

Buying CDs

About Record Labels Older jazz listeners tend to identify recordings by the companies that produced and first issued them commercially – Columbia (including subsidiaries Brunswick, Vocalion, Okeh, Harmony), RCA (Bluebird), and Decca were the original big three, with Capitol joining them in the early 40s and Mercury (Emarcy) a decade later. Next were smaller companies that specialized in jazz, all started by one or two entrepreneurs who were jazz fans – Commodore, Storyville, Aladdin, Riverside, Blue Note, Clef, Norgran, Verve, Pablo, Savoy, Fantasy, Prestige, Roulette, Pacific Jazz, Bethlehem, Atlantic, Argo, Vee Jay, Mainstream, ECM, Impulse, Steeplechase, Jazzland, Solid State, Novus, and Flying Dutchman. Some of them got to be large companies, some (including some big ones) disappeared or merged with others, and over the last decade or so, virtually all were swallowed up by a few conglomerates. CDs we can buy now will be on whatever labels the conglomerates who currently own the material choose to apply to them. For example, Columbia is now Sony Music, Capitol is reissued on Blue Note, RCA Victor originals are showing up on Bluebird, etc.

The *Mosaic* label, which first appeared in the 70s and is still quite active today, and is devoted to limited edition, high quality box set reissues of the complete works of important artists or bands for a particular record label or period of time. The sound quality is usually excellent, and each set comes with a booklet that includes a well written background essay and musical annotations by a musically knowledgeable writer, and very nice black and white photographs. The sets typically contain 4-8 CDs, and are sold new for about \$15 per CD. Since Mosaic's contract with the owners of the material specify limited editions (typically 5,000 copies), sets more than about four years old are sold out and only available on the used market.

Some CD Suggestions – Some of My Favorite Artists and Recordings

Louis Armstrong – The duets with Ella Fitzgerald and with Duke Ellington are wonderful (on Roulette and Verve). The 1928 recordings with Earl Hines (on Okeh, now Sony) are on everyone's list of the greatest recordings of the 20th century.

Chet Baker – Chet was important both as a trumpeter and singer. Always a very emotional, lyrical, and very interesting soloist, his early work, on Riverside and on Pacific Jazz, is especially nice. I like *Chet Baker Sings*, and other studio recordings from the 1950s, as well as many recordings with Gerry Mulligan, also on Pacific Jazz. *She Was Too Good To Me* and *You Can't Go Home Again* are two of his best from the 70s (with Paul Desmond and Jim Hall), and *The Last Great Concert* (two CDs) shows how well he was still playing in the last months of his life.

John Coltrane – Even if you don't like Trane's more modern work, almost everyone loves his ballad playing, which I find emotional and strongly masculine in the most positive sense. *John Coltrane and Johnny Hartman* is a classic. So are *Ballads*, a lovely collection from the early 60s, and a collaboration with Duke Ellington. I also very much like Trane's playing from the mid and late 50's, most of which is on the Prestige label, and all of which happened in the company of other wonderful musicians. *Giant Steps* and *My Favorite Things*, on Atlantic, are also quite wonderful, and still pretty accessible. Trane moved to the Impulse label at the beginning of the 60s, and over the years his playing became increasing more complex and less accessible. Try the earlier Impulse studio recordings first, then try moving on to the live dates, and finally the later ones.

Bill Evans – [Make sure you're getting music from the pianist, not the saxophonist. Both played with Miles Davis, but the saxophonist is a far more modern player.] Bill's first great recordings were on the Riverside label. His trio recordings from the Village Vanguard in 1961 are classics that redefined the piano trio. More classics are *Conversations With Myself*, *Something Else* (with Cannonball Adderley), and his two duet sessions with Tony Bennett (recently reissued) are some of Tony's best work. Nearly all of Bill's work is very good, and much of it is exceptional. I also enjoy his work with the classic Miles Davis Sextet of the late 50s (see the listing for Miles). Bill's playing evolved over the years, and

the live recordings from the Keystone Korner and the Village Vanguard during the last month of his life are wonderful gifts.

Paul Desmond – One of the most lyrical and imaginative of all jazz musicians, Paul is on all of the Brubeck quartet recordings between 1956 and 1968 (first on Fantasy, then Columbia). They're all excellent, as are the two sessions with Gerry Mulligan (one on Verve, the other on RCA Victor). After Brubeck, there was a great string session on RCA Victor (now Bluebird), a live performance at Carnegie Hall with the Modern Jazz Quartet, some very nice collaborations with Chet Baker (under Chet's name) and Jim Hall (some under Jim's name, some under Paul's), and several live recordings from Toronto.

Miles Davis – Miles' quintet/sextet of the late 50's was one of the great bands of the 20th century. The Prestige recordings -- *Steamin' Cookin', Relaxin', Workin'* – are the most relaxed, low budget “blowing sessions” with little rehearsal, while the Columbia recordings (reissued on Sony) were more formally produced. This is the band that included (at various times) John Coltrane, Cannonball Adderley, Bill Evans, Wynton Kelly, Red Garland, Paul Chambers, Philly Joe Jones, and Jimmy Cobb, and everything they did is quite satisfying musically. Beginning in about 1956, Miles recorded some thrilling collaborations with composer/arranger Gil Evans. Untold numbers of children were conceived while their parents were lost in the throes accompanied by their greatest collaboration, *Sketches of Spain*. *Porgy and Bess* and *Miles Ahead* are also first rate. Many enjoy Miles' 60s quartet with Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, Ron Carter, and Tony Williams. After that, Miles became the primary creator (with Herbie Hancock, Gil Evans, and others) of a new form often called *jazz rock*. I never liked it much. But then, I never liked rock and roll.

Clifford Brown – Clifford died very young – pianist Richie Powell's wife was driving when she went to sleep on the Pennsylvania turnpike driving the band from Philadelphia to Chicago for a gig, killing Powell and Brown. That didn't stop Clifford from influencing most trumpet players who came after him, and even in his short life, creating a wonderful body of recordings, none of which are less than very good. Some of the best are *Clifford Brown With Strings* (a collection of ballads), those with the quintet he co-led with Max Roach, the live recordings with Art Blakey and Horace Silver (originally on the Blue Note label with Blakey as leader), a west coast session with Zoot Sims, and especially *The First and the Last*, a live recording allegedly recorded the night he died, but probably recorded a few months earlier. Clifford went to Europe with Lionel Hampton's Big Band, and participated in several sessions in Sweden and Paris that were eventually released under his name. They're nice, but not up to the US recordings. Clifford's music is both lyrical and exciting.

Art Tatum – Considered by most the greatest pianist of all time, Art's finest recordings were made in a few evenings for Norman Granz's Verve label, now available on Pablo as a box set, *The Solo Masterpieces*. While Art recorded with his trio (Tiny Grimes and Slam Stewart), and with various other jazz stars, his powerful style tended to overwhelm them, and most are considerably less satisfying than the solo sessions.

Lester Young – Named the President by Billie Holiday, immediately shortened to Pres, Young was first great soloist after Armstrong and Coleman Hawkins. Lester's finest recordings are with the Basie band in the 30s and early 40s, and in a small group backing Billie Holiday in the same time frame, all reissued on the Sony label. His small group sessions from the 40s are also quite nice – including *The Kansas City Sessions*, on Commodore, *The Complete Savoy Recordings*, and a trio session with Nat Cole and Buddy Rich. A few Verve recordings from the 50s are very good, most notably *The President Plays With the Oscar Peterson Trio*, *Pres and Sweets*, *The Jazz Giants '56*, and *Count Basie at Newport '58*, which features Pres as a guest soloist.

Dave Brubeck – The quartet recordings with Paul Desmond are all wonderful; CDs are available on the Sony label, both as collections and as reissues of the original Columbia LPs. Some of my favorites include *Jazz Goes To College*, *Jazz Red Hot and Cool*, *Dave Digs Disney*, *In Europe*, *At Newport '58*, *Jazz Impressions of Eurasia*, *in Japan*, *Impressions of the USA*, and, of course, *Time Out* and *Time*

Further Out. The earlier recordings on the Fantasy label, before their contract with Columbia, are just as nice. They include *At Storyville, Jazz at Oberlin, Jazz at College of the Pacific* and several others.

Gerry Mulligan – Gerry was important first as an arranger, next as a composer and soloist, and finally as a leader of some really nice bands. Gerry arranged for Gene Krupa (*Disc Jockey Jump* is a classic), Stan Kenton (*Young Blood, Walking Shoes*), Elliot Lawrence, and the landmark *Birth of the Cool* session, released under Miles Davis's leadership. His first great recordings as a leader, piano-less quartets and quintets with Chet Baker, Art Farmer, and Bob Brookmeyer, were on the Pacific Jazz label. His *Concert Jazz Band* of the early 60's was one of the finest in jazz, and all of their recordings are worth having. Look for collections on the Mosaic and Verve labels. Verve small group sessions from the 50s with Ben Webster, Stan Getz, and Paul Desmond are all very nice, as well as the RCA session with Desmond. Gerry continued to write and perform until his death in the 90s, and all of his recordings from that period are worth hearing.

Bob Brookmeyer, who died in December, 2011 just short of his 82nd birthday, was first a wonderful trombonist, then a great arranger, and finally a fine composer. His early work in small bands led by Stan Getz and Gerry Mulligan, then in a quintet he co-led with Clark Terry, is all very nice. After settling in New York in the late 1950s, he became a favorite lead trombonist and featured soloist in many of the studio bands. His playing, compositions, and arrangements are major highlights of recordings by the last two great big bands, the Mulligan Concert Jazz band (for which he was also the principal organizer and straw boss) and the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Jazz Orchestra. *Gloomy Sunday and Other Bright Moments* documents an all star band under his own leadership, with great writing by Eddie Sauter on *Gloomy Sunday*. His final recording, *Standards*, featuring his arrangements, but not his playing, performed by a first rate and well-rehearsed German big band, is a masterpiece. Order it online from Artists Share.

Billie Holiday – The first great singer after Armstrong, Billie's first great recordings (my favorites, and many consider them her greatest) were with various small bands led by Teddy Wilson in the late 30s, now available on the Sony label. Included are the sessions with Lester Young, some of the great jazz recordings of all time. Norman Granz's Verve sessions from the 50s are also quite nice, backed by many of the same musicians. In between she recorded for Decca; while she was singing well, I've never liked them as well as the others. Her final recordings, *Lady in Satin* (1958, with strings, originally on Columbia), and *Billie Holiday* (three sessions from 1959, with strings, with a big band, and with a small group, originally on MGM) are lovely – even though her voice is shot, they are masterpieces.

Count Basie – Basie led two really great bands – first in the late 30's and early 40's, recording for Columbia and Decca, and beginning in the 50s (often called the New Testament band), recording first on Verve, then Roulette, and finally Pablo. For the 30s/40s band, look for The Decca Recordings, and various collections on the Sony label. My favorite recordings of the New Testament band include *Basie* (often called the *Atomic Basie*, because the cover included a photo of an atomic blast), *Basie Plays Hefti, Breakfast Dance and Barbeque*,

Stan Kenton – Stan led at least a dozen bands over his lifetime, each a bit different from the other, and a few of them great. Some of my favorite recordings include *Standards In Silhouette* (ballads arranged by Bill Mathieu), *Contemporary Concepts* (standards arranged by Bill Holman), *Cuban Fire, West Side Story*, and *Adventures in Time* (arranged by Johnny Richards), *Adventures in Blues* (arranged by Gene Roland), *The Jazz Compositions of Dee Barton, Kenton Presents Bill Holman and Bill Russo, Back to Balboa*, and *Birthday in Britain*.

Woody Herman led bands almost continuously for forty years, most of them very good, some of them great. The mid-40s band recorded for Columbia (now Sony), the late 40s/early 50s band for Capitol. Box sets of the complete Columbia and Capitol recordings were issued by Mosaic. Later versions of the band recorded on several labels, including Atlantic, Philips, and finally on Concord.

Maynard Ferguson – Like Duke, Basie and Woody, Maynard led bands for more than forty years, beginning in the early 50s. The first bands, recording first on RCA, then Emarcy and later on Roulette

between 1957 and 1965, played both jazz for listening and standard tunes for dancing, with fine arrangements by young guys who played in the band (Slide Hampton, Willie Maiden, Don Sebesky, Don Menza), and a few who did not (Bill Holman, Marty Paich). Mosaic issued a complete collection of the Roulette recordings; the Emarcy things have shown up on Verve, and the RCAs on Bluebird. This is all great straight ahead jazz and big band dance music that holds up quite well fifty years later. Beginning in the 70s with a couple hits on pop music charts, and continuing until his death in the 2000s, Maynard's bands played jazz with a nod to the popular music world. For the most part, these bands were far less interesting.

Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra – One of the great big band drummers, Lewis powered the finest of Kenton's bands, then became “the man” on the Hollywood studio scene, finally relocating to New York after a tour with Gerry Mulligan's great Concert Jazz Band. Trumpeter and composer Thad Jones was a veteran of the Basie band, which recorded several LPs of his compositions. The two met when Basie and Kenton played some dates together; and several years later when Basie found some of Thad's too modern for his band, Thad and Mel decided to form a band. The last of the truly great big bands, comprised of the cream of New York jazz studio musicians, started playing Monday nights (the traditional night off in most jazz clubs) at New York's Village Vanguard in 1965, and is still there at the end of 2011 as the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra. The music was mostly Thad's, but other contemporary writers were also represented in the band's book, and the band played modern arrangements of some of the best of the Great American Songbook. Most LPs were on the Solid State label, later Blue Note, and a complete set was reissued on CD by Mosaic. Thad moved to Sweden in the 70s, with the band continuing under Mel's leadership until he died in 1990, but the band was never the same without Thad. Thad was also a great arranger for singers, and the vocal LPs, one each with Joe Williams and Ruth Brown, are those singers' best work on record.

Gil Evans – In addition to the classic sessions Gil arranged and conducted for Miles Davis, Gil made some great recordings with his own band, especially during the 60s. Look for *Out Of The Cool*, *The Individualism of Gil Evans*, *Where Flamingos Fly*, *Great Jazz Standards*, and *New Bottle, Old Wine*. By the end of the 60s, Gil's music had evolved into a contemporary rock-oriented jazz form that I don't enjoy.

Bill Henderson – Bill is a favorite of many musicians but not widely known to the general public. Bill's best work was his earliest, on the Vee Jay label, and with the Oscar Peterson trio on Verve. Look for reissues of these LPs. In his 80s, Bill is still singing very well today.

Johnny Hartmann – Another fine singer who never caught on with the general public, Johnny's singing was consistently very good. His best recordings are on Impulse, especially the classic ballad session with John Coltrane.

Mark Murphy – The most interesting singer to emerge after the big band era, and an influence on many who came after him, Mark is still singing well as he turns 80. All of Mark's recordings are very good; look for *Rah*, *That's How I Love the Blues*, *Hip Parade* (with Bill Holman charts), *Stolen...And Other Moments*, *Bop For Kerouac*, *Kerouac Then and Now*, *Bop For Miles*, and *Memories of You* (for Joe Williams).

Sarah Vaughan – One of the greatest of all jazz singers, Sarah's best work was on the Emarcy, Verve, and Pablo labels. Look for a session with Clifford Brown, *No Count Sarah* (the Basie band, minus the Count), *At Mr. Kelly's*, and all of the Pablo and Verve LPs.

Carmen McRae – Another of the great singers, Carmen was strongly influenced by Billie Holiday. One of those musicians who rarely caught fire in a studio, Carmen made magic with a live audience. Look for live recordings *At the Great American Music Hall* (San Francisco), *at Ratso's* (Chicago), a New Year's Eve broadcast in New York around 1980 (originally on Novus), and *Dream of Life* with a Dutch big band.

Helen Merrill – Emerging after the big band era, Helen sang standard songs in a lovely haunting style that I've always loved. Her first recordings (the 50s, on Emarcy) are excellent, especially the session

with Clifford Brown and another arranged by Gil Evans; a 70s collaboration with Steve Lacy, another with Gil Evans, and *Out Of This World* (a quintet with Roger Kellaway, Tom Harrell, Red Mitchell, and Wayne Shorter) are also lovely.

June Christy – A highly original and very personal singer who had a way with a lyric, June first came to prominence with the Kenton band, then had a fine recording career in the decade after leaving the band. The musical partnership with the arranger Pete Rugolo was most propitious – many of the albums he wrote for her are classics, and stand up today as some of the finest examples of the art, in a class with Nelson Riddle's writing for Sinatra. Look for *Something Cool, The Misty Miss Christy, Fair and Warmer, The Song is June, and Gone For the Day*. June was a victim of alcoholism, and her career did not survive the 60s, but the albums she made with Rugolo are wonderful.

Chris Connor – Often compared with June Christy, Chris sounded a bit like June, but her style was her own. She replaced June in the Kenton band, then, like June, struck out on her own to produce many fine recordings, and as a performing artist she outlasted June by nearly four decades. Her first recordings on Bethlehem, then on Atlantic, hold up well today. She still sounded good when I heard her in a Chicago club in the late 80s, and recordings she made in the 90s and in 2003 got good reviews. Look for those Bethlehems, the Atlantics – *Chris Craft, Double Exposure* (with one of Maynard Ferguson's fine early bands) -- and any of the later recordings on various labels. No Chris Connor records are less than very good.

The Hi-Los – This wonderful vocal quartet – Gene Puerling, Clark Burroughs, Bob Morse, Bob Strasen (later Don Shelton) with vocal arrangements by Puerling, made some great recordings during the 50s and 60s. My favorite, *The Hi-Los and All That Jazz*, with the Marty Paich Dektette, has Marty's great arrangements and classic solos by Jack Sheldon. Also look for *Listen, The Hi-Los, I Presume, Suddenly Its The Hi-Los, and All Over The Place*. Most reissues are on Sony. The Hi-Los were major influences on The Beach Boys and Manhattan Transfer. After the band broke up, Puerling formed the Chicago-based Singers Unlimited (with Shelton, Bonny Herman, Len Dresslar) that made many fine recordings through the 70s and 80s. Next, a fine new Christian pop group called Take Six appropriated the Hi-Los sound, bringing it to a new generation of listeners who never heard of the Hi-Los.

The Four Freshmen – The other fine vocal quartet of the 50s and 60s, the Four Freshmen strongly influenced The Beach Boys and Manhattan Transfer. Their finest recordings (on Capitol) were arranged by Pete Rugolo, Dick Reynolds, (*Voices in Modern, The Four Freshmen and Five Trombones, And Five Trumpets, And Five Saxes, Voices and Brass*) and Bill Holman (*The Swingers*). Mosaic issued a complete set that is long sold out; individual CD reissues, typically two LPs on each CD, are on EMI and Collector's Choice.

Barry Harris – One of my very favorite pianists, Barry is highly respected for his harmonic concept, his very generous teaching, and a playing style that can only be described as lovely – Barry Harris is one of the most lyrical of all pianists. Strongly influenced by Monk and Bud Powell, he is perhaps the leading interpreter of their music. Some of my favorite CDs are *Plays Tad Dameron, Al Cohn - Barris Harris Quartet* (also issued as *Barry Harris Trio with Al Cohn*), *Playing for Change* (with Jack Sheldon), *Live in Japan, Live at Maybeck* (solo), *Luminescence, Listen To Barry Harris, The Bird of Red and Gold* (solo).

Roger Kellaway – Another of my very favorite pianists, the brilliant Kellaway stands out as a leader, as a sideman, as a composer, and as a solo pianist. Like most composers and arrangers, his playing is highly original and always interesting. One of his best known compositions is Remembering You, the closing theme of All In the Family. His writing is featured on one of Carmen McRae's finest studio sessions, *I Am Music*, a collaboration with Alan and Marilyn Bergman. His score for A Star Is Born was Oscar-nominated, and he won a Grammy for his writing for Eddie Daniels' *Memos From Paradise* CD. Thanks to all the time spent writing, there was a long gap in his jazz career. A brief return to the jazz scene was in Art Pepper's last rhythm section, and I heard them on the Chicago stop of Art's last

tour, only a month before Art died. Art was playing beautifully, but Kellaway was killing me as much as Art was! Kellaway can be heard to advantage as a sideman on *See You At the Fair* (Ben Webster), and with the Clark Terry/Bob Brookmeyer Quintet. Under his own leadership or co-leadership, there are *Fifty* and *Life's a Take*, both with the wonderful bassist Red Mitchell, *Live at Maybeck Vol 11* (solo), *Meets the Duo* (with Gene Bertoncini and Michael Moore), *A Jazz Portrait of Roger Kellaway* (with Jim Hall), and several nice duo CDs with clarinetist Eddie Daniels.

Sonny Rollins – This magnificent saxophonist has been one of the most exciting and creative players on the scene for more than 60 years. Early recordings were with Bud Powell and the Clifford Brown/Max Roach (he was a member of the band when Clifford was killed in 1956); then under his own name for Prestige (*Saxophone Colossus*, *Tenor Madness*, *Sonny Rollins Vol 1 and 2*), Contemporary (the monumental *Way Out West*, *Newk's Time*), *The Bridge*, *Our Man In Jazz* (RCA Victor). In his 80s, Rollins is still one of the most exciting players in jazz, and received Grammys in 2001 for *This is What I Do* and in 2006 for *Without A Song*, *The 9/11 Concert (recorded 9/16/2001)*.

Dave Pell – A veteran of the Les Brown band of the 40s and 50s, tenor saxophonist Pell has always been a Lester Young disciple. Beginning in the 50s, Pell led a small band that, built on arrangements by Bill Holman, Marty Paich, Shorty Rogers, Med Flory and a rotating collection of interesting players – Holman, Zoot Sims, Jack Sheldon, Bob Burgess, and the wonderful Don Fagerquist – made some very recordings. The most interesting of these, and my personal favorite, is *Swinging In the Old Corral* (recorded in 1956, six months before Rollins' played some of those same tunes on the classic *Way Out West*), and reissued as *High Definition Country*). For a short time during the 80s, Pell led Prez Conference, a four saxophone band that did for the music of Lester Young what Supersax had done a decade earlier for Charlie Parker's – transcriptions of favorite solos arranged for four saxophones by Bill Holman. The band is well documented by *Prez and Joe*, with Bob Cooper, and Basieites Joe Williams, Sweets Edison, and Nat Pierce.

Johnny Richards – Known primarily for his great compositions and arrangements for the Kenton band, Richards did a lot of writing for his own fine bands, and the results were consistently interesting. *Something Else*, a 1956 recording by an all-star West Coast band, is the most exciting by far. First rate New York-based bands recorded *Walk Softly - Run Wild*, *Wide Range*, *Rites of Diablo*, *My Fair Lady - My Way*, and *Spanish Spoken Here*. Recordings by the New York bands were reissued by Mosaic.

Shorty Rogers – Another fine composer and arranger, Shorty was one of those, along with Mulligan, and Paich, whose writing most typifies the west coast sound. As a member of the Woody Herman and Stan Kenton trumpet section, Shorty contributed some of the most swinging arrangements to the books of both bands. Settling in Los Angeles in the 50s, he began writing for and recording with his own big bands and small groups. Shorty's own playing is readily identifiable – light and whimsical is a good description. Look for *Short Stops*, *The Big Shorty Rogers Express*, *Portrait of Shorty*, *Swinging Nutcracker*, and *Courts the Count* as documents of the big bands. The small bands albums were mostly on Atlantic and Capitol, and were reissued by Mosaic. Look for *Modern Sounds* (with Mulligan), *The Swinging Mr. Rogers*, *Martians Come Back*, *Way Up There*, and *Shorty in Stereo*. A few more were on RCA Victor – *Wherever the Four Winds Blow* and *Gigi In Jazz*.

Lambert, Hendricks, and Ross – Singers Dave Lambert, Jon Hendricks, and Annie Ross set the jazz world on fire when they burst onto the scene in the late 50s. Eddie Jefferson and King Pleasure had been singing vocalese for at least a decade, but Jon Hendricks took it up a notch when he wrote inventive lyrics to classic jazz solos for three top flight singers who could not only deliver them at machine-gun tempos, but could also create thrilling improvisations of their own. Their first LP, *Sing A Song of Basie*, had the Basie rhythm section with Basie-compadre Nat Pierce in the piano chair. The whole Basie band was there for their second, *Sing Along With Basie*. A new contract with Columbia Records produced *The Hottest New Group In Jazz*, *Sing Ellington*, *High Flying*, all with small bands, and *The Real Ambassadors*, a jazz suite written by Dave and Iola Brubeck, and performed by Louis Armstrong, Carmen McRae, Lambert, Hendricks and Ross, and the Brubeck Quartet. The trio soldiered

on for a year or so after Annie Ross left the band in 1962, replaced by Yolanda Bavan, but it was never the same, and they broke up in 1964. Lambert died in an auto accident in 1966; Jon Hendricks has had a long and highly productive career; and after a punishing bout with heroin that decimated her voice, **Annie Ross** has been quite successful as an actress in feature films, and in spite of it all, was still capable of a captivating set in a New York club when I last heard her around 2007. In her youth though, Annie Ross was a wonderful singer with great chops and a unique style. *Skylark*, a reissue of a 1956 session with a British rhythm section clearly shows the promise of things to come. I particularly like *Sings A Song With Mulligan* (with Art Farmer and Chet Baker), and *A Gasser* (with Zoot Sims); *Gypsy* (1959) has the backing of an all-star west coast band arranged by Buddy Bregman but is less interesting than it should be, *Sings A Handful of Songs* (1963) is with a good but unidentified British band arranged and conducted by Johnny Spence. *In Hoagyland* (1981) with Georgie Fame, is dreadful. If you're a real fan, you'll dig *Music Is Forever* (1995) with an all-star New York band and great charts. Like that 2007 set in a New York Club, the voice was long gone, her vibrato exceeds her range, and at times she's talking more than singing, but the session is very well produced, and the trouper and musician in her pulls it off.

Red Garland – Best known for his work in the piano chair of the 50s Miles Davis Quintet/Sextet, Red also made some very nice recordings with his own trio on the Prestige, Xanadu, and Galaxy labels, and as a sideman with Art Pepper (*Art Pepper Meets The Rhythm Section*), John Coltrane, and Pepper Adams.

Stuff Smith – One of the great original voices on violin and one of my favorites. It's obvious that Regina Carter listened to Stuff a lot, and when she's swinging at her best she sounds a lot like him. He was a favorite of Norman Granz, who featured him on Verve sessions with Dizzy Gillespie, Oscar Peterson, and others in the Granz stable of stars. Mosaic issued a 4-CD set of his Verve recordings; there are also fine sessions with Joe Venuti, Stephane Grappelli, and Herb Ellis, and several live recordings from Europe, where Stuff spent the last decade of his life. He died in 1967.

Shelley Manne – One of the all time great drummers, he was equally strong kicking a big band, playing high energy bebop, or playing with great sensitivity in a variety of small groups both as a leader and as a sideman. Some of my favorites include *My Fair Lady* (with Andre Previn), small band sessions led by Shorty Rogers, and leading his own small band, Shelley Manne and His Men (often with Russ Freeman and Richie Kamuca) on the Contemporary label.

Richie Kamuca – First coming to prominence in the bands of Woody Herman and Stan Kenton, Richie was strongly influenced by Lester Young, and played in Lester's style all of his short life. No surprise that he's one of my favorite players. Some of his best recordings are with Shelley Manne and His Men, on Contemporary, *Tenors Head-On* (with Bill Perkins), *The Brothers* (with Al Cohn and Bill Perkins), *Primitive Cats* (with Cy Touff), and with Bill Berry's Big Band on *Hello Rev*. Richie died young, of cancer.

John Campbell – A very versatile and exciting pianist, John will knock you out in a big band, a small group, accompanying a singer, and playing solo. He's my favorite of all the pianists of his generation (he turned 50 in 2011). Look for *After Hours*, *Turning Point*, *Live at Maybeck*, and *Working Out* under his own name, and with Clark Terry (*Squeeze Me*, and *Having Fun*). John has also recorded as a sideman with Terry Gibbs, Buddy DeFranco, Mel Torme, Eddie Jefferson, and Cleo Laine.

Eddie Harris – A highly original, intelligent, and emotional tenor saxophonist and composer of several jazz classics (*Listen Here*, *Freedom Jazz Dance*) Chicagoan Eddie Harris was always one of the most interesting musicians on the scene. One of the first musicians to use electronics creatively, and did so with considerable musical and popular success. Always very much his own man and with a highly identifiable sound, he also appealed to a wide range of listeners. His first recording, *Exodus to Jazz*, in 1961, sold two million copies, and was the first jazz instrumental to go gold.

Benny Green – There are (at least) three important musicians with this name. Trombonist Bennie Green, born in Chicago, was active during the 50s and early 60s. A dependably swinging player with a

readily identifiable sound, he recorded mostly for Prestige and Blue Note. I particularly like *Walking Down* (Prestige, 1956) and *Walkin' and Talkin'* (Blue Note, 1959). British tenor saxophonist Benny Green was best known as a writer about jazz, and in the UK, for his radio shows. Pianist Benny Green (born 1963), a native New Yorker now living in Berkeley, California, is a soulful, hard swinging pianist and composer with prodigious technique and both feet firmly planted in bebop. After several years in the Universities of Betty Carter and Art Blakey, the pianist Benny Green is one of the most interesting musicians of his generation. Primarily a trio player, he has enjoyed a long term partnerships in a trio with bassist Ray Brown, then with guitarist Russell Malone and bassist Christian McBride, and most recently with bassist Peter Washington and drummer Kenny Washington (not to be confused with Bay Area singer Kenny Washington), arguably the finest rhythm section on the planet. It's natural that they would work together as a trio – they are often in the studio and on gigs together as the rhythm section for another soloist. Benny's playing and compositions, which are interesting and varied, reflect the strong influences of Bud Powell, Sonny Clark, Kenny Drew, Tadd Dameron, and Thelonius Monk, and last year's Kuumbwa trio gig playing Monk's music was one of the most satisfying I've heard in years. Benny is also a fine rhythm section player and accompanist, and is one of the most sought after players on the scene.

Anat Cohen – A native of Tel Aviv, Anat studied first in Israel, then at Boston's Berklee College of Music before settling in New York in the late 90s. A fine saxophonist and clarinetist solidly grounded in the jazz tradition, she can knock you out playing anything from Goodman to Prez to jazz with a world music influence. Her brother Avishai is an exciting trumpeter (not to be confused with another Avishai Cohen, also active in New York, also from Tel Aviv, a modern jazz bassist).

Al Cohn – Another of the great jazz originals, Al was first a Lester Young disciple before settling into his own somewhat more sinuous style in the late 50s. Cohn first came to prominence as a member of the sax section that played Jimmy Guiffre's *Four Brothers* in Woody Herman's Second Herd, all of whom were firmly under the influence of Lester Young. (The others were Zoot Sims, Stan Getz, and Serge Chaloff.) Their Lestorian sound and Guiffre's writing were a key component of the sound of the band, and remained so long after they had moved on to careers of their own as leaders.

Best known for his his four decade association with Zoot, Al was a fine arranger and composer as well as one of the most interesting of soloists. Al's charts were recorded by Mulligan's Concert Jazz Band, Terry Gibbs, and Woody Herman. He can be heard as a soloist on Xanadu sessions with Barry Harris, Jimmy Rowles, and Dexter Gordon, at the end of his life with Lou Levy on Concord, and on more than a dozen sessions with Zoot Sims on several labels. Their playing together, both live in clubs and on record was one of the nicest things about jazz in the second half of the 20th century. Like most great arrangers, Al's playing was lyrical, flowing, soulful, and highly inventive – and like Zoot, he always told his story well. Although I liked them both a lot, it was Al who really got to me the most.

Zoot Sims – Zoot didn't write, but he was always much better known as a soloist than Al. Zoot's sound was equally identifiable, and although very much his own man by the late 50s, remained more Lestorian throughout his life. My favorites of Zoot's recordings are those with Al, *Loose Blues*, a 1959 Bill Evans' date with Jim Hall where he's sounding a lot like Getz, his later recordings, mostly on Pablo, and some very exciting live recordings from a tour he made with the Mulligan Concert Jazz Band in 1960. Look for *Swiss Radio Days – The Concert Jazz Band featuring Zoot Sims, Zurich, 1960*, and various reissues of Verve recordings of the band in Germany, Italy, and Santa Monica (all of which also feature great playing and writing by Mulligan and Bob Brookmeyer). Zoot's solo features with the *CJB* were *Apple Core* and *Go Home*.

The Usual Suspects – From the 50s and continuing into the 80s, New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles were home to a rotating pool of spectacularly good big band musicians, nearly all of whom were veterans of the great touring bands led by the Dorseys, Jimmy Lunceford, Dizzy Gillespie, Billy Eckstine, Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Woody Herman, Les Brown, and Maynard Ferguson, and had become tired of life on the road. These guys worked all day every day in recording studios, pit bands

for Broadway shows, and scoring stages for movies and TV. Every day, all day, they played new music written for the occasion, sight-reading it and playing first takes that sounded like they had been playing it for years. When a solo was called for, many were first rate (and highly identifiable) improvisors. A New York recording session might include Thad Jones, Clark Terry, Snooky Young, Al Porcino, Joe Wilder, Ernie Royal, Johnny Coles, Bernie Glow, Jimmy Nottingham, Charlie Shavers, Burt Collins, Doug Mettome, Jimmy Cleveland, Frank Rehak, Bob Brookmeyer, Billy Byers, Bill Watrous, Eddie Bert, Jimmy Knepper, Tom McIntosh, Slide Hampton, Willie Dennis, Kai Winding, Vic Dickinson, Julius Watkins, Phil Woods, Gene Quill, Lee Konitz, Jerry Dodgion, Frank Foster, Frank Wess, Jerome Richardson, Al Cohn, Zoot Sims, Wayne Shorter, Steve Lacy, Pepper Adams, Eddie Daniels, Frank Socolow, Barry Galbraith, Kenny Burrell, Danny Barker, Roland Hanna, Tommy Flanigan, Hank Jones, Barry Harris, Milt Hinton, Paul Chambers, Richard Davis, Bill Crow, Gary Peacock, George Duvivier, Buddy Clark, Dave Bailey, Jo Jones, Elvin Jones, Art Blakey, and Max Roach. In Los Angeles a leader could choose from Al Porcino, Ray Triscari, John Audino, Carmel Jones, Maynard Ferguson, Shorty Rogers, Buddy Childers, Pete and Conte Candoli, Don Fagerquist, Stu Williamson, Jack Sheldon, Carl Saunders, Ron Stout, Sweets Edison, Milt Bernhart, Frank Rosolino, Carl Fontana, Ray Sims, Bob Enevoldson, Charlie Mariano, Herb Geller, Bud Shank, Joe Maini, Art Pepper, Richie Kamuca, Don Menza, Teddy Edwards, Harold Land, Bob Cooper, Bill Perkins, Bill Holman, Jimmy Guiffre, Jack Nimitz, Lanny Morgan, Marty Paich, Hampton Hawes, Roger Kellaway, Victor Feldman, Jimmy Rowles, Pete Jolly, Lou Levy, Red Callender, Leroy Vinnegar, Buddy Clark, Monty Budwig, Shelley Manne, Frank Capp, Mel Lewis, Nick Ceroli, and Stan Levey. In Chicago a leader could call Art Hoyle, Bobby Lewis, Johnny Howell, Cy Touff, Bill Porter, Ralph Craig, Joe Daley, Don Shelton, Eddie Johnson, Lenny Druss, Kenny Soderblom, Roger Pemberton, Ron Kolber, Larry Novak, Eddie Baker, Jodie Christian, John Young, John Campbell, Jim Atlas, Johnny Frigo, Rick Frigo, Wilbur Campbell, and a dozen other fine players you've never heard of. These musicians worked and recorded together so often, and as such a consistently high level, that, other than looking for a particular sound for a solo for feeling for a particular kind of writing, it didn't matter who you called, the results would be first rate, and the musicians came to be known collectively as "the usual suspects."