

The Towering Reedist Goudie

Clarinetist 'Home' After Years Abroad With Top Bands

By Richard Hadlock

One of the best examples I know of how jazz can transform a country boy into an informed world traveler may be found at a small saloon along the Embarcadero. Clarinetist Frank Goudie, currently appearing nightly with Bill Erickson's trio at Pier 23, is a man of impressive pro-

portions, any way you look at him.

Despite his towering size—six feet, six—and aggressive playing style, Goudie has the serene appearance of one who has found an ideal way of life for himself. And behind his easy smile lies one of the most colorful stories in jazz.

Born in the small Louisiana town of Royville, Goudie began on violin at 5 and was playing country dances before turning 10.

"The fox trot was just coming in and the waltz and mazurka were going out," the clarinetist remembers. "The only good tune I recall playing was 'Maple Leaf Rag'."

Goudie studied trumpet and, later, clarinet and went on to work with well known New Orleans bands of the early 20s, including Oscar Celestin's Original Tuxedo Orchestra. His musical outlook still reflects, in many ways, traditional New Orleans values.

"Two things are very important in playing jazz," he explains. "First, you have to study your instrument right from the first page of the book. Second, you must always have a melody line. Without a melody of some kind, no one can perceive what is happening when you play and it becomes meaningless."

Goudie left home in 1922, when he was 16, to travel as a musician in Mexico. Two years later he took off for Europe and stayed there 16 years. He was one of the first of many American jazzmen who settled abroad over the past four decades.

"Some American musicians were already in Europe about the time of World War I," he explained. "My brother came back from the war and told me how well musicians were doing and that got me interested."

Doubling on reeds and



BOB HELM, Bob Neighbor, Lu Watters and Turk Murphy (left to right) have an al fresco practice for this afternoon's concert at Earthquake McGoon's. The bill also includes Barbara Dane, the Goodtime Washboard Three, Malvina Reynolds, the Firing Squad and Turk Murphy's band. Watters is coming out of retirement to appear as master of ceremonies and guest trumpeter. Proceeds of the concert, which will last from 4 p. m. to midnight, will go to the Northern California Association to Preserve Bodega Head and Harbor. Admission is \$5 for adults and 50 cents for children under 12.

trumpet, Goudie soon became accepted as part of the European jazz scene. As is his custom, he quickly adopted the ways of his host country.

Goudie played with the Continent's finest jazz musicians and many top traveling Americans as well. In 1930 he worked with Tommy Ladnier in Noble Sissle's orchestra and a few years later was featured in Freddy Johnson's all-star Paris band. He was especially close to the outstanding (and severely underrated) American trumpeter Bill Coleman.

"Booker Pittman was playing saxophone around Paris in those days," Goudie recalls, "and he was already on to the modern style that's being played today. He had it in the early 30s."

"Coleman Hawkins, of course, spent a lot of time in Europe then. We had never heard anything like it. Everybody went wild and all the tenor saxophonists changed their styles to sound like him. He could create beautiful melodies, and he was much better in person than on records."

Goudie himself was playing tenor at the time, and it is significant that French critic Hugues Panassie said of him, "He is one of the rare saxes who owe nothing to either Hawkins or Lester Young, but has evolved his own emphatic and melodious style."

The big man from Louisiana also worked and record-



FRANK GOUDIE
A way of life

ed with famed gypsy guitarist Django Reinhardt.

"Django had everything. Feeling, soul, technique. He could be sentimental or brutal. He loved big bands, especially Ellington's, but he liked the freedom of playing in the Quintet of the Hot Club of France. He was a natural genius, one of the few who could succeed without training. Sidney Bechet was like that, too."

"I never saw Django without his guitar. He lived for playing. And he was a wonderful person, not temperamental at all. He made good money, but he always stayed with the gypsies."

As the Nazis were attacking France, Goudie slipped out and took up residence in Brazil. Again, he fit himself into the native environment, working with samba bands, playing Brazilian shows and giving local musicians pointers in jazz playing.

"It took a couple of years to really learn the samba rhythms," he remembers, "but it was worth it. Playing Brazilian music has helped me a lot."

Goudie returned to Europe in 1946, to stay another 11 years. There he was exposed to a new variety of musical styles, including the modern, postwar approach to jazz. Already an admirer of Lester Young, whose influence on modernists was great, the veteran reedman took it all in stride.

"I like SOME, but not all, things about Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie and Miles Davis," he says. "You still have to have that melody line, and when you get too far off nobody knows what you're doing."

What brings a man who has performed for the Shah of Iran, Brazilian millionaires in marble mansions and the Hot Clubs of Europe to a San Francisco waterfront bar?

"I had to come back to be an American again," Goudie declared. "If I had stayed away any longer, I would have become another nationality. As for San Francisco, I came here once as a young boy and decided I would live in this beautiful city some day. So here I am."

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