

# Frank “Big Boy” Goudie on the West Coast

## Vol. 1: Big Boy’s Blues, 1958-62



*Goudie's professional photo image,  
Paris 1939.*

### A Big Life

It is a mistake of jazz history that **Frank “Big Boy” Goudie** (1899-1964) has been almost completely overlooked until recently. This collection and related web pages aim to help correct that oversight, examining his last and most personal chapter in San Francisco, CA 1956-64.

Tall and handsome, Goudie was a cultured gentleman with advanced musical skills fluent in French and Portuguese. He had played jazz, swing, dance, latin and ethnic music on three continents. Almost 6’ 5” and at least 250 pounds, he was massive and broad. Powerfully built he remained strong and fit into his sixties.

Over the previous half century Frank Goudie’s career had paralleled the history of jazz itself: origins in Louisiana, migration to Europe, transition to Swing, integration with Latin music, and the New Orleans revival. Traveling the world this master musician lived four distinct musical lives:

**New Orleans and the Southwest 1918-24:** A journeyman jazz cornet player by about 1920, Goudie moved to Texas with his family and went on the road traveling the Southwestern states and northeastern Mexico.

[Paris and Europe 1924-56:](#) Frank arrived in Paris about the same time as Josephine Baker, becoming very popular. Focusing on alto saxophone and later tenor, he easily made the transition to swing. For almost three decades “Big Boy” recorded, worked, played and jammed with the jazz elite of Europe except during WW II.

**South America 1939-45:** Stuck on the Southern continent during the war, Goudie played dance music, big band, samba-swing and jazz when he could. He and wife Madeleine operated a small cafe in Rio de Janeiro and traveled.

[San Francisco 1956-64:](#) His expressive New Orleans clarinet was welcomed into the flourishing Frisco jazz revival.

## Starting Over in America

Moving to San Francisco after 32 years overseas Goudie was starting over yet again; but he'd done it before and thrived. At first he ventured a lot of money trying to launch a music school that failed. But he quickly adapted to the local Traditional, Dixieland and Revival jazz situation and was soon working regularly with Bob Mielke and The Bearcats Jazz Band.

Those who knew Frank describe a wise, kind gentleman with a strong French accent, who wore a beret, yet retained the earthiness of his Creole origins. Goudie kept a proud New Orleans tradition, a trade. His business card said he was an "upholsterer." His move to San Francisco was due in part to inheriting a small upholstery repair shop, a skill he'd also practiced on the side in Europe.

Previously in his travels "Big Boy" had easily found well-paying jobs with prestigious bandleaders wherever he went. But after finding no lucrative high profile jobs he confessed to [interviewer Ken Mills](#) missing the fame he'd had in Europe and South America. Though in Frisco he did work briefly as an occasional substitute with noted headliners: pianist Earl "Fatha" Hines (two weeks in 1962 when Darnell Howard was ill), trombone player Kid Ory and trumpeter Marty Marsala.



*Richard Hadlock was a jazz writer, broadcaster and soprano saxophonist who befriended and profiled Goudie.*

## San Francisco Associates

Richard Hadlock (b. 1927) is a soprano saxophonist, teacher, jazz writer, broadcaster and journalist who came to know Goudie well and profiled him in print. He wrote in the San Francisco Examiner, January 19, 1964, *"Few musicians his age were ever more eager to play. A born gentleman, one of the last of the old school."*

On the West Coast Frank became good friends with Hadlock and musical buddies with Burt Bales (piano), Bill Erickson (piano, trumpet), Dick Oxtot (banjo, singer) and trombonists Bob Mielke, Jim Leigh and Bill Bardin. Goudie's former Bay Area associates describe a modest, kind, cultured gentleman with a strong French accent who wore a beret, yet retained the earthiness of his Louisiana Creole origins. *"He had it,"* remarked trombonist Bardin commending his flowing musical lines, *"a player who would never let anyone down."* Adding, *"Though none of us ever called him 'Big Boy'."*

Ken Mills reports Frank traveled in circles that included such noteworthy local characters and luminaries as beat poets Kenneth Rexroth and Lawrence Ferlinghetti, jazz writer Ralph J. Gleason, playwright Henry Miller and gossip columnist Herb Caen (the man most responsible for banning the word “Frisco” from the local lexicon).

## Bay Area Venues

Joining up with younger musicians who were mostly his junior by decades “Big Boy” could be heard playing clarinet several nights a week at overlapping venues 1957-63, including but not limited to the gigs sampled in this two-volume collection:

- **Pier 23 Jam sessions** run by pianists Burt Bales or Bill Erickson (heard on Vol. 2).
- **Pier 23 broadcasts** with Burt Bales, Bob Mielke, Bill Erickson (trumpet) and Dick Oxtot.
- Goudie was a regular clarinet alternate with **Bob Mielke and The Bearcats**.
- In San Francisco at the **Bagatelle** bistro Sunday afternoons Frank joined Oxtot and the usual suspects.
- In Berkeley, Goudie was a regular at the music parties, rehearsals and jam sessions at **Nod’s Taproom, Dick Oxtot’s home** or one of several **Berkeley jazz houses**.
- At **Monkey Inn** also in Berkeley Frank joined a remarkable swing combo with Erickson (piano) and Bob Mielke (trombone) during 1961-62.
- Goudie played with Jim Leigh’s New Orleans-styled El Dorado Jazz Band in the South Bay.

# A Gentleman of Jazz

Without exception Frank Goudie was recalled as a gracious “gentleman of jazz” and supportive friend; a strong presence kindly offering his wisdom and experience, he brought polish and style to any ensemble. With his height, heft and French accent Frank stood out. *“He cut quite a figure,”* said Bob Mielke, *“Frank Goudie was a man of the world. Stood very straight, marvelous posture; really an impressive man. He was always supportive, both personally and musically.”*

Trombonist Jim Leigh played with Goudie at Pier 23 and came to know him well as recounted in his jazz memoir, *Heaven on the Side*. Becoming friends they worked together in numerous ensembles including Leigh’s El Dorado Jazz Band in the South Bay and sessions heard in this collection. Goudie, he wrote:

*... was a wise and good natured man who had seen a great deal of the world and liked to talk about it. This he did with great charm in English to which traces of a French accent still clung, yet with Louisiana underneath it all. He knew his horn, his ear was excellent, he could read anything.*

Goudie’s satisfaction with in his new life was apparent in comments quoted by Hadlock for The San Francisco Examiner July 28, 1963:

*I had to come back to be an American again. 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.*



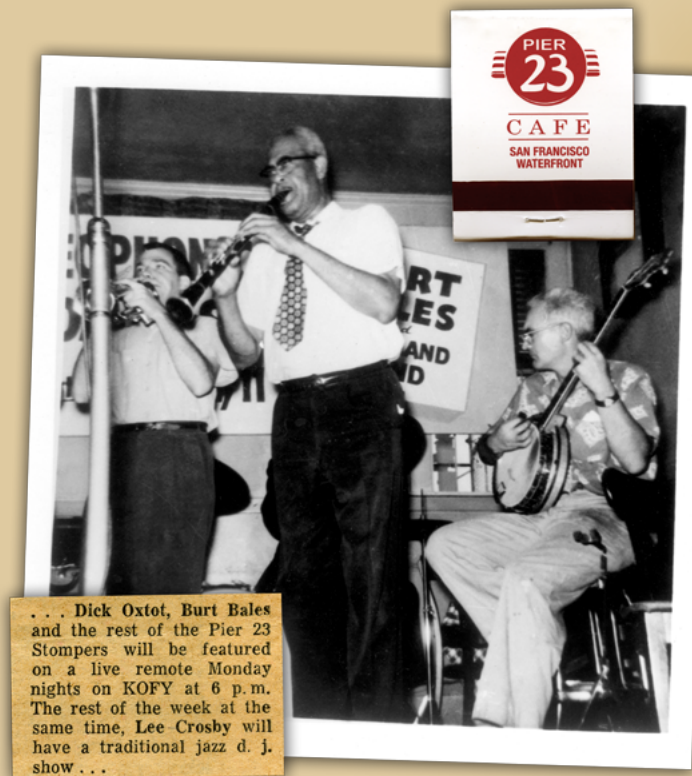
## Parisian Icon

*“Big Boy” was ubiquitous in Paris 1924-39 and likely the archetype for this Parisian jazz icon. The dimensions suggest his breadth and height.*

*Though this image might provoke mixed emotions today it signifies Goudie’s formerly overlooked role at the heart of a European Golden Age of jazz and swing.*

# Former Saxophone and Cornet Player, Clarinet Master

Frank Goudie first took up clarinet in his early twenties. It appears in photographs and recordings of him from the late-1920s through the '50s. In addition to playing cornet and saxophone, he famously “doubled” and even “tripled” playing all three instruments when first recording under his own name in Paris 1935.



*Pier 23 matchbook, newspaper promotion and Estuary jazz group broadcast 1959: Bill Erickson (trumpet), Goudie, Oxtot (banjo).*

**Estuary jazz group** (aka Waterfront Jazz Society) existed only for radio broadcast and was similar to Mielke's Bearcats except that it featured Burt Bales and a girl singer (actually under 18 years of age). Goudie stepped it up a notch on-air.

There are no reports of Goudie ever playing anything other than clarinet on the West Coast, somewhat to the disappointment of his younger colleagues. Most were curious about his saxophone sound and the musical persona that had carried him across three continents. Yet he told interviewer Ken Mills he'd “never felt at home” playing the tenor.

Goudie's fluid, legato lines are not unlike his former saxophone style or clarinet playing on record in earlier years. He developed a rich husky tone with relaxed flowing lines. He launched effortlessly into expressive improvisations with a clear sense of purpose and direction, equally at ease in a seven-piece New Orleans ensemble or swing combo.

## Pier 23 Estuary Jazz Broadcasts

Once he cast his lot with the younger jazz revival crowd Goudie was soon working regularly at [Pier 23](#) with piano player Burt Bales. The Pier was (and still is) a popular dive and jazz bar on the San Francisco waterfront. To this day their matchbook bears the motto “*Tween the Tracks and the Tugs.*”

Briefly in 1959 a few radio remotes (possibly only two) emanated from Pier 23, organized by radio personality and disc jockey, “Hambone” Lee Crosby.

Estuary was directed by [Burt Bales](#) (piano and vocals) then at the top of his game and a frequent guest of the Bearcats with Bill Erickson (trumpet) and Bob Mielke (trombone). The swinging four-beat rhythm section was equivalent to Mielke's Bearcats: Dick Oxtot (banjo), Squire Girsback (string bass) and Bob Osibin (drums). Notably, each of these musicians hired Goudie at one time or another with the exception of Osibin.

Host Lee Crosby touted the exotic dockside setting, *"tugboats, switch engines and glasses clinking."* The broadcast was an early experiment in stereo, the left and right signals transmitted simultaneously on mono AM and FM stations. But neither sustaining radio broadcast nor the hoped-for TV coverage ensued.

## Bob Mielke

[Bob Mielke](#) (b. 1926) was among the first Bay Area bandleaders to hire Goudie in 1957 as a regular clarinet substitute in The Bearcats Jazz Band. A highly imaginative trombonist, Mielke synthesized his personal style fusing elements from Kid Ory's tailgate, J.C. Higginbotham's swing, Tricky Sam Nanton's *vox humana* and George Brunies part-playing in Muggsy Spanier's 1939 Ragtime Band.

Bob spoke of Goudie with great fondness, recalling their first meeting (bear in mind Mielke was at least 6' 2"): *"He stood on a doorstep that was about six inches high. I looked up and he looked down at me. And he says, 'Big huh?'"*

Mielke was deeply impressed by Frank's sophistication, sheer stature, physical strength and unexpected talents, noting he possessed advanced musical skills such as harmony, composition and solfeggio: *"He was a musician's musician. He admired people who knew what they were doing. He's gotta be one of the most cosmopolitan people I have ever met."*

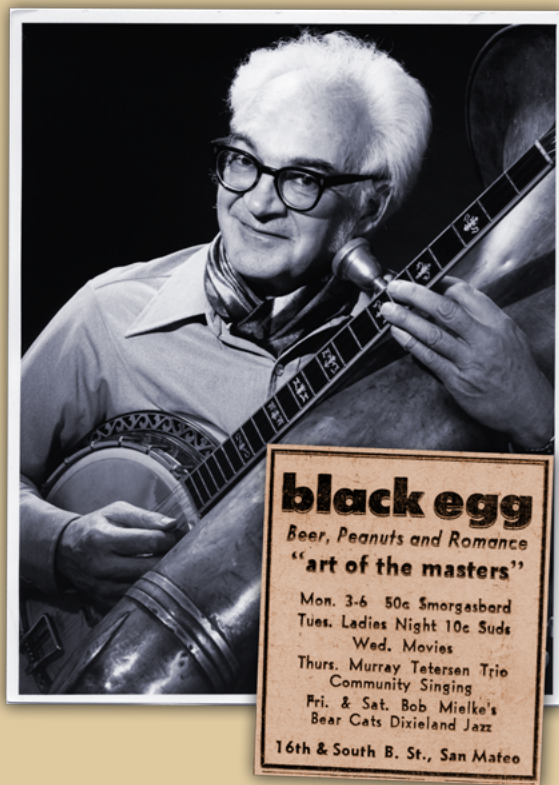
*Bob Mielke  
self-portrait, Lark's Club,  
Berkeley, 1955.  
Goudie with Bob Mielke  
and P.T. Stanton at  
Pioneer Village, East Bay  
c. 1958.*



# The Bearcats Jazz Band in Visalia, California

Goudie was taped with The Bearcats at a semi-annual casual event for the band in **Visalia**, a small town in California's Central Valley some 200 miles from San Francisco. It's rare hearing both Goudie and pianist Burt Bales with the band; for several years before 1960 Burt and "Big Boy" worked regularly together at Pier 23.

"Basin Street Blues" was Frank's vocal specialty and a sly reminder of his Louisiana origins. He emoted without a microphone projecting his voice directly to listeners. Traces of New Orleans are apparent in his pronunciation of "elite" as "E-light," like Jelly Roll Morton. Trombonist Bill Bardin reports, *"I took a good one in the chest one time when I was standing too close to him and he made an expansive gesture with his arms."*



Dick Oxtot proffered "Vintage Jazz with Style" on both sides of the Bay.

"When You're Smiling" is spirited enough to merit inclusion despite being incomplete at start and finish. "Blues From the Valley"\* displays Frank's deep and easy familiarity with the blues, to which he was first introduced four decades earlier in New Orleans.

## Dick Oxtot

Once Goudie entered the Mielke/Bales/Erickson orbit his employment by [Dick Oxtot](#) was natural, possibly inevitable. Dick sang and played several instruments very well. An unmatched gig getter, personnel of his ensembles were fluid and billed under a half dozen monikers, often interchangeable with the Bearcats.

Both the Mielke and Oxtot bands played briefly at **Black Egg** in 1960, a bar in San Mateo 15 miles south of the City. In "Black Egg Blues"\* Goudie spins off several choruses of tasteful variations once again demonstrating his easy mastery of the blues.

\*Unnamed tracks titled by author.

# The Bagatelle

The [Bagatelle](#) was Oxtot's Sunday afternoon gig at a pleasant little bistro on Polk St. in San Francisco. He customarily featured veteran African American Louisianans in the clarinet chair when available: Clem Raymond or Frank Goudie with P.T. Stanton (cornet) -- replaced here by the excellent horn player Ted Buttermann -- Bill Bardin or Bob Mielke (trombone), Pete Allen (string bass) and Bill Young (drums).



*Dick Oxtot's Golden Gate Stompers rehearsing at a private residence with Clem Raymond (clarinet) c. 1959.*  
*L to R: Goudie, Stanton, Raymond, Bardin, Allen, Oxtot, Young.*

Taken from an acetate disc the vivid “Say Si, Si” captures an exhilarating moment. Goudie constructs a classic New Orleans-style counter-melody to Buttermen’s sunny lead. Frank spoke with great regard of Bardin, considering the trombonist a force to be dealt with. Fortunately, “Should I?” was taped in full fidelity stereo.



*Bill Erickson,  
late 1950s.  
Monkey Inn Combo,  
1961-62,  
L to R: Goudie,  
Carter, Mielke,  
Erickson.*



## Bill Erickson

[Bill Erickson](#) and Goudie began working together regularly when Bill replaced the injured Burt Bales for a while at Pier 23. The pianist, trumpet player, arranger and musical genius some called ‘Willie the Master’ was skilled at setting the stage for the horns to shine. Under Bill’s leadership jam sessions at the Pier ranged from New Orleans revival, to Kansas City, to modern 52<sup>nd</sup> Street swing, including a wide range of local and visiting talent (heard on Vol. 2). Erickson’s frequent presence throughout this collection highlights his easy rapport with Goudie and their sparkling partnership.

[Monkey Inn](#) was a casual beer and pizza joint in Berkeley where during 1961-62 Goudie joined Erickson, trombonist Mielke, the fine New Orleans-born drummer Jimmy Carter and sometimes trumpet player Jerry Blumberg in a Thursday night combo. Photos show the musicians seated at this occasionally rough joint. Mielke recalls it was a lively hangout for UC students, “*football players and fraternity guys on their first beer bouts,*” that could get “*pretty rowdy.*” You can almost smell the stale beer and cigarette smoke.

These tapes are an intimate portrait of Goudie as a mature artist and the most detailed pickup we have of his clarinet. Frank was free to stride out on lengthy solos with purpose and direction, his expressive variations opening like blossoms.

“Petite Fleur” was not well known in America at the time. Goudie’s rendition is sincere yet plain compared to Bechet’s bravura stem-winder. (In Europe, Frank and Sidney’s paths had crossed often.) Mielke steps aside for Frank’s hushed soliloquy, Erickson shifts to tango rhythm midway.

“Nobody Knows” is the blues again via Count Basie’s KC combos, nuanced blending of instruments exploring the sophisticated harmonics. Erickson pounds out the blues on a broken-down badly tuned upright, adjacent to the audibly swinging barroom doors opening onto noisy Shattuck Avenue.

## Oxtot’s Berkeley home

It was not unusual for Frank to be recorded at jams, rehearsals or parties at Oxtot’s Dwight Way home in Berkeley. In Mills’ interview Goudie praised Dick’s banjo playing. Frank was heard on the 1963 [Janis Joplin sessions](#) taped at the Oxtot residence.

The fine cornet player for this session Walter Yost was better known as a tuba player. Other personnel include Jim Leigh (trombone), Bill Erickson (piano) and probably Pete Allen (string bass). The unknown drummer’s kit seems to include a subtly utilized washboard element.

“I Want a Little Girl” is one of the few surviving examples of Goudie backing a singer. He provides a playful accompaniment to Oxtot’s slightly melancholic vocal. “Gee, Baby, Ain’t I Good to You” was popular with these musicians and a natural vessel for Frank’s rich blues variations.

During about six years on the West Coast Goudie’s musical voice ripened to full fruition in the second wave of the great San Francisco jazz revival. He found fresh inspiration in his autumnal years with skilled musicians who honored the traditions he’d lived by for decades.

## Eulogy for a Gentleman of Jazz

In late 1963 Frank became very sick, dying of lung cancer January 9, 1964. There was little note of his passing, except for Richard Hadlock who drew on their personal friendship and interviews to write a sincere [eulogy](#). Published in the San Francisco Examiner January 19, 1964, it was a fitting tribute to his unparalleled journey spanning two thirds of jazz history:

*On the job, or even in jam sessions, other musicians soon learned to listen to Goudie's quiet suggestions. They were based on a long lifetime of playing music, from New Orleans to Paris, from Rio de Janeiro to Prague.*

*And when he played, the clarinetist gave it everything he had, no matter how many fumbling amateurs might be blowing alongside him. In the New Orleans tradition he tried to make every phrase count. He had done just the same in Europe, where he recorded with Django Reinhardt, and in South America, where he learned to play the real samba.*



*Today the big man rests near San Francisco.*

*Yet, I think the greatest lesson he bequeathed to those who go on living the Jazz Life was simply that people are more important than music.*

Near San Francisco on a gently rolling hillside Frank shares a grave plot with his sister Olive (1899-1955) and brother Dudley (1908-1980). The stone bears the name Goodie, a common variant.

“Big Boy” was a big man who lived a big life. From New Orleans to Paris, Rio to Berkeley the full extent of his talents, travels and music remains to be fully explored. Hopefully this sampling from his final chapter along with research, web pages and a fine new biography will bring due recognition to the colorful life and music of [Frank “Big Boy” Goudie](#).

Dave Radlauer, 2017

Award-winning broadcaster, writer and audio producer presenting vintage jazz since 1982.

## Sources:

Based on interviews, discussions and correspondence with Bill Bardin, Bill Carter, Barbara Dane, Dave Greer, Bob Mielke and Darylene Oxtot. Great thanks to Richard Hadlock for his recollections, corroboration, assistance and San Francisco Examiner articles.

*BIG BOY, The life and story of Frank Goudie*, by Dan Vernhettes with Christine Goudie and Tony Baldwin (2015).

[Interview of Frank Goudie by Ken Mills](#), San Francisco, 6/2/60, Music Rising at Tulane.

*Heaven on the Side: A Jazz Life*, Jim Leigh (2000).

[Frank Goudie in San Francisco 1956-64](#), Frisco Cricket, SFTJF, 2013.

[Remembering Bill Erickson, 'Willie the Master' \(1929-67\)](#), Frisco Cricket, SFTJF, 2013.

[Goudie's San Francisco](#)

[Frank Goudie in Paris](#)

Monkey Inn recordings by Alvin and Barbara Bryant. Estuary group from Oxtot's collection. All others courtesy Dave Greer.



*Goudie, Mielke, Stanton,  
Pioneer Village*



**Frisco Jazz Archival Rarities** presents these recovered audio artifacts despite occasional technical and musical flaws. About fifteen hours of Goudie's performances on the West Coast have been recovered; Grammercy Records offers the best half of it. Frisco Jazz Archival Rarities is temporary custodian of these audio treasures, entrusted with their interpretation and dissemination before transfer to a university-based archive for long-term preservation.

## **Frank “Big Boy” Goudie on the West Coast, Vol. 1: Big Boy’s Blues, 1958-62**

**Frank Goudie plays clarinet on all tracks.** *Personnel listed may not be complete but is based on data available.*  
*Tracks 10-12 previously issued on Grammercy CD 418 & 422.*

### **Pier 23 Estuary Jazz Broadcast, San Francisco, CA 1959**

*Bill Erickson (tpt), Bob Mielke (tbn), Burt Bales (pno), Dick Oxtot (bjo), Squire Girsback (str bs), Bob Osibin (dr),  
“Hambone” Lee Crosby (MC)*

1-Just a Closer Walk with Thee	5:30
2-Mack the Knife (vocal, Burt Bales)	2:47
3-Saturday Night Function	3:09

### **Bob Mielke and The Bearcats with Burt Bales, Visalia, CA c. 1958**

*P.T. Stanton (cor), Bob Mielke (tbn), Dick Oxtot (bjo), Burt Bales (pno), Pete Allen (bs), Don Fay or Don Marchant (dr)*

4-Basin Street Blues (vocal, Goudie)	3:02
5-When You’re Smiling (fragment)	4:04
6-Blues From the Valley	6:34

### **Dick Oxtot’s Stompers, Black Egg, San Mateo, CA 5/21/60**

*P.T. Stanton (cor), Bill Bardin (tbn), Dick Oxtot (bjo), Pearl Zohn (pno)*

7-Black Egg Blues	5:53
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### **Dick Oxtot’s Golden Gate Stompers, Bagatelle, San Francisco, CA c. 1959**

*Ted Buttermann (tpt), Bill Bardin (tbn #8), Pete Allen (bs), poss. Bill Young (dr)*

8-Say Si, Si	4:21
9-Should I?	5:35

**Bill Erickson combo, Monkey Inn, Berkeley, CA 9/7/61-2/1/62**

*Bob Mielke (tbn, except #11), Bill Erickson (pno), Jimmy Carter (dr)*

10-Willie The Weeper	4:18
11-Petite Fleur	4:53
12-Nobody Knows	7:45

**Dick Oxtot's Stompers, Oxtot's home, Berkeley, CA c. 1962**

*Walter Yost (cor), Jim Leigh (tbn), Bill Erickson (pno), Dick Oxtot (banjo, vocal), poss. Pete Allen (str bs), Don Marchant (dr)*

13-I Want a Little Girl (vocal, Dick Oxtot)	7:00
14-Gee, Baby, Ain't I Good to You	7:46
	<b>73:26</b>

Audio: Tapes from Dave Greer and the collections of Dick Oxtot and Bob Mielke.

San Francisco photos from Dick Oxtot and Bob Mielke collections. European photos from [www.JazzIndex.ch](http://www.JazzIndex.ch).

Sound restoration, research, art design and liner notes: Dave Radlauer.

Transferred and mastered using a J-corder Technics reel to reel, RME Fireface d/a, Bybee Quantum filtering and Pro Tools.

Graphics: Conrad Seto

“Behind his easy smile lies one of the most colorful stories in jazz.”

-- Richard Hadlock, San Francisco Examiner, July 1963