JACKIE McLEAN

Location: N/A
Date: April 10, 1996

Talk to me about bebop. Help us understand the excitement.

Well, I, when I think of, of that term bebop, what the music has meant to me, it's a style that evolved out of Lester Young's solos and out of Lester Young's concept of, of the music. Of course, it's unfair to just give Lester Young credit alone; there's always Coleman Hawkins and this music is overlapping. Louis Armstrong has made a contribution, of course, Sidney Bechet. But I think the sound of the music that we call bebop comes right out of Lester Young's mid-30 solos, between 1936 and so on, and Basie's band and other recordings that he made. And I think that had an influence on a lot of different musicians and also Charlie Christian, his guitar solos and Jimmy Blanton, his bass solos with Duke Ellington. These solos have many of the qualities of what would later be called bebop.

Well what does it sound like?

Well, it's like... triplets and...

Now, feel free...

OK. I'm going to, I'm going to explain it. OK.

You can give me all the personalities...

OK. OK.

Alright. Go ahead. So what did it sound like?

Well, you know, like during the big band period, you had phrases like da-da-da-da-duh-dee-duh-da-um-da-dit-da-da-duh-doo-da-da-duh-duh-da-da-da, you know, going that, that kind of, of 2 feel, you know? But, but Lester Young kind of extended the, the ideas, if I may take the saxophone and, and

give you an idea of, of what he played. His introduction to "I Never Knew" was like (plays music). You know, he started the melody, "I never knew..," but before that, he plays this phrase: doodle-oo-dit-do-day ba-doodle-day-dah sthoo-ba doo-ba-doodly-da-doodle-dwee-dit. He'd been playing phrases like that since the 30, you know. Of course, this recording was made in the early 40. But if you listen back to Billie Holiday's recordings that features Lester Young's solos on it, you'll hear, back as early as 1937, '38, '39, his style was already developing beyond what music sounded like before that. There were a lot of eighth notes: da da da da da da da da, and the 2 feel was beginning to disappear and a lot of triplets and grace notes, you know, and, and a different sound, you know. Not as much vibrato, like Coleman Hawkins had a great deal of vibrato in his tone, deep, velvety vibrato. Lester's sound was much lighter and, and less vibrato. So, this had an influence on Charlie Parker and many other people and, and so, I guess Charlie Parker, I guess would be the one that, that took that idea and extended it even further. And then, of course, when he met Dizzy and Thelonius in New York, they began this wonderful movement.

Go ahead.

(plays music) Like that. Yeah. "I Never Knew."

You said there were a lot of qualities in the sound of bebop that came out of the world that people lived in...?

Well, you know, I've, I've always felt that the world around the musician has a great influence on what he produces musically. And with the acceleration of the technology in World War II, you know, the propeller plane developed into the jet plane, and of course, the atomic bomb, and everything sped up, and so did the music. The music began to accelerate. And when Charlie Parker arrived in New York and 1939 and took a job washing dishes in a club so that he could be close to the great master, Art Tatum, and listen to Art Tatum play the piano, it was, it was these ideas that Bird was looking for, I believe. And that coupled with his own concept, because you can hear in the early recordings of Charlie with Jay McShann, that he is already playing this style by 1940, '41. And even earlier, because you can hear that in his first recording that he did by himself in a little booth when he was 17 years old. So, I think that by this time, when Bird met Thelonius Monk, and, and, and met Dizzy Gillespie, that the 3 of them had these ideas. And of course, Bird had the language together, had the concept. Thelonius is like, his contribution is really not bebop, what I think, Thelonius plays. It's more about stride piano, the blues, church music, and, and differences that extend in to what we call the avant garde, or free form, because I think Thelonius is not only one of the founders of the bebop movement, but I think he's an early founder of the avant garde free form music that came later, in 1958, '59. And so, and then Dizzy, of course, being such a great virtuoso on the trumpet, picked up when he and Bird worked in Earl Hines band together they would practice together and work out these ideas and I think that they

wanted to play something that the older musicians couldn't play. I think they wanted to get up on the stage and play ideas and, and keys and, and on chord progressions that would be difficult for other musicians to, to stand up and play.

You were going to talk about the older musicians...?

Right.

... the young people...?

Right. So, so you had Dizzy and, and, and Bird and Monk - they were doing these jam sessions at Menton's. And like, so say, there were not, all the older musicians now weren't qualified. I mean, you take someone like Coleman Hawkins and Ben Webster, Don Byas, those musicians can play anything. Don Byas can play as fast as anybody and play as great as anybody. But there were other musicians that maybe weren't up to par that would always want to sit in and Bird and them didn't want them to, to take up the time on the stage, 'cause they were working out their project at this time. And, and not as a, they didn't sit down like a corporation, say "Let's work this music out," it just was happening. So what they would do was play some things that, fast things and, and different chord progressions that would keep these guys from coming and sitting in. And so, I think that's when the music began to develop along these lines that, you know, of course... The music also had an urban sound to it. To me, the energy of New York City has something to do with the development then of the music, you know, it... Of course, the blues that Bird brought from Kansas City and the blues that comes up from the South with the musicians that come up from New Orleans and other places in the South - all of this is mixed into this great soup of music. But it took the energy of New York City and the speed of the, acceleration of the technology after the war and, of course, Bird's great genius and Dizzy's great genius and Bud Powell, you have to definitely mention him, that made this music began to grow and develop in New York City.

So...

...at that time.

... you were a young fellow at this time...

Right.

So, how young were you when you heard this music...?

OK. Well, I first heard Lester Young at my, at like at my uncle's house and he played a record for me. In fact, I heard Coleman Hawkins play "The Man I Love" on recording and I heard Lester Young do "I Never Knew" the same day. And it was, it was, both of those guys captured me, but Lester really got

my ear and then it was, it was shortly after that that when I was working in my step-dad's record shop that I heard Charlie Parker on recording. And that and Dexter Gordon, of course, and that really made me decide that I wanted to play this music. But one of the things that I learned early on, I think Sonny Rollins and Andy Kirk, Jr. and several of the other saxophone players and musicians that lived in that neighborhood on Sugar Hill, we all knew that we had to practice and work very hard because the music was not easy. You had to have great speed, you have to, had to have good energy and dexterity, and a good knowledge of chord progressions and theory in order to, to play this music. Of course, early on, I had the speed and the sound. The theory, I more or less played by ear and got away with doing that for a number of years until I went with Miles's band and it was Miles that more or less became my teacher and, and forced me in a way, to stop approaching this music as a little boy and approach it as a, a man with putting some deep study into learning how to play progressions and chords and learn how to play the piano and things like that.

Well give us an example of the speed and the elements that went into this music.

OK. Charlie Parker was, is, some of his ideas would be at 2 or 3 different speeds, depending on how he wanted to phrase it, he can take an idea like these, this is one of his ideas, like: (plays music), like that, but he could also play that very fast: (plays music), like that. And it required that, that you had to practice through the keys and understand how to play through all different keys and also, of course, a musician that's going to play any part of this music we call 'jazz' has to have a good understanding what the blues is and, and play the blues and so, you had all of these things. Of course, Charlie Parker introduced a lot of western classical ideas into his music as well as old show tunes and he was very, very broad in his concepts of what the music was that he was playing. So, and as a very young musician, that's how I wanted to play, exactly. I didn't care if someone said I sounded like him , that's what I wanted to do. And that was all I dreamt of doing. I didn't want to be original; I wanted to pay like Charlie Parker. And it wasn't until I got in Charlie Mingus's band that I began to lose that idea, because he began to say things to me that were really making me think, like, I would play a phrase of Charlie Parker's and then he would, after the set was over, he'd say, "Oh, yeah, I heard what you played, man. You played one of Bird's ideas. When you going to play your ideas, man, you know? I already heard Bird play that a thousand times." You know, and these kind of things would begin to make me think. And then, he used to say to me also, "You have your own sound, man, and I know somewhere in your body and your mind, there's your ideas. When are you going to let me hear that?", you know? And, eventually, even though I never really sounded like Bird, even my first recordings, as hard as I tried to play like him, I still had another quality to my tone that I still have today, which is kind of original - it's mine, you know. And that's another great thing about this music: it's very democratic, everybody can have their own sound, you know. A classical saxophone

player, most of the time, they have to get a pitch that is tuned up perfectly to the piano and up to where the piano's A is, and they have to play at a particular intonation to keep it that way. But, and many, and, and many of the, the, the popular saxophone players of today sound alike. I can't tell the difference in all these guys, these current guys and I, it's not that they're playing anything that's so difficult, or so technically different, it's just that all of their tone, the qualities are the same and many of their ideas are the same, you know, very syrupy, sweet tone that they're producing today and so, this music is very democratic that I play, you know.

Just play. I'm not going to say anything.

You want just a little intro?
Just a little intro about what, you know, the Bird's...?

OK.

You know, Bird would play this kind of...

OK.

OK. OK.... Charlie Parker's ideas are sometimes he would play something slow and he would play the same thing but much faster. Something like this: (plays music), like that or, (plays music), like that, which is almost the same thing, but one is very fast and the other one is kind of much slower.

..you were going to describe how the Apollo, and going to hear Bird at the Apollo...?

Oh yeah that, well that was the first opportunity that I had to see Charlie Parker and I'd have to sneak and try to sneak in some place. Like, for instance, I couldn't get in at 52nd Street or any of the clubs 'cause I was too young. They wouldn't let minors into the club and this is where Bird was performing. I had seen him a few times in concert but this week that he was playing at the Apollo was perfect for me and the only way I could get to see him would be not to go to school. So, a few of my friends and I, we would leave home in the morning, like we're heading for school, and go down in the subway, but instead of going to the Bronx to our school, we would go down to 125th Street and put our books in one of those lockers in the subway and go get in front of the theater and it would be nobody there 'cause it would be all so early in the morning like 9, 9:15, something like that. Then when the doors opened at about 10 o'clock, we'd be the first on line, go right down through the aisle and sit on the front row where we had to look up like this at the movie which came on first, you know. And, there was always an audience there for Bird, I remember, even though the house wasn't packed like when Lionel Hampton was there. But, there would be an audience because his music was very popular in the black communities across America at this particular time. And so, we would sit and watch the movie and then we would

wait until it was time for the show and then the curtain would come back and there he'd be with Miles Davis on trumpet and Duke Jordan on piano, Tommy Potter on bass, and Max Roach. And of course, we heard all of this great music that we had heard these recordings and we would enjoy that show and then we get up when the movie came on and dash, sneak out of an exit on the side, and run backstage so we could see Bird when he came out to get a breath of air, you know and, and it, luckily it was in the springtime as I remember, so people were out and about and the sun was shining and we would stand outside of the stage door and see Bird when he came out and, of course, I knew him and we would go up and talk to him and he would spend a little time with us and then we would talk to Max 'cause we idolized Max Roach, as well, my group.

What would you talk to, what would Bird talk to you young guys about?

Yeah, we were young. He would just say, "How you guys doing?" You know? "Aren't you supposed to be in school today?" That's one of the things. We, we say, "Yeah, Bird, but, but like, we came down here to see you." He said, "Oh, OK. Well, you guys be careful." You know? and he'd go on up the street and we'd try to follow him, but a lot of times, he would disappear, we wouldn't see him, we'd go back and try to wait for Max and talk to him 'cause Max was big idol of ours. We liked the way he dressed, we liked the way he played, we liked the way he looked and he kind of set a, a style for us. And we, we loved this music and they were our heroes.

Well now, when Bird asks you to play for him. How did that go?

Well, OK. I just want to add one more thing.

Shoot.

Before, when he was getting ready to go perform again, we'd sneak back into the Apollo and go back and sit down and watch every show until 3 o'clock and then we would go home. But to answer your question, that was like when I was about 16 when Bird played at the Apollo and about 2 years later, I was playing with Sonny Rollins's band and I had already played with Bud in Birdland, sat in one night and, and Bird had heard me play in and around New York, you know at, at, at Birdland and, and I was beginning to get a little reputation as somebody that was coming along. So, one day, I came home from school and my mother said to me, she said, "You will never, you're not going to believe this but I got a phone call from Charlie Parker today." And I said, "What?" You know, I was very excited, you know, I said, "Well, what did he say?" She said, "Well, he wants you to come down to this place called Chateau Gardens tonight and wear a blue suit, shirt and tie, and play for him until he gets there, and see Art Blakey, 'cause Art's going to be in charge of the band til he gets there." So I was, man, I immediately went in the room, began to practice and get ready for this big night for me, you

know, and I got on the subway and went down to Houston Street where Chateau Gardens was located and went in and of course, I was the first person there. And then when Art and them came, I told Art that Bird asked me to come down and play, and of course, Art said, "OK." He knew me, I knew Art, you know, and, and so I did, you know. When the curtain went back, the people were very disappointed, I might add (laughs) ... they looked up there and saw me up there. But Art Blakey went to the mike and explained that Bird would be there shortly and that in the meantime, this young fellow was going to play, you know, and so I began to play through the tunes that I knew like "Confirmation" and "Now's the Time" and "A Night In Tunisia" and "Don't Blame Me" and the things that Bird played. And, then I remember that I looked and saw this crowd surge to the back and I saw Bird come in, you know. And it was just great, you know, and he came to the stage and gave me a signal to keep playing. He took out his horn and walked out there and he said, "Play one with me," and we did one together, and then he told me to go sit down. He, you know, played the rest of the night. And then he paid me 15 dollars which was a lot of money at that time, you know.

I get the impression from you though with the crowds at the theaters, at the back of the club, that this cat was somewhat of an idol, a god…?

Um, you know...

Capture it for us. Make us feel it.

Well, you know, like when I looked at the, and saw the crowd surge to the back, I saw a saxophone case up in the air. The people were so close around him that he was holding his saxophone case over his head. And then, they followed him all the way to the stage, you know, and then he came up and took his horn out. Yeah, he was definitely an idol. People really loved him. And of course, they danced to his music as well as standing close to the stage to watch - there was always the watchers, they stood and, right close to the stage to see everything. But, then behind that, there was a space on the floor and people would be dancing, you know and so, Bird was, yeah, he was a big hero in our community.

You said that Bird was someone who was caring and concerned, especially about you and your performance and playing. Tell me what you mean.

Well, there, there were several. I, I remember that one night I was working with Miles in Birdland and I looked at the door and here came Bird down the stairs with his saxophone case, and I was frightened when I saw that 'cause I figured that, well, maybe he's just coming in to sit and watch, you know. But then he came over on the side and I was afraid to look over there because I, I didn't want to see what I knew was about to happen: he put his case up on the table and I heard the snaps open where he was taking his horn out and I

thought, "Oh, my God. He's going to come up and play." And here I am on the stage with Miles, you know. So, sure, lo and behold, I didn't want to look that way, but I could see in my peripheral vision him putting his horn together. Then, he came over. We had just finished a song, we were between songs, and he stepped up on the stage and he could have just stepped up and said, "Let's play this," 'cause once he steps on stage, he takes over the band, even though it's Miles's band, when Bird comes, he becomes the leader. Everybody… allegiance goes to him. At least mine did and I know everybody else up there did, even Miles. But, he stepped up and, and, and immediately said to me, "How you doing? How you feeling? Good. You sound great," he says, "do you know "Groovin' High?" So, I said, "Yeah." Said, "Yeah, we'll play that. Hey, Miles, how you doing? Let's play some "Groovin' High." You know, and so, that, that was a concern, you know? He didn't just come up and call "Lover" or some difficult tune that would have, perhaps, killed me at that moment, you know, and, and so that was a concern. Another time that I can remember is when I was, made my first recording with Miles. When I arrived at the studio that day, when I looked in the engineer's booth, who was sitting in there with the engineers but Bird. And I thought, "Oh my God, man, I know this man is not going to stay this afternoon while I'm here making this recording," 'cause it made me nervous just to see him, you know? I mean, I idolized him that much; I think a lot of young musicians did. And, not only idolized him, but loved him, you know. And, he could see it. Miles came to me and said, "Look man, don't be so nervous and everything. Bird is here. So what, man? Play," you know. So we were running through the tunes and practicing the solos and stuff, you know, running through our solos and but I just was a nervous wreck, so Bird came out from behind the glass on one of the breaks and walked over to me and said, "Hey, man," he said, "you really sound good, you know?" he said, " you really sounding good," he said, "Relax, man," he says, "relax. You sound great," you know? And that relaxed me, you know, I suddenly stopped thinking about him and began to now concentrate on the music. And he had that quality.

I understand his generosity; why do we always read negative impressions about him...?

Well, Miles made a few visits to the pawn shop when he was addicted and Miles did his own things that addicts do when they are under this kind of strain. And so, it isn't strange for anybody who's addicted to heroin to go to the pawnshop and pawn his clothes or to beg somebody for some money or to pawn his instrument - it's done all the time. So, I don't know why it is that people like to tell those stories about Charlie Parker. Maybe there's a little jealousy there, I don't know. I know that Miles was very fortunate to stand next to Charlie Parker when he did and, and he learned a lot from Bird and, and even though he may not say that in his books, in his autobiography, or in his interviews, everybody knows that, that the years that he spent with Charlie Parker were very important years for Miles Davis. And it's just as important as the years that I spent with Miles, 'cause Miles gave me my first

break and I will always love him and respect him for that. So, I don't know why it is that some guys like to just tell the down side of Charlie Parker's life.

Help us understand the complexities of this man's life as a musician and we were told he was family man and an addict...?

Well, the addiction itself becomes a part of your everyday life so it isn't a separate life. It is your life. You get up, your body craves the, the drug, it's, you're sick. So, you have to go out and get the money and then go and procure the, buy the drugs. And to relieve your body ache, to relieve the pain of, of the sickness that you have when you are addicted to a drug like heroin. So, he, and, and being a full-time musician, true, and when he became a family man, really a family man, was very late, I think, when Bird had married Chan and they had the babies, you know, and that was when he was living down on the lower east side on Avenue B. I didn't see much of Bird during that time. I was busy out working with other bands. I saw him intermittently, you know. But, the addiction, certainly it can't be separated. It's, it's part of your everyday existence and you just have to deal with it, and, and his wife, Chan, had to deal with it and it was just the way. And he tried, I'm sure, many times to get his self together, but, and I think at the very end he was making some successes, you know, but Bird not only was using heroin, but he was drinking and that didn't help and so, he died so young, you know...

You wrote that... heroin was just another drug that you really didn't know.

Right.

... in danger of it, can you...?

Yeah, we didn't know, we didn't know. It was, it came on the scene like a tidal wave, I mean, it just appeared after World War II, some kind of way. And I began to notice guys in my neighborhood nodding on the corner, you know, and so we all began to find out that this is what they w..., they were nodding because they were taking this, this thing called 'horse'; we called it horse at that time. And, of course, a lot of guys in my community that idolized and worshipped Charlie Parker began to experiment with this drug, including myself. And, I had 18 years of addiction; that's why I can speak about it and I'm a family man, and I'm a musician, so my life wasn't that different from Bird's, you know, but it has to do with who your wife is and who your family is and if they can tolerate what goes on and it's terrible, you know. I mean, I had my mom and my family and my wife and my children and then, I also has this gorilla on my back that I had to wrestle with every day and it's just part of your existence, you know, and thank God, by 1964, I began to get my my life together, you know.

There's a play that you were in at one point called "The Connection," very famous play around the early part of the 60...?

No, it was like that. It was like that was a real hunk of life, that play. It was way ahead of its time. I mean, it's... America now is experiencing for the past 30 years this, what this play predicted. 'Cause see, when we went to London with that play, they couldn't relate to it because they, they had legalized drugs over there, so they didn't have anybody waiting in a house for a connection to come. You went to the doctor and got a prescription and went to the drugstore and procured your drugs, you know, you didn't... And they didn't have any drug convictions in London. I think when I was in London in 1961, they had 3 drug convictions in the whole country. So, legalized drugs can be an answer for a problem like that. Of course, when you say that in America, people get all excited and think that you going to stand on the streets selling drugs like hot dog stands, or something and it wouldn't be like that.

Tell me a happier story of when Bird used to come up behind you and take money out of your pocket.

Yeah. Yeah. He used to do that. He did that to me a couple of times where I'd be standing in a club or something like that and, standing outside of Birdland and waiting to go see somebody else, you know. And I would feel a hand go in my pocket and I would look and it would be Bird and he would pull out... He would always hit the, hit the jackpot, too and I would have like maybe 15 dollars in my pocket and he would say, "I'm going to leave 5 dollars in your pocket and take this 10 and I'll be back." And he would leave, you know. And of course, a lot of times, this would really upset me a little bit, but I loved him so much and admired him so that I would never want to show it. And maybe I wouldn't see him any more that night, you know. And maybe I would be some place else, at the union or, or, or in front of a bar on another street another day and I'd feel a hand go in my pocket and Bird would have put maybe 20 dollars in my pocket, you know. And, and so he was great like that. He was beautiful to me.

There was a time when you went out with Bird and your wife to hear some music.

Yeah. We lived on the lower east side. Bird wanted to play one night and he came by my house and wanted to.. for us to go find a club to play in. And so, Dolly and I walked out with him and we went to one club, The Open Door and they, it was during the week. They didn't want any music in there, so, they only had music on the weekends. So we left there and walked further over in the Village, and as I walked with Bird, other musicians began to join in and walk with us, 2 or 3 other ones and we arrived at this club called Arthur's Bar. I think it's on 4th Street, and we went in and the owner said, "Sure, go ahead." So we went up and I gave Bird my horn and he began to play. And Dolly, at that time, was pregnant with Melanee and Bird was rubbing her

stomach before he went on, for good luck, you know, and he told Dolly that there's a little girl in there, you know. And it turned out that it, there was, you know, and so he went up on the stage and played, and he was, when he finished his solo, he would come down and give me the horn and I would go up and play. And so, when we were finished we went outside and one of the things that I must say about Charlie Parker is that he didn't like the idea that this time I was starting to experiment and use some drugs. And, when we got outside he said to me, he said, "You know, Jackie," he said, "man, you should try to be like Horace Silver and some of the younger musicians that's coming along today and, and, and, and get yourself together," he said, "You know, man, you really ought to... I feel responsible for, for what you're doing," he said, "and you, you, you need to come on and kick me in the behind for this, you know?" And of course, I didn't, you know, because his in..., inviting me to kick him was a way of him s..., admitting to me that he thinks, he thought that I had been following his, his lifestyle, you know. So, he was, and not only did he say that to me, I think that he said that to a lot of young musicians. I would bet that he said that to more than one, you know.

Yeah, but this instance, he meant this because he kept insisting "kick me in the ass."

Right. He kept saying "Kick me in the ass." And they did it in the movie, but they had Red Rodney. They did the situation with Red, but I, that was true, that's what happened. And he was always trying to look out for younger musicians; at least, that's the way I felt, you know.

There was a time that you got pissed at him because he hocked your horn…

Yeah, well it, it wasn't my horn. What had happened was that I had, he and I both were renting a horn from 48th Street and I had rented this horn and used it, and one night I was getting in a cab and I, I had been drinking a lot and Bird was helping me to get in the cab with some other people and he said, "Here. Let me take this." And he took the horn. And of course, about 2 or 3 days later, when I saw him, he didn't have the horn; it was in the pawn shop. And, and I was a little angry at him about that. So, I was playing in The Open Door that Sunday night and he came by with the Baroness and a party of people to see me play. And I remember that night. He invited to drop me home after the job was over and I said, "No, that's OK. I'll get a cab," 'cause I was still as little angry at him, you know, and I went out and got a, caught a, got a cab and went home. And it was like 2 days later, I read in the newspaper that he died, you know.

There's a story that goes along with you reading in the newspaper…

I got on a bus and I bought a New York Post and I sat down on the bus and I rode for several blocks before I opened it and then when I opened the paper

and looked inside, I saw the article where it said that Bird was dead, you know, that he had passed away at the Baroness's house. So, I hopped off the bus. Of course, I was in tears and I headed down to, toward the musicians' union and when I got there, someone told me that he was in the morgue but he was a John Doe and that they, they didn't, no one had come down to identify him. So, I headed straight to Birdland and went downstairs and knocked on the door, the club owner, you know, and I went inside and I said, "You guys need to go downtown and, and identify Bird's body, man," I said, "he's laying down there as a John Doe." And they said, and so they told me to get out. They said, "Mind your business and get out," you know. And they s... I said, "Well, you know, you, you named this club after him. It's Birdland, you named it after him. Why don't you go down there?" And so they said, "Look. You're not working here any more. Get out of here," you know. So, I split and I didn't work in that club for maybe about a year. They put me on like a black list, you know, and finally they began to hire me again, after about a year.

... it must have been devastating on all of the musicians in NYC at the time of Bird's death..

Oh, man, it was, it was awful, you know? It was, it was terrible, especially, I felt especially bad because I had just seen him the, 2 or 3 nights before that at The Open Door and, and being angry about the, the horn, I had missed the moment that I could have had one more moment with him, you know, if, if I hadn't been over-acting, you know. And so, that hurt me but, sure, everybody, you know, all the guys, like Jimmy Heath and Sonny Rollins and, you name it, name it. Everybody was crushed, you know, when Bird died. I didn't go to his funeral. I couldn't, I just couldn't go, you know, I couldn't be, couldn't be a part of that, you know. And it was, it was terrible, especially for me, you know.

Birdland was on 52nd St., which for a lot of us younger folk... paint me a word picture of it, what was that street like...

Well, you know, it was great because, like, right across the street was a hotel and, and Prez lived in that hotel, and so I used to make a run. I'd come in and call Prez's room, see if he wanted me to go to the store or anything for him, you know, when I was, even when I was 20, 19, 20 years old, you know. I loved Lester Young so much, you know, if I would spend any moment I could... Sometimes he would say, "Yeah, come on up," and I'd go up to his room and go buy, go buy him some cigarettes or something like that, you know. Or you could take a walk with him. And across the street was this huge awning and it was Birdland, you know, with a huge awning in front. And you went down some steps to, to the basement. It was like a basement club, you know? And, it was just great because it was the place that, that I had my beginnings at, you know I, that's where I made my first important job with Miles and it was also the place where I first got a chance to play for a real jazz audience, and people were in the audience like Ira Gettler, the,

the critic, and other... So, when Bud Powell let me sit in, with his band, with his trio, it was a big night for me, you know, I was about 17 years old and, and Birdland was like the cradle for my whole career, you know.

How did, how was Lester Young living? Describe how he was living...

Well, he had a house in Long Island but, but he liked to live, he liked to stay in the city so he could look - he used to sit at the window and look across at Birdland at the people coming and going. It was kind of sad, you know, he was kind of, excuse me, withdrawn, and I remember that one of the things that the Prez liked to do, I know, I used to go up to his room. I would always hear Frank Sinatra on the record player or I'd hear Judy Garland or, always a vocal, you know, Billie Holiday. I never heard him play any of his records and he used to like to go to the 42nd Street and go in every movie in one day. You know, he would go in to one movie and sit through those 2 films and come out and go into the next movie and sit through those 2, and maybe that would take up that whole day. Then he would come the next day and go into the next movie until he had gone to every movie on the street, you know, and that was one way that he, he, he, he spent his days. But I kind of felt that, and of course, he was drinking quite a bit at this time, too, 'cause he liked to drink gin and he was drinking that quite a bit. But he was living a very lonely life at this particular time and... But he was still performing, going to Europe to perform. In fact, that was his, his last big job, was in Europe and he had kind of bit a hole in his lip and was suffering with a, a sore on his lip the last time I saw him, you know.

He had just come back...

Right.

... from Paris...

Um-hum.

.. he used to hang his horn on the bedpost at this hotel..?

Yeah. He used to sit at that window a lot. He had like a robe he would put on over his, over his pajamas and he would sit and look out the window, you know. And I would go to the store for him and get some gin or something, whatever he, he wanted, like the cigarettes and stuff, you know. But he was always very nice to me, too. I was, and I was, he was my first idol, you know, him and Dexter. Like my first idols.

You were going to give me a word picture of this enigmatic man... Miles Davis...?

Well, the first time I, I began to, to see Miles is when he used to come up on the hill where we lived and visit. Sonny Rollins, he was very interested in

Sonny because Sonny was probably our most accomplished musician amongst the younger guys, you know. And even though there's only a year between Sonny and I in age difference, Sonny was far more advanced musically because he had been playing from an earlier age. He started when he was 9; I started playing when I was 14. So, but Sonny, we all looked up to Sonny and Miles took Sonny in his band early on, so I got a chance to meet Miles when he used to come up on the hill and visit. Of course, I had gotten his autograph early on, when I used to visit the clubs, you know...

Paint me a picture of Miles Davis.

Miles Davis... Well, Miles, you know, ... as time went on, he became more and more like this kind of mythical figure, you know, this kind of person that people were kind of afraid to approach. But Miles was very ordinary when I met him. He had a voice, he wasn't talking with the sound that you heard in his late life when he was just speaking with a whisper. He had a voice, he had a sense of humor. We, we, we loved to go to movies together and we would get on the subway sometime, going downtown and laugh and joke going downtown. He had a, he was, loved to laugh and I used to make him laugh quite a bit. And, and so, you know, that's how I knew him and I, I wanted to get in his band early on. That was my real aim and Sonny was in his band already, and the time came that Bud asked me to go sit in with Miles 'cause Miles was looking for an alto player. I really didn't know Miles that well. I had met him a few times and so, Miles had told Bud, "Yeah, well, send him down." And so I went down to Birdland this night and Miles was working. He had Gene Ammons in the band, Horace Silver and Art and Percy Heath and I, I went backstage and I was so nervous, man. And finally, when Miles invited me out to sit in, we played a tune and I walked out to play my solo, and my stomach flipped and I had to run off the stage and throw up. And while I was off throwing up, the band just kept playing. Nobody came, nobody came in and then the owner said, "Wipe off! You're on! Get out there!", you know, and I wiped off my horn a little bit with a towel and ran back out and walked back to the mike and finished my solo and the audience thought that was great. They had never seen that before (laughs), you know. And, and so, Miles was pleased, somewhat ,with my, what I was doing and invited me to his house the next day and I went out to his house and had a rehearsal with him, showed him my song that I had written at that time called "Dig" and, and then Miles invited me to play a job with him and, then that's when I first went in his band with him and Sonny.

… this album called "Dig" was part of the experience of going to the University of Miles…

Well, you know, like, when I was young, it seemed as though Bud, would, when I used to go to Bud's house and, and I used to visit his house every weekend and sit around and hopefully, get a chance to play with him, Bud would never really teach me anything about theory or chords or anything. He just would tell me to play by ear, it was good enough. He would show me

melodies and, and I would play and, and so I got used to that. I kind of thought that was going to be how I was going to play music forever. And so, when I went in Miles's band, you know, Miles used to give me s..., tunes to learn and I would try to play them by ear but it, I wasn't successful at it. Tunes like "Round About Midnight" were very difficult for me to play, or "Wouldn't You?"; that was a hard tune to play. And so, Miles began to get after me and say, "Look, man, you got to go and learn about chord progressions. You have to go and learn something about the piano." And, and he wouldn't let up and eventually, in order to stay in the band, I had to do this. And I'm thankful, that's what I mean when I say I went to the University of Miles Davis, because Miles forced me to grow up beyond being a, a saxophone player that played by ear to a musician that began to understand what this music is really about and what theory is about and chord progressions.

... Miles had a penchant for standing next to the drummer...?

Well, he used to say me, he'd say, "If you want to really get the feel of the music, man, stand next to Art," you know. And I used to go stand to the left of Art's, to the right of Art's drum set. And, and I began to s..., to understand what Miles meant by that, you know. I could really feel the rhythm. And Art is very, you could feel the rhythm anywhere you stood on Art Blakey's bandstand, 'cause Art was so strong and, and his, his, his style was, was about energy and thunder, you know, Art Blakey Thunder. But, I learned how to stand next to a drummer right from Miles Davis 'cause he said, "This is a good place to stand and get the feel of the rhythm," you know, and I, I agree with that. And of course, when I went with Art Blakey's band, I used to stand in the same spot all the time until my, my left ear's still very weak from listening to, from Art's s..., drums, you know? I can't really, if somebody whispers in my left ear, I have to turn my head around, let them whisper in my right ear 'cause this ear's a little weak in from standing there so much, you know.

Another cat that was thunderous was Charlie Mingus. Profile him...?

Oh, man, he was the, the most difficult of all the bands that I ever worked in because he was a taskmaster and...

... start over and get 'Mingus' into the first part...?

Um...

... tell us who Charlie Mingus was.

OK.

Yeah.

Charlie Mingus was, was the most difficult band leader that I ever worked with because he was d..., demanding rehearsal time, all the time. I mean, we used to rehearse at his house for hours on end, every day, for weeks at a time, and if we didn't have any jobs or anything, we just, we just call rehearsals and we'd go there. But his music was very demanding. The other thing that I, that I have to thank Charlie for was helping me to get my own voice, you know? I used to, when I first went with his band, I was still trying to, to copy Charlie Parker's style and accomplish playing like Bird, you know. And Mingus used to get after me and say, "Look man, when are you going to play your own music, man? When you going to... Let me hear Jackie McLean, you know? Let me hear what you have to say, you know. I don't, I don't want you to quote Bird, man, you know? You don't have to do that in my band. I want to try something different." And eventually, he got through to me and I have to always thank Charlie for, for helping me to discover myself, you know, and to become more concerned with being original and, instead of trying to just another carbon copy of someone that I love so much like Charlie Parker.

... describe to us how he manipulated this instrument of his...?

Well, he was a powerful, powerful man, huge in size, you know, and so, the bass fiddle was like a toy in his hands. I've seen him pull that string and make those knobs on top spin around, you know? I've seen him pick up a guy's bass and ruin it, you know? I've, I've saw him do that. A bass player named John Nevs in Boston let Mingus play on his bass when I was playing with, up there in Boston, and Mingus came and picked the bass up and pulled the strings and the screws on top s..., gone around and the strings fell like spaghetti, you know, and he just handed the bass back and said, "Why don't you buy a real bass?," you know, and stormed out of the club. I mean, he was a powerful, powerful man. I've seen this man tell the audience to be quiet and look at a particular table and say, "Hey, man, Sh-h-h!, you know, be quiet, man. Quit talking so loud," you know, and then turn around and start a tune. If that guy made another sound that he heard, I've seen Charlie walk down and put that guy out the club. Pick him up and walk him to the door and throw him out. Now, that's the kind of guy he was, you know, he was a very powerful man, and, and nobody wanted to get into any dispute with him, because he had a short temper and he seemed like he was always ready to fight, you know, and I was one of the unfortunate people that he hit once. He hit me in the mouth and knocked my teeth back once in Cleveland, 'cause he was angry because I wanted to hand in my notice to leave the band, a two weeks notice, you know? And so...

He was tough on you guys and he would start a tune and if he didn't like the way it was going...

That's right and that's why he called his band the Charlie Mingus and the Jazz Workshop because the audience, when they came in there they were paying to see his workshop and that meant he would stop any time he

wanted to and I'll tell you, I'll go, go a step further. Once we played in Cleveland and Pittsburgh and he had a tune called "Pithecanthropus erectus" that was a very difficult piece that he wrote. It was quite different than anything I had ever played before. And he was determined for us to get it right and we played just that tune alone over and over again, every set for two nights. We never played another song. He would start this first set, "Pithecanthropus," and we played and complete and we say, "What, what now Charlie?" He'd say, "Pithecanthropus" and kick it off again. The audience just sat there and heard this one song for two nights and then, finally, he began to play other pieces out of our book. But he was ... And then another thing he would do, if the audience was noisy, he would stop the tune, pull out a chessboard, set the pieces up on the piano and start a game of chess with Mal Waldron and we'd all stand around and watch the game. And then he'd go to the mike and said, "Are you folks going to quiet down a little bit now?, or do you want us to continue with this game, 'cause we're having a good time up here," you know, and he would "It's your move, Mal," you know and Mal would move. So people would get quiet, then he would fold up the board, set it on the side, and we'd play again; they'd be quiet, you know. He was quite, quite inventive.

You were going to tell me about Mingus and working out of a framework at the piano.

Yeah. At rehearsals, Charlie Mingus used to, even though he was, could definitely write all parts out, he was a, a, a wonderful composer and arranger, he had the abilities to write all the music out, but he, the band that I was with, for some reason, he would sit at the piano and teach each musician his part, from the piano. So, he would take Bill Hartman over to the piano and teach him the trumpet part. Then he would call me over and teach me, show me the alto part, write it, play it out, and...

… and then what would Mingus do with you?

Well, he would, after he finished with Bill Hartman, then he would call me to the piano and show me my part, you know, by playing my part out and having me pick it out and then having me play it with him and then he would call the two of us over and have us play the two parts out together. Then, he would stand up and go to his bass, let Mal sit at the piano and we'd play the, the whatever it was that he taught us. And that's how he taught us every piece.

What was his point in doing that?

No music on the stage.

OK.

No, no one had to look down at any music 'cause once you start to read music, like my band, w..., we have so much music. We have a great deal of music in my band and much of it is on paper. So, even though you play it and you know it, once you start to look at that paper, you always want it there. Least I do, you know. And so, we, now, my band has music stands, you know, and because that way there's no question about somebody forgetting a part or anything like that. But Mingus didn't want that. Art Blakey was another musician that wanted no music on the stage, you know. So, the music was taught to you by, by rote, you know, by ear and you picked it out and once you learned it a particular way, you never forget it, you know.

That's like ... they were doing in the swing era with the 'head arrangements'...

Yeah. Head arrangements. That's true.

It's the same thing.

Same thing, yeah.

Art Blakey is someone that you played with ... he's a very special character.

Well, he's the greatest band leader that I ever worked with. He, I'd, I not only learned so much about how to lead a band from Art, but I also learned how to grow up and be a man from Art, because Art was a, a very powerful individual that had things set in his mind, had a particular philosophy for living, p..., particular philosophy for having a band and everybody had to do their job or you were replaced. And in every city that we went to, if there was a, a star alto player there, he would invite him to come and play with the band and that was always to keep me on notice that there was always somebody waiting in the wings. And that's the way Art conducted his band. I remember once we went to Philadelphia, Donald Bird and myself and Art. That was The Messengers and he invited L..., young Lee Morgan. Lee was only 16 then, but when he came up on the stage and played, he was looking at me and winking and, and s..., saying to me, you know, making a little joke about it to Donald, you know. Of course, Donald was a master at that particular point and Lee was quite young, but he sounded very good, and so there was somebody waiting in the wings. So, Art always had this going on, you know.

He nurtured you quite a bit, too. Do you have a story about him...?

Oh, yeah. Well, he was always teaching me something, you know?, because we traveled in two cars. We traveled in a, in a Coupe de Ville, Art and I, and then the rest of the band, 3 other guys would travel in a big sedan, you know, the Brougham. And we go from city to city in these two new Cadillacs

and we would come in town. It was always a great feeling to be with Art, you know, in the, in the newest Cadillac, in a great band, you know. It was a wonderful experience for me. Plus, Art was crazy about my family, my kids, and, and he would always visit my house and play with Melanee and Renee and Vernon, and sit in the kitchen and talk with Dolly and I would always visit his house and, and talk to Diane, his wife, and play with his kids and spend the night there and everything, you know. Art was just wonderful to, to be with; I loved him very much and I played with him all my life until he passed away. He would always call me back.

... he had to remind you guys that you actually were helping to pay for those Cadillacs...?

Oh, that's right, yeah.

Tell me that.

Well, one night, we were playing, we were going through Cleveland and Harrisburg and Cincinnati, playing that part of the east coast, and it was supposed to be 3 jobs but we played 4. And so, on the night of the 4th job, everybody, it used to be that we'd go back to the hotel and Art would call us, call me and say, "Jackie, brings the cats up to the room." And we'd go up to the room and he'd pay us all. So we went back to the hotel and there was no call. So, finally the call came to me from the band. They kept saying, "Jackie, how come Art's not calling nobody?" So I said, "I don't know." Said, "Well, man, check it out." So, I called Art up, I said, "Art, the guys are calling me, man, about the money." So he said, "Call them cats and bring 'em up here right away." So I called the guys and we met in the lobby and went up to his room. Knocked on the door and went into his suite and he was sitting up in the middle of the bed. So we lined up at the foot of his bed and he s..., he asked each one of us, he said, "How do you travel, Spanky?" (the bass player). He says, "Spanky, how do you travel?" So Spanky said, "We ride in, in the cars, Art." Said, "Do you ride a bus, Jackie?" I said, "No." "Do you ride a airplane, Bill Hartman?" "No." "Do you ride the trains? No. You ride in Cadillac, right? A brand new, nice comfortable Cadillac. Yeah," he says, "those Cadillacs have to be paid for. Last night, we worked for the car notes. See you guys in the morning." So, (laughs) we left, and it was great lesson for me to learn. It made sense and, you know, we just left, 'cause we were so happy to play with him.

In those days it must have been tough... life on the road...

Yeah. It was, it was rough, man, 'cause we, we had to stay sometimes in a, in, in people's houses, you know. We couldn't always afford to be in the big hotels downtown. Art was a, a wonderful bandleader. I don't care what anybody says, and he, and through his bands, traveled the greatest musicians of those, of that era. And even when Art was in Miles's band, he was sort of like the leader, even though he wasn't the leader; it was the

Miles Davis Band. But Miles always looked to Art for, for advice and looked up to Art and, and we all did, you know.

Somebody else you all looked up to was Thelonius Monk... idiosyncrasies...?

Yeah.

Tell me about the time that he wanted a piece of your mother's chocolate pie.

That was, yeah. My mother used to make a great chocolate pie. Cream with whipped cream on top. And so, I met Thelonius down at the subway; we were going to walk up to the Audobon Ballroom and walk, I went down and met him at the subway. We were walking up and I just happened to mention, walking up to the Audobon, I said, "Boy, my mother made a delicious pie." I said, "I just had a wonderful piece of it; it really was good." And so, he listened to that and didn't say anything. So, when, when the job was over, like 5 hours later, and I had totally forgotten about this and Art said, I mean Thelonius had walked me to the subway, so we had to walk past my house again, you know. And we were walking down and he said, "Hey man," he said, "I sure would like to get a piece of your mother's chocolate pie. Will you go up and get it?" It was like 3 o'clock in the morning. So I said, "Thelonius," I said, "it's 3 o'clock in the morning." "That's OK, man," he says, "I'll wait out in the hallway. Just pass it out to me." So I went upstairs and there was a window from my bedroom to the hallway and I opened the hallway window and I said, "Stand here, Thelonius," you know. He stood by the window. I went in and I went in the kitchen. I didn't want to wake my mother up, you know, and I cut a big hunk of the pie and wrapped it in tin foil and came to the window and handed it to him. He said, "Thank you. I'll see you later." And he went down the stairs. That was great, you know, that he remembered that.

There was another time that you played with him and you left the bandstand.

Oh, man, that was the first time I ever played with him. I guess I was about 15 and he used to let Sonny Rollins and another trumpeter named Lowell Lewis and myself come down to his house and visit him and, and he would pass the music out sometime and let us play some little easy charts that he had. So, this particular time, he was playing in the Bronx up on Boston Road. I think the club was called the 8:45 Club. And, he let me come up and sit in and so, when I got up on the stage with, with the musicians and began to play when it was time for my solo, I went out to the mike and I couldn't hear the piano and I was afraid to turn around, you know, I didn't want to look around and make him think I was being arrogant or something; I just couldn't hear the piano. Then suddenly, I looked at the bar and he was standing over at the bar having a beer, and it scared me because I didn't

have any notes behind, any chords behind me to help me along. And he saw this, you know, so he rushed back to the piano and put the glass down and began to play, you know. But, that was great. I remember that.

You were going to give me a story about Monk and the Sanctified Church...?

Uh, yeah.... you know, when Thelonius Monk's music always meant a lot of different things to me. It went over the bar lines, I mean, it was kind of the way he would hold his foot down on the pedal and let the note ring a little longer, let the chord bleed into the next part of a song that was different than anything that I ever heard. Plus, he would always use stride whenever he did it and, and revert his styles back to the stride piano players like James P. Johnson and Fats Waller. Then there was always a hint of Duke Ellington somewhere in his music somewhere, you know. And it was like that, plus the sanctified church. You know, I always felt a bit of the sanctified church and a bit Sunday morning in, in Thelonius's music, you know. And so, therefore, it was, it was very hard to nail his music down to any particular style. It was like encompassed a lot of different styles and it also pointed the way to a style that was going to be developing later on in the future, like in the '59, '60, in that period. And, the avant garde, as they called it, or the free form. And it was just a way Thelonius used whole tone scales and, and notes that, that were dissonant, you know, 2 clustered, 2 or 3 notes pushed together to make a crunchy clustery sound. He was really the most original piano player that I heard, he and Herbie Nichols, and, and of course, Bud, you know. And, and Bud was like the, the person that Thelonius used to love to play his music, you know, and I was fortunate enough to be with both of them at the same time and see, see how excited they were to be in each other's company. They loved each other very much and respected each other as musicians, Bud being more like the pupil and Thelonius being like the master, you know, and it was something that I witnessed, it was, was really wonderful.

You were going to talk to me about Bud Powell...?

Well, I think Bud Powell is important because Charlie Parker was the originator of this music called bebop. He was one of the found.., the trilogy as I call it in my history course. The trilogy meaning Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and Thelonius Monk, and not in any particular order, but those 3 men. But the other figure is Bud because Bud was the most creative musician, next to Charlie Parker. A lot of people think that he played and was as creative as Charlie Parker, and I like to think of it as a road with a fork in it. And when you reach the fork in the road, when you bear left, you follow Bud's, Bud's route which brought a lot of different ideas to the music, different than what Charlie Parker was playing. So, I think Bud was as significant to the music as the trilogy and its further development. Also, he was a student of Thelonius Monk, and he loved Monk's music and, and Monk used to love to hear Bud play his compositions. And I was fortunate enough,

as I had mentioned to you before, to be with both of them in a room at the same time and see Bud sit and listen to Monk in awe, you know, of his every note that he played, 'cause they loved each other deeply as musicians, you know. So, I'm very fortunate to have witnessed that, you know.

You said that Monk paved the way for the "new thing" of free jazz...?

Well, you know, like, in the mid-50, when Charlie Parker had asked me to listen to, there's a couple of young musicians who listened to "Rites of Spring" and to "Fireworks" by Igor Stravinsky, of which I never did because I was too busy listening to him to be bothered with listening to any classical music, 'cause at that time I had no idea of western classical music.

We need to get this right.. Wasn't it "Firebird"?

"Firebird."

Right.

That's right.

So start that over again....?

OK. Bird, Charlie Parker used to ask the young, young musicians to listen to Stravinsky's "Firebird", you know, and listen to his music. And we never did. I didn't anyway, because I was too busy listening to Charlie Parker. And, when Bird died, though, I listened to that that very day that he died. I went to a record shop and I didn't get "Firebird", I bought "Rites of Spring" and listened to that. And it opened my head to some other concepts of playing and so, a lot of people in the mid-50, like Sun-Ra and like Cecil Taylor were already playing music that had an open concept, what I call the 'big room,' a place where you could cross a threshold and have no barriers, you know, no, no key signatures, no chord progressions, no particular form, you know, and later on, Ornett came to New York with his quintet and stood his ground and made this music really sink in and work, you know, and that's the thing that I admire about Ornett, not only his writing and playing, but the fact that he stood his ground and stood by his music and took the slings and arrows of all the criticism that came towards him, because a lot of musicians from the bebop school thought that they were just playing any old thing, you know. And I've heard some other people say that Ornett opened up the barn door and let all the chickens and pigs and horses come squelching out to make noise, you know? But, that's one way of putting it and I was one of those that, I used to say that I liked Ornett and his band, but I was little leery of his disciples, you know, because there was so much that was cast aside, you know, where you just played the instrument totally free and open without having any concerns for chord progressions and things that, that I came, that I came to understand as a young musician. But it was more to it than that for me. I felt, especially when I worked with Mingus's band, I felt as though,

'Sure. There should be a place where, where musicians can, can even look further and even play from a whole 'nother point of view,' and it did happen. But I think Thelonius and Herbie Nichols were very important influences in the music that led to this, you know.

... Quincy Jones once said, "If you listen to the rhythm, you can hear the times in the music." What was happening in this free music...?

Well, you know, if you remember I said earlier that musicians play because of the world around them and what goes on, so when my band made a transition was when, in the 60. And don't forget, there was a lot of violence in the 60. John F. Kennedy was blown away in 1963, Malcolm X, Medgar Evars, Martin Luther King, Robert Kennedy, all of this assassination went on. The cities were burning. The civil rights movement was going on; people were screaming, the Vietnamese war. And so the music went that way. John Coltrane, you know, some of Trane's solos sound like a child being whipped in a city, you know? Some of the music that was played by Al..., Albert Eyler, and other, other musicians from that whole period has another whole kind of a connotation to it. And of course, Ornett's music, Cecil Taylor's music, Sun-Ra's music and many other people. Grachan Moncur, you know, there's just so much that went on during the 60 that, that caused the music to really break out into this whole hysterical and whole violent kind of sound that came out of, out of the music at that time.

Yeah, so no music happens in isolation then. It's all about time...?

And, and environment, you know, and what we live in, you know? And right now, if you listen to the music now, you're hearing this whole period of violence getting ready to erupt, and I don't know where it's going to show. You hear it in, in the heavy metal music, you know, when you listen to this what they call heavy metal music, you hear a violent kind of people diving off the stage, you know. I mean, our music is still, the music that I play, we're still moving along in this particular direction following the, the, the concepts of Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong and all these great men who have set this direction for us. You know, we already have our, our road kind of mapped out. It will, it will change. Young musicians will bring other ideas, rhythms will change and concepts will change, but this music is always ever developing and ever moving on, you know.

What'd you think of that fusion stuff in the 70?

Well some of it, I found interesting. I certainly liked Miles, you know...

Put fusion in the answer so we know what you're talking about.

Well, fusion, yeah, the music that they call fusion, I'm, you know, I thought Eddie Harris, the saxophonist was, he and, and Les McCann had done a lot to make this music happen. Especially Eddie, 'cause he had experimented with

the electronic instruments early on. Sun Ra, as well. But Miles kind of took it to the next level because Miles put his, his signature on it and, and I always liked everything that Miles did. I don't ever think Miles ever made any music that I disliked, you know? He made a lot of statements that I disliked and didn't agree with. I didn't agree with some of the comments that he made about the music, but I certainly didn't disagree with anything that I heard come out of his trumpet, you know. But I liked, yeah, I liked some of that music.

You're a teacher in school ... and it's said that all of the musicians coming up sound so academic... do you agree with that?

Well, I think, you know, I think it's an, it's an awful lot that went by real fast, you know, I mean, when you look at the, when ragtime, it was over 50 years, almost, of ragtime music. It started in 1895 and went straight through to 1925, that, that rhythm and that beat, that feel of ragtime. So, the music changed and went through the Big Band period, then it came to this bebop music that they talked about in the mid-40. Well, then, then it changed about 1959, we came to this free music. So, what's happening is the young musicians have gone all the way back now, and they've come through the music of the late 40 and the 50 again, re-examined it, re-examined John Coltrane's music, re-examining all of this music, and eventually it's going to pay off, because there's some wonderful young musicians out there today. I don't think they all sound academic. I think that they, there's some wonderful young musicians out there that's playing some very serious music's going to have an effect on the future of this music. I think the music is in very good hands.

As a summing up statement,... what is jazz?

I think that eventually, it will be called America's music, because it's certainly the only music that this country had produced that's original on this planet, you know. American music is what this music is going to end up being, which will include the blues, and rhythm and blues, because rock and roll is nothing but rhythm and blues regurgitated, you know, and re-defined. So, all this music came from the community, the poor community, and came from the church and it came from the American experience. It didn't come from a European experience, it didn't come from and African experience. It came from an American experience. And, and it also used some of the mores of the European music and some of the concepts of African music and some of the feelings of, of the music of the world. And as the world is becoming smaller now, this music is going to all fuse together and become one, the music of the planet Earth, you know? Once this, all of this music gets together, the, the Ravi Shankar's from India, and the music out of Japan, and the music out of Africa, it's happening already, you know, but certainly, the, the most powerful musical statement that was made after Beethoven and Bach and those European musicians has been the music of Duke Ellington and Charlie Parker and the great musicians that have composed this music that we

unfortunately call jazz. 'Cause that's not my favorite word, and neither is bebop, but, it's what we're, it's what's been labeled, it's what this music has been called and so, therefore, but I would rather call it American music.

The End