



The NOTE



Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania • Fall / Winter 2017



SPECIAL ISSUE! BOB DOROUGH INTERVIEW

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The NOTE contains some content that may be considered offensive. Authors' past recollections reflect attitudes of the times and remain uncensored.

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From the Collection . . .



**Cover Photo (front):
Bob Dorough in his NYC apartment in 1956.
Photo by Scott Hyde**



**Cover Photo (back):
Bob Dorough at the piano - 1956
Photo by Scott Hyde**

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Editor:

Matt Vashlishan, D.M.A.

Design/Layout:

Charles de Bourbon at BGastudios.com
ESU Office of University Relations

Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection

Kemp Library
East Stroudsburg University
200 Prospect St.
East Stroudsburg, PA 18301-2999
alcohncollection@esu.edu
(570) 422-3828
www.esu.edu/alcohncollection

East Stroudsburg University President

Marcia G. Welsh, Ph.D.

The mission of the Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection is to stimulate, enrich, and support research, teaching, learning, and appreciation of all forms of jazz.

The ACMJC is a distinctive archive built upon a unique and symbiotic relationship between the Pocono Mountains jazz community and East Stroudsburg University.

With the support of a world-wide network of jazz advocates, the ACMJC seeks to promote the local and global history of jazz by making its resources available and useful to students, researchers, educators, musicians, historians, journalists and jazz enthusiasts of all kinds, and to preserve its holdings for future generations.

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A Note from the Collection Coordinator



Bob Weidner

By Dr. Matt Vashlishan

It is a somewhat regular occurrence these days where I sit down to write this column feeling incredibly excited to share the contents of the issue with our loyal readers. This issue is no different! There have been a lot of things happening on the ESU campus as well as in the jazz community. This is an important time for us here in the Poconos, as we reshape what was and envision what will be, not without the help of some new faces and some rekindled relationships with those who have been around to see it all.

The first “thank you” I must give out is to vocalist JD Walter, Bob Dorough, and photographer Larry Fink for their work on an incredible piece for this issue. I am sure you will find that JD’s interview with Bob Dorough is unlike any other. As I was editing through it I could not bring myself to split it up between two issues, so you will find it here in its entirety. As I made my way down the Word document, I didn’t realize my mouth hanging open wider and wider as Bob told story after story of his experiences and relationships that (as JD mentions) is a “who’s who” of jazz and entertainment history. This interview separates itself from the usual School House Rock and Miles Davis topics often covered by Bob.

Jazz News and a Thank You List!

Due to their relationship with one another, JD is able to dig a little deeper to elicit responses from Bob that are much more personal. It is a rare gem that puts Bob’s importance in jazz history into an even brighter light, and Larry’s photos are second to none and complement the interview as well as balance Scott Hyde’s photos from the 1950s!

As you will see by the photos in this issue, Zoot Fest 2016 was a phenomenal time. The music could not have been any better, and I send out my sincerest thanks to: Lew Tabackin; what I call the “Bill Trio” (Bill Dobbins, Bill Crow, and Bill Goodwin); the members of the newly titled Water Gap Jazz Orchestra for presenting some truly incredible music. Bill Holman was gracious enough to send us the original parts to the Zoot Sims recording “Hawthorne Nights” that he arranged back in the mid 1970s. Saxophonist Scott Silbert did a great job handling the “Zoot chair” and made it a very special occasion for those involved.

You might still be thinking of the previous paragraph, wondering to yourself, “Water Gap Jazz Who??” Many of you know the band as The COTA Festival Orchestra. We perform on the last Monday of every month at the Deer Head Inn for Big Band Night. Those of you who have been around the area long enough are familiar with the various incarnations of the band: The Phil Woods Big Band, Grandmas Soup, and others I’m sure. I am happy to announce that in honor of not only Rick Chamberlain and Phil Woods, but all of the talented and inspiring musicians that have come through the Delaware Water Gap over the years that we are now known as the Water Gap Jazz Orchestra. It is a pleasure and an honor to

perform with and direct this group of some of the most loyal, passionate, and gifted musicians I have met. We will continue to expose the public to the most diverse sets of big band jazz possible. I would like to thank the Deer Head Inn and everyone who puts the time in every month to make these concerts happen.

As is my usual custom for this column, I must acknowledge a photographer left out of the last issue. The centerfold photograph was taken at the Denver Jazz Party and was of Benny Carter, Phil Woods, and Zoot Sims. This photo was donated to the Collection by Jim Eigo, and was taken by a photographer named Jay Anderson. It has come to my knowledge that Jay often kept to himself, and you didn’t really get to know him unless you had a few mutual friends. Thanks to our loyal and knowledgeable readership for informing me of anything I might miss!

Finally, I would like to inform everyone of esu.edu/jazzatesu. This is the website dedicated to anything jazz going on at East Stroudsburg University. There is information about the Collection, the University Jazz Ensemble, Zoot Fest, other concerts, and most recently the Jazz Lounge Lecture Series. There is a new space in Kemp Library dedicated to the Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection, and part of this initiative is to bring musician lectures to the public free of charge. The first lecture will feature Su Terry, a saxophonist, clarinetist, author and composer. The focus will be area professional musicians and will occur on a somewhat regular basis, right now the last Wednesday of each month. Stay tuned to esu.edu/jazzatesu for updates on the day, time, and lecturers in this series. ☺

From the Bridge



James Richard

Hero's Journey Through the Düsseldorf Airport

By Su Terry • Suterry.com

I'm an American. I admit it. Actually, I don't even have to admit it because my attire, my accent, my attitude, all proclaim my Americanness to anyone with whom I come into contact.

As an American—of a certain age, I might add—portions of my personal aesthetic were formed by some iconic American things, one of which being *The Wizard of Oz*. The original book was authored by L. Frank Baum, who unfortunately never lived to see the 1939 MGM adaptation with its classic score by Harold Arlen and Yip Harburg. Rich in psychological and mythic imagery, amongst the film's many archetypal references is Dorothy's "Hero's Journey." The archetype of the Hero's Journey (described at length by scholar Joseph Campbell) is summarized in the chart below, courtesy of writer Christopher Vogler:

fact, I believe anyone's life is immeasurably enriched by recognizing it as one's personal Hero's Journey. Seeing one's existence in this way adds a larger-than-life element that, if nothing else, makes life a bit more bearable, and a lot more fun.

ORDINARY WORLD

Of course, it's easy to contemplate your Hero's Journey when you're kicking back with a glass of Sauvignon Blanc on the deck at sunset at the end of a glorious summer's day. The challenge is contemplating it when you're at the Düsseldorf airport at three in the morning trying to make your way back to good old JFK.

The Priority Pass app indicated there was an Air Berlin lounge I could access right near my gate. Before boarding, it would be nice to get a free cup of coffee, a bottle of water, snacks, and free Wi-Fi to check my email. I said to the woman manning the gate, "Where is the lounge, please?"

"You go through there," she replied, waving her hand ambiguously. "It's one floor up."

"Thanks," I say, going toward the direction indicated, lugging my horn cases and feeling the leg burn of the previous day's walk around Berlin.

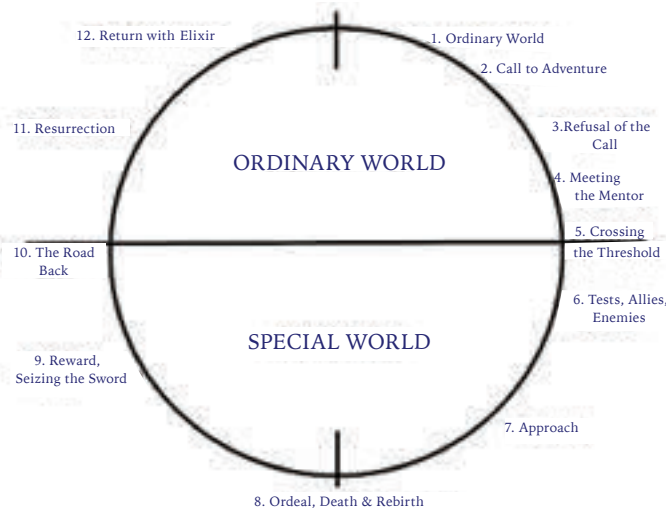
CALL TO ADVENTURE

"Through there," she had said. Well here's the thing: she's German, and English is not her native language. Truth be told, even native English speakers have trouble with prepositions. "Through there" can mean just about anything! The only thing I saw that seemed to correspond to "through there" was a glass enclosure with a band of pretty lights inside. It looked like an elevator, albeit a rather futuristic one. Leave it to the Germans, I thought. When it comes to appliances and machinery, they are all over it like white on rice. Nice touch to have a classy futuristic entrance to the lounge! Well done!

REFUSAL OF THE CALL

Do I really have time to do this, I wondered. Well, why not? The lounge is only one floor up! As I approached the elevator, the doors opened automatically. I stepped in, surrounded by tiny, colorful, translucent cubes. Then the doors closed, sealing me off from the

THE HERO'S JOURNEY



I mention *The Wizard of Oz* because in modern times we get a lot of our myths from various forms of media. For example, I like to think of myself as a combination of Nora Charles, Dorothy Parker, Emma Peel, and Tamara In The Green Bugatti. I try to live my life with mythic precepts in mind. What the hell, it makes me happy. In

boarding area. As my eyes adjusted to the odd lighting, I saw I was now in a Security Personnel Only area. No exit without a special key.

MEETING THE MENTOR

I pushed open an emergency exit that opened into a carpeted foyer, tripping the alarm. I waited. Nobody came to investigate. I saw a house phone on the wall and dialed security. “Hello, I walked into the security area by accident and now I can’t get out.”

“Someone will come to meet you,” was the reply.

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

After some minutes, a security guard shows up and wants to know how I ended up there. “I was trying to get to the Air Berlin lounge,” I say. “The woman at the gate pointed over here so I went over here.” He tells me I have to wait for the Airport Police to come. “My flight is boarding soon,” I say.

“Too bad,” he says. “It was your mistake.”

“No it wasn’t,” I counter. “She said ‘go through there’ and the only thing ‘through there’ was that thing that looked like an elevator, and the doors opened automatically when I approached it.”

He shook his head.

“Hey,” I said, sounding even to myself like the most clueless American possible, “if you don’t want people to go through that entrance, why do the doors open automatically, and why do you have all those groovy lights in there? And a Do Not Enter sign would be nice, too.”

“You will have to wait for the Airport Police,” he repeated gruffly, and he split.

TESTS, ALLIES, ENEMIES

I checked the time on my phone. Boarding was scheduled for a few minutes from now. I could see the gate, but I couldn’t get to it. Passengers were already lining up. I began to berate myself. What was I thinking, walking into a weird-looking elevator on purpose just because I wanted a free cup of coffee. The devil on my shoulder laughed hysterically.

“There should be a Do Not Enter sign on it, dear,” said the angel on my other shoulder. “You were just attracted by the shiny lights. ANY girl who grew up in the 60s and plays jazz saxophone and wears her hair in dreadlocks would have done exactly the same thing!”

Sensing the angel’s ironic tone, I was not much consoled. I sat down on my saxophone case to wait for the Airport Police. They took their sweet time getting there. When two representatives of the battalion finally arrived, they seemed rather suspicious of my story. I played the Clueless American card to the hilt, hoping for mercy. Alas, there was none.

“You must go through Passport Control again,” one of them said.

“But that’s all the way back at the beginning of the airport,” I whined, remembering how long it took to walk to the gate, and unable to hide the tremor in my voice. “The gate is right there,” I said, pointing. “Why can’t I just go to the gate? I haven’t done anything wrong.”

They were adamant. I realized I had to try to get back to Passport Control and return to the gate in record time—

horn cases and burning legs notwithstanding—in order to make my flight.

APPROACH

“How do I get to Passport Control from here?” I asked. “Through there,” one of them said, waving his hand ambiguously as he unlocked an unmarked door and ushered me through. Wandering down a deserted, sterile hallway, I looked in vain for signs to Passport Control. In fact, I looked for any signs at all. No signs. Nor were there any signs of life, human or otherwise. “Help!” I shouted. “Help!”

ORDEAL, DEATH & REBIRTH

My pitiful cries were swallowed by the seemingly infinite passageway. Just as I thought it was coming to an end, it turned a corner and kept going. The thought occurred to me that even if I should find Passport Control, since my passport had already been stamped they would likely consider me worthy of detainment. What would Nora Charles do, I wondered. Well, first of all, she would be wondering where the next martini would be coming from. And at the end of the day, if necessary, she would be rescued by her husband Nick, or else the dog. But I was traveling solo and had no such backup. Since there was nothing else to be done, I trudged onward through the apparent Portal to Nowhere.

REWARD

I eventually found Passport Control. The other people in line kindly let me go ahead when I said my flight was boarding. The officials had evidently been tipped off by their colleagues to expect a Clueless American, and after a cursory glance through my passport, they let me proceed back to the gate.

THE ROAD BACK

With as much speed as my awkward burden (I bought a double horn case as soon as I got back to Pennsylvania) and aching legs allowed, I hightailed it back to the scene of the “crime,” where I made it through just as the gate was closing. My traverse down the aisle of the aircraft was greeted by the disgruntled stares of passengers wondering who on earth THIS was, delaying the flight like that. After stowing my cases in the one remaining overhead bin that would fit them, I settled into my seat.

RESURRECTION

The plane took off. As we rose higher and higher, I reflected on my journey through the Düsseldorf Airport. On the up side, I was now fully awake and did not miss the un-procured cup of coffee that had been the catalyst for a dismal but comical chain of events. I did wish, however, for some sort of talisman that would symbolize my adventure. A magical elixir, perhaps.

RETURN WITH ELIXIR

Synchronistically, no sooner had the thought of a magical elixir crossed my mind than the beverage cart appeared. Suffice it to say that I did, indeed, return home bearing a magical elixir. Better still—since I drank the whole thing, I did not even have to declare it at Customs.



From the ACMJC Oral History Project



Larry Fink

Bob Dorough and JD Walter

Much of Bob Dorough's exploits and associations have been documented in previous interviews in various publications, as well as in a forthcoming documentary. I first met Bob in 1992 while singing at the Deer Head Inn in the Poconos (where he resides) after I had moved back to the east coast from Texas. Shortly thereafter, Bob wrote liner notes for my debut CD and later produced another CD of mine. The family of the Delaware Water Gap area had taken me under their wing, and I was invited to stay at Bob and Sally's house whenever I had a gig in the area (which was frequent during the Solliday ownership of that club). Whenever I stayed at his house, I would always find myself feeling like a kid listening to stories that

took me on adventures through the history of Jazz. Bob had played with, toured, and traveled in the circles of the giants of Jazz including the Black community of artists and personalities as well as famous actors and comedians of the day. I wanted to dig a little deeper into his personal relationships, as well as get his vantage point as to the social climate of the day. For me, one of the beautiful things about this interview was learning new names and legends that opened doors and filled in the gaps of relationships between the different communities of musicians in this great American art form.

— JD Walter

Interview September 2015

JD Walter: The people you have rubbed elbows with and performed with reads as a who's who in the history of American Music and Jazz Artistry, as well as some major figures in comedy, literature and acting. Many of these associations started because you were the pianist for Sugar Ray Robinson as a tap dancer after his retirement as a world champion boxer. Can you tell me about how that began?

Bob Dorough: I used to hang out at a tap dancing studio in NYC in the early 50s. Well, I didn't hang out - I'd drop in once in awhile.

JDW: Because?

BD: I got jobs playing classes, so it would be 24 young people doing the same steps, and Henry (the owner) played piano himself.

JDW: Who is Henry?

BD: Henry LeTang. He was a teacher and he could play. (Imitates rhythms and sings the song, "Just You, Just Me.") He had these arrangements, and I learned them all, and I'd play for a class and make three dollars an hour. There were some great talented swingers. One guy would say at the end of class, "let's jam one," and we'd play a tune. Just him and me, and he could improvise and do stuff faster and off the book kind of.

JDW: Did you ever run into Baby Lawrance (arguably one of the greatest legendary tap dancers to have lived)?

BD: I met him with Sugar, because all the tap dancers came to our shows to see Sugar Ray tapping. So he quit the ring - he was a champ. One day I reported to Henry's (I had no telephone in those days), and I'd just make my rounds and play for singers and play for tap dancers. I dropped off at Henry's and he said, "Oh, go down to the big studio. You're going to make \$5." I didn't know what he meant, but I went into his most deluxe studio, and the door opened and it was full of Black people. Henry says, "Bob Dorough, meet Sugar Ray Robinson. Play a tune for Sugar." So I played "Green Eyes." I'll always remember that. And when it was over Ray was mopping his brow and said, "You're going on the road with us."

JDW: It was long enough ago that I don't feel shy about asking how much you made on the road with him.

BD: (Laughing) I was afraid to ask for too much money. But I was in dire straits because I had that other affair of being denied a cabaret card, which happened while I was rehearsing with Sugar. I think I made \$200 a week when we worked, and when we didn't everything was on Ray. We traveled on the train because he wouldn't fly because he was superstitious. We went up to Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, San Francisco, LA, and back to Chicago where we had started as well as the east coast, the Deep South, and Paris.

JDW: Who was traveling with you?

BD: (Laughs) He had eight or nine people in his entourage. It was ridiculous. First of all, he had his partner who was a comedian and became a good friend of mine: "Scottie." He was a gasser! Joe Scott: he would teach me to drink Gin. While on the road I would always say, "Hey Sug, why don't you let me do a number on the show?" And Sugar would say, "No, this is the big time!" (Laughing) But in time, Joe and a couple of the other guys in the entourage all sort of got to diggin' me as a singer and entertainer.

I was never on the show. I was the conductor so sometimes I'd conduct and sometimes I'd play. We'd hook up with big bands everywhere we went and we'd have charts; charts by Jimmy Mundy, the great arranger. But during those two years with Sugar, I met some of the most important people like Earl Hines, Louis Armstrong, Count Basie and Maya Angelou, to name a few.

JDW: This show with Sugar would join up with other "acts" to do variety shows for weeks at a time?

BD: Yes

JDW: I understand that is where you first got to really know Louis Armstrong - while on a stint with Sugar in Chicago? Did you get to spend time with Louis?

BD: Well, we were doing a variety show with Sugar and some other artists, and for two weeks we played a theater in Chicago on the south side. I've forgotten its name. It was in a black neighborhood theater and played variety shows and movies between the shows... five shows a day.

JDW: And Louis Armstrong was in this show?

BD: Yes, he was the headliner in fact. I'd walk by his dressing room and he'd be sitting there with a silk stocking on his head. You know, the way they used to conk, and he had a wooden crate full of tape. Reel to reels, and a tape recorder, and he'd say, "C'mon in Bob I'm listening to Lester Young..." or whoever. You know, he loved to listen to music. We had lots of time off because there was a movie between each show, but every show he did was pretty much the same because he was a big time artist. They (the record labels) would say, "Plug your new thing." (Starts singing "Give Me a Kiss To Build a Dream On.") And I'd stand in the wings and listen. Trummy was playing bone. Trummy Young that is. Let's see, Arvel Shaw was the bass player and Marty Napoleon played piano.

JDW: You were the Music Director for Sugar?

BD: Mostly I played or conducted for Sugar, but now and then I'd conduct for guests of the show... and I remember (this was in Chicago too) when Eydie Gormé came without her conductor. She came with her piano player, and she had charts so they asked if I could conduct for Eydie, so I got that experience. I never got her to sing one of my songs... (laughing).

JDW: Well, plenty of other people have sung your songs. Admittedly you were rather unknown for a long time, having

lived this kind of “Zelig” type of story. And having associations and relationships with many of the greats.

BD: It seems like it. I was lucky, and I didn’t really want to be in show business. I wanted to sit and play, but I did need the gig.

JDW: You hadn’t recorded your own music yet. The stint with Sugar was from 1952-54, and your first record wasn’t recorded until 1956. So up until this time you were conducting and accompanying?

BD: I recorded some with Sam Most before 1956.

JDW: Before we leave this period, were there any other notable stories with Louis or Sugar you want to talk about or that left an impression on you?

BD: Just that Sugar was a completely friendly guy, and when we would travel together on the train with the variety show he would bring his wife and son. He would carry his trainer, his Valet, chauffeur, a big retinue. So all these people are traveling with him.

JDW: What’s interesting also is that you are getting to see a side of America from a different vantage point than most of white America. You are spending a lot of time traveling the country with black entertainers, and so you were certainly privy to seeing a lot of racism and how people of color were being treated at a time when a lot of whites weren’t allowed “in” these situations. What kind of things were you seeing while on the road traveling? How were the hotels? Were there problems? What was that situation like in general?

BD: Well, when we went down south with Count Basie, I would stay in the black hotels and I’d come down the stairs into the café or the restaurant in the morning, and suddenly the room would go silent (*laughing*). But I’d announce nervously, “I play piano for Sugar Ray,” and that loosened it up a little (*laughing*). A lot of times I’d say, “Scottie (Joe Scott), lets go to breakfast.” So I’d be with him and that helped the situation. But yes in Chicago there was a little heat, and we were on the south side. I met a lot of black people, and some beautiful ladies... quite an adventure I must say.

JDW: Were there any run-ins with the police or harassment of any kind?

BD: No, but then Sugar was quite highly respected, so I think his reputation and his standing kept us from getting any real heat.

JDW: Certainly traveling in the south and even in the north you know you’re going to run into that. You stayed in black hotels, but how about stopping along the road or at restaurants, etc.?

BD: That was tough. We’d see those signs... “colored or white only.”

JDW: So was there a lot of cooking by yourselves?

BD: A lot of people took us into their homes. He was a famous guy. I remember that being the case in

Philadelphia especially, where we “sat down” for a bit while doing another two weeks before heading down south, and that’s where I met Coltrane.

JDW: Tell me more about that.

BD: This is before he was known. I had the chart, “Green Eyes,” and “Just You, Just Me,” and a few big band charts. Some guy says, “see that fourth tenor player?” I said, “yeah.” And he said, “you’re gonna hear from him.” I said, “Oh yeah? Who is that?” And he says, “That’s John Coltrane and he’s something else!” So I switched the second tenor music to his “desk” so he’d have an eight bar solo (*laughing*), and that gig lasted a week. We’d work three or four times a day, shows that is, with a movie in between, and pretty much play the same music. You know, show biz.

JDW: And this was 1952 and 1953?

BD: Yeah.

JDW: So getting back to an earlier question, you had lost your cabaret card? I think it’s a generally accepted concept that the idea of the cabaret card and its punishments for violations were directed at the black community.

BD: Yeah.

JDW: But you got snagged?

BD: You know I was completely honest about having been arrested. I was such an innocent really, and I could have lied on the application.

JDW: Who required folks to apply for cards?

BD: The Liquor Control Board.

JDW: Ok.

BD: They didn’t want any “undesirables” in bars, whether they were bartenders, waitresses, or whatever... undesirables (*laughing*)!

JDW: So you never had a cabaret card to begin with, you just decided to tell the truth on the application because it was required if you wanted to play in the clubs? And you were denied?

BD: Yeah, Max Gordon gave me a gig at the Vanguard. It was more of a cabaret room in those days, and I accompanied some girls from the “House of Flowers” Musical.

JDW: Now this is pre Sugar Ray now right?

BD: Yeah right before the start with Sugar. Max said, “You got to have a cabaret card,” and so I worked there about two weeks, and I kept putting him off. I said, “I’ll work on it,” and I’d postpone it. Finally he put the hammer down and said, “If you don’t have it Monday or Tuesday that’s it... I’m sorry but they’re on my neck.” So I quit, and that was the end of that. So I knew I didn’t have a card, and of course I confessed to Sugar soon after.

We opened at the French quarter with Sugar. That

was our very first gig, somewhere on West 46th Street I think. We had a French Dancing show from Paris and Sugar was just one of the acts. We had a big band and after a few weeks Sugar said that everybody had to have a cabaret card because it was a bar. That's when I confessed to him, and he said, "You've been busted?" Actually I was late for rehearsal because I was in jail! The day I got out, I went straight to the 2 p.m. rehearsal at the French Quarter, and he says, "Where you been?" (*laughing*) Sometimes he was very bossy - quite a heavy ego. So I confessed that I couldn't get a cabaret card because I'd been busted before.

JDW: What was his response?

BD: He said he would fix it. So I guess he pulled some strings. We played three or four weeks in New York. He paid whoever needed to be paid or talked to the mayor.

JDW: So it's all very interesting to me, this cabaret business. Do you care to go into any detail about those circumstances?

BD: Well we were in Wildwood. We played inside the bar in this little joint, and it was a pretty good band. We had rehearsed at my house. I needed the gig. It wasn't an ideal band, and I wasn't really the leader, but they all dug me and I could sing and play, so we played tunes. On our day off, they all wanted to go to New York and get some pot. It was a Monday. I think that was our day off and we went back for the Tuesday night opening, and we got busted after the first set.

JDW: How did that transpire?

BD: It was a wonderful drummer who was with us... the tenor man drove to New York and back. We had a beautiful jam session at my pad, #333 East 75th Street, and we got a kilo of grass (*laughing*). Besides our band, there were about three or four other bands playing in Wildwood, and everybody was pitching in to get a piece of the stuff so we had the capital to score. I think it was two or three hundred dollars. The drummer, I won't say his name, was a junkie. The tenor man was very hip, and had been a junkie in his younger days. He was driving back, and we were all ready for our gig, and the drummer finked on us.

JDW: Why would he do that?

BD: To get out of it... you know they put the pressure on junkies - "give us some names" type of thing. So as we approached the town, the drummer who was playing with another band in Wildwood but driving with us said, "I have an early set tonight, can I get my share?" And the tenor man says, "No man, we are all late, we'll do it later." So back and forth, "No, no man, I got to get my share," the drummer says. So the tenor player gets mad and stops the car on the highway, got out of the car, goes around to the trunk, reaches in the bag of pot and gave him a piece and the drummer says, "Let me off at 3rd Street." And because we were late, we threw the stuff in my bureau drawer. I was rooming with the tenor player right above the club, so being late we went right down and played a set, then I got involved talking to a chick during intermission, and ah,

suddenly they all came back for the second set, and as they passed me, the tenor player said, "We're busted." I looked at him, and his face was white, and so as I go back to the piano, I notice these plain-clothes cats at the bar dressed very untypical of the beach, and I thought, "Oh boy," and I called the tune, "Strike Up The Band." I'll never forget that.

JDW: You didn't play that Nat King Cole tune, "Call The Police?"

BD: (*laughing*) I wish I had known it! I took most of the heat because I was the only one who lived in New York. I was the oldest in the band and it was in my room. In a way I think that if that cabaret card business hadn't happened, I would have been a bigger part of the N.Y. scene. But I went on the road with Sugar to Paris and spent almost a year there.

JDW: How was the scene there?

BD: Well I was trapped on the Right Bank, and jazz was going on in the Left Bank. I worked every night in the Mars club. That was really my first chance to do what I wanted to do. Playing any tune I could think of...writing tunes and playing them. It was all very good.

JDW: That doesn't sound so bad, quite a silver lining, getting to write tunes and playing what you wanted.

BD: Definitely. The owner married a French woman, but he was definitely an east side New Yorker, who loved my singing and my songs.

JDW: So keeping the timeline straight, you played with Sugar in 1952 and 1953, and you had graduated North Texas in 1948?

BD: June of 1949.

JDW: And then you made a beeline to New York?

BD: Yeah.

JDW: So according to that timeline you got pretty lucky, even though you say you were scraping the bottom of the barrel. Having landed in NYC in the later part of 1949, you then find yourself playing for Sugar Ray Robinson some two years later. I know it took me about four to six years before I had steady work in New York and abroad. It's a tough road as it has been for many.

BD: Well, I picked up little gigs here and there. And you know a piano player can do things that a band can't do. We didn't get many band gigs at all.

JDW: This is a curiosity for me. I know the personnel in most of your bands. But when you moved to New York, what was the integration like of white musicians and black musicians? It seems to me, from what you've said, that you were mixing quite a bit.

BD: We all loved each other and loved to play. There was a whole panoply of cats that came through my pad for jam sessions about three times a week from



Larry Fink

7 p.m. to 10 p.m. We had to quit at 10 p.m. because it was a regular apartment house. I had a Steinway upright and it was on the 4th floor. No telephone, no elevator, so everyone that wanted to play had to walk up those stairs and carry their instruments, including the bass and the drums! All kinds of people, players, black people who I've never heard of, Philly cats... you know there was a Philadelphia clique and a Detroit clique.

JDW: Were you guys just playing tunes or did you have charts?

BD: No, we were just jamming on the bebop tunes and standards. And of course there were other more known places that had sessions like at Jimmy Knepper and Joe Maini's pad. He lived in the William Henry hotel at Broadway and 136th. We'd go there in the afternoon and they'd have the Fake Book. Jimmy Knepper was a very good transcriber, so he would take down the bebop tunes that he heard Bird and Diz play (among other people), and later on he even transcribed the improvisations. Anyway, we'd go there in the afternoon and I'd be on the piano and learn tunes

like “Lady Bird” and “Half Nelson.” It was like a little school almost. And at night they would have these sessions that lasted till dawn because it was in the basement and they had heavy padding in the ceiling. It was like a dark tomb!

JDW: So, this is the beginning of the loft scene in New York?

BD: Yeah except it was a cellar! We called it the William Henry. Buddy Jones made a tape of Bird (Charlie Parker) playing there because sometimes Bird would come. Jimmy and Joe were both junkies, so they’d say, “Bird we’ve got some smack, you wanna play Thursday night?” Yeah! So now they go in the backroom and get even higher. So I got to play a tune or two with Bird. I mean the house was full of cats, you know? And everyone wanted to play just because he was there, and we would go on and on and on. Nine to 10 solos on a fast tunes. I don’t know how the guys did it. The bass and the drums, they just kept going. But you know, I met a lot of people that way and learned a lot of tunes that way.

JDW: That’s an exciting time. That whole period has been romanticized of course, but there IS something very romantic about it.

BD: We were underground. We felt like nobody wanted to hear us. But we felt we were on to something.

JDW: One of the reasons why I love NYC is because any day I can call almost any player to come over and have a session. Even players that I remotely know, if they’ve heard of me or whatever, I’d invite them to come over and play new music or just to play tunes. It’s all about meeting and learning about new people, their writing, hearing things you’ve written, playing new charts, new tunes, but it sounds like it is not quite the same as when you were here in that period. There were just nonstop jam sessions happening all the time.

BD: Yeah.

JDW: But still in NYC there are a handful of sessions. Smalls, and other various clubs, but it is not quite the same thing.

BD: No, I guess not.

JDW: And I guess economics have a big role in the sense that the density of jazz musicians really isn’t in Manhattan as much as it used to be, because it’s not as affordable for musicians to be there.

BD: Yeah, Manhattan was full of young bebop students in those days.

JDW: And really aside from North Texas, there weren’t many schools for Jazz.

BD: It was a new thing, yeah. Mostly they just learned as best they could from a record or something. You know I had the GI Bill, and did three semesters at Columbia. I could scramble for my living, so I didn’t have it that tough. And you know Pepper Adams? Pep-

per Adams was our friend and contributed highly to the Loft scene in those days. I have to give credit to Chuck Lilly who also came from Texas - I met him at North Texas. He was just hip, outgoing, and he dressed more like Diz than us white cats. Although he was white, he was from an affluent family in Colorado and played the French horn in a high school band. He went to North Texas and he played in a big band in Fort Worth and one year they invited Dizzy’s big band to play the Keyhole Club. Chuck Lilly had a picture of the keyhole, which was like a round hole in the curtain. Diz stuck his head through it and Chuck took that famous picture. He was a friend of Dizzy’s so I got to know Dizzy mostly because of him.

JDW: When you say you got to know him, what does that mean?

BD: Well, we’d go to his gigs. I never played with him but he knew me. I don’t think he ever heard me play. I tried to sit in once, but anyway I was in that crowd. Chuck was friends with those cats. He’d go down to Broadway or the Union everyday in the evening and meet people, and Pepper Adams was our pipeline. Every time someone would move to New York from Detroit, Pepper would say, “I know a place where we can play 7 to 10 (at Bob’s place).” And he’d bring him over, Kenny Burrell, some of the Jones cats, I never had Hank but Thad (Jones) was in my pad and Elvin came once, that was a red-letter day.

JDW: That must have been a loud red-letter day!

BD: (Laughs)

JDW: He was a quite a personality.

BD: There was another wonderful drummer, one of my favorites from Detroit: Frank Isola. If I could have done a future singing thing with him I would have. He just knew what to do according to what was going on. He wasn’t just a drummer who would go, “dang-dang-a-dang,” he was really creative. All kinds of cats were there of course. I also remember the loft on 32nd. We called it the Clyde Cox loft. It was the first loft I went to, and then I went to the Painter’s loft. Painter and alto man Larry Rivers. It was more of a weird scene. The Clyde Cox loft was more pure love with maybe a taste of gin and vodka or something and maybe a little joint of grass. I played a lot with Zoot (Sims) and met Steve Swallow and I associated my first jam session at Clyde Cox’s with Steve. But Mose (Alison) used to jam there too.

JDW: You know I’m always curious about the history of singers that I was into or that I have discovered. You can have respect for somebody and not be into what they do.

BD: Oh yeah.

JDW: So Mose, for me, was not somebody that I was particularly drawn to. He had a very bouncy swing feel, and I didn’t like that. I liked a more smooth swing... a more legato type of thing. So Mose wasn’t my bag but I have a lot of respect for him. I dig tunes that he wrote and recorded and I like some of his

records. So you came in contact with him?

BD: He didn't know I sang and I didn't know he sang. This is 1953 or 1954. We actually thought singing was kind of corny. I would never sing at a session or anything like that. Now and then the agent would say, "Anybody in the band sing?" And my pals would say, "Well yeah the piano player can sing." And then I'd sing "Route 66" or "Straighten Up and Fly Right" or some other song that I learned from Nat King Cole. But at the Jam sessions we were playing piano.

JDW: Are you aware of the Art Tatum record, and I'm not sure what year it was recorded (early 1940s), called "God is in the House?" A Columbia student follows Art Tatum around to after-hours jam sessions with a giant reel-to-reel tape recorder and records Art Tatum, and he actually sings some tunes.

BD: Wow.

JDW: Yeah it's some really interesting interpretations. What got you singing more? How did that come about?

BD: At home after the 10 o'clock sessions ended at my pad and everybody left, I used to put the damper on my piano and play and sing. Sometimes I'd record myself and listen to it, trying to make it better. And I wanted to sing, but I'm afraid there was a little bit of an attitude towards chick singers, you know (laughing). You know musicians sometimes in the old days... I mean we dug Sarah Vaughan and Ruth Brown.

JDW: Had you guys heard of Betty yet?

BD: No, I don't think we had. We dug the really good ones, but the rest you know we just... it was a joke almost. You would be playing a gig and someone would come up, "Can I sing one?" And of course we are modulating at the bridge and things like that. It was good ear training, that's all.

JDW: What are the singers you were aware of at that time?

BD: I liked all the horn players that sang. Trummy Young, of course Louis... he is exemplary. Diz could sing.

JDW: And Ella of course?

BD: Yeah, well you had to give it to her, such technique.

JDW: And Billy Holiday?

BD: Of course.

JDW: And I think Betty only came in on the scene a little bit later, even though she was playing with Lionel Hampton in the late 40s.

BD: I sort of missed her. I know she is your favorite.

JDW: But she had a couple of hits with Ray Charles in the early 50s.

BD: Oh, I loved that duet album.

JDW: So you were aware of her. That's not my favorite re-cording of her but there are some sentimental things attached to it. There were other singers of course, like Nat King Cole.

BD: Yeah and Joe Mooney.

JDW: And everyone was aware of the Mills Brothers.

BD: Yeah, and Jack Teagarden. You know, the cats that would just sing like a band singer.

JDW: And how about Babs Gonzalez?

BD: Oh yeah, I loved him. We were pals.

JDW: How was that?

BD: Well, he was always on the scene. He could probably tell right away that I was not the ordinary guy I guess.

JDW: Did everyone call him Babs?

BD: Oh Yeah, we called him Babs and I actually ordered his LP "Three Bips and a Bop" when I lived in Texas before I moved to NYC. I thought, "You know that's hip, that's some bebop singing." So I had all these bebop tunes in my head when I moved to New York so I wasn't concentrating on singing, except in my quiet hour.

JDW: Tell me more about your friendship with Babs.

BD: He heard my record I think.

JDW: But your record is 1956, so you met Babs later?

BD: Yeah, it was relatively later. He was there one night in a club and I said, "Well Babs, I got your LP," and he was always peddling his book.

JDW: That's right, "paying them dues."

BD: And he dressed so fabulously.

JDW: How about Eddie Jefferson or King Pleasure?

BD: I never got to know them. Annie Ross was my first turn on in a way, because she did "Twisted."

JDW: But wasn't that with Lambert, Hendricks and Ross?

BD: Did she not do that before them?

JDW: She may have, not as far as I'm aware of. But the first recording I heard on was with Lambert, Hendricks and Ross. (Annie actually recorded it on her debut record in 1952).

BD: I used to go to Broadway plays if I could scrape the money together. So once I read a review in the post or something with the review from London for a musical called "Cranks," and that it starred a fabulous singer. She is Ella Logan's niece (her mother and father were Scottish vaudevillians), so I paid the

money and went to see “Crank.”

JDW: Oh, so she is a legacy.

BD: Yeah.

JDW: I didn't know her aunt was a singer.

BD: Well, her aunt was an actress and a singer, but that blurb made me say, “I gotta hear this.” It was kind of a far out thing, kind of a review with some odd songs. I don't remember too much about it but I knew Annie then. And then of course we used to hear jazz radio and listen to Symphony Sid and all those guys. Every night we could listen to the radio.

JDW: How about Johnny Hartman? That's later right?

BD: Yeah, that's later. I knew him a bit.

JDW: Or Andy Bey.

BD: Yeah.

JDW: How about Andy Bey and the Bey sisters?

BD: Yeah, I did know this record. You know, I think I wrote an arrangement for the sisters.

JDW: They were something else. Andy Bey, yourself, and Mark Murphy are three people on the top of my head that just never got their due. Sometimes you just miss somebody in the history of things. A great singer friend of mine, Kurt Elling, invited me to come out and see him at Birdland when he was singing with a group he organized called “Four Brothers” with Jon Hendricks, Andy Bey, Mark Murphy, and of course Kurt. While I'm a fan of all four singers separately, I went to see it and I was slightly disappointed. One of the things that bothered me was the crowd becoming ecstatic over seemingly, in my mind and taste, meaningless scat lines. But the crowd was excited and they would have cheered about anything. Don't get me wrong, there were great musical things happening.

BD: Yeah, I know what you mean.

JDW: But it was the first time that I really heard Andy Bey live. I did have that Andy Bey and the Bey sisters record, and I said, “This can't be the same guy because this is just way too hip or this guy is old.” And then I'm hanging out at the Zinc Bar one night and in walks Andy Bey. There are only about 15 people in the club and the band sees him and says, “You want to sit in?” He says, “Sure” and they say, “What tune you wanna do?” He just started singing. He didn't ask for a pitch, he didn't ask for anything, he just started singing and he was a monster! I had to take a step back. A friend of mine has a studio in Astoria and recently recorded a new album with Andy playing piano and singing and it sounds amazing. Hopefully this might be some sort of comeback. I was just disappointed because I had those records and then I saw that show. I want to add though that number one, it can't be magic every night. And number two, that show was more of an entertainment type of show, a lot of vocalese.

BD: Yeah and he was saddled with three other guys playing their roles.

JDW: There is something else I really admire about you. I don't consider myself an entertainer and I have not mastered, possibly even out of interest, the showy aspect of performance. From my view, you are also not an entertainer or showman in the classic sense of the words. But I have seen you perform where you just own the audience. I mean you own the audience. This leads to a lot of other questions including the telling of a story, as well as your writing skills and your intention. I've said this to you before, I feel like you have more intention in your pinky than I have in my whole being! Where do you think that comes from? I mean, when one writes original songs it's easier to mean what you say because of the personal aspect. But when you are singing a standard, you have to paint that picture in your mind or somewhere you've been in life that might be related to that subject matter. So to be clear, what is your vantage point on intention and the relationship with an audience and foundations of your composing? We know it's a symbiotic relationship with an audience; we give to them, they give to us. But you somehow grab the audience. This is apparent even in the last show that I saw you do a few months ago. I mean, you're no spring chicken!

BD: (laughs)

JDW: I'm not mincing any words here. By no means do I mean this as an insult. There have been better days of singing for you and better days of playing the piano for you, and still you were killing the audience and me that night. So, that comes down to something deeper.

BD: Now, what do you mean by the intention in my little finger?

JDW: It means you have more meaning in your being than I could ever hope for. That's what I meant, the depth of intention. We've talked about this before in regards to your songwriting. You showed me a demo tape of how you practice writing, how you wrote music to an electric bill using the text on the bill, and the instructions on a vomit bag from an airplane, writing songs using the wording from all kinds of sources. How about when you wrote the song “Love, Webster's Dictionary.” I'm thinking, “How are you going to make a story out of this, drawing from a definition in a dictionary?” But then you come to one of the alternate definitions of the word: “Love in tennis means no points.” And you add the phrase, “and you have nothing,” and then you repeat the phrase, “and you have nothing.” And a hand rips into my chest, and rips my heart out! You were able to squeeze peaks and valleys of emotion out of a banal dry definition.

BD: Well, that's songwriting!

JDW: But there is more than songwriting involved in that.

BD: Well maybe I'm a natural.

JDW: I don't know what that means. Where are you as far as headspace is concerned when you are composing? Even in the School House Rock repertoire the subject matter is on the surface. For example, you are singing about how a bill is created, multiplication tables, parts of speech, and you are able to draw depth and emotion through your interpretation. Is there a headspace you go to?

BD: Gee, (laughing) I think a lot about the song and



Scott Hyde

Bob Dorough - NYC 1956

what it means, and how I can put it over. In the old days when I was a yeoman in New York, we'd go to the Union and you'd hear an announcement, "Need a piano player that sings!" And I'd grab the gig if I could. So I am in this bar and it's a very unfriendly audience and I did my best. I would sing "Hong Kong Blues," "Lazy River," Nat King Cole tunes, Hoagy Carmichael tunes, maybe I learned a little about it then. My idea is to make them hear the words like they never heard them before. There are so many beautiful songs and people toss them off too fast and too casually.

JDW: And the interpretation can vary from day to day, and from mood to mood.

BD: Sure. I think I've stated this before with others that my M.O. is trying to have people hear songs in a way they have never heard them before.

JDW: I've always noticed that your enunciation is very clear, and maybe even over enunciated sometimes to great effect, but you are telling a story and that's the bottom line. Throwing away lyrics, or being flippant has always bothered me, like when you might hear someone singing "Just Friends," and it comes off as a happy go lucky, snapping your fingers, "try the veal it's great!" cabaret parody, when in fact that lyrical content could be interpreted as quite remorseful and filled with pain. But then the reception of poetry or a story is up to the listener not the performer, so all we can do is add our emotional content and hope it touches or comes across close to what we intended.

I'd like to get back to timelines and associations you've had. You opened up for Nina Simone a number of times. How did this come about and what was it like doing that during the Civil Rights revolution?

BD: Well it was only because I knew Al Schackman. He and I were buddies and we even troubadoured together. He was from Brooklyn and played guitar for Belafonte and Nina. He and I went on a gig to St. Thomas together and got stranded. We were trying to have a quartet...you know we did that "Oliver" LP, an instrumental excursion through "Oliver." The guy that made the MMO records (pre Aebersold play alongs), I worked with him a little, and he was in love with the show "Oliver" from London. He wanted me to do a jazz version, so Al and I did the arrangements. So later on he was rehearsing with Nina in Mt. Vernon and I happened to be up there with him, and he said, "Come on over to the rehearsal," and got to know her and she accepted me, although she was a toughie. Then I opened for her at the Village Gate among other nights. (*Laughing*) Stewy would say I opened twice for her at the Gate. She was late, and not in the best of moods at the time, but she would say that she wanted Bob Dorough to open for her.

JDW: She was quite outspoken, and we had the Civil Rights movement happening during this period of the 60s, and she was looked to by the black community as a spokesperson...

BD: She was kicking ass on the rights thing!

JDW: And then she asks YOU to open up for her? I am assuming the audiences were predominantly black?

BD: Yeah... I died (*Laughing*)

JDW: How were you received?

BD: Very coldly, because at that particular gig at the Village Gate she was late. We played a set, just Bill Takas and me. And we were in my dressing room and suddenly the manager comes in, and Stuie was there, Stuart Scharf, and the manager says, "Could you play another set? She's late but on her way in a limousine." And Stuie says, "No, you don't open twice. Here's the way it works, you open and then the main act comes on." And then Al comes in and he's very nervous and he says, "I'll play with you." So I said "Ok, let's do another set." So now we had a trio, and she's still not there. Bleecker Street is full of people waiting for the second show, and the first show is disgruntled as hell. And then finally she shows up with James Baldwin I think. The two of them go up on stage, and start say-ing I want my money, and these white people don't pay me my money. It was ridiculous.

JDW: What was ridiculous?

BD: That they carried on this harang after being late for the show. But finally she sang a few songs and that ended it I guess. That was a terrible night.

JDW: But you had played other gigs opening for her, right?

BD: Yeah.

JDW: And they weren't all like that?

BD: No.

JDW: Why did she ask you specifically to open for her?

BD: (*Laughing*) She'd let me sing, and she said, "That white boy's OK," or words to that effect. Most of our hanging out was at her rehearsals. I don't know. For some reason she mentioned my singing "Memphis in June" was really good, and when we did a tribute for Nina at Carnegie Hall with four female singers singing her repertoire. Al was the band leader, and I was the piano player. Al said that I was going to sing "Memphis in June" because Nina dug it.

JDW: So you had a personal relationship with her?

BD: Yes, and her husband, Andy.

JDW: I'm sorry for jumping around with the timeline, but want to clarify some things. You were drafted in the Army during WW2 and decided to get into the Army band?

BD: I was drafted but I didn't decide to try for the Army band, it just happened. I went to college for three semesters at Texas Tech in Lubbock, Texas, because it was close to where my parents lived in Plainview. The Bandmaster was very good and I was writing a lot of music and was even writing a varsity show when I got

drafted. So here I am at Camp Hulen in the asshole of Texas as we called it, doing what you have to do when you get in the Army. Crawling through mud and all that, and I'm finishing up the arrangements for the Varsity show and shipping them back to Lubbock. Suddenly it turned out that the band director from Texas Tech knew the Warrant officer in this camp. So one day the loudspeaker said, "Private Dorough, report to HQ and bring all your gear." And I thought, "Oh my God, bring all my gear?" Way down in the bottom of my duffle bag was my clarinet, which I hadn't dared show. The camp was half northerners and half southerners, so there were a lot weird people I was meeting... hardly any black people in that camp as it was before the Army was fully desegregated. Anyway, so there were weird people so I didn't dare take out the clarinet. I was a timid guy. I went over to Head Quarters and said, "Private Dorough reporting as ordered." And they said, "Get in that Jeep, you're going to the Band." It was like a heaven sent relief. That was the beginning of my education. Some of the northerners were already jamming and trying to play like Lester Young.

JDW: You told me before that you'd sit around and listen to records with these guys.

BD: Yeah, they had record players and hot plates. They were living the life. We did have to play drills and later on concerts. So I had almost three years in two different bands.

JDW: And so the war ends, and you continued college at Texas Normal School, which eventually turned into the University of North Texas?

BD: Well by then it was called North Texas State Teachers College, NTSTC.

JDW: We've already talked about singers you respected, but who were some you may have been influenced by if any?

BD: Pretty much the same ones I respected... Trummy Young, Teagarden, and the ones who also played instruments. You know, natural musician type singing. When I made "Devil May Care," I wanted to call it, "A Jazzman Sings." That was my viewpoint. I'd have to say that during this period my favorite was Joe Mooney. He had a very hip quartet and made a few recordings. Basically he was an organist who could sing. I used to read Downbeat Magazine when I was in Texas, and read an article about Joe who it was said took up the accordion on a dare. People apparently told him accordions don't swing, so he got one. He had clarinet and bass, guitar and himself on vocals and accordion.

JDW: Many recordings?

BD: Yeah I had two 10-inchers of his. He had creative arrangements.

JDW: How about the pop jazz singers of the time like Frank Sinatra?

BD: I sort of admired him, I envied his fame.

JDW: He was a pop star.

BD: Yeah. I didn't really rate him that high actually.

JDW: There are certainly things about him that I respect, most of it was consistency of sound and a little swing. He never really did anything that took me anywhere, except the work with Nelson Riddle and the Basie Band. But who isn't going to sound good with Basie or Riddle? I suppose I was never a big fan.

BD: That was my viewpoint too. He was a phenomenon.

JDW: One of the nice elements of the pop jazz era was swing, and he could swing and could dig in every now and again. I recently saw the documentary they did on him and actually disliked him even more after watching that than I did before. Some of that was dislike of him as a person with certain facts revealed, and it showed how he was kind of a pop music brat, but there is a nostalgia of the songs he sang that has nothing to do with his musicianship.

BD: He was a lucky guy. They rave about his phrasing, and it's pretty good I think. He puts the words together in a way that I would want to do it.

JDW: We've had conversations in the past about record labels putting people out there prematurely, because they are surrounded by immense talent, and receiving an education...

BD: Getting better, yeah.

JDW: I'm sure our learning process was similar, in that when I was in my teens I was always tagging along with the best players around, who kinda looked down on me, but would let me sing, offered encouragement and I was learning. That couldn't be stopped. So surrounding myself with people who were very talented made me who I am.

BD: That's smart.

JDW: I guess my point is that I was always more interested in peer acceptance than public acceptance, which could be a mistake for a career. I also strayed from a classical voice career as a teen to sing jazz because my parents liked me singing classical music more than jazz. It was a rebellion of sorts, playing in clubs in my early teens. I say all of this to ask you, what did your parents think of what you were doing and what type of musical impact did the people with whom you surrounded yourself have on you?

BD: I don't think my parents thought much of it. As I've said, I never put my singing forward. I figured I'd do it my own way when the time comes. The jam sessions, the loft scene, and records were my schooling.

JDW: When I look at you as a musician, I see your strong points as, not necessarily in this order: your interpretation, song writing, piano playing, and your singing. These things combined have proved to be a deadly weapon. It's hard to explain the influence you've had on a number of generations of musicians, because you are kind of an elusive figure. From Miles to School House Rock is quite a stretch and yet employ the same fundamental elements, those being serious depth and intention. I mean School House Rock songs were not "Barney" songs. There is

something very meaningful there. What was your trial of fire for writing these songs? Or any writing for that matter?

BD: Well I wrote some real dogs in my life (laughing) but I started writing in high school.

JDW: And you were writing from the piano?

BD: No I was just writing in my head while still learning ear training and playing the clarinet in the high school band. I'd write in my head and still remember some of those songs. I think I sing one of them for the impending documentary. (Starts to sing, "Sittin' On My Doorstep"...) But I was doing this in my head while doing farm work. I don't think I wrote any song worth hearing until I was in the Army band. One of the other musicians in the band suggested we write a song, so I said ok.

JDW: Just tunes? Or for a particular instrumentation?

BD: We wrote them for the Army band, and the bandmaster said, that's pretty good, have you ever heard of Rodgers and Hart? I said, "I guess, I don't know." So he actually bought me some sheet music of their work and said, "This is real songwriting," and I made a little study. I didn't go overboard. I never really set my mind on being a songwriter. I thought if I was going to play and sing, I was going to do standards yeah, but thought later that maybe I need a song that's more about me. So I'd say I wrote maybe two or three pretty good ones.

JDW: Your first record was 1956, but you were writing some of the originals that appeared before that date, and everybody knows "Devil May Care."

BD: Yea, the guy that helped me write "Devil May Care..."

JDW: What do you mean helped you?

BD: Well we lived in the same building. He wasn't a pro, but he studied composition, and he said to me, "let's write a song." He knew I was pretty good at the piano and arranging and things like that. So he'd knock on my door every morning and say, "I got an idea," and one day I said, "yeah what?" We're both drinking coffee. He would come up early. He was on the second floor and I was on the fourth in that same building I spoke of. So he says, "Devil May Care," and I said, "Aw, I'm sure they wrote that already it's so trite." So he said he would check it out. He goes to the New York library, and the next day he says that there are six of them. And I said, "Do they all say 'you don't love me anymore, you're so devil may care?'" And he said, "pretty much." And I said, "OK, we'll do a different one!" I only had two original tunes on the first album.

JDW: What was the other one? "You're the dangerous type?"

BD: Yeah.

JDW: And on "Just about Everything."

BD: A generation later (*laughing*).

JDW: Yeah, 10 years in between your first two recordings.

BD: Yes 1956, 1966, and then 1976.

JDW: Is that right? But you did the School House Rock music in between the second and third record.

BD: School House Rock was the early 70s.

JDW: So you had some time in between these records where a lot of the fascinating stories of the associations you've had took place. When the whole Zelig thing of "he's everywhere with everyone" happened.

BD: See I just sort of go with the flow.

JDW: It led you to some amazing places. I know you've called yourself a troubadour, which falls in line with your life's events and what I would consider a magical story. And again, I always enjoyed listening to those stories, like a 10-year-old kid, those nights when I crashed at your place after gigs at the Deer Head Inn. Listening to stories of the legends of this music, as well as historical, literary, comic and sports figures of the 20th century was quite meaningful and well, downright entertaining. I mean iconic figures like Lenny Bruce...how did that happen?

BD: (*Laughing*) Let's see, I went to L.A. to record for Mode. They made some pretty good LPs out in L.A. Bethlehem records folded. So Red Clyde said, "Come on out to L.A., I'm working for a new label called Mode, and you can make a new album." I said, "What about Bethlehem? I'm under contract..." and he says they're folding. So I got to L.A. somehow, and one of the first days while staying with a friend there named Terry Morel I visited Mode Records. Terry was a singer from Philly. She's the one that actually introduced me to Miles. So I said, "I'm here, when can I make a record?" Suddenly in comes Lenny... "blah blah blah, blah blah blah blah." He had a record deal going with them. But he was speaking very rapidly, said hi to Terry for a bit, ignored me, did his business and then he cut out. I said, "who was that?" She said, "oh that was a come-dian named Lenny Bruce. He hangs out with the jazz cats and works at this place where Joe Maini and Jack Sheldon jam." So I got to know him a little bit and he had heard me sing somewhere, and one night he got me a gig. I went up to the really high-class club where he was opening for a big band. Maybe Buddy Rich or Woody Herman. Then out in the hall at intermission he said, "Call this guy, he's looking for a piano player that sings. You know, it's some work for you." So I got a six-month gig playing piano and singing in Holly-wood.

JDW: Lenny got you the gig?

BD: Yeah.

JDW: Were you opening up for him?

BD: No, he just got me the gig in a bar, and the owner played the drums after he got drunk when his friends would come in. But he never bothered me otherwise. So there I was practicing my repertoire.

JDW: What year was that?

BD: Those were my L.A. years, maybe 1958, and before meeting Miles. I was there almost three years. There were a lot of good friends in that circle.

JDW: Lenny was in that circle of friends?

BD: Oh yeah. He was hanging out, especially with Jack Sheldon and Joe Maini.

JDW: So you guys would all hang out?

BD: Yeah, and after a while he wanted me to play his show. I was the pit. The only guy in the pit! He had a two-week show called, "A sick evening with Lenny Bruce." He wrote a ballad that I wish I could remember. I had to learn it by ear and accompany him. It was a really kind of a heavy ballad. He had a couple of actors. He had put it together in San Francisco and brought it to L.A. Then I opened for him at two or three different jazz clubs with a combo and then again in San Francisco very near the end. By this time he was nothing but law in his act.

JDW: Were any of the shows interrupted by the police?

BD: No.

JDW: His arrests for obscenity law violations are of course something that many remember.

BD: I wasn't there for that, but he was a junky till the end. He used to bring his bags to the gig and take them away after the gig to the hotel, because the "shit" was in there and he didn't dare leave it in the dressing room at the club. So he arrives to the gig with his bags, does his show and splits.

JDW: What kind of things did you guys talk about?

BD: Well I wasn't a dooper, and I'm sure he let his hair down more in a situation with other people who were using, so our conversations were kind of superficial. But he dug me and wanted to help me.

JDW: See if you had only played along and did the "misery" you could have had much deeper relationships. Then again you might not be around to tell me about it!

BD: (*Laughing*)

JDW: How did you avoid getting involved with Heroin?

BD: The first job I had in New York was with a big band, and on the road I roomed with the bass player. The first night on the road in Toronto back in the hotel room after the show, he started moaning and groaning. I turned on the light, and saw he had dumped his mattress on the floor. I said, "Paul what's the matter?" He said, "Aw man I need a fix, I'm sick." So at about 8 a.m. he said, "I'm going out." He came back and said, "Bobby, would you just stand guard at the bathroom in the hall?" It was a cheap hotel. So I'm standing outside this bathroom door, and I hear him moaning again. Finally I said, "Paul are you alright?" I opened the door,



Larry Fink

tions and not the timeline, so I'll just name some names. Blossom Dearie, Dave Frishberg, Allen Ginsburg, and Donald Fagan?

BD: Blossom was an excellent singer and such a tailored artist and great pianist. Dave came much later in my life. Donald was such a great songwriter.

JDW: I am a huge fan of Donald's writing. His erudite lyrics and melancholy drenched passion. You had an association with him as well however short-lived. You performed with him right?

BD: Yeah.

JDW: Did you approach him or did he approach you?

BD: He came to me. I knew Libby Titus before she married him. She must have said something to him about me. So he asked me to play some room with the name Texas in the name in the West Village...

JDW: He was writing songs for people before he did the Steely Dan thing.

and there he was: blood, a tie and needle hanging and blood coming down his arm.

JDW: He wasn't doing it very well!

BD: (Laughs) I said, "Paul, what's that?" Well I knew what it was. He said, "Don't ever do this."

JDW: And that stayed with you?

BD: Yeah.

JDW: I mean that was the thing. Bird did it and everyone felt they had to as well if they wanted to get to where Bird was.

BD: I'm sure he regretted it... that he had that image. I think it has been voiced. I'm not a scholar. I just loved his recordings. We had lots of tapes of Bird. Bootleg tapes. Chuck Lilly was one of the guys. We went to the Diplomat Hotel where Bird played a prom dance for black prom kids. Chuck just put his Wollensak tape recorder on the stage and turned it on. And we had the William Henry Hotel tape that was made by Joe Maini... that basement jam pad. Another tape that was recorded by Al Porcino recorded at the Apollo Theater, "Bird with Strings." We had three shows, the same tunes with different solos.

JDW: I'm racking my brain to talk about more folks with whom you've been associated, since I only recall your associa-

BD: Oh yeah. I caught on to him later. I think it was Bill Goodwin who asked me if I had heard Gaucho.

JDW: That's around 1980, about 10 years after Steely Dan got started.

BD: On the gig I did a tune of my own at the piano. He played piano as well, and was damn good! He, Libby and I sang a Lambert, Hendricks and Ross song called "Come On Home." He had sent me a tape of it and we performed it. That's all there was to it, one night's work.

JDW: It's an interesting combination for me because one of the things that I get from your music, and what I'm drawn to when I listen to music in general is a melancholy. This yearning for something or a feeling that I've had before, or a time I'd like to relive. I get that from your writing and performing, and I get that from Donald's as well. This is a big common element between the two of you for me.

BD: We might be kindred souls!

JDW: It comes as no surprise to me that there was some kind of attraction to each other, except for the genre difference and generation gap in which you were both ensconced. Anyone who knows about Donald knows he was a huge jazz fan and quite knowledgeable of the music with early Steely Dan tunes like "Parker's Band," and "East St. Louis Toodle-oo." I suppose the main thing that struck me was your two names tied together,

and the common elements that you both exuded. The melancholy factor... that longing nostalgia for past days in what you both do and it's a sweet pain. Maybe it's the misery loves company factor... the blues.

BD: Basically I'm not a blues man.

JDW: Yes. Let's draw the distinction between blues and being soulful then? I came relatively late in life to your music. I was a classically trained singer and had an aversion to the untrained singer. That being said, I had a teacher who once told me I needed to listen to more Chet Baker, to which I replied, "I don't like his singing because it was a wimpy, droopy, dogish... an untrained voice." She told me, "Well that may be true, but he means what he says and you don't." She was right! So that opened up a whole new world in my early 20s to the search for intention in singers regardless of the respect I had for their instrument. The search for emotional connection. Male musicians talk to each other in a complimentary fashion that laymen or business people do not. Grown men musicians say things like, "you really moved me, I love what you do," or numerous common phrases we use to acknowledge other's creativity. These are not generally used in the male working atmosphere. No one says, "The way you handle that shovel touches my soul!" But in music you have this.

BD: (Laughing) The camaraderie among musicians was a savior for me, because I was a little bit ill at ease in my early childhood days. I wasn't a good fighter, or a good ball player, and then suddenly I was a band member and felt this family feeling that musicians have. I finally felt at ease and that this was where I belonged.

JDW: Yeah, inviting my childhood friends over to my house as a kid and playing some Benjamin Britton or Stravinsky just didn't seem to do it for them.

BD: (laughs)

JDW: One of the things I've enjoyed in our relationship were times when you would come to town and call me up and just say, "Let's go see some music." The music was never mainstream jazz. It was always cutting edge progressive music whether it was classical or otherwise. The point being that you wanted to continually expand.

BD: Yeah. I recall when living in Texas I would order some Monk records and while listening some guys would say, "What's that? What do you want to hear that for?"

JDW: Hearing some of your answers confirms what I already suspected about your vast tastes. Who were some of your piano influences?

BD: I liked Bud Powell a lot. I liked Horace Silver a little bit. I liked most of the sidemen with Bird, and even a little Teddy Wilson. I tended to gravitate towards something new. I was in a jam session and different cats were playing, and suddenly I heard this sound. I turned around and there behind me was Ornette Coleman with a plastic alto! I said to the bassist, "Who's that?" He whispered, "That's Ornette... Ornette Coleman." Wow! This was when I was in L.A. It was a hot time for this music. Paul Bley and Carla Bley,

their bands, they'd all do the Jam session thing. I think it was around 1957-1959.

JDW: Can you think of any other people of note with whom you have worked that I've missed?

BD: Well, I produced "Spanky and our Gang," which was a result of accompanying Chad Mitchell. Chad Mitchel was a doing a solo act with Stuart Scharf on guitar. Walter Raim was his producer. I met Walter at the Union and he asked me if I wanted a job. "What kind of job?" I asked. "Playing for Chad Mitch-el. He wants to sing pop tunes." So I did that job which led me to meet Spanky, which led me to meet the Fugs and then to Ginsburg. Although I don't know if Ginsburg knew about my jazz and poetry album from L.A., but he was looking for an arranger and I had arranged for the Fugs. So I spent some time learning the songs he had written. He claimed Blake wrote them. That he was getting it out of the air. He was a cute little guy.

JDW: Tell me about your work with Art Garfunkel.

BD: I sang on a record of his that went gold. I got a gold record! (laughing) I think I sang on two songs and arranged a couple as well. That was in the 70s after Spanky. I also had the pleasure of working with Maya Angelou. While I was playing my regular gig at the Mars Club in Paris, probably in 1954, "Porgy and Bess" came to town. Truman Capote was accompanying them, and they were going to Russia after Paris. I never got to meet Truman. The Mars Club was sort of an English-speaking club for tourists. Well, it was strictly English speaking, on the Right Bank. People from that show started dropping in the club. So one day the boss whose name was Ben says to me that I have to accompany Maya Angelou. I said, "Who's that?" (laughing) He said that she was kind of a calypso singer.

JDW: I only know her as a poet and author.

BD: She was in the dance troupe and would come by the Mars Club along with a few other very talented people to sit in. She had a two-week engagement at the club and I accompanied her. I had to learn all of these tunes because I didn't really know calypso.

JDW: How was she?

BD: She was good. Excellent. It was very strange, as she later wrote an account of it in one of her books. She said something like, "When I heard his voice, my blood went cold" because of my southern accent. She had been raped as a child or something to that effect by a white southerner. But she said that I had an ear like a crystal, which was a compliment. She eventually warmed up to me and we hung out. She got over my accent and realized that not all white southerners were the kind she knew. We became good friends.

JDW: I'm afraid to even ask for more names as I know the list goes on and on. What year did you move to Pennsylvania?

BD: Around 1966. My daughter Aralee was just ready for public school. I was living in Long Island City, the next neighborhood over from where we are



Scott Hyde

Bob Dorough, Russ Savakus, Sam Herman - October 1955

now, and her mother, Corine, came back from a visit from the elementary school Aralee was to attend... We were making a living but we were poor. So she said the school was terrible and I said, "Let's just move to the Poconos."

JDW: Why the Poconos?

BD: Because I had already worked at the Mt. Airy Lodge with Bob Newman, my old jamming buddy in N.Y. before I had left for L.A. Before I worked there I didn't even know where the Poconos were... I knew New Jersey was next after New York City but... (*laughing*). So I took the gig because I needed the job and dug the gig because I liked the drummer Jerry Segal. He's the one that plays on "Devil May Care." I wound up working there a year and a half, and then another year after Aralee was born. Bob used to book big bands for special events at the Mt. Airy Lodge, and that's how a lot of cats came out from N.Y. to PA and fell in love with the country. At first I was living at the Mt. Airy Lodge because I was a bachelor. Then I got married and decided to live here. I decided I didn't want to work the Lodge anymore, but thought I was still close enough to New York living here in Mt. Bethel. We bought a small house in our price range and stayed here ever since.

JDW: But you added on to that house right?

BD: Have I? (*laughing*)

JDW: Yes that's a practice room to die for, with the cathedral ceilings and glass wall looking out into nature. The first time I came to your house I was thinking, "This is the great Bob Dorough, what is he doing living in this small little house?" And then you walk inside and it expands into a beautiful spacious yet comfortable home, the expansion being out of sight from the road.

BD: So in a way, living out there took me off the scene. I feel like I didn't really do that much in New York in my life. Partly because of the cabaret card business, the exile, and then the move to Pennsylvania.

JDW: If you moved to the Poconos in 1966 then it was just a few years until the School House Rock work came along.

BD: Yeah, I was dabbling in advertising music too in between those years too with Ben Tucker. He's one of my main buddies, as we had played together in L.A. We both moved back to New York at about the same time. That's when I wrote "Comin' Home Baby." Then we wrote a couple of others like "Baby You Should Know It." Ben was very important in my life, but he wanted to write advertising music and jingles so we did

a few. We started a business.

JDW: Well it seemed to have caught the ear of somebody.

BD: Yeah. It was he that had met George Newall of School House Rock. George told Ben that his boss was looking for someone to put multiplication tables and such to music. Ben told him, "Bob Dorough, he can put anything to music." And he played my "Pop Art" album, the one you mentioned a while ago, and another one called, "This is a recording." Stuart died and he had the label in California for these recordings also including "I'm Beginning To See The Light" with just Takas and me.

JDW: You recorded "Devil May Care" in New York with Takas, and then he recorded with you on some of these other recordings. Had he moved out to L.A.?

BD: No. He and I just troubadoured up and down the west coast: Seattle to L.A. and even down to San Diego. Stuart said to me that he had a series called "Concerts by the Sea," which Errol Garner had made famous as a club. Irene Kral opened up for me with Alan Broadbent.

JDW: Was this in San Francisco? Because there's a great club that I've played there called Half Moon Bay, or the Bach Dancing and Dynamite Society. Was that it?

BD: No, this was L.A., but I have played that Club. The BDDS... Pete Douglas the longtime owner just died.

JDW: I had heard that. He was such an enthusiast.

BD: Such great fans and listeners there. Great audiences.

JDW: I recall the same.

BD: So Takas and I recorded live at the Concerts by the Sea. Takas never moved out there, he was just there for our tours and concerts. Takas was good friends with the actor Howard Hesseman who was on WKRP in Cincinnati, and he would crash at his house while in California. We also became friends with Gary Goodrow the actor/comedian. I had a whole Hollywood gang that I hung out with.

JDW: You had a part in a movie right?

BD: Yeah. I've been in a few.

JDW: Tell me about them.

BD: Well I was in an episode of "Have gun will travel," and "Chasers." James Coburn was a pal of mine. We all used to have these soirees in L.A., and he was a music-loving fan. He helped me through that gig. I went and read the part. It was a weekly series, a cowboy show. Richard Boone played the hero, Paladin. James played my big brother, and I got shot by Paladin.

JDW: Sorry about that...

BD: *(Laughing)* Some day these and more stories

will come out in the Documentary. Paul Bley was one of the cats that used to come and play at #333 East 75th Street and was damn good. Then I got stranded in L.A. for three years. I always say I got stranded three times: Chicago, L.A. and St. Louis.

JDW: What was the St. Louis situation?

BD: Well let's see, when I lived in L.A. I met Tommy Wolf. "Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most," that guy. I knew his song and could sing it, and he talked me into being in his next musical to take place in St. Louis at the Crystal Palace. I said, "I'm not an actor, I'm just a cabaret singer." He said, "But no, you gotta do this, I want you to play Dove Linkhorn!" So I got the novel and read it. He talked me into it. I packed up all my stuff in L.A., put it in a car, drove to Amarillo to visit my parents, and then on to St. Louis to act in "A Walk On the Wild Side." They made a movie out of it, but this was a musical and was closer to the book, a novel by Nelson Algren. Sometimes I say on stage that I played the part of an ignorant Texas teenager. Natural casting *(laughing)*! We ran the show three weeks, and there wasn't much money, but I was having a good time there with a free apartment. Then I took a bar gig for another couple of months, packed up my stuff and came back to New York.

JDW: I'm exhausted. Such a colorful and eventful life!

BD: *(Laughing)* Well you asked for it!

JDW: Many people don't know you by name until you explain that you are that quirky white singer on Miles Davis' Sorcerer album, Blue XMas, or that you are "the School House Rock guy." How did you first come to know Miles Davis? How did he approach you about singing on his records, and what were your reactions to this invitation?

BD: I used to hear Miles all the time for about 10 years or so in my New York days, but I couldn't get close to him. He didn't seem interested in talking to his fans, especially white ones maybe, or at least I thought. I was in L.A. to make that second recording that I had talked about that never happened on Mode records, and as I said before, stayed there for three years. Miles came out to L.A. for a three week engagement - I can't remember the name of the club right now, and I wasn't even going to go because it was a lot of money and I had heard him before. It turned out that he would crash at a house in Laurel Canyon owned by a trumpet player named Kenny Bright. I knew his wife and his son. Roberta inhabited the house, but I don't recall if they were separated or divorced. In her attic was an apartment rented out to my friend Terry Morel, that singer from Philly that we've talked about. Terry seemed to know everyone. As a Cabaret singer in Philly, she always had a lot of money, and every time a hot band would come to the main club Terry would be there and knew all the cats, including Miles. So apparently Miles, in a moment of boredom while staying at the Bright house, went up to talk to Terry about the Philly days. Terry always kept my LP right on the front of her record shelf. So there I was with that silly grin, staring out from the shelf and somehow caught Miles'



Scott Hyde

Dorough's apartment jam session - 1954

eye.

JDW: Of course that was your first offering, "Devil May Care."

BD: Yes. I had yet to record my second, as it was about 1958 or 1959 when this all happened. He asked her, "Who's that?" And she told him, "That's my buddy Bob, he plays piano and sings and writes songs." She said Miles asked to hear a little. Then he came back the next day and apparently asked to put it on again and listened to the whole thing. Anyway, she said, "Let's go to the gig." I scraped up some money and we went with Terry. Sure enough, Miles is walking around after playing his chorus. The other guys (Cannonball, Coltrane, Jimmy Cobb, Paul Chambers, I can't remember who was on piano) are playing their solos and he's walking around the room when Terry got his attention. She said, "Miles, this is my friend I was telling you about!" So that was my official introduction to Miles. I thought he'd say, "I like your LP man," or something like that, but instead he whispered in my ear and grabbed me by the wrist with a firm grip and said, "Bob, go up

and sing Baltimore Oriole." I was dumbfounded. He dragged me up to the bandstand, and I knew all the cats up there, at least superficially. There was a lull on the stand, maybe a bass or piano solo going on, and Miles says, "Take a break, Bob's gonna sing one." (*Laughing*) So he left me there with drums and bass, and well, I didn't know what to do but sing it! I said to Paul Chambers, "It's in F minor, just follow me," and I launched into my version of "Baltimore Oriole," which of course was one ad-libbed chorus - and then a little rhythm - take it out. Nothin' to it! Then I didn't know what to do. I don't recall how the applause was or anything. I was in a trance. But I did it, and Paul, Jimmy and I walked off the stage and there was an intermission. Miles didn't say much. He didn't come on too strong, but I started hanging out at the club and he asked me for a ride a few times. I didn't sing anymore but would give him rides after the gig to some place or another. Probably to meet a girl or something, and then sometimes home to Roberta's when he wanted to crash. Paul Horn was instrumental in cementing our relationship. Paul had known Miles for many years, and he threw a party at his house in the Valley. We

were all invited, including Terry Morel and Lee Wilder, who was another great personality in Hollywood. I guess she was a DJ and had worked in radio, collected records, knew everybody, and was married to musicians. It was a nice party. Everybody was out by the pool. Miles was there, and said to me, "Let's go inside, and sing me a song." So we went into the studio where it was shady where there was a piano. Naturally I played the toughest tunes that I knew.

JDW: Like what? "Nothing like you?"

BD: Yeah, I had already written that. And "Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most," and I guess "Devil may Care." He'd just prop his elbows on the spinet piano and lean there and listen. He wouldn't say a word, but apparently he dug it.

JDW: Nice. Well if he's asking you for more he obviously did.

BD: Yep. So that happened a couple of times where I had occasions to sing for him. Then he left town, gave me his number and shortly after that I went back to New York and would call him and hang out a little bit. I knew his wife, Frances Taylor. I remember once when I was up at the house and he said, "We're listening to tape." He was listening to that day's takes of "Sketches of Spain," and man it was so fabulous! I guess he was picking out his mistakes or takes he liked. He didn't tell me about the sessions or maybe I could have gone. But anyway, I was privy to the advance notices of this recording as it were.

Our relationship continued. I guess it was about 1962. I was working at Mt. Airy Lodge and my daughter Aralee was one year old. I'm living there in a little rented house for the summer gig. I hadn't been there for a few years. As we spoke of before, I had worked the gig as a bachelor but now I was married. One day the phone rings, and it was Miles. I said, "What's happening Miles?" He said, "Bob, I want you to write me a Christmas song." I said, "A Christmas song?!" I was dumbfounded again! He was really a wild man. He went right to the nitty gritty I guess you could say. He said, "Harold Lovett will explain it." Harold was his lawyer at that time in the summer of 1962.

JDW: Why would he have his attorney explain to you what he wanted musically?

BD: Well, Miles might not have had my phone number, and maybe said to Harold, "Where's that phone number for Bob?" I don't know, maybe they hung out a little and talked about it and Miles just didn't feel like explaining it all. So Harold explained that Columbia Records was making a composite for Christmas, and he wanted me to write Miles a song because he didn't want to play "that Jingle Bell shit." Miles came back on the phone on a second line and said, "And you're gonna sing it with me!" I said, "Wow, ok, I'll give it a try Miles. It's great hearing from you," and then he was gone (*laughing*). So I went right to work. Wouldn't you?

JDW: Absolutely. So what is going on in your mind? What is your approach when you are writing a song specifically for

Miles to record? That's a heavy request to fill.

BD: That was a fabulous charge. I started thinking about it right away, and immediately conceived that this wasn't going to be a "jolly noel" tune of any kind. I got the idea of Blue Christmas, and then just to make it a little more gritty, let's call it "XMas." So I wrote Blue XMas. I guess I added the parenthesis later "to whom it may concern." So when I started it, I got just the idea - the first riff, "Blue XMas" (and then sings the lyrics for the first verse). It was a long labor, which took about two weeks. So then I called Miles, "I got the song, Miles." He says, "Ok, come down Tuesday night and we'll check it out." So I head into New York on Tuesday to his house, went into the basement where he had a small piano, and there was Gil Evans. Now I also knew Gil because we had played opposite each other in the Village. I was working at the Riviera, and Gil was playing at Nick's across the street. He'd come over and dig me, and I'd go over and listen to the Dixieland band he was with. I was playing with a bass-less trio: piano, clarinet, and drums with no singing. He professed to be interested in my playing, and I knew who he was because I'd heard about him in the army. So Miles says, "Play it for Gil." So I'm singing "Blue XMas" over and over while Gil took notes. Miles rearranged the format a bit which I discovered the next day during the recording session (which I had only learned about that night) (*laughing*). Gil must have stayed up all night, as I didn't see him again that week, but he sent the arrangements in by messenger service. Miles also asked me to play "Nothing Like You" for Gil and he also took notes. He basically transcribed what I played by ear.

So there we were in the Columbia recording studios, and I'm looking around and in comes Paul (Chambers) and Jimmy (Cobb), and I'm feeling pretty good because they were the tightest friends out of all those guys. Then here comes Wayne Shorter, and he says, "Oh wow, what are you doing here Bob?" We knew each other from various sessions. I said, "Well, I'm gonna sing a song with Miles." He says, "This is my first date with Miles." The music was for trombone, tenor, trumpet, bass, drums and voice. So then in came Frank Rehak, a valve bone player and we were ready to go. Apparently Miles had been hoping to get J.J. Johnson, and then I hear that there is no pianist and I'm thinking that maybe I'm gonna play. I'm sitting at the Steinway wondering, so I go to see Miles in the control room while everyone is looking at the charts and warming up. Miles is on the phone trying to get a piano player. This was a real comedy. He actually put in a call to Bill Evans who couldn't come because he was recording his own album at Nola's. He apparently tried to call Red Garland who said he was in Philly and can't make the session. So I pipe up and say, "Miles, I can play it!" And he's still on the phone ignoring me. So I go back to the piano and am warming up my voice getting ready. I figured it's gonna be a tough shoot with a guy like Miles.

Finally, he comes out and starts the session. He saw me at the piano and said not to play. We spent most of the time on "Blue XMas." I said, "Miles, these tunes are new and they are tough, I need some piano to keep me on." So he says, "Just play the opening chord then lay out." I said to myself, "He told Monk to lay

out, why shouldn't he tell me?" (*Laughing*) It was a real comedy. I guess I was a little uptight, but I suppose my professionalism that I had developed over the years was telling me that I have to do this and do this well, because I may not get another chance.

He took some time working on the chart with the horns and making sure everybody knew the format, and then we were off. In my memory I recall one take, but subsequent visits to the vaults of Columbia records shows a lot of little short takes. Many people ask me what kind of producer Miles was, and I say he was very good because he didn't waste any time. We'd play four bars and he'd whistle, "Stop, no, blah blah, blah." Whatever it was he was critiquing. We'd do it again and stop after eight bars and the same thing happened. So he wasn't wasting anybody's time. Finally we took off and I sang. Wayne Shorter played three choruses of the B-flat minor blues and we were out of there. Then he says, "Let's do "Nothing like you."

JDW: "Nothing like you" is a great tune. It's real shifty in key areas, yet the melody doesn't feel strange. I played it out a few months back and the pianist was like, "Wow, such unexpected changes, but it all works well." When singing it, it feels fine, but when you start to investigate the changes you realize it.

BD: It is shifty and I've had trouble with it myself (*laughing*)! So I played the first chord and away they went. He wouldn't let me play on that either. It was a pretty weird arrangement Gil wrote... you've heard it of course. The voicing of the horns, I never did quite figure it out. The form was the same - there were no solos. It runs about a minute and 30 seconds doesn't it?

JDW: I think its closer to two minutes but yeah, and so "Gil Evansesque."

BD: Yeah. It was indeed. I was thinking, "This doesn't fit on a Christmas album," and guessed it was just kind of an experiment Miles was doing. I forgot all about it, and of course "Jingle Bell Jazz" came out in November before Christmas, and that was a gasser. I think I got my copy from Miles. And there I was, last track on the album. It had tracks from everybody like Duke Ellington, Lambert Hendricks and Ross, Carmen McCrae, Pony Poindexter, and a host of others all doing the standard Christmas songs. The last track was Miles and me (*laughing*). What a kicker! So "Sorcerer" comes out in 1966, and I get a call from Fran Landesman, the lyricist for "Nothing Like You," and she is exclaiming that our song is on Miles' new album. By that time Miles was getting a little weird - getting deep into a habit. He threw Frances out and got a divorce.

JDW: Frances was the dancer right?

BD: She was. She probably could have had a bigger career if she hadn't married him, I don't know. Frances Taylor is still alive. I'd come around like I always had and knock on the door. Sometimes he'd be in an argument with some other girl or something, and then it got to where I'd knock on the door and someone I didn't even know would answer the door and say he wasn't there. He changed his number so I couldn't call anymore. I had met a few of his family members,

and considered him a friend, but dropped that idea after this change. By this point I'm a daddy and trying to earn a living and keep my family together, and I didn't have a lot of time to hang out with crazy people (*laughs*). So I went out and bought the "Sorcerer" and once again it was the last track on the LP. Again, it was quite an anomaly, because it was a different band from the rest of the LP. He had Tony (Williams), Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter, and Wayne Shorter was the only connection.

JDW: Why do you think they added this tune to the album?

BD: I don't know. I guess maybe some producer said the album was a little short and they just added that tune for length. Who would second-guess Miles? Even though it was a different band and a different era with a weird song and a funny singer (*laughs*). I was still friendly enough with Miles to go to some gigs with him and the new band all knew me. I never did get the nerve to ask him why he put that tune on "The Sorcerer."

JDW: If I had had the opportunity I wouldn't have cared where he stuck any one of my tunes on one of his recordings.

BD: I wasn't really gong to complain, I just wondered how it transpired. It did me a lot of good, with people all over the world having heard "Nothing Like You."

JDW: It's such a great tune. It's quite a departure from a lot of your songwriting that is more inside.

BD: Well the form of it was largely driven by her lyrics, which resulted in a long form.

JDW: I have one last question, and admittedly it's a little silly because you know who you are as a man and musician. You had become yourself. Some of this has been brushed upon already, but did that experience you had with Miles change or affect any views you had about music, or give insights into what made Miles tick, as a musician and as a person?

BD: Yes, well I stuck with Miles. I kept buying his LPs and CDs even though many people were saying at this point that Miles had lost it. I'm sure he widened my horizons a little bit, but of course I did have my long formed view of music in the way I liked and felt I was supposed to do it. I guess he didn't change me that much. I was always open to new things, but I have always been proud to do that little bit with him.

JDW: Interestingly enough in Miles' time line, Dave Liebman joins his band. You and Dave live in the same area in the Pocono region of PA.

BD: Isn't that wild? Yeah that was a real connection.

JDW: I guess the first connection I had in the Poconos was with you, and then later with Lieb, but that of course was all through the Deer Head Inn. You and I had collaborated on some shows together and got to hang out on the occasions when I'd be playing at the Deer Head and New York. Dave and I got to play-

ing and recording a few years after you and I had met. That area is quite a hot bed of great talent. I was wholly taken with you as a person and a musician, and after we met you had written liner notes for my first CD, and produced another CD of mine. I don't know if you remember.

BD: Of course I do.

JDW: You were someone I could bounce tunes off of when writing during the times I stayed at your place. You were a mentor to me and I appreciate you. I felt that I wanted to share you with the world. That whole Delaware Water Gap contingency

was like an apprenticeship. You talking about how Miles ran his rehearsals was reminiscent of how Liebman ran his when we were preparing for the recording we did together. To the point, not wasting time, and very focused. Big lessons in my life came from that scene in PA.

BD: That sounds about right.

JDW: I want to thank you for the interview, the inspiring stories and lessons in history you've spoken about, and all of the contributions you have made to many people's lives.

BD: It's been a pleasure JD. ☺



Larry Fink

COTA Festival 2016



Garth Woods

Bassist Tony Marino



Garth Woods

Bob Dorough sounds better than ever.



Bob Weidner

A crowded hillside for the 39th annual COTA Festival.



Bob Weidner

The Celebration Sax Quartet plays music composed by Phil Woods.



Garth Woods

The Jazz Mass conducted by Mark Kirk.



Bob Weidner

Tom Hamilton Alan Gaumer and Nelson Hill



Bob Weidner

The COTA Festival Orchestra performs Phil Woods compositions.

A Story from Jerry Dodgion



Photo courtesy Jerry Dodgion

Jerry Dodgion

Pat Dorian: We are at the Deer Head Inn – it is May 26th, 2014 with Jerry Dodgion and a lot of great people. Jerry is going to tell his famous story... the punch line you will hear at the end.

Jerry Dodgion: This is a true story that happened in the summer of 1986. It was an international band called together to play a television show for five weeks in Naples, Italy. It was truly an international band. There were three Americans from New York, a bass player from Paris, a guitar player and drummer from Naples, a tenor player from Brazil who lived in Paris, one guy from Cuba, another from Bolivia, and two guys from India. Truly an international band! Dinner was always wonderful with all those languages happening and the food was great.

We were rehearsing for this television show and we probably rehearsed a whole week. The music wasn't great, but we did the best we could with it because we knew dinner was coming! The conductor (his name escapes me right now) was from northern Italy. We were in Naples, which has a bit of a minor chord on it to people from the north... you know. So we were rehearsing for the week and the music was really weird. There were a lot of wrong notes and basically everything was going wrong. At one point during the rehearsal about three or four days before the opening night, the conductor decided to tell the orchestra a story.

This is a story about an Italian guy who dies and goes to Hell and he is being shown around Hell during his first day there. He is very nervous. He is walking with his guide down this long corridor and they approach a door where they hear all of these tortured sounds coming from the other side. Screaming and moaning and things like that. Just awful sounds. So the Italian guy says to the guide, "What is this behind this door?" The guide responds, "This is the German Hell." He opens the door and looks inside, and everyone is being tortured by these metallic instruments accompanied with even more awful sounds, so the guide slams the door shut and the Italian responds with desperate thanks. They keep walking down the hallway and come to another door. It isn't as loud behind this door, but there are more subdued moaning, groaning and murmuring. The Italian wonders, "What the hell is this?" The guide opens the door and says, "This is the Chinese Hell." Everybody inside is being tortured with the Chinese Water Torture - one drop of water on their forehead every few seconds for months at a

time or something like that. The guide slams the door and the Italian exclaims, "Oh my God let's get out of here and go someplace else!" They continue walking and come to the end of the hallway. There is only one door remaining. The guide says, "Now we're coming to the Italian Hell." By this point of course the Italian is getting really nervous. They begin to hear sounds behind this door as well. They hear dishes, silverware, conversation, men and women laughing and talking... The Italian asks, "What's this again?" The guide responds, "This is the Italian Hell." He then opens the door and they see everyone sitting around a table eating and drinking, telling stories and hugging each other and having a wonderful life. Confused, the Italian says, "I don't understand, you say this is the Italian Hell?" The guide says, "Yes this is it." And the Italian asks, "Well what is our punishment?" The guide responds, "Well you see, you have to eat a pound of shit every day and every hour you get hit on the head with a hammer." The Italian exclaims, "What?! Oh my... But, then why isn't that happening?" The guide explains, "Well it's because the shit hasn't been delivered yet and they can't find the hammer."

So we are all listening to this story and at that point all of the Italian guys in the band start to break out laughing because they think that's the end of the story. They think that was the punch line!

Three or four days later we are doing the opening television show. This opening wasn't like any opening any place else. We had custom made tuxedos, custom made shoes, basically everything was custom made. We were all at the sound check, and this was not a typical sound check where you do one for the light man and one for the soundman altogether. Here they were separate.

We had to play this long production number, and it really wasn't very good but we played it for the light man. Then we played it again from beginning to end. And you know, it was a long number! 10 or 15 minutes! Then we play it again for the soundman. Then we play it again for the cameraman! Well by this time the orchestra has really had it.

Now it was time to start the show. The audience is there, the red light goes on and the director points to our conductor, and the conductor gives the downbeat. There's a tympani roll, a loud boom, and immediately there's feedback on the audio! Then the cameraman falls off of his seat, and the light's flicker on and off. It's a complete disaster! Our conductor puts his hand on his forehead and he leans forward without saying a word. He stays this way for about 10 or 15 seconds. Then he stands up and he says to the orchestra (having known and set us up three days beforehand!), "I think they finally found the hammer." ☺

Zoot Fest 2016



The Hawthorne Nights band performs Bill Holman arrangements

By T. Storm Heter

On Sunday, November 13, East Stroudsburg University's Cecilia S. Cohen Recital Hall came to life when world-class jazz musicians from near and far converged for Zoot Fest 2016.

This year Zoot Fest starred two master tenor saxophonists: Lew Tabackin and Scott Silbert. Tabackin led the small group portion of the concert playing tunes that he said, "Zoot loved." Tabackin demonstrated the hard-driving, tough-toned style that has made him one of today's great artists. The Tabackin quartet consisted of Bill Dobbins (piano), Bill Crow (bass), and Bill Goodwin (drums). Bill Crow's good bounce and Bill Dobbins' fire paired well with Goodwin's creative, energetic approach to the drums.

The music began when Tabackin spontaneously called "The Red Door," which he dedicated to Zoot Sims' widow Louise, who was seated in the front row. A heavy swing piece, "The Red Door" was composed by Gerry Mulligan and Zoot Sims, and appeared on the 1960 recording "You 'N' Me" by the Al Cohn-Zoot Sims Quintet. In the spirit of Zoot, Tabackin focused his playing on impeccable time, bebop roots, and nods to modernist playing (Tabackin quoted not only Zoot, but also Coltrane in his solo).

The second part of the afternoon featured a 10-piece big band performance of music from the record, "Haw-



Original rhythm section part to Holman's Hawthorne Nights



Lew Tabackin, Bill Crow, and Bill Goodwin during the quartet set.

thorne Nights” (1976). Scott Silbert, head arranger for United States’ Navy Band, was in the lead tenor seat, performing charts that had been written by Bill Holman 40 years earlier for Zoot Sims.

When Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection Coordinator Matt Vashlishan wrote to Bill Holman to ask permission to copy the Hawthorne Nights scores, Holman did him one better—he went to his garage, dusted off an old box that hadn’t seen the light of day since 1976, and sent the original scores to Stroudsburg.

Since the concert I have been able to listen carefully to both the original “Hawthorne Nights” recording as well as the Zoot Fest performance. Both performances are powerful, rhythmic, and modern. The main difference is tempo. As Bill Dobbins explained to the audience, he had made a pre-performance call to Holman in order to ask if he

would make any changes if he were to record the album today. “Take them a few clicks slower,” Holman said. Dobbins must have taken this advice literally, since he could be seen with metronome in hand before the count off!

The band’s opening number which is also the title cut from the album, “Hawthorne Nights,” is a percussive, groove-based tune. At around 250 beats per minute, the piece cooks but still sounds less hectic than the original, which is upwards of 300 bpm. The song’s rhythmic hook is announced from the first downbeat. The thumping “bah-dah-dot” is the first half of a (three-against-two) clave pattern. Measure two then forms the rhythmic response. Against the tune’s heavy rhythmic call and response, Silbert’s playing sounds bright with a light, slightly behind-the-beat approach. Compared with Zoot’s driving, top-of-the-beat feel, Silbert’s playing is relaxed and floats with an elegantly swinging eighth note feeling.

The big band performed all eight tunes from the 1976 album and one extra from Vic Lewis’ record “West Coast All Stars play Bill Holman.” Bill Dobbins, who is writing a book on Bill Holman, interspersed com-

Bob Weidner



Scott Silbert plays the Zoot Sims part during Hawthorne Nights

Bob Weidner

mentary between pieces. For instance, it turns out that the last piece of the evening, “Sizzler,” was named after the restaurant. Apparently that’s where the band took its lunch break!

The nine quality tunes included: “Main Stem,” a jaunty Ellington tune, with forward motion; “More Than You Know,” a vocal piece sung by special guest Bob Dorough; the Jobim classic, “Girl from Ipanema.” Dobbins kept “Main Stem” at 230 bpm and “Ipanema” at 210 bpm—both of which were recorded about 20 clicks faster on the record.

The big band had precise time and an expert command over dynamics. With only a brief pre-show rehearsal, the unit sounded like it had been working together for years.

The age gap between players in the band is reflec-

tive of jazz in the Poconos—there is a strong connection between jazz master and emerging players. The youngest members of the band were bassist Evan Gregor and saxophonist Jay Rattman, both of whom have benefited from the mentorship of locally-based heavy weights such as Dave Liebman and Phil Woods.

Zoot Fest 2016 concluded with a jam session and dinner at the Deer Head Inn in Delaware Water Gap. It was appropriate to end the night at the oldest continuously running jazz club in the nation. As the evening wore down it was heart warming to see honored guests Lew Tabackin and Scott Silbert having a glass of wine and enjoying the freedom of the stage at the Deer Head, surrounded by fans who wanted nothing more than to hear another great jazz tune. ☺



Left to right - Bill Goodwin, Sam Burtis and Bill Crow

T. Storm Heter

but for now

THE MUSIC & MOJO OF BOB DOROUGH



A vivid vérité documentary of Bob Dorough, the musical mastermind behind the beloved ABC children's program "Schoolhouse Rock!" Vibrant as ever, and still touring at age 92, Bob continues to captivate audiences around the world.

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But for now: The Music & Mojo of Bob Dorough

tells the vivid tale of the seminal bebop pianist, vocalist, composer, and producer's life and career.

One of the original hepcats, Bob is best known as the creator of the Emmy award-winning children's TV show, **Schoolhouse Rock!**, which aired throughout the 1970s and inspired generations of kids.

Over eight extraordinary decades, Dorough has blazed a trail through a vast arc of American pop & jazz — sharing a stage with **Charlie Parker**, composing for beat poets **Ferlinghetti** and **Ginsberg**, touring with **Lenny Bruce**, and cutting two tracks with **Miles Davis**. Stardom awaited, yet eluded him at every twist & turn.

“**Bob Dorough's story inspires in us the power of music to change our mood, even our world, and how to age without getting old.**”

The New York Times

When we meet him, Bob is focussed on two things: his next gig and writing new songs. That's not uncommon for any musician, but Bob is now 92 years old.

Exalted and admired by young musicians and older cats who have played with him for decades, Bob has trouble saying “no” to their many requests to perform and teach.

The film explores what drives Bob to care so much and to keep going, gig after gig, city after city, often for little pay. And asks: what fuels a creative spirit for a lifetime?

Featuring colourful commentary from distinguished collaborators, devoted colleagues and discerning critics, our film follows Bob over four years. We watch him thrill his rabid fans in Tokyo, mesmerize students during his master classes, and share quiet moments at home, capturing an intimate glimpse of the hippest elder statesmen of the post bebop era.

More than a documentary about jazz, **But For Now** is a moving story about passion, aging and art.

PRODUCER/DIRECTOR **Mitchell Kezin**
mitchell@mabooshifilm.com
van cell 778 681 8048
nyc cell 646 705 7192

mabooshifilm.com

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Readers, please take **NOTE**



Big Band Night at the Deer Head Inn!

Join the Water Gap Jazz Orchestra under the direction of Matt Vashlishan the last Monday of every month at the Deer Head Inn for a great evening of big band jazz. Each month the ensemble performs original and arranged music from throughout jazz history, as well as performing modern compositions by many internationally recognized composers and arrangers.

7:30-10:30 p.m., admission \$10.

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Contributors & Acknowledgements

For additional information about contributors to this issue of The NOTE, you can visit their websites:

Su Terry: www.suterry.com

Larry Fink: larryfinkphotography.com

JD Walter: jdwalter.com

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Representing all forms of jazz from all eras, the Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection was founded and named in honor of the award-winning Al Cohn — legendary saxophonist, arranger, composer and conductor.

Housed in Kemp Library on the campus of East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania, the collection consists of jazz recordings, oral histories, sheet music, photographs, books, videos, original art and memorabilia. The collection also includes outreach projects.

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Bob Dorough at the piano, NYC - 1956

Photo by Scott Hyde