

# SCENE & HEARD

OUT AND ABOUT WITH JAZZUK'S ROVING REPORTERS

Photographs by David Sinclair

GEORGIE FAME sidled in, waved to a packed Ronnie Scott's Club, then sat down and set an organ groove that never flagged. Fame's powerful entourage includes trumpeter Guy Barker, tenorist Alan Skidmore and the vibes virtuoso Anthony Kerr - all skilled enough to make those time-honoured riffs sound fresh. Drummer James Powell (Georgie's son) must have absorbed 'Yeh, Yeh' with his baby food, and his efforts and those of bassist Alec Dankworth were the ideal backdrop for Fame's enduring drive. Nostalgia may be part of the Fame thing, and he recalls many '60s people and places in his

introductions. But his wry 'Guantanamo By The Sea', almost a protest song, showed he lives in the here and now. Fame at his unmissable best. (PV)

HARRISON SMITH's is not necessarily a British jazz name that trips off the tongues of local fans, but those who recall the tenorist and bass clarinetist's work with the excellent District Six know how substantial, if overlooked, a figure he is. Smith reminded us of all that on a short British tour in October, fronting a band also featuring the gifted Liam Noble (piano), Dave Whitford (bass) and



Harrison Smith and friend - full of surprises

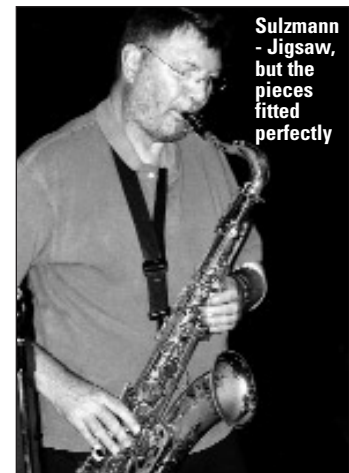
Winston Clifford (drums), on a show devoted to the work of his saxophone hero Joe Henderson. Liam Noble's spontaneous support swirled around Smith's muscular, rather dolorous tenor sound like a written arrangement, Whitford and Clifford were full of surprises, and the leader's sometimes freewheeling, sometimes fragmentary and abstract bass clarinet-playing on his own 'Outside Inside' bore witness to the span of his imagination.

A MIXTURE OF JAZZERS and fans of his Radio Four broadcasts awaited Humphrey Lyttelton at Pinner Parish Church recently. Nobody was disappointed, with the fluent trombonist Ray Wordsworth and the gifted tenor/baritone player Karen Sharp complementing the regular lineup. Sharp's flowing tenor choruses hooked the crowd on 'If You Could See Me Now', much as altoist Jimmy Hastings had done on Duke's 'Lady of the Lavender Mist'. Exuberant pianist Ted Beament delivered a gospel-like trio workout on 'Nobody Knows The Trouble I've Seen,' later described by Humph as 'the bandleader's lament.' As for the man himself, his most cherished moments came on pure-toned and considered readings of 'Trouble In Mind' and the lovely 'Black Beauty'. (PV)

THE LONG ESTABLISHED free Thursday lunchtime concert series in

the King's Hall of Newcastle University is this term seeing a more eclectic policy which includes a greatly increased jazz content. The opening September event, 'Jazz From The Soul' featured vocalist Hannah Jones, former BMG recording artist and USA hit-making soul-jazz and dance diva who recently returned to the North East. Accompanied by bluesy local pianist Gerry Richardson, she gave a spectacular performance ranging from gospel-inflected interpretations of standards to blues ballads, a highlight being a soaring version of Aretha Franklin's 'You Make Me Feel Like A Natural Woman'. (CY)

JIGSAW, the international quartet led by UK saxophonist Stan Sulzmann and American pianist Marc Copland and featuring bassist Drew Gress and drummer Jochen Ruechert toured in early autumn. Sulzmann and Copland often play ruminatively together, but this band is a more driven affair, the music sometimes recalling mid-'60s



Sulzmann - Jigsaw, but the pieces fitted perfectly

acoustic Miles, or the rugged energies of recent Michael Brecker - but sometimes too, the mysterious, ambiguous lyricism of Kenny Wheeler. Marc Copland has long called Stan Sulzmann a world-class player, the Jigsaw tour has helped a wider audience to get the point.

LEA DELARIA AND IAN SHAW co-lead a riotous week of full-on jazz improvising, Cole Porter songs and not a little lesbian and gay political banter at the Dean Street Pizza Express in



Lea Delaria and Ian Shaw - riotous week at Dean Street.

## 52nd Street themes

LOREN SCHOENBERG'S NEW YORK NEWS

LATE IN THE SUMMER, New York played host to two of jazz's most influential, innovative, and venerated jazz musicians. Sonny Rollins and Lee Konitz appeared in situations as disparate as their approaches to music.

Sonny Rollins played outdoors at Lincoln Center as he does every couple of years. His band was as mediocre as ever, doing no more than providing the carpet which Rollins regularly transforms into a magic one and takes flight. While the individual musicians in his troupe are fine players all, one can't help but wish that we could for once hear Rollins in a musical setting peopled by his peers.

There were thousands in attendance and the sheer physical remove of the band from the audience similarly made one hunger to hear Rollins up close and personal. He played the usual combination of extended pieces including an obscure ballad, a calypso piece and an ostinato-ish song. There were the familiar moments of brilliance from the leader, but though they were far outnumbered by the workmanlike plodding of his band, any Rollins performance is by definition superior to the great majority of what's out there in the jazz world today. He is an authentic Sequoia, but one whose grandeur might best be glimpsed in the context of other majestic trees. Enough with the metaphors.

Lee Konitz, three years Rollins' senior, played one of his all too infrequent gigs at the Iridium, now ensconced in its new location a dozen blocks south of Lincoln Center where the seating and sightlines are a marked improvement over its former home. Whereas Rollins has stuck with the same group of musicians for decades, Konitz has studiously avoided any repetition in his musical surroundings. He thrives on the spontaneous and has an abhorrence of cliché. This is not to infer that Rollins is any less of an on-the-spot improviser - of course he is. It seems to me that both of these masters might benefit from a bit of each other's *modus operandi*.

Konitz played with bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Matt Wilson. He launched off into tunes with no preparation and eschewed the usual solo format. Jazz is an intensely contrapuntal experience for him and he's always weaving lines in and out. Because of the intimacy of the setting, it was possible to appreciate all the subtle nuances of Konitz's vocal tone. Rollins has been playing with a microphone attached to his saxophone for years now, made necessary by the amplified sound his band makes.

Wait a minute. In various anthologies, we read reviews of late Armstrong, late Ellington, late Callas. How we wish we could have been there for any of those performances and how shallow the reactions to their mature work seem upon reflection now. I wish there was some way to bring together Rollins, Konitz and Ornette Coleman to make music together before it's too late. The accompanying band would have to be assembled with great care. Maybe Herbie Hancock, Christian McBride, and Roy Haynes. What a joy it would be to be able to report in this column that such an event had taken place.



October. As he famously did with Nina Simone, drummer Paul Robinson showed how to balance sensitive accompaniment and thrilling soloing, DeLaria was sonorous and powerful (her voice is honed on Broadway musicals), Shaw was flexible, fearless and ingeniously Mark Murphy-like. 'Let's Do It' was a fast bop-scat duet, 'Miss Otis Regrets' a sinister march, 'Lady Be Good' accompanied only by a finger-snap and Jeanette Mason's punchy piano.

Ram Jam photo by Peter Symes



**Geri Allen and Tom Bancroft - lateral connections**

DETROIT'S GERI ALLEN, one of the few pianists lateral-minded enough to play keys with Ornette Coleman, and Edinburgh's Tom Bancroft joined unlikely forces for Bancroft's Orchestro Interrupto tour, with Allen guesting. Bancroft's music characteristically forced Charles Mingus, Carla Bley and something a little like the Globe Unity Orchestra into wedlock, and the adaptable Allen found ways to negotiate the band's fiercest extremes of free-jazz and surrealism. She was also the soloist on a dreamier and often delectably folksy new large-scale commission for Bancroft. An inspired encounter.

ALLAN GANLEY did the phoning, Digby Fairweather compered, Jack Parnell told stories and Andy Bush spoke eloquently about his late father on the Lennie Bush tribute at London's 100 Club. Bassist Ken Baldock showcased drummer Spike Wells and trumpeter Dick Pearce, and long-time Bush chum Bobby Orr fired up a group with thoughtful veteran Ronnie Hughes on trumpet, Jack Emblow on bop accordion, and inspirational bassist Roy Babbington. A rather more sedate Best of British followed, with a jubilant Digby Fairweather and Roy Willox on trumpet and alto, and trombonist Don Lusher his usual impeccable self. Drummer Tony Kinsey's quartet and big band stole the show, with altoist Peter King and pianist John Horler in searing form, and bassist Alec Dankworth recalling the late Bush's propulsive powers; and stupendous drumming in the big band by Ralph Salmins and tasty solos from tenorist Julian Siegel and trumpeter Martin Shaw in the big band. A great send-off for a very likeable man. (PV)

Reviews by John Fordham, Peter Vacher, Chris Yeats.

## ROOM SERVICE

### UK VENUES AND PROMOTERS IN A NUTSHELL



**The Ram Jam Club, The Grey Horse, 46 Richmond Road, Kingston, Surrey. Tel: 020 8549 8709.**

THIS COLUMN usually features UK jazz clubs that have been around a while - but here's a newcomer. Kingston's Ram Jam Club is in its early weeks at the newly refurbished room attached to the 'Grey Horse' pub. This outbuilding was just a shed until gunner Richard Fletcher persuaded Young's Breweries to spend £70,000 last year, converting it into a fully-equipped club-room with a bar and kitchen. It mostly features blues and rock, but Wednesday nights are run as the Ram Jam, by a collective of west London musicians including saxophonists Tim Whitehead, Stan Sulzmann, Chris Biscoe and Tony Wood, guitarist Mike Outram, veteran trombonist/pianist Eddie Harvey, Andrea Vicari and others. *JazzUK* talked to Tim Whitehead.

**JazzUK:** *What is your musical policy?*

**Tim Whitehead:** We don't have one. There are too many of those around already. But we did agree to be as open as possible about people sitting in, to encourage it rather than restrict it. There are three sets, the first and last by the featured band, the middle a jam - either for the main band and guests, or sometimes for student musicians. People can also tell stories, or jokes, or just talk. It's wonderful to have several generations playing together. The vast experience of someone like Eddie, for instance, means you don't keep trying to reinvent the wheel.

**JazzUK:** *What makes a good jazz club?*

**TW:** A vibe. Ian Storrer had it at the Albert in Bristol. It's when musicians sense the promoter and the audience are as hooked on jazz as we are, and on our side. A place that really welcomes what jazz is. Then things happen.

**JazzUK:** *What would you do with a windfall?*

**TM:** Get a good piano. Eddie has to bring his electric keyboard at the moment. Improve the lighting. There's a dynamic between improvisers the audience can see as well as hear, and it's part of the attraction. But we've wanted this a long time, and it's very exciting.



Every self-respecting jazz lover should know and celebrate the superb altoist JOE HARRIOTT. He has been largely ignored since (and prior to) his 1973 death; Jazz Academy Records seeks to help redress the balance: first, with *GENIUS* (JAZZ 8, just reissued) and now, never before attempted, *BIG BAND HARRIOTT* (JAZZ 10) which opens up his startling music to new dimensions.

Harriott Quintet material is integrated live with the Mike Garrick Jazz Orchestra. Add to this Joe's haunting "Morning Blue" (with a full orchestration of a Coleridge Coode bass solo), the newly-discovered gem "Little Poem", plus raunchy blues tracks, and you get "a stunning recording", according to biographer and research authority Alan Robertson, writer of "Fire in His Soul" (Northway Books: ISBN 0 233 96323).

**BIG BAND HARRIOTT**  
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