give an accurate account of its various metamorphoses. The trumpet stars have been at various times: Bunny Berigan, Sterling Bose, Gordon Griffin, Ziggy Elman, Harry James, Cootie Williams; Vernon Brown and Lou McGarity were the best of his trombonists; the sax section has been graced by Vido Musso, Babe Rusin, Dave Matthews, George Auld, Lester Young (records only); the rhythm section has seen many pianists and drummers trying to fill the shoes of Jess Stacy and Gene Krupa respectively, a succession of fine musicians.

Benny Goodman has been on top a long time; those who know are certain his popularity will outlast Artie Shaw and Glenn Miller, both temporary pennant winners. His dominant position has enabled him to secure the services of the best musicians and arrangers. And despite the continual personnel changes, the spirit of the band has remained the same and a choice group of soloists continue to get off against brilliantly figured ensembles. Goodman's standing has also enabled him to ignore racial barriers, as when, in 1940, he reached out for Cootie Williams, a Duke Ellington fixture for a decade, and Sidney Catlett, Louis Armstrong's drummer.

The line-up of the Goodman aggregation in 1941 was: Jimmy Maxwell, Alec Fila, Irving Goodman, Cootie Williams (trumpets); Lou McGarity, Red Gingler (trombones); Benny Goodman (clarinet); Pete Mondello, Les Robinson, Jack Henderson,

Gus Bivona, George Auld (saxes); Bernie Leighton, soon to be replaced by Mel Powell (piano); Charlie Christian or Mike Bryan (guitar); Artie Bernstein (bass); Harry Jaeger (drums).

This was an excellent band, well balanced, with almost perfect section work. Fletcher Henderson continued to be the mainstay of the arranging staff, although there were occasional contributions from the pens of Jimmy Mundy, Mary Lou Williams, and others; and Eddie Sauter, a white musician, began to assume more and more importance until he superseded Henderson.

With the departure of Big Sidney Catlett, the death of Charlie Christian, and the defection of Cootie Williams, who formed his own band, the Goodman orchestra lost its colored musicians.

Benny's most famous musicians have made their reputations as spectacular musicians rather than as "hot" personalities. For some strange reason the big bands of the last ten years have not been able to produce outstanding individuals known and appreciated throughout the world as hot jazzmen. Georgie Auld, Jerry Jerome, and Lou McGarity, for example, are excellent musicians. But since they were brought up in the school of the full orchestras, they substitute for the exciting trance of the old days an academic and rather conventional jazz based on intellect and technique.

But it is an impressive demonstration of Benny Goodman's importance when you consider how many musicians acquired such reputations with him that they were able to start bands of their own. Bunny Berigan, Gene Krupa, Teddy Wilson, Harry James, Ziggy Elman, Lionel Hampton, and now Cootie Williams are the cases which leap to mind most readily.

One after the other the stars whom Goodman has developed and brought into the limelight have deserted him to form their own bands. But such losses never seem to worry Benny. His standing is so impregnable and his income so great that he is able to replace any musician with a more than capable substitute at a moment's notice.



## XII. SATCHMO AND THE DUKE

LOUIS ARMSTRONG IS a full-blooded Negro. He brought the directness and spontaneity of his race to jazz music. Other full-blooded Negroes—Tricky Sam Nanton, Harry Carney, Cootie Williams, Leo Watson, etc.—are likewise noted for the explosive force of their playing.

Future critics may make much of this fact in noting that the musical expression of mulattoes like Fletcher Henderson and Duke Ellington is very different from that of Armstrong. Both these conductors seem to unite symbolically within themselves the musical conceptions of both races. Both strove to find a formula which would combine the power of Negro jazz with the refinement of white jazz.

Fletcher Henderson was studying pharmacy at Atlanta University when he decided he preferred the piano to the mortar and pestle. He went up to New York and found that the chances of a musician were much better than those of a pharmacist in Harlem.

At the time the hot collective improvisations of King Oliver's band had won the heart of New York's colored folk. The whites still went in big for stuff like Paul Whiteman and Vincent Lopez, commercial and showy jazz. There was room for someone who could be original enough to attract interest, and yet conventional enough not to alienate the uninitiated. Along with others not so talented as he, Fletcher Henderson tried to solve this eternal problem of the struggle between novelty and tradition.

For one thing, the small jazz band had to be enlarged. The distinctions between instrumental sections had to be established, and they had to be properly balanced. One had to be careful to prevent individual improvisation from getting out of hand, and even more careful not to efface it completely, as Paul Whiteman had done. In a word, better orchestrations were needed, which

would preserve the appearance of excitement and permit soloists to get off.

Fletcher Henderson has received a good deal of well-merited praise. It must be said, however, that he led true jazz astray and modified its original essence and expression. What had been spontaneous joy in Joe Oliver's band was carefully prepared beforehand by Henderson. For the first time, intelligence and skill took the place of sensitivity and spontaneity. Here, again, lies the problem of all art, one on which definite judgment cannot yet be passed.

Too often in music as in literature clever persons have tried to substitute intelligence for the genius which they lack. Naturally, they cannot succeed. They may be able to deceive their contemporaries, but time invariably shows them up. So has it been with Fletcher Henderson: the best parts of his recordings are those which were not worked out beforehand. The arrangements have proved all too mortal, but the solo work of his inspired musicians will live eternally.

It must be said, however, that Fletcher has shown remarkably good taste in selecting his musicians; the arrangements he has provided for them are beautifully balanced, full of swing, and allow ample room for individual solos against well-planned hot backgrounds. His work has won him one of the greatest reputations in jazz, one which has lasted right down to the present day.

I like him, although my critical sense tells me that Fletcher Henderson has had a deleterious effect on jazz music. He prepared the way for swing, which was to devitalize jazz. The swing era, still going strong, has not made any significant contributions to pure art.

Put seven real musicians in a room, let them play together for a while, and when they feel the spirit they will create something unique, a music with a character all its own. It's an entirely different matter when you put fourteen musicians together in a room. Collective improvisation becomes impossible, and it's a big job to replace it with ersatz inspiration.

Why is this? Because three melodic instruments—trumpet, trombone, and clarinet—can create individual melodic lines which

can cross in intelligible and exciting polyphony. When ten melodic instruments are present, the composer or arranger has to fix the melodic line of each instrument. Unless the arranger is a genius, the musician can't very well be one.

Fletcher's first orchestra, which played at the Club Alabam way back in 1922, was composed of: Howard Scott, Elmer Chambers (trumpets); Charlie Green (trombone); Buster Bailey (clarinet); Don Redman (alto sax); Coleman Hawkins (tenor sax); Fletcher Henderson (piano); Charlie Dixon (banjo); Bob Escudero (bass); Kaiser Marshall (drums). This band had its points; its playing was marked by a delicate sensibility, Buster Bailey's style was already fully developed, and Don Redman's talent had almost matured. Coleman Hawkins, on the other hand, gave no indication that the tenor of *Chattanooga* and *Red Hot Mamma* would one day attain the fullness and fervor of *One Hour* and *Hello Lola*.

I remember the first Henderson recording I ever heard—*I Can't Get the One I Want*. It was a fine platter, whose fluidity and purity pleased me greatly. Henderson had an easy musicality which King Oliver lacked. This was, at the same time, both his strength and his weakness. For in gaining it, Fletcher lost Oliver's spontaneity. During this first period, which lasted from 1922 to 1924, Henderson waxed some fifty recordings, with the band as well as accompanying several blues singers: Lulu Whitby, Josie Mills, Edna Hicks, Alberta Hunter, Ethel Waters, Rosa Henderson. Rosa Henderson, almost completely forgotten today, was one of the greatest blues singers, ranking with Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey. I am not acquainted with the sides, some twenty in number, which she made with Fletcher, but I remember five or six numbers which she recorded on Oriole. The spontaneity, vigor, and depth of her voice lent these records a matchless atmosphere. I am sure the future will restore her to her rightful place among jazz greats.

Slowly but surely the orchestral talent of Fletcher Henderson developed. The reed section, composed of three great musicians, outbalanced the brass section. Henderson remedied this disparity by sending to Chicago for the second cornet with King Oliver's

Creole Jazz Band, a young man named Louis Armstrong. Armstrong and Henderson skyrocketed to fame together, and all the white musicians in New York went to the Roseland Ballroom to hear this sensational orchestra. Here was a music they could understand, yet a vital music which put Paul Whiteman, Ted Lewis, and Paul Specht to shame.

A number of admirable recordings marked the progress of the band: *Everybody Loves My Baby, I'll See You in My Dreams*, *Alabama Bound*, *Copenhagen*. Compare these with the records of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, and the California Ramblers, and you will see the influence of white jazz on Henderson.

During this period all the great blues singers chose contingents from Fletcher Henderson's orchestra to accompany them on record dates: the Smiths—Trixie, Clara, and the incomparable Bessie—Ida Cox, Maggie Jones, Ma Rainey, and a host of others.

Louis brought with him from Joe Oliver's band a New Orleans number called *Dippermouth* with a trumpet solo which has become the oldest tradition in jazz. Rebaptized *Sugar Foot Stomp*, it became a stand-by of Fletcher Henderson's orchestra, and only the first of a series of New Orleans tunes which were converted into riffs and added to the Henderson repertory.

Fletcher continued to develop his orchestra, and most of the great names of jazz played in it at one time or another. Russel Smith and the incomparable Joe Smith joined Louis in the trumpet section, and after Armstrong went back to Chicago his chair was occupied by such great cornets as Rex Stewart, Tommy Ladnier, and Bobby Stark. Fats Waller sat in on piano, and a new trombonist named Jimmie Harrison was added.

Jimmie Harrison was one of the jazz immortals who was not long for this world. Many musicians and critics agree that he was the greatest trombone of all time. Certainly his style of playing has influenced all the Negro trombonists since and, through Jack Teagarden, most of the whites as well. But none of his imitators can match the feeling which Harrison put into every note he ever blew.

With men like Harrison, Rex Stewart, Tommy Ladnier, and

Joe Smith in the brass section, the orchestra was at its peak. Listen to *Fidgety Feet* and *Sensation*, and you'll realize that what has become an aimless mechanism in present-day orchestras possessed a tremendous power in Fletcher Henderson's old band. If it is true, for example, that Henderson's *Clarinet Marmalade* cannot stand comparison with the Original Dixieland's, it is even more obvious how fine the Henderson recording is, compared to most commercial performances by big bands.

In 1928 the line-up of the Henderson orchestra presented an unbroken front of outstanding musicians: Russel Smith, Bobby Stark, Rex Stewart (trumpets); Jimmie Harrison, Benny Morton (trombone); Buster Bailey, Benny Carter, Coleman Hawkins (saxophone); Fletcher Henderson (piano); Clarence Holiday or Charlie Dixon (guitar); June Coles (bass); Kaiser Marshall (drums).

About this time an event in Fletcher Henderson's orchestra shook the jazz world with sensational repercussions. The tenor saxophone, thanks to the sudden development of Coleman Hawkins, took its rightful place among the solo instruments. The first jazz bands had only one reed instrument—the clarinet. When the saxophones were added to the orchestra the alto sax was the featured solo instrument—as witness Jimmy Dorsey, Frank Trumbauer, and Don Redman. Adrian Rollini won fame on the bass sax, but the tenor remained the orphan of the reed section. Hawkins himself played a heavy, uninspired tenor as late as 1927. Then he changed his style, and his new inspiration won him universal acclaim as the greatest of all saxophonists. Hawkins became for the sax what Armstrong was for the trumpet, and under his influence all, save a mere handful of recognized alto stars, deserted the alto sax for its broader-toned brother instrument.

In the early thirties Henderson was playing at Connie's Inn up in Harlem with the following band: Russell Procope, Harvey Boone, Coleman Hawkins (saxophone); Russel Smith, Bobby Stark, Rex Stewart (trumpet); Claude Jones and Benny Morton (trombone); Clarence Holiday (guitar); John Kirby (bass); Walter Johnson (drums); Fletcher Henderson (piano).

The mid-thirties saw Henry Allen (trumpet), Dicky Wells (trombone), Hilton Jefferson (alto), and Coleman Hawkins (tenor) as the featured soloists with the band. In 1936 and 1937 Roy Eldridge (trumpet), Buster Bailey (clarinet), Chu Berry (tenor), and Horace Henderson (piano) provided most of the solo work.

By 1938 Fletcher was fronting the following orchestra: Russel Smith, Richard Vance, Emmett Berry (trumpet); George Washington, J. C. Higginbotham, Edward Cuffee (trombone); Jerry Blake, Hilton Jefferson, Elmer Williams, Chu Berry (saxophone); Fletcher Henderson (piano); Lawrence Lucie (guitar); Israel Crosby (bass); Walter Johnson (drums).

But by this time Henderson's orchestra had ceased to be an important factor in the jazz world. Henderson's arrangements, the best in the early days of swing and which, played by Benny Goodman's orchestra, had done much to assure the success of the swing era, became more and more mechanical and less and less distinctive. Henderson was beaten on his own ground by Basie, Lunceford, and Goodman. He finally gave up his band entirely and devoted his talents to arranging for Goodman. For a short period in 1939 he became Benny's regular pianist.

Fletcher recently fronted a new band at his old stamping ground, the Roseland. The less said about it, the better. Henderson has had many great bands in his day, but his day seems to be over.

Looking over the career of Fletcher Henderson, we can see that he moved steadily away from spontaneous inspiration toward premeditated orchestration. To do this successfully requires a boundless supply of originality. For all his talent, Henderson was limited, nor did he have the strength to hold his musicians in line and dominate his orchestra with his own personality throughout its varied metamorphoses. The qualities so grievously lacking in Henderson, however, were abundantly present in the person of another band leader, Duke Ellington.

Edward Kennedy Ellington was born in Washington, D.C., in 1899, the son of a government employee. He received a solid

musical education as a boy, studying the piano with a teacher named Thomas.

With this background and classical training, Ellington could never become an explosive genius like Louis Armstrong, who had the New Orleans tradition behind him. Indeed, there was nothing very outstanding about him as a pianist. His genius lay elsewhere, in a totally new conception of what American music should be, and he gave jazz one of its most integral and highly personal expressions. For Ellington, untrammelled instinct was not enough. It remained, of course, as the basic impulse of jazz, but on top of it he superimposed the most painstaking and intelligently planned elaboration.

Few of those who heard Ellington's five-piece Washingtonians could have foreseen the tremendous development in his music which was to follow. They came to New York to play at Barons' and then went to the Kentucky Club. This was the time when the most famous colored bands in the city were Fletcher Henderson's orchestra at the Roseland and King Oliver's at the Savoy. When the Cotton Club looked around for a sensational band for its opening, it first asked King Oliver. He refused and thereby opened the way to glory for Duke Ellington.

At the same time Irving Mills took over the management of the band. As its business manager and as an intelligent musical counselor, Mills had much to do with the artistic and commercial success of the Ellington orchestra.

The Duke skyrocketed to fame at the Cotton Club in 1927. Meanwhile his ideas were developing into a wholly new conception of jazz. He had something which Fletcher Henderson lacked, which some may call luck but others will call genius. His style was unique, and he played original numbers whose melodies were well fitted to it.

We have already seen how the Original Dixieland Jazz Band created its own repertory of Dixieland tunes. Ellington did likewise. His new themes were not, however, drawn out of the blue—they were worked over laboriously until they were perfected. A basic idea would occur to some member of the band, the Duke

would develop it, another musician would add a phrase or change it, and by such a conscientious gestation a distinctly Ellingtonian composition was born.

Such a procedure has produced an unprecedented continuity of inspiration and interpretation. This explains why Duke Ellington's was, and is, the best orchestra in the United States.

The greatness of the band is amply demonstrated by the hundreds of records it has waxed under various names for different labels: Duke Ellington and His Cotton Club Orchestra (Victor), The Jungle Band (Brunswick), Harlem Footwarmers (Okeh), Sonny Greer and His Memphis Men (Columbia), Georgia Synopators (Oriole), Earl Jackson and His Musical Champions (Melotone), The Lumberjacks (Cameo), and others.

But his activities were not limited to recordings. He accompanied Maurice Chevalier on the stage, played Gershwin tunes for the Ziegfeld Follies, and toured all America and Europe.

After making a few recordings with a band which included Jimmie Harrison and Don Redman, Ellington's Washingtonians took definite form in 1927. The personnel consisted of Bubber Miley (trumpet); Tricky Sam Nanton (trombone); Rudy Jackson, Otto Hardwick, Harry Carney (reeds); Duke Ellington (piano); Fred Guy (banjo); Wellman Braud (bass); Sonny Greer (drums). Some of these nine still play with the band.

Ellington has known how to choose his musicians and how to infuse them with his own feeling for jazz, so that the orchestra remains an integral whole. But in welding their talents to his own purposes, he has been careful not to destroy their individual temperaments—indeed, he makes use of them to widen the range of the orchestra.

Another of Ellington's contributions was his realization that the soul of the Negro race needed different forms of expression, that black jazz must not be the same as white jazz. With this in mind and men like Bubber Miley and Tricky Sam in his band, he created the famous "jungle style," which relied on growl sounds obtained with the wa-wa mute. He composed and performed such original and gripping pieces as the *East St. Louis*



*Toodle-oo, Black and Tan Fantasy, Creole Love Call, and The Mooche.*

The Duke also recorded some piano solos. *Black Beauty* is played simply and with a good deal of feeling, though Ellington's pianisms never leave the terrific effect of an Earl Hines, a Fats Waller, or an Art Tatum.

Meanwhile, the orchestra continued to develop as Louis Metcalf, Freddy Jenkins, and Juan Tizol were added to the brass section and Barney Bigard and Johnny Hodges to the reeds. Every trip to the recording studios produced several gems of jazz. It is difficult to single out any of these records for special mention, they're all so good. I particularly like the collective excitement and lovely solos on *Bandanna Babies* and the way in which the two sides of *Tiger Rag* stand out sharply from the pale imitations of the Original Dixieland version which other bands put out.

In 1930 came the first serious change in the band's personnel as Bubber Miley left it shortly before his death. The composition then became: Arthur Whetsel, Freddy Jenkins, Cootie Williams (trumpets); Tricky Sam Nanton, Juan Tizol (trombones); Barney Bigard (clarinet); Johnny Hodges (alto sax); Harry Carney (baritone sax); Ellington, Guy, Braud, Greer (rhythm).

Cootie Williams was the perfect choice to succeed Miley. Not only did he continue the growl tradition perfectly, but he played beautiful open horn à la Armstrong. Had Louis never existed, Cootie might well have been the greatest of them all. Bigard, a New Orleans clarinet, is considered by many as the best on his instrument, and he undeniably was the best for a big band like the Duke's. Johnny Hodges plays simple and direct alto and soprano with a world of feeling. He, too, is considered best on his instrument by most critics, and only Benny Carter, Willie Smith, and Pete Brown are in his class.

The orchestra continued to put out terrific recordings. To get an idea listen to *Jungle Jamboree, Echoes of the Jungle, Limehouse Blues, Cotton Club Stomp, Lazy Duke, Ring Dem Bells, Jungle Nights in Harlem, Big House Blues, Saturday Night Function, Mood Indigo, Rockin' in Rhythm, Creole Rhapsody,* and the famous *It Don't Mean a Thing.*

It was in this last number that Ivy Anderson sang:

*It don't mean a thing  
If it ain't got that swing,*

and a new word had been born, a word which has since been erroneously used instead of hot jazz.

In 1932 Otto Hardwick rejoined the band, and a new trombone, Lawrence Brown, was added. The delicately nuanced style and tone which Brown used proved a perfect foil for Joe Nanton's savage jungle trombone. The band recut some of its classics, accompanied Bing Crosby in the *St. Louis Blues*, and recorded such melodic originals as *Moon over Dixie*, *Blue Ramble*, *Blue Harlem*, and *Ducky Wucky*.

In 1933, some months after Armstrong's visit, Duke Ellington's orchestra toured Europe. The European jazz fans liked it tremendously but were rather bewildered by the difference between Ellington and Armstrong. Trying to analyze the Duke's orchestral style, they realized that here was something more than pure improvisation. Some believed that all its music must have been arranged down to the minutest detail.

I was interested in this point myself, and went to London to hear the band play at the Palladium.

It was one of the greatest thrills of my life. I was excited by certain muted brass ensembles, by Harry Carney's powerful baritone work, by Freddy Jenkins' simple and direct trumpet, by the melodious charm of Lawrence Brown's trombone, and by Hodges and Bigard, who proved themselves just as great as their recordings indicated. I realized that here was no static, lifeless music, but a dynamic, flexible, ever-moving music. Even the ensembles, whose structure would seem to be rigid, differed according to the mood of the musicians.

A bit later, when the band came to Paris, I had the opportunity of spending an evening with Hugues Panassié and the Duke. I asked him many questions about his technique, and he described his method of composition just as I have recounted it to you. Melody and execution are experimented with, until gradually musical perfection is attained. All this takes a considerable

amount of time; the orchestra tries out themes, gives them up, and goes back to them. The Duke consults his musicians, listens, compares, seeks the right chords. After a long and slow maturation of the basic theme, the number is ready to go into the books and be preserved on wax. In more recent years the music has been largely preconceived on manuscript, however.

In 1935 the orchestra was further enlarged as Rex Stewart was added to the trumpet section, and Wellman Braud gave way to Hayes Alvis and Billy Taylor, a marvelous two-bass team. There were no further changes until 1939, except that Wallace Jones replaced the ailing Artie Whetsel. This is the band which returned to Europe for a series of concerts in the spring of 1939, when I heard it in Brussels.

Since their return there have been several personnel changes of considerable importance. A young and gifted bassist, the late Jimmy Blanton, joined the rhythm section. Then Ellington added Ben Webster to round out the sax section with a tenor soloist. Finally, Cootie Williams, after a decade with the Duke, accepted an enticing offer to join Benny Goodman, and he was replaced by Ray Nance, who doubles on violin.

I have heard the band several times during the past few years. Duke Ellington seems at times to be deserting jazz and flirting with concert music, but we mustn't worry too much about such evolutions. The band has had bad spells from time to time in the past, but has always rallied in a few months. Duke Ellington is too sensitive a man to let things remain out of kilter. Still, one always senses the difference between the Ellington and the Armstrong approach to jazz; one is constructive intelligence, the other unbridled instinct.

I have spoken at length about jazz with Duke Ellington, who, in addition to being one of the greatest figures in contemporary music, can analyze the problems of jazz with great acumen. He is an advocate of rhythm and considers the rhythm section as the most important in an orchestra. Without an impeccable rhythm as a solid base, an orchestra cannot be very good, no matter how fine its melodic sections. At the same time Ellington criticizes the monotony of certain bands which rely on a continual four-beat

rhythm, which destroys the musicians' individuality by forcing them to play mechanically.

In the Duke's opinion the most important member of the rhythm section is the pianist, whose function is to round out the rhythm with arpeggios and rapid chromatics. Playing solo, however, the pianist should give free rein to his imagination, in so far as his technique permits, yet always remember to keep a steady rhythm lest the other musicians be confused. As a pianist and a band leader, he believes that the afterbeat is just about the most effective rhythm, provided the accent is on the bass.

Duke Ellington's orchestra plays only special arrangements, written by the Duke himself or his brilliant assistant, Billy Strayhorn. This, together with the comparative permanence of its personnel, accounts for the distinctive and continuous individuality which the band has always had. Practically all the other bands sound alike, at least in their ensemble playing, but there is no mistaking a number played by the Duke.

The first step in these arrangements, as Ellington himself told me, is to take care of the rhythm section; all the instruments—piano, guitar, bass, and drums—should play the same rhythm simultaneously. At the same time a good deal of attention is paid to the melodic instruments, particularly the brasses, in order to obtain a full, deep, tonal quality.

Before concluding, we might mention that the Duke has written more popular hits than any other major jazz figure. His melodic vein is indicated, though by no means exhausted, by the following titles: *Moon Indigo*, *Sophisticated Lady*, *Solitude*, *In a Sentimental Mood*, *I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart*, *I've Got It Bad*, *Don't Get Around Much Any More*. An impressive list of popular songs, not one of which is banal.

For six months in 1943 Duke Ellington was the star of the Hurricane in New York with a rejuvenated band in which musicians like Jimmy Hamilton, Nat Jones, Taft Jordan, and others came under the genial direction of the great leader.

There is no need to dwell further on the importance of Duke Ellington's contribution to jazz or on his tremendous influence on other orchestras. Just as Armstrong has inspired all soloists,

even on instruments other than the trumpet, Ellington has furnished a wealth of material for all other composers and arrangers to chew over. His great achievement is that he has attained as high a degree of perfection as only pure improvisation had thitherto produced, by the addition of carefully and intelligently prepared elements to those furnished by instinct alone.

Thus, Ellington stands out in sharp contrast to Armstrong. With Louis the band doesn't count—all that matters is his own genius expressing itself through the bell of a trumpet. The Duke thinks orchestrally; as a piano soloist he is, although wonderful, less interesting, but he has succeeded in molding a great orchestra with the stamp of his own genius.

### XIII. THE NEGRO BANDS OF YESTERDAY

WE HAVE SEEN how jazz evolved from New Orleans to Chicago, from Buddy Bolden to King Oliver, reaching its full stature in the person of Louis Armstrong. A new line of jazz had been started by two great orchestras: Fletcher Henderson's and Duke Ellington's. This chapter will deal with the present-day Negro orchestras, first paying tribute to those which are now but memories. Needless to say, we cannot examine them in complete detail within the limits of this book.

Perhaps the first of the big colored bands, next to Fletcher Henderson's, was McKinney's Cotton Pickers, a band which should not be confused with the original Cotton Pickers, which was a white orchestra.

The band consisted of Langston Curl, John Nesbitt (trumpets); Claude Jones (trombone); Don Redman, Milton Senior, George Thomas, Prince Robinson (saxes); Todd Rhodes (piano); Dave Wilborn (banjo); Bob Escudero (bass); Cuba Austin (drums), at the time of its first recordings. This band originated in Ohio and played around Chicago. Don Redman was its mainstay and was responsible for most of its arrangements.

Their first great hit was *Four or Five Times*, which they followed up with such classics as *Nobody's Sweetheart*, *Some Sweet Day*, *Shim-me-sha-wabble*. Redman's arrangements were quite advanced for the time, although they are somewhat dated today, and Prince Robinson was one of the best tenors of the period before Hawkins attained his prime.

Hawkins himself joined McKinney in 1929, along with Joe Smith and Sidney de Paris (trumpets), Benny Carter (alto), James P. Johnson (piano), and Jimmy Taylor (bass).

The saxophone trio—Don Redman, Benny Carter, Coleman Hawkins—formed an ideal section, and was just about perfect for the time.

Later personnel changes brought Rex Stewart into the trumpet section and Cuffy Davidson into the trombones. But, despite its wealth of talent, McKinney's Cotton Pickers passed out of existence at the beginning of the thirties.

Don Redman formed another orchestra under his own name about 1931. He wrote the arrangements with the help of Horace Henderson. Its first record, *Chant of the Weed* and *Shakin' the African*, made a tremendous impression.

I had already realized that, with Duke Ellington and Don Redman, jazz had begun to fall under the sway of the intellect. Duke Ellington had been the first to introduce this more complicated form of jazz, but *Chant of the Weed* indicated that Redman was likewise capable of producing original and thoughtful compositions. It is one of those themes which depends on rhythmic and tonal effects, and whose melody can never be remembered.

I prefer *Shakin' the African*, which is more in the old vein, mingling hot solos and Don's wonderful vocal with a loose, free arrangement.

Don Redman formed various recording bands from time to time, and he has some twenty or thirty records to his credit. Many great hot jazz musicians—Red Allen, Bill Coleman, Sidney de Paris, Benny Morton, Sidney Catlett—have played with him.

McKinney's Cotton Pickers continued in slightly altered form as the Chocolate Dandies. Under this name Rex Stewart, J. C. Higginbotham, Don Redman, Benny Carter, Coleman Hawkins,

and Thomas (Fats) Waller recorded *That's How I Feel Today, Six or Seven Times*, for Okeh in 1929.

This is one of the best personnels ever assembled, and the sections were well balanced. Don Redman provided fine connections between the solos, and the intelligent presence of Benny Carter is keenly felt. Carter himself directed and arranged a later Chocolate Dandies date for which the personnel was: Bobby Stark, Jimmie Harrison, Benny Carter, Coleman Hawkins, Horace Henderson, Clarence Holiday, John Kirby. This group produced five sides which rank among the greatest Negro jazz. The Hawk was at the pinnacle of his success, Jimmie Harrison was the greatest of all Negro trombones, and the other musicians were of almost equal stature.

*Got Another Sweetie Now* is one of my very favorite recordings, a bit of musical perfection. The tune is melodic but not trite and is fresh and sprightly; it is played with warmth and precision, and the ending has a charming simplicity which brings tears to the eyes. The saxophone solo does not show off any amazing technique, but it is one of the most moving things imaginable, and Jimmie Harrison's trombone and vocal demonstrate what a great loss his death was for jazz music. This is one record surely destined for immortality.

Two years later the Chocolate Dandies recorded again, but this time it was a mixed band in which white Chicagoan musicians joined with the colored stars. The complete personnel was: Max Kaminsky (trumpet); Floyd O'Brien (trombone); Benny Carter (alto sax, trumpet, and arranger); Leon (Chu) Berry (tenor sax); Teddy Wilson (piano); Lawrence Lucie (guitar); Ernest "Bass" Hill (bass); Sidney Catlett (drums). They recorded four fine sides for the English market.

About the same time Benny Carter assembled an excellent group of musicians to record for Spike Hughes, the Irish jazz critic. This all-star band recorded the laborious and modernistic compositions of the Britisher—*Nocturne*, *Pastoral*, *Arabesque*. Compare these with *Got Another Sweetie Now* and you'll see the difference between spontaneous and cerebral jazz.

Another big Negro band which enjoyed great popularity dur-

ing these years was the Blue Rhythm Band. This band was organized about 1931 without any exceptional musicians, though it did have such fine men as Castor McCord, the tenor, and Edgar Hayes, the pianist. The band had a rather personal flavor imparted to it by the somewhat mechanical arrangements of Nat Leslie and Harry White. For a while it was directed by Benny Carter, but finally, in 1934, it passed to the leadership of Lucky Millinder. A considerable amount of excellent talent joined the band: Red Allen, J. C. Higginbotham, Buster Bailey, and Joe Garland. In 1936 Charlie Shavers, trumpet, and Billy Kyle, piano, joined the band. These two, together with Buster Bailey and O'Neil Spencer—also Lucky Millinder, alumnus—were later to form the major part of John Kirby's band.

Among the orchestras which have been almost completely forgotten is that of Sam Wooding, which played in Europe for several years. It consisted of: Bobby Martin, Ted Brock (trumpets); Willie Lewis, Gene Sedic, Ralph James (saxophones); Albert Wynn and Herbert Flemming (trombone); Justo Baretto (piano); June Coles (bass); Ted Fields (drums); John Mitchell (banjo).

Upon Wooding's return to America he organized the following group: Garvin Bushell, Jerry Blake, Bugey Watson, Gene Sedic (saxophones); George Swazie, Frank Wilson, Frank Newton (trumpet); George Walker, Nathaniel Story (trombones); Bernard Addison (guitar); George Howe (drums); Harold Walton (piano); Louis Hill (bass).

Wooding, who today directs a choir, made only a few recordings, and these were not very good. His alto saxophonist, Willie Lewis, remained in Europe until 1940, and scored a considerable success with a band composed of some other Wooding alumni and such newcomers as Bill Coleman, Louis Bacon, Big Boy Goodie, Benny Carter, and Herman Chittison. Willie Lewis had easily the best band in Paris, although we mustn't forget Freddy Taylor, whose Villa D'Este orchestra, in 1935, consisted of: Fletcher Allen (tenor); Chester Lanier (baritone); Freddy Taylor, Charlie Johnson (trumpets); John Ferrier (piano); Oscar Aleman (guitar); D'Hellemmes (bass); William Dierner (drums).



#### XIV. THE SMALL NEGRO BANDS

A BIG ORCHESTRA necessitates a continuity or organization and administration which is difficult for all but a few talented leaders to achieve. A small band, on the other hand, is a much easier form and permits any musician to have his day as a band leader. There are very few first-rate jazzmen who have never, at some time or another, satisfied their ambition to lead a band. When a musician in a big band shows some spectacular solo ability, the record companies are after him to gather a date band together to record for their labels.

The term "small band" refers to a group of five to eight musicians, including generally a rhythm section composed of piano, bass, drums, and guitar, and a melodic section consisting of trumpet, trombone, and clarinet or saxophone. For the most part, it is such small bands which continue in the tradition of improvised jazz, while the big bands go in for arranged swing.

During the King Oliver period, when Chicago was the great musical center, there were many small bands to be heard around the Windy City. One of these was led by the New Orleans pianist Jelly Roll Morton and consisted of Nat Dominique (trumpet), Roy Palmer (trombone), Townes (clarinet), Jelly Roll Morton (piano), and Jasper Taylor (drums).

In 1926 Jelly Roll Morton's Red Hot Peppers made the first of a series of fine recordings. The band which recorded *Black Bottom Stomp*, *Doctor Jazz*, *Grandpa's Spells*, *Cannon Ball Blues*, etc., was composed of the following fine musicians: Jelly Roll Morton, George Mitchell (cornet); Kid Ory (trombone); Omer Simeon (clarinet); John St. Cyr (banjo); John Lindsay (bass); Andrew Hilaire (drums). Later Jelly Roll assembled such men as Ward Pinkard (trumpet), Geechy Fields (trombone), Johnny Dodds and Barney Bigard (clarinets) for various recording dates. Many of these recordings are most impressive, but in my humble

opinion (which is not that of most jazz critics) they are not the equals of the New Orleans Rhythm Kings of the same time.

Another New Orleans musician who has led small bands in Chicago, from the King Oliver days right down to the present, is Jimmie Noone. Jimmie has had a great influence on clarinet style, and even such white musicians as Benny Goodman and Jimmy Dorsey show traces of Noone's influence. Noone's combinations have featured the playing of Earl Hines and Zinkey Cohn on piano and Joe Poston on alto, in a long series of records down through the years. Records like *Four or Five Times*, *Apex Blues*, *Sweet Lorraine*, and *River Stay 'Way from My Door* have lost little of their charm.

Some years ago Noone came to New York to record with a band which boasted Charlie Shavers on trumpet, Pete Brown on alto, and Teddy Bunn on guitar. More recently he recorded for Decca's "New Orleans Jazz Album," using old-timers with the New Orleans-Chicago background.

Little non-commercial outfits like these perpetuate the cult of good jazz. Jimmie Noone himself is a wonderful improviser with a style all his own. Hugues Panassié considers him the greatest of all jazz clarinetists.

The outstanding small Negro band in New York, in the middle and late twenties, was Clarence Williams' Blue Five. As it recorded in 1925, it consisted of Louis Armstrong, Sidney Bechet, Charles Irvis (trombone), Clarence Williams (piano), and Buddy Christian (banjo). The fine music played by this early group is hard put to it to overcome the difficulties of rather primitive recording technique and poor vocalists. Nevertheless, Clarence Williams groups have produced many wonderful records.

Some of the small band leaders have given up big bands in order to return to more intimate jazz; such is the case of Teddy Wilson. While he was featured with Benny Goodman's Trio and Quartet, Teddy Wilson led small recording groups which accompanied Billie Holiday on a long series of swell recordings. When he left Goodman, however, he organized a sixteen-piece band—a very undistinguished one—which played at the Famous Door.

He gave up this large combination and opened at Café Society with a seven-piece outfit, which had Bill Coleman on trumpet and Benny Morton on trombone. The band, which is still playing at Café Society, has a melodic section consisting of Emmett Berry or Joe Thomas, fine trumpets; Benny Morton, trombone; and Ed Hall, one of the finest jazz clarinetists. The music they play is scarcely pure improvisation; Teddy Wilson mixes solos with arranged ensembles and riffs and, with the wonderful drummer Sidney Catlett, has now the best little band. The group of Red Allen contains Don Stovall on alto, the incomparable trombone J. C. Higginbotham, and previously featured Kenneth Kersey on piano.

To my mind, this band represents an honest, sincere, and moving attempt to play real jazz. Rarely has a small band united musicians who play so well together. Red Allen is second only to Louis Armstrong, with whom he was associated for so long a period. Red was born in Algiers, near New Orleans, and his father led a band back in the days of King Bolden. Red—Henry Allen, Jr.—became a noted trumpeter while still young and joined Luis Russell's orchestra, where he was hailed as a second Louis.

J. C. Higginbotham was born in Atlanta, in 1906, and studied music at Morris Brown University. His first job was in Wesley Helkey's small band, and after playing with a few such obscure groups he joined up with Luis Russell in New York, in 1928. Here he met Red Allen for the first time and became his friend.

Red Allen's band had punch and bite, but alas! such orchestras never lead a continuous existence. The musicians are laid off for a few days between engagements, and some other band seeks the services of one of the men. So, when the band finds a new job it has to find another musician to replace him. This accounts for the continuous personnel changes which destroy the unity of most bands.

Coleman Hawkins, since his return from Europe in 1939, is a case in point. He tried to organize a big band but had to content himself with a more modest group consisting of: Joe Guy, Tommy Lindsey (trumpets); Earl Hardy (trombone); Jackie Fields, Eustace Moore, Coleman Hawkins (saxes); Gene Rod-

gers (piano); William Smith (bass); Arthur Herbert (drums).

When I heard the great tenor play at Kelly's Stable, in 1940, he had already lost one of his trumpets. The personnel kept on changing as the band moved from New York to Chicago.

About the same time I heard Roy Eldridge's band. Eldridge is a terrific trumpeter who won his reputation with Fletcher Henderson's orchestra around 1935. He plays with a good deal of dash and originality, though he lacks Louis's control. The orchestra was excellent, but it was not long-lived. Roy Eldridge left to become a featured soloist with Gene Krupa's band from 1941 to 1943, when he led a little combination in Swing Alley, New York.

There are many such band leaders who, unable to find jobs for their orchestras, are forced to join up with other bands. Besides Eldridge, we can cite Pete Brown, Frankie Newton, Sidney de Paris, and Sam Price, not to mention a host of minor figures. Others formed trios and quartets which, because of their reduced personnel, have a better chance of finding work.

There are countless small bands that have played in New York and Chicago spots: Chris Columbus, Savoy Sultans, Earl Bostic, Willie (the Lion) Smith, Kaiser Marshall. I should like to make special mention of Bobby Martin's group, which played in Greenwich Village.

One extraordinary small band is led by Eddie South, the marvelous violinist who plays jazz and gypsy music with equal facility. Eddie has led several different groups at various times; I particularly liked the band he had in Europe. At the present time he is the best jazz violinist and has become one of the regulars at Café Society. Unfortunately, he spends half of the time playing waltzes, tangos, or gypsy music.

Together with Eddie South at Café Society has been the orchestra of John Kirby, perhaps the only small band which has led a continuous existence with the same personnel for a five-year period. John Kirby played bass with Fletcher Henderson and many other orchestras before forming his own band. He realized the difficulty for a colored band to achieve commercial success, but that didn't stop him. His band was unusual, refined, and

composed of first-rate musicians: Charlie Shavers (trumpet), Buster Bailey (clarinet), Russell Procope (alto), Billy Kyle (piano), John Kirby (bass), O'Neil Spencer (later Bill Beason, drums).

I first heard them at the Onyx Club in 1939 and was impressed with their powers of improvisation. Since then the orchestrations have been much more rigid, and the soloists have been held in much tighter rein. The music is about as far removed as possible from the New Orleans tradition. Its personality is completely due to the unusual caliber of its arrangements, which, though rhythmic, are highly intellectualized.

I have already stated how much I admire Charlie Shavers, who seems to me to be the ideal trumpet for a small improvising band. One might think he would be out of place playing the arrangements of John Kirby, but, as a matter of fact, he writes many of them himself. As for the ever-smiling Buster Bailey, he has kept the same flowing style of rapid notes down through the years, and has ranked as one of the leading clarinetists for almost two decades. Russell Procope is a solid rhythmic alto who plays on the order of Charlie Holmes, but with his own individual touches. He is a native of New York and studied the violin before taking up the saxophone. He played with Fletcher Henderson's orchestra during the Connie's Inn period, when the bass player was John Kirby, who likewise was a violinist and had studied music at the Baltimore Conservatory.

The orchestral ensemble is perfect, since the members have played together for so long. The highly refined, sophisticated, and melodic music which they have played has been responsible for their great success at Café Society and at the Monte Carlo.

A completely different sort of music was that of the Spirits of Rhythm, a highly exciting outfit. I often heard them at the Onyx Club in 1939, when they were a six-man string combination. The success of this very effective and unusual group was largely due to Leo Watson, who is one of the hottest temperaments of the present day. He animates the orchestra, electrifies it, and puts it into a trance. Sometimes he attains a sort of rhythmic mania which represents the purest surrealist tradition of jazz. The sub-

consciousness alone is responsible for his tormented vocals, in which scat syllables, the tune, the rhythm, and the imagination are merged to form a potent mixture. Leo Watson is at his best when he is neither too low nor too high; his wildness is superimposed on the more precise and calmer music of the orchestra.

The group was reduced to four men in 1940, when it played at Nick's and in the Hickory House. Its leading instrumentalist was Teddy Bunn, who plays the guitar with such a high degree of skill that he has been chosen for the rhythm section on many recording dates. One of these was the Mezzrow-Ladnier session organized by Hugues Panassié when he visited the United States. This date produced some of the finest recordings of the last few years, notably *Rosetta*, on which Pete Brown takes an extraordinary alto solo. In addition to Leo Watson and Teddy Bunn, there are the two Daniels brothers, one an excellent bass player, the other a marvelous and poignant vocalist who also plays trumpet.

Teddy Bunn played on a Blue Note recording date on which the Higginbotham Quintet (Higginbotham, Bunn, Meade "Lux" Lewis, John Williams, Sidney Catlett) recorded a good *Basin Street Blues*, and the Port of Harlem Seven (the same band with the addition of Frankie Newton and Sidney Bechet) made other fine records.

I shouldn't forget to mention the small band led by Stuff Smith, the fine jazz violinist. He made his reputation back in 1936, when Jonah Jones was his trumpet and Cozy Cole his drummer. Both have since joined Cab Calloway, but Stuff has continued to lead his group at Kelly's Stable and various other places from New York to Hollywood.

And now, for the last and one of the best small orchestras—Fats Waller's. It seems to me that he is the man who has stood out above his rivals during these last few years. Fats is a native Harlemiter, the son of a pastor and himself destined for the pulpit until the spirit of jazz won him from the church, just as it had taken Irving Berlin away from the synagogue. His religious training did have one important effect on Fats—it gave him a solid technique on the organ.

Fats Waller gradually slid toward profane music. With his

talent and his amazing personality, he was a natural. He played the piano with a style of his own, marked by the continual rhythmic use of the left hand. Besides his skill as an instrumentalist, he ranks with Louis Armstrong and Leo Watson among the vocalists who mean most to me.

Fats Waller has played with many orchestras and recording bands, from his days with Fletcher Henderson, the Morris Hot Babies, and the Louisiana Sugar Babes, down through Ted Lewis and the Chocolate Dandies, to his recent sessions with Eddie Condon on the Commodore label. He has also cut many sides of piano and organ solos. His first band under his own name was called "Fats Waller and His Buddies," which recorded the excellent *Minor Drag*.

Recording since 1934 as "Fats Waller and His Rhythm," he has used such musicians as Mezz Mezzrow, Floyd O'Brien, and Bill Coleman, although the regulars of his melodic section were Herman Autrey (trumpet) and Gene Sedric (clarinet and tenor).

I should like to say a few words about Gene Sedric, the excellent reed man who played in Europe with Sam Wooding, and whom Hugues Panassié considers the best tenor after Coleman Hawkins. Sedric was born in St. Louis in 1906 and began his musical career with Charlie Creath in 1922. In 1923 he played with Louis Armstrong and Johnny Dodds in Fate Marable's orchestra on the river boat *St. Paul*. After playing with Julian Huthor, whose band accompanied Jimmie Cooper's revue in Harlem, he was engaged by Sam Wooding in 1925.

Since returning to America, Sedric has been almost continuously with Fats Waller. His solid style, his long, well-rounded phrasing, and his original and sincere ideas have lent considerable interest to Waller's records.

The personnel of Fats Waller's band just before its dissolution was: Bugs Hamilton (trumpet), Eugene Sedric (tenor), Fats Waller (piano), Ed Smith (guitar), Cedric Wallace (bass), Slick Jones (drums).

I heard it several times, and it was a great band. Thanks to the forcefulness of its leader, it succeeded in avoiding the banality

of most orchestras. Fats is always wonderful, whether he sings, plays the piano, or plays the organ. I have only one reproach to make: he spends too much time in jiving around, posturing idiotically, and rolling his big eyes. Fats should leave such burlesqued gestures to those who need it to cover up their lack of talent. He is too great a musician to spoil the effect with such imbecilities.

Fats has been without a band for more than a year now, and Sedric recently had an excellent little group of his own, featuring Henry Mason on trumpet.

## **XV. BIG COLORED ORCHESTRAS**

THERE ARE COUNTLESS important Negro orchestras today, a detailed list of which would be almost endless. All of them, from the best to the worst, have the same fundamental approach to their musical subject. The metamorphosis of jazz into swing has reduced the majority of these groups to the same general level, with a few outstanding exceptions which I should like to discuss.

In every American city you can find a typical swing band of, say, seven brass and four reeds. Whether it is in Daytona Beach or in New Orleans or Hollywood, the musical product is generally the same and of little significance. However, jazz cannot be produced on a mass scale like doughnuts. Stock arrangements have been made from time to time of most of the best-known works by the great Duke Ellington, for the benefit of those who wish to reproduce the music he created. Nevertheless, not one of these orchestras has managed to duplicate the artistic achievements of Ellington himself, because none of them has succeeded in reproducing the exact musical personality of the original.

It stands to reason that the large number of arrangements turned out by writers of commercial orchestrations cannot all be endowed with greatness or inspiration. Even the so-called name bands offer no guarantee of an exception to the rule. Some time



ago in New Orleans I heard a band led by Sidney Desvigne, a veteran steeped in the pioneer jazz tradition. The band sounded just like Erskine Hawkins', Les Hite's, or any other average colored outfit. All of these combinations are satisfactory, but they lack the kind of personality which enabled one to distinguish between such pioneer bands as the New Orleans Rhythm Kings and the Memphis Five.

Among the best Negro band leaders of the past decade, Chick Webb comes to mind as an outstanding figure. This brilliant little artist, tortured by a severe physical affliction, was a splendid drummer who produced a number of first-rate recordings.

Chick Webb was a crippled youth from Baltimore who conquered his handicap through a natural racial faith in his music. Partly cured through a difficult operation, he was given sufficient courage to start working with small bands. He started in New York at the Balconades on Columbus Avenue, where the customers recalling the memorable music created there by the Dixieland Band were somewhat surprised to see the little hunchbacked figure at the drums. But this little man was possessed of a soul, and before many years he had earned himself a place among the immortals of jazz.

In his first band were such men as Johnny Hodges, later famous as Duke Ellington's alto man, and Bobby Stark on trumpet. By 1931 he had a fine band of stars: Shad Collins, Louis Hunt, and Louis Bacon, trumpets; Jimmie Harrison, trombone; Benny Carter, Hilton Jefferson, and Elmer Williams, saxophones; Don Kirkpatrick, piano; John Trueheart, guitar; Elmer James, bass; and Chick himself at the drums.

This was the band that recorded the remarkable *Heebie Jeebies*, which brought something fresh and rhythmic to the musical scene. I remember the first time Hugues Panassié played this record to me in Paris, when we were immediately convinced that a great new band had been born.

Whoever wrote the arrangement of *Heebie Jeebies* somehow recalled the atmosphere of the old Chocolate Dandies, with Benny Carter and Jimmie Harrison working together again. After their departure, though, this was still a great band. In 1934 there

were Mario Bauza, Renald Jones, and Taft Jordan, trumpets; Sandy Williams, trombone; Peter Clark, Edgar Sampson, Elmer Williams, saxophones; and John Kirby replaced Elmer James in the rhythm section. This was the important period when Chick Webb rose suddenly to a top place among the Negro name bands. Edgar Sampson, a good saxophonist, was an important acquisition, since he had a hand in most of the arrangements, giving the band a truly individual stamp. Interesting listening today are such sides as *Sunny Side of the Street*, *Darktown Strutters' Ball*, and *That Rhythm Man*; this last was recorded in 1935 with Bobby Stark and Wayman Carver. By that time Sampson and Kirby had left the band. That the personality of the band was affected by Sampson's departure might well be gauged from the fact that, after Hilton Jefferson had taken over his chair for a short while, Sampson was brought back; and shortly afterwards about ten numbers were recorded in which the band achieved the qualities for which it had been striving.

Around this time an important new figure entered the band in the person of Ella Fitzgerald, a young orphan girl who had saved up to spend an evening at the Apollo Theatre in Harlem, where she took part in the regular Wednesday night amateur hour. Although she was accorded a hostile reception by the unpredictable Apollo crowd, Webb, immediately struck by her charm and vocal style, hired her for the band. Before long her deep, vibrant voice and searing, emotional tone had won her the admiration of every jazz lover and made her the central figure of the Webb organization. The band reached its zenith of public acclaim during Ella's first era of popularity, but in 1939, after achieving his greatest successes and completing his mastery of the drums, Chick's career was cut short by death. His technique was marked by a rhythmic suppleness never marred by heavy effects; he was a brilliant exponent of wire-brush technique and helped to popularize their use. I heard his band a few months before his death and was deeply moved by his fine qualities as a leader. One of the numbers I heard, *Undecided*, had the same charm that had made *A Tisket a Tasket* such a tremendous hit for Ella and the band.

Earlier, Chick Webb had worked up some idea with a little five-piece group out of the band, known as "Chick Webb and His Little Chicks." He also made a number of recordings under the name of "Ella Fitzgerald and Her Savoy Eight," using men from his own band. After Webb's death the band continued under Ella's name, but one by one the best musicians left and were replaced by newcomers.

On many occasions I heard the Fitzgerald band at the Savoy Ballroom, on Lenox Avenue in Harlem, where it alternated with such groups as Lucky Millinder's, Erskine Hawkins', the Savoy Sultans, Earl Hines's and others whose music reflected the excited spirit of this veritable jazz conservatory from which so many fine bands graduated.

Unfortunately, the band did not have the financial success under Ella that it had enjoyed before Chick's death. Several musicians successively took over the leadership, while Ella remained merely the nominal head. Eventually, in 1942 the great Webb tradition departed forever as the band broke up. Ella worked in 1943 mostly at solo acts in night clubs and theaters.

The Blue Rhythm Band has been best known to the general public since it was taken over by Lucky Millinder. In 1937 there were several important names to uphold the reputation of this band: Charlie Shavers on trumpet, Wilbur de Paris on trombone, Tab Smith on saxophone, Billy Kyle on piano, and O'Neil Spencer on drums.

All these musicians have been replaced, but Lucky still has an important band. A year or two ago at the Savoy it was a big moment when his new tenor man started on a solo, and the lindy hopping became more and more frenzied as the music came out of the amplifier. In recent years the important commercial asset of the band has been Sister Rosetta Tharpe, a former Holy Roller gospel singer who does semispiritual numbers, accompanying herself on the guitar.

When Lucky Millinder was away from the Savoy, most often it was Erskine Hawkins' orchestra that would be there to keep the dancers jumping. Both bands are on pretty much the same order, though each has individual musicians with a degree of individual

style. *Tuxedo Junction*, which made Hawkins a big name, is already a thing of the past. The band plays furiously, but it might almost be any other band until its style is established in a characteristic trumpet solo, whose ideas constitute an example of everything that should not be done in real jazz. Actually Wilbur Bascomb, who took the famous trumpet solo on *Tuxedo* and many other Hawkins records, is a far better artist than the leader himself.

Les Hite had a relatively obscure band until he happened to meet Louis Armstrong, who at that time had no band of his own. King Louis stayed in California for some time with Hite's band at Sebastian's Cotton Club. The personnel at that time included such men as Lawrence Brown, trombone; Les Hite, alto sax; Jimmy Prince, piano; and Lionel Hampton, drums. This was the band with which Louis recorded the wonderful *Ding Dong Daddy, I'm in the Market for You, Confessin', and If I Could Be with You*.

After these records were made, Lawrence Brown left the band and joined Duke Ellington. Later Louis made *Memories of You, Body and Soul*, and the side which happens to be my own favorite Armstrong disk, *Shine*. The beginning is sensational; Armstrong's singing, merging abruptly from real words into a scat phrase, is vastly entertaining, and his trumpet solo reaches a climax through skyscraper notes in a manner that has always given this performance an irresistible appeal for me.

After Louis Armstrong, Les Hite continued his career on the west coast. Eventually he came east in 1940 and appeared a couple of times at the Apollo, where I heard the band. It was a competent organization playing adequate arrangements, nothing more. The personnel at that time comprised Paul Campbell, Walter Williams, Forrest Powell, trumpets; Britt Woodman, Allen Durham, trombones; Floyd Teernham, Judillis Martyn, Rogers Hurd, Sol Moore, saxophones; Nat Walker, piano; Frank Paseley, guitar; Al Morgan, bass; and Oscar Bradley, drums. Hite returned to California in 1942 and retired temporarily from band leading early in 1943.

I had already been familiar for many years with Claude Hop-

kins when I caught his band at the Apollo in 1939. Nostalgically, I recollected that it was he who had accompanied Josephine Baker on her European tour in the 1920s. By the standards of those days it was a very exciting combination, playing for an outstanding singer. In addition, Sidney Bechet appeared as a star soloist with his soprano sax, which was a treat in itself.

It was a great disillusionment in 1939 to see how Hopkins' band had changed. Some of his records which I had heard in Europe included some great clarinet work by Ed Hall, one of the most authentic exponents of the New Orleans style. But Hall had left the band, which now seems to lack any particular impact. By way of compensation Benny Carter was producing some wonderful music around the same time in 1939 at the Savoy, with a band composed of Joe Thomas, Russel Smith, Link Mills, trumpets; Tyree Glenn, Vic Dickerson, James Archey, trombones; Jimmy Powell, Carl Frye, Ernie Powell, Cass McCord, saxophones; Eddie Heywood, Jr., piano; Ulysses Livingston, guitar; Hayes Alvis, bass; Ted Fields, drums. Benny led on alto, trumpet, and clarinet.

At the end of one exciting evening which I spent with Louis Armstrong at the Savoy listening to Carter's music, Louis expressed his boundless admiration for Benny, describing him as one of the four or five greatest personalities in jazz.

Carter's name has appeared frequently in these pages, but only a small idea has been given of his multiplicity of talents. In 1933 he had an excellent band in which were Bill Dillard, Chu Berry, Sidney Catlett, and other stars. During that year Carter assembled the musicians who made a number of recordings under the name of the visiting Irish composer-critic, Spike Hughes. Later in the year Carter had a band with an even stronger personnel, including a remarkably powerful trombone trio: J. C. Higginbotham, Fred Robinson, and Keg Johnson. At the piano was Teddy Wilson, playing his first New York engagement and creating a sensation with his new and original style.

A year later Benny Carter had a new band, with Russel Smith, Otis Johnson, and "Mouse" Randolph, trumpets; Benny Morton, Keg Johnson, trombones; Ben Smith, Russell Procope, Ben Web-

ster, saxophones; Teddy Wilson, piano; Clarence Holiday, guitar; Elmer James, bass; Walter Johnson, drums.

In 1935 Benny Carter left for Europe, to work in Paris with Willy Lewis' band. On his first trip he was unable to disembark at Le Havre, owing to domestic legal complications. After returning to New York and straightening out his problems, he finally landed and went to work, at Chez Florence, where the swing fans congregated nightly to hear his brilliant work on both alto and trumpet.

The following year Carter went to London and became staff arranger for the BBC radio house band. He recorded several sessions with a pickup band composed of British musicians, among them Max Goldberg, Tommy McQuater, trumpets; Lew Davis, trombone; Buddy Featherstonhaugh, tenor sax; Eddie Macauley, piano.

After several Continental appearances Carter spent a summer in Holland, where he was joined by another giant of the saxophone, Coleman Hawkins, in a record session which also featured Freddy Johnson on piano and George Chisholm, the talented Scottish trombonist. Later he recorded another session in Paris with Bertie King, clarinet Fletcher Allen, alto; Alix Combelle, tenor; Yorke de Sousa, piano; Django Reinhardt, guitar; Len Harrison, bass; Robert Monmarche, drums—a truly international band including British and French Negroes and whites.

On all his recordings, of course, Benny Carter is responsible for the arrangements and displays his usual peerless talent on both alto and trumpet. On several of his English recordings, notably *Nightfall*, he also played beautiful tenor sax.

In the course of many meetings with Benny Carter, both during his European tour and later on my own visit to New York, I found him a musician of superior intelligence—incidentally, he had acquired a thorough knowledge of the French language—and a man with very distinct ideas on the future of jazz.

On several occasions I heard Benny with a small band which worked for him at Kelly's Stable and the Famous Door. He showed himself as much at ease in a small improvising band as he always has been in a big organized band. Having always been

a stubborn defender of the small improvising groups, I frequently discussed my point of view with Benny, who showed a sympathetic understanding of this attitude.

Moreover, he expressed a viewpoint which seemed to me logically sound. Small improvising bands are preferable, he declared, only when it is possible to build them out of the very greatest musical talent. Otherwise it is impossible to let every man strike out for himself, and the need for leadership and preparation becomes evident. This provides a good basis for some kind of general agreement on the much disputed question of the relative values of improvised jazz and swing—a problem which has divided the jazz critics' camps irreconcilably. It is simply a matter of relative values: Are the individual artists more important than the talent of one good arranger, or is the latter's influence more vital than the band's power of improvisation? This is an eternally moot question among the critics, and there will always be disagreement among them in the assessment of these values.

In the case of Benny Carter, the entire music field seems to be in accord on the potency of his versatile musical personality. In recent years he has done commercial radio and movie studio work on jobs which are usually denied to Negroes.

The last time I heard Carter in person he was co-starred at the Apollo with Billie Holiday. He has had several bands since his return to this country, from the neat and perfectly balanced small bands to the customary big band formula of seven brass and five reeds, always bearing the stamp of his own personal and charming style.

Although his band generally outclasses the majority of his more commercially successful contemporaries, Benny has seldom been able to hold his musicians together very long, owing to financial difficulties. Duke Ellington owed some of his success to the stability of his personnel, a factor that Benny has never been able to count on. Given this advantage, Benny might be one of the few musicians capable of competing on an equal footing with the Duke, and of expressing himself musically without any trace of imitativeness or banality. During 1943, his first year spent in California, he at last began to acquire the reputation he

deserves, and kept his personnel much more consistently than hitherto.

Cab Calloway is one of the more fortunate folk in the jazz picture, since his band is one of the three or four biggest money-makers among the Negro outfits. He was a big name as far back as 1930, and in February of the following year he took over the bandstand from Duke Ellington at the Cotton Club, where he became a key figure in the entertainment at this celebrated night spot, first in Harlem and later on Broadway.

Cab Calloway was a young law student who had not yet truly decided on a career. However, his talent as a scat singer and master of ceremonies eventually drew him into the jazz scene. With his band he quickly made a name for himself, and by 1931 he had established himself on the road to fame by way of radio and records. Harry Cooper, by the way, had left the band and gone to live in Paris. The band at the Cotton Club included Dickerson, Lamar Wright, and Reuben Reeves, trumpets; De Priest Wheeler, Harry White, trombones; William Blue, Andrew Brown, Walker Thomas, reeds; and the same rhythm section.

This was the band which made a series of records (eight sides were reissued in the summer of 1943 on Brunswick), some of which were of musical interest. After hearing one of them, *Some of These Days*, when it was first released in Europe, I observed new possibilities in the astonishing ensembles of this arrangement at breakneck tempo, and something new and different, even after Armstrong, in the unique vocal style of the leader.

Cab's international name value brought him to Europe in 1934 for a successful tour. During an afternoon he spent at my home in Brussels I found that he had some sound views on jazz, appreciated the work of the best musicians, and explained the difficulties of resisting the temptations offered by commercial success. He had hit on a formula and was exploiting it to the full. He made a few records, such as *Margie*, which showed that the band was capable of producing some first-class jazz. Little by little he changed his band until it became one of the best aggregations of talent in the business.

My last evening with Calloway was spent in Amsterdam; with



us was the late Edwin Swayze, his trumpet player, whom I had previously met in Europe with the Plantation Band. Al Morgan, the bassist, known among the musicians as "Kingfish," was also in the party later.

Some young, blue-eyed, flaxen-haired Dutch girls came to interview Cab, who was in good spirits and offered to give a performance, to benefit a Dutch Indies charity, at which he would transform any given theme into his hi-de-ho style. The results were colossal; some of the more conservative Dutchmen were scared out of their wits. Cab's scat syllables burst forth with rhythmic and sometimes mechanical precision. The climax came when a French sailor started to hum the *Marseillaise*. Although Cab had never heard it before, we were soon treated to an incredible scat version of the French national anthem.

Calloway's orchestra, as I last heard it in New York, comprised Mario Bauza, Dizzy Gillespie, Lamar Wright, trumpets; Tyree Glenn, Keg Johnson, Quentin Jackson, trombones; Hilton Jefferson, Jerry Blake, Andrew Brown, Walter Thomas, and the late Chu Berry, reeds; Benny Payne, piano; Danny Barker, guitar; Milton Hinton, bass; and Cozy Cole, drums.

A number of changes have been made with the band since then. Dizzy Gillespie, after playing with several other bands, including Benny Carter's, joined Earl Hines in 1943. Chu Berry, the great tenor man, died in an automobile accident. Many critics had considered him Coleman Hawkins' main rival. Calloway, of course, continues a triumphal career, enjoying a reputation shared by very few Negro bands. In 1943 a great new tenor man, Illinois Jacquet, joined the band. J. C. Heard took over Cozy Cole's chair late in 1942.

Earl Hines was the first artist to elevate the piano to its full glory as a medium for jazz. His role in Louis Armstrong's band was hailed as the work of a genius, and his records with Louis's Hot Five around 1928 were a unique contribution to the annals of recorded jazz. Hines revealed a superb imagination combined with astonishing technique and power. His two hands worked together to produce rhythmic effects that brought something revolutionary to jazz piano style. Earl Hines has often been described

as one of the four or five great jazz pioneers. His solos, such as *Caution Blues* and *57 Varieties*, became the model and inspiration of every young pianist.

Hines was a wonderful musician who seemed still further inspired by his partnership with Armstrong. Was his genius apparent in other surroundings as it had been with the Hot Five? On the basis of such evidence as Harry Dial's records with the Blusicians, or the Jimmie Noone and Omer Simeon records, it would seem that his inspiration in other environments was not quite the same. The explanation is simple: power attracts power, and inspiration feeds inspiration.

Sometime after his first great recordings, Hines became a name in Chicago as the band leader at the celebrated Grand Terrace Ballroom. His first band in 1930 was composed of local musicians, including George Mitchell, Shirley Clay, trumpets; William Franklin, trombone; Toby Turner, Lester Boone, Cecil Irwin, reeds; Hines, piano; Claude Roberts, guitar; Hayes Alvis, bass; Bud Washington, drums. Later Earl enlarged to six brass and four reeds in 1932. Around this time came *Blue Drag* and his theme, *Deep Forest*, which did not particularly impress me as great jazz.

To explain my attitude a little more clearly I might recommend a comparison of Hines's record of *Angry* with the same tune as recorded by the New Orleans Rhythm Kings. The difference between mere workmanship and inspiration becomes apparent after the first hearing, despite the fact that this superlative pianist himself is in fine form.

In the past two years I have heard Hines's new band and found it very enjoyable; however, it sounds exactly like all the colored bands. He has several first-class musicians with him, such as Scoops Carey on alto, one of the very best on his instrument. Hines's own work sounds a little mechanical at times nowadays; the dynamic effects he used to improvise, the wonderful flow of ideas, seem somehow to have become mere formulas. Fortunately, though, I heard Hines at one of Harry Lim's jam sessions, where he played in such company as Benny Carter and Charlie Shavers. I can recall few occasions when I was so profoundly impressed.

Charlie Shavers' electrifying power had in turn excited the normally calm disposition of Benny Carter, and Hines was in rhythmic fury at the keyboard. It was one of the great moments in jam session history. To my mind this again proves what a stimulating effect the atmosphere of a small improvising band can provide.

The role played by New Orleans in the evolution of jazz was paralleled later by the Kansas City group of musicians, who provided two important factors in the shape of the Andy Kirk and Count Basie bands.

Kirk has an important combination which was originally formed in 1927. He won his spurs in Kansas City, later going to Chicago, where reputations were made and broken. In its early days Kirk himself played bass. Many of the arrangements were written by Mary Lou Williams. The first records reveal little in the way of rhythmic originality; for example, *Casey Jones Special* and *Dallas Blues* had nothing particular to offer, in comparison with the contemporary offerings of Henderson and Oliver.

Kirk's band stuck together through many hard years; around 1936, when the leader was playing baritone sax, he had his first real commercial success with some Decca records, which ultimately brought him on a series of Eastern tours, including some successful visits to New York. In 1939, by which time Kirk confined his activities to conducting, he had with him Harry Lawson, Earl Thompson, and Clarence Trice, trumpets; Ted Donnelly and Henry Wells, trombones; John Harrington, Rudy Powell, Dick Wilson, Don Byas, reeds; Mary Lou Williams, piano; Floyd Smith, guitar; Booker Collins, bass; Ben Thigpen, drums; and June Richmond, vocals.

Heard later in the band briefly was the fine trumpeter Bill Coleman. Ed Inge replaced Don Byas in the reeds. The two pillars of the band were always Kirk and his talented girl pianist-arranger, whose solo work always displayed a great personality, aided by a power and attack rare among women musicians. In addition to her records with the full band, Mary Lou waxed some sides with her Kansas City Seven on Decca and, under the pseudonym "Six Men and a Girl," on Varsity.

Andy Kirk has earned a place among the foremost colored bands. The band's work, though by no means sensationally original, is generally interesting and enjoyable.

Count Basie achieved his reputation after inheriting a band which had already had its measure of local recognition: Benny Moten's Kansas City Orchestra. At first this band had three brass and three reeds; several of its records, I remember, came to Europe, but it did not stir up any particular comment. The band was rough and crude; its arrangements were disorganized. *Moten Stomp* is worthy of mention, and *Sugar* was pleasant despite the barking of the sousaphone. To get a good perspective it is interesting to note that the Chicagoans' famous version of *Sugar* was recorded about the same time.

After 1931 the Moten band began to develop some more potent characteristics through the work of such men as Hot Lips Page, trumpet; Eddie Barefield, alto and clarinet; Ben Webster, tenor; William (Count) Basie, piano; and Walter Page, bass. All these men were superior artists whose work was to achieve much wider recognition before long.

Gradually the band underwent a change of character, in which the asperity of the Benny Moten manner gave way to the more advanced ideas of the pianist, Count Basie. Typical of this new style was *Moten Swing*. Basie, his style a little closer to that of Fats Waller than to Earl Hines's, was responsible for the orchestral development of the group, with emphasis on the repetition of riffs, punctuated by a very simple rhythm in which a few notes from the piano provided the high spots.

In 1936 Basie formed a band of his own, using a nucleus of the former Moten group. It was not long before his name began to be discussed in New York jazz circles. John Hammond, hearing this talk about the band, caught one of its local broadcasts from Kansas City. Fascinated, he wrote a long article about this new discovery. Before long Basie had hit Chicago and the Grand Terrace, where the enthusiastic dancers welcomed something that immediately showed signs of becoming a new fashion in jazz.

Basie had achieved a truly original style of musical expression through his band, and within a matter of weeks he had hit the

road to fame. Along with the improvising of Louis Armstrong and Fats Waller, there were at this time two other great bands with distinctive personalities: Ellington's and Lunceford's. Panassié had come out with the allegation that Jimmy Lunceford had the best American jazz orchestra. The truth was that Ellington and Lunceford had two different and marvelous personalities and owed nothing to each other. Suddenly a third big name came on the scene, as Count Basie's arrangements began to make their mark, revealing a style completely different from those of the other two bands. Basie's band was responsible for the popularization of the riff style, using short, incessantly repeated phrases. After 1936 this style came into general use among most of the swing bands. A new excitement had captured the music world, and a new swing style had started to replace pure improvisation.

One of Basie's first records, *Honeysuckle Rose*, demonstrated the transformation of the theme into a series of mechanical repetitions along the lines that were to provide the basis for so much of the big band jazz from that time.

This new style had a magical and stimulating effect upon audiences everywhere, and no less upon the musicians themselves. When Panassié visited New York in 1938 a group of musicians, including the late Tommy Ladnier and Mezz Mezzrow, were assembled in a recording studio for a session. At that time *Hold Tight* was the hit song of the moment. One of the musicians started to play the second phrase from this tune, *I Want Some Sea Food Mama*. The seven notes sounded wonderful, constituting a perfect riff. The musicians kept repeating it; Mezzrow, too, joined in, and Tommy Ladnier added himself to the ensemble. Panassié started to sing along with them, and the whole bunch, possessed by this riff delirium, completely forgot about the matter of making records.

An examination of the evolution of Count Basie's orchestra reveals not only his own excellent musicianship but also his good taste in the selection of musicians. Newcomers to the band included Dan Minor and the tenor sax of Lester Young, who seemed to be one of the few men on this instrument never in-

fluenced by Coleman Hawkins. The rhythm section was reinforced by Joe Jones's supple drumming.

In 1940 the band reached a new peak in its climb to glory. After many changes Basie had settled down with a personnel that comprised Buck Clayton, Ed Lewis, Harry Edison, and Al Killian, trumpets; Vic Dickerson, Dicky Wells, and Dan Minor, trombones; Earl Warren, Tab Smith, Jack Washington, Lester Young, and Buddy Tate, reeds; Basie, piano; Freddy Green, guitar; Joe Jones, drums; and Walter Page, bass.

For several years I have listened to Basie's band every time it has visited New York. I heard him at his most vibrant and rhythmic groove, at the Apollo; soon after, with Paul Bascomb in place of Lester Young, he was at the Café Society, and later at a big Broadway movie theater. The evening at the Café offered unmitigated delight, but the theater engagement showed them way below form, with James Rushing's traditional blues singing as the chief redeeming feature.

In 1943 Basie increased his brass section to eight. Tab Smith is no longer with him, and Don Byas has the tenor chair originally held by Lester Young. The band has spent much of its time on the west coast, making several successful movie appearances.

Last but not least comes the great Jimmy Lunceford band. I remember that not long after the publication in Europe of my first book on jazz, I was told that a new band had come to the forefront in the States; it was even whispered that Louis Armstrong's reputation as a skyscraper trumpet artist had been shattered, and on his own home ground, and that one of Lunceford's men, Sy Oliver, had exceeded Louis's range by a whole octave. Incredible as all this sounded at the time, we were inclined to believe it when the records of *Jazznocracy* and *Star Dust* arrived.

At that time it seemed to me that Lunceford was greatly influenced by Duke Ellington, whose compositions he played, though in a very different style which sometimes gave new life to them.

Lunceford was born near Denver, Colorado. Leaving the mountain surroundings while still very young, he spent his childhood in Mississippi, where he lived amidst a fast-developing jazz idiom that had already grown far from its New Orleans origins.

Tall, broad-shouldered, round-faced, a fine figure of a man, he was seriously devoted to his studies, earned a college degree, and became a high school teacher in Memphis, another colorful city where he was steeped in more of the jazz tradition. It was there, along the levee, that the blues were said to have been born. Many years before, W. C. Handy had heard a hobo singing a nostalgic blues theme, which was later to be incorporated into the *St. Louis Blues*.

Lunceford set out to impart his knowledge of science to the colored youths; in the evenings he would spend many hours dreaming about the future of his race and its music. Jazz seemed a form of evasion and liberation for the Negro. Lunceford set out to learn to play saxophone, and before long he was blowing in amateur bands, along with such men as Elmer Snowden and later, around 1925, in the band of Deacon Johnson. Finally Lunceford found himself at the crossroads of his career and decided in favor of adventure, music, and glory. Giving up his teaching job, he became a full-time musician.

In 1931 this determined and personable young man formed the Lunceford Chickasaw Syncopators, with Eddie Tompkins, Sy Oliver, and Paul Webster, trumpets; Eddie Durham, Elmer Crumbley, and Russell Bowles, trombones; Willie Smith, Dan Grissom, Earl Carruthers, and Joe Thomas, saxophones; Ed Wilcox, piano; Al Norris, guitar; Mose Allen, bass; and James Crawford, drums.

Thus, the men who turned out to be the pillars of the Lunceford edifice were with him from the start. In the brass section the admirable Sy Oliver contributed many modern and constructive arranging ideas which helped in the evolution of the band. In the reed section were Willie Smith, expert alto man and deputy leader, and Joe Thomas, who plays the tenor with a warmth calculated to excite the coldest of hearts. James Crawford's magnificent drums provided an invaluable solid foundation for the rhythm section.

Subsequent changes strengthened the band. Arrangements were written by Sy Oliver, Ed Wilcox, and others in the band, as well as by outsiders such as Will Hudson. Gradually Lunceford

steered the band toward the achievement of a truly individual style which has earned the description "Luncefordian." All the men in the ensemble were excellent musicians who combined a gift of improvisation with the ability to read and play well in the section.

The orchestrations were based on sweeping ensemble effects, powerful successions of brilliantly scored sectional passages, and the eventual introduction of the soloists. A great part of the band's individuality was contributed by the underlying work of the rhythm section. The soloists would tear out impressively from the ensembles with their muted trumpets and occasional use of forceful riffs.

Lunceford owed a great debt to Sy Oliver, who is certainly one of the most interesting personalities in modern jazz, and who gave his whole musical soul to the band. He has an intelligent, calculated talent, mixing polyphony with sheer rhythmic power, finding new tonal effects in his orchestration and occasionally interspersing some delightful touches of musical humor. It was he who taught the trumpet section some of its flashy and somewhat noisy tricks in the skyscraper register, which is one achievement for which he deserves less credit. However, he is one of the few arrangers who brought touches of genius to swing, which can so easily become a boring substitute for real jazz when the arranger lacks any true creative power. For the past four years Oliver has been staff arranger with Tommy Dorsey and has given up trumpet playing. To my mind he is the type of musician who could organize a band of his own and make it as much an individual expression of its leader's ideas as are the bands of Duke Ellington and Benny Carter. His work with Dorsey, however, has been less consistent in the past couple of years.

An important new personality joined the Lunceford band in 1937 when Trummy Young came into the trombone section and was also featured as vocalist. Ted Buckner, another fine alto man, came into the reed section about this time. Such numbers as *Margie* illustrate the constructive power of the ensemble. *Running Wild*, arranged by Willie Smith, was an example of har-



monic balance between the brass and reeds, with imaginative by-play between the trombones and Joe Thomas' tenor incantations.

The dynamic impact of this band improved as time went on. Willie Smith proved himself a sensational alto man, comparable with Hodges and Carter; powerful, yet simple, always playing from the heart. Working as a sideman in the Lunceford band, he was perhaps a little overshadowed despite his great personal charm. Born in 1910 in Charleston, S.C., he spent his childhood daydreaming in the parks, in flower gardens where camellias and magnolias heralded the spring. He was familiar with the old blues and spiritual traditions perpetuated by the Negroes of South Carolina—the same themes I heard myself in 1941 at an extraordinary camp meeting in Yemassee, where I saw scenes of choral incantations and virtual musical trances in the Negro spiritual idiom.

Willie started on the clarinet at ten, playing in amateur bands for Sunday concerts. Beginning his professional career at home, he later went to Georgia and Alabama. One Sunday he arrived in Memphis, where the musicians of 1930 were still reminiscing about the sporting houses of Beale Street, and of the faraway days when Jelly Roll Morton played the blues in gambling dens while the waiters robbed their drink-sodden customers.

It was in Memphis that Willie Smith, who incidentally is pale enough to pass for a white, joined the Lunceford band, which he left in 1942 to join Charlie Spivak's white band. The following year he was inducted into the Navy and was assigned to a band at Great Lakes.

In 1939 I attended a number of rehearsals of the Lunceford band on Seventh Avenue in Harlem. Lunceford, sitting on a trunk, was giving directions with his baton. In one corner Sy Oliver was busy rehearsing the brass section; in another, Willie Smith was training the reeds. The tune was *T'Ain't What You Do*. The bold and melodic ideas of Sy Oliver, who was breaking in two new trumpet men, Gerald Wilson and Snookie Young, were immediately apparent. When Sy departed shortly afterward, Lunceford lost an irreplaceable figure. He had been to this band

what Duke Ellington had been to the history of swing. The style of his arrangements was always immediately apparent, as in *Annie Laurie*, which was the epitome of Luncefordiana.

William Moore, Jr., took Sy's place as staff arranger with the band. Since Moore's departure the Lunceford library has been composed of arrangements by various other writers, including Eddie Durham, Roger Segure, Bud Estes, and Ted Dameron. Moore was excellent, but it was hard to replace Sy. Such numbers as *Pretty Eyes* and *I Got It* revealed Moore's qualities, but also showed the differences between his style and Sy's; this, in turn, explains the evolution of the Lunceford band. Duke Ellington has always been composer, arranger, and exponent. Lunceford is none of these; he is merely the spectacular director of the band. In the course of long conversations with Ellington and Armstrong I have heard them often talk with enthusiasm on musical history and technique. When I tried to discuss these subjects with Lunceford he seemed disinterested in them.

I have spent many pleasant hours with the members of the Lunceford band. Men like Joe Thomas and Ted Buckner enjoy discussing at great length, and with great conviction, the different qualities of contemporary saxophonists. I remember one evening at the Renaissance Ballroom in Harlem, when the crowd was yelling its enthusiasm and reacted violently to the most exciting ensembles and solos. Joe Thomas or Willie Smith would start the frenzy, Trummy Young would keep it up at fever pitch, and the trumpet section would emphasize the general state of ecstasy. These evenings of musical delirium would generally be followed by a long session of general conversation.

In the past two years Lunceford has lost most of the band's original key men. Late in 1943 Trummy Young was with Charlie Barnet; the trumpet section had only Paul Webster left of the originals; Crawford, Buckner, and Crumbley had gone, as well as Willie Smith, and for a while Lunceford had to play saxophone himself, for the first time in many years. The band has lost some of its old precision and fire but still has many admirable arrangements in its books.

All the big colored bands discussed here have reached their

maturity and cannot be expected to add any further innovations. They have reached the full bloom of their powers of expression; some of them have retained their qualities, while others are slowly losing them and slipping into the past.

For five or six years swing music has lived on the initiative and energy of such bands as these. Perhaps something new is needed now. The danger lies in the fact that what was originally a thing of inspiration can degenerate into a routine. These bands are getting old, just like human beings. Which is to be the young band that will inscribe its name below those famous ones in the book of jazz fame? Will it be Jay McShann, with his volatile new bunch from Kansas City, or King Kolax, who was a hit in Chicago but failed to make an impression in New York? Will it be the young organization led by Cootie Williams, or Harlan Leonard and His Rockets, who attempted to rejuvenate the old Kansas City style?

It is difficult to guess the answer, but perhaps the band which will turn out tomorrow's sensation is Lionel Hampton's for Lionel's powerful personality and imagination have enabled him to make rapid strides. He has gone a long way from the music made by his specially assembled recording bands in 1938-39, when such men as Cootie Williams, Lawrence Brown, Johnny Hodges, Jess Stacy, John Kirby and Cozy Cole contributed in a number of first-rate improvisations. His present band was formed in 1940 after he left Benny Goodman. Its first appearance at the Apollo Theatre, when it was not much more than a year old, was a revelation. Since then the band has undergone many changes in personnel. It now includes an extraordinary pianist, Milton Buckner, brother of the former Lunceford sax man, and a great tenor, Arnette Cobbs.

Cootie Williams' band has proven itself worthy of its brilliant leader. Using excellent arrangements by Don Kirkpatrick and others, Cootie has featured such men as Eddie Vinson, the unique blues singer and alto sax, and several other fine soloists.

To sum up, it must be conceded that the modern swing style, which has taken the place of pure improvisation, makes a difficult medium for the expression of musical beauty. Some great

arrangers have appeared on the scene, giving life to the bands; the rest are all about the same, and of no particular merit. It takes a great deal of talent to produce collective improvisation, but there is no doubt that nothing short of genius is necessary to give swing music the qualities of a major art.

## **XVI. FROM SPIRITUALS TO BOOGIE-WOOGIE**

WE HAVE ALREADY DISCUSSED at some length the evolution of the jazz orchestra. Having examined the trees, we should next get a clear perspective of the woods, in order to gain a more general view of our subject.

It is hard to determine the exact periods marking the transformation from one style to another. When did the spirituals and popular ballads begin? Some authorities would set the date around the middle of the nineteenth century. It seems to me that at that time there were already some spirituals in existence which were passed along from generation to generation. Certainly the spiritual goes back to the time of Negro slavery in the Southern agricultural states, and these religious songs of hope survived despite a lack of acceptance by whites of that period.

During the Civil War Colonel Wentworth Higginson, coming from the North, heard some colored groups of religious singers who impressed him greatly with their style, which was rhythmic though not syncopated. The spirituals were a product of hymns heard by Negroes in the Southern churches, mixed with plantation songs in which a more syncopated element can be found. At the outset these spirituals were called jubilees. After falling into obscurity they were revived through the important work of a Fisk University group started in 1871 under the direction of George White. This group took the traditional religious airs and adapted them to be sung throughout the world. Similar vocal groups were organized at Tuskegee, Atlanta, and Hampton. The complete success of this musical renaissance movement was con-

firmed in a book on the subject written about 1900 by Dr. Du Bois. America had begun to be moved by this simple and direct poetry, sung by a race so often humiliated and spurned.

Henry Krehbiel published a book of *Afro-American Folk Songs*, in which were rejuvenated some of the old hymns that had been born in Southern congregations and had passed into the realm of folklore.

At first the spirituals were sung by choirs. Today there are many fine groups interpreting spirituals, including those of Eva Jessye and Hall Johnson. Through the early choral interpretations, the popular and religious expression of this music took on a new rhythmic perfection; later there were smaller combinations and outstanding soloists identified with the spiritual, among them Nathaniel Dett, Carl Ditton, Ballanta-Taylor, and Lawrence Brown.

Such spirituals as *Glory Road*, *Go Down Moses*, and *I Want to Be Ready* developed alongside the popular songs such as *John Henry*, *Steel Drivin' Sam*, and *Joe Turner*.

It has been observed that the French influence on the Negroes allowed them greater liberty for their powers of syncopation. The spiritual seems to have been a product of the contacts between the Negro and Anglo-Saxon religious elements. The puritanical control thus involved seems to have brought about a suppression of the essentially African characteristics in the spiritual. The difference between the British- and French-dominated areas of the United States is reflected in the contrast between the musical products of Virginia, Georgia, and the Carolinas—*Carry Me Back to Old Virginny*, *Casey Jones*, *John Henry*—and the Mississippi region's *Joe Turner* and the early blues.

The blues, a product of the spiritual, was another popular form which was crystallized and formalized considerably later. Curiously enough, it was only in recent years that the blues achieved any real recognition and understanding by writers and critics. In *Jazzmen*, as Leonard Feather has pointed out, the examples selected by E. Simms Campbell were actually not blues in many cases. Campbell was misled by the superficial character of certain compositions. The blues is a Negro product which

antedates jazz as a whole. Generally, it is based on a three-line theme in which the first and second lines are similar.

Discussing the musical form of the blues, Dr. Alain Locke wrote in *The Negro and His Music*:

The tunes are built around a succession of three common chords on the keynote, the subdominant and the chord of the dominant seventh. The repetition of the second line gives emphasis, a chance for improvised variation, leaving a wait in which originally to think up the last line, and later in which to improvise and vary the rhythm before returning to the regular pattern of the original theme. This interval is the original "break"—the narrow cradle for improvised rhythm and eccentric tone intervals from which jazz was born.

The blues, contrary to the popular development of jazz songs, was always based on a theme only twelve bars long. I have explained how the musical folklore of the Mississippi was exploited by the musicians whose names I quoted. The most important of these was Louis Moreau Gottschalk; a man of mixed blood who enjoyed considerable success in Europe, and who, incidentally, wrote the original *Cubana* which formed the basis for the famous *Peanut Vendor*.

For a long time these strange musical manifestations known as the blues were in the hands of such obscure characters as Blind Tom, who came from Georgia but took his music as far abroad as England. Later such minstrel troupes as Lew Johnson's Plantation Company and the Georgia Minstrels carried these themes throughout the States, helping to spread the fame of Stephen Foster, who was the first white man to assimilate successfully the Negro musical spirit with his *Swanee River*, *Old Black Joe*, *My Old Kentucky Home*, and many others. A further evolution developed early in the twentieth century with the formation of larger groups like Black Patti's Troubadours and the Clef Club, mentioned previously in connection with Louis Mitchell.

By that time, ragtime had started to establish its formula, later to be given world-wide fame by Will Marion Cook and Jim Europe. The choral groups at Negro universities had played

a similar role, twenty-five years earlier, in perpetuating the spirituals. In Europe I heard the Fisk University student group and the Utica Jubilee Singers, but the passionate spirit that has made jazz a universal music could not be found in the same degree in the music of the spirituals. The latter consists of a simple theme developed with monotonous repetition; there is hardly any element of improvisation, even in the interpretations of such modern groups as the famous Golden Gate Quartet.

The precision, the repetition, the intonation and syncopation, leave a great impression on a first hearing of a spiritual, but its limitations are soon discovered, and the advantages of jazz, with its freshness of improvisation, can be appreciated. The blues is not static like the spiritual, having played a basic part in the origin of jazz improvisation. Alain Locke explained: "Jazz improvisation came rocketing out of the blues. It grew out of the improvised musical 'filling in' of the gap between the short measures of the blues and the longer eight-bar line, the break interval in the original folk form of the three-line blues." This interesting viewpoint was further expounded in an article by Walter Sidney in *Jazz Information* entitled "Blues in Disguise":

This harmonic freedom was the heart of the collective improvisation that produced so great a music. It aided the growth of a natural counterpoint, an ensemble in which each player could develop his own melodic line, with complete independence. The freedom from traditional scales, of course, made the early jazz sound horrible to academically trained ears. When Armstrong's staccato trumpet cut across Dodds' Sobbing Blues, the successive dissonances, according to academic standards, should have prostrated the listener. The effect, however, was incomparably exciting and beautiful to anyone actually familiar with the blues language.

These were the same sensations experienced with bewilderment by W. C. Handy, veteran composer known as "the father of the blues." Handy, born in Florence, Alabama, in 1873, was the son of a Methodist preacher who gave him a classical musical background. Very early young Handy had to go to work, and his life changed rapidly. At nineteen he was an employee of a

pipe manufacturer in Bessemer. Little by little he became aware of the popular musical forms, of syncopation and spirituals and traditional songs. In 1909 he was heading a little band in Memphis. After some adventures around Beale Street and experiences with a minstrel troupe, he was hired to provide musical propaganda for the election of a new mayor, Mr. Crump. Handy and his group went through the city playing on street corners, with the spirit of Negro folklore uppermost in his memory. A Negro walking by the levee had hummed a theme which he recalled; a street worker toying with the old twelve-bar strain had given him further inspiration. He wove these themes into his first song effort, which brought scorn from a music publisher, because it was based on a twelve-bar theme instead of the then conventional sixteen. But *Mr. Crump*, written for the election, was eventually published and became famous under its later title, *Memphis Blues*.

Later Handy was to publish his immortal *St. Louis Blues*, a work of poetic purity and naïveté, which must have inspired Gershwin many years later when he wrote *Summertime* for *Porgy and Bess*.

The blues was born officially when Handy documented this form, and it was to achieve new recognition through the blues-singing Smiths. Three famous singers, all with the same name but related only by their love of the blues, were Bessie Smith, Mamie Smith, and Trixie Smith, whose relative merits have often been the subject of critical discussion. All three had their own eras of glory, and their fame was preceded by that of the unforgotten Ma Rainey, born in Georgia in 1886. Ma Rainey followed a minstrel troupe around in her childhood days and spent most of her life on the road, eventually becoming proprietress of a theatrical group herself.

Ma made her first records after World War I, and achieved a legendary importance in the days when jazz was beginning to crystallize as a new form. Her moving, deep, earthy voice had an emotional and rhythmic expressiveness seldom found in present-day singers.

Bessie Smith, generally considered the best of all blues singers,



was a pupil of Ma Rainey as a child. During a tour in Tennessee Ma Rainey heard this young girl, singing with an unusual sense of rhythm. Immediately she put her to work, and Bessie Smith began her illustrious career when most children of her age were still in school. With the increased popularity of phonograph records, Bessie Smith's fame became nation-wide; she recorded with the best musicians, after having spent many years working in the South for low pay.

Bessie was designated "Empress of the Blues," to her own surprise. She had spent her life wandering from tent to barn, in an environment of adventure and constant travel. Suddenly her reputation blossomed; before long she was a rich woman, and the sudden change in her way of living made her fantastically eccentric in her habits.

Ma Rainey had lived in the first era of the blues pioneers, of the blues that had been passed down to a new generation and endowed with the Negro's sensitive musical qualities. She excelled in the interpretation of those nostalgic lamentations whose lyrics will always be an important part of Negro folklore. The story of Ma Rainey's blues was mostly that of the girl who was unlucky in love, expressing her infinite woes. Her titles are typical and significant: *Levee Camp Moan*, *Weepin' Woman Blues*, *Big Boy Blues*, *Deep Moanin' Blues*.

Tommy Ladnier, with whom I frequently discussed this blues veteran, described her as a strange figure, swaying as she sang; mournful yet vulgar, often obscene. Her suggestive lyrics enthralled the colored audiences, who eagerly devoured her tales of misery and despair.

This same idiom was employed by Bessie Smith. Accompanied by Clarence Williams, Fletcher Henderson, Billy Jones, or James P. Johnson, she continued the popular tradition of the blues. Bessie expressed the soul of her people with grace and emotion. Her titles, like those of Ma Rainey, are indicative of the blues spirit, to which she gave new life: *Gulf Coast Blues*, *Downhearted Blues*, *Aggravatin' Papa*, *Midnight Blues*, *Jailhouse Blues*, *Graveyard Dream Blues*, *Haunted House Blues*, *I Ain't Goin'*, *Send Me to the 'Lectric Chair*, and, best of all, her tragic

*Empty Bed Blues*. These are not artistic blues prepared by modern musicians: the music is pure and clean, even though the lyrics were impure and dirty; the emotional strains came straight from a soul that had known suffering.

As if to justify the dramatic portent of the blues, Bessie Smith, once rich as Croesus, returned eventually to poverty. Desperate, embittered, saddened by gin, she heard the graveyard blues echo a last chorus for her in 1937 when she was injured in an automobile accident in Tennessee and carried bleeding to the hospital. For all the whites at the hospital knew, she was just another neglected Negro woman about to die; for the jazz lovers she was the Empress of the Blues, taking leave of the vale of tears which she had enriched with her talent.

Ida Cox, a Tennessee girl, also had an adventurous childhood, like all the artists who were brought up against a background of wandering minstrelsy. She roamed through the South telling her lyrical tales of sorrow and affliction. Ida traveled for some time with the Clark Minstrels, but she earned her fame during the days she spent at the recording studios. She was accompanied by Louis Armstrong, Buster Bailey, Fletcher Henderson, and later by Lovie Austin and Her Blues Serenaders. With this last group she made *Graveyard Dream Blues* and *Blues for Rampart Street*, about the same time Ma Rainey made her *Barrelhouse Blues*. The Serenaders specialized in backgrounds for blues singers. With Tommy Ladnier on trumpet and Jimmy O'Brien on clarinet, they gave wonderful encouragement to Ida Cox, Ma Rainey, Julia Davis, Ethel Waters, Edmonia Henderson, Viola Bartlette, and Ozie McPherson.

Many years later Ida Cox appeared at Café Society in New York, backed by Red Allen's band. Alas, she seemed ill at ease before a sophisticated audience; her gowns, designed to please the colored audiences of the Deep South, struck a false note with this white crowd. Her musical sensitivity and emotional qualities affected by this lack of sympathy, she left soon afterward and returned to the world of traveling minstrels.

There is no need to repeat here my tribute to the great Rosa Henderson. Many pages could be written, too, on the famous

Ethel Waters, whose *Da-Da Strain* with Fletcher Henderson impressed me so much, and whom I was to see a generation later, and still great, in *Cabin in the Sky*.

Josephine Baker was the first artist whose blues singing I studied religiously in Europe. She was beyond all praise; glamorous, colorful, spontaneously inspired. It took several years in Europe to spoil her talents. Another of my happiest recollections, perhaps best of all, is of Florence Mills's performance at the Kursaal in Ostend, Belgium, with the Plantation Band, where I listened to her for many evenings in rapt admiration. After the show I would stay behind for many hours reminiscing with her about familiar tunes. Joe Hayman, now playing saxophone with Louis Armstrong, and the late Ed Swayze were with us. Florence Mills died not long after her return to America. Today she is almost forgotten. The jazz books hardly mention her, and critics have overlooked her, though the people of Harlem still remember her and often put flowers on the grave of this girl who was peerless in her day.

Mention should also be made here of Eugenia Daniels, whom I found one night in a little Harlem dive, singing *Honeysuckle Rose*. Two days later she was embarking for Europe, to sing with a band in Belgium, but she arrived to find war had just broken out and was obliged to make an immediate about-face. She is a fine artist who has still had virtually no recognition.

Dozens of other great girl singers deserve a word: Chippie Hill, Ivy Anderson, Maggie Jones, and more recently Pearl Bailey and Betty Roché. The story of Ella Fitzgerald is told elsewhere in these pages; others to be cited are Maxine Sullivan, a singer of real talent, and Helen Humes, former star of Count Basie's band.

It would, indeed, be impossible to give full credit to all the singers who have given their talent to the cause of jazz. Success is not always directly proportionate to ability; audiences are misled by irrelevant considerations instead of the sheer artistic values that guide the critics. Thus, for example, Hazel Scott and Lena Horne have achieved limitless success largely on the basis of a

good appearance which does not happen to be an attribute of better singers, such as the above-mentioned Eugenia Daniels.

Laurel Watson, born in Poughkeepsie, started her career modestly in a small band led by a brother of Don Redman. She has all the necessary qualifications of a great star—expression, style, and personality—but in some of her jobs, such as her work with the big band of Lucky Millinder, she was hampered by her environment. With a small band well suited to her musical temperament, she could be a real success. Laurel made a few records with Don Redman and Roy Eldridge.

One important name remains: that of the singer who was considered by many as a candidate for the place left empty by the death of the Empress of the Blues, Bessie Smith. Billie Holiday is something more than an ordinary jazz singer; she has provided a style that is imitated by every singer who cannot find a style of her own. She has had as much influence on the jazz voice as Louis Armstrong and Coleman Hawkins have had on the trumpet and the tenor saxophone. Many of her contemporaries and chief competitors have been inspired by Billie.

A poor child from the Negro section of Baltimore, she arrived in Harlem while still a baby and started her career in a noisy, smoky dive on Seventh Avenue, from which she soon graduated, starting toward fame in 1935 through a few recordings made with Benny Goodman and Teddy Wilson. In the years since then she has made hundreds of records with various combinations. In 1936 she had an admirable band on one session including Bunny Berigan, trumpet; Artie Shaw, clarinet; Joe Bushkin, piano; Dick McDonough, guitar; Pete Peterson, bass; and Cozy Cole, drums. She worked for some time with the bands of Count Basie and Artie Shaw, as well as making numerous night club and theater appearances on her own. In 1940 she recorded with Lester Young on tenor, Joe Sullivan on piano, Joe Jones on drums, and Walter Page on bass. All her recording bands were first-class.

Billie's personality has improved steadily. Not dynamic or spontaneous like the traditional jazz singers, she is a well-prepared, conscious, and precise artist, whose effects are bril-

liantly conceived. Billie tears at the words, deforms the phrasing, goes beyond the limits of jazz with her expressive style.

"Lady Day," as she is called, is an impressive sight as she walks into the Onyx or the Famous Door, magnolia in her hair, her eyes bright, her cheeks full, her lips vibrant and sensuous. The piano plays her introduction, and the audience is suddenly silent as her wistful plaints begin. This is not the rank-and-file lament of a Ma Rainey, a Bessie Smith; it is a cerebral lamentation in suggestive pastel shades, so subtle that often it escapes many of her listeners. It may be many years before Billie Holiday's importance is fully realized. She is doing for the jazz song what Duke Ellington has done for the jazz orchestra. She has opened the way to a new musical culture, toward a vital expression that unites intelligence and instinct.

Of the few white girl singers worthy of mention, Mildred Bailey is discussed elsewhere. Anita O'Day is the only outstanding white girl jazz singer to come to the forefront in recent years.

Switching to the male singers, I will pass lightly over Louis Armstrong, having already made it clear that I consider him in a class entirely by himself. Credit should also be given to such modern blues singers as Joe Turner, T-Bone Walker, Jimmy Rushing, Eddie Vinson, Big Bill, Louis Jordan, and many others familiar through their records. I should like to pay a special tribute to an artist who falls into a special category. His name is Leo Watson, and he is gifted with an extraordinary musical temperament, combining dynamic force with petulance, and a rhythm that makes him second to none.

Willie Duke has nothing to do with the blues; his place is in the traditional line of jazz scat singers. He might even be described as the perfect swing singer.

More directly related to the blues than many of the singers mentioned in the preceding pages is the subject of boogie-woogie.

Hugues Panassié contributed toward a revival of interest in Chicago-style jazz; Charles Edward Smith and his colleagues drew attention to the New Orleans pioneers; and similarly John Hammond is credited with the propagation of boogie-woogie. All of which, by the way, indicates the importance of the influence

some jazz writers have had in altering the course of jazz history.

Boogie-woogie is a very old piano style which retained its strange vitality in the dives and dens of the South and the Middle West. Through Hammond's influence it rose to the surface of society and became generally accepted.

Jelly Roll Morton spoke of several early pianists who, he claims, played in boogie-woogie style. In reality, boogie-woogie is the style of the pianists who had no real style and had not learned to play. Ignorant of the rules of accompaniment and of the assistance that the left hand must give to the right, they changed the traditional functions of the bass, and in so doing they revolutionized the whole style. The later boogie-woogie pianists gave the left hand an essential and complicated role—a role carefully intertwined with the improvisations in the right hand. This new conception may be related to the fact that there were no pianos in the early New Orleans jazz bands, and that the pianists or "professors" in the bawdyhouses had to supply a continual and exciting rhythm in their solo work. The essential difference between boogie-woogie and ordinary jazz, of course, is that the bass is founded on eight beats to the bar, in straight eighth notes or dotted eighths and sixteenths, instead of the conventional four beats to the bar.

One of the first to spread the gospel of boogie-woogie was Jimmy Yancey, a former vaudeville artist who toured Europe many years ago, but fell on lean times in recent years and was discovered by some jazz research men, working in a ball park in Chicago. His name was forgotten, but it was revived through Meade Lux Lewis, who, after achieving a boogie-woogie reputation of his own, paid tribute to Yancey by recording a number which he called *Yancey Special*.

Other early pioneers of boogie-woogie included Pine Top Smith and Cow Cow Davenport. More recently popular, besides Meade Lux Lewis, have been Albert Ammons and Pete Johnson, featured as a two-piano team since 1939 at Café Society in New York. Albert Ammons recorded with a small band known as Ammons' Rhythm Kings, but he became best known as a boogie-woogie soloist. He played a long time at the De Lisa in Chicago,

where he was discovered. At that time John Hammond was looking for Meade Lux Lewis, who had disappeared for years from the musical scene. Lewis was found washing cars in a Chicago garage. Surprised by Hammond's visit, he underwent a rapid change of fortune. He made some new records and appeared at a concert held in 1936 at the Imperial Theatre in New York. Afterward came a big concert at Carnegie Hall dedicated largely to boogie-woogie, with Meade Lux Lewis representing the St. Louis brand, while Ammons and Johnson represented Chicago and Kansas City. Since then Café Society has been a virtual academy of boogie-woogie, with thousands of its own devoted fans. Some of the critics have unearthed further pioneers of eight-to-the-bar, Cripple Clarence and Romeo Nelson and Speckled Red, whose value is more legendary than real. Also prominent in recent years, and an excellent exponent of blues and boogie-woogie, is Sammy Price, a prolific recording artist.

What will be the ultimate role and influence of boogie-woogie in jazz? The fashion for this brand of music has been encouraged beyond its real value by a number of confused amateurs who have been carried away by its superficial rhythmic excitement. Will Bradley's Orchestra even started a fashion for adapting boogie-woogie to orchestral forms. The possibilities of boogie-woogie are too limited to allow for any really important developments. Most boogie-woogie is, of course, based on the twelve-bar blues form, and the whole thing should merely be treated as a branch of the blues idiom.

The blues has an important and permanent place in the development of jazz. Boogie-woogie is a technical trick which will have no bearing on the future of rhythmic music.

## XVII. BEST MUSICIANS AND RECORDS

I GIVE HERE two articles that *Esquire* asked me to write on the best "All-American Band" and my favorite recordings. I add a

few observations and commentaries explaining some errors and new impressions which have forced me to alter my previous decisions for the "All-American Jam Session Band," to appear in 1944.

To begin with, it's very simple. Opposite the place where it says "Trumpet," you merely set down the name of Louis Armstrong. After that, you go gently mad.

Pitting the merits of one musician against another, even though only on paper, is about as complicated a business as one could well devise. There is no accepted starting point, which makes it a bit difficult, to say the least, to arrive at the finish line. The welter of conflicting claims and counterclaims, advanced by the innumerable self-appointed champions of the leading performers, merely confuses the issue.

Concerning the selection of Louis Armstrong as trumpeter on the "first team" of the All-American Band, there can be, as I say, no dispute. He *made* jazz and is the true King of Jazz. Anyone who knows anything about the subject will concede this. Concerning the other nominations, there may be some dispute. Nevertheless, here they are and here are the reasons for their selection.

But first let me briefly define my terms. In my opinion, the thing that makes jazz what it is today is the phenomenon of improvisation. We must make a vital distinction between hot jazz and swing. Hot jazz is basic American syncopated music, improvised by a band usually composed of five to seven persons in a Dixieland group, although the unit sometimes numbers ten or more pieces in certain jam sessions. Swing is more or less the mechanization of hot jazz; it is achieved by big commercial bands, with effects produced by musical sections. Improvisation is not left to the personal inspiration of the musician; the arranger fixes the whole tune, leaving only a few free bars to the soloists.

I do not for one moment mean to disparage the importance and value of swing music. It has been a tremendous contribution and stimulus. But after all, my task is to select *performers*, not composers or arrangers, and the merit of swing is chiefly dependent on the talent of the arranger. He can be a genius, like



Duke Ellington, or a mediocrity, of whom there are far too many. The real, living art, in which the performer meets his true test, is hot jazz, which finds its best expression in the jam sessions—that is to say, the meetings which take place every week, principally in New York, in which musicians from all sorts of bands join and play together without any former preparation or rehearsal. The imperative requirement of such a session is to improvise, and out of the general excitement to rise to a frenetic ecstacy of realization.

For a jam session, the composition of the band is most variable; it can be from five to ten pieces. Generally, a good combination would involve four rhythms (piano, drums, bass, guitar) and three improvisers (one clarinet or saxophone, one trumpet, one trombone). This latter section can, naturally, be increased, as I have often seen it done at Nick's, Jimmy Ryan's, or Harry Lim's jazz sessions.

Certain musicians' high rank is conceded by almost every connoisseur. I have already spoken in no uncertain terms of Louis Armstrong. Ten years ago there was no doubt about the supremacy of Bix (trumpet), Earl Hines (piano), and Coleman Hawkins (tenor); but Bix died, and I do not think that the other two men have retained their supremacy in the intervening decade.

Among the soloists whose ability I cannot personally question there are George Brunies (trombone), Art Tatum (piano), and Leo Watson (singer). They are clearly the best in their fields by the most impartial standards one can set up, although I presume I can be sure that some of the critics will not agree with me.

This is, after all, a subjective matter, such as the judgment of poetry, painting, or any art form. In jazz, as in other arts, of course, the relative values are better measured in the perspective of time. We know today without the slightest question that Louis Armstrong has proved himself far above Paul Whiteman, while contemporary critics of the year 1925 could conceivably question this point.

But instead of generalizing, let us get down to cases and

analyze the selection of the individual performers in *Esquire's* All-American Band and in the All-Time Band. The latter group, obviously, makes no distinction between the past and present, whereas the selection of the three "teams" in the first group is based on contemporary performances.

**TRUMPET:** A word more about Louis Armstrong is necessary here. He possesses powers of technique and of improvisation beyond comparison. His style is altogether personal, sensitive, and versatile. Incidentally, of the many times I have heard him, he proved to be most nearly perfect in a Dixieland combination jam session at the Walt Whitman School.

Next to him, seven or eight trumpeters can aspire to second place. My choice would include Harry James, Red Allen, Cootie Williams, Charlie Shavers, Emmett Berry, Roy Eldridge, Muggsy Spanier, and Arthur Briggs. The last, a colored trumpeter who has lived in Belgium and France for twenty years, is now detained in a concentration camp.

After weighing their qualities carefully, although I am attracted to Charlie Shavers, Muggsy Spanier, and Red Allen, I feel Harry James should get the call because of his tremendous power and his extraordinary technique, joined to a considerable capacity for improvisation. Cootie Williams, to my ear, is perhaps too uniform, with his ever-growling style. Roy Eldridge has not enough control over his horn. For these reasons I have selected Charlie Shavers for the third team. I don't always enjoy his style in John Kirby's band, but in any jam session he is a hit: wild, frenetic, imaginative, powerful, sensitive!

With respect to the All-Time Band, Bix Beiderbecke, whose improvisation was poetic and fresh, is the only name that need be mentioned. He died too early to show the complete measure of his ability. Louis Armstrong still stands without competitors.

**TROMBONE:** Here I am glad to be able to single out a man, relatively unknown, who is famous only among the Dixieland admirers whom you meet every day at Nick's. Lou McGarity, Jack Teagarden, Tommy Dorsey, J. C. Higginbotham, and Brad

Gowans are all great instrumentalists, but in my opinion the man whose virtuosity has been overlooked by the critics is George Brunies.

I would say that as far back as 1923, with the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, Brunies was the best—and still is. And if sometimes a trombonist may challenge him, no one can excel him. One is attracted by both the continuity and the explosive quality of his improvisations. It will constitute a tribute to the good judgment of the public if George Brunies is at last accorded the recognition he has so long deserved.

Ten years ago I was very much intrigued by the playing of Tommy Dorsey, whose full potentialities have unfortunately not been realized even today. Brad Gowans is too limited with his valve trombone; and the style of Higginbotham underwent a sweetening process some time back. My second and third candidates would be Jack Teagarden and Lou McGarity. Both are effective. Jack deserves the second-place niche because he influenced jazz affirmatively, sings wonderfully, and has made some of the best records.

The selection for the All-Time Band is limited to George Brunies, Jimmie Harrison, and Leo Vauchampt. Jimmie Harrison, in my opinion, was wonderful. Vauchampt, a French trombonist whom I heard in Paris and in London during the twenties, was also tops. Today he is a musical director in Hollywood. I vote for Brunies because, alone in his field, he delivers the sort of punch that is most admirable.

**CLARINET:** This instrument is perhaps the most controversial of all. There are at least eight men whose power is very nearly equal, in spite of the differences in their style: Artie Shaw, Benny Goodman, Pee Wee Russell, Ed Hall, Barney Bigard, Buster Bailey, Jimmie Noone, Irving Fazola.

In assembling these mythical aggregations, it would be interesting to contrast two different conceptions of style and select two clarinets for each group. My first-team choice would be Benny Goodman and Edmond Hall. This would bring together the swing king with an old-timer whose reputation has suddenly

grown during the last two years, causing him to be rated as one of the purest clarinetists of the day.

For the second team I designate Barney Bigard and Pee Wee Russell; for the third, Artie Shaw and Jimmie Noone. It would be something of an experience to confront technicians like Goodman and Shaw with improvisers such as Pee Wee Russell and Jimmie Noone, who devoted their entire lives to small bands, preferring their complete independence, despite the comparatively low compensation, to the restrictions of the big-time, big-money bands.

In making a single selection for the All-Time Band, one finds three truly great players in the annals of jazz. Larry Shields, the clarinetist of the Original Dixieland Band, who was so powerful and so inspired in 1917, was one. In a way, no one else has brought to jazz what he did, and all clarinetists have since relied on his imagination. Even Rappolo, the crack clarinetist of the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, was influenced by Larry . . . but what an inspiration!

Nevertheless, Frank Teschemacher cannot be passed by. He produced only some ten records, but some bars in them are the most thrilling sound in jazz. The critics recognize Teschemacher's genius as supreme. He must be the selection for the All-Time Band.

**TENOR SAX:** There are many good tenors. Coleman Hawkins is one of the best; he was so effective that he universalized the use of the tenor sax. It is difficult to say to what extent he has retrogressed and to what degree some of his followers have gained in brilliance, but Coleman Hawkins no longer stands alone in his class. Each of the following men is able to achieve a wonderful hit chorus: Eddie Miller, Lester Young, Ben Webster, Gene Sedic, Vido Musso, Bud Freeman, Tex Benecke, Joe Thomas, and Al Sear, not omitting the late Chu Berry.

At the risk of provoking considerable disagreement, I select as my first choice Eddie Miller, of Bob Crosby's band. I consider his inspiration the purest and most sensitive; he is never forced—an error into which too many have fallen nowadays. Coleman Hawkins is certainly still good enough to be the second selection,

although today one sometimes encounters too much of the routine in his style. My third man is Ben Webster, the tenor of Duke Ellington's band. His recent performances demonstrate that he is indeed not far behind the first- and second-team choices.

As for the All-Time Band, I choose the Coleman Hawkins of 1928 to 1930. This was his best period, when he recorded *Hello Lola*. No one has since attained that peak.

**ALTO SAX:** There are perhaps more good alto saxophones than tenors in the profession. One can count only one outstanding soprano, Sidney Bechet, and one baritone, Harry Carney; but there are many altos of very high ability, among whom I would list Johnny Hodges, Benny Carter, Willie Smith, Pete Brown, and Charlie Holmes. Incidentally, Johnny Hodges, who achieves the purest solos, is so commercial on the stage occasionally that I cannot stand him. The hottest man, very personal in a style all his own, and very sincere, is Pete Brown.

I do not forget that Benny Carter is perhaps our most versatile musician, playing the alto and trumpet equally well, in addition to having proved himself to be an exceptional arranger. Willie Smith is the most expressive and effective with a big band. My selection for the three teams would be: Johnny Hodges, Benny Carter, and Pete Brown, in the order named.

I want to mention, in passing, that some months ago at the Village Vanguard I heard a jam session with Earl Hines (piano), Benny Carter (alto), and Charlie Shavers (trumpet). It was the best thing I ever listened to this side of heaven! In this field, for the All-Time Band, I believe the honors go to the contemporary performers. I consider the Frankie Trumbauer of fifteen years ago outranked by the Johnny Hodges of today.

**PIANO:** Earl Hines was easily tops some time ago. Before 1930 he made some marvelous records with Louis Armstrong. In my opinion there can be no question as to the best pianist of the moment: he is Art Tatum. I do not always like him as a soloist, but in a band he is terrific!

Other candidates are Fats Waller, Jess Stacy, James P. Johnson, Count Basie, Teddy Wilson, Herman Chittison, and Joe Sullivan. For the second and third selections I nominate Count

Basie and Teddy Wilson. Both men are more constructive, and at the same time more frenetic, than the others.

As suggested before, Earl Hines once attained a peak that neither he nor any other pianist has since equaled. He is therefore the logical selection for the All-Time Band. His supreme performances were accomplished during the short period he touched the ivories in company with Louis Armstrong, when he recorded the immortal *West End Blues*.

**DRUMS:** Plenty of drummers truly can be classed as sensational. I believe that the old-timers are excelled by the young men. Among the best performers are Zutty Singleton, George Wettling, Sidney Catlett, Cozy Cole, Joe Jones, Gene Krupa, James Crawford, and Dave Tough. Each of them is excellent, but my attention would turn first to Sidney Catlett, who proved ideal with Benny Goodman's and Louis Armstrong's bands.

Second choice is Gene Krupa, provided he overcomes his habit of introducing too many monotonous solos. For the third team I choose Cozy Cole, admirable drummer for Cab Calloway.

For the All-Time Band it is difficult to make a selection in this category. However, I pick Sidney Catlett, though I am not sure that Zutty Singleton was not the best of them all twelve years ago.

**BASS:** At the head of this class are Artie Bernstein, Al Morgan, John Kirby, Hayes Alvis and Billy Taylor. After long deliberation I select Al Morgan, John Kirby, and Billy Taylor, in the order named. I understand well how others might prefer Artie Bernstein. For the All-Time Band, Al Morgan is again my choice.

**GUITAR:** Three supreme guitarists have died: Django Reinhardt, Charlie Christian, and Eddie Lang. The genius was Django! Today, I can point to Teddy Bunn, Oscar Moore, and Eddie Condon, in the order named, with honorable mention to Clarence Holiday and Bobby Hackett, who plays guitar and trumpet with Glenn Miller.

The choice lies between two men when it comes to the All-Time Band: Django Reinhardt and Eddie Lang. Both were won-

derful; Django, the French gypsy guitarist, was the more thrilling of the two. His renditions can be compared only with three or four top performers, and he impressed me as forcibly as Louis Armstrong. He was alone in his class.

SINGERS: I would designate Louis Armstrong as the best male singer, but he is already selected for the trumpet. So I propose Leo Watson and Billie Holiday. Leo Watson gives voice to the inner trance of jazz. Billie Holiday is more sophisticated and I would like her to "swing" it more, but she is nevertheless first choice.

Second place would go to Willie Duke and Mildred Bailey. (Duke, incidentally, could give better expression to his fine talent if he would forget some of his unfunny jokes.) Third place goes to Jack Teagarden and Laurel Watson. I can see how the generally ignored Genia Daniels, who sings in a very pure style, might offer competition. But I prefer Laurel Watson, who puts more zest and more swing into her art.

The two best singers I ever heard are certainly Louis Armstrong and the late Bessie Smith. Fifteen years ago I might have preferred Rosa Henderson, but now I choose Bessie. As for Louis, even if he plays trumpet I would ask him to sing too, because he is the best of them all and the real King of Jazz!

### THE ALL-AMERICAN BAND

	<i>First Team</i>	<i>Second Team</i>	<i>Third Team</i>
<i>Trumpet:</i>	Louis Armstrong	Harry James	Charlie Shavers
<i>Trombone:</i>	George Brunies	Jack Teagarden	Lou McGarity
<i>Clarinets:</i>	Benny Goodman	Barney Bigard	Artie Shaw
	Edmond Hall	Pee Wee Russell	Jimmie Noone
<i>Tenor Sax:</i>	Eddie Miller	Coleman Hawkins	Ben Webster
<i>Alto Sax:</i>	Johnny Hodges	Benny Carter	Pete Brown
<i>Piano:</i>	Art Tatum	Count Basie	Teddy Wilson
<i>Drums:</i>	Sidney Catlett	Gene Krupa	Cozy Cole
<i>Bass:</i>	Al Morgan	John Kirby	Billy Taylor
<i>Guitar:</i>	Teddy Bunn	Oscar Moore	Eddie Condon
<i>Male Singer:</i>	Leo Watson	Willie Duke	Jack Teagarden
<i>Female Singer:</i>	Billie Holiday	Mildred Bailey	Laurel Watson

## THE ALL-TIME ALL-AMERICAN BAND

<i>Trumpet:</i>	Louis Armstrong	<i>Drums:</i>	Sidney Catlett
<i>Trombone:</i>	George Brunies	<i>Bass:</i>	Al Morgan
<i>Clarinet:</i>	Frank Teschemacher	<i>Guitar:</i>	Django Reinhardt
<i>Tenor Sax:</i>	Coleman Hawkins	<i>Male Singer:</i>	Louis Armstrong
<i>Alto Sax:</i>	Johnny Hodges	<i>Female Singer:</i>	Bessie Smith
	<i>Piano:</i>		Earl Hines

After one year the success of the choice of this best band was found so interesting that *Esquire* decided to dedicate more importance to jazz and to organize the most wonderful jam session ever heard in the world. This manifestation has even a symbolic meaning, for it is going to be rendered in the temple of serious music: the Metropolitan Opera.

I must note that the previous observations on Johnny Hodges and Cootie Williams, well translated as they were, appear too critical applied to these wonderful musicians, whom I admire really deeply.

We asked many jazz experts and fans to choose the best actual jam session band. The answers are good and correspond with the perfect sense of justice. The reader has to consider that some of the best men, like Gene Krupa and James Crawford, were not eligible for various reasons. Critics have said that Armstrong was the old-time superman, but they voted for someone else.

The answers are self-explanatory and show that the experts know who good musicians are even if they disagree sometimes on some particular exponents.

The results are based on votes cast by the following sixteen experts: S/Sgt. George Avakian, E. Simms Campbell, Leonard Feather, Robert Goffin, Abel Green, Elliott Grennard, John Hammond, Roger Kay, Harry Lim, Paul Eduard Miller, Bucklin Moon, Baron Timme Rosenkrantz, Charles Edward Smith, Frank Stacy, Bob Thiele, Barry Ulanov.



## ESQUIRE'S ALL-AMERICAN BAND

## TRUMPETS

Louis Armstrong	16
Cootie Williams	8
Roy Eldridge	5
Bill Coleman	5
Bobby Hackett	6
Harry James	3
Charlie Shavers	3
Muggsy Spanier	2
Buck Clayton	2
Red Nichols	1

## CLARINETS

Benny Goodman	24
Barney Bigard	8
Edmond Hall	5
Irving Fazola	4
Pee Wee Russell	2
Buster Bailey	1
Hank D'Amico	1
Sidney Bechet	1
Jimmie Noone	1
Bud Jacobson	1

## PIANOS

Art Tatum	17
Earl Hines	7
Teddy Wilson	5
Jess Stacy	4
Joe Sullivan	3
Mary Lou Williams	3
King Cole	2
Art Hodes	2

## TROMBONES

Jack Teagarden	13
Lawrence Brown	8
George Brunies	7
J. C. Higginbotham	6
Tommy Dorsey	3
Lou McGarity	2
Vic Dickerson	2
Dicky Wells	2
Floyd O'Brien	2
Miff Mole	1
Benny Morton	1
Tyree Glenn	1

## SAXOPHONES

Coleman Hawkins	17
Johnny Hodges	10
Benny Carter	8
Ben Webster	4
Pete Brown	2
Lester Young	2
Bud Hunter	2
Don Redman	1
Babe Rusin	1
Joe "Flip" Phillips	1
Eugene Sedric	1

## GUITARS

Al Casey	11
Oscar Moore	10
Teddy Bunn	7
Eddie Condon	6
Freddy Green	4
Les Paul	2
Lonnie Johnson	2
Roc Hillman	2

PIANOS—*Con.*

Johnny Guarnieri	2
Fats Waller	2
Count Basie	1

## BASSES

Oscar Pettiford	6
Milton Hinton	5
Al Morgan	5
John Kirby	4
Red Callender	4
Slam Stewart	3
Walter Page	3
Wellman Braud	3
Serious Meyers	3
Israel Crosby	3
Ed Safranski	2
Sid Weiss	2
Bob Haggart	2
Billy Taylor	2
Doc Goldberg	1

## ODD INSTRUMENTS

Red Norvo	15
Lionel Hampton	15
Sidney Bechet	6
Eddie South	3
Ray Nance	3
Joe Venuti	3
Harry Carney	2
Peter "Rabbit" Graham	1

GUITARS—*Con.*

Lawrence Lucie	1
Mary Osborne	1
Jack Purcell	1
Carl Kress	1

## DRUMS

Sidney Catlett	16
Cozy Cole	9
Joe Jones	7
Zutty Singleton	6
George Wettling	4
Specks Powell	2
Arthur Herbert	2
J. C. Heard	1
James Crawford	1

## MALE VOCALISTS

Louis Armstrong	11
Leo Watson	9
Joe Turner	7
Jack Teagarden	3
Cab Calloway	2
Josh White	2
T-Bone Walker	2
Eddie Vinson	2
James Rushing	2
Bob Eberle	2
Louis Jordan	2
Bing Crosby	2
Harry Babbitt	1
Willie Duke	1
Walter Brown	1

## FEMALE VOCALISTS

Billie Holiday	23
Mildred Bailey	15
Ella Fitzgerald	4
Helen Forrest	2
Ethel Waters	2
Betty Roché	1
Peggy Mann	1

## ARMED FORCES FAVORITES

Artie Shaw	5
Willie Smith	3
Dave Tough	3
Max Kaminsky	1
Arthur Bernstein	1
Mel Powell	1
Joe Bushkin	1
Stanley Atkins	1

Here is my personal selection:

	<i>First Choice</i>	<i>Second Choice</i>
TRUMPET:	Louis Armstrong	Charlie Shavers
TROMBONE:	George Brunies	Jack Teagarden
CLARINET:	Benny Goodman	Edmond Hall
SAXOPHONE:	Coleman Hawkins	Johnny Hodges
(Alto or Tenor)		
PIANO:	Art Tatum	Teddy Wilson
GUITAR:	Teddy Bunn	Oscar Moore
BASS:	Slam Stewart	Bill Taylor
DRUMS:	Sidney Catlett	Cozy Cole
MALE SINGER:	Leo Watson	Willie Duke
FEMALE SINGER:	Billie Holiday	Mildred Bailey
OTHER INSTRUMENT:	Red Norvo	Sidney Bechet
(Violin, vibraphone, etc.)		

*Favorite Musician Now in U.S. Armed Forces:*

Willie Smith

I have now to explain my changes. I voted deliberately for Coleman Hawkins because the two or three times I heard Eddie Miller didn't convince me of his actual superiority, and on the other hand the wonderful Coleman, who a couple of nights performed for me, was definitely a hit. I have to confess that for the second and third choice of the tenors I would have certainly considered Bumps Meyers, Eugene Sedric, and Joe Thomas rather than Ben Webster.

As to the basses, I have enjoyed so much Slam Stewart and Oscar Pettiford, I think they are the next champions.

The Bible tells us that when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed God saved the innocent and allowed them to flee the cities. Three years ago something of the kind happened in Belgium—though when Hitler took over not all the innocent were able to flee. Luckily, I escaped. The penalty I paid was to lose my collection of three thousand phonograph records.

I have never bought a phonograph record since that day. But I've often wondered, if I were able to go back for, say, twelve records, without turning into a lump of salt, which ones I would choose. Could I choose twelve jazz records which I would listen to fifty years hence without shuddering? And how would I choose them—for the tune itself, for the arrangement, for the solo artist?

Taste in jazz music is as personal as the contents of a man's trousers pockets. This list of mine may be "expert," but it could cause another expert acute pain.

- Original Dixieland Jazz Band—*Tiger Rag, Ostrich Walk.*  
 New Orleans Rhythm Kings—*Shimme-Sha Wabble, That Da-Da Strain.*  
 Original Wolverines—*Shimme-Sha Wabble, The New Twister.*  
 Louis Armstrong—*West End Blues, Fireworks.* Columbia.  
 Louis Armstrong—*Shine, Just a Gigolo.*  
 Louis Armstrong—*Confessing.* Decca.  
 Duke Ellington—*Tiger Rag (Parts I & II).*  
 Duke Ellington—*It Don't Mean a Thing, Rose Room.*  
 Chocolate Dandies—*Got Another Sweetie Now.* Columbia.  
 Chicago Rhythm Kings—*I Found a New Baby, There'll Be Some Changes Made.*  
 Mound City Blue Blowers—*One Hour, Hello Lola.* Victor.  
 Eddie Lang-Joe Venuti All Star Orch.—*Beale Street Blues.*

I asked six jazz specialists—both men who make music and men who tear it apart—what twelve records they would take were they fleeing from this or that wicked city. The first to be questioned was the urbane Duke Ellington.

"Well," said the Duke thoughtfully, "I'd take Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloe*; Delius' *In a Summer Garden*; Debussy's *La Mer* and *Afternoon of a Faun*; and the *Planets Suites*. . . ."

On closer questioning he admitted he would take a few jazz records. "One of Art Tatum's records—*any one*"—and the rest would be:

Coleman Hawkins' *Body and Soul*. Bluebird.

Berigan's *I Can't Get Started*. Victor.

Artie Shaw's *Nightmare*. Brunswick.

Fats Waller's *I'm Gonna Sit Right Down and Write Myself a Letter*.  
Victor.

Sidney Bechet's *The Mooche*. Victor.

Willie "The Lion" Smith's *What Can I Do with a Foolish Little Girl Like You*. Decca.

Duke Ellington's *Something to Live For*. Brunswick.

"About that record of my own," Duke explained. "I like it for the singing by Jean Eldridge."

Art Hodes, the noted pianist, took just five minutes to make up his list. Though he's a Chicago pianist, not a single Chicago-style record is included. Hodes likes the blues, and the old style of the men around King Oliver:

King Oliver—*Canal Street Blues, Dippermouth Blues*. Brunswick.

Ma Rainey—*Black Bottom, Georgia Cake Walk* (Collector's Item)

Bessie Smith—*Yellow Dog Blues, Soft Pedal Blues*. Okeh.

Louis Armstrong—*Strutting with Some Barbecue*. Decca.

Louis Armstrong—*Lonesome, All Alone and Blue*. Okeh.

Sippie Wallace—*Have You Ever Been Down, Dead Drunk*. (Collector's Item)

Pine Top Smith—*Boogie Woogie, Pine Top's Blues*. UHCA.

James P. Johnson—*Snowy Morning Blues*. (Collector's Item)

Albert Wynn—*Down by the Levee, Parkway Stomp*. Vocalion.

Johnny Dodds—*Weary Blues*. Vocalion.

Jelly Roll Morton—*Black Bottom Stomp, The Chant*. Bluebird.

Jelly Roll Morton—*Kansas City Stomp, Grandpa's Spell*. Gennett.

Both Hodes and Leonard Feather, radio emcee of WMCA's "Platterbrains" jazz quizz, swing critic for *Look*, *Metronome*, and other publications, chose their records-for-exile with an economical eye. They selected not so much the best records ever made, but the best couplings. Most of those on Feather's list

below are more or less obtainable, and all are stand-outs on both sides:

Louis Armstrong—*West End Blues, Muggles*. Columbia.

Barney Bigard—*Minuet in Blues, Barney Goin' Easy*. Vocalion & Okeh.

King Cole Trio—*Sweet Lorraine, This Side Up*. Decca.

Duke Ellington—*The Flaming Sword, Warm Valley*. Victor.

Duke Ellington—*Portrait of Bert Williams, Bojangles*. Victor.

Duke Ellington—*Crescendo and Diminuendo in Blue*. Columbia.

Duke Ellington—*Battle of Swing, Jazz Potpourri*. Brunswick.

Benny Goodman Quintet (with Lionel Hampton, Teddy Wilson)—*I Cried for You*; Goodman Trio—*Where or When*. Bluebird.

Billie Holiday (with Artie Shaw, Bunny Berigan)—*Billie's Blues, Summertime*. Vocalion.

Jimmy Lunceford—*Uptown Blues, Put It Away*. Okeh.

Metronome All Star Band (with Harry James, Cootie Williams, J. C. Higginbotham, Benny Goodman, Benny Carter, Coleman Hawkins, Count Basie, etc.)—*One O'clock Jump, Bugle Call Rag*. Victor.

Muggsy Spanier—*Relaxin' at the Touro*. Bluebird.

Teddy Wilson Quartet (with Harry James, Red Norvo)—*Just a Mood* (Parts I & II). Brunswick.

Art Tatum & Band (with Joe Turner)—*Wee Baby Blues, Battery Bounce*. Decca.

Feather apparently planned to greet Manhattan with a couple of extra records under his tunic. And if they'd relax the rules, he would include Pete Brown's *Unlucky Woman*, with Helen Humes (Decca).

Tenor saxophonist Eugene Sedric never heard of Sodom, but he did know twelve good records. Sedric formerly played with Fats Waller and is rated by Panassié as second only to Coleman Hawkins. His list is no amateur's catalogue; Sedric is a technician, and, though a wonderful improviser, he prefers organized jazz to the pure jazz of improvisation:

Louis Armstrong—*My Sweet*.

Casa Loma—*For You*.

Tommy Dorsey—*Lonesome Road*.

- | King Cole Trio—*Honeysuckle Rose*.
- | Duke Ellington—*Slapping 7th Avenue with the Sole of My Shoe*.
- | Fletcher Henderson—*Whiteman Stomp*.
- | Jimmy Lunceford—*I'm Nuts About Screw Music*.
- | Paul Robeson—*Water Boy*.
- | Fats Waller—*A Million Dreams of You*.
- | Paul Whiteman—*Rhapsody in Blue*.
- | Teddy Wilson—*Don't Blame Me*.

George Frazier, who has written on jazz for music magazines but is currently working for *Life*, said: "No arrangements. No modern-style swing. Just sentiment and spontaneity." With these twelve examples of pure jazz Frazier would be banished, smiling:

- | Louis Armstrong—*No One Else but You*. Columbia.
- | Louis Armstrong—*Tight Like This*. Columbia.
- | Mildred Bailey—*Honeysuckle Rose*. Decca.
- | Bix Beiderbecke—*Sorry*. Columbia.
- | Bunny Berigan—*I Can't Get Started*. Victor.
- | Chicago Rhythm Kings—*There'll Be Some Changes Made*. Brunswick.
- | Eddie Condon—*Ballin' the Jack*. Commodore.
- | Duke Ellington—*Jungle Blues*. Brunswick.
- | Earl Hines—*A Monday Date*. Columbia.
- | Bessie Smith—*Give Me a Pigfoot*. Okeh.
- | Count Basie Quintet—*Lady Be Good*. Okeh.
- | Jess Stacy—*Barrelhouse*. Decca.

Charlie Barnet, a band leader whose popularity blooms like a hardy perennial, spoke for modern swing. A glance at his list of "twelve records I would take from Sodom" tells where Barnet's band gets its musical inspiration:

- | Duke Ellington—*Lightnin'*.
- | Duke Ellington—*Echoes of Harlem*.
- | Duke Ellington—*Cotton Tail*.
- | Duke Ellington—*The Gal from Joe's*.
- | Duke Ellington—*Warm Valley*.
- | Duke Ellington—*The Flaming Sword*.
- | Duke Ellington—*Rocking in Rhythm*.

Duke Ellington—*Sepia Panorama*.  
 Louis Armstrong—*Knockin' a Jug*.  
 Charlie Barnet—*You're My Thrill*.  
 Charlie Barnet—*Afternoon of a Faun*.  
 Charlie Barnet—*Daphnis and Chloe*.

To a real jazz collector, twelve records are only a crumb before the banquet, but if they are good ones they make excellent anti-pasto. For those who snoop in secondhand stores and First Avenue music shops, I have compiled a list of records which cover modern American jazz from the time it was just an itch in a drummer's hand to the present.

The older recordings which start this list off are my own selections. The more recent examples were chosen for me by Leonard Feather.

Original Dixieland Jazz Band—*Tiger Rag*. Victor, Columbia.  
 New Orleans Rhythm Kings—*That Da-Da Strain*. Gennett.  
 Original Wolverines—*Shim-Me-Sha Wabble*. Brunswick, Vocalion.  
 Bessie Smith—*Empty Bed Blues*. Columbia.  
 Bessie Smith—*Yellow Dog Blues*. Columbia.  
 Louis Armstrong—*West End Blues*. Columbia.  
 Louis Armstrong—*Shine*. Okeh.  
 Louis Armstrong—*Hey Lawdy Mama*. Decca.  
 Duke Ellington—*The Mooche*. Victor, Brunswick.  
 Duke Ellington—*Black and Tan Fantasy*. Victor, Brunswick.  
 Duke Ellington—*East St. Louis Toodle-oo*. Victor, Brunswick.  
 Jimmy Lunceford—*Annie Laurie*. Decca.  
 Bix Beiderbecke—*At the Jazz Band Ball, Jazz Me Blues*. Columbia.  
 Bix Beiderbecke—*Somebody Stole My Gal*. Okeh.  
 Glenn Gray's Casa Loma Orch.—*Indiana, I Never Knew*. Brunswick.  
 Benny Goodman—*Blue Skies*. Victor.  
 Chicagoans—*Nobody's Sweetheart, Liza*. Okeh.  
 Chicagoans—*I Found a New Baby*. Brunswick.  
 Mound City Blue Blowers—*One Hour, Hello Lola*. Victor.  
 Red Nichols—*Ida, Feeling No Pain*. Brunswick.  
 Miff Mole—*Alexander's Ragtime Band*. Columbia.  
 Venuti-Lang—*Farewell Blues*. Vocalion.  
 Jelly Roll Morton—*Mamie's Blues*. General.  
 Ladnier-Bechet—*I Found a New Baby*. Victor.



- Ted Lewis—*Dallas Blues, Royal Garden Blues*. Columbia.  
 Jimmie Noone—*River Stay 'Way from My Door*. Brunswick.  
 Memphis Five—*Rampart Street Blues*.  
 Quintet of Hot Club of France—*Some of These Days*.  
 Benny Goodman—*Clarinet à la King*. Okeh.  
 Benny Goodman Sextet—*Gone with What Wind?* Columbia.  
 Artie Shaw—*Concerto for Clarinet*. Victor.  
 Artie Shaw's Gramercy 5—*Summit Ridge Drive*. Victor.  
 Tommy Dorsey—*For You*. Victor.  
 Jimmy Dorsey—*Sorghum Switch*. Decca.  
 Duke Ellington *Panorama*—Victor Album.  
 Jimmy Lunceford—*What's Your Story, Morning Glory?* Columbia.  
 Jimmy Lunceford—*Blues in the Night*. Decca.  
 Lionel Hampton—*Flying Home*. Decca.  
 Lionel Hampton—*Blue*. Victor.  
 Count Basie—*You Can't Run Around*. Okeh.  
 Count Basie—*Fiesta in Blue*. Okeh.  
 Teddy Wilson & Billie Holiday. Columbia Album.  
*Anthology of White Jazz*. Decca Album.  
*Anthology of Colored Jazz*. Decca Album.

## XVIII. THE FUTURE OF JAZZ

IT REMAINS NOW to dispel some of the enthusiastic aggressiveness which has entered into jazz criticism and created so many stubborn, partisan, and intolerant opinions. I realize how many different matters could have been brought into the scope of this book. Sooner or later some enterprising editor will probably undertake the publication of a jazz encyclopedia of several volumes, to embrace the entire subject. In this encyclopedia a synthesis of critical opinion could be compiled by allowing each writer to expound at length on the particular branch of jazz in which he is most interested, and leaving it to the public to draw its own conclusion.

The idea of this would be to put the problem on a higher

rather than a lower plane. There are too many tyros for whom jazz has been an escape from other forms of culture. The importance of jazz can only be measured by its development alongside the other arts and by its relationship to and creative force as compared with theirs. We have been fortunate enough to witness the birth of a new art form, a complete understanding of which has been long overdue. It is regrettable that the American intelligentsia has allowed the constructive period of jazz to pass by without serious study in the beginning, without a real bibliography or discography. It is not my place to criticize this lack, but one may well imagine how it will be observed by American intellectuals a couple generations from now.

Jazz, basically a music of African origin, created by white and colored men amidst a rich and tragic folklore, has become the real music of America. The United States has had many great poets, writers, and painters, but few musicians of comparable importance. American art lacked self-confidence, and it was one of the most despised and least privileged of its people that unconsciously gave the means of attaining a great and influential power.

But America has always been suspicious of jazz, and its conservative elite element, ever reluctant to admit something new in art, has still not been able to reconcile itself.

Nevertheless, jazz is destined to become something more than a local phenomenon or even a national music. Jazz is on its way to conquering the world and becoming the music of the world.

It is significant that the victory of 1918 brought jazz as well as peace to Europe, where its qualities were recognized and established among progressive and cultured people.

Jazz has already played an important part in the fight for human freedom. It is the music of freedom, freedom of individuals and of races. It is the great art of democracy, irreconcilable with the philosophy of the dictators.

It is high time for America to be aware of this, and to prepare to establish this power all through the world. Jazz can be a universal instrument in the accomplishment of a bloodless victory. The time is not far distant when jazz will develop in every continent along the lines of local influences, with the same power

that enabled the so-called European classical music to submerge many national musical forms until today.

This is not merely an indication of artistic importance, but also a proof that American civilization is one of world-wide significance. This power of radiation parallels the history of the Greeks and the Romans, who were able to impose their artistic achievements on the limited expression of their contemporary and subsequent civilizations.

Such is the future of jazz, provided America herself realizes the importance of this international factor. To arrive at this end, jazz must be allowed the same cultural basis and encouragement which has been granted to other arts. It is paradoxical that this country, which has spent millions of dollars on the promotion and patronage of the French impressionist school of painting, has shown no such concern, but rather open contempt, for its own music.

French impressionism actually serves as a good object lesson. All the impressionists, from Renoir to Gauguin, and from Manet to Pissarro, and finally Rousseau, were misunderstood and despised by their contemporaries and died unrecognized. Today these men, who starved to death, are worth a fortune to those who buy and sell their works. So it may be too with jazz!

To avoid this, steps should be taken without delay to open conservatories in which the spirit of jazz can be developed; a committee of jazz students should be organized to work constantly on all matters pertaining to the study and betterment of this music.

Today in New Orleans a wonderful branch of folklore is dying almost undiscovered. There are still men who can recall the earliest tom-tom scenes and the birth of ragtime. In the Belgian Congo can be found the same music that arrived here in slave ships. All this should be of interest to Americans. Only an official research body could undertake this important investigation.

A comprehensive record library should be established with a classified selection of all the great recorded examples of jazz. Already many of the most important disks have disappeared. It

should be possible to arrange for the reissue of some particularly rare examples. Similarly, there is a need for a library and for a jazz academy which would be as important to the American people as the academies of literature and science in France, England, and Belgium. All the Negro and white heroes of jazz should be represented in this Academy of Jazz.

These are the first steps to be undertaken. They are important in that they would allow another American art, the motion picture, to maintain a permanent laboratory which would help Hollywood in the documentation in which the film industry must continue to participate.

For some time I have had these ideas of an essential cultural and social plan in mind; and at this writing the project seems to be on the verge of realization. In Mr. Arnold Gingrich, editor of *Esquire*, I have found an ardent spirit ready to make vital contributions for which the next generation will remember him gratefully. It is to be expected that the seeds sown here will bear fruit and that the powerful influence of the motion pictures will be brought into this organization for the development of American music. Perhaps it would not be too much to hope for some official form of patronage. Certainly it would be the best means of wiping out race prejudice.

On the day when Hollywood shows Negroes and whites working together in the dramatization of the roles they have played in jazz, the principles of American democracy will have reached a new practical basis.

The consideration of these generalities regarding social evolution as it is affected by jazz must not distract me at this point from discussing the question of jazz criticism. When all these dreams have been realized and jazz has been universalized by the movies, the most advanced of the American critics will be able to tackle the subject and study it at length.

In the meantime there have been nothing more than well-meaning amateurs. An uncertain and changeable art has met a chorus of confused criticism. Most of the time those who have devoted themselves to the cause of jazz have lacked the necessary culture which might give their efforts more consistency. I

am even willing to bet that the violent disputes of certain among them cannot even be understood by the majority of people interested in jazz.

Jazz, like all the arts, is an objective creation designed for subjective appreciation. One literary critic may like Robert Frost; another may prefer Archibald MacLeish; others may wax enthusiastic over William Carlos Williams or Stephen Vincent Benét. In other words, the readers, like the jazz fans, are divided into groups preferring one or the other emotion or one or the other music.

But strange to relate, when the literary critics are not unanimous in their appreciation, they do not insult each other in defense of their convictions, and above all their readers do not start taking up the issue for the critic.

In jazz it is different, for these young people have been seized by such a delirious enthusiasm that they may actively detest a certain musician or even a certain writer who has said, for example, that Benny Goodman is better than Pee Wee Russell, or vice versa.

It seems to me that jazz, which is a democratic creation, should endow its followers with tolerance and broadmindedness. When I listen to these petty quarrels I try to imagine the devotees of *La Bohème* insulting those of Wagner's operas because the only real opera music belongs to one group or the other. It is a grotesque yet somehow pleasant thought.

It all proves the great vitality of jazz. But it also proves that a spirit of artistic objectivity has yet to be strived for by the critics.

Jazz has passed from the stage of pure improvisation into that of swing, which might be called an intellectual construction assisted by solos. Some prefer one format, some the other; those who are sufficiently objective can like both kinds, taking into full consideration the respective differences of evolution and atmosphere.

Until two or three years ago most of the critics leaned toward the vibrant reality of pure improvisation and were horrified by the idea of big band jazz. Let us discuss first this group, which

we might describe as the classical jazz critics. They are in agreement on the general formula, but not on its application, nor on the detailing of their own particular taste. This is perfectly normal, and one would not want it to be another way. In art, nobody can ever be positively and completely right where subjective appreciation is involved.

Hugues Panassié, to my mind, defined very accurately the necessity for improvisation and the contrast between the early hot jazz and the saccharine products of the "straight" melodic orchestras of that period. His stubborn temperament, however, brought him to introduce a vain system of describing one musician as "better" than another, which seems all wrong to me, and opposed to the real spirit of jazz. After all, this is an ensemble music; when Jimmie Noone, Milton Mezzrow, Teschemacher, Edmond Hall, or Fazola plays or played clarinet with one or another group, his style may have differed. The group is more important than the individual!

Panassié underwent an extraordinary flip-flop in his views, which astonished his American readers. After going overboard for the white Chicagoan school, he suddenly decided in his last book that he believed only in the strictly Negro jazz. What is colored is good; what is white is only good insofar as it tries to be colored! This forced him into certain gymnastics of logic to try to make himself appear consistent. But what matter? Panassié loves jazz; he has devoted his life to it, though he suffers from the terrible limitation of judging it all through phonograph records. I believe that all his last book was spoiled by a lack of understanding even of swing, which he defined erroneously, and which distorted his attitude toward jazz. Moreover, Panassié prefers Mezz Mezzrow to Teschemacher, and Jimmie Noone to Benny Goodman. This is his right, and these are his sincere beliefs. However, in these expressions of loyalty one must be aware of the circumstances. Some say that Panassié praises Mezzrow because they are personal friends. Surely the contrary could be asserted—that they are friends because Panassié likes Mezzrow's music.

When I published *Aux Frontières du Jazz*, in France, and

came to know Panassié, I also established contact with John Hammond, who has done a great deal of good for the cause of American jazz. Hammond wrote a number of important articles and did some other work, the significance of which will be appreciated later. He has a passionate love for jazz, but with the reservation that his interest is specialized in the Count Basie and Teddy Wilson schools and in the resurrection of boogie-woogie. His great sincerity has put him into several remarkable situations, notably one when he publicly denounced the band of his brother-in-law, Benny Goodman, and more recently when he declared that in his opinion Duke Ellington was deserting jazz in order to create a more advanced music.

When Panassié was active in Paris the Belgians and the Dutch had already preceded him. Brussels had its magazine, *Music*, which was the first of its kind in the world and which features articles by such people as André Hennebicq, Bettonville, and especially Carlos de Radzitzky, who had one of the deepest feelings for jazz of all the writers I know.

In Holland the *Jazz Wereld* played a similarly important role, with Van Praag, a great swing fan and Duke Ellington admirer, as the most authoritative critic.

The gap left by Panassié was brilliantly filled by George Frazier, a follower of the small jam bands, especially the white Chicago-style musicians and a few Negro artists playing in that style. His consistent admiration made him one of the best defenders of Dixieland.

His tastes inclined him toward the study of those ever-changing little groups of individuals who have more love for jazz than for money.

Charles Edward Smith and his admirable group, with Frederic Ramsey, Jr., and William Russell, did jazz a great service in helping to bring jazz back to its origins. Inspired by the work of the pioneer musicians, they set to work to discover and bring back into the limelight some of these early artists. They also specialized in parts of Negro jazz history from Buddy Bolden through King Oliver and Jelly Roll Morton to Sidney Bechet and Louis Armstrong. According to them, swing represents the deformation and

perdition of jazz; it is a musical flood, drowning out improvisation, against which it is too late to build a dam.

Thus every field of jazz before the rise of swing has been minutely explored, with the exception of the whole white school of improvised jazz, from the Original Dixieland to the Chicagoans—a great injustice, it seems to me.

I have tried to show that until the arrival of Armstrong there was as much important jazz exploited and created by whites as by Negroes. This theory is contrary to Panassié's and partly different from Charles Edward Smith's. It is nearer to the attitude of George Frazier, with the difference that I try to go objectively beyond my own personal tastes and judge the evolution of jazz, in its swing era, in its boogie-woogie manifestations, and even in its present form; for whether or not we like what has evolved, we must accept its presence. This viewpoint is shared by Bob Thiele and his magazine, *Jazz*.

*Down Beat* has done inestimable good for jazz in a spirit of enlightened commercialism. The distinction made in its record reviews between jazz and swing is of great importance and should help the study of jazz.

In addition to these critics, who are agreed on the necessity for pure improvisation, and who have held out against the spirit of the big bands, there are a number of critics who have inclined more toward the swing school. The two best-qualified representatives of this school are Leonard Feather, who has written for *Metronome*, *Look*, and other publications, and Barry Ulanov, editor of *Metronome*.

These writers are enthused by the best of modern improvisation and believe that improvisation should be allowed in big band arrangements too. They point out that enormous strides have been made in this music in the past generation, that very little of what was played twenty years ago would sound good today, and that some of the older musicians have been built up into false gods, more on legendary or sentimental value than through the permanence of their music. They do not believe that the latest ballad played by Jimmy Dorsey or by Harry James is jazz, but they do declare that these bands play real jazz arrangements inter-



mittently. According to Feather, there is no such thing as a sharp distinction between jazz and swing, the latter merely being a newer word which in many cases is interchangeable with jazz.

Personally, I am only partly in agreement with these views, though on the subject of Duke Ellington I concur with them and believe John Hammond was right when he said: "Duke is still the greatest creative force in jazz, and his band is a wonderful instrument, tonally if not rhythmically." But on the subject of Ellington and his musical evolution, I might add that I did not have to wait for jazz to interest me in the kind of modern music at which he is aiming. It existed twenty years ago; and since at that time I preferred jazz to certain modern formulas of Stravinsky and Milhaud, I do not wish to be brought back to them by a detour.

I can well understand that a listener may not react to the improvisation of a Kid Rena or a Mezz Mezzrow, and may prefer Count Basie or Charlie Barnet or above all the great Duke Ellington, but I wonder why those who swear only by Ellington have, as far as I know, ignored the moderns for twenty years.

All this should provide the material for discussion and argument that will never end in our generation. Where does jazz end and where does it begin? Is jazz swing? Do the big bands have the spirit of jazz? Can a soloist develop as well in a swing band as in a jam band? These are the general ideas that will always continue to provide food for disputes among critics and thousands of other Americans.

In this book I have put forward my ideas sincerely. I do not wish to convince anyone; I merely hope to enlighten. I do not claim to be infallibly right. Time will bring us all into agreement. But I can't help thinking that those who reserve their praise solely and exclusively for the big bands today are the modern counterparts of those who claimed fifteen years ago that the inconsistent small groups did not represent jazz, which must be looked for in Paul Whiteman and Jack Hylton. They justified their arguments by pointing to the popularity of the bands they defended. Nevertheless, after fifteen years the Whitemans and the Hyltons are not important. I believe that most of the work of today's big bands

will be similarly forgotten fifteen years from now, and that to find the truth about the jazz of our time it will be necessary to look back on the little bands and individuals who helped to make jazz a living thing of beauty, rather than on those who were merely interested in achieving the power of money through it. Poverty has often been the price of art.

Jazz has not escaped this handicap in its first struggles. More power to those who appreciate this; but let the thousands of enthusiasts who think they have seen the light beware the temptation to indulge in insults and bickering. Jazz is a great art which is practically newborn, and it must be nurtured in a spirit of honesty, understanding, and tolerance.

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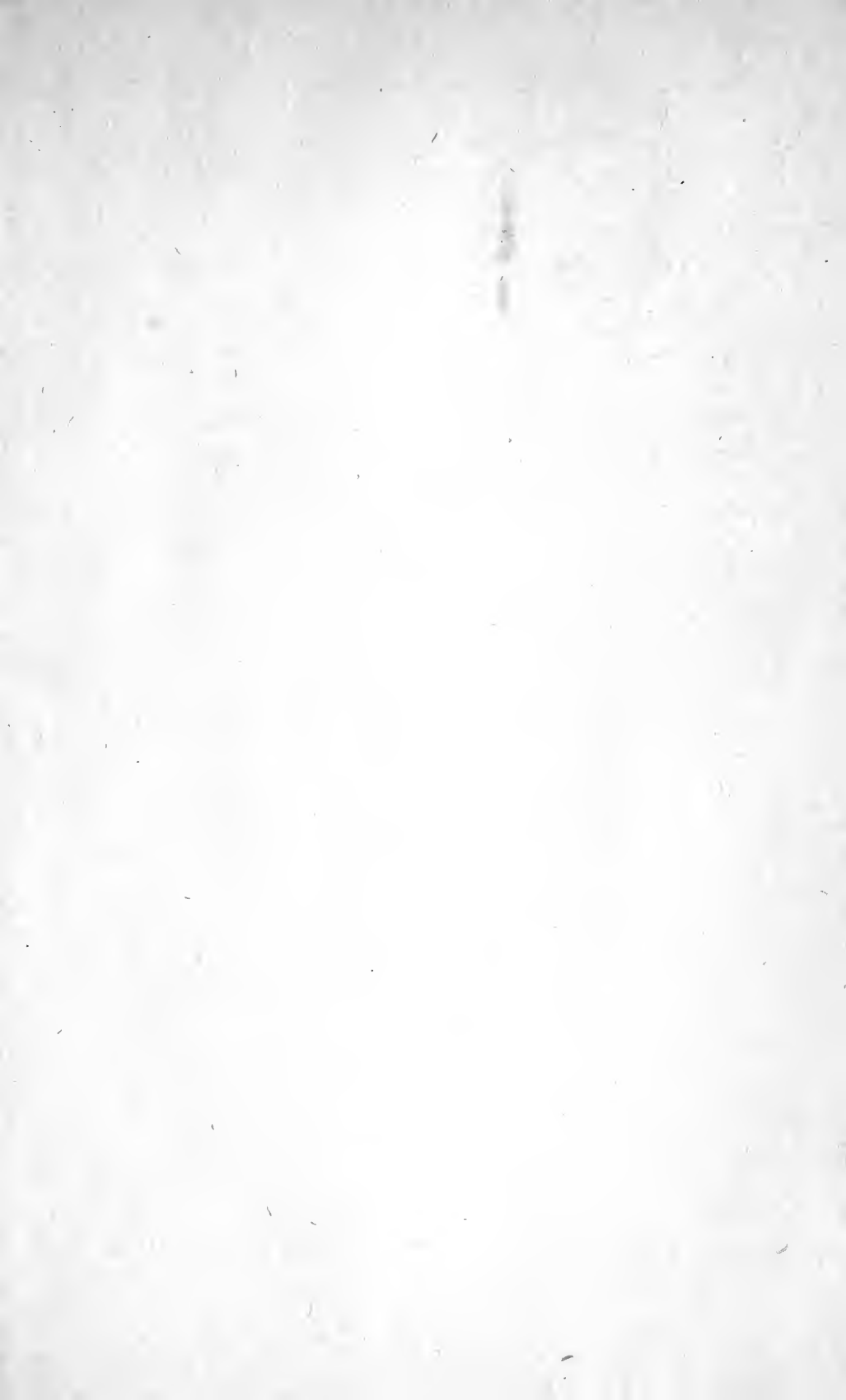
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