

# making tracks

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## HUMPHREY LYTTTELTON

*Humph Returns to the Conway*  
Lake Records, LACD 202  
The celebrated 1954 live album *Humph at the Conway* was predominantly 'traditional' but included one Johnny Hodges number. When Lyttelton returned to the London venue in 1960 and 1961, his bands displayed a prominent Ellington and Basie flavour. The two Conway Hall concerts contained on this CD feature an eight-piece and a six-piece band, saxophonists Tony Coe and Joe Temperley common to both.

The larger 1960 unit featured arrangements by Eddie Harvey and Harry South, giving pieces such as 'Love for Sale' and 'Willow Weep for Me' an expansive orchestral feel. The more freewheeling slimmed-down 1961 group included impressive Lyttelton originals, Charlie Parker's 'Billie's Bounce', an instance of traditionalism revisited on 'Bugle Call Rag' and an extended rocking blues entitled 'Ti-Re-Lee' echoing Humph's meetings with Kansas City stylists. (CY)

## STAN TRACEY/DANNY MOSS

*Just You, Just Me*

Avid, AMSC 793

The saxophone-piano duo has numerous precedents, but even then one wonders why such a fruitful format has not been more widely adopted. The inspired teaming of tenor saxophonist Danny Moss and pianist Stan Tracey provides further evidence of the enormous scope that this instrumentation allows. With great clarity afforded to each instrument, one can revel in their subtle interactions on 5 Ellington pieces and 6 standards. From the urgent pulse of 'Drop Me Off in Harlem' and 'Just Friends' to the tranquillity of 'Indian Summer' the level of rapport is stunning. Moss' warm Swing Era style combines with Tracey's harmonic adventurousness to conjure up a decidedly magical mix. (CY)

## GERI ALLEN

*The Life Of A Song*

Telarc CD-83598

Acclaimed as her first album in six years, this certainly deserves celebrating as a welcome back for Geri Allen. Leading the same all-star team of bassist Dave Holland and drummer Jack DeJohnette that accompanied Betty Carter on a memorable album ten years ago, she seems to have added a more lyrical approach - as befits a pianist from Detroit, noted for Hank Jones, Barry Harris and their many followers - to the bracing sounds one expects. She wrote eight out of the eleven tracks, an ideal mix of tough and tender, while

the three standards include Mal Waldron's classic 'Soul Eyes', here a feature for Detroit trumpet legend Marcus Belgrave. (RA)

## ROSARIO GIULIANI

*More Than Ever*

Dreyfus FDM 36669-2

Latterly part of Guy Barker's group, Italian alto saxophonist Rosario Giuliani has an engagingly forthright style that fits somewhere between the foot-tapping flow of Phil Woods and the acerbic, slightly off-centre tones of Jackie McLean. For parts of this French-recorded album, he shares the spotlight with the spiky pianisms of Jean-Michel Pilc while his other guest, accordionist Richard Galliano, brings in a suitably framed tribute to Astor Piazzolla and adds his distinctive colours to half the tracks. Offsetting the overall bonhomie, a freer ambience emerges from the titles with just bass and drums support. (RA)

## DAVE O'HIGGINS

*Push*

Short Fuse 002

This is saxophonist Dave O'Higgins' first CD for Short Fuse - typically, he delivers an impressive variety of grooves. On the opening 'Snowman' and the final 'Push' it's out-and-out funk, with trombonist Mark Nightingale well to the fore, but along the way there are such delights as the finger-busting 'Samba Express', with pianist Tom Cawley and guitarist Mike Outram propelling O'Higgins into a tenor solo of rare intensity. 'Means to an End' is a powerful hard-bop outing featuring trumpeter Martin Shaw, there are some effective ventures into Latin territory - I particularly liked 'North Station', with a tight arrangement launching brief but brilliant contributions from O'Higgins and Shaw. Bassist Sam Burgess, drummer Simon Lea and percussionist Pete Eckford drive an attractive programme from one of Europe's most accomplished and engaging saxophonists. Check [www.daveohiggins.com](http://www.daveohiggins.com). (PM)

## JULIE EDWARDS/KEVIN DEARDEN

*Connections*

EPUK003

Singer Julie Edwards and saxophonist Kevin Dearden are fast becoming one of the top attractions on the club circuit. Mostly familiar standards, yet treated with such care and attention that there's a real vitality. Guitarist Curtis Shaw and Kevin Dearden on flute enhance it, and the smoky mystery of 'Round Midnight' balances the exuberant swing of 'Well, You Needn't'. Check [www.julieedwards.com](http://www.julieedwards.com). (PM)

# IN THE SAXOPHONIST'S CHAIR

The UK scene is bursting with fine saxophonists, but few as widely respected as the legendary alto saxophonist Peter King, a star since the '50s. Since his work is loved even in Charlie Parker's hometown, why does he need Dr Iain?



**Patient 0013** Peter King

**Dr Iain:** Come on in Peter, and relax. What brings you here? Just an MOT or something more serious?

**Patient 0013:** Hang on, my agent told me I get £300 for this!

**Dr Iain:** I understand you are writing an opera! Have you always had operatic leanings or do you think you just stand more chance of getting knighted and paid at the end of it?

**Patient 0013:** No, I'm doing it "because it's there". I happened to see a TV documentary about the Jewish scientist who invented Zyklon B, the gas that killed six million Jews. It was such an amazing and tragic story, I thought it should be an opera. It became an obsession. I showed some of it to Sir Peter Hall and he said "of course you must finish it. It is very dangerous to give up an obsession". He also told me, "don't forget, Wagner wrote the whole Ring Cycle with no chance of a performance". Actually, the main reason was to get booked under my own name in New York. Never made it there as a bebop alto player, but I finally got a gig ... with the bloody opera - December 13 in the Big Apple.

**Dr Iain:** Do you find aero-modelling therapeutic?

**Patient 0013:** Yes, but competitive flying is even more intense and frustrating than jazz. God, the pressure!

**Dr Iain:** How does it help your music?

**Patient 0013:** I can forget about all the aggro and bullshit for a day or two.

**Dr Iain:** We could even look for crashed model planes together. Although last time I was on Barnes Common I was turfed out of a seven foot hole by a mounted policeman.

**Patient 0013:** What, that bastard? It was his damned horse that stepped on my model plane!

**Dr Iain:** Why did the alto appeal to you most of all? I know it is a lot harder to play than the tenor.

**Patient 0013:** It's a lot easier than playing the damned clarinet!

**Dr Iain:** Who inspired you most and



how at a crucial point in your life?

**Patient 0013:** Bird and Trane. Oh, and Ayrton Senna. Watching his driving genius at work taught me how to use any means, technical, physical and psychological, to win at all costs in a jam session! As a quiet, shy person I'm still trying to get that together, though.

**Dr Iain:** Does drinking and experimenting with chemicals have any useful place in the lifestyle of a contemporary jazz musician? Punters in the bebop era used to shout stuff like 'who's his pharmacist?' Bob Burns, who once taught me, spat out a scotch in disgust because it was only a single. Is it still like that??

**Patient 0013:** Ah the good old days. I find that too depressing to talk about. Keep my murky past out of this, Doc.

**Dr Iain:** What is the benefit of disciplined practice?

**Patient 0013:** You can do less of it. As Elvin said. "I used to practice, but then I found out I could do it".

**Dr Iain:** Is Kenny G shit or brilliant?

**Patient 0013:** Didn't you hear that joke? The guy with the gun and just two bullets who, when confronted with Hitler, Saddam Hussein and Kenny G. shot Kenny G and then shot him again, just to make sure.

**Dr Iain:** What do you imagine Charlie Parker would sound like if he were still alive?

**Patient 0013:** Eric Dolphy. That's what Chan Parker told me once. She said Bird was trying to work on a new approach before he died and Chan reckoned he would have sounded something like Dolphy.

**Dr Iain:** Peter, you're in great shape!

## JAZZ IN BLACK AND WHITE

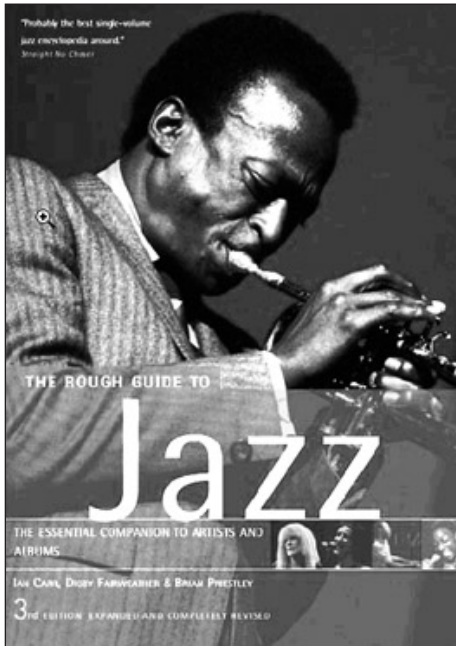
**PETER VACHER** on classy critic Francis Davis's latest collection; **BRIAN PRIESTLY** on Irish writer Roddy Doyle's foray into the treacherous fiction territory of jazz.

THERE'S SOMETHING about the validity of jazz in the American intellectual consciousness that supports the idea of carefully argued extended criticism and reportage as crucial to its proper coverage. At least, that's the situation in the print media in New York. Think Whitney Balliett and his long (if now nearly dormant) association with the *New Yorker*, or consider Nat Hentoff in the *Village Voice* and Gary Giddins in the same paper, or Peter Keepnews in the *New York Times*. And that's not to overlook other influential commentators such as Will Friedwald, Gene Lees (via his *Newsletter*) and past master Martin Williams. And to this list should be added the estimable Francis Davis, another who works for the A-list publications cited above.

Several of these writers have published collections of their journalism, but Davis may be the first to have been asked to make a selection from his books of selections, this entitled *Jazz and Its Discontents* (Da Capo Press, paperback, £15.50) and badged as 'a Francis Davis Reader'. Why does he deserve this recognition, you ask? Well, the answer may come in the encomium printed on the cover that speaks of Davis combining 'Gary Giddins' musical acuity with Whitney Balliett's literary flair'.

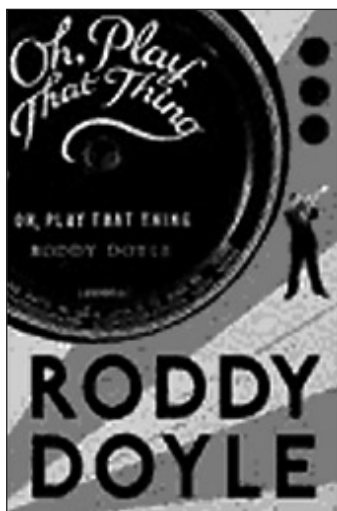
There's little doubt that Davis is a diligent observer, happy to put himself in the critical firing line, whose phrase-making, while not in the Balliett class, can make you sit up and re-assess your own comfortable assumptions about the music he's describing. As he explains in a disarming foreword, these pieces are his 'greatest hits' although he confesses he's too close to them to be sure he's choosing intelligently. Even so, there's enough in these 327 pages to entrance and inform any reader. The subjects run the gamut from singer Susannah McCorkle to Wynton Marsalis (this essay is entitled 'Born Out Of Time') via the engaging 'Klezmer of color', clarinetist Don Byron who calls Davis "B", short for 'Homeboy' once he decides you're OK. Along the way, such as Rollins, Roswell Rudd and Sun Ra are covered, as are a few other cultural icons such as Jack Kerouac, Bob Hope and Larry Seinfeld.

Like many journalists, I depend on key works of reference. Grove comes in for near-daily scrutiny, and John Chilton's varied works are regularly consulted, as are Tom Lord's *Jazz Discography* and the Cook/Morton *Penguin Guide*. For all that, it's the *Rough Guide to Jazz* that is invariably my first port of call, as much for its short character studies and career



vignettes as for the essential data it provides. So, it's a pleasure (and a relief, as my previous volume was pretty down-at-heel) to welcome the re-designed and partially revised *Third Edition* (Rough Guides, paperback, £19.99) and to commend it you. The work of my usual companion on this page, Brian Priestley, and Ian Carr and Digby Fairweather & Brian Priestley, it's up to date enough to include Jamie Cullum if not Clare Teal. Inclusions can seem chancy: Phil Lee but not Tony Lee, Freddy Gardner but not Lennie Bush, and so on. Kathy Stobart's retirement didn't make it, and some of the CD recommendations do seem a touch dated. Even so, I wouldn't be without it. (PV)

RODDY DOYLE's first contribution to jazz literature was a passing reference in *The Commitments* to the 'Avant-Garde-A-Clue Quartet', which probably sounds better in an Irish



accent. His latest, *Oh, Play That Thing* (Jonathan Cape, £10.99), makes jazz fairly central to its story of Dubliner Henry Smart, a former hitman on the run from the aftermath of Ireland's Civil War of the early 1920s. Emigrating to New York and Chicago, he starts to understand aspects of America, finding out about gangsters, racism and a new kind of music in the Jazz Age.

There's a lot of compelling and competent invention, combined with some sensitivity to the music and other issues. In the words of one of the central characters, 'The song don't matter. It the

how that matter, not the what'. But the 'how' in this case means that, alongside the vivid dialogue and witty observation, some implausibilities and wild coincidences lead to a rather mixed verdict, and the success of the jazz theme largely rests on whether you can accept that the speaker quoted above is the young Louis Armstrong. It's not so much the occasional technical and discographical gaffe, but the feeling that this vision of Armstrong is being manipulated by the author - in a way that his Louis character refuses to be.

According to the acknowledgements, Doyle has consulted all the best books about Armstrong (and a host of others, including the inevitable *Gangs Of New York*). But it's probably fair enough that his interest is in the great man's impact on the public, rather than the effect on fellow singers and instrumentalists. (BP)



Francis Davis - diligent observer

## INTRODUCING

**Abram Wilson**



**ABRAM WILSON** has made a mark in Britain - playing scorching trumpet parts with Denys Baptiste's orchestra on the Let Freedom Ring! tour, or as a foil for the evocative alto sax of Soweto Kinch - since his arrival in the UK from the States two years ago. But Wilson, an enthusiastic teacher and singer as well as a trumpeter sprung straight from the classic tradition of brass players in his native New Orleans, has a career of his own on the way. Dune Records have released his debut album as a leader, and the irrepressible Wilson is increasingly to be heard on the circuit with his own groups, joining contemporary groove music, postbop and the occasional soul song.

Wilson was born in Fort Smith, Arkansas in 1975, and raised in New Orleans. He listened to his father play guitar at first, but after his mother taught him his first trumpet note at nine, Wilson went on to teach himself - copying the lines of Stevie Wonder songs from the radio. He attended the famous New Orleans Center For Creative Arts (NOCCA), which included graduates like Wynton Marsalis, Terrance Blanchard, Harry Connick Jr and Donald Harrison - Wynton would frequently return and give Wilson some precious guidance. At Ohio Wesleyan University, Abram Wilson learned classical trumpet too, and completed his studies at Eastman Conservatory in Rochester, New York. He began teaching children extensively, worked with the Roy Hargrove Big Band, and came to London in 2002, joining Julian Joseph's Big Band, and meeting the directors of Dune Records at a jam session at London's Jazz Café.

'I was on my way to France, to try to find Quincy Jones and tell him about myself,' Wilson laughs. 'But the scene was so interesting here, I stayed. I've been struck by the depth and knowledge of the blues you hear in Denys, Soweto, Juliet Roberts. I said to Juliet "were you raised in the church?" Denys has certainly listened to a lot of New Orleans music, which you can hear in Let Freedom Ring! I like melodic music and grooves, and so do they. It all made me feel right at home. I'll be sticking around a while.'

*Abram Wilson's Jazz Warrior (DUNECD011), is out now.*