

JAZZ

why some are & some aren't

FESTIVALS

by dan morgenstern

The term "jazz festival" was coined almost eight years ago, at Newport. As seems to be the case with most jazz terms, it has become difficult to define. In 1960, a year which saw the number of "festival" events rise to a peak which 1961 seemingly won't reach, the term covered everything from pre-packaged one-night stands to elaborate cornucopias. Jazz "festivals" were held in ballparks, in tents and in theatres, indoors and under open skies. Some were dismal failures, other brilliant successes. And Newport, the daddy of them all, was cut off in *medias res* when Bacchus overwhelmed Dionysus and Apollo with the subtle aid of Mammon.

It is most encouraging that in spite of the riots, jazz will be back at Newport this year. But one is tempted to conclude that the motivating force behind this resurrection was financial rather than spiritual. For better or worse, jazz festivals have become big business, and they are here to stay.

Newport, during the seven-year reign of George Wein and the Lorillards, becomes in retrospect an index to the trials and tribulations of the jazz festival, a new and uniquely American genre combining high seriousness and low comedy, simple entertainment and mystical rite, commerce and art—a mixture typical of all manifestations of truly popular culture throughout the ages. A current favorite topic of discussion in jazz journalism is "Art vs. Entertainment." The dichotomy is arbitrary and artificial. Jazz is and always will be both, and this dictum will furnish a clue to the future of the jazz festival. If this very promising form is to grow and survive, it will require better planning and thinking by promoters, directors, musicians and public than have hitherto been demonstrated.

Avoiding the pitfalls of semantics, let us define a jazz festival in terms of what it should be rather than what it most frequently is. A jazz festival should be a high point in the activities of both musicians and listeners. A jazz festival should be a forum for free exchange of ideas within the art. A jazz festival should find room for music which is

seldom (or never) heard in other public contexts. A jazz festival should be a judicious mixture of the old and the new, the familiar and the unexpected. A jazz festival should provide an opportunity for musicians to prepare and present work which represents them at their best. A jazz festival should be an annual ingathering of the jazz community *in toto*; it should provide the fullest opportunity for free and frank discussion of what ails this community. A jazz festival, at its best, should result in an affirmation of jazz as the greatest popular art of our time—the music of America and of the world.

In bits and pieces, jazz festivals have been all these things. But they have also been three-ring circuses, crass commercial supermarkets of jazz, cold and uninspired variety shows, and unseemly mixtures of pretentiousness and sham.

In the early years of Newport, jazz musicians felt it to be an honor to be asked to participate. After the advent of such acts as the Four Freshmen, The Kingston Trio and Pat Suzuki, the enthusiasm of honest jazz performers became noticeably dampened. Ironically, the Newport program of 1960 was the best and least compromising since 1957, but the point of this became lost in the riot's aftermath. This year's Newport program is anything but boldly experimental, and while it promises to present much worthwhile jazz, it can hardly be expected to become more than an index to the hits of the nightclub circuit and record scene over the past twelve months—with the addition of peripheral materials from the popular culture of the day. Monterey promises to keep to the high standard set in the past, and it is to be hoped that the public will this year support this event as fully as it has long deserved. But even Monterey has often looked better on paper than in the flesh. Randall's Island, the second-oldest festival, has shown indications of a desire to improve and expand. Being in an enviable position as New York City's only real festival event, Randall's draws its audiences from the largest single pool of jazz aficionados in the country, and, weather permitting, can pull a sizeable audience no matter what the fare. Until now, the promoters have not exercised notable imagination in programming or presentation. Great South Bay, one of the best festivals, bit the dust through a combination of bad luck and poor promotion.



These are the large, established events. Two possible directions are indicated for their future. One, the negative, would see these festivals turned into mammoth displays of popular favorites, going through established routines and offering the spectator nothing more than a vast panoramic view of the contemporary night-club and concert scene. The best that could be said for such enterprises is that they would provide well-paid bookings for established jazz acts. Which is all right, but far from fulfillment of the promises inherent in the festival form. The other, unlikely to occur elsewhere but at Monterey, would lead to the presentation of carefully planned and staged special events: commissioned works, staged historical surveys, reunions and unorthodox combinations, etc. This would be all for the good, unless it should veer in the direction of self-conscious and slick calculation. But in any event, this direction is much preferable to the other.

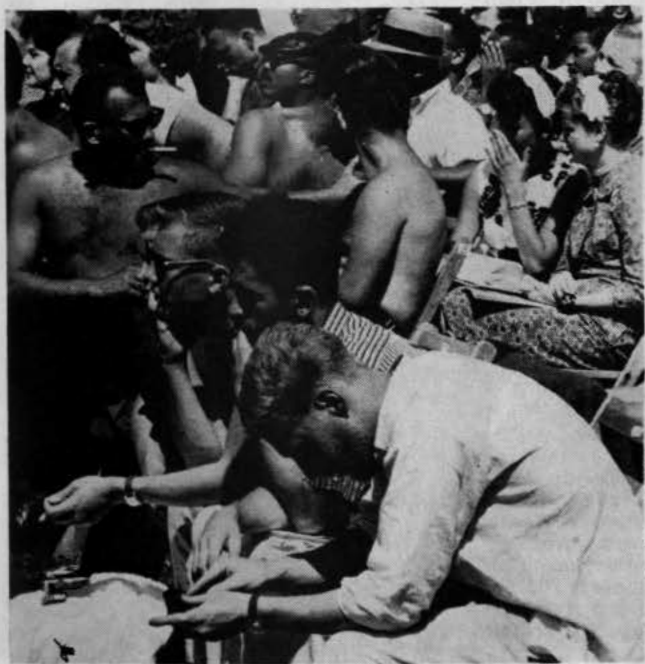
There can be no doubt that large festivals have become highly expensive propositions. The general jazz public is probably not aware of the high price of name talent in the field. Jazz today is top-heavy with expensive acts, and if the trend continues the results may be most unfortunate. There is, however, a vast reservoir of talent available at reasonable prices. Very often, this talent is not at all inferior. Furthermore, it provides the added value of novelty to some, nostalgia to others, and freshness to all. This is where the smaller, regional festivals come in. It is to be strongly hoped that more of these "little" festivals will be staged this year than the few which have been announced thus far. Of these, the Virginia Beach Festival could serve as a model. It is, as a festival should be, situated in a pleasant outdoor setting. It offers a variety of fare. And it relies, for a goodly portion of the program, on regional talent. There are gifted jazz musicians, young and veteran, in almost every nook and cranny of the United States. The opportunity to play to larger audiences, alongside some of the glamorous names in jazz, is invaluable to such players. And for the enterprising talent-scout, such festival programming is a godsend. Virginia Beach also shows a healthy respect for tradition. It is unfortunate that the large, prosperous festivals have consistently slighted musicians of the "mainstream" generation, seemingly unaware of

the fact that time does not stand still for the creative artist. Virginia Beach, in booking such talent as Buck Clayton's *truly* all-star eight-piece band, has shown insight that should be demonstrated by the major league as well. It is quite conceivable that the well-planned, well-run smaller festival eventually will supersede the giants in quality and artistic relevance. It could become something like Hollywood as opposed to "art" films—with the important distinction that most jazz, happily is less *recherché* and arty than other contemporary creative endeavours.

And that brings us to an important point: the rise of the jazz festival is a logical and generic result of possibilities long inherent in jazz. The "art vs. entertainment" dilemma is fictitious. Jazz has always been more than just music. Jazz is exciting to watch as well as exciting to hear. Jazz is an art possessed of such great vitality that it needs no frills and devices to become marketable. We often tend to forget that jazz grew out of an environment in which the sanctimonious western isolation of "art" was unknown. Jazz was "art" long before a handful of intellectuals pronounced it to be such, and much jazz which today is slighted and disparaged by these discoverers and their heirs still is—perhaps more so than the other kind. Time will tell. Suffice it to say that jazz is naturally theatrical, and that a jazz festival has certain decisive advantages over conventional music festivals. Jazz is also a cult, a phenomenon which offers the initiate an opportunity for total involvement. This, too, is a factor favoring the development of jazz festivals. The boorish bachannal at Newport in 1960 was only a grotesque caricature of the truly dionysian spirit which jazz is capable of arousing—even in the 20th Century. And last but not least, jazz is a unique manifestation of the spirit of freedom—not hedonistic freedom, but the democratic kind, in which each individual is free to realize his own fullest potential only through respect for and collaboration with others. That, too, is something the gentlemen who organize jazz festivals should remember.

It is curious but true that jazz has always been sold short by the very people who profess to value it most highly. (The reader may recall a recent comment by Nat Hentoff in this magazine to the effect that any writer past his early thirties who is totally involved in jazz is a petrified adolescent or somesuch.) The present state of affairs in jazz, of which festivals are only one aspect, reflects this attitude. At the risk of ridicule from ones supposed peers (even some jazz musicians have acquired a cultural inferiority complex), one hesitates to theorize about the potential power of this our music. Perhaps there hasn't as yet been a *real* jazz festival because there aren't enough people who believe in jazz. As long as this holds true, we are at the mercy of the money boys, the smart operators and the "uneducated" public. We should worry a little less about jazz being "accepted" and fully accept it ourselves.

In the meanwhile, attendance at a jazz festival, while apt to give rise to considerable frustration and ire, is also always a source of much pleasure and surprise, even of moments of truth. Go to as many as you can, but be sure to let the people in charge know what you don't like as well as what you like. In the final analysis, the future of jazz festivals is in the hands of the public. If the jazz festivals degenerate, we will have cheated ourselves of a great experience. Jazz is the only indigenous art of our times which is a potential source of riches comparable to such great popular creations as the theater of Athens or Elizabethan England or Italy's grand opera. The promise is there.



photographs / herb mitzer

Festival Roundup

Festival season is upon us once again. In spite of the melee at Newport last year, a healthy schedule of activities is being planned throughout the land at this writing. The following guide to festivals is as complete as we could make it at press time, but the reader is forewarned that changeability is in the nature of the genre.

If you plan to attend a jazz festival, be sure to make reservations ahead of time—for tickets and lodgings. Otherwise, you might wind up with second best. In most festival towns, the local chamber of commerce will be found very helpful. If the festival of your choice is an outdoor event, it is advisable to bring along some warm clothing—and don't forget rainwear. At Newport, it is recommended to plan your meals at in-between hours; at regular lunch and dinner time it gets pretty crowded. In the early years of festivals, it was a big question whether one could hear the music adequately in the lower-priced areas. By now, the standards of PA are sufficiently high to almost certainly assure proper listening conditions for all present. However, if you want to see what's going on, it pays to shell out a few more \$\$ for an up-front seat. Or bring along your binoculars. Whatever your tastes, remember that your neighbors' may be different. A jazz festival caters to a broad audience. The small element which appears at festivals solely to worship their idols can be a source of distraction to more catholic listeners. Let a hundred flowers bloom—and have a ball.

INDIANA JAZZ FESTIVAL: JUNE 23-25

This event takes place in Evansville, Ind., at the Municipal Stadium. Festival Director Hal Lobree organized last year's bash on the spur of the moment when the sponsors of the event scheduled for French Lick, Ind., pulled out in the aftermath of Newport. A unique feature of this Indiana festival is the solid community basis on which it is organized. Co-sponsors are the local Junior Chamber of Commerce and the Fraternal Order of Police. The 1960 festival was a resounding success. The local citizenry seem genuinely well disposed towards visiting jazz fans. Ticket orders should be addressed to Festival Headquarters, 131 Locust St., Evansville, Ind.

• Set for this year's opener on June 23 are the Dave Brubeck Quartet and Jack Teagarden's Combo (featuring Don Goldie on trumpet) plus the winners of the 1960 National Collegiate Jazz Band Championship, the North Texas State College band from Denton, and Jimmy Rushing.

• The Duke Ellington Orchestra will be featured on June 24 in a "blowing" concert of Ellington classics. The remainder of that evening's program will be given over to modern jazz, with no groups definitely booked at this writing.

• The Duke returns on the 25th, with a completely different program devoted to extended works from the vast treasury of Ellingtonia. Among them may be Black, Brown and Beige, Suite Thursday, and Nutcracker Suite.

Also on hand will be Al Hirt and his sextet and singer Lurlean Hunter. According to a press release from the festival, a vast amount of letters requesting Hirt were received from all over the country, and local straw polls confirmed this indication of the 300-pound trumpeters' current popularity. The afternoon will be devoted to a program of gospel music, Church Roots of Jazz, produced by Gary Kramer. Featured artists: Marion Williams & the Stars of Faith; The Staple Singers; a local choir and an authentic New Orleans Jazz Band (George Lewis or Paul Barbarin). Special narration was written by Roscoe Brown.

MUSIC AT NEWPORT: JUNE 30-JULY 3

After much doubt and some premature rumors, it is now definite that Newport is on again. Sid Bernstein and John Drew are presenting this year's event, which carefully avoids use of the word "jazz" in the official title. Among the innovations and improvements are such features as special construction at Freebody Park to handle possible overflow crowds, patrolled and lit beaches and parking lots, provision for 67,000 beds in the area, and special afternoon programs of dance and comedy. Promoter Bernstein has even made prearrangements for 2 nightly shows, if more people than can be comfortably accommodated at one sitting should turn up.

• The program, with several additional bookings more than likely to be added, shapes up as follows: June 30, 8:30 pm: Louis Armstrong, Maynard Ferguson Band, Cannonball Adderley, Dave Brubeck, Carmen McRae, Lambert, Hendricks & Ross, Ramsey Lewis Trio. MC's: Carl Henry (WPAW) & Sid Mark (WHAT).

• July 1: The afternoon will be devoted to a program of dance, featuring Leon James & Al Minns, Carmen de Lavallade and troupe, and others. The evening show starts at 8 and offers Count Basie, Chico Hamilton, John Coltrane, Horace Silver, Gloria Lynne and the Slide Hampton Octet. Mort Fega (WEVD) will be the MC.

• July 2: Sunday afternoon will be given over to comedy, with Bob Hope heading a troupe of funny cats and chicks. The night's activities, starting again at 8, list Gerry Mulligan and the Concert Jazz Band, Stan Getz, Anita O'Day, Art Blakey cum Messengers, The Jazztet, George Shearing, and Eddie Harris, a new tenorman from Chicago. Symphony Sid (WADO) will be on hand as MC.

• July 3: The afternoon (and this, please note, is the only afternoon program firmly set at press time) belongs to Miss Judy Garland, perhaps with a jazz backing, perhaps not. The final evening has two big bands, Duke Ellington and Quincy Jones, as well as Miriam Makeba, James Moody with Eddie Jefferson, Cal Tjader, Oscar Peterson, Bill Henderson and Sarah Vaughan. MC is Norm Nathan, (WHDH). Tickets can be purchased by mail from Music at Newport, 201 W. 46th St., NY 36, NY and 226 Bellevue Av., Newport, R. I. They are scaled

at \$3.20, 4.30 and 5.40 including tax. For the Judy Garland afternoon, tickets come at \$2.50, 3.50 and 4.50.

VIRGINIA BEACH JAZZ FESTIVAL: JULY 14 AND 15.

This is the third, (and biggest) year for Virginia Beach. This is not a mammoth festival, but seating capacity has been expanded this year, taking advantage of the natural beauty of the surroundings. Tom Gwaltney, producer of the festival, is a well-known jazz musician and has received cooperation from the local community in his endeavors to make things swing the right way.

• The program shapes up as a good balance between local and nationally known talent. On Friday, July 14, Count Basie will be the headliner. Also on hand: Lambert, Hendricks & Ross; a mainstream group headed by Max Kaminsky and Vic Dickenson; Pat Roberts, a local pianist well received by critics in his two previous outings at Virginia Beach, with his trio; and the Jimmy Crummett Brass Choir, a Richmond, Va., group featuring the leader's baritone sax and flute backed by a bevy of trombones.

• On July 15, the big band will be Sal Salvador's. Buck Clayton's All Stars (probable personnel: Buck and Emmet Berry, Dickie Wells, Buddy Tate, Earle Warren, Sir Charles



a guide to coming jazz events

Thompson, Gene Ramey and Oliver Jackson), Jimmy Rushing, Lurlean Hunter, and the Ruby Braff—Marshall Brown Sextet round out the national contingent. The local boys will be represented by the Gwaltney-Bennett-Thomas Quintet. Producer Gwaltney plays alto, clarinet and vibes. Norman "Jeep" Bennett plays sax, clarinet and vibes plus bass, piano and guitar. He has worked with Tommy Dorsey and Charlie Barnet. Newton Thomas, a gifted pianist, was heard briefly at Birdland last year. Reservations and information are available from Virginia Beach Jazz Festival, 217 69th St., Virginia Beach, Va.

RANDALL'S ISLAND JAZZ FESTIVAL:

AUG. 25-27 This, the second-oldest jazz festival, is held at a stadium on an island in the East River, easily accessible from Manhattan. This year, a pleasant innovation in MCing is in the offing: instead of the endless stream of DJ's assigned to this chore in past years, Jon Hendricks has been signed as musical advisor and will, in conjunction with his famous cohorts, introduce the acts *a la* Monterey '60. Already contracted at this early juncture are Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, the Dukes of Dixieland (a departure in policy) and Buddy Rich for Aug.

25; Cannonball, Gerry Mulligan and Brubeck for Aug. 26 and Dizzy, Stan Kenton, Joe Williams and Carmen McRae for Aug. 27. Franklin Geltman is producing.

MONTEREY JAZZ FESTIVAL: SEPT. 22-24

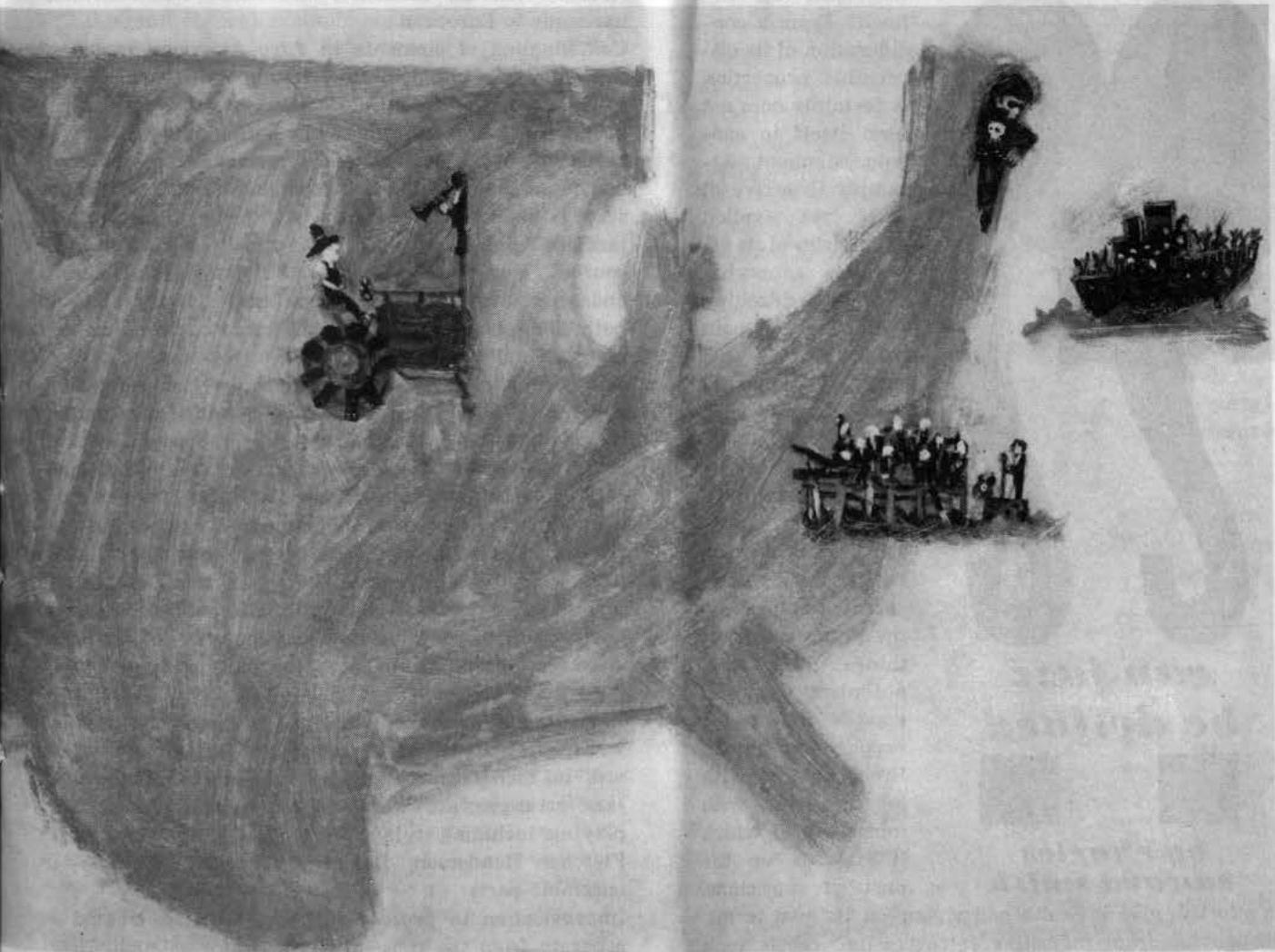
This California festival, produced by Jimmy Lyons, has become the most widely acclaimed of the majors. There's always something new forthcoming at Monterey, and the surroundings are a gas. Due to the late date of the festival, not much of this year's program had been set at press-time. Already signed, however, was Duke Ellington (it is a pleasure, indeed, that Ellington, currently in one of his major creative periods, is really making the festival scene this year), who will MC all three nights and take over one afternoon to do with as he pleases, as well as putting in a regular appearance with his orchestra. Dizzy Gillespie, too, has been signed. Diz will appear with his own group, and as trumpet soloist on Sunday afternoon. Among the works he will perform is a 35-minute suite composed by J J Johnson, who will also be a key artist in the festival lineup. That much is definite. Among Lyons' planned goodies are a hand-picked group of West-Coast jazzmen led by Gil Evans. Evans is also slated to fill in

for Monterey's regular musical adviser, John Lewis, who will be in Europe this year. A modern-mainstream set featuring Dizzy, Johnny Hodges, Lawrence Brown, and possibly Earl Hines is planned. Basie, Shearing and a couple of singers are also among the possibilities being considered.

EUROPE Jazz festivals are scheduled overseas at Antibes, France (Mingus did well there last year); Brussels, Belgium; Essen, Germany (held in May) and Beaulieu, England. It is heartening that Beaulieu (which the British pronounce "Bewley") is still with us, in spite of a riot last year similar to the Newport mess. Three cheers for Lord Montagu, angel and host of this event.

HOPEFULS Among the tentatively planned jazz festivals this year are three slated by George Wein's PAMA combine: Detroit, Buffalo and Boston. It would be a pity indeed for George, who, so to speak, invented the jazz festival, not to be among this year's producers.

Other rumored festival sites for 1961 are Atlantic City (a sell-out in '60), Toronto (somewhat of a flop last year) and Philadelphia. In addition, there will be numberless local events billed as "jazz festivals" throughout the land. We'll keep you posted.



Recent observations—one by a well known folklorist, the other by a distinguished composer—convince me that accepted attitudes with regard to Negro American folk music and jazz are as much a product of segregation as high rents in Harlem. The gist of these observations, an idea that is far from novel, was that the basic contribution of African to American music was rhythmic. (Anyone familiar with jazz intonation and phrasing should appreciate the fallacy of this description of rhythm as a discrete entity!) In the first instance the argument was buttressed by the fact that many Negro spirituals have been traced to psalms, hymns and gospel tunes. For that matter, melodies of many blues, work-songs and early jazz tunes can be traced to European sources. But musical heritage is not a private property of the mind, or of the blood line. It represents what is accessible and, of course, meaningful.

Musical originality is evident in what is done with heritage, regardless of source. Since both "white" and Negro spirituals evolved, but only in the South, the implications of this should be obvious. A major error seems to have been in confusing heritage (culture) with heredity (chromosomes). Nor does it add to our understanding to be told, now that Africa is emerging on the world scene, that the blues, for example, are African when in fact they are Afro-American. Perhaps these prefatory remarks will seem superfluous to what follows. Nevertheless, accepted ideas of musical heritage need a little sorting out, if not de-segregating!

Can jazz be defined? From a consideration of its discernible properties, it certainly does not lend itself to capsule comment. Attempts to arrive at brief yet explicit summaries of its attributes, properties and relationships, while not without merit, suggest that jazz is a musical genre and as such may be adequately defined only through description. For all its impressive technical innovations and widespread influence—the latter, like most things ubiquitous, not always for the good—jazz is still a very young music. Preoccupation with its past and with music out of which it grew is, on the part of musicians,

as funk, hard bop, mainstream and soul are signposts on the road back to the blues. This is the well with the clean young bird and the cool, cool water.

Among qualities of jazz that distinguish it from other types of American music, three come readily to mind. These are: its relationship to Afro-American oral traditions, instrumental usage influenced by the latter, and thematic material representing further assimilation and alteration of a complex of African-European-American musical materials.

The potent thrust of jazz, its germinating force, is to be found in its West African antecedents. The nature of jazz—what, basically, it is—is to be found somewhere between the Africa of the past and the America of the present, in such music as represents these three hundred years of musical acculturation. To be sure, to describe jazz from this vantage point will not illuminate every corner of its 1960's complexity, with performances varying from those of a folk character to the jazz-concert blend that Gunther Schuller calls "Third Stream" music. But it should—if the attempt is successful—help to bring into focus characteristics that distinguish jazz from other music, and that relate it to Afro-Cuban, Afro-Brazilian and other types of Afro-American music—each of which is, of course, unique in its own right.

In view of the somewhat polyphonous nature of group improvisation in early jazz, it is interesting to note that in judging blues and spirituals, musicologists tend to interpret the more polyphonous to the predominance of strongly African influence, the more conventionally harmonic to European.

Commingleing of elements in Afro-American music of this country resulted in new singing styles (worksongs, spirituals, blues) long before jazz emerged as a music in its own right, though how much of a hiatus there was between early blues and early jazz is at present anybody's guess. (The lag in acceptance of the folk blues scale is another matter entirely.) Particular aspects of jazz are indebted to West African or Western European sources. But among the most strikingly indigenous characteristics of jazz are those that clearly relate to both, for example, its tonal-rhythmic conventions and instrumental techniques.

The basic Afro-American root music of jazz is reflected in what is called *blues intonation*, a deliberate shading of tone and the production of timbre appropriate to it. It is also reflected in adaptation of the *blues beat*, commonly called *swing*—manipulation of the beat, especially retardation or anticipation of accent, and cross-rhythms. A feature of the best jazz, though not unique to it, is rhythmic aliveness. Though rhythmic accent has definition, it does not consist in discrete accents. It is not difficult to conceive how manipulation of the beat, creating tension, contributes to this impression of a fluid living rhythm.

In scalar and harmonic usage and in cross-meters, much written jazz attempts to reproduce jazz elements that are, in fact, features of the root-music. Many early jazz "arrangements" were adaptations of improvisational playing, including style and *attack*—e.g. Armstrong with Fletcher Henderson, Beiderbecke with Goldkette—in ensemble parts.

Improvisation in present-day jazz is often treated as separate from the musical performance as such. How-



can jazz be defined



by "charles
edward smith

an effort to give it health and vigour on its own terms. Though far from indicating retrogression, labels such

ever, in folk music related to it, in much early jazz, and even in some contemporary jazz, improvisation is warp and woof of the musical fabric. Among other aspects of jazz that refer back to Afro-American sources are *riffs* (musical phrases) employed compositionally that hark back to statement-and-response patterns. Typical also are *breaks*—two, four, sometimes eight-bar cadenzas, often played against stop-time—and an extended phrasing of the melodic line (from blues), both of which at times appear to defy the limitations of formal measures. Ornette Coleman is said to be “trying to extend his melodic freedom into the area of rhythm by refusing to recognize the bar line” (Don Heckman, *Jazz Monthly*)—an amusing sidelight on the turns heritage will take. To be sure, triumph over the bar-line is not new in jazz—there are beautiful examples of it in Earl Hines’ piano solos of the 1920’s—what is new is that jazz musicians should talk about it!

An important aspect of heritage, though not always stressed as such is jazz phrasing in its utile function of delineating the melodic line. Every scalar system may be said to have its own logic, of which phrasing is an extension—related, as it is, to harmony, the notes of the chord. That jazz phrasing is related to that of the blues, is demonstrable. But since in contemporary jazz the individual has, in the ears of the listener, taken on the glamour of uniqueness, a jazzman’s originality is often stressed, rather than his role in furthering tradition. As jazz grew away from its folk roots, changes in the environment influenced changes in the music itself—the most obvious example being the solo line that came into prominence more and more as jazz emerged nationally.

When Louis Armstrong came to Chicago in 1922 to join King Oliver in the latter’s Creole Jazz Band, “There was no star,” Warren “Baby” Dodds, the bands drummer, reminded us (*Evergreen Review*), “but everybody had to come through.” By the late 1920’s the *individuality* of Armstrong was given such emphasis, by musicians and jazz enthusiasts alike, that his use of a common, what has been called a New Orleanian phrasing, as the basis for his uniqueness, was all but lost sight of. In much the same way but even more exaggeratedly out-of-focus, was a tendency to attribute Charlie Parker’s phrasing on alto saxophone to his admittedly fresh approach to harmony in the context of his improvisational style, failing to take into account that, like that of Armstrong, it was based upon a logic of phrasing that was an outgrowth of blues.

Harold Courlander, in a book to be published by Columbia University Press, sums up characteristics that tend to distinguish jazz from its folk roots:

“There is in jazz an intensive drive toward change and innovation, superimposed upon an ever-more-distant ‘tradition.’ Although much of jazz is not strictly ‘literate’ (that is, written, in contradistinction to folk music), there is considerable arranging, manipulating, rehearsing, rendition in the style of this or that performer, and stress on devices (both instrumental and musical). Despite the theoretical freedom of improvisation, the performers nevertheless have a non-folk, non-written approach to their music.” In folk music, on the other hand, “Offbeat performances of a ‘different’ or ‘sensational’ or ‘virtuoso’ (in the broad sense) nature is not

nearly as well thought of as faithfulness to tradition.” Most folk music is, as Mr. Courlander puts it, “in an oral, community tradition. It has immediate meaning in its own environment, is more often than not functionally integrated into community life, and is conservative and slow to change. . . . In folk music tradition there is little value placed upon newness or variation, or improvisation on old established themes or ways.”

However, tradition in Negro American folk music is unique, if only for the circumstances of its early environment. While Anglo-American folk music, for example, represented a continuity from that of the British Isles, Afro-American folk music had, so to speak, to be born, with all the turbulence that that implies.

Even during Slavery in the United States there was little of that tribal identity that still persists, in some respects, in the West Indies and about which Mr. Courlander writes so engagingly in “The Drum And The Hoe” (U. of Cal. Press, 1960). There was, instead, a mixture of African elements with music of West European derivation. Broadly speaking, phases of Negro American folk music consisted of a series of magnificent improvisations.

What we know of tradition in Negro American folk music suggests that, to some extent, it has been non-static, non-formalized, and of great mobility. Following Emancipation much of its burden shifted from spirituals to secular songs. The apparently rapid maturation of blues form—kinship of which to spirituals is obvious—must have been stimulated by country-city relationships. For example, the blues were not a part of the minstrels, they were a type of folk song brought into them and thereafter, into written music. When Ma Rainey sang the blues to country audiences she was, in fact, bringing them home.

“Jazz,” observes Mr. Courlander—who elsewhere makes it clear that he means most jazz and not the exceptional—“is not folk music as we are accustomed to understand that term, but a specialized popular art which owes its existence, form, inspiration, and character to various folk elements in the national music.” To which one might add that since the exceptional, in jazz, would include a performance involving both the Modern Jazz Quartet and the Beaux Arts String Quartet as well as a performance in which Louis Armstrong supports Bessie Smith, it is essential to appreciate the divergent areas upon which jazz impinges.

In melodic material, jazz owes its greatest debt to Negro American folk music, particularly to the blues, but its assimilation and adaptation of music outside this area has been an important feature of jazz from its earliest days. So also has been the impact of instrumental styles, such as those employed in Negro brass bands.

Borrowing and blending the music of the period, jazz ventured out of its regional setting early in this century, equipped with a formidable repertoire, parts of which are still coming to light. From New Orleans’ blues, stomps and joys to the thoughtfully orchestrated writing of Gil Evans, the happily conceived and beautifully ordered compositions of John Lewis, and the intimate, often amusingly contrived, jazz pieces of Charlie Mingus, jazz—like any true musical genre—has also proved itself compositionally.