

the **Sax** section



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THE SAXOPHONE IN JAZZ

An Outline History

by

Dan Morgenstern

Most of our musical instruments (electronics aside) evolved gradually from ancient archetypes, but the saxophone was invented on the drawing board in the 1840s by Adolphe Sax (1814-1894), a Belgian instrument maker in search of a sound that would combine the warmth of wood with the power of brass. The family of instruments he came up with have a reed (resembling a clarinet's) like a woodwind and a brass body.

The main types of saxophones in use today mirror the range of the symphonic string section. From highest to lowest, they are the *soprano* in E flat; the *alto* in E flat; the *tenor* in B flat; the *baritone* in B flat, and (much less common than the others) the *bass* in B flat. Excepting the straight soprano, all these are built in S-shaped form, but once there were both straight and curved variants of all the saxes, including many now extinct forms (such as the stritch and manzello played by Rahsaan Roland Kirk). The best known hybrid was the C-Melody, the only saxophone not in B flat or E flat; a non-transposing horn pitched between alto and tenor. Easy to play and once very popular, it died out because of its inadaptability to section work.

To Sax's disappointment, his invention was not embraced by serious composers, and during his lifetime, only Bizet's use of it in his *L'Arlesienne* Suite could have brought Sax pleasure. Later, Debussy, Ravel and Ibert in France and Glasunov in Russia made good if limited use of it, and such later composers as Webern, Shostakovich, Milhaud and Wolpe have employed it on occasion. There is an extensive literature for saxophone quartet, including many transcriptions, but before jazz liberated it, the saxophone was mainly confined to military and other brass band use.

It was also heard in vaudeville, where the first great jazz saxophonist, *Sidney Bechet*, sometimes appeared, and the man who gave the saxophone true jazz currency, *Coleman Hawkins*, was exposed to it via the Brown Brothers, a group of six instrumentalists who utilized the entire saxophone family in their act. Stunts and grunts aside, they could really play.

But the man who popularized the saxophone was *Rudy Wiedoft* (1893-1940), an American. He was the first to abandon the non-vibrato way of playing the instrument, inherited from the French woodwind tradition, and give it a new sound. He also introduced design modifications and many tonguing and fingering effects and tricks. His popular virtuosos instrumentals, such as *Saxophobia*, in no small way helped make the saxophone part of regular dance band instrumentation, a trend that began in the late 'teens.

Though long identified by the layman with jazz per se, the saxophone was a relative latecomer to the music. Significantly, the first jazz saxophone giant played the soprano—the instrument closest of all the saxes to another horn important to jazz from the start, the clarinet. Sidney Bechet was an accomplished clarinetist when he picked up soprano. The bigger, stronger horn was ideally suited to his romantic conception and powerful vibrato, but he had few followers. The instrument remained an occasional “double” until John Coltrane took it up in the '60s and gave it unprecedented popularity.

Though he didn't develop a viable saxophone style until years after Bechet had perfected his, Hawkins must rank as the man who gave the instrument jazz status and stature. A clever technician on the tenor when he made his recording debut with Mamie Smith's Jazz Hounds in 1922, he matured as a creative musician under the spell of Louis Armstrong, his colleague for a key year in Fletcher Henderson's band, from late 1924 to late '25. Hawkins himself remained with Henderson until 1934, and during this decade established himself and his instrument as one of the leading voices in jazz.

The Henderson band also launched the first musically significant saxophone section, shaped and led by *Don Redman*, a multi-instrumentalist and arranger who later had his own bands and specialized on alto. The early sections had two or at the most three members, who between them disposed over an arsenal of reed instruments (ranging up to no less than 20). Clarinet was a mandatory double and remained so until

at least the mid-'40s. The lead role went to the alto, and by the time the Swing Era had arrived and big bands proliferated, no band could be great without first-rate men in the three key positions of lead alto, lead trumpet, and drums.

By then, the standard section consisted of four men, though *Benny Carter* and Don Redman had begun to write for five saxes in the early '30s. The most-used combination, via Henderson and Benny Goodman's band, was two altos and two tenors, one of the latter doubling baritone. But Duke Ellington had two altos, one doubling soprano, the other bass; one tenor, and one baritone, while Count Basie used one alto, two tenors and baritone. Jimmie Lunceford's superb section used five—two altos, two tenors, baritone—by the late '30s, and this became the standard setup for most bands, remaining so until today (with at least some soprano and much flute doubling, as well as some clarinet and bass clarinet). Woody Herman's band introduced the unorthodox three tenor-one baritone "Four Brothers" setup via Jimmy Giuffre in 1947; it is often modified by Herman's lead alto.

In individual roles, the two dominant saxes soon became alto and tenor. On the former, to confuse matters, an important early influence was *Frank Trumbauer*, who played C-Melody. Important altoists of the '20s included Benny Carter, Don Redman, *Jimmy Dorsey*, *Otto Hardwicke* and *Johnny Hodges*, all of whom had developed significant solo styles before the decade was up.

By the mid-'30s, the decisive stylist were Carter, Hodges, and a whiz of a newcomer, Lunceford's *Willie Smith*. Individualists included *Pete Brown* and *Buster Smith*, the latter a decisive early influence on a young man named *Charlie Parker*, who by 1945 had become *the* new voice in jazz. His genius dominated the approach to the alto for decades, with *Lee Konitz* the only major voice not under his complete spell until the arrival of *Eric Dolphy* and *Ornette Coleman* and their radical new concepts in the late '50s.

On tenor, Hawkins himself had cited such predecessors as Happy Caldwell and Stump Evans, while Barney Bigard, prior to concentrating on clarinet, was the tenor king of Chicago. By the early '30s, when Hawkins sailed for Europe, *Chu Berry* was his chief rival, while a lighter approach to the horn, better suited for band section work than Hawk's vibrato-laden sound, had been developed by *Bud Freeman* and *Eddie Miller*. In 1936, *Lester Young* exploded onto the scene with an approach

that, like Parker's, went beyond his instrument in influence. He found a legion of disciples among the young, but did not immediately threaten the supremacy of the Hawkins style. In that tradition, Berry, *Ben Webster*, *Herschel Evans* and *Dick Wilson* were the leaders by 1939, but by 1941 Berry, Evans and Wilson had all died (none was much over 30), robbing this school of much promise, though *Don Byas* was a worthy new contender. Vido Musso, Charlie Barnet, Babe Russin and Georgie Auld were favorite big band soloists.

The Lester Young avalanche was preceded by a modified style emerging from the mid- and south-west via *Illinois Jacquet* (and his successor with Lionel Hampton's band, Arnett Cobb) and *Buddy Tate*, Evans' able replacement in Basie's ranks. Lester's most influential disciple, *Dexter Gordon*, also brought a Charlie Parker approach to the tenor. Others included *Wardell Gray*, *Gene Ammons*, *Sonny Stitt*, *Stan Getz*, *Zoot Sims*, *Al Cohen*, *Paul Quinichette*, a.m.o.

Subsequently, Getz himself became a new stylistic source, just as, f. ex., Ben Webster had forged his own style from Hawkins. In jazz, individuality is dominant, styles and schools to the contrary notwithstanding.

The tenor sax was now the dominating instrument in jazz, and its dominant voice in the '50s was that of *Sonny Rollins*, whose approach in some ways harked back to Hawkins, as did that of his contemporary, *John Coltrane*, whose influence by the end of the decade had begun to temporarily eclipse Rollins'. His approach transcended instrumental boundaries and put its stamp on all of jazz, to a degree previously matched only by Armstrong and Parker. Among his many gifted followers, one must mention *Wayne Shorter*, who also has mastered the soprano.

The baritone field was indisputably dominated by *Harry Carney* until the advent of bop and *Serge Chaloff*, *Leo Parker*, *Gerry Mulligan* and *Cecil Payne*. The first two died young, and Mulligan is important as an arranger and band leader as well as player. *Pepper Adams* must also be mentioned, and Britain's John Surman is the baritone voice of the avant garde.

In the soprano sphere, Johnny Hodges was instructed by Bechet and played the horn beautifully until he abandoned it in 1940; another, much younger Bechet student, *Bob Wilber*, has carried the tradition forward. *Budd Johnson*, a splendid tenorist, plays Bechet-styled soprano,

and *Kenny Davern* is beginning to be duly recognized. Another fine tenor player, *Lucky Thompson*, brought a special sound to the horn, and *Steve Lacy* was its pre-Coltrane pioneer in modern jazz, where current voices include Gary Bartz and Dave Liebman.

The cumbersome bass sax boasts one important specialist, *Adrian Rollini*; the late Joe Rushton and young Russ Whitman heard him well.

Not least because of its flexibility and adaptability to the new jazz's vocalized and electronicized sounds, the saxophone retains today the dominant position it has held in jazz since the mid'40s. Adolphe Sax would have been proud of the creative uses to which the genius of the music we call jazz has put his invention.

JOHNNY HODGES

Alto saxophone, soprano saxophone

b. Cambridge, Mass., July 25, 1906; d. New York City, May 11, 1970

Once you'd heard his alto, the full, ringing, sinuous vibrato pitched so perfectly, other sounds faded before it; you could never forget it. The unique music of Johnny Hodges is one of the glories of contemporary music. His collaboration with Duke Ellington—he was with the band from 1928-51 and again from '55 until his death—was an incomparable musical marriage. Before the advent of Charlie Parker, Hodges and Benny Carter dominated the alto, yet it would be misleading to think of Hodges in the historical role of pre-modernist. He was uniquely himself from the start and every note he played was 'modern'.

Ellington said: "Johnny Hodges has complete independence of expression. He says what he wants to say on the horn, and that's *it*. He says it in *his* language, which is specific, and you could say that his is pure artistry. He's the only man I know who can pick up a cold horn and play in tune without tuning up." Hodges was the most popular soloist in the band; his specialities included stomping but distinctly urbane blues and lilting, passionate ballads. Until he put it aside in 1940, he was also a consummate master of the soprano. A student of Bechet, he was Bechet's only rival on the horn until John Coltrane turned to it in '61.

Hodges began playing alto at 14, after having tried drums and piano. During the '20s, he worked with Bechet, Willie The Lion Smith, Luckey Roberts and Chick Webb before joining Ellington, and in 1951, he formed his own small group including ex-Ellingtonians, and, briefly, John Coltrane.

As popular as he was consistent, Hodges recorded prolifically in and out of the Ellington band. Everyone has his own favorites, but perhaps *Things Ain't What They Used To Be* (RCA LPV-533) and . . . *And His Mother Called Him Bill* (RCA LSP-3906) can be singled out. He is heard with Lionel Hampton on *Stompology* (RCA LPV-575) and on his own in a long series of Verve LPs, all of them good. G.G.

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BENNY CARTER

Alto saxophone, clarinet, trumpet, arranger, bandleader (also tenor sax, trombone, piano)

b. New York City, Aug. 8, 1907

From a musical family, Carter began on piano as a child. Turned pro in 1924 but in order to please his parents, went to Wilberforce College in Ohio to study theology. However, he soon joined Horance Henderson's Collegians, a band so good it left school *en masse* to go on the road. From 1926 to January 1930, when he joined Fletcher Henderson's famous band for 14 months as featured alto and clarinet soloist, sax section leader and staff arranger, Carter worked with most of the best big bands in the East for brief spells, also leading his own band. In March '31, he joined Chick Webb, then took over leadership of McKinney's Cotton Pickers from Don Redman. From '32 to '35, he mainly led his own big bands, all musically excellent but commercially unsuccessful, also arranging for many others, including Benny Goodman's first big band.

In 1935 he left for Europe, played with Willie Lewis' band of U.S. expatriates, and in early '36, became staff arranger for Henry Hull's B.B.C. dance orchestra in London. In 1937, he organized his own international band (including Cuban, West Indian, Panamanian, Dutch, Welsh, Scotch and English musicians), and, along with Coleman Hawkins (with whom he frequently teamed up) educated a generation of European musicians and listeners to jazz.

Back in the U.S., he again took up leading big bands, meeting with indifferent success but always maintaining the highest musical standards. In the '40s, his alumni included such stars-to-be as J.J. Johnson, Max Roach, Art Pepper, Lucky Thompson and Miles Davis, among others. In 1945, Carter moved to the West Coast, and eventually his playing and band-leading began to play a secondary role to his work as composer and arranger in the Hollywood studios, though he occasionally took time out to tour with *Jazz at the Philharmonic*. Scored for many TV series, including "M Squad," "Alfred Hitchcock Presents," "Chrysler Theater," and ghosted for many more. His major film credits

include "Snows of Kilimanjaro," "The View From Pompey's Head," "As Thousands Cheer," "Clash By Night," and "A Man Called Adam." In 1973, he spent a semester as visiting lecturer in Afro-American Studies at Princeton University, also presenting two major concerts, one with an all-star big band.

Benny Carter is not only one of the foremost alto saxophone stylists in jazz history and one of the music's outstanding arrangers and composers; even on his secondary instruments, trumpet and clarinet, he ranks with the best. "Elegant, poised, graceful—such adjectives instantly come to mind when one speaks of Carter's alto playing." (Albert McCarthy) "One of the greatest musicians in jazz." (Stanley Dance) "Endowed with superb tone and flawless technique. . . he continued to evolve and progress; by 1960 he was even more elegant and swinging than in earlier days. . . ." "He was and is a master of scoring for saxophone sections." (Leonard Feather) "He's a whole musical education." (Miles Davis)

Among Carter's multitude of fine recordings, the following may be cited as representative of successive periods in his long career: *The Chocolate Dandies* (Parlophone PMC 7038); *Swingin' at Maida Vale* (Ace of Clubs ACL 1167); *Lionel Hampton's Best Records* (French RCA 730-641); *Melancholy Benny* (Tax m-8004); *Big Band Bounce* (Capitol M-11057); *Jazz Giant* (Contemporary S7028); *Further Definitions* (Impulse S-12).

Suggested reading: *The Benny Carter I Knew*, in Rex Stewart: *Jazz Masters of the 30's* (Macmillan).

D.M.

CHARLIE PARKER

Alto Saxophone (also tenor sax, clarinet)

b. Kansas City, Kan., Aug. 29, 1920; d. New York City, March 12, 1955

The importance of Parker's contribution to jazz cannot be overstated. With Dizzy Gillespie and a handful of others, he spearheaded the transition to the increasingly sophisticated, soloist-dominated form of music that became known as bop, helping to change the focus of jazz from entertainment to art. He was not only one of the all-time greats of the alto sax; he was probably the most influential jazzman after Louis Armstrong.

Raised in Kansas City, Mo., a hotbed of Afro-American music, he began to play alto at 11 and quit school four years later to become a professional musician. After early work with local bands and a few unsuccessful forays to Chicago and New York, he settled in with Jay McShann's big band and served notice of the arrival of a major talent. After touring and making his first recordings with McShann, he quit the band in the summer of '42 and settled in New York. In '43, he joined Earl Hines' band (on tenor), where he worked alongside Dizzy Gillespie; the two began to experiment with new concepts of improvisation in their spare time, often at after-hours jam sessions. After a brief stint, again with Gillespie, in the first bop-oriented big band, that of singer Billy Eckstine, he returned to New York and began leading his own groups.

For the next decade, Bird (as he was known to his growing legion of fans) was in the forefront of the music, working mostly with small groups that served as incubators for young talent, significantly including Miles Davis, Bud Powell, Max Roach and other leading music figures to be, but also making a series of influential records with string backing, touring with Jazz at the Philharmonic, visiting Europe, etc.

Plagued by a variety of psychic and physical problems, he died at 34 of causes including ulcers, pneumonia, cirrhosis, and a possible heart attack.

John Lewis of the Modern Jazz Quartet recalled first hearing Parker, on a McShann broadcast: "The alto solos. . . opened up a whole new world

of music for me. . .the alto saxophone was new and years ahead of anybody in jazz. He was into a whole new system of sound and time." His genius as an improviser was summed up by Eckstine: "He was so spontaneous that things which ran out of his mind—which he didn't think were anything—were classics." And Lennie Tristano said in 1951 that "if Charlie wanted to invoke plagiarism laws, he could sue almost anybody who's made a record in the last ten years," while Charles Mingus, shortly after Bird's death, said that "the musicians at Birdland had to wait for Charlie's next record to find out what to play. What'll they do now?"

Jazz would have developed without Parker, but it certainly would not have been the same. He was a vital force in expanding every aspect of the music; he was also a player of extraordinary depth, skill, knowledge and commitment, based in the blues-laden Kansas City tradition and constantly exploring the deepest emotional resources of his music. His recorded solos are among the most intensely beautiful musical works of our time.

Recommended recordings: *The Essential Charlie Parker* (Verve 6-8409); *Echoes of an Era* (Parker-Gillespie), (Roulette RE-105); *The Greatest Jazz Concert Ever* (Prestige 24024); *The Immortal Charlie Parker* (Savoy 12001).

Recommended reading: Reisner, Robert: *Bird—The Legend of Charlie Parker* (Citadel); Russell, Ross: *Bird Lives!* (Charterhouse).

P.K.

ERIC DOLPHY

Alto saxophone, bass clarinet, flute

b. Los Angeles, June 20, 1928; d. Berlin, Germany, June 29, 1964

Dolphy began to study music at 8, starting on clarinet. He took up saxophone at 16 and after jobs with Buddy Collette, Eddie Beal and Gerald Wilson began to attract attention with Chico Hamilton's quintet in 1958-59. He settled in New York and in '60 joined the highly experimental (and highly exciting) Charles Mingus Jazz Workshop; in the following year, he began his association with John Coltrane, after having co-led a group with trumpeter Booker Little and visited Europe on his own. By '62, his unorthodox concepts of improvisation and instrumental color had made him a controversial figure. He joined forces (using his quartet with Freddie Hubbard on trumpet) with Ornette Coleman's quartet on the influential LP *Free Jazz* in that year, and worked and recorded extensively, both as leader and sideman.

In '64, he rejoined Mingus for a European tour, decided to remain in Europe after it ended, and died there suddenly, apparently of diabetes. "My life was made much better by knowing him," John Coltrane said of Dolphy. "He was one of the greatest people I've ever known, as a man, a friend and a musician." Charles Mingus said of the man that he "was absolutely without a need to hurt and of the musician that "he had such a big sound, as big as Charlie Parker's . . . Inside that sound was a great capacity to talk in his music about the most basic feelings. . . he had mastered jazz. And he mastered all the instruments he played. In fact, he knew more than was supposed to be possible to do on them."

A decade after Dolphy's premature death, his music, once criticized as anarchic and hysterical, can be seen as the impassioned and exhilarating cry of a remarkably gifted artist. Dolphy's constant search for new means of expression beyond what he saw as the structural limitations of jazz as others played it, and the deep emotional thrust of his playing, helped pave the path for other musical explorers.

Recommended recordings: *Eric Dolphy* (Prestige 24008); *Last Date* (Limelight 86013); *Charles Mingus Presents The Charles Mingus Quintet* (Barnaby Z-30561); *Free Jazz* (Atlantic S-1364).

P.K.

ORNETTE COLEMAN

Alto and tenor saxophones, also trumpet, violin
b. Fort Worth, Tex., March 19, 1930

Today, 15 years after his debut in New York City, it may be difficult to realize that Ornette Coleman was then the center of the stormiest controversy in jazz since the advent of bop. Ironically, this gentle but uncompromising innovator served his apprenticeship in rhythm-and-blues bands. Though he also plays other instruments and is one of the outstanding composers of his generation, Coleman is best known for his unique approach to the alto sax.

He began to play this instrument at 14, mainly self-taught and strongly influenced by the southwestern blues style that surrounded him. He gigged in his hometown and came to Los Angeles in the '50s with Pee Wee Crayton's R&B band. He worked there for several years, often outside of music, and also studied harmony and theory. In '58, he made his first recordings, revealing a strikingly new, masterfully conceived style that seemed to be without precedent. Like Lester Young, he began recording late, and like Lester, he arrived with his basic attitude fully formed. Many put him down as a freak—as some had dismissed Charlie Parker earlier—but John Lewis, leader-pianist of the Modern Jazz Quartet, who championed Coleman and helped bring him to New York, said: "Coleman is doing the only really new thing in jazz since the innovations in the mid-'40s of Gillespie, Parker and Monk." Charles Mingus pinpointed his significance: "I'm not saying everybody's going to have to play like Coleman. But they're going to have to stop copying Bird."

Coleman's newness, like Parker's, was four-fold: he introduced ideas in melody (rough, speech-like lines), harmony (he improvised without chord structures), rhythm (he eschewed steady time for free and open rhythms) and pitch (he often chose to play at a strident, toneless pitch). For all that, his work is replete with memorable melodies and a deep blues feeling.

Coleman has for the most part surrounded himself with the same players for long periods of time; his most important groups have been the original quartet, with Don Cherry, trumpet; Charlie Haden, bass; Billy Higgins (and later Ed Blackwell), drums; the trio with David Izenzon, bass; Charles Moffett, drums), and his most recent quintet, with Dewey Redman, tenor saxophone; Haden, and Blackwell. Coleman has composed works for string quartet, woodwind ensemble, and symphony orchestra.

Coleman's tenor may be heard on Atlantic 1394. More typical are *Ornette!* (Atlantic 1378); *Change of the Century* (Atlantic 1327); and *At The Golden Circle*, Vol. I (Blue Note 4224). *Free Jazz* (Atlantic 1364) presents Coleman's "double quartet," including Eric Dolphy. His work for symphony orchestra is *Skies of America* (Columbia CS 31562).

G.G.

COLEMAN HAWKINS

Tenor saxophone (also clarinet, piano)

b. St. Joseph, Mo., Nov. 21, 1901; d. New York City, May 19, 1969

In the scope of his influence and achievement, Hawkins was to the saxophone what Louis Armstrong was to the trumpet (if not to jazz as a whole). The saxophone's potential for serious music-making wasn't fully realized until Hawk perfected his style while with Fletcher Henderson's orchestra. That would have been accomplishment enough, perhaps, but Hawk was never satisfied standing still, even when he was the undisputed master of his instrument. He refined, listened and experimented constantly. When the modern movement (bop) was getting off the ground, Hawk hired the young musicians, including the then-unknown Thelonious Monk, and headed up what is considered the first bop record date. (Fifteen years later, he stood beside John Coltrane on a Monk date.)

Hawkins began playing tenor at 9, after four years of piano and cello (his tenor sound had something of the richness of the cello). He studied music at Washburn College in Kansas and in Chicago, and was working professionally in Kansas City by 1920. He began touring with Mamie Smith's Jazz Hounds in '21, settled in New York and joined Fletcher Henderson in '24—late that year, Louis Armstrong also joined—staying for a decade. He left for Europe in March '34, staying until July '39 and inspiring countless musicians. Upon his return, his competitors were ready to challenge him, but he wasn't worried. "They were laying for me," he said. "They thought I'd be stale after six years in Europe. This was the real chance to catch me. . . They had nothing new. At first, I thought they were holding back, but it wasn't so." During those first months back home, he recorded his most famous improvised solo, on *Body and Soul*. Cool it wasn't, timeless it was. As even Lester Young himself said: "I think Coleman Hawkins was the President first, right?"

As Hawkins' style matured in the late '20s, every saxophonist (not just tenors) learned from him. The sureness of his rhythm and his unexcelled knowledge of chords kept him in good stead with the modernists, who learned much from his genius with arpeggios. Young, with his brilliant

melodies and lighter tone showed another way but his way never supplanted Hawk's. The history of the tenor in the last 30 years is the history of those twin lights, Hawk and Prez, meshing in varying degrees in the work of subsequent players.

In his later years, having had his own big band during 1939-40, Hawk mostly headed small groups, continued to record prolifically, often co-led groups with Roy Eldridge (their collaborations are legendary), toured widely with *Jazz at the Philharmonic*, and was heard on records with such peers as Duke Ellington, Sonny Rollins and Coltrane.

Listening to his recordings, we can hear, in addition to the masterpieces, the adventurous temperament that foreshadowed much of what was to come. Representative among many albums are the anthology *Body and Soul* (RCA LPV-501); *Hollywood Stampede* (Capitol M-11030), and *The Hawk Flies* (Milestone M-47015).

G.G.

BUD FREEMAN

Tenor saxophone (also clarinet)

b. Chicago, Ill., April 13, 1906

The urbane and affable Bud Freeman developed one of the most influential tenor styles of the '30s, apparently independent on the then overwhelming influence of Coleman Hawkins. His tone was lighter and better suited for section work, and in some ways presaged the coming of Lester Young. . .the link would seem to be Frank Trumbauer.

Freeman established himself with his work on the 1927 McKensie-Condon Chicagoans recordings, worked with Ben Pollack, Red Nichols and other leaders, visited France in 1928, and during the swing era was featured with first Joe Haymes and Ray Noble, then Tommy Dorsey and Benny Goodman. In 1939, he formed his Summa Cum Laude Band with old friends including Eddie Condon, and from then on was on his own most of the time until joining the World's Greatest Jazz Band, his present affiliation, in 1968. (During World War II, he led a band in the Aleutian Islands.)

Freeman was the first tenor saxophonist to be accepted in a traditional jazz context, but his style is certainly not "dixielandish." It has changed remarkably little—like the man himself—since reaching maturity in the mid-30s, and still doesn't sound dated. For one thing, as pianist Dill Jones puts it, "no one swings more than Bud." He always wanted to be an actor—preferably a Shakespearian. It's our good fortune that he stayed with music. Freeman has penned several durable compositions, among them *The Eel* and *After Awhile*.

Freeman's earliest recordings (including the McKenzie-Condon stuff and his own *Crazeology* date) can be found on *That Toddlin' Town* (Parlophone PMC 7072); some of his best big-band (including the memorable *Smoke Gets In Your Eyes*) is on *This Is Tommy Dorsey*, Vol. 2 (RCA VPM-6064); if you can find a copy, some of Bud's best later work is on *Something Tender* (United Artists 15033), while the classic trio recordings from the '30s are on *Eddie Condon & Bud Freeman* (Atlantic SD-2 309)—in a recent review, Peter Keepnews wrote of Bud's play on these:

"...his unlikely rhythmic emphases and bold harmonic leaps seem to offer clues to what post-war reed playing was going to sound like." Also recommended: *The Compleat Bud Freeman* (Monmouth-Evergreen MES/7022), and all the World's Greatest Jazz Band albums.

Bud has recently completed a book, *You Don't Look Like A Musician*, which was published in 1974.

D.M.

BEN WEBSTER

Tenor saxophone (also piano)

b. Kansas City, Mo., March 27, 1909; d. Amsterdam, Holland,
Aug. 20, 1973

If Coleman Hawkins was the Father and Lester Young the Son, then Benjamin Francis Webster might be considered the Holy Ghost in the trinity of classic tenors. Though his early work clearly places him as a Hawkins disciple, his breathy, lavish, eccentric mature style created its own framework of reference. Like Hawk and Prez, Ben was a school of playing. Capable of frenzied, inventive swinging and the most heart-rending balladry, his gruff, tough but tender sound is also the basis for much of the honking r&b tenors. Of the three tenor giants, Webster alone seems to have matured increasingly over the years so that his later work (particularly the Verve recordings of the '50s) is even more distinctive and satisfying than the earlier innovative masterpieces.

Rex Stewart, his friend and colleague from the Henderson and Ellington bands, described Ben's evolution: "Over the years, his style has undergone a complete turnabout, which is obvious to the discerning listener. During his early period, he blew with unrestrained savagery, buzzing and growling through chord changes like a prehistoric monster challenging a foe. With the passage of time, this fire has given way to tender, introspective declamations of maturity and reflective beauty."

Ben began on violin and piano, achieving competence on the latter, but studied tenor on his own and with the help of first Budd Johnson, then Lester Young, whose father had hired him for the family band. He came to New York with Benny Moten in '32 after stays in various bands including Andy Kirk's, and joined Fletcher Henderson in July, '34, taking over Coleman Hawkins' chair from Lester Young. Subsequently, he worked with such top bands as Cab Calloway and Teddy Wilson, but his most important affiliation was that with Duke Ellington, 1940-43. His impact on Ellingtonia was profound—the band's subsequent tenors (and he was the first important tenor voice with Duke) owe him much—consider Paul Gonsalves and Harold Ashby. His solo on *Cottontail*, for which he also wrote the famous reed chorus, is a classic.

After leaving Ellington, Ben led his own groups, was with Duke again ('48-'49), worked with Jay McShann in Kansas City, toured with Jazz at the Philharmonic, and then, after a period of relative obscurity, emerged in New York in '62. He went to Europe in December '64 for the first time in his life and never returned home. With Copenhagen as his base, he worked and recorded steadily until his death.

Webster can be heard with Ellington on *In A Mellotone* (RCA LPM-1364), with his own quartet on *The Tenor Sax* (also featuring Chu Berry and Lester Young) (Atlantic SD 2-307), and in his later style on *Soulville* (Verve 2683-023). A set with Art Tatum (Verve 8220) is hard to find but worth every effort.

G.G.

LESTER YOUNG

Tenor saxophone, clarinet

b. Woodville, Miss., Aug. 27, 1909; d. New York City, March 15, 1959

Lester Willis Young first recorded in 1936, when he was 27—an advanced age for a great jazzman's recording debut—and the repercussions were incalculable. The group was a quintet with Count Basie, and the tunes included *Shoe Shine Boy* and *Lady Be Good*, two masterpieces that Lester often equaled but never surpassed. No one had ever played tenor sax like that; there seemed to be no precedent for his lithe, floating swing and melodic genius. He introduced many phrases that soon became basic parts of the jazz vocabulary. And then there was his sound—cool, light, dry but sweet: to this day, the most significant alternative to Coleman Hawkins' heavy-toned, on-the-beat approach.

Billie Holiday, with whom Young recorded some of his greatest work, nicknamed him "Prez," in a time when the President was a man to be looked up to, and the name stuck. To a generation of tenor players, he was the unimpeachable source of inspiration. But the originality of his conception was such that his ideas were adopted by players of all the instruments. (In his earlier days, Charlie Parker would memorize Young solos from records.) He was the first modernist, the father of "cool," the master of a private kind of music which yet reached deeply into the hearts of his listeners.

Prez's family moved to New Orleans during his infancy, and later settled in Minneapolis. His father led a family band that toured through the south-west and mid-west; Ben Webster, who briefly played with them, said that Lester had his own style as early as 1929. After leaving the family band because he didn't want to tour the deep south, Lester worked with many bands, including Art Bronson, The Original Blue Devils, Benny Moten and King Oliver. In '34, he joined Fletcher Henderson's band, replacing Coleman Hawkins, for six months, then asked to be released to Andy Kirk. In '36, he joined Count Basie (with whom he'd worked briefly some years earlier), staying with the band until December '40. He led his own combos, sometimes with his drummer brother Lee Young, toured U.S.O. camps with Al Sears' big band, then rejoined Basie from Dec. '43 to Oct. '44, when he was inducted into the U.S. Army. His experiences during some 9 months of service were shattering and included a courts-martial on marijuana charges and confinement to detention barracks. His first recording after his release was entitled *D.B. Blues*.

Throughout the remainder of his career, during which he mainly led his own groups, but also toured extensively with *Jazz at the Philharmonic*, he would occasionally play with flashes of the old brilliance, but his tone had become darker, the sweetness was frequently displaced by honking and moaning that sometimes sounded like pleading, and he began to hide behind a facade of indifference and aloofness. In the final years, his energy sapped, his solos had a simple, to-the-point quality, bereft of any frills—not unlike Billie Holiday's singing in that period.

No one was more eloquent about Lester Young than Prez himself: "I don't like to read music, just soul. . . If a guy plays tenor, he's got to sound like Hawk or like Lester. . . in my mind, when I play, I try not to be a repeater pencil, dig? Always leave some spaces—lay out. . . I developed my tenor to sound like an alto, to sound like a tenor, to sound like a bass and I'm not through with it yet. That's why they get all trapped up; they say, 'I never heard Prez play like this.' That's the way I want them to hear. That's *modern*, dig? . . . I'm looking for something soft; I can't stand that loud noise. It's got to be sweetness, you dig? Sweetness can be funky, filthy or anything. Whatever you want!"

Prez is heard with Holiday on *Lady Day* (Columbia 637); with Basie in his early period on *The Best of Basie* (Decca DXB-170), and on *Young Lester Young* (CBS 65 384) and *The Tenor Sax* (Atlantic SD 2-307). His late style is exemplified on *Prez and Teddy* (Verve 2683-025) and *Prez in Europe* (Onyx 218).

G.G.

DEXTER GORDON

Tenor saxophone

b. Los Angeles, Calif., Feb. 27, 1923

Gordon began studying clarinet, along with theory and harmony, at 13. In 1940, he joined Lionel Hampton's band on tenor sax, remaining for three years; then he was with Louis Armstrong for six months prior to joining the newly formed Billy Eckstine Band, a hotbed of young modernists, in mid-'44. He stayed 18 months and first developed a following with his tenor battles with Gene Ammons on *Blowin' the Blues Away*. Since then, after briefly working with Charlie Parker and Tadd Dameron, he has led his own groups.

Gordon was the first saxophonist to effectively synthesize the tradition of Lester Young and the advances of Charlie Parker—the first full-fledged bebop tenor player. For three decades, he has stood tall among his fellows, both physically (6'5") and musically. His strong, swinging approach, hard-edged lyricism and total control of his instrument had a profound influence on John Coltrane and Sonny Rollins, among others—an influence that persists in the work of many young saxophonists today. The late trumpeter Kenny Dorham said of Gordon: "He's a swing master. He has a method. It sounds like a natural, but it's a method. He goes outside on the chords." Vibist Bobby Hutcherson has listed Gordon among his "heroes, the people who've remained themselves. . . who've not said, 'Let's try to get on the Top 40!'" Gordon, Ira Gitler has written, "wove an important piece into the great tapestry of the modern tenor saxophone style."

Gordon's fortunes hit a low ebb in the '50s, when, after a brush with the narcotics laws, he found that his style of playing had fallen from favor. For almost five years, he did no recording ('55-'60). In the '60s, he had a resurgence, recording prolifically, appearing both as musician and actor in the Los Angeles production of *The Connection* (for which he also composed the score), and visiting Europe, where he decided to settle in the fall of '62, making Copenhagen his home. However, he makes frequent visits to the U.S. to record and appear in clubs and at festivals.

Early Gordon can be heard on *Dexter Rides Again* (Savoy MG 12130); he is joined by Bud Powell and Kenny Clarke on *Our Man In Paris* (Blue Note 84146) and is also in splendid form on *Go!* (Blue Note 84112) and the more recent *The Panther* (Prestige 7829).

P.K.

STAN GETZ

Tenor saxophone

b. Philadelphia, Pa., Feb. 2, 1927

Raised in New York, Getz was playing professionally before he was 15 and worked with Jack Teagarden, Stan Kenton, Jimmy Dorsey, Benny Goodman and others before joining Woody Herman in 1947. His playing on the Herman recording of *Early Autumn* brought him his first substantial public recognition. In early '49, he went out on his own, and excepting a scrape with the narcotics law, his success was considerable. His sidemen included Jimmy Raney, Horace Silver (who made his recording debut with Getz), Al Haig, Tiny Kahn, and Bob Brookmeyer, and his recording of *Moonlight in Vermont* with guitarist Johnny Smith was a big hit.

He visited Sweden for some time in '55, and in '58, following a tour with Jazz at the Philharmonic, settled in Denmark. He returned to the U.S. in early '61, and in the following year helped put the bossa nova fad on the map through his *Jazz Samba* LP with guitarist Charlie Byrd—in particular the tremendous hit *Desafinado*. He has since continued to lead his own groups, often with innovative young sidemen (Gary Burton was launched by Getz).

Originally a Lester Young disciple, Getz over the years has developed a far more individual style than most of his Young-inspired contemporaries. Warmth of tone and restrained lyricism are the best known facets of the Getz approach, but by no means the only ones. A major voice on his instrument for 27 years, he is also one of the few jazzmen to achieve great commercial success without musical compromises. John Coltrane listed Getz as an early favorite.

Recommended recordings include *Stan Getz* (Prestige 24019), from the early years; *Focus* (Verve 68412), a major piece written for him by Eddie Sauter; *Jazz Samba* (Verve 68432); *Sweet Rain* (Verve V-8693).

P.K.

SONNY ROLLINS

Tenor saxophone, also soprano sax

b. New York City, July 9, 1929

By the mid-'50s, Theodore Walter Rollins had established himself as the major tenor sax voice of his generation. His hard but sonorous, Hawkins-inspired sound was an alternative to the cool, fluid, Lester Young-inspired approach of Stan Getz, just as Young had provided the alternative to Hawkins in the '30s. By 1959, John Coltrane had become the dominant tenorist, and Rollins took a sabbatical from public music-making that lasted almost two years. Today, Rollins is once again the pre-eminent tenorist, and his hugely swinging, melodic-thematic conception is increasingly emerging as an antidote to Coltrane's pervasive influence.

Though he didn't become interested in the saxophone until he was 14, Rollins was working professionally by '47 and made his recording debut (with Babs Gonzales) in '49. In the following years, he played and recorded with Bud Powell, Miles Davis, Art Blakey and others, and in late '55, he joined the Max Roach-Clifford Brown Quintet, then free-lanced busily with Thelonious Monk, Kenny Dorham, etc. and also led his own groups. Now placed firmly at the center of the hard bop movement, he was criticized by some for his hollow tone and what were considered eccentricities of style, but as Gunther Schuller wrote, "Rollins can honk, blurt, cajole, scoop, shrill—whatever the phrase demands—without succumbing to the vulgar or obnoxious."

Rollins' playing is sometimes elliptical and brusque, sometimes lyrical, but always his brilliant time gives impetus to and controls the movement of his solos. He has often worked with just bass and drums and has also recorded and played unaccompanied. Although he has composed several jazz standards (*Airegin*, *Doxy*, *Sonnymoon for Two*), he relies for the most part on popular songs for material, often of a surprising (i.e., non-jazz associated) kind.

Rollins returned from his first sabbatical in '61; his playing was now more refined but no less provocative. At one point, he appropriated half of the Ornette Coleman Quartet (trumpeter Don Cherry and drummer Billy Higgins) and experimented with the range of tenor dynamics. In the late '60s, he withdrew once again—visiting India and Japan and studying Eastern religions. Since his eagerly awaited and warmly received return in '72, he has occasionally played soprano and is using piano, guitar, bass and drums in his current group.

Representative Rollins albums include *Sonny Rollins* (Prestige 24005); *The Freedom Suite Plus* (Milestone 47007); *A Night at the Village Vanguard* (Blue Note 81581); *Tenor Madness*—with Coltrane (Prestige 7657); *Our Man In Jazz* (RCA LSP-2612), and *On Impulse* (Impulse 91).

G.G.

JOHN COLTRANE

Tenor and soprano saxophones, also flute

b. Hamlet, N.C., Sept. 23, 1926; d. New York City, July 17, 1967

John William Coltrane was 30 before he attracted much attention, but during the remaining 10 years of his life his influence on jazz was catalytic. He introduced a vibrant, singing sound to the upper register of the tenor which showed countless young musicians the direction of the future. His solos, of unprecedented length and speed, forged in a knowledge of Eastern scales and modes, helped to move jazz out of existing concepts of swing, harmony, etc. and into new realms. No less important was his work on the soprano sax, almost singlehandedly responsible for the current revival of interest in the instrument.

Coltrane grew up in Philadelphia. He became a professional musician in '45 but was drafted that same year and served in the U.S. Navy. Upon his discharge, he joined Eddie (Cleanhead) Vinson's band, and subsequently worked (on alto) in Dizzy Gillespie's big band and small group ('49-'51), with Earl Bostic, and with Johnny Hodges. In the fall of '55, when he was hired by Miles Davis, he had already developed an aggressive and original style. His cascades of notes alienated some, but his vital approach to the blues and ballads made him a growing musical force. He worked with Monk in '57, during a leave from Miles, learning much, he said, about rhythm and intervals. His subsequent work with Miles, and as leader of his own dates, resulted in a series of recordings that changed the face of jazz.

First, there was Davis' *Kind of Blue*, an investigation of scales and modes, soon followed by his own *Giant Steps*. During this period, he also recorded with Cecil Taylor and members of Ornette Coleman's quartet in a quest for new ways. With the release of his *My Favorite Things*, he found growing public acceptance and gave the soprano its first important identity since Bechet. A year later, he polarized his audience with the release of an extended improvisation, *Chasin' the Trane*. In some ways, that propulsive recording ushered in the New Music.

Coltrane was never content with repeating himself. For inspiration, he surrounded himself with younger players who had learned from him but were now moving further into the realm of free expression. With McCoy Tyner (piano), Jimmy Garrison (bass) and Elvin Jones (drums) as his rhythm section nucleus, he also frequently teamed up with Eric Dolphy. But he hadn't lost touch with his roots. In '62, he recorded with Duke Ellington, who wrote: "It was a very interesting session. . . no hassle, no sweat—John Coltrane was a beautiful cat. The date flowed so smoothly, we did the whole album in one session, and that's rare. I loved every minute of it."

Two years later, he created the central masterpiece of his mature period, *A Love Supreme*, a four-part inspirational work, the last movement improvised entirely from the syllabic content of a poem he had written. Now he began to surround himself with exponents of the avant garde, such as Archie Shepp, Marion Brown and Albert Ayler. Saxophonist Pharoah Sanders became a regular member of his band, and Alice McLeod, who'd become Alice Coltrane, replaced Tyner. His music became seemingly chaotic and primitive; he frequently used more than one drummer; the solos, growing even longer, replaced lyrical content with overwhelming emotional immediacy. To some, Coltrane seemed to be working himself into a cul-de-sac, and the influence of Sonny Rollins—Trane's primary rival for the attention of younger players—seems to be growing. Still, Coltrane had the most revolutionary effect on the saxophone since Charlie Parker, and his legacy is astonishingly varied.

Coltrane may be heard with Miles Davis on *'Round About Midnight* (Columbia CS 949) and *Kind of Blue* (Columbia CS 8163); with Monk on *Monk/Trane* (Milestone 47011), with Ellington on *Ellington and Coltrane* (Impulse A-30). Representative of his own recordings are *The Atlantic Years* (Atlantic SD2-313); *Live at the Village Vanguard* (Impulse A-10); *A Love Supreme* (Impulse S-77), and *Live at the Village Vanguard Again* (Impulse S-124).

Recommended reading: LeRoi Jones: *Black Music* (Morrow); Martin Williams: *The Jazz Tradition* (Oxford).

G.G.

HARRY CARNEY

Baritone saxophone (also alto saxophone, clarinet, bass clarinet)
b. Boston, Mass., April 1, 1910

Before he joined Duke Ellington in late June, 1927, young Carney had played with bands in his home town and spent a few months gigging in New York. He's been with Ellington ever since, rarely missing an engagement. It is a record unsurpassed in the annals of jazz.

Originally, Carney played a good deal of alto sax and clarinet with Ellington, but his talent for filling the big baritone was soon discovered. Carney was the first, and remains the premier stylist on his favored horn, producing a sound that is one of the landmarks of jazz and has anchored the Ellington reed section through thick and thin. The always recognizable Ellington sound, despite personnel changes, is in no small way due to the permanent presence of Carney.

"Harry Carney is so strong that he made Ellington compose in the midst of arranging. Everything he played cut through so much that everything written for him had to have an interesting quality." (Mercer Ellington)
"Carney's conception is unique; so personalized that no one has been able to successfully copy his style or his famous sonority. . . he has a range on the instrument that surpasses credibility." (Rex Stewart)

Carney performs outstandingly on so many of the Ellington Orchestra's countless recordings that it is difficult to single out key works, but here are a few from his more than 45 years of Ellingtonia: *Old Man Blues* (1930), in *The Works of Duke, Vol. 5* (French RCA 741 048); *Perdido*, *Sepia Panorama*, and *I Don't Know What Kind of Blues I've Got* (clarinet on the latter), from *In A Mellotone* (1940-42), RCA LPM-1364; *Prelude to a Kiss* (1945), in *Johnny Come Lately* (RCA LPV-541); *U.M.M.G.* (1958), in *Ellington Jazz Party* (Columbia CL 1323); *Agra* (1967) from *Far East Suite* (RCA LSP-3782); and *Aristocracy a la Jean Lafitte*, from *New Orleans Suite* (1970), (Atlantic SD 1580).

Suggested reading: *Harry Carney: Boss Baritone*, in Rex Stewart: *Jazz Masters of the 30's* (Macmillan); Stanley Dance: *The World of Duke Ellington* (Scribner).

GERRY MULLIGAN

Baritone saxophone, clarinet, piano, (also tenor and soprano sax)
b. New York City, April 6, 1927

Raised in Philadelphia, Gerald Joseph Mulligan made his first major impact on the jazz scene as an arranger, when he joined Gene Krupa's staff in '47 and came up with *Disc Jockey Jump*. As a player, he first attracted attention with Miles Davis' famous Nonet of '48. After work with, among others, Claude Thornhill, Elliot Lawrence and Kai Winding, he moved to California, where in the summer of '52 he opened at The Haig in Los Angeles with a pianoless quartet featuring a young trumpeter named Chet Baker (and Chico Hamilton on drums; the fourth man was bassist Bob Whitlock).

The quartet introduced a new sound in jazz and quickly became very popular; Mulligan dissolved it in late '53 and later teamed up with trombonist Bob Brookmeyer. He led a new quartet with trumpeter Art Farmer in '58; formed a unique 13-piece big band in 1960 (it proved commercially not viable and broke up in '63), led a variety of small groups, and in '68 teamed up with Dave Brubeck, with whom he still does tours and concerts at this writing.

Mulligan's approach to the baritone differed from that of his predecessors in lightness and dryness of sound and airiness of phrasing. In later years, he reverted to a more Swing-oriented phraseology, even flirting with traditional (i.e., '20s) approaches to rhythm. "Deservedly, Mulligan has retained the esteem of jazz enthusiasts everywhere as an instrumentalist who played a vital part in the evolution of modern jazz, notably in the phase represented by the Miles Davis Nonet records, and later by demonstrating the advantages inherent in freeing the rhythm section of the piano," wrote Leonard Feather.

Mulligan has retained his enthusiasm for playing in a variety of contexts (including jamming with traditional jazzmen, playing Alec Wilder's music for wind chamber groups, and subbing for Harry Carney with Duke Ellington) and has further perfected his elegant control over his cumbersome instrument. Harry Carney has said that Mulligan's playing

"really thrills me," and he is altogether a musician with a rare understanding of all facets of jazz.

Recommended recordings: The Nonet session with Davis is on *The Complete Birth of the Cool* (Capitol M-11026); the original quartet and some interesting '51 ten-piece band sides are on *Gerry Mulligan/Chet Baker* (Prestige 24016); some of his finest solo work is on *Jeru* (Columbia CS 8732, reissued on Odyssey); his best recent effort (also as arranger and pianist) is *The Age of Steam* (A&M SP3036).

D.M.

SERGE CHALOFF

Baritone saxophone

b. Boston, Mass., Nov. 11, 1923; d. there July 16, 1957

In an all too brief career, ravaged by drug addiction and cancer, Serge Chaloff established himself as the most devastatingly personal, fragile and haunting baritone sax stylist in jazz. The physical pain he suffered seems to have ennobled his music. His splendidly dignified sound and self-assured swing were combined with an inspired sense of dynamics. A phrase as soft as still water would suddenly be followed by an explosion from the lower register of the big horn. In his last recordings, particularly the classic *Body and Soul*, he achieved a hurting but courageous *persona* that has been compared to the later singing of Billie Holiday.

Chaloff was born into a highly musical family; his father played with the Boston Symphony and his mother taught piano at New England Conservatory. He described his apprenticeship: "I took lessons on piano and clarinet, but I taught myself baritone. At first, I listened to Harry Carney and Jack Washington. . . that's how I formed my first style. But it was an alto man, the great Charlie Parker, whose work made me change my style." In adapting Parker's giddy flights to the bigger horn, he became the major modernist on baritone, but he achieved much more. He mastered its full range of sounds, making it an intimate extension of his own breathing.

Chaloff's early work was with a succession of big bands, the most important being Woody Herman's "Four Brothers" Second Herd. In subsequent years, he lived in Boston most of the time. As his illness worsened, he sometimes played from a wheelchair.

He recorded his most extraordinary work on two Capitol albums, *Boston Blow Up* (out of print) and *Blue Serge* (M-11032). Earlier work can be heard on *The Oscar Pettiford Memorial Album* (Prestige 7813), and *Sonny Berman: Beautiful Jewish Music* (Onyx ORI-211).

G.G.

ADRIAN ROLLINI

Bass saxophone, vibraphone (also drums, piano, misc. reeds)

b. New York City, June 28, 1904; d. Homestead, Fla., May 15, 1956

The foremost bass saxophone specialist in jazz was a piano prodigy, giving a Chopin recital at age 4 (!) and leading his own band (doubling xylophone) at 14. He learned bass sax in two weeks and began to play it with the California Ramblers, one of the best white jazz-oriented dance bands in New York, in 1923. A prolific recording artist in the '20s (with Bix Beiderbecke, Frank Trumbauer, Joe Venuti, Ed Lang, etc.), Rollini led his own all-star band (including the above luminaries) briefly in 1927, then went to London for two years to work in the band of Fred Elizalde, the Philippine-born pianist-composer-arranger. Back in New York in late '29, he resumed his studio career. In 1935, he opened his own club, Adrian's Tap Room, in mid-Manhattan; it featured black talent. About this time, he retired his bass sax and concentrated on vibes, forming a trio (with guitar and bass) which performed successfully in hotel lounges throughout the country for many years. He moved to Florida in the early '50s and opened his own hotel and lodge.

In his vintage years, Rollini performed on the cumbersome bass sax (for which he had devised a special neck and mouthpiece; he was mechanically inclined and also invented special vies mallets) in a style which, according to Gunther Schuller, "in its modern conception and well constructed continuity anticipates the work of modern jazz musicians like Gerry Mulligan and Pepper Adams by some 20 years." He was an admitted influence on young Harry Carney.

Recordings include *The Bix Beiderbecke Story*, Vol. I (Columbia CL 844); *Benny Goodman and the Giants of Swing* (Prestige 7644); *A Jazz Holiday* (MCA 2-4018).

D.M.

FRANK TRUMBAUER

C-Melody saxophone (also misc. reed instruments; trumpet)

b. Carbondale, Ill., May 30, 1901; d. Kansas City, Mo., June 11, 1956

Mother was a concert pianist; raised in St. Louis, Frankie played piano, trombone, flute and violin before concentrating on C-Melody sax. Formed own band at 17, later worked with many prominent bands, most importantly the Benson Orchestra of Chicago, whose recordings were widely disseminated. Became musical director for the Jean Goldkette Bands, leading a unit at the Arcadia Ballroom which included Bix Beiderbecke. The two musicians struck up a friendship and musical partnership that lasted through several years with Goldkette, Paul Whiteman, and many small-band recording units. Trumbauer remained with Whiteman until 1932, then organized his own band. He rejoined Whiteman in '33 and stayed until '36, then co-led band with trumpeter Manny Klein on west coast; did studio work with Georgie Stoll until organizing own big band again in '38, using the spelling "Trombar." He left full-time music to become a Civil Aeronautics inspector (in Kansas City), but led own band again in '40. A test pilot through WW II, he worked for NBC in New York under Russ Case and Raymond Paige, then resumed job with Civil Aeronautical Authority in K.C. He guested at a Bix tribute in '52.

The instrument on which Trumbauer specialized was popular in the '20s but had passed out of the picture by the end of the decade. He found its sound and manageability to his liking and remained loyal to it. Trumbauer's influence (via his many recordings) on saxophonists in the '20s cannot be overestimated; his followers included Benny Carter (who first heard him on Benson Orchestra records in '22) and Lester Young ("Trumbauer always told a little story and I liked the way he slurred his notes"). His impact on Bix was profound; there can be little doubt that he extended the young cornetist's musical horizon both technically and intellectually, if not always in the direction of "pure" jazz. An indication of Tram's (as he was nicknamed) popularity with fellow reedmen was that Don Murray (then a member with Jimmy Dorsey and Doc Ryker, of a Goldkette sax section) orchestrated Trumbauer's "I'll Never Miss the Sunshine" solo with the Benson Orchestra for the whole

section as a unison chorus. But mainly, it is Trumbauer's ability to "always tell a little story" (i.e., to construct musical and emotionally meaningful solo statements) that has earned him a rightful place in the jazz Hall of Fame.

The most durable Trumbauer records are those on which he teamed with Beiderbecke; these can be found on *The Bix Beiderbecke Story*, Vols. 1-2 (Columbia CL 844, 845, 846), and on the French RCA sets *The Bix Beiderbecke Legend* (731 131; 731 046/037).

Recommended reading: Smith, Ramsey et al.: *Jazzmen* (Harcourt, Brace & Co.); Mezz Mezzrow and Bernard Wolfe; *Really the Blues* (Doubleday Anchor).

D.M.

SIDNEY BECHET

Soprano saxophone, clarinet (also tenor sax, piano)

b. New Orleans, La., May 14, 1897; d. Paris, France, May 14, 1959

Bechet dominated any musical situation in which he found himself. The first great soloist in jazz (his 1924 recordings with Louis Armstrong show him to be the trumpeter's sole equal at this time), he filled the horn with tremendous presence and passion. When he heard young Bechet play with Will Marion Cook's Southern Syncopated Orchestra in Europe in 1919, the great Swiss conductor Ernest Ansermet wrote: "I wish to set down the name of this artist of genius. . . as for myself, I shall never forget it;" this in the course of a review that was the first instance of jazz being taken seriously in print by a sophisticated critic. To Gunter Schuller, "Bechet is one of the supreme melodists in jazz."

A child prodigy (he picked up clarinet one day of his own accord and was able to make music on it), Bechet was instructed by the great New Orleans reed teachers, and as a young man worked with such legendary greats as King Oliver, Freddie Keppard and Armstrong. After touring the U.S. and Europe with the Cook band (he picked up a soprano in London in 1919), he remained in Europe until '21, and lived and worked there again from '25 to '30 playing all over the continent, including the U.S.S.R.

With trumpeter Tommy Ladnier, he attempted to revive New Orleans music in 1932, but though a few great records were made and some jobs obtained, they had to give up the idea and for a while ran a tailor shop in Harlem to ward off the Depression's music slump. With Noble Sissle's society band for four years from '34, Bechet finally broke through with his '39 recording of *Summertime*; from then on, he was regularly featured on 52nd St., in Greenwich Village clubs, and at Eddie Condon's Town Hall Concerts, and made a remarkable series of records for RCA, including a "one man band" stunt on which he played clarinet, soprano, tenor, piano, bass and drums in one of the first creative utilizations of the now familiar overdubbing process. He also was active as a teacher; his star pupil was Bob Wilber.

In '49, he visited France, performing at the first big post-war jazz festival in Paris (Charlie Parker was on the program); he was in Europe again later that year and in '50; the following summer, he settled permanently in France, where he came to enjoy tremendous popularity, making hit records, appearing in a film, and being accorded a status similar to that of later pop stars. In his last years of life, he worked on his autobiography, *Treat It Gentle*. It is one of the most remarkable books written on jazz, and Sidney Bechet is one of the most remarkable figures of that remarkable music.

Bechet also wrote many fine jazz pieces and popular songs, among which *Petite Fleur* became an international hit not long after his death.

The many wonderful records made by Bechet include the early collaborations with Armstrong (CBS 63 092); the 1940 Bechet-Spanier Big Four dates (most recently on Olympic 7113); the RCA recordings (RCA LPV-510, LPV-535 and 741.069—the latter French), plus two classic collections for Blue Note (BN 1201, 1202).

Treat It Gentle (Hill & Wang) is out of print. Dick Wellstood's memoir, *Walking With A King*, appeared in *Music '71* (*Downbeat* annual).

D. M.

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