SPOTLIGHT ON
Diz Disley

Happy Birthday
FRANK PARR
80 on the 1 June

DOWN BY THE RIVER SIDE

HUMPHREY LYTTELTON 1921-2008

ALLAN GANLEY 1931-2008

the
TRADITIONAL JAZZ
magazine
JUNE 2008
Issue No. 122
£2.50

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DICK CHARLESWORTH 1932-2008
Johnny Dodds, Frank Teschemacher, and Wee Russell was still his main inspiration, friend, pianist Don Ewell. Live recordings were recorded and several tracks were issued for his own playing. (hace had also listened to Omer Simeon, on the Savoy label. Orleans bassist Pops Foster and Jelly Roll Morton's drummer Tommy Benford also worked with the Salty Dogs and also led his own bands. One such group included veterans Johnny Mendel, Floyd O'Brien, Tut Soper, and Jim Lanigan as well as younger musicians - Bob Skiver, Grosz, and Wayne Jones. When this group played for the Chicago Historical Society in 1964, they were joined by a very special guest - Gene Krupa.

During the early- and mid-’60s, except for a brief stint with Muggsy Spanier, Chace worked with the Salty Dogs and also led his own bands. One such group included veterans Johnny Mendel, Floyd O'Brien, Tut Soper, and Jim Lanigan as well as younger musicians - Bob Skiver, Grosz, and Wayne Jones. When this group played for the Chicago Historical Society in 1964, they were joined by a very special guest - Gene Krupa.

A late-’60s Chicago recording session by guitarist/vocalist Jim Kweskin resulted in three more classic Chace solos. The album, ‘Jump For Joy’, released in 1967, paired Kweskin with comettist Ted Butterman’s Neo-
Passé Jazz Band. In addition to Buttermar,
the personnel consisted of Chace (clarinet and
bass sax), Kim Cusack (clarinet), Johnny Frigo
(violin), Grosz (guitar, banjo, and arranger),
Truck Parham, (bass), and Wayne Jones
(drums). Fellow reedman Kim Cusack called
Chace's playing on You're Not The Only Oyster
In The Stew, "One of the sublime moments in
jazz." The clarinet choruses on Memphis Blues
and There'll Be Some Changes Made are two
more outstanding examples of Frank Chace at
his best.

Recently, the GHB label released a two-CD set
of Chace playing with a specially assembled
band in 1967 at the Emporium of Jazz in
Mendota, Minnesota. The group included Bill
Price (cornet), Tommy Archey (trombone), Don
Ewell (piano), Bill Evans (bass), and Sammy
Price (drums). A cursory glance at the
personnel and their stylistic differences might
cause concern. However, the musicians –
particularly Chace and Ewell – sound
wonderful together.

Sometime during the '60s, or possibly the
'70s, Chace went to work as a technical
writer. He continued to work with bands
around Chicago, and to play sessions, but did
not rely on music for a living. As musician/
author Richard Hadlock explains, 'Most jazz
players learn to adjust, at least somewhat, to
shallow audiences, wrongheaded entre-
preneurs, pandering bandleaders, and jaded
or inept sidemen.

'Not clarinetist Frank Chace, however. Over
the thirty-some years I've been observing his
largely hidden talent, I have heard story after
story about Chace's playing because he
wouldn't play 'pretty' or 'straight' or
'traditional' or some other term that meant
going outside his own natural way of making
music ...

'There have been occasions when Frank
simply would not take a paying but dumb
job. At other times he hasn't been hired or
was let go because someone wanted to hear,
say, Stardust, and didn't recognize Frank's
version of it. The result is that Frank Chace
has kept one of the lowest profiles among
outstanding jazz players.'

During the 1970s, Chace also listened closely
to the music of John Coltrane and other
modern jazzmen. In the right setting, his
solos often went farther 'out' than ever
before! Delmark Records producer Bob
Koester, a longtime admirer of Chace's music,
wrote about his plan to record the clarinetist
with a 'modern rhythm section'. Alas, the
session never materialized.

This writer's first encounter with Frank
Chace was on April 28, 1985. Pianist Butch
Thompson assembled a band to play a
concert for the Good Time Jazz Club in
Libertyville, Illinois. Butch invited Frank to
play clarinet in a group that included
Charlie DeVore (cornet), John Otto (alto
sax), Jack Meilahn (guitar), Bill Evans
(bass), and myself on drums. It was an
unbelievable thrill to hear that intense,
wailing clarinet coming from directly in
front of the drums! The concert flew by –
much too fast – and my only contact with
Frank Chace for the next year would be
written correspondence. The letters are
priceless, especially for the humour. In one
exchange, he obviously remembered the
salutation on my first letter ('Dear Mr.
Chace'). At the end of a very funny letter,
which ran to several pages, he signed off as
'Your Friend, Mr. Chace'.

In 1986, he was flown to New York to perform
at the JVC Jazz Festival's 'Chicago Jazz
Summit'. An LP was subsequently issued,
featuring several instrumental combinations
recorded live at the festival. Unbelievably,
Chace is only heard on one track. However, it
is a rip-roaring version of At The Jazz Band
Ball, played by Yank Lawson, George Masso,
Eddie Miller, Truck Parham, Ikey Robinson,
Barrett Deems, and festival producer George
Wein. Though we can wish that Chace was
heard on more tracks, it is safe to say that his
two idiosyncratic choruses are easily worth
the price of the record!

My final gig with Mr. Chace' was in 1987 –
another concert for the Good Time Jazz Club.
On that occasion, I led the Chicago Loopen
which also included Tom Pletcher (cornet),
Tom Bartlett (trombone), Joe Johnson
(piano), and Dan Shapera (bass). Frank's
playing that day – passionate, rasping,
keening, whispered – was other-worldly.
It was an indescribable high.

He continued to play with unlimited creativity
for nearly 20 more years. In 2001, drummer
Wayne Jones played with Chace at a gig
sponsored by Delmark's Bob Koester. He
reported that "Frank sounded not the least
dimmed by the passing years."

Frank Chace died on the 28 December, 2007.
He never gave up that fight to keep a wild,
free heart.

The above article was published with permission of the 'Jazz
Ramblers', San Diego.

Following is a list of recent CD issues that
feature Frank Chace:

Salty Dogs • 1955 (W windin' Ball CD-105)
Marty Grosz & The Honors Causa Jazz Band:
'Horray For Bix' (Good Time Jazz 10065-2)
Marty Grosz & The Cellar Boys • 1951/Honoris
Causa Jazz Band alternate takes • 1957
(J&M CD-004)
Jim Kweskin with Ted Buttermar & the Neo-
Passee Jazz Band · Jump For Joy
(Universe UV0051)

Jimmy Archey & Don Ewell at the Emporium of
Jazz • 1967 (GHB BCD-461/462)

Chicago Jazz Summit (Atlantic 81844-2)

These sessions are currently being prepared
for release on Jazzology.

Jabbo Smith • 1961

Butch Thompson and his Boys in Chicago • 1985

Dear Peter;
I am just back from a week in Boston
(USA) and the record scene there is
poor. Since my last visit two years ago,
the big CD retailers have closed or now
moved over to DVD. HMV and Virgin
have closed completely, while Barnes
and Noble has moved to smaller
premises next door and now have a good
selection of jazz and classics. Very few
CDs as they concentrate on DVDs. The only bright
spot was a new store, FYE, that has
released from the ashes of a previous
retailer and has a shelf devoted to jazz,
easy listening and classics. We were
lucky to catch an assistant who actually
knew something about these styles of
music, as normally the assistants are
young and know little.

Also on the positive side was Newbury
Comics, which originally dealt in Comic
books but had a selection of Pop and
Rock music. They have taken on the
premises next door and now have a good
selection of jazz and classics. Very few
of the reissues on British labels such as
Jasmine, Avid, and Lahe are in the racks,
but I did see some JSP releases. My
favourite store, Looney Tunes, continues
to be a treasure trove of second-hand
jazz LPs at reasonable prices.

Kind regards,

George Hulme, Old Basing, Hants.