

AL COHN MEMORIAL JAZZ COLLECTION at EAST STROUDSBURG UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

The NOTE

SUMMER/FALL 2020

BILL HOLMAN

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW ON
ZOOT SIMS AND MORE!

PHIL WOODS
DISCUSSES **AL COHN**

REMEMBERING

VIC JURIS

SEPTEMBER 26, 1953 - DECEMBER 31, 2019



EAST
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IN THIS ISSUE

- 3 **A NOTE FROM THE COLLECTION COORDINATOR**
By Dr. Matt Vashlishan
- 4 **GUITARIST'S GUITARIST, MUSICIAN'S MUSICIAN, HUMAN BEING'S HUMAN BEING**
By Su Terry
- 5 **AN INTERVIEW WITH PHIL WOODS ON THE SUBJECT OF JAZZ SAXOPHONIST AND ARRANGER, AL COHN**
By Larry Fisher
- 10 **VIC JURIS: THE JAZZ WARRIOR**
- 18 **JAM SESSION ETIQUETTE**
By Rob Scheps
- 19 **AN INTERVIEW WITH BILL HOLMAN**
By Dr. Matt Vashlishan and Patrick Dorian
- 27 **THE CHARLES CHRISTOPHER PARKER CENTENNIAL YEAR CONTINUES: BIRD WITH THE HERD, KENTON, & THE ORCHESTRA**
- 29 **FAREWELL TO THE GREAT MANDEL!**
By Patrick Dorian
- 30 **CONTRIBUTORS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

FROM THE COLLECTION



Cover: Vic Juris
COTA 1992

Photo by Bob Napoli



Centerfold: Zoot Sims performing with Al Cohn (location unknown)
Photo by Jack Bradley



Back Cover: Coleman Hawkins listens to Zoot Sims warming up backstage at Newport Jazz Festival in 1963.
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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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AL COHN (1925-1988)

The Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection was founded in 1988 by Flo Cohn, Ralph Hughes, Phil Woods, Dr. Larry Fisher, ESU Vice President for Development & Advancement Larry Naftulin, and ESU President Dr. James Gilbert.

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A NOTE FROM THE COLLECTION COORDINATOR

Dr. Matt Vashlishan

As I write this piece during the summer of 2020, many of us are five months into living a lifestyle we never thought possible. For the first time in history, our country has been ground to a halt for the better part of six months by something no two doctors or health organizations can seem to agree on how to fix. We can all agree that a disease has taken a toll on our country, as well as the world. The infamous COVID-19 will without a doubt live on in our memories like other national tragedies such as “9-11” or “Pearl Harbor.” We have lost several very important jazz musicians to this illness: Ellis Marsalis Jr., Bucky Pizzarelli, Wallace Roney and Lee Konitz. There are no doubt more. I personally know several others who have recovered but not without great struggle and some of the most uncharacteristic and severe symptoms they have ever experienced.

I mention COVID-19 to document the world climate at the time of this issue, but also because for the first time in my lifetime, the jazz community and live music industry as a whole have taken a direct hit. It is a time for reflection, and a time for us to try and understand our place in the world. It is also a time to reflect on what has come before, and to admire the strength and determination of those who we look up to. It is a time to look back at the qualities of the heroes we have listened to on all of those wonderful jazz recordings and try to imagine their world during which they created those masterpieces. Think of the stories about Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Woody Herman, Stan Kenton, and so many other bands traveling on the road, some of which you will hear about in this issue. What was their living situation like? What was the food like? How easy was it to have clean clothing? How were they treated? Their determination to play this music above all odds drove them to do what they had to do to accomplish the task and to of course, make a living doing something they truly believed in. How would they approach our current situation? Furthermore, how would we approach their situation? Would we? Could we?

All of the incredible music created throughout jazz history has occurred in the last 125 years since cornet player Buddy Bolden created his first group in 1895. During those 125 years, we have endured the Spanish Flu, the Polio epidemic, the Asian Flu of 1957-58, the Hong Kong Flu in 1968-69, AIDS, the H1N1 Swine Flu pandemic, the threat of Ebola, the Zika Virus, SARS and MERS, now COVID-19, and probably too many more to mention here. There will unfortunately be more down the road.

Let’s not forget the Great Depression, which was an illness of a different sort. The United States unemployment reached an incredible 24 percent nation wide, even higher than what we face today.

It is through dealing with all of these obstacles that we become equipped to overcome the next. History shows we are resilient and able to conquer any challenge presented to us. There will be other illness, other conflict, other administrations, and perhaps issues we cannot comprehend at this point. At a time when the world needs music, I am certain we can find a way to beat the odds much like so many did before us. I think we have a lot to learn from the people who built the foundation for which we stand playing and appreciating this music. We can learn not only from transcribing their solos, but also from admiring their personalities and fearless resilience. They never let the music stop, and neither should we.

I would like to acknowledge that ESU President Marcia Welsh, Ph.D. has officially decided to start a new chapter of her life. I met Dr. Welsh about seven years ago when we decided that I would take on the duties of the ACMJC. Since that time, she has been incredibly supportive and involved with everything going on in the Collection. From our annual concerts to the Jazz Lounge, from The Note redesign to new programs such as the Jazz Lounge Listening Series and the Duke Ellington Nutcracker Suite, she has been there to listen and help expand the visibility of the Collection as well as the offerings we provide to the public. She always had time for it, and for that I am greatly appreciative.

ESU’s Interim President as of July 31 is Kenneth Long, Vice President of Administration and Finance. He began his time at ESU nearly the same time I did, and although my interaction with Ken Long has been nowhere near as involved as it was with Dr. Welsh, I have the same description for him as far as support for the ACMJC. We are in good hands, and I would like to officially wish Dr. Welsh the best of luck moving forward and a sincere “thank you” for everything she has helped me accomplish over the years.

Finally, as is the case with nearly every issue these days, saying goodbye to a fellow jazz musician is never easy. This is especially the case with guitarist Vic Juris. Taken far too soon due to liver cancer, his passing has left a hole in the jazz community at large, and especially within the world of guitar players. You will hear about Vic from several people throughout this issue and I hope it illustrates what an incredible person and musician he was to literally every person who met him or heard him on even one recording. My deepest thanks goes out to Gunnar Mossblad and Kate Baker, who during a very difficult time found a way to help reach out and compile thoughts and photographs from some of Vic’s closest friends. ■

GUITARIST'S GUITARIST, MUSICIAN'S MUSICIAN, HUMAN BEING'S HUMAN BEING

I was always in awe of Vic Juris. He was only six years older than I but his musical maturity belonged to those "old souls" who seem to have reincarnated as a musician so often that they no longer PLAY music, they ARE music.

The first time I played with Vic was at the Deer Head in 2013.



I was in the audience when Gene Perla's band was onstage, with Vic as the featured guest. Gene kindly invited me and one or two other musicians to sit in. We played a tune and I stepped off the stage after my solo to stand next to my old friend, trumpeter Tom Goehring. Vic began his solo by playing the figure with which I had ended my own. He proceeded to take my humble ending and weave it into a veritable sonata: playing the line in different keys, using augmentation, diminution, elongating it, coloring it, compressing it, delicately weaving it into a tapestry that had begun as a simple strand of yarn.

Tom said to me, sotto voce, "How does it feel to have a genius take your line and make a whole tune out of it?"

Not long afterward, as the new Deer Head Records label was being launched, producer/pianist Richard Burton sounded me with a proposition: How would I like to be one of the debut leaders for the label? That sounded mighty fine to me. But it got better. Richard had been contemplating the lineup for the date and he excitedly revealed his plan: myself with Ron Thomas on piano, Tony Marino on bass, Bill Goodwin on drums, and Vic Juris on guitar. Wow!

The date was to be recorded live onstage at the Deer Head, with Richard producing and Glenn Ferracone engineering. I had complete freedom to choose the repertoire and I wrote arrangements to feature Vic on nylon string as well as electric.

At our first rehearsal I passed out an arrangement I'd made, an homage to Michel Legrand, incorporating his ballad Windmills of Your Mind and What Are You Doing the Rest of Your Life (which we did as a double-time-feel samba, as opposed to its usual treatment as a ballad.) It turned out both Vic and Bill had toured with Legrand, which led to the reenactment of some hysterical road stories complete with faux French and some pantomime worthy of Marcel Marceau.

Another arrangement was By the Time I Get to Phoenix (which did not make the final cut of the disc—we had so much material!)

In this arrangement I had modulated up a half step for each section. To build tension in the second verse I opened with a pedal tone, and for the modulation to the third verse I had a weird chord: E flat sus over B. Looking over the chart before we played it, Vic noticed this chord and said, "Su, I think you made a mistake here. I think you meant [he suggested some other chord I don't remember.]"

"No Vic," I replied, "I want what I wrote."
"Well okaaaaaay," Vic replied, unconvinced.

When we got to that part of the tune Vic played the chord as I had written it. Delightedly, he called out over the band: "That is so hip! Well I guess you showed me!"

You have to understand what that remark meant to me. When you're a saxophonist you're always a little harmonically insecure around pianists and guitarists (or maybe it's just me) since harmony is their business. To blurt out "I want what I wrote" instead of thanking my guitarist for his obviously superior suggestion (while on my knees intoning "I'm not worthy, I'm not worthy" in my mind) was a bit brazen, if not outright rude. But there was my weird chord, with the Vic Seal of Approval and Apology on it.

The musical chemistry of the casting of the album was like falling in love. When you have a record label like VectorDisk with a catalogue of some of the most adventurous, creative and sublime recordings in the history of modern jazz, as Richard Burton does,

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AN INTERVIEW WITH PHIL WOODS

ON THE SUBJECT OF JAZZ SAXOPHONIST AND ARRANGER, AL COHN (1925-1988)

By Dr. Larry Fisher

ESU Professor of Music Emeritus and Research Chairman,
International Association of Jazz Education.



Author's Note: This conversation was recorded in my office in the Fine and Performing Arts Center of East Stroudsburg University on September 30, 1988 between 11:17 AM and 12:00 Noon. As is the case in most oral histories, some editing was necessary for the sake of brevity and clarity. The original tape, however, is preserved as a part of the Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection at E.S.U. This archive has been established in remembrance of a

distinguished musician from our community who has attained worldwide recognition for his contributions to art of Jazz Music.

This article was presented at the Sixteenth annual convention of the National Association of Jazz Educators in San Diego, CA in January of 1989. It was originally published in the annual yearbook: Jazz Research Papers 1989, Charles T. Brown, Editor.

Larry Fisher: How long did you know Al Cohn and where did you meet him?

Phil Woods: I've known Al Cohn since I went to New York City in 1948. I think the first time I'd seen Al Cohn was with great disappointment. I went to see Woody Herman's band. I remember going to look for Allen Eager who was supposed to be in Woody Herman's band. They played a gig in Riverside Park and that was located in my hometown of Springfield, Massachusetts. I was born in 1931 just to give you some idea as of where I am coming from. I was probably just about in high school. It had to be 1946 or 1947. Allen Eager wasn't playing and I said, "Who the hell is that on tenor?" And they said it was Al Cohn. I was so disappointed! I didn't know who Al Cohn was. I went to New York in 1948. So I first met Al, I mean peripherally, in all the jam sessions. I knew Al Porcino and Charlie Kennedy pretty well. There was a whole coterie. I was hanging out with a cat named Hal Stein. I attended Juilliard School of Music from 1948 through 52. I did the whole 4-year smear. The first time I was really aware of Al's music was when I did a John Eardley record.

then I guess you know how to put a record date together! I liked the band so much that we did many subsequent concerts. But even when I changed up personnel, I tried to always have Vic on guitar if he was available.

For a concert booking at the Artists Collective in Hartford in 2014 I got Vic, Bob Cranshaw on bass, and Steve Johns on drums. At the rehearsal Vic and Steve (New Jersey) were politely arguing over who would pick up Bob (Manhattan) for the drive to Hartford; in other words, who would get to listen to Bob's stories about playing with Sonny Rollins and everyone else he played with, for three delicious uninterrupted hours each way?

Vic: "Steve, I think it's easier if I pick up Bob."

Steve: "Yes Vic, but I actually have to be right near his apartment that day [probably a lie] so why don't I pick him up?"

Vic: "Steve, you lucky son-of-a-gun!"

The music Vic and I played together was brief in duration, but long in that vertical dimension we call "deep." The last gig we played together was, fittingly, at the Deer Head in May 2019, six years after we had made our Live at the Deer Head album. Kenny Davis was on bass and Bill Goodwin on drums.

The last time I'd played with Vic had been the previous year when I went to the States for a couple of weeks. When he arrived at the club for the sound check, I noticed how much he'd aged. Still, when I picture Vic in my mind, I perceive much more than an image. What comes through is actually a spectrum of frequencies we knew as Vic Juris. The range of visible light on the entire electromagnetic spectrum is very small, but what Vic gave to all of us is very large. He'll always be remembered because of how beautifully and uniquely he expressed the entire spectrum, especially that invisible part that sounds so lovely.

We arrive at the Coda sign of a maestro. After a stunned silence, all we can do is applaud, loudly. Rising to our feet, applauding all the while, we thank the maestro. Thank you, Vic. ■

This would have to be in the early 50's - 1951, 52, something like that. The album has appeared under Zoot's (Sims) name occasionally. We were having rehearsals at Nola's and Zoot couldn't make rehearsal and sent Al Cohn. I thought that was a pretty hip substitute. That's the first time we sat down together in a section. I really got to know Al Cohn well. I think this would be the most important junction that we had and we had many. This would be the Birdland All Stars of 56. I was part of a group with Al. It was called East coast meets West coast. It was Al and me, Conte Candoli and Kenny Durham, just the four horns. We did a couple of albums for Roulette. In addition to this group, the tour consisted of Sarah Vaughn, Al Hibbler, Count Basie's Band with Joe Williams, Bud Powell's Trio, and Lester Young. I sort of knew everybody from Birdland because Birdland was, of course, the clearinghouse. When I showed up for that bus at 9 o'clock in the morning in front of Charlie's I didn't know where to sit. I mean there's a pecking order. I mean Basie's band had been sitting in the same seats. Freddy Green has been in the same seat since 1928 or something. You know what I mean? So as I got on the bus I heard a voice in the back say, "back here Phil!" and that was Al Cohn. He had saved me a place. We sat over the wheel and right in front of me was Bud Powell and right in front of Al was Lester Young. So I would say that was a pretty good start to the life long friendship that we had. We roomed together and he took pretty good care of me. We used to drink together and play gin rummy. A few years later I remember going to New York to see Al Cohn. I started to write some charts when I was living in New Hope, PA and I wanted a little guidance with my arrangements.



Phil and Larry at Phil's Home
Photo by Allisen Trotter

I knew Al was a wonderful arranger so when I got up my nerve, I asked him if I could bring my charts in. He said, "Yeah, I'll take a look at them." He looked at all my charts and he started to mull them over. He said, "Phil, it looks good, but Phil, you're giving the drummer too much information." I understood exactly what he meant. We talked about Duke Ellington and how Duke didn't believe in giving the bass player any information.

LF: You said you recorded some of the music from that tour?

PW: Yeah.

LF: Were those the first recordings you ever did with him?

PW: That probably was the first. Yeah, that was the first.

LF: Did you do any others?

PW: Oh many, many, many, many, many, many, many, many, many.

LF: Could you talk about those?

PW: Oh, you can talk about the Jazz Giants album we did. That was Al, Zoot, Jerry Mulligan and myself. Just those Manny Albam charts. It's called Jazz Giants. And I remember I couldn't deal with Gerry Mulligan.

I was sitting right next to Gerry and he was saying, "long, short, short, long, long short long." He was making me crazy. So I said, "Zoot, will you change places with me?" I moved over in between Al and Zoot where it was a lot safer. Al always protected me. The standard studio sax section for any Manny Albam date, Oliver Nelson date, Quincy Jones date, Ralph Burns date, Al Cohn date, Bill Potts date, I don't want to leave anybody out, Gary McFarland date, would always be Al and Zoot, Gene Quill and myself and would either be Danny Bank or Sol Slinger on baritone. That was for me the ultimate sax section as well as for most of those above mentioned arrangers who knew something about how it should go.

The jazz solos in the Bill Potts arrangements of Porgy and Bess were played by that saxophone section. That's probably the most representative of the New York sound. That's what I call the New York sound, I mean everybody was a jazz soloist and could still read even though Zoot claimed he couldn't read, but he read very well. He really did. He would demean himself but he was really quite capable after all those years of big band experience. You don't make all the big bands that Zoot made and not be able to read. He just didn't feel that reading was his strongest suit, but he did a hell of a job, I thought. And, of course, Al could read fly shit, you know what I mean?

LF: We have a rather unique jazz festival here in the Poconos called The Celebration of the Arts (C.O.T.A.).

PW: Yes we do.

LF: Could you tell me about Al's involvement with that?

PW: Well Al had been living out here prior to his demise. I guess it's been a good 10 years. He's taken part in all our fundraisers. Al and I used to always be in Denver on Labor Day weekend for the Dick Gibson Jazz Party. There was a big hole this year. The year before Zoot wasn't there, now this year Al wasn't there. The ranks are definitely being thinned. It's very good you are doing this oral history. I think it's a very important project. I also roomed with Zoot. Al and Zoot are inextricably entwined as a unit and for many years they were representatives for many of us New York musicians around the world. In the middle of Russia everybody knew who Al Cohn was. I mean he was given the title "Mr. Music" and that's not a title that the cats bestow lightly.

LF: Who gave him that title?

PW: God only knows. It sounds like it might have been Ralph Burns or one of the heavy writers. But it doesn't matter, whoever it was had it absolutely correct.

LF: What would you consider some of his best recordings, your personal favorites?

PW: I liked the album called "Mr. Music." It's beautiful, it's about a nine-piece band and it's so superb. All the arrangements were done by Al and it must be a Jack Lewis production. I also love Mission to Moscow. I think it's probably some of the best writing ever done from a writer's point of view. From my point of view any album Al recorded with Zoot.

LF: He arranged the Mission to Moscow album?

PW: Yes.

LF: Did he also play on it?

PW: No he didn't. He just wrote it.

LF: What other important credits does Al have as an arranger?

PW: He did the Duke Ellington Tribute "Sophisticated Ladies" of course. That was his Broadway production. He did a lot of the arranging for that. He also wrote for TV shows: The Miss Universe Pageant, Your Hit Parade, and for the shows of Sid Caesar, Ernie Kovacs, and Steve Allen. He did a lot of writing that we're not even aware of. Because he was what they would call a ghost writer. I mean when cats got jammed up or needed a hand they'd get Al because he was so fast. A lot of his credits are ghost credits. Al would bail out many a show and its music director by helping with the orchestrations. Al and others like him were known for their fast professionalism.

LF: On September 10, 1988 you performed in an entire set of Al Cohn Big Band arrangements at the Celebration of the Arts Jazz Festival in Delaware Water Gap, PA. For whose band did Al originally write those arrangements?

PW: Most of them were written for the Terry Gibbs Band. One was for Urbie Green and another for Woody Herman.



Larry placing donated books on shelves in Kemp Library
Photo by Kurt Fisher

LF: Did Al do a lot of touring? Did he tour with his own group or with others?

PW: His touring was rather limited because he would stay in New York and do mostly writing. His tour was whenever. He did a lot of work at the Half Note with Zoot of course. They were there every New Year's for many, many years and then they would go to Chicago and they would go play Shelly's Club. He would do 4 or 5 months touring a year but he wasn't on the road all the time. He didn't have to be, that's why he wrote music so he could stay in New York. He loved New York. It took him years to get off the stoop and move to the country. He loved the city action.

LF: Did he use any particular sidemen on those tours?

PW: Major Holly and Dave Frishburg were playing with him for a while, Monty Alexander was a drummer, Major Holly was a bass player, Dave McKenna played with him for a while.

LF: What can you tell me about Al's personality?

PW: Funny, funny, funny guy.

LF: Do you have any favorite stories about him?

PW: Well I have one I just heard. Somebody asked him if he played "Giant Steps" and he said, "yes but I use my own changes." If you're a musician and know "Giant Steps" it's god damn hysterical. A favorite one I like is: supposedly he was watching a baseball game in a bar and somebody said, "what's the score Al?" He said, "ten to one" and somebody said, "who's winning?" and Al said, "ten!" Ah, the famous one is when he was in Scandinavia. They have a beer in Denmark and it's very strong. A couple of those will knock your socks off. It's called Elephant Beer, and somebody said, "Al have you tried the Elephant Beer?" Al said, "No, I drink to forget!" I mean he was so fast.

LF: I find that many musicians that have great improvising skills with their horns are also very quick with their wit.

PW: You'd be surprised some of them don't have a sense of humor, but most of them do. Zoot was also very witty and very quick and very dry. Zoot was drier than Al. Al was always into jokes, I mean he always had a joke. But not so much after Zoot died. I remember Al said to me one time, "life isn't so funny any more," and I knew what he meant. But that didn't stop him from telling jokes.

LF: Do you think that those recordings he made with Zoot will be remembered more than any others?

PW: Oh yeah. "From A to Z" and those albums for anybody that knows their stuff. You're darn tootin. Or stuff that he did later, especially like the solo stuff he did with just Jimmy Rowles and Al playing. That's a beautiful album. Just the two of them playing for some of that. And that's the real salon chamber of music. There is nothing quite as good as those two guys together (Al and Zoot).

LF: What musicians do you think influenced Al more than anyone else?

PW: Lester Young, Charlie Parker, Louie Armstrong for sure. Not necessarily in that order. Also Ben Webster and Coleman Hawkins, Prez, I think, would be the key, but not the sole influence. Al listened to everybody. Towards the end, a lot of Duke. He was really into Duke.

LF: Historians like to put labels on players. Would you say Al's style was more Swing or Be-Bop? How would you describe it?

PW: Oh he was Swing. He was close to, I mean just a little before Bop. It was very modern Swing. He was right between Lester Young and Charlie Parker in which he utilized the best of the elements that fit for him. You've got to remember that Al had consummate harmonic sense. He was a fine pianist. He was a very sophisticated. One of his songs, "Tain't NoUse," uses the beginning of Petrushka or was it Firebird? I forget, maybe I got my Stravinsky wrong but its nice chromatic harmony. A direct quote from Stravinsky. He was extremely erudite in his approach to all the music. I think he went with a Lester Young swing but he adapted quickly to the new harmony in the extended altered chords. It was no big deal to Al to think that way, but as a musician he knew how to play changes, man.

LF: What made Al and Zoot's recordings so special to everyone?

PW: Oh because they were just so special. It was just a wonderful tandem team. They both had similar roots. Al perhaps had a stronger harmonic root, Zoot perhaps a stronger swinging root. Put them together and you had the best music possible improvised at that moment.

LF: Do you think they expressed their different personalities in their playing?

PW: I think everybody has a different personality. Al had his harmonic sophistication and Zoot his rhythmic sophistication. They both played hip changes and they both swung, but Al could play the piano and knew more about chords. Zoot had more of an instinctive rhythmical sense.

LF: Do you think their sense of humor came out in their playing?

PW: Well I roomed with both of them. They were both extremely funny.

LF: How would you show humor in playing?

PW: Any number of ways, by obscure quotes you would do on your horn which they would do sometimes accidentally. I remember on one New Year's Eve broadcast from the Half Note Zoot, instead of going into "Auld Lang Syne" went into "Happy Birthday" I was on tour with Zoot in Russia. I mean rooming with Zoot in Russia is truly amazing. Everybody said your rooms are going to be bugged and I looked at Zoot and I said they won't know what the hell we're talking about anyway.

LF: Many musicians have played the tenor saxophone. In your opinion is there anything specific that is unique about Al's playing or his approach to the instrument?

PW: Yeah, it was Al Cohn. Words can't describe it, his musical sound speaks for itself. The most important part of course is that all the great players have a distinctive sound. When you heard a tenor sax you simply said, "that's Al, that's Zoot, that's Lester, that's Ben Webster," that's what comes first. All of the swing and the harmony and all that comes later. First you got to have a distinctive sound otherwise it sounds like cookie cutter jazz like so many of the younger players. I mean they all sound the same. They use the same mouthpiece, the same reed, the same set up. Al had a sound, a distinctive sound.

LF: A beautiful, rich sound.

PW: Big, and when he got his new false teeth towards the end he was getting louder and higher. And he was practicing more and more. Steve Gilmore my bass player lived close to Al. Al went out and bought a four-wheel drive with a little snowplow in front and he'd go over and he'd plow

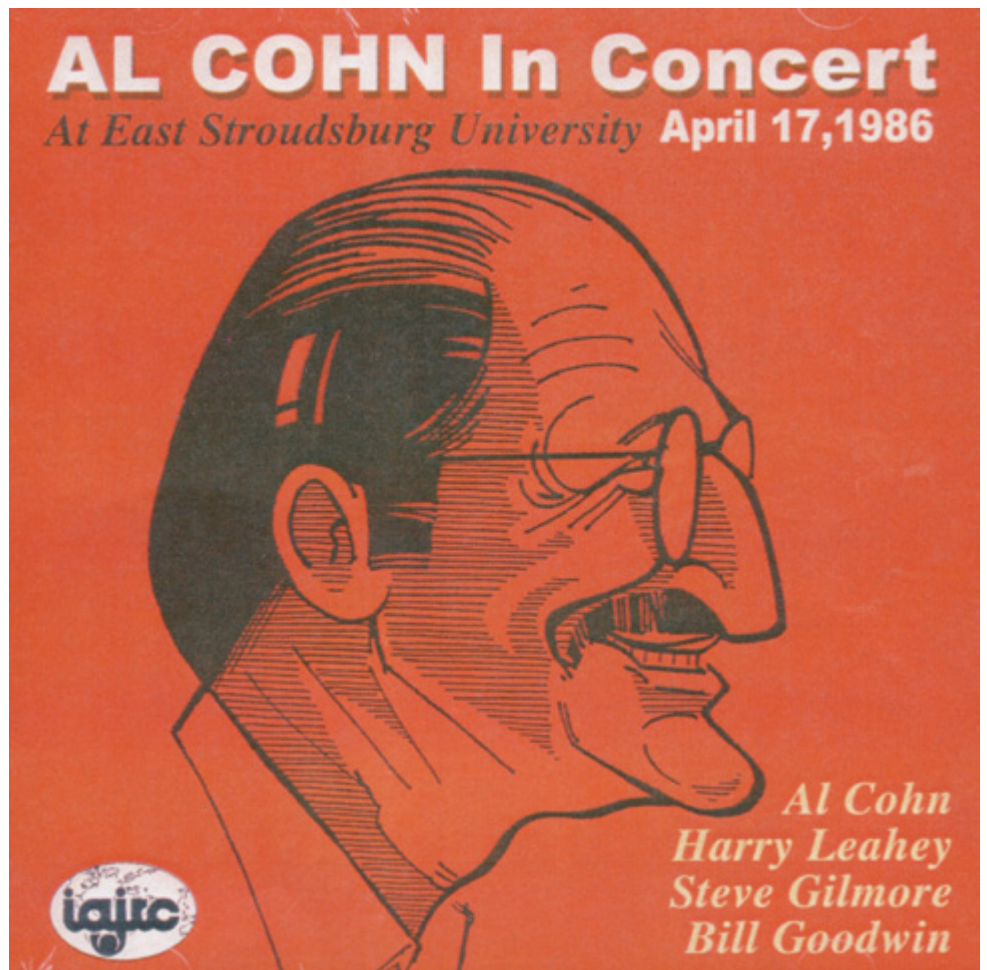
Steve out but he'd have his tenor in the back. And in return Steve would have to play like, "All The Things You Are," in the key of E. I mean when Al wanted to practice, he'd go by Steve's house and he'd play stanzas but he'd play them in any key possible. A Major, five sharps, 10 sharps, 15 sharps, whatever. That, to him was working out. I guarantee it. That's no mean feat. But Gilmore told me that which I think is very interesting: "He would plow you out but you had to play in E with him!"

LF: Al was not as well known as Zoot Sims or some of the other tenor saxophonists of that time. Why?

PW: Perhaps because Zoot toured more. Zoot toured a lot for Norman Grantz and had a lot more exposure. He did more records under his own name.

LF: You said before that Al didn't really tour that much was that because he liked to write more?

PW: Al wrote. Al liked to write. It wasn't a matter of writing but it was just a quicker way to make a buck. It was good money and he had family to raise and all other responsibilities for a young family man and this kept him in New York and he was a New York guy. I mean who wants to go off on a bus when you have the best of both worlds: write all day and play all night which is a lot of time what he actually did. ■



REMEMBERING VIC JURIS



THE JAZZ WARRIOR

The following pieces were written by a select few who knew Vic Juris closely and worked with him over the years. I would like to thank Gunnar Mossblad for taking charge and helping to compile this information. The shorter quotes at the end came from the program at Vic's memorial service.

It goes without saying that Vic Juris was a huge inspiration for guitarists everywhere. Upon learning the news of his stage 4 liver cancer diagnoses, Gunnar set up a GoFundMe account to help with all of the costs associated with such a situation. Starting on June 27, 2019, the fund has raised over \$111,000 for the family. There were 1400 donors and the ad was shared over 8500 times. Donations came from all over the world, including jazz and commercial music legends,

students, followers that heard Vic play sometimes only once, and many that had been following him for years.

The GoFundMe address is:

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/vic-juris-needs-out-help>

To the Pocono audience, Vic was as much a local musician as anyone else from the area. He played at the Deer Head Inn constantly and in the past 10 years or so was noticeably working with more musicians of the younger generation and really making a name for himself as a headlining solo artist. He was incredibly generous, funny, talented, and admired by anyone who met him or heard him play. Here is what some of Vic Juris' closest friends and musical partners have to say about his life, his personality and his music.

Dave Liebman

Saxophonist, composer, educator

My first memory of Vic was at a clinic in Germany sometime in the mid 1980s. There were a lot of teachers and students attending but I do remember taking note that there was something special in Vic's playing and importantly his general demeanor. I could tell he was ready, truly interested in expanding his horizons and had a desire to communicate beyond clichés. After years of meeting musicians far and wide I can tell certain things... subtle stuff... but basically when they are fueled by a desire to learn more. When I observe that attitude it rings a bell. Vic was as I could tell, ready for prime time!!

By 1991 I was ready for a new group using keyboards and guitar. My band leading experience with a guitar had been the Dave Liebman Group featuring John Scofield for a few years around 1980. My concept for this new group was to use the guitar as a quasi-second horn, leaving the chordal information to the piano. I organized a "jam session" with my choices for the band, which besides Vic included the perennial Tony Marino, Jamey Haddad and Phil Markowitz. After a few standards (best to hear someone playing straight ahead for starters) it felt good and we started rehearsing. Vic was fine with the role of the guitar at that time and off we went... for the next 20 plus years doing the dance: teaching... performing... touring and recording, encompassing a repertoire ranging from Ornette Coleman's music to original material totaling nearly 20 CD releases in the several incarnations of this group. Vic also started writing seriously for the band... great and challenging tunes.

My initial supposition from Germany proved correct. Vic was a sponge who wanted to learn and was willing to put the time in. When the Dave Liebman Group became a quartet sans piano by the mid '90s, Vic had a lot on his plate. Besides the eclectic nature of my musical tastes and constant idiomatic detours, I encouraged Vic to use pedals, incorporate electronic based effects as well as the acoustic guitar. He was constantly trying out new sounds... I loved it! And now in a quartet setting, Vic was the major soloist after me. To put it mildly Mr. Juris had a lot on his proverbial plate!! The saving grace was that Vic just "happens" to be the most serious musician I have known. He was always ready with his cassette machine to tape what he wanted to shed for the next rehearsal... clarifying a voicing and so on. With my chromatic stuff it was a challenge to adapt and transplant piano voicings to guitar, some heavy lifting to say the least. Vic took it to heart... going sometimes note for note. I never witnessed such change and development of a musician over a period of time. And of course there was the blues part of his playing having spent some time with organ trios as well as good old rock 'n' roll... after all Vic belonged to that special fraternity of New Jersey guitarists.

That's the musical side, but with Vic there's more. Besides having an incredible desire to go ANYWHERE (we toured a lot), he loved to play. In New York, Vic worked all the time as well as teaching (students loved him). His books on voicings and other guitar issues were inspiring. There were semesters where he was teaching at three schools each week in the New York area.

As a man Vic was one of the sweetest, most caring and generous people I have ever known. Along with wife Kate (I was best man for the wedding) their musical duo was fantastic. Kate can really sing! Their love and respect for each other was obvious. When he left us, Vic was just receiving some long-deserved notoriety and beginning to work as a leader more and more. His reputation was growing as one of the baddest cats on guitar whose time had finally come.

We all miss Vic. He touched a lot of lives. For me it was a privilege to have spent nearly 25 years with this Prince of a man on and off the bandstand. RIP my brother!!



Dave Stryker

Jazz Guitarist

I was lucky to have Vic Juris as a friend for the last 25 years. When he and Kate were looking to buy a house I told him about the one across the street from us... As I've said before, I hoped that when I moved out to New Jersey that I would have been the best guitar player on my block at least... oh well haha...

The late great John Abercrombie said it best: "Vic is the best, there are none better."

Vic was New Jersey. But Vic also was the world. All of us knew that this was one of the greatest to ever pick up a guitar. There is not one guitarist alive who doesn't give it up to Vic Juris. Those of us that play music know the time and dedication it takes to reach that level of artistry. Vic put in the hard work but also had that special magic...

I feel very lucky for our friendship for the last 25 years and especially the time we spent together at the end doing what any friends would do. Mainly just hanging out, talking and playing a few tunes.

Because of all of the great performances and recordings Vic made we that were lucky to hear over the years, his music will live on. But especially through the hundreds of students he taught over the years at his house and in college. Several of them also stepped up when Vic got sick by coming over to play and hang. That is where his legacy will live on from having passed his knowledge on so freely.

I like to think of the words of Dr. Seuss: "Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened."

Rest In Peace my friend, I think of you often. Thanks for the music and friendship.



Dave Stryker, Vic and Bucky Pizzarelli

Todd Coolman

Jazz Bassist/Director of Jazz Studies: SUNY Purchase

I first met Vic Juris at various jam sessions in New York City shortly after I moved from Chicago in the Fall of 1978. Sessions were going on day and night in several lofts around town, and I was able to meet and play with huge numbers of great musicians just by showing up. I knew Vic could really play, but we were not yet in the same circles of musicians, so I did not see him all that often.

Some years later, I was the Director of Jazz Studies at SUNY Purchase College. I had hired John Abercrombie to be one of our guitar instructors. As fate would have it, John became ill after having been on our faculty for quite a few years, and his illness eventually led to his passing.

I was aware that Vic had been teaching at various other colleges on a part-time basis, and by this time, Vic's visibility as a very in-demand guitarist on the New York scene was quite high. I offered Vic the guitar instructor position specifically to be himself and to bring his unique skills to the table.

Vic surpassed my highest expectations in every respect, and his presence strengthened our program, for sure.

As great a guitarist and educator as Vic was, I came to understand that he was an even greater person. He was always thoughtful, respectful, and generally a quiet and amazingly egoless individual. He always seemed like "the guy next door" to me. He was so down to earth, so kind and compassionate. I never heard him say one negative thing about another person, be they musician or not, nor did I ever hear him complain about anything. He was a team player. He showed up and did his job to a consistently high standard, often exhibiting a wry and subtle sense of humor that brightened many a day for all who knew him.

Unfortunately, the heavens had a plan for him that included a bout with cancer that he eventually succumbed to. It was during his illness that I became closest with Vic. I would visit with him as frequently as I could, first when he was hospitalized, and afterward when he was trying to recuperate at home. I would often take my bass and we would play a few tunes together.

What I would like others to know about Vic Juris the person is that from the moment he got his diagnosis, right up to the time he passed, his overwhelming concern was for others. Each time I visited him, he would ask me how I was doing, how our mutual friends were doing, how his students were doing, and so forth. He was determined to stay in touch with all of us and let us know he was thinking of us and caring for us. He never spoke of his illness nor did he let on that he was in extreme pain and discomfort at times.

Vic Juris was a selfless individual who lived for the music, for his loved ones, and for all who had the honor of knowing him, either on or off the bandstand. His passing has left a hole in my world that will remain for the rest of my time in this life. Keep swingin' Vic!

Jay Anderson

Jazz Bassist

Few people are fortunate enough to find the thing they were put on this earth to do. Vic was one of those people. His musical gifts were enormous, his work ethic strong, and his desire to grow and learn insatiable.

I met Vic in the late 80s playing in and around New York City. Since then, we played hundreds of gigs together. I first recorded with him in 1991 and played bass on 15 of his recordings. It goes without saying... his playing was never anything less than spectacular, but he was also a composer, arranger, bandleader, mentor and teacher of the highest order. Loved by all.

Vic was always respectful and professional. I can't remember one time where I got to a gig before Vic, and I'm always early. I'd arrive and Vic would already be set up and ready to play... every time.

Vic had amazing hand-eye coordination. Around 1990 we were doing a record date in Stamford, CT. There was a basketball hoop set up behind the studio. Vic walked out, lit a cigarette (he quit shortly thereafter), and picked up the basketball. He casually made a few baskets in a row with one hand, smoking with the other. We all began to take notice and egged him on, telling him to back up with each consecutive shot. He ended up around 15 feet away (free-throw line distance), and continued to nail every shot (20?) as he smoked. In his typical understated way, he put the ball back down and went back into the studio.

For over 10 years we played a trio gig once a month at the 55 Bar in NYC with Adam Nussbaum. We'd play a mix of tunes...Standards, Ornette, Monk, Bill Evans, Bud Powell, Keith Jarrett, Albert Ayler, Wayne Shorter, and The Beatles to name a few. Before the gig, Vic would hand out the music. He would always toss each sheet of music to us individually from 10 feet away, the way a magician tosses cards into a hat. Every time it would come straight to me. It sounds silly, but try it. Not easy to do. He just had an innate understanding of movement, the physical world and his relationship to it.

Among those tunes he handed out were his originals, old and new. I'd ask what a new tune was into (we'd rarely rehearse). He'd say something like "straight eights, play the last eight as an intro... just do your thing." It was never precious to him. There was mutual trust. The music was always hand written with perfect/clear manuscript, not computer generated. It could be free, swinging, beautiful, quirky, Brazilian, up-tempo or folk... always great. I'd ask him about it and he would reply, "it's just something I wrote the other day." There was never any speech about his inspiration or process. He was too humble and self-assured for that.

I consider my personal and musical relationship with Vic to be among the greatest gifts of my life. His Spirit will always be with me.



Jay Anderson, Vic, and Adam Nussbaum at the 55 Bar, NYC.
Photo by Kyra Kverno

Adam Nussbaum

Jazz Drummer

It's difficult for me to begin something like this because I miss my musical colleague and friend. Vic as we know was one of the best... we first played together in the 80s in a guitar summit with John Abercrombie, Chuck Loeb and John Scofield as well as in other configurations.

I'm grateful and feel very fortunate that we were able to get together with Jay Anderson the first Sunday of every month for over 10 years at the 55 Bar. We played the 6 PM set or as I used to call it "The early bird special." The music we played was a variety of his originals some standards and more. The gift of the situation was that we were able to truly learn to trust each other. Every time we played there was an opportunity to get deeper into it and consequently open it up. Vic always had an open mind to what was happening on the bandstand. I know I can also speak for my friend Jay that we are very thankful to have had this special dynamic. We had a green light. This was one of those situations that I will always cherish and it will be with me forever. Thank you Vic.

Rufus Reid

Jazz Bassist/Composer

I began my 40-year relationship with Vic Juris in 1979 when I asked him to join our newly found jazz faculty at William Paterson University. The Jazz Studies and Performance degree program is still viable and strong today. Little did I know, at that time, this academic setting would develop and blossom to become a most gratifying and personal relationship for Vic and I. Vic's personality was always understated while at times shockingly funny! His guitar playing was astonishing and fearless. His feel and harmonic awareness were broad and deep, no matter the style! Vic's supportive comping role was always solid, but he always enhanced the music with a deep groove and surprises beyond anyone's expectations. That alone always gave me goose bumps and a big smile, every time!

The students at WPU loved Vic and they all worked hard for him as he prepared them toward becoming world-class musicians, as he was. Vic Juris was a passionate teacher of the guitar who also taught the value of being honest to the music and to oneself. Vic was in-demand as a player who also possessed the skill to communicate at a high level. As director of the WPU program, I was very confident that the guitar students were being well taken care of.

Vic Juris, as a man, was sweet, humorous, very humble, totally without ego, and not an evil bone in his body! His musical ability was stunningly brilliant every time he picked up his instrument. Vic Juris' musical breath was astonishingly deep, no matter the style. His mere presence made any musical ensemble rise to new heights! His musical consistency was valued by all of us. In 2013, he recorded my big band music, QUIET PRIDE-The Elizabeth Catlett Project. In 2017, and more recently, October 2019, we performed with that ensemble at Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola in NYC. I will treasure these performances. I will miss all he has given to me, especially the musical surprises he dropped on all of us! All who were fortunate to make music with Vic will never forget his musical essence. We all are better for having Vic Juris in our lives.

Gunnar Mossblad

*Saxophonist & arranger/composer/educator
Director of the Dave Liebman Big Band*

I was fortunate to have enjoyed a friendship and musical relationship with Vic Juris for many years. I met Vic in 1991, when Dave Liebman invited me to a club in NYC to hear a potential guitar player he was considering hiring for his new group. I was currently on sabbatical, living in NYC and studying with Lieb. I figured it would be a great night and sure enough it was. In addition to a unique sound and approach to the music that was grounded in the blues, Vic had a confidence to his playing that was powerful but not overstated, and supportive and flexible, reacting to the music that was being made at the moment. This was a quality that I would hear every time I heard or played with Vic. He was doing things that were unique to the guitar. Over the next few years, Vic's playing "took off" in Lieb's new group, and I often wondered why he wasn't a bigger headline act.

In 2000 Lieb decided to put a big band together using his core small group as the rhythm sections, but adding a piano player. As the music director of the group, I had the opportunity to work more closely with Vic, and got to know him better both personally and as a player. He was always fully prepared for every rehearsal of what was very difficult music. Whether Vic's role was harmonic and rhythmic accompaniments, "shadowing" Liebman on rubato melodies, taking the lead line with one or more of the horn sections or soloing, his playing was "on the money" and he was aware of everything that was going on around him, humbly contributing to all aspects of the performance. It was clear the music was everything to Vic.

When the Dave Liebman Big Band was touring, we often held master classes and clinics. Vic was very articulate about his role in the rhythm section, how he approached the music, and offered specific technics that the students could practice. By 2007, we knew each other well, and it was only logical to ask Vic to be apart of the Jazz Camp I developed to present at my university in Toledo, Ohio. With Vic and Jon Hendricks as the guest headliners, the camp was a tremendous success, and I had the pleasure of playing concerts with Vic every day in numerous musical settings from quartet and quintets to duos and trios. Whether we were playing standards or originals, he was ready to play and teach all day and night long.

The camp was populated with adults, college students, and secondary students as young as 14 years of age. I doubt that too many of the students realized the caliber of musician they were working with, but his ability to communicate complex musical concepts to all levels of student, and his sincere delivery endeared him to the students. In fact, Vic's contributions personally, musically, and educationally were so valuable, I made him a permanent faculty member of the annual camp, and many students returned to the camp, year after year, to study and interact with him. To many, he became "Uncle Vic."

Overall, whether he was playing someone else's music or his own, Vic's playing was deep, and always evolving based on the experiences in his musical and personal life. He was a beautiful, giving person who shared his life and music with all who would listen. The inner circle of jazz musicians has always respected him, but in recent years, I believe he was given a taste of the professional notoriety that he deserved. His reputation and legacy will continue to grow and contribute to a great wealth of students, lucky enough to study with Vic. Personally, I will always feel blessed to have been apart of Vic's personal and musical life. No matter what gig he played, Vic made it meaningful and fun.



Vic and Gunnar Mossblad
at the UT Jazz Camp

Pat Martino

Jazz Guitarist

The loss of Vic Juris has been overwhelming for all of us. To say that Vic was a great jazz guitarist is, and was, an understatement, maybe because he was continually greater as a human being. He certainly left an incredible mark on the history of our instrument with his love.

Pat Metheny

Jazz Guitarist

I first heard Vic with Barry Miles around 1975 when we were both just starting out. Right away, he became one of my favorites. He sounded fantastic in any situation no matter what the context. He was a great straight-ahead player but had the kind of open ears and imagination to be able to address virtually any playing environment, not only with excellence and depth, but with an identity of his own – you always knew it was Vic playing. And it was no surprise that he sounded amazing – he was a beautiful person. I always learned from him whenever I heard him. He may be one of the only people on any instrument who had totally absorbed Lieb's harmonic vocabulary and was free inside that world like no other. With that kind of insight combined with his already deep pocket and great sound – it was everything all in one place and I remained even more in awe of him as the years went by. We will all miss Vic, and there is a huge space in the realm of creative music left in his wake.

John Scofield

Jazz Guitarist

Vic Juris was as good a jazz guitarist as one could be but his talent as a human being exceeded even that. I always loved Vic and thought he was one of the kindest, most open and thoughtful people I knew as well as a superb musician. He will be greatly missed.

Paul Simon

Singer/Songwriter, Guitarist

Vic was a superb player and teacher and one of the kindest souls; a rare combination.

Kate Baker

Vic Juris' Wife

The lessons I have learned through this journey will stay with me forever. The lesson was love. Once in your life if you are lucky enough, you meet someone that turns your world around. I met Vic. It was a love that will last me a lifetime.

When Vic was diagnosed with cancer and we knew how serious this was, our world as we knew it stopped. In one moment, our priorities were brought into perspective. We stopped everything and we focused on us, we learned to live each day for the moment and we found love in the little things. We found it in meaningful talks, the love in a smile, in the music in making breakfast and in our dear friends. Vic and I could talk without words. We fought a hard fight together and found the gift of love in the deepest way possible.

When Vic was in the hospital it was a very difficult time. I brought him his guitar but he wouldn't touch it, then when Gunnar and Dave started the GoFundMe and he saw how much he was loved, he cried and he picked up the guitar. That was the start for him and gave him true hope. The next few months in between chemo treatments, his dear friends would come over and some of the most beautiful music I have even heard was played in our living room. The music was no longer about getting ready for a gig or a project but instead, heart came through in each note as the love came through the music. We performed during those six months and even though Vic could not feel his fingers and lost most of his hearing, he never played better. I look back on those times and I remember finally getting it. I remember playing and you could hear a pin drop on every note, there was no longer any "try" in the music. Instead there was just trust, communication, spirit and love. It came from everywhere.

Vic and I didn't have children but instead we had about 100 of them, all of our students! Vic's boys were a godsend. They would come over and play with him, he would mentor them till the last week. The boys truly loved Vic and Vic truly loved them. I remember talking to Vic and saying, "Vic you know your life is exactly how it should be, there was a reason you were not touring all the time, it was because you were meant to do this. You were chosen to pass down the music and also teach these boys about life. You are exactly where you should be. A bad ass player and artist, an amazing husband and a mentor to your 100 children."

I will leave you with one last story: When Vic was coming out of anesthesia after another biopsy, I was in the room with him and he was a little groggy. He said, "Kate - I know it, I know the secret." I said, "Vic what is the secret!" He said, "Improvisation is a gift, a real spiritual gift, and that is why I know there is a God."

It has been over six months without Vic but i know that we all still carry a piece of him with us. I hear his voice in mine and I am grateful for our ride through life together. Until we meet again. ■



Ray Ellis Recording Session

ZOOT SIMS AND AL COHN

PHOTO BY JACK BRADLEY



JAM SESSIONS: A BASIC GUIDE FOR NEW PLAYERS

By Rob Scheps

When going to a jam session in a club or at a school... what do you do if they call a tune you don't know? Unless you have a wealth of experience, I'd recommend **SITTING DOWN**. Don't be so arrogant or ignorant that you get up there and hack away at a tune you don't know. Better etiquette and musicality would dictate that going home and learning said tune for next time is the best method to deal with this.

That said, if there is some flexibility at the session, you could request that they play another tune. It's often unsaid, but it seems that if you say no to the first two tunes called, it would behoove you to know the third one!

There is no shame in saying, "I don't really know this tune, so I'll sit this one out." Rather than shaming you for not knowing the tune, you are actually being more mature and musical by doing this.

ETIQUETTE FOR JAM SESSIONS: A FEW HELPFUL HINTS

Sign the list if there is one, then wait your turn.

If there's no list, try to introduce yourself to the leader at an opportune moment.

Just say who you are, your instrument, and that you'd like to play if it's cool. Don't go onstage until you're called up.

When you do get up there, don't call obscure tunes that nobody knows. It's ok to call things like "Nica's Dream" or "All The Things You Are." It is NOT ok to call "The Brain" by Chick Corea or "Applejackin" by Herbie Nichols. The spirit of the session is to find some common ground and play tunes that most or all of the participants know. Use common sense here!

Conversely, if you are not the one calling the tune, try to go along amiably if it's a tune you know and can play reasonably well. If you don't know it, you have three options:

- 1) Say, "Can we play different tune?"
- 2) Stay and hang - play the tune if you think you can reasonably get through it without disrespecting the music.
- 3) Say, "It's cool, I'll sit this one out."

Don't take too many choruses. If you do, you can be perceived as either young or selfish, or maybe both! An unsaid axiom of jam sessions is, "Don't play too long!" You aren't John Coltrane on "Live in Seattle," you don't get a 30 minute solo. It's inconsiderate, and you don't have that much to say! When you are conscientious about how long you play, you're showing consideration to the other musicians and the audience, as well as being musical to boot.

Some folks find it helpful to take a list of tunes they know to a session, whether it's paper in your pocket or a list on your phone. For those who freeze up and can't remember what tunes to call at the actual session, this can be a big help. Glance at it when trying to think of what to call. A simple list can be a helpful tool in the heat of the moment.

Here's an unwritten rule: After you've played two tunes, thank the other cats and leave the stage voluntarily. By doing this, you're letting them know you're not greedy and don't expect to play all night. Only stay on the bandstand longer than two tunes if they ASK you to. This can go a long way in keeping things nice for all the cats who are jockeying to get up there too. It also shows you to be a reasonable, mature musician who is considerate.

This tip can help you learn more tunes: Make a list of the tunes played at the session that you DIDN'T know. Take it home and learn those tunes for next time. We can grow from observing what tunes get called.

Another unwritten rule: A session at a club requires the deference and flexibility outlined above. However, a private jam at someone's house or at the Musician's Union has looser parameters. You might be able to experiment, play a bit longer, or even bring some tunes that are uncommon to play. Finally, depending on the cats you're playing with, you might even be able to bring and play some original compositions. Try to analyze each situation as well as you can to make these determinations.

A final caveat about jam sessions: If you get your head handed to you, like you fell apart on a fast "Cherokee," you hated your solo, or you turned the time around, don't despair. The best approach is always: go home; lick your wounds; work on the stuff that tripped you up; get back on the horse. Charlie Parker did it, as well as many others. It takes some courage but this attitude will serve you well as you learn and grow.



For more information about Rob Scheps, visit his website at robschepsmusic.com

Also, check out his newest recording, *Comencio*, available on amazon.com from Steeple Chase Records. ■

INTERVIEW WITH BILL HOLMAN

By Patrick Dorian and Matt Vashlishan



Bill Holman
Photo by Lesley Bohm

Bill Holman is one of the most prolific and respected composers of the jazz genre, particularly for the large jazz ensemble. His career began six decades ago with the Charlie Barnet Orchestra, and he has been a household name among jazz musicians and enthusiasts ever since. I have particularly looked up to him over the years, as his music is something that speaks to my tastes directly. I have always jumped at the chance to hear, perform, or study any of his compositions. Bill was especially generous with his time and recollections during this interview that went on for nearly two hours. Getting the chance to experience his intelligent, witty personality and stories of the past was a wonderful experience after listening to his music for so many years.

Explanatory material is included between square brackets ([]). We hope readers will appreciate this extra information, which adds further depth to Bill Holman's remarkable commentary. His spirited thoughts encourage (re)exploration by our readers.

Pat Dorian: Bill thank you very much for taking the time to speak with us. We are both honored and pleased that you would be willing to speak about all of these great people in the jazz universe with us... Zoot, Al, and so many more.

Matt Vashlishan: Yes, thank you. Today is April 30th, 2020 and Pat Dorian and I are speaking with composer, arranger, and saxophonist Bill Holman [from his home near North Hollywood, CA].

PD: Can we start out with how you first found out about Zoot? You revered him. You were both on the Kenton Orchestra in the late spring of 1953 when he was 27 and you were 26.

Bill Holman: Well I first found out about Zoot by hearing Woody Herman's record "I Told Ya I Loved Ya, Now Get Out" [recorded October 19, 1947, in Hollywood]. I haven't heard that thing in many, many years. There was a solo break [where everybody stopped], and the tenor player played this two- or four-bar break and it just put me away. I wasn't even playing music at that time. I was studying engineering at UCLA. I wasn't much of a player yet but that little break really got to me and I never forgot it. I never dreamed that I would meet and be friends with the guy that did it. Several years went by when I was learning how to play and starting to write, and I finally found out who it was who played the solo on Woody's record. So I started listening to all the Zoot that I could.

PD: Yeah, that's great. I have that recording here, do you mind if I play a little of that Zoot solo and see what you think of it?

BH: Sure.

PD: [Plays recording] It's very relaxed.

BH: Yeah, you know as far as I can remember I never heard a saxophone sound like that. It was a Lester Young influenced sound. But I was listening to Dexter Gordon and Coleman Hawkins and Zoot was just different. It was even different than Prez [Lester Young], whom I heard a lot of. There was just something that really connected with me.

PD: Beautiful, because right around there in 1947 you were turning 20, which is that pivotal age where you find your own thing and keep going with it.

BH: I was on Charlie Barnet's band in 1951 and we played the Apollo [Theater] in [Harlem] New York for a week. That may have been the first time I heard Zoot in person. Just watching him play and watching him when he wasn't playing on the stand, he had what I felt was a fierce expression on his face. Even though I still didn't know him, I was afraid of him. [laughs] I didn't want to offend him in any way, so I didn't talk to him until I went back to New York on Kenton's band [spring 1953] and he was playing on an off night at Birdland. I naturally went down to hear him and made up my mind that I was going to meet him and introduce myself.

On the break I went over and said, "I'm Bill and I'm playing with Kenton." And to my surprise he was very friendly! He was a really warm and friendly guy behind that fierce expression. So I said, "Why don't you come over to my hotel room?" He was on the break, so we went over to the hotel and got high. He was expounding on what a great thing it was for two people to meet and to bond over smoking dope. He was just really a pleasure to be with. When I heard a couple of nights later that Stan Kenton was talking to him about coming on the band, I was just beside myself. And it finally happened! He showed up and remembered who I was from our first meeting, and I was determined to become friends with him. It was very easy, because he was very welcoming.

When he first joined the band we were traveling in busses. He would wander up and down the bus aisle singing little ditties. He did one to a Lester Young solo. He wrote lyrics to it: "My name is Zootie Sims... I play the saxophone... Hello! Hello everybody, hello!" All kinds of things like that.

Zoot was just happy, singing songs and cracking jokes. The usual feeling on the bus was one of resignation. 200 miles to go today... , etc. Most of us just said, "OK, let's read a book or something." Zoot was having none of that. He wanted to live his life even though he was on a bus.

Later we were traveling in cars. I was driving one of the cars, and Zoot got into my car. I think it was Lee Konitz, Zoot, Bobby Burgess and myself in my car. It was a good group because we all loved each other. We could talk about anything musically or personally or whatever.

PD: Without interstate highways as well.

BH: Yeah. The Europe trip eventually came up [August-September 1953] and in Germany we all bought cameras. Germany was the place for cameras. Every time the bus had a rest stop we would pile out of the bus and take pictures of each other. Zoot had a Rolleiflex and he was out there shooting with the rest of us.

In a concert in Berlin, Zoot was wearing his space shoes. They were specially made shoes built around the mold of your foot. They looked really funny. Between one of the tunes,

Stan came over to Zoot and said, "Jack, I don't want you to wear those shoes on the [band]stand anymore." So we finished the set and went out for an intermission and Stan was talking business with a bunch of Capitol Records executives. Zoot goes right up to them and said, "Stan, what do your shoes cost?" Stan says, "Not now Jack, I'm busy." Zoot said, "I want to talk about it now. What do your shoes cost?" Stan said he didn't remember, and Zoot says, "Well my shoes cost \$80," which at that time was a pretty stiff price for shoes. I don't know how it went on after that but the fact that Zoot busted up one of Stan's business conferences about his shoes tells you how he was.

Stan always called Zoot Jack [Zoot's given name was John]. It was maybe a little too light to call him Zoot.

PD: It almost sounds like when Zoot would bang heads with Benny Goodman in Russia.

BH: Well [laughs], a lot of people did that!

PD: I see the concert in Berlin was at the Sportpalast [Sporthalle] on August 27, 1953. [The Kenton Band with Zoot featured on an improvised solo, Bill, and a remarkable personnel appeared in the 1953 German film "Schlagerparade" ("Hit Parade"), filmed on August 27, 1953, at the Sporthalle in Berlin. A two-minute video segment is viewable on YouTube at "Stan Kenton: Berlin, 1953."]

BH: When we got back from Europe we were traveling on the bus and we had a bus accident on the Pennsylvania Turnpike on November 11th. We rear-ended a truck and several people got hurt. The road manager got hurt, and the whole trombone section had facial injuries so they couldn't play. When we got to Cleveland, Stan said he wanted to have a rehearsal because he had to have Bill Russo contact some trombone players from Chicago to fill in. Of course they didn't know the book, so he wanted the rehearsal. Of course Zoot says, "Well, we know our parts, why do we have to rehearse?" Stan says, "Because I said so, Jack." So Zoot just keeps saying, "Why do we have to rehearse?," over and over and wouldn't back down. So Stan finally said, "I think you should give your notice." Zoot said, "OK, you got it." Two weeks later he left. On the night that he left, I gave my notice. I didn't see myself having much fun after Zoot left. I returned to L.A. and to scuffling.

MV: Did you ever talk about saxophone playing, sound, concepts or playing music with Zoot? Or were your discussions purely based on non-musical friendship?

BH: No, I'm not a good communicator. Whatever Zoot wanted to talk about, that's what we talked about. It wasn't usually about music.

MV: You wrote a tune called "Zoot" for Stan Kenton's band, correct? How did that tune come about? Was it through a conversation with Stan or Zoot? What was your inspiration for it?



Zoot, Bill Holman and Stu Williamson - Hollywood 1964

BH: Stan told me that he wanted me to write a chart for Zoot. That's all the guidance he gave me. I didn't talk to Zoot about it because I was on a tight rope with Stan about writing. I wanted to write swing charts, but Stan wanted more progressive jazz. I wanted to swing more. I didn't want to go too far in my direction to make Stan unhappy, so I tried to find a middle groove. I had been trying to do that since Stan started buying charts from me. I wanted to satisfy us both if possible. But I was young and didn't really know. I wrote what I thought would be an attractive thing for Zoot and suitable for Stan. It went OK except when I was riding back from the first rehearsal with Stan where we played it, he said, "That was a good chart, but it was a little like Basie wasn't it?" And I responded, "Well, not knowingly but I know it had to swing because it's Zoot Sims." We let it lay there but I was very happy and proud to have Zoot playing a piece of mine. [Eight live recordings of the Kenton Band performing "Zoot" between July and November 1953 are available.]

PD: The next topic I have here is that you were with Les Brown with Zoot in March 19, 1959 on a recording session in Hollywood. Does that bring up any memories?

BH: I do remember doing those things. I wasn't a member of the band, but Les had been making some records with jazz players and Zoot was one of them. Another was Frank Rosolino. I wrote the charts for Zoot and Frank.

Those records never did really well. They were something a little different than what Les Brown fans were used to buying. [The session was released as "Jazz Song Book" on the Coral label and also featured clarinetist Buddy DeFranco.]

PD: I see in the Jazz Discography by Tom Lord that you arranged for a December 4-5, 1957 session for Gerry Mulligan's Octet which was released as "Gerry Mulligan Songbook Volume 1." It was a band with Zoot and Al Cohn, Lee Konitz, Gerry Mulligan, and no piano but Freddie Green on guitar.

BH: Yeah, originally the idea was to record that in L.A. When Dick Bock called me, that was the plan.

PD: Dick Bock from Pacific Jazz Records?

BH: Yeah. We were going to use bass and drums and no guitar. But one thing led to another and delayed it, so long that Gerry had to go back to New York and he took the charts with him and recorded it with all New York people. That made me happy because at the time I would rather listen to New York people than L.A. people. We added the guitar, which was probably Gerry's idea.

PD: It's five saxes, guitar, bass and drums: Lee Konitz, Allen Eager, Zoot and Al, Gerry Mulligan, Freddie Green on guitar, Henry Grimes on bass, and Dave Bailey on drums. [Al Cohn performed on tenor AND baritone saxophones!] That's exciting. For a lot of the sax music that Al wrote for just saxophones and rhythm section, like "The Sax Section" [LP recorded in 1956] and so many other things he did, here are Bill Holman arrangements of Gerry Mulligan tunes with those icons of saxophone. I imagine you were really in seventh heaven with that.

BH: Yeah, to work with Gerry's tunes and knowing that Gerry was going to be conducting the session and playing on it made it very attractive to me.

PD: Do you still have those arrangements or did they go to the Smithsonian?

BH: Gerry kept them. They could be in his collection in the Library of Congress.

PD: Something that you were very generous with was the music for the Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection Zoot Fest performance that Matt and Bill Dobbins conducted of "Hawthorne Nights." Can we skip forward just about 20 years from the session in 1957 for Gerry Mulligan in New York and head to Los Angeles in September of 1976? How did "Hawthorne Nights" come about?

BH: [American jazz impresario] Norman Granz had called me and wanted me to write an album for Basie. I got to know Norman at that time and thought that now's the time to hit him up for a Zoot album. I asked him about a record with Zoot and a big band, and he said, "I would love to do a record with Zoot, but not a big band."

Can you do it with a smaller band?" So I said, "Sure." I was going to jump at the chance to do it any way that I could. The name comes from a travelogue where they will say "Paris Nights" or something like that to sound mysterious. They use a name and add "nights" to generate some kind of atmosphere. I called it "Hawthorne Nights" because Zoot grew up in Hawthorne, California. So I was implying soft summer breezes and palm trees and dancing girls in Hawthorne, which never happened! I assembled a band and told Norman that Zoot and I figured out a tentative instrumentation that we both agreed on.

I'm not entirely happy with the record. The tempos were a little too fast and I thought the rhythm section was pressing too hard. But we got it done. In the process and during one of Zoot's solos I heard something wrong in the band, so I stopped the take. Norman took exception to this. It was probably the worst thing I could have done to stop the band while Zoot was playing. My experience as a conductor on a record date was that if you hear something wrong, you stop it so you can make it right. Norman was really offended by that. I have been told that after that, Norman was always talking about what a phony I was and what a bad arranger I was. But I got past that.

MV: Do you remember how you selected the tunes?

BH: Zoot had one that he wrote, "Dark Cloud." He sings that. I don't really remember the other tunes...

MV: "Main Stem," "More Than You Know," "Only a Rose," "Girl From Ipanema," "I Got It Bad," and there's another original of yours besides "Hawthorne Nights," called "Fillings."

BH: I think Zoot requested "Ipanema."

MV: Did you write "Fillings" specifically for this date? Or was it something from somewhere else?

BH: No, it was for the date. It was a takeoff of "Feelings" which was a big tune at that time. I called it "Fillings" as in a Lower Slobbovian version of "Feelings." I was thinking of the language spoken by the downtrodden residents in the fictitious country of Lower Slobbovia, one of the regions created by Al Capp for his hilarious hillbilly comic strip "Lil Abner" [published 1934-1977]. The residents had a mock Russian accent and were always changing vowels around, thus "Feelings" became "Fillings." [The profound political implications that Capp was communicating can be found online. Start with "Wikipedia Lower Slobbovia."]

PD: Oh, that's a great story! I remember around 1975 this Brazilian singer named Morris Albert had a hit with "Feelings." That's great!

Just to clarify the timeline here, you did the Count Basie LP called "I Told You So" which was recorded in January of 1976 and "Hawthorne Nights" was recorded eight months later in September of 1976.

BH: A word about that Basie album – one of the tunes I wrote on there I called "Told You So," which is the way that saying comes out a lot of the time. A lot of people don't bother saying, "I Told You So." They just say, "Told You So." That was my thinking. One day I get a call from Norman. He said, "About that tune, the saying is 'I Told You So.'" So I said, "Norman, in colloquial English sometimes we take words out and take shortcuts. That's how that sounds to me. 'I Told You So' sounds very formal and rehearsed." I couldn't sway him. So the record name came out as "I Told You So" and the tune itself stayed as "Told You So."

PD: You copyrighted it as "Told You So" so he couldn't change it?

BH: That's right.

PD: Who is Alfie as in "Blues for Alfie" that is on that same record?

BH: I was dating a woman named Ruth Price at the time [mid-1970s] and that was the name of her dog. [Ruth Price (b. 1938) continues to have a remarkable career in Los Angeles as a singer, lyricist, and founder/owner of the non-profit jazz club the Jazz Bakery, which she opened in 1992. In July 1994, she sang on three tracks on the CD "Herb Geller Plays the Al Cohn Songbook" by the Herb Geller Quartet, released in 1996 on the Hep label in England (Hep 2066). One of the tracks features her singing the lyrics she composed for Al Cohn's "High on You." In 2020 she carries on while presenting live jazz throughout Southern California, most recently in Santa Monica at the Ann & Jerry Moss Theater (Jerry Moss is the "M" in the legendary A & M Records). Bob Dorough & Dave Frishberg's CD "Who's on First?" was recorded live in Los Angeles at the Jazz Bakery in November 1999 for Blue Note Records with Ruth as the announcer. For more about Ruth, visit <https://jazzbakery.org/about-us>.]

PD: Johnny Mandel wrote a tune about Al Cohn called "Here's to Alvy" and I wasn't sure if it was a similar thing.

BH: Also, Mandel wrote a tune about Al called "El Cajon." That's a district out here in California. [When said with a Latin inflection] it almost sounds like Al's name.

PD: That's right and Dave Frishberg wrote lyrics for it. Speaking of Al, would you like to talk about him at all? I notice you arranged for Al on LP's for Woody Herman, such as "Third Herd" in 1954. Both of you also wrote for the Maynard Ferguson "Birdland" volume one and two in September of 1956. You were both arrangers on several recordings that you did not play on, which demonstrates your additional expertise at arranging while you were both tenor players at heart.

BH: I didn't know Al as well as I knew Zoot. I had heard about Al or read about him in Downbeat Magazine or other places. I listened to his writing a lot. He always gave me the feeling that I could do this. His writing always sounded so natural and unforced. To me it had a heavy Jewish content. F minor was his favorite key. He wrote several charts that I listened to a lot that were all in F minor. I got to know him when I went back [to New York] in 1960 to work with Gerry Mulligan and the Concert Jazz Band. He was such a wise man along with his great playing and writing. I was like being in heaven hanging around with those guys.

I heard that Al was a big W. C. Fields fan. So when he was playing a club out here I went up to him and with no introduction or anything I said, "Sneed Hearn." Without any hesitation he turns around and says, "Mahatma Kane Jeeves." [For these "unwashed" and neophyte interviewers, it was an illumination to find out that Sneed Hearn and Mahatma Kane Jeeves were but two of the bizarre names that W.C. Fields concocted for characters in his movies.]

PD: That reminds me of the joke about the coat check person in the Indian restaurant, "Mahatma Coat."

BH: [laughs] I've never heard that! Mahatma Coat, oh man, that made my day!

I made Al laugh one time in Germany. A group of us were walking around in Cologne. We were doing a production for the radio network.

PD: Featuring Al, right?

BH: Yeah, we were wandering around not paying attention to where we were going. And eventually somebody says, "Where are we?" and I say, "Right here!" And that broke Al up and I was very proud of that.

PD: Our dear departed friend Wolfgang Knittel from Delaware Water Gap transcribed your arrangements from that date and we have some titles here: "Some Other Spring," "Woody 'N You," "Autumn Leaves," "High On You," "Good Bait," and "Love For Sale." I'm glad you mentioned that date featuring both Al Cohn and Sal Nistico.

BH: Another thing about that production was that I had not been playing much. The producer suggested I bring my tenor and play a bit. I'm thinking, "Me? Play with Al and Sal?" It sounded like a terrible idea but he insisted. So I went and did it anyway and didn't sound as good as they did but I did it. I loved both of those guys. It was a real knockout to work with them for a few weeks.

PD: We were able to play some of those arrangements adjusted for Wolfe's local big band here, JARO [Jazz Artists Repertory Orchestra]. Wolfe used one French horn, four saxes, trombone, bass trombone, three trumpets and rhythm section.

BH: So he transcribed the charts from that production?

PD: Yeah, Al was living here and Wolfgang worshipped you. Wolfe would get up every day and arrange for the jazz festival we do every September in Delaware Water Gap. He would transcribe a year's worth [a 45-minute set] of pieces he wanted to play with his band. It is amazing the output he produced. I used to joke he would take the day after the festival off and the day after that would start the arranging for 363 more days until the next festival.

It looks like the WDR gig was in Cologne, Germany in 1987 [WDR is the name of the renown jazz radio orchestra in residence since 1946 at the West German Broadcasting Corporation headquarters.]. Was Mel Lewis there with you for that gig?

BH: Oh yeah!

PD: "Tenor Reunion" they called it [June 12, 1987, which was eight months before Al's death]. The tunes were "Pilgrim's Pride," "Good Bait," "Woody 'N You," Al Cohn's "High On You," "Autumn Leaves," "Love For Sale," and "Moon of Manakoora." [This project also featured Sal Nistico, a tenor saxophonist, and like Al, a Woody Herman Thundering Herd alumnus.]

BH: I have to comment about Mel Lewis being there. He was on most of my productions. The band had a percussionist, but often they had to hire a drummer to come over from the states to play for the two weeks. I was tight with Mel, and we got him on almost all of our productions. It was really a help. He was just so musical and able to control the band and was able to help me with his musicality. He could offer punctuation points as the piece transitioned, and he could remember it. People often talk about Buddy Rich as being an "instant sight-reader" ... Mel could do that, too. Just once through a piece and he could remember all of it. He had a very good idea of the chart after one run-through. We were also friends and I enjoyed the companionship.

PD: He was on Kenton's Orchestra several months with you. I know he was there after you for the "Cuban Fire!" LP [May 1956]. You two go back such a long way.

Do you have any comments about Phil Woods? He was so close to all of you and he is one of the founders of our Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection.

BH: Well there's no need to talk about Phil's playing! Everybody knows what he can do. He was a really energetic tough taskmaster. I remember there was a break on one of the tunes and Phil played a solo break that was a little bit out and the whole band flubbed the re-entrance. We stopped and I told the band something about this and that, and I told Phil, "Please be kind," meaning please help us out a little bit on the breaks. All Phil said was, "Pay attention!" Well that was that!

PD: Was this when you arranged for recording sessions that Phil played on for Jackie Cain [the “Bits and Pieces” LP, recorded in March 1957] or for Charlie Barnet [the “More Charlie Barnet” LP, recorded in September 1958]?

BH: Oh no, this was in Germany in Cologne [1989].

PD: So this was when you did some arrangements featuring Phil for the WDR?

BH: Yeah, I did a lot of things over there.

PD: I didn’t know there was a date specifically with Phil.

BH: Yeah, I think there were a couple of them. That’s where I met Phil. I didn’t know him before that.

MV: Did you write anything specifically for him? Or was he playing pre-existing charts on this date?

BH: No, I wrote all these for him. I called him and we talked about tunes.

PD: I have the tune list here now: Phil’s tune “Quill,” “Round Midnight,” “Speak Low,” “Springfield Nights” Parts 1-3, “We’ll Be Together Again,” and “When the Sun Comes Out.” Was “Springfield Nights” the same type of reference as “Hawthorne Nights” since Hawthorne was where Zoot grew up and Springfield [Massachusetts] was where Phil grew up?

BH: Yes it was. I don’t remember much about that concert.

MV: I’m wondering if “Speak Low” was a different arrangement than the one from your earlier big band recording. Did you arrange that more than once?

BH: Yeah, it was different.

MV: If we could switch topics now, I was curious about some of your writing and education background. You speak about Gerry Mulligan a lot. As far as writing and arranging, who were your major influences? You reference Mulligan in terms of form, but who were your three major influences? What major things did you pick up from people that helped shape you as a composer?

BH: There were a few people that I knew about. I didn’t get any direct musical ideas from them, but I was a big fan of the early Basie band in the ‘30s and ‘40s. I didn’t know who the arrangers were but I thought they were really great. As it turns out a lot of those charts were head charts that the band made up themselves. I knew about Eddie Sauter [iconic arranger] from the one record he made for Benny Goodman [probably recorded in 1940]. That stood out to me. Gerry had a big hit with Gene Krupa’s band in 1947 and that thing lasted on the radio for a couple of years called “Disc Jockey Jump.” It was played all over the place. That was my first exposure to Gerry. I liked that chart and made a note of him, too. He came to L.A. in 1951 and that’s when he and Stan connected.

Gene Roland, who wrote a lot of music for Stan, was a good friend of mine and one night at my house I was playing some records for him. I put on a thing that was a dub of a chart I wrote when I was at Westlake College of Music. It was a kind of linear thing. He jumped up and said, “I think this is what Stan is looking for!” Apparently Stan was talking to Gene about changing the style of the band a little bit, things like getting away from harmonic structures and leaning more towards melody. Gene took this record to Stan while I was on the road with Charlie Barnet and he told him my story. Stan liked it and they arranged for Stan and me to meet. When I got back in town I went to his place and we talked about music. He suggested I write a couple of pieces for the band. I said, “Sure.” I went home and wrote some charts immediately.

I was so impressed with this situation that I over-wrote the charts. They really didn’t hang together. I took them to rehearsal and we made a mutual decision that they weren’t what he was looking for. I thought to myself, “Well, that cooks me with Kenton.” He was rehearsing a new band [late 1951-early 1952], and they needed a new tenor player so I auditioned and got the gig as the tenor player. So I said, “Oh good, Stan and I are back on again!”

Once I was on the band I couldn’t think of anything to write. I kept thinking about the difference between Stan’s conception and mine. I couldn’t figure out a way to make it work at both ends. So I didn’t write anything for a long time. Stan kept encouraging me saying, “Holman, when are you going to write something?”

Several months went by - this is where Gerry comes in again. He had written eight or 10 charts for the band. Some of them were hot jazz and some of them were danceable. We played quite a few of the dance charts every night. I got to study his voicings, harmony, and the form of his charts. I was getting acquainted with what jazz charts sounded like. That gave me the confidence that if he could do it, then I will try.

I wrote a piece for Don Bagley called “Bags” [recorded 19 times, the first of which was a live recording on January 15, 1953, followed later in the month with the studio recording]. Stan liked it and said to keep on writing. I started writing more and more, and more of them were accepted and the band liked them.



Zoot Sims, Joe Maini and Bill Holman. Date and location unknown. Bill Holman said that Joe Maini “was an impossible person, yet he had impeccable jazz ‘time’ both on alto and tenor saxophones. Johnny Mandel hired Joe for a recording session and proclaimed him as the best lead alto ever.” [Joe Maini was extremely close to comedian Lenny Bruce. Maini died at age 34 in 1964 from a firearms accident. For an enlightening 2010 interview with his daughter, Tina, Google “jazzwax.com The Truth About Joe Maini.”]

MV: You mentioned you had this chance to study Mulligan's writing. Were you studying scores or parts, or was this purely you listening on the gig and paying attention to what was happening?

BH: Just by playing and hearing what everything sounded like and getting an idea for how the form felt.

MV: You studied composition at the Westlake College of Music, right? Is that where you got your initial understanding of writing and harmony?

BH: Yeah, I studied arranging there. The organizer of the school envisioned turning out proficient commercial musicians that could play or sing in any kind of band. He said one of the best doubles you could take up is to sing the third part in a vocal group. There were a few of us into jazz and we didn't want to hear about any of that! That was the aim of the school, though. What usually happens is the jazz group will form as a sub group, which is what we did. The head of the school did not conceive of musicians being composers, he just wanted a well-rounded student.

PD: Where there any teachers at Westlake that you feel worked out well for you?

BH: There was a teacher named David Robertson from Massachusetts. He was a genius. He could hear things and knew ahead of time what you were doing when he heard one of your pieces. He was great and so far ahead of us that a lot of times we didn't know what he was talking about. I imagine private lessons with him would have been a real plus. We were all on the G.I. Bill and we didn't want to go through the red tape of getting another teacher involved since we were already enrolled in a certain schedule.

I eventually ended up studying privately with Russell Garcia. He wrote an arranging book that is geared toward being a successful working musician ["The Professional Arranger-Composer," a compilation of Garcia's assignments from the late 1940s at Westlake, published in 1954]. He didn't talk about jazz much. But later it turns out that he did have a jazz conception all his own, it just wasn't mainstream. Those were my two favorite guys.

MV: So it seems as far as jazz writing goes, you were relying solely upon your life experience and what you could learn from these situations, not necessarily formal instruction.

BH: Oh yeah. We all had a lot of jazz records and that's where you learn a lot of stuff. As far as I knew nobody else in L.A. was really trying to write jazz inspired music. Everybody in L.A. was concerned with studio work. I was kind of a loner.

PD: The Westlake College of Music in Hollywood was very new when you were there. It opened in 1945 and was the first jazz academic institution in the country,

opening around the same time as the Schillinger House of Music [started in Boston in 1945, becoming the Berklee School of Music in 1954] to offer a college diploma that offered a curriculum in jazz. It became a prototype for jazz education in other schools.

BH: Yeah, I went there in early 1948 for a couple of years.

MV: I always wanted to know your thoughts on the process of writing and arranging back in a time when there were no computers or communication. You had to write a chart and send it in the mail or take it to a rehearsal without really hearing it. The process was much slower and I imagine more difficult. Can you say anything about that?

BH: Well, things haven't changed that much for me. I don't write on a computer so I can't play things back. I still write with a pencil and a large eraser! That was one of the reasons I started my own band. I wanted to hear my music not too long after I wrote it. I wanted to hear it at the right tempo! I would send things off to bands, and I would hear it two years later on the record, and they were invariably too fast. Some of the leaders would make adjustments, like Woody [Herman]. He felt no embarrassment about changing a chart or adding something to it. Stan didn't do that, but he always played the tempos wrong. So I started my own band to hear my music the way I wanted it. But the actual writing part is pretty much the same.

[Six weeks later, on June 11, 2020, Bill told Pat that Woody Herman performed Bill's 1953 big band composition "Prez Conference" live for over a year, yet when recording it for the LP "The 3 Herds" on May 21, 1954, Woody changed the title to "Mulligan Tawny" and inserted a Gerry Mulliganesque introduction with a prominent baritone sax part. There are two Al Cohn classics on the same LP. In addition, 10 years later, when Woody Herman recorded Bill's very up-tempo and rollicking arrangement of "After You've Gone," Woody added an "interesting" and very slow and mournful clarinet melody at the beginning and end of the arrangement. As documented by several sources, during this mid-day recording session on November 22, 1963 at Phil Ramone's A & R Recording Studio on the 4th floor of 112 W. 48th Street in New York, Woody and his band members were informed that President Kennedy had just been assassinated. After recording Bill Chase's eerily mournful arrangement of "A Taste of Honey," it was decided to end the session, whereupon several band members went downstairs to the legendary Jim & Andy's jazz bar to process the tragedy.]

MV: Do you have any formal piano training?

BH: I use the piano, not exclusively but to check voicings and work out harmonic changes. I'm a lousy piano player. I never learned how to play but I got by.

MV: I want to ask you about two of my favorite records: “The Fabulous Bill Holman” and “In a Jazz Orbit.” I’m curious how those arrangements came about for those records.

BH: “In a Jazz Orbit” [recorded February 11, 1958, for the Andex label] was my second experience with a producer for Bethlehem Records. I was on a lot of small band dates for him, and we talked about doing a big band album and he gave me the go ahead. He said to write the music and we would discuss recording it after I wrote it. So I wrote and wrote and called him to ask when we could record. He said, “Well, things are a little shaky now, can we put it off for a little bit?” I reluctantly agreed and it went on and on and never got better. It became apparent that he wasn’t going to record it.

This had happened once before with my first record, “The Fabulous Bill Holman” [recorded April 25, 1957, for the Coral label]. They promised and then never recorded it. With that one, drummer Shelly Manne had an arrangement with a label to make four jazz records and picked my band to make one of the four. So that was in 1957.

In 1958, I had all these other charts ready and went looking for a label. I was doing some vocal charts for a label, and I asked them one day if they were interested and they seemed like they were. They came to a rehearsal and they loved it. They said the band would sell itself, so we recorded it.

Looking back at the personnel for those records, it looks like an all-star band, but I didn’t think of it that way. They were just guys that I knew and people who’s playing I liked and who could handle a recording date. It turned out well and it’s one of my favorites too.

MV: How and why did you prefer three trombones and later on add the bass trombone?

BH: Well it was just the norm at the time. That’s really it. Four trumpets and three trombones.

MV: Was this before or after Kenton had a larger brass section? Was he the first to have 10 brass?

BH: Yeah.

MV: Was he doing that around the same time everybody else was using seven?

BH: I think he had 10 when I joined the band. That was ’52. But jazz bands didn’t have bass trombones then.

MV: On the subject of writing, do you approach writing in any specific way, or is it just a matter of sitting down waiting to see what comes to you? Do you work on writing? I often read of people with formulas and pitch manipulation but from what I have read it seems you just write what you hear.

BH: I never had a system. A lot of times I just imagined playing a line. Boy, I thought of all kinds of things while you were asking the question and now I can’t think of any!

I just sat there and sang to myself. Some people showed me how to write a curved line on the staff paper as a guide and then filling it up with notes or something. But that didn’t work out much. A lot of my earlier writing was generated by my time as a player. I imagined melodic lines with my fingers on the horn.

Russ Garcia made me very aware of form and I’ve thought a lot about that. Not a waltz form or dance form, but the form of the music itself. How will it have a climax and an end and a curve? I try to keep form in mind and every day I would review what I wrote so far to keep myself in some kind of groove. Your mind can change quite a bit from day to day depending on what you think about, what you worry about, and how you feel. I became conscious of that and tried to make one day flow into the next day. Form is a big item for me.

MV: So if we look at two different records of yours, “In a Jazz Orbit” versus something like “World Class Music” with “St. Thomas” and those arrangements [recorded November 30-December 1, 1987, on JVC records], would you say that evolution was a natural occurrence or did you really try to grow and change with the world and the sound of jazz? Because you’re writing has really evolved yet it still sounds like you.

BH: I listened mostly to players that I liked. I liked to keep an improvisatory quality to my music. I want it to feel like a bunch of soloists. I would say the progression was natural. Even though I was listening to small groups, the soloists were my inspiration. As that music changed, so did I. Eventually I started listening to other music. I discovered the Bartok String Quartets and that turned me around. I imagine some of that crept into my decisions. I want the lead line to feel like whoever is playing it is just making it up. There’s a limit to how far you can take this of course, but I just want to make sure it doesn’t get too stiff.

PD: What did you like about Bartok?

BH: Oh, the music! [laughs] The quartets were just mind blowing . . . his music for strings and percussion and celeste as well. It was very much like jazz to me. It was people’s music dressed up behind some knowledge and it was just lovely. I first heard the string quartets on the road with Kenton because I roomed with Bill Russo and he had a portable record player. He had an album of Bartok String Quartets and it was just unbelievable to hear it at an early age musically. I didn’t get started in music until after I was out of the Navy. [Phil Woods often studied and referenced Bartok’s music, especially the six volumes of “Mikrokosmos” for piano and the six string quartets.]

PD: At the end of WWII?

BH: Yeah, July 1942 to July 1946.

PD: Did you do any music in the Navy?

BH: No, I was in officer training school for three quarters of it. Then when the war was over I flunked out of officer training school and became an ordinary seaman and served on a cruiser for three months. It was fun, I liked being on a ship and sailing on the ocean. I was close to home as well. Every few weeks I could visit home.

PD: Bartok died a month after WWII ended. He was composing right into the 1940s. He was alive during your early years in music. He included elements of folk music in his writing.

BH: It's unbelievable how he could die penniless after writing so much great music. It just doesn't seem like that could happen.

PD: And his funeral was attended by only 10 people! Speaking of the folk aspect of Bartok, when you are composing, does it always have to have the dance aspect? So much of big band music started out as dance music. Were you concerned about that or more of jazz as an art form? You also grew up in the swing era in the '30s and '40s.

BH: I've never thought about dance music. That seems to come normally to me. The bands like Basie that I have been inspired by seem to pick medium tempos for pieces and I liked it, so I would use it. I don't remember anyone asking me for a specific dance chart. Stan had a bunch of dance charts, but after he liked my writing, he put me in the category above dance charts. Stan had different levels to categorize arrangers. I graduated from "rookie" directly into "jazz charts."

PD: Bill you have been incredible for the better part of two hours!

MV: This has been a great experience. I think it is particularly interesting that for someone as influential and prolific as yourself, there is really no literal rhyme or reason to how you do what you do, which further illustrates how special your writing is. Some of the best writing is the stuff that "just happens."

PD: It is really great to hear you speak about all of these things.

BH: It's always a pleasure to talk about music, especially to people that know what I'm talking about! ■

THE CHARLES CHRISTOPHER PARKER CENTENNIAL YEAR CONTINUES: BIRD WITH THE HERD, KENTON, & THE ORCHESTRA



On August 29, 2020 the world commemorated Charlie "Bird" Parker's 100th birthday. On that special day, I called renown woodwind virtuoso Jerry Dodgion to wish him a happy "Bird's" Centennial, then said, "Oh, by the way, Jerry, happy 88th birthday to you! Your great friend Phil Woods would have told you that 'you don't look a day over 87 and you're an 88-year-old in the body of an 87-year-old!'" Jerry has been a longtime huge friend of the ACMJC and has one of the richest journeys in jazz history. It's poetic justice that this remarkable artist and person shares Bird's date of birth.

I thought it might be of great interest to discuss live recordings of Bird improvising on big band arrangements by additional great "principals" of the ACMJC. These remarkable collaborations with three iconic road bands feature Parker on arrangements by Al Cohn (AC), Bill Holman, and Johnny Mandel.

July 22, 1951

Woody Herman and the Thundering Herd – Municipal Arena, Kansas City, MO

K.C. native Charlie Parker (age 30) was home visiting his mother and behaving well, five days after the birth of his daughter Pree. He was in great shape and even attended a rehearsal, according to saxophonist Dick Hafer. It was Hafer's first performance with Herman... what a baptism by fire! Bird and the Herd were together for four nights. On one of the evenings, future Delaware Water Gap resident and Third Herd lead trombonist extraordinaire Urbie Green (age 24) recorded nine selections on his new-fangled portable reel-to-reel tape recorder. One of the tracks was AC's early 1947 (age 21) composition "The Goof and I." It was originally recorded in several small-group settings until AC's big band arrangement made its way into Buddy Rich's "book" (band repertoire) later that year. Woody Herman would make the gold-standard recording of it on December 27 with his important "Four Brothers" sax section, which included Zoot Sims and Stan Getz. AC would join this historic section about a month later.

AC's piece would become a permanent fixture in the Herd's repertoire, as would many of AC's works for "The Chopper's" big band. The CD of the concert is called "Bird with the Herd," released in 1996 on Drive Archive [DE2-42442].

Who was "The Goof"? AC gave his frequent sax section-mate baritone saxophonist Harvey Lavine that nickname in 1946 because he was always forgetting things and often late. Only Lavine's family knew that he was this way due to his extended time as a bazooka-wielding soldier in horrific WWII battles such as the Battle of the Bulge, where he endured launching and dodging shells for hours and days at a time. As Paul Harvey used to end his radio segments, "And now you know... the rest of the story."

In the early 1970s the Main-Man label released the concert as "Bird Flies with 'The Herd' - Charlie Parker & That Thunderin' Herd/The Inspired Trumpet Artistry of Clifford Brown" [BFWHCB617]. The track that's included as Al Cohn's arrangement of "Sonny Speaks" is incorrect. It's actually the above-discussed "The Goof and I."

February 22, 1953

THE Orchestra

- Joe Timer, Musical Director

- Club Kavakos, Washington, D.C.

In 1951, D.C.-area musicians wanted to start a big band, so they approached radio disc jockey Willis Conover. Within weeks, "Willis Conover Presents THE Orchestra" was formed. Drummer Joe Theimer (aka Joe Timer) became the musical director. They backed many famed guest artists over several years. When Bird appeared in 1953, two of the eight big band works recorded and released on the "Washington Concerts" CD that I'll mention in a bit are of special interest. The arrangement of the 1930 composition "Fine and Dandy" is credited to AC; however, when listening to it, the arrangement is identical to the one recorded by Buddy Rich and His Orchestra on July 20, 1948 at the Palladium in Hollywood.

Playing bass trumpet with Rich on that date was Johnny Mandel (age 22). In an October 2008 interview on JazzWax.com, Johnny states, "I remember with Buddy's band, I had written Fine and Dandy with the intention of it being a pit opener [for movie theaters]." When I visited Johnny Mandel at his Malibu cliffside home on February 17, 2020 (age 94), I played the 1953 recording in Washington with Bird and he insisted that it was AC's arrangement. So the wonderful mystery continues!

The second track of special interest is Johnny Mandel's arrangement of the 1927 composition "Thou Swell." During my visit, we listened to this. I didn't tell him what it was. Within a few seconds of hearing the band's statement of the melody, he said, "I wrote this [arrangement]!" Upon completion of the melody, Bird makes a startling flourish-like entrance, and within two seconds Johnny exclaimed, "That's Bird!" He also spoke of the rampant use of potent narcotics in use at the time and how he and a few colleagues were the sole abstainers. Johnny had originally done this arrangement for Buddy Rich. A recording exists from July 24, 1948, recorded at the same engagement previously mentioned at the Palladium in Hollywood. An interesting connection is that trombonist Rob Swope and trumpeter Charlie Walp are on both of the 1948 Buddy Rich in Hollywood recordings and also the 1953 Bird in Washington concert, most likely because of their D.C. roots.

The 1953 Washington, D.C. event was recorded and produced by pianist/composer/arranger Bill Potts (1928-2005). For many years, Bill Potts attended the COTA Jazz Festival in Delaware Water Gap, donating sheet music to the COTA Cats student big band. He is best known for his seminal arrangements for the LP "The Jazz Soul of Porgy & Bess," recorded January 1959, featuring AC, Zoot Sims, and Phil Woods. Bill and his daughter graciously donated a copy of the "Charlie Parker - The Washington Concerts" CD [Blue Note 7243 5 22626 2 5].

Two years after leading THE Orchestra and playing drums behind Bird, Joe Timer died (age 32), two months after Charlie Parker.

February 25, 1954

The Stan Kenton Orchestra

- Civic Auditorium, Portland, OR

Stan Kenton organized two tours called A Festival of Modern American Jazz, featuring his orchestra and several well-known jazz performers, including Stan Getz and Dizzy Gillespie. The first tour started in November 1953 and lasted a month. Before the second half of the tour started, Stan Getz was arrested on drug charges and Bird was invited to replace him. Good friend of the ACMJC, Bill Holman (age 26), had recently ended his two-year stint on tenor saxophone with Kenton, yet Stan had commissioned Bill to write several arrangements for this tour and subsequent recording sessions. Of seven selections from that evening, Dizzy Gillespie was featured on four and Bird was featured on three. Two of Bird's three features, "Cherokee" and "My Funny Valentine," were arranged by Bill. On July 20, 2020, I spoke with Bill and asked him about having Bird featured on two of his arrangements. He said, "To have Bird perform my arrangements was a career highlight. I presented bare frameworks for him to blow on." A little over a year later, Bird would be dead. Amen.

The above performances are collected on a single CD: "Charlie Parker: Stan Kenton, Woody Herman, Joe Timer – Live with the Big Bands," released in 2007 on the Jazz Factory Label [JFCD 22883] located in Andorra, the tiny, independent principality situated between France and Spain in the Pyrenees mountains. Wonder if Bird ever performed there?

John Edward Hasse, Curator Emeritus of American Music at the Smithsonian, wrote an excellent six-minute read about several Charlie Parker entities. Search "medium.com Charlie Parker at 100: Commemorating His Centennial."

After we lost AC's musical sidekick/partner Zoot Sims in 1985 (age 59), Phil Woods would often write "Zoot, pray for us!" This begs a supremely deserved mention of recordings of Zoot and/or AC with Bird:

- Zoot might have been with Bird on a Machito and His Afro-Cubans recording, circa 1949.
- April 3, 1950, Zoot & AC (both age 24) recorded with the Gene Roland Orchestra, which included Parker (age 29). This bigger-than-big big band had 27 musicians, including alto sax phenom Joe Maini (age 20) and future important Pocono resident and Mt. Airy Lodge bandleader Bob Newman. There are seven Gene Roland arrangements including some alternate takes. This session has been released twice: (1) "Gene Roland Band: The Band That Never Was" on *Spotlite Records [E-SPJ141]*; (2) "Bird's Eyes, Volume 15 – Charlie Parker" on *Philology [W845-2]*. The *Philology* label was founded in Italy in 1987 by Paolo Piangiarelli and is named in honor of Phil Woods.
- Zoot was in the Charlie Parker Tentet at the Howard Theatre in Washington, D.C. on October 18, 1952, a few days before Zoot turned 27 and a mere four months before Bird's above-mentioned Club Kavakos recording.

Zoot & Johnny, pray for us! ■

FAREWELL TO THE GREAT MANDEL!

By Patrick Dorian



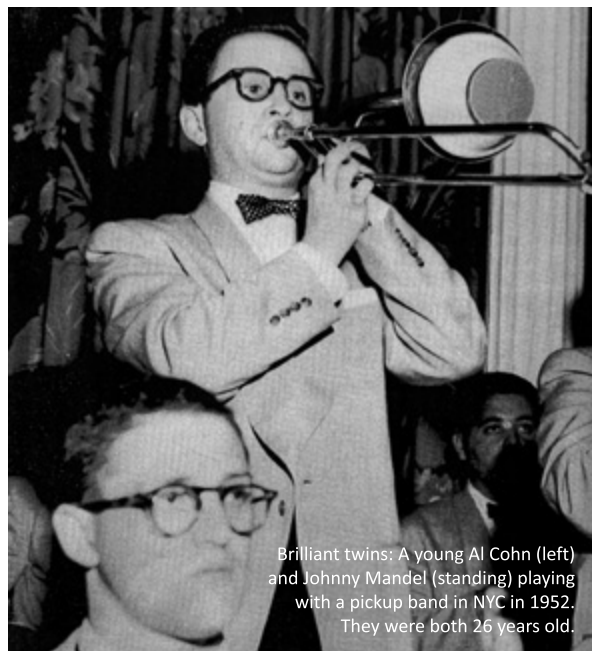
Johnny and Pat singing through his arrangement of "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year" (Malibu, February 16, 2020).
Photo by Suzie Katayama

Johnny Mandel might have left this astral plane, but he didn't leave our deep consciousness on June 29, 2020, about the same time as his colleague Carl Reiner.

Carl was 98 and Johnny was a mere 94. In the first part of the 1950s, they worked together in New York as featured actor and composer respectively on one of the first great television programs, "Your Show of Shows." This variety program had a direct connection to the Pocono Mountains via director Max Liebman, who directed weekend productions at Tamiment Resort. By the late 1950s, Johnny would end up in Los Angeles and Carl would follow suit several years later. As Johnny's Oscar nomination for his iconic score and song in "The Sandpiper" (1965) was morphing into a win, he was composing the score for "The Russians Are Coming, the Russians Are Coming" (sound familiar since 2016?), which co-starred Reiner. Johnny's love theme from this movie, "The Shining Sea," featured lyrics by Peggy Lee. Listen to Irene Kral's vocal on the soundtrack LP (not heard in the film) and just try not to melt.

In January 2011, David Liebman gave Mary and me front-row seats at Jazz at Lincoln Center to witness him receiving the nation's highest jazz award, the NEA Jazz Master Fellowship. Johnny was also receiving this prestigious honor that night. After the event, we went backstage to thank and congratulate Dave. All of a sudden, THE Johnny Mandel was heading right at me with a purpose, so I moved aside to get out-the-way! He got right in my face and said, "I read each issue of The NOTE cover to cover at least once and I feel like we're neighbors! I really enjoy your column." How could he recognize me from the tiny thumbnail photo in each issue? What an eye . . . what a mind! As time went on, I started getting messages from other people that Johnny wanted me to call him to talk . . . about Al, Zoot, Phil, Basie, Bob Dorough et al. I didn't feel worthy, but we became phone buds for years, me trying to remember each detail of each conversation, especially the humor, oftentimes ribald as all getout.

As I wrote in the previous issue of this journal, it was my honor to advocate for Johnny for the Grammy Legend award, whether he wanted it or not! Mary and I had an unforgettable visit with him in May 2019 at the Malibu cliffside home and I returned in February 2020 to celebrate the life of his dear Martha,



Brilliant twins: A young Al Cohn (left) and Johnny Mandel (standing) playing with a pickup band in NYC in 1952. They were both 26 years old.

who left us at the end of 2019. We spoke about a few of the usual topics and ended up scat singing in unison his entire famous burning jazz waltz arrangement for the Andy Williams recording of "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year," released five weeks before JFK's assassination. It was another cherished trip. He would be gone a little over four months later.

This November, we'll be thinking of and listening to the music of lifelong friends Johnny Mandel on Monday the 23rd and Al Cohn on Tuesday the 24th. It'll be their 95th.

FOR A TRIO OF FINE TRIBUTES, SEARCH:

NYTimes - Johnny Mandel, 94, "Writer of Memorable Movie Scores, Is Dead" (the photo of Johnny on the Oscar stage with a 27-year-old Natalie Wood is precious)

WashPost – "Johnny Mandel, Composer Who Gave 'M.A.S.H.' Its Theme Song, Dies At 94"

LATimes – "Johnny Mandel, Hollywood Film Composer Who Wrote Theme to Mash, Dies"

Johnny's love theme from this movie, "The Shining Sea," featured lyrics by Peggy Lee. Listen to Irene Kral's vocal on the soundtrack LP (not heard in the film) and just try not to melt. ■

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Visit the website at ctsimages.com.

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**COLEMAN
HAWKINS**

ZOOT SIMS
1963

Coleman Hawkins listens to Zoot Sims
warming up backstage at Newport
Jazz Festival in 1963.

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