

Frank “Big Boy” Goudie on the West Coast Vol. 2: Frank’s Jams 1959-63

A Big Life

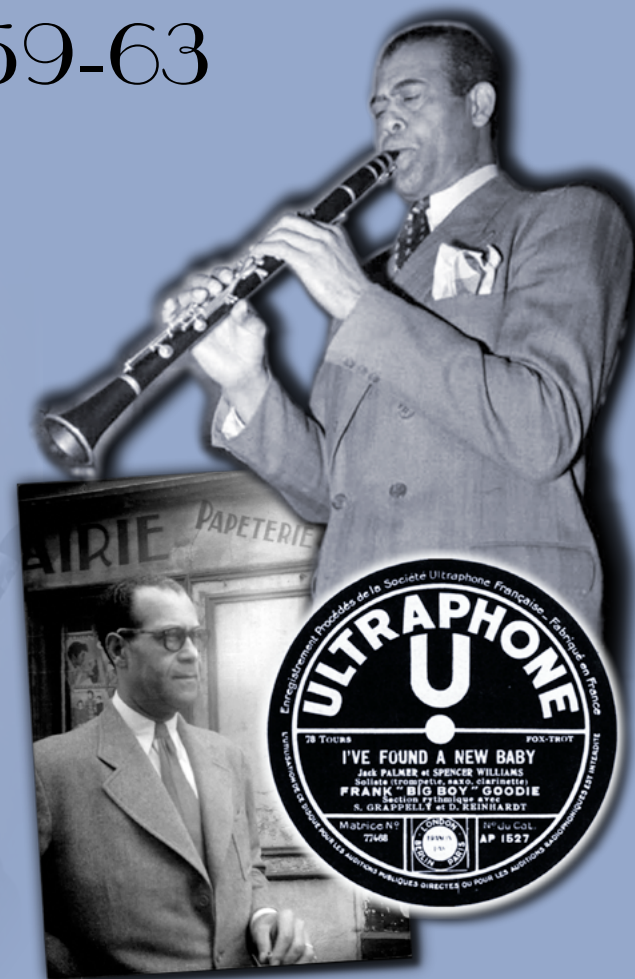
It is a mistake of jazz history that [Frank “Big Boy” Goudie](#) (1899-1964) has been almost completely overlooked until recently. This collection and related web pages aim to help correct that oversight examining his last and most personal chapter in San Francisco, CA 1956-64.

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. Six feet five inches tall 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.



At the Chikito Club, Basel, Switzerland 1949 and in front of his wife Madeleine's papèterie (stationary) shop late-1940s. When Goudie first recorded under his own name in Paris 1935 he “tripled” soloing on trompette, saxo, clarinette.

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. At first he ventured a lot of money trying to launch a music school, but failed. 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 him describe a wise, kind, modest, sophisticated 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 “Big Boy” had easily found well-paying jobs with prestigious bandleaders wherever he went. But after finding no lucrative high profile jobs in San Francisco, he confessed to interviewer Ken Mills missing the celebrity 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

“Few musicians his age were ever more eager to play. A born gentleman, one of the last of the old school,” wrote Richard Hadlock in the [San Francisco Examiner](#), January 19, 1964.

Richard Hadlock (b. 1927) is a soprano saxophonist, teacher, jazz writer, journalist and broadcaster who befriended Goudie. Richard invited Frank to dinner at his home in Berkeley a few times and profiled him in print.

The two were linked by odd coincidence. As a teenager Hadlock lived in Rio where his father worked for RCA. He heard Goudie at the Copacabana Casino in rehearsals with the samba big band of Aristides Zaccarias. Though too shy to introduce himself at the time Richard often walked past the small café owned by the Goudies, noting its, *“4 or 5 tables with red checked tablecloths, just like a Parisian movie set.”* Later in the 1940s Hadlock was briefly protégé to Frank’s old acquaintance, Sidney Bechet.



As a teenager Hadlock first encountered Goudie in Rio de Janeiro and recalls the couple’s tiny café, seen with wife Madeleine hosting.

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.

In Frisco Goudie also became friends and musical buddies with piano players Burt Bales and Bill Erickson, Dick Oxtot (banjo, singer, bandleader) and trombonists Jim Leigh, Bill Bardin and Bob Mielke. With his height, heft, French accent, beret and proud upright posture Frank stood out. *“He cut quite a figure,”* said Mielke, *“he was a man of the world. Really an impressive man. He was always supportive, both personally and musically.”*

“He had it,” remarked trombonist Bardin who commended his flowing clarinet lines, *“a player who would never let anyone down.”* Adding, *“Though none of us ever called him ‘Big Boy’.”*



Burt Bales sometime before 1950.

San Francisco 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.
- **Pier 23 radio broadcasts** with Burt Bales, Bob Mielke, Bill Erickson (trumpet) and Dick Oxtot.
- Goudie was a regular clarinet alternate with Bob Mielke and **The Bearcats** (heard in Vol. 1).
- In San Francisco at the **Bagatelle** bistro Sunday afternoons Frank joined Oxtot and the usual suspects (Vol. 1).

- In Berkeley Goudie was a regular at the music parties, rehearsals and jam sessions at **Nod's Taproom**, **Dick Oxtot's home** or the various **Berkeley jazz houses**.
- Also in Berkeley at **Monkey Inn** Frank joined a remarkable swing combo with Erickson (piano) and Bob Mielke (trombone) regularly in 1961-62.
- Goudie played with Jim Leigh's New Orleans-styled El Dorado Jazz Band in the South Bay.

Former Saxophonist and Cornet Player, Clarinet Master

Frank Goudie first took up clarinet 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, when first recording under his own name he famously “doubled” and even “tripled” playing all three instruments on disc in Paris 1935.

There are no reports on the west coast of Goudie ever playing anything other than clarinet, 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 in 1960 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, launching 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.



Tenor man, Chikito Club, Basel, Switzerland 1949.

Legendary Pier 23

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 small dive and jam bar on the San Francisco waterfront. San Francisco music critic Ralph J. Gleason memorialized the joint in his liner notes for Burt Bales' 1958 album, *On the Waterfront*:

In San Francisco for some years now the Embarcadero (the dockside road than runs along the Bay waterfront wharves) has been a sort of North Rampart Street with Dixieland jazz floating out over the waters of the Bay every night from the Tin Angel and Pier 23, that converted dock wallopers lunchroom where Burt plays.



Pier 23 has changed little since Goudie's time, except the sawdust on the floor is now gone.

As recounted in his self-published jazz memoir, *Heaven on the Side*, Jim Leigh worked with Goudie at Pier 23. Frank called the trombonist “very original.” They played in Leigh's El Dorado Jazz Band in the South Bay and numerous other ensembles, some heard here. Wrote Leigh:

If such a thing as a session joint exists, the Pier was the main one in the Bay area for musicians of pre-bop sympathies, enormously popular with local and visiting musicians as a place to drink and, frequently, to sit in.

At Pier 23 Frank joined what was *officially* a trio. But the Pier built its reputation and flourished as a jammers bar; musicians came to play with each other and for a small, appreciative audience. But in early 1960 Bales was struck by a car and hurt badly; a broken leg and serious injuries sidelined him for months if not years.

Bill Erickson's Pier 23 Sessions

Pianist Bill Erickson replaced Bales, capably taking charge of the **Pier 23** jam sessions for years. Goudie remained a regular fixture, becoming a close musical associate, working frequently with the pianist, trumpet player, arranger and musical genius some called Willie the Master.

Skilled at setting the stage for others to shine, Erickson is the only other musician on all but a couple tracks of this volume, a testament to their sparkling partnership. At The Pier Goudie jammed easily with a wide range of horn players on a broad spectrum of styles, as heard in these tapes from the collection of Erickson's friend Dave Greer.

Attentive listeners might notice that music from Pier 23, and these ensembles in general, was neither pure San Francisco Traditional nor New Orleans jazz. It was a swinging Frisco hybrid on a broad palette encompassing New Orleans to 52nd Street Swing, featuring diverse local and visiting musicians. Besides the talent heard here, occasionally sitting-in reports Hadlock were horn players Muggsy Spanier, Marty Marsala and Ernie Figueroa and reed-man Darnell Howard among others.

The sessions were predominantly in a four-beat rhythm format. Erickson took a low profile keeping focus on the horns. It's not always clear who played bass, but a couple of the best in the area were frequently present: Squire Girsback and Pete Allen.

Banjo players like Dick Oxtot (a favorite of Goudie's) or Mike Prince often joined the proceedings. New Orleans native Jimmy Carter usually played drums; accurate and hard driving he was tasteful and unobtrusive. Bill also hired Carter for his Thursday night combo with Goudie at Monkey Inn in Berkeley.



*Bill Erickson and Dick Oxtot:
publicity for Jack's Waterfront Hangout 1957.*

Goudie's Jams

Featured in the **Pier 23 Trio** Goudie was relaxed, soloing at length with ease. Frank had trained himself to play unlimited solo variations, a facility he'd admired in saxophone giant Coleman Hawkins. In Europe he'd seen "Hawk" improvising on a theme for an hour or more.

Some very good musicians were heard at **Nod's Taproom** in Berkeley where Goudie was a regular. It was more of an ongoing weekly jam session than paying gig. Jazz superfan Dave Greer, who was the source for many of these tapes recalls the backroom sessions: *"There was a bandstand if no dance floor. Tables came up pretty close to the musicians."*

"Shake That Thing" captures the lively atmosphere and lead of [Byron Berry](#). Popular at Pier 23 and Nod's, Berry was a former associate of Lu Watters who ran with Burt Bales, Mielke and the East Bay gang. His horn had an undomesticated roughness, possibly reflecting his troubled personal life and petty crime complications.



Berkeley Jazz Houses

"Big Boy" was a denizen of the frequent house parties and jam sessions in Berkeley. These casual events at a rotating series of [Berkeley Jazz houses](#) were jolly affairs that could stretch from afternoon until past midnight; music parties fueled by good jazz, spaghetti or red beans and rice, day old bread and dollar-a-gallon wine. In close proximity to friends and family the musicians played for their own pleasure. Dave Greer and his open reel tape deck roomed for a while at Erickson's rented Victorian and captured some of Frank's contributions.

Relaxed high spirits and bonhomie are apparent in the informality of "See See Rider." Goudie gets lots of mic time despite a precocious toddler shrieking into the microphone with delight. Another clarinetist, most likely Bill Napier, takes the second solo.

Cornet player "**Papa Ray**" **Ronnei** (b. 1916) brought authentic New Orleans style to his horn. A one-time disciple of Papa Mutt Carey, Ronnei's beautiful sound was earthy and elemental, offering strong yet cooperative leadership for "Just Because" and the rarely heard "Under the Bamboo Tree."

[Bill Napier](#) (1926-2003) was among the best jazz clarinetists produced by the Frisco revival and a brilliant hot jazz musician. At times he and Frank sounded surprisingly alike in tone, though very different in style.

Another of Greer's taped gems is the electrifying "Should I?" full of intense riffing and ensemble polyphony. Napier solos first followed by Goudie. **Walter Yost** shines on cornet, though he was much better known for his East Bay jazz tuba. Mielke's scorching trombone solo segues to a romping clarinet duo in the ride out ensemble.



*Bill Erickson's Monkey Inn
combo: Goudie, Carter,
Mielke, Erickson, 1961-62.*



Bill Erickson's Monkey Inn Combo

In Berkeley, [Monkey Inn](#) was a rough and rowdy beer and pizza joint, a hangout for UC Berkeley students and frat boys. Erickson brought Goudie together with Mielke, sometimes trumpeter Jerry Blumberg and the excellent New Orleans-born drummer Jimmy Carter. In his New Orleans days Carter had played with the bands of "Kid" Thomas, "Kid Shots" Madison and John Handy.

The presence of pianist, trumpet player, arranger and musical genius [Bill Erickson](#) on every track but one in this volume highlights his easy rapport with Goudie. His genius is undeniable despite the broken wreck of a piano.

"Joseph, Joseph" was a specialty of this combo summarizing their creativity, skill and verve. Frank had room to stretch out, launching extended solo improvisations. Photos show the musicians seated at this gig; you can almost smell the stale beer and cigarette smoke.

More Pier 23 Jams

Like Goudie, beloved local treasure **Amos White** (cornet, 1890-1980) was among several African American jazz veterans plying their musical trade by the Bay. "Sweet Sue" is a rare taste of Amos swingin' away in fine form with Robin Hodes tastefully seconding. Mike Prince supplies some remarkably good banjo pickin.'



Photo of Burt Bales and Pier 23 proprietor Havelock Jerome, courtesy Richard Hadlock.

Originally from Ohio, horn man **Robin (aka Bob) Hodes** (1926-2005) was a veteran of the Dixieland Rhythm Kings, Red Onion Jazz Band and worked with Don Ewell, Bob Helm and Burt Bales. At Pier 23 he was comfortable in several modes, rounding up the posse for a 52nd Street-style session teetering on the cusp of Bop.

Homage to Lester Young is apparent in “The King” (sadly incomplete) and not just Dave Clarkson coming on like Prez. By 1963 Goudie had absorbed and resynthesized much of jazz saxophone style into his personal clarinet sound, including Lester’s intense urgency. Frank’s searing solo (3:45-4:45) demonstrates robust fluency in the contemporary idiom, unsheathing a growling edge he’d been honing since the 1930s.

Estuary Jazz Broadcasts

Briefly in 1959 a few broadcast remotes (possibly only two) emanated from [Pier 23](#) promoted by radio personality and disc jockey “Hambone” Lee Crosby. **Estuary jazz group** (aka Waterfront Jazz Society) existed only for broadcast and was similar to Mielke’s Bearcats except that Burt Bales directed from the piano and there was a girl singer (actually under 18 years of age). Erickson played trumpet, Mielke trombone and there was a swinging four beat rhythm section equivalent to The Bearcats. Host Lee Crosby touted the colorful dockside setting, but neither sustaining radio broadcast nor the hoped-for TV coverage ensued.

Goudie sounded excellent, stepping it up a notch on-air. “Rose Room” spotlights his talent for limitless variations on a theme. Named for the Rose Room of San Francisco’s St. Francis Hotel it was composed by Art Hickman who played there in 1914. Ellington later utilized the chord progression for “In A Mellotone,” heard in the band riffs behind Frank’s extended lead.

“High Society” harkens back to Goudie’s youth in Golden Age New Orleans when he heard the early masters: Albert Nicholas, Barney Bigard, Johnny Dodds, Papa Celestin, Punch Miller, Freddie Keppard, Mutt and Jack Carey, and he’d known Bunk Johnson.

Goudie’s musical voice found full fruition in the second wave of the great San Francisco jazz revival. In his autumnal years “Big Boy” found fresh inspiration with skilled musicians who honored the jazz traditions he’d lived by all his life.



... Dick Oxtot, Burt Bales and the rest of the Pier 23 Stompers will be featured on a live remote Monday nights on KOFY at 6 p.m. The rest of the week at the same time, Lee Crosby will have a traditional jazz d. j. show ...

'Estuary Jazz group' broadcasting at Pier 23 San Francisco 1959. L to R: singer Suzanne Summers, MC "Hambone" Lee Crosby, Burt Bales, Bill Erickson (hidden), Dick Oxtot, Frank Goudie (obscured).

Eulogy for a Gentleman of Jazz

In late 1963 Frank became very sick and died 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 fitting tribute to Goudie's remarkable journey spanning three continents and 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.

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.

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.



Goudie rests today on a gently sloping hillside near San Francisco sharing a grave plot with his sister Olive and brother Dudley. The stone bears the name Goodie, a common variant. Richard Hadlock, who eulogized Goudie in 1964.

“Big Boy” was a big man who lived a big life. From Josephine Baker’s Paris to Rio, Switzerland to the San Francisco waterfront, the full scope of his talents and travels remains to be fully charted. Hopefully this sampling from his final chapter, along with recent 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.



*Goudie, 1963
copyright William Carter*

Heaven on the Side: A Jazz Life, Jim Leigh (2000). *BIG BOY, The life and story of Frank Goudie*, by Dan Vernhettes with Christine Goudie and Tony Baldwin (2015).

See also:

[Frank Goudie in San Francisco 1956-64](#), Frisco Cricket, SFTJF, 2013.
[Remembering Bill Erickson, 'Willie the Master' \(1929-67\)](#), Frisco Cricket, SFTJF, 2013.

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

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

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

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

Graphics: Conrad Seto



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. 2: Frank’s Jams, 1959-63

Frank Goudie plays clarinet on all tracks. *Personnel listed may not be complete but is based on data available.*
Tracks 8-10 previously issued on Grammercy CD 418 & 422.

Pier 23 Trio, San Francisco, CA 6/60

Bill Erickson (pno), Jimmy Carter (dr)

- | | |
|----------------------------|------|
| 1-You’re Driving Me Crazy | 3:26 |
| 2-You Took Advantage of Me | 5:29 |

Byron Berry (trumpet) Nod’s Taproom Jam Session, Berkeley, CA 4/6/60

Bob Mielke (tbn), Bill Erickson (pno), Dick Oxtot (bjo), Bret Runkle (wshbd)

- | | |
|--------------------|------|
| 3-Shake That Thing | 3:49 |
|--------------------|------|

Walter Yost (cornet) Jam Session, Berkeley Jazz house, Berkeley, CA 9/60

probably Jim Leigh (tbn), probably Bill Napier (2nd clt), Bill Erickson (pno), Dick Oxtot (bjo)

- | | |
|-----------------|------|
| 4-See See Rider | 6:20 |
|-----------------|------|

Ray Ronnei (cornet) Jam Session, Berkeley Jazz house, Berkeley, CA 9/60

probably Jim Leigh (tbn), Bill Erickson (pno), Dick Oxtot (bjo), probably Pete Allen (sb)

- | | |
|-------------------------|------|
| 5-Just Because | 5:24 |
| 6-Under the Bamboo Tree | 4:25 |

Clarinet duet with Bill Napier and Jam Session, Berkeley Jazz house, Berkeley, CA, Summer 1961

Walter Yost (cor), Bob Mielke (tbn), Bill Napier (clt), Dick Oxtot (bjo), Pete Allen (str bs)

- | | |
|-------------|------|
| 7-Should I? | 6:35 |
|-------------|------|

Bill Erickson's, Monkey Inn Combo, Berkeley, CA 8/31/61-2/1/62

Bob Mielke (tbn), Bill Erickson (pno), Jimmy Carter (dr)

8-The Blues my Naughty Sweetie Gives to Me	6:08
9-Just a Closer Walk with Thee	5:33
10-Joseph, Joseph	6:26

Pier 23, Amos White (cornet) ensemble, San Francisco, CA Spring, 1962

Amos White and Robin Hodes (cor/tpt), Bill Erickson (pno), Mike Prince (bj), probably Jimmy Carter (dr)

11-Sweet Sue	4:45
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Pier 23, Robin Hodes (cornet) Modern Swing session, San Francisco, CA 5/63

Jim Leigh (tbn), Dave Clarkson (ten sax), Bill Erickson (pno), Squire Girsback (bs), Jimmy Carter (dr)

12-The King (incomplete)	6:01
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Pier 23, Estuary Jazz Broadcast, San Francisco, CA 1959

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

13-Rose Room	4:02
14-Struttin' with Some Barbeque	4:30
15-High Society	3:39
	77:30

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

-- Richard Hadlock, San Francisco Examiner, July 1963