



Editor: David Nathan

ISSUE 10 SUMMER 2002

MELLY MANIA HITS LOUGHTON!

Yes it's true! In 2002 - on November 29th at 8.00pm to be exact - our guest at the National Jazz Archive's Celebrity Interview will be none other than Britain's 'Dean of Decadence'; Britain's greatest jazz celebrity - the legendary GEORGE MELLY. We've been hoping to get him for years.

I don't think he knows about this yet, but I was once thrown out of a coffee-bar because of George. It happened in 1965; the year in which his first wonderfully scandalous autobiography 'Owning up' was published. I had snaffled our brand-new copy from the shelves of my workplace, Southend Central Library, and taken it to a nearby coffee-bar just before arriving at page 57 and an anecdote concerning clarinettist Paul Simpson and a long forgotten legend of Britain's jazz scene, the trumpeter 'Little Jeff'. (In case you'd like to check the story for yourselves in George's recently-published 'Penguin Classic Biography' trilogy it's now on page 442 by the way). During the uncontrollable fit of hysterical laughter that ensued I dropped the book, knocked over three full cups of coffee and was ejected for trouble-making, damage to café property and undue noise. But it was worth it.

Talking of noise, George has been making the biggest and best kind of it all over - and well beyond - Britain's jazz scene for well over five decades now. During the 1950s his unmistakable voice was a central focus amid the music and mayhem of Mick Mulligan's Jazz Band of course. But long after almost all his musical colleagues of the time had consigned themselves to the headline following the dawn of rock-and-roll - and, more dramatically the arrival of the Beatles - George achieved what for most jazz musicians would remain an impossible dream. He re-established himself in 1972 with a hit album 'Nuts' (produced by the Beatles' one-time publicist Derek Taylor) at the height of the rock-and-roll years. And thereafter - driven by the skill of Britain's most high-powered jazz agent Jack Higgins - triumphantly returned to touring with John Chilton's Feetwarmers for a further thirty years of billtopping.

In order to find out exactly how this happened - and at least some of what happened after - you'll need to book up for November 29th. But apart from his visionary book 'Revolt into style' (which charitably and perceptively

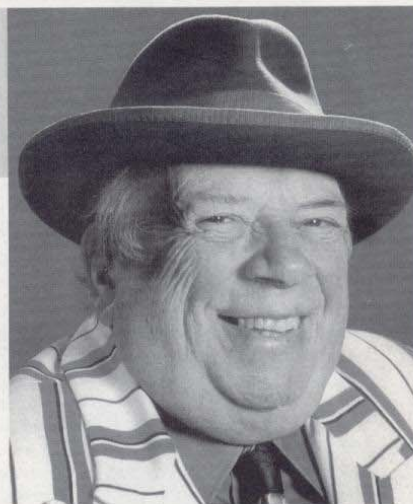
praised the pop music which had temporarily usurped him) I believe it had most to do with the fact that George Melly fitted perfectly with the tone of the times. By the end of the 'Swinging Sixties', the world was ready for him. In fact (as 'Owning Up' had already proved five years earlier) Good Time George could have taught that decade everything it knew about swinging, on-stage and off, in a few effortless demonstrations.

He is still a proud raver of course. But, as we all know, George Melly is much more than that. A classic jazz entertainer, and - dare I say it, despite his convincing successes in America - an unmistakably British entertainer at that. A great jazz and blues singer of course. An acknowledged authority on modern art. A writer of enormous skill, wit and perception. But had I to find one aspect of this wonderfully multi-faceted man that I find most likeable - apart from his singing of course - I think it would be summed up in the word 'humanist'.

Apart from his own unquenchable lusts for life, George Melly's genuine liking for - and focussed observations of - fellow human-beings illuminate his being and books; from the crashingly anarchic 'Owning up' in 1965 to his later more mellow compendium of tour-memories with John Chilton's Feetwarmers called 'Mellymobile' (1982). 'One of the Great Architect's better efforts' as his old friend Mick Mulligan once observed. And, by the way, a skilled man with a one-liner. Not so long ago, during a BBC interview conducted one morning at ten-o'clock, I unthinkingly asked if he'd like a cup of tea. 'No thank you Digby' said our honoured guest, visibly recoiling 'I never drink anything but alcohol!'

In another unguarded moment I asked if, after such a supremely successful career, he felt he had anything left to look forward to. 'Well death comes to mind!' returned the interviewee ruefully. But there seems little chance of that, as from the beginning of next year George Melly begins a whole new round of touring and personal appearances, amongst others with my own band! I can't think of better company in which to spend the New Year, or come to that an evening next November, 2002. I do hope you can come and join us - and, by the way, book early!

Digby Fairweather



Editors Note: Tickets priced at £7 can be reserved from me at the Archive but as Digby stated please book early in view of the limited accommodation. Cheques should be made payable to Essex County Council.

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The Loughton – Beijing Connection

By Campbell Burnap

Arts centres, libraries, museums, and other places dedicated to the enlightenment of the public usually ensure that their benefactors and their many unpaid 'working' supporters are gratefully acknowledged. I suspect, on the other hand, that a hefty percentage of citizens take these marvellous institutions for granted. Not me.

Cobbling together a really comfortable living out of jazz has been an unfulfilled dream – one based on the sort of optimism required by the elephant with diarrhoea who is trying to pick the lock on the bathroom door with a blade of grass. The secret of jazz survival is to live very modestly, or to find a partner with a 'real' job (her phrase). It helps if you can diversify within the field. I was lucky enough to get a toe-hold into jazz-radio broadcasting in the late 1980s, and this led to other related work – like writing and presenting the occasional music series, liner-notes for CDs, giving jazz talks in music colleges, and em-ceeding concerts. By putting those supplementary jobs together with my regular gig (spitting down a length of brass tubing) I've found that I can just about make one end meet.

And that's where my gratitude to archives and libraries comes in. Because most of my chattering and scribbling has been centred on yesteryear's rather than today's music, and because I'm an embarrassed luddite where internet technology is concerned, I've found myself heading out regularly to Loughton library, usually to commandeer a large table, cover it with yellowing *Melody Makers*, frayed *Downbeats* and *Metronomes*, neatly bound *Jazz Journals*, as well as books galore – everything from jazz superstar biogs to the scrawny but adoring discography of some obscure 'gaspipie' clarinetist in 1920s Milwaukee. I sit there and wallow in the whole hundred-year history of the music. I can hear it, I'm struggling out of my jeans and sneakers to slip into a zoot suit and emblazoned tie, I'm climbing into Buicks and Pontiacs, sharing a fifth of prohibition gin with Red McKenzie and Eddie Condon, waving to the Goldkette band bus as it eases into New York; I'm 'lending' Charlie Parker a twenty dollar bill, dining at the Monsigneur restaurant and sitting just ten feet from Lew Stone's orchestra, I'm buying a new Commodore 78 at Milt Gabler's famous shop, enjoying a Manhattan cocktail at the Haig club in L.A. while the new Gerry Mulligan quartet purrs along, and was that a 21-year old Bunny Berigan I noticed in Hyde Park yesterday, posing for the British press as a member of the recently arrived Hal Kemp band? Yes it was, confirms the *Melody Maker* the following Friday, in 1930.

My Loughton reveries are officially clocked at three hours, but feel like a mere thirty minutes – so pleasurable is my temporary disappearance into the past. The only interruption is the offer of coffee and assorted toffees by the curator, David Nathan (and the same generous attention came from David's predecessor, Ken Jones). Much of the satisfaction I get is from turning the pages of 'actual' magazines – the ones that really appeared on bookstalls at the time. Journals transferred to microfilm give nothing like the buzz you get from touching the original newsprint. Washing your fingers afterwards is not a chore; it's one of the privileges of hands-on communion with social history.

Working hard on an Eddie Lang documentary for the BBC a few years ago, I couldn't find any references in the British music press about the arrival in this country of the Mound City Blue Blowers (Lang was their outstanding guitarist) in 1924 – the year always quoted in essays and LP liner notes. Mystified, I rang a world champion discographer, Brian Rust. Mr Rust took all of two seconds to retrieve the correct details from his encyclopaedic mind – "they didn't arrive until the following year, 1925, docking at Liverpool, April 1st.... played a week at a theatre, then a 6-week residency at the Piccadilly Hotel in London." I drove out to the national newspaper library at Colindale and looked up *The Stage* magazine dated the second week of April, 1925. Turning the ancient pages slowly, my sudden whoop of delight as I saw a review for the previous week's variety offering at the Stratford Empire in east London, shattered the silence and drew reproachful looks from the scholars and

researchers around me. But there it was – a priceless little piece of musical history, and a perfect quote for my radio documentary. The *Stage*'s critic had not been impressed by the Blue Blowers' new brand of novelty music from across the Atlantic ("their first appearance in England is hardly calculated to set the Thames on fire"), and he much preferred the established British ventriloquist, Arthur Prince.... "always welcome for his crisp patter and a laugh in every line."

On another occasion, visiting Chicago, I spent a wonderful day in the city's historical archives. I pulled out the telephone directories for the years 1922 – 28. Not only were numbers and addresses listed, but occupations too. I started to look up classic jazz names: Joe Oliver, Louis Armstrong, Johnny Dodds, Jelly Roll Morton. Surely, as professional jazzmen, they would have to have been contactable by phone – but I drew a blank on all four. What about trombonist Kid Ory, though? He was always known as a good business head. Flipping through the O's in the 1927 directory I came across his entry, and a little shiver of pleasure shot up my spine. 'Ory, Edward – musician', followed by his room number at an establishment on the south side of Chicago. And to make my day, who should I find listed at an address on N.Prairie Ave but 'Capone A. – furniture salesman' – no kidding.

Solid research can pay dividends in the most unlikely locations. Half a dozen years ago my partner, an academic in the field of sports sociology, was invited to lecture at the University of Physical Education in Beijing. I'd always wanted to see something of China, and to walk on the Great Wall, so I tagged along. The authorities said that if I had any subject I could give a lecture on then I could also enjoy free accommodation in the university. What about 'The Rise and Fall of the Swing Era'? I suggested. Absolutely perfect, they replied. And so I found myself in a hall with my Loughton-researched notes, an interpreter, a blackboard, a box of chalk, a technician to operate my cassette of musical illustrations, and a mixed audience of 110 smiling Chinese students who were dreaming of Olympic medals at Sydney, 2000, rather more than Swing Street, New York, 1938.

Each time I talked there was complete silence. Whenever the jazz was played there was cheerful chat, as if in a public bar. With my interpreter kept busy, the 60-minute talk had inevitably swollen to 90 minutes. I'd given them the best of Armstrong, Basie, Goodman, Dorsey, Django, Billie, and Ella, and with a brave but despairing smile I wound things up by asking if there were any questions. To my amazement a hand shot up at the back. I beamed, and asked what it might be. The enquirer spoke good English.... "Please, sir, do you know Michael Jackson?" Loughton had not prepared me for this.

Editors Note: Thanks to Campbell for this very entertaining article. He is one of our best known jazz trombonists now freelance but has worked with, among many others, Acker Bilk, Alex Welsh and Alan Elsdon.

He is also a radio presenter of note having been with *jazzfm* since it started with his programme *Mainstem* and featured many times on BBC radio as well. Campbell is also an Executive Committee member of the Archive.



Picture courtesy of David Sinclair

ARCHIVAL NEWS

NAME CHANGE

Have you spotted this already? For simplicity the Trustees and Executive Committee decided to drop "Foundation" from the title which makes the new name easier to use.

DONATIONS

NEW BOOKS

Publishers/authors who have generously submitted gifts of books include:-

- Peter Broadbent** - *Charlie Christian* - **Ashley Mark**
Thomas Brothers - *Louis Armstrong in His Own Words* - **Oxford University Press**
Owen Bryce - *The George Webb Dixielanders - My Part*
Robert Ford - *A Blues Bibliography* - **Paul Pelletier**
Constance Valis Hill - *Brotherhood in Rhythm - The Jazz Tap Dancing of the Nicholas Brothers* - **Oxford University Press**
Spencer Leigh - *Sweeping The Blues Away - A Celebration of the Merseyside Jazz Band* - **Institute of Popular Music - University of Liverpool**
Peter J Levinson - *September in the Rain - The Life of Nelson Riddle* - **Windsor Books International**
Peter J Levinson - *Trumpet Blues - The Life of Harry James* - **Oxford University Press**
Richard Palmer - And John White (Editors) - *Larkins Jazz* - **Continuum**
Alyn Shipton - *A New History of Jazz* - **Continuum**
W Royal Stokes - *Living the Jazz Life* - **Oxford University Press**
Richard Sudhalter - *Stardust Melody* - **Oxford University Press**
This England's Second Book of British Dance Bands
Peter Townsend - *Jazz in American Culture* - **Edinburgh University Press** (Donated by Professor George McKay)
Walter Van de Leur - *Something to Live For - The Music of Billy Strayhorn* - **Oxford University Press**
Rob van der Blik - *Thelonius Monk Reader* - **Oxford University Press**

BOOKS, MAGAZINES & MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

There have been many fine additions most notably from:-

- POLO BRIDGSTOCK** - many cuttings from newspapers/ magazines
BRIAN BROWNING - magazines including Down Beat
DEREK COLLIER - magazines including Blues Research and Jazz Rambler
TERRY FISHER - programmes
ALAN HAZELL - his late brother Tony's fine book collection plus some LP records
TONY KING - indices he produced in paper and CD format on a number of defunct British jazz magazines
TONY MIDDLETON - magazines including CODA and Jazz Times
CAROLYN NIXON - photos taken by Denis Austin for an exhibition during the first Camden Jazz Festival in 1974
TONY RUSSELL - general memorabilia and cuttings files
GARRY SARGEANT - his files mainly dealing with Jimmy Giuffre and John Lewis and the Modern Jazz Quartet
SUSAN MAY - a fine framed sketch of her late lamented husband Spike
ROBINSON - books from the late Ken Munday's collection
JOHN TOWERS - Down Beat magazines and ephemera
VAL WILMER -

To them and all other donors our grateful thanks.



Left: Pete King, Director of Ronnie Scott's Club at Open Day, 15th June 2002.

A report on his splendid interview and the musicians who played at Open Day will appear in the next newsletter.

OPEN DAY - JULY 7TH 2001

Highlight of the open day held on a hot Saturday afternoon was an entertaining web of reminiscences spun by Roger Horton, owner of the 100 Club, Oxford Street, during which he recalled his 37 years' association with the famed jazz venue. In over an hour of engaging recollections, which he modestly labelled "Oh, didn't he ramble" (well he didn't!), the urbane Mr Horton adeptly held the attention of the sardine-packed audience with his account, laced with typical Horton humour, of his early days at the club doing menial jobs until he became a partner with accountant Ted Morton and then owner.

Among many unforgettable moments he recalled the night a corpse was carried through the club whilst R&B singer/guitarist Bo Diddley was performing. Also remembered was an unexpected visit from an unlikely looking official of the Inland Revenue.

Now, to use his own phrase, "almost retired", Roger Horton rued the virtual disappearance of jazz clubs where customers can dance, the 100 club being one of the very few in the capital where terpsichorean activity is actively encouraged.

This well-supported open day at which books, magazines and records were on sale, was enhanced by live music which rounded off the afternoon. An imposing line-up of musicians spearheaded by Digby Fairweather, the original founding father of the Archive, played in various permutations, all combining for a stirring en masse finale of "Jumpin' at the Woodside".

They were saxists Dave Gelly and John Altman, trombonist Campbell Burnap, bassist Pete Corrigan, pianist George Webb, guitarists Dominic Ashworth and Nevil Skrimshire, trumpeter Bill Thompson and percussionist Dave Michaels.

The last-named, in the absence of a drum kit, brought a touch of the avant garde to the session by nimbly playing brushes on the top of a portable electric heater - unplugged of course!

Editors Note: Thanks to The Jazz Rag and Kevin Henriques for their kind permission to reproduce this review which appeared in the Autumn 2001 issue.

Below: George Webb and Digby Fairweather



100 CLUB BENEFIT EVENING

This was held on September 12th 2001 and produced a contribution of £430 to the Archive. Grateful thanks go to Roger Horton for organising this splendid occasion and to all the musicians from The Delta Jazz Band with Colin Bowden and Vintage Jazz who played so well in support of the Archive and to all those who attended.

LUSHER LIFE – CELEBRITY INTERVIEW

23RD NOVEMBER 2001

Kevin Henriques



By Kevin Henriques

Veteran trombonist/bandleader/ teacher Don Lusher brightened a dank November evening for a capacity audience in Loughton Library with a lively, enlightening, always entertaining account of his life in the music business.

In what was the Archive's celebrity interview of 2001

and with Digby Fairweather by his side to prompt and prod where necessary (not often), Don outlined his illustrious career of over half a century with modesty and much humour.

Early days in his native Peterborough were devoted to buying the latest releases (on 78 rpm of course) of the Duke, the Count and inevitably, Tommy Dorsey, and to getting his pre-teen initiation into the mysteries of the trombone via Salvation Army bands. Later, while serving in the army, he was in the audience when Geraldo's band played at his camp, little realising that six years later he would be among that famed line-up.

There followed stints with such other name bands of the day as Joe Daniels, Lou Preager, Maurice Winnick and the Squadronaires. The last Don described as a "heavily drinking band". The only two who didn't imbibe were himself and reedman Andy McDevitt. Then came nine years with Ted Heath where he first really impinged on the consciousness of the big band public. He left Heath in 1961 to join Jack Parnell's TV orchestra and subsequently did a

vast amount of session work, recording under the baton of, among others, Nelson Riddle, Robert Farnon and Henry Mancini and with Frank Sinatra, Fred Astaire, Bing Crosby and Ella Fitzgerald.

Apropos session work, Don readily admitted he enjoyed it, warming to the efficient way it was organised, adding: "I miss it to this day. We earned good money but home life was neglected. However, it enabled us to provide a good standard of living for our families. So I say 'thank you' to the music business".

Still maintaining a busy playing schedule (as well as leading his own band and after fronting the revived Ted Heath band after Ted's death), Don is also Professor of Trombone at the Royal Marines School of Music at Portsmouth. He performs with them and other brass bands but, not surprisingly, contends that of all the service bands the Royal Marines maintains the highest standard.

Of today's young trombonists Don was laudatory. "They are of a higher standard now than ever before because they study, they go on courses or they join NYJO. Sometimes their playing identity is not obvious and they are not interested in simply being melodic players.

However they have enormous confidence".

A fitting, sincere tribute from a respected trombone Master to the younger generation of players.

Editors Note: Thanks to Kevin for this report. Kevin was jazz critic for the Financial Times from 1969 to 1988 and has contributed as a freelance to such jazz magazines as Jazz News, Beat, Jazz Forum, Jazz and Blues and more recently for Jazz Journal, The Jazz Rag and Blue Light the magazine of the Duke Ellington Society (UK).

Below: Don Lusher and Digby Fairweather



BENEFIT NIGHT AT ONGAR JAZZ CLUB

By David Nathan

Another marvellous evening's entertainment occurred on 24th May 2002 which included the presentation of a cheque for £1,000 to the Archive which was greatly appreciated.

Two fine groups provided the music. Firstly Pete Strange (tmb) led a great septet featuring Digby Fairweather (tpt), Julian Marc Stringle (clt), Doug Higgins (dms), John Day (bass), Dominic Ashworth (gtr) and a terrific newcomer Karen Sharp (tenor sax) in a really swinging session.

The numbers played were "At Sundown", "Basin Street Blues", "Big Butter and Egg Man" (not as Digby announced "Big Buttock and Leg Man!"), "Polka Dots and Moonbeams" (a great feature for Karen) and "Riverboat Shuffle".

The second set was a revelation as this was a trio featuring a relatively unknown clarinet player Tim Huskisson backed by the ever reliable Nevil Skrimshire (gtr) and Alan Morgan (bass).

Tim's excellent technique and sound was much appreciated and he wowed the enthusiastic capacity audience with renditions of "Indiana", "Moonglow", "Whispering", "Stardust" and "After You've Gone".

To finish the set there was a fine tribute to Cy Laurie who died recently when the trio were joined by Julian Marc Stringle (clt) to play "Blues for Cy".

Pete Strange's septet returned after the break with Julian Marc Stringle switching to alto sax and played "Undecided", "It's Wonderful" - a lovely and seldom played song which used to be featured by Bobby Hackett and



The star performers at Ongar Jazz Club from the left: Digby Fairweather, Nevil Skrimshire, Tim Huskisson, Alan Morgan, Pete Strange, John Day, Doug Higgins, Julian Marc Stringle, Karen Sharp and Dominic Ashworth.

Jack Teagarden, "Zoltan's Dream" - a Pete Strange composition and "I Thought About You".

Then came the customary jam session to end the evening with a flourish with the septet joined by Nevil and Tim on "Swing That Music", - which is precisely what they did.

Once again the Archive is indebted to Ongar Jazz Club and all the musicians for their continuing and generous support.