

Frank “Big Boy” Goudie, Bob Mielke, Bill Erickson Combo in Stereo Hi-fi Live at Monkey Inn, 1961-62 Volume 3: Jamming In The Woodshed



Monkey Inn was a beer and pizza joint in Berkeley where East Bay musicians met Thursday nights to play jazz. These cats rarely sounded happier than when playing mainly for themselves and only secondarily for a mostly indifferent college crowd.

Miraculously, a dozen hours of vivid audio survives, preserving a conversation among inspired musicians at the apex of their creativity. These private tapes of historic public performances offer an intimate view of inspired musicians jamming in the woodshed and speaking with their own true voices.

The soloists in this combo played significant roles in Frisco Jazz of the 1950s and '60s:

- Bob Mielke created his own powerful jazz trombone style. Bob Mielke's Bearcats Jazz Band was a distinctly independent voice in the mid-century jazz revival, and focal point for the music in Berkeley and the East Bay.
- Creole clarinet player Frank Goudie had arrived in San Francisco only a few years earlier, returning to America after three decades overseas. His life reflected the story of jazz itself: origin in turn-of-the-century Louisiana, migration to Europe and Latin America, transition to swing, and recapitulation in the New Orleans revival.

- [Bill Erickson](#) was a dynamic jazz pianist, trumpeter and entertainer; a catalytic musician and creative force who led combos and jam sessions at the region's best jazz dive: Pier 23 on the Frisco waterfront.
- There are curious uncertainties regarding the '**Mystery horn**' cornet or trumpet player, very possibly Jerry Blumberg, in the quintet sessions.

Bob Mielke (b. 1926)

Mielke created his own exciting jazz trombone style fusing elements from Kid Ory's New Orleans tailgate tradition, the Harlem swing of J.C. Higginbotham, and Ellington's "Tricky Sam" Nanton. His trombone exemplar for playing New Orleans parts was George Brunis, heard in the 1939 Muggsy Spanier Ragtime Band.

As a soloist Bob was interesting because he was brave enough to take the unexpected path. His support for the other players is strong; his comping alternates between supportive riffs and ensemble counterpoint. He's at his best or featured on "Cakewalkin' Babies," "You're Gonna Lose Your Gal," "Sweethearts on Parade," and the two versions of "Closer Walk." Of several fine solos on "Diga Diga Doo" Bob's may be the corker.

In the 1950s and '60s Mielke's popular Bearcats Jazz Band was at the core of an East Bay/Berkeley contingent in the Frisco revival. Mielke, Erickson, Goudie and company were part of a second wave of jazz musicians who built an independent Traditionalist style. This combo exemplifies their co-operative, adventurous and musically sophisticated outlook.



Bob Mielke, Lark's Club, Berkeley 6.23.55

Frank “Big Boy” Goudie (1899-1964)



Frank Goudie with Bob Mielke's Bearcats,
Pioneer Village, East Bay, c. 1958

From about 1957-63 Goudie was a notable figure in the Frisco revival. The six foot, five inch multi-instrumentalist originally from Louisiana moved to Paris in 1924, South America during WW II, back to Europe after the war, and eventually back to the USA. His globe-spanning saga is only now being fully explored. *“Behind his easy smile lies one of the most colorful stories in jazz,”* wrote broadcaster, musician and writer Richard Hadlock in the early 1960s, *“I never saw a musician more eager to play.”*

By the early 1960s Frank was playing most nights of the week in any of a half-dozen ensembles, or with Bill Erickson at Pier 23 and Monkey Inn. He had a “continental” manner, wore a beret, spoke with a strong French accent, yet retained earthy traces of his Creole origins. His younger associates found him cultured, intelligent, worldly and modest; a charming “gentleman of jazz” with considerable personal warmth, *“though none of us called him ‘Big Boy’,”* noted trombonist Bill Bardin.

In his sixties and still brimming with energy Goudie was known exclusively as a clarinetist in the Bay Area: fertile ground for an autumnal flowering of his music. The former saxophone player developed a distinctive personal voice: a rich, husky tone with flowing lines and a vocabulary incorporating both New Orleans tradition and his decades playing swing tenor. Drawing on broad experience that had included jamming with the jazz elite of Europe during the 1920s, ‘30s and ‘40s, Goudie developed the ability to improvise endlessly with ease. He solos at length effortlessly in “Gettysburg March,” “Sweethearts on Parade,” or blues-based material like “Nobody Knows” or “Careless Love.” In “Up a Lazy River” he adds a theatrical burr, almost a growl, that he’d utilized on clarinet some 25 years earlier recording with the Willie Lewis orchestra in Paris.

The Monkey Inn sessions are by far the best pickup of his masterful clarinet sound. Goudie poured out his variations with drive and imagination, his eloquent solos opening like blossoms.

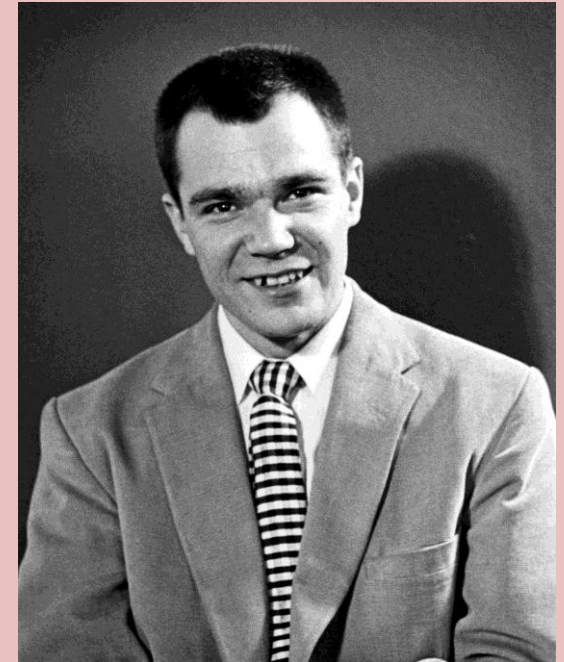
Bill Erickson (1929-67)

A dynamic force in the Frisco revival, Erickson is almost completely forgotten today. A musical genius and jam session director, he was remarkably skilled at setting the stage for others to shine. Besides playing piano in Mielke's Bearcats when called upon, his other main enterprise was directing jam sessions at [Pier 23](#) on the San Francisco waterfront a couple nights a week, with Goudie a regular fixture.

Leading the Monkey Inn combo from the piano Erickson delivered solid bass support, imaginative harmonics and superb solos. These are the finest examples of his piano playing on disc or tape; his improvisations take daring harmonic leaps, presenting brilliant melodic variations.

A gifted all around musician known locally as "Willie the Master," Erickson was also an accomplished trumpet player, arranger, entertainer and raconteur. For a while in the late 1950s, his spacious nearby residence became known as the 'Berkeley jazz house,' a site legendary for music parties and jam sessions. Members of Mielke's band including Goudie often jammed there from afternoon until past midnight.

His genius is undeniable whether soloing or playing counterpoint to the horns on "Doctor Jazz," "I'm Gonna Sit Right Down," "The Goldiggers Song," "Diga Diga Doo" or pounding out a masterful solo in "Joseph, Joseph."



Bill Erickson, late 1950s. Mielke Collection

The shock of his 1967 suicide, and scarcity of surviving discs, extinguished too quickly the memory of a bright light in Bay Area music. This is the first publication of music produced solely under Bill Erickson's leadership.

"Mystery Horn"

There's a puzzling mystery surrounding the identity of this cornet (or trumpet) player. For decades Bob Mielke recalled that it was [Jerry Blumberg](#) who played on this gig. Blumberg was known for his work in New York with Bunk Johnson and Bob Wilber, where he and Mielke first met in 1947. He later came under the influence of Bobby Hackett. Briefly in the Bay Area during the late 1950s and early '60s Jerry made a strong impression on local musicians. But he soon quit music for health and personal reasons.

However Blumberg recently broke a silence of 50 years to state that he is not the cornet player on these tapes. Nonetheless, he did recall playing Monkey Inn with Mielke a couple times. Furthermore, his itinerary in the Bay Area overlapped with these sessions, he was sometimes heard at Erickson's Pier 23 jam sessions, and extant tapes of Jerry subbing in the Bearcats bear a strong resemblance to these. So despite his demurral informed listeners remain convinced this is Blumberg, including Bob Mielke, me, and jazz scholar, Richard Hadlock who distinctly recalls Jerry's "classy" sound.



Bill Erickson and Bob Mielke, 1951-52.

The lead horn added substantially to this group, upgrading it from a combo to a classic jazz ensemble. Though only a quintet, and lacking a proper bass line, the third horn allowed for the music parts of a New Orleans ensemble to generate polyphonic melodic counterpoint. And for riffing: playing simple repeated figures behind a soloist which was a

popular and effective technique in Bay Area jazz performance at the time, adding complexity, harmonic layering and rhythmic drive to the music.

Whoever it was, is indeed very good. His lead is a clarion call on “I Ain’t Gonna Give Nobody None of my Jelly Roll,” “Battle Hymn” and “Diga Diga Doo.” In “Joseph, Joseph” his control of dynamics and modulation of intensity levels is exemplary. Our “mystery horn” player provides skillful leadership without aggressiveness, a full tone, fluid technique and fresh improvisational ideas, blending a swinging Bobby Hackett New York Dixieland sound with flourishes of Bunk Johnson.

Little is known of drummer **Jimmy Carter** who was an African-American native of New Orleans working regularly at Erickson’s Pier 23 jams, and with this combo. Accurate and supportive he shifts his patterns fluidly, punctuating the action with quick jabs.

Historic Audiotape

These recovered audio artifacts are only slightly marred by minor tape flaws. Plenty of location and performance noise can be heard, like the swinging doors next to the piano: a tired poorly tuned upright. Mielke wanders around audibly, chats up the audience, and stomps his foot near the end of each tune alerting other musicians to the concluding bars. In the quintet sessions pickup of Goudie’s clarinet is too weak in the ensemble, the horn too strong. Curiously, in parts of the 6.31.61 session you can hear a humming wordless vocalise by an unknown party, most noticeable on “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” and banjo player Dick Oxtot drops in sporadically.

Captured in vivid stereo with an Ampex tape deck and Telefunken microphones, the sound is surprisingly lifelike. The original dynamics have been retained with only equalization adjusted. Bob Mielke lived to see publication of this music with great pride. Sadly, Goudie was dead of lung cancer within two years, Erickson a suicide five years later.

Music and Repertoire at Monkey Inn

Several revival bands played at this venue between about 1956-66: Bay City, Great Pacific, and Bob Mielke's Bearcats Jazz Bands. Mielke describes the Monkey Inn crowd as "*frat boys out on their first beer benders,*" though another less charitably called them, "*a little pack of thugs.*" Mostly a college-age crowd, they responded to the music with mild indifference or overheated enthusiasm.

Mielke and the East Bay jazz crew took special pride in presenting a broad range of music from classic jazz, American standards, and the swing era. They reinterpreted tunes from Jelly Roll Morton: "Doctor Jazz" and "Sweet Substitute," Louis Armstrong: "Sweethearts on Parade," Basie and K.C.: "Nobody Knows," Duke Ellington: "Creole Love Call," and Popular music of the 1930s: "The Goldiggers' Song (We're in the Money)."



Goudie, Carter, Mielke, Erickson, Monkey Inn, 1961-62

Notably, almost nothing appears from the Lu Watters-Turk Murphy Trad Jazz genre. The spiritual "Just a Closer Walk," traditional "Gettysburg March," and enthusiastic "Ice Cream" were already staples of the New Orleans revival by the 1950s.

"Careless Love" is offered despite shortcomings, including location sound leaking in when a Harley V-twin motorcycle starts up and pulls away. Another reminder that according to Mielke, "*things could get a little rough.*"

The tapes contain no less than four renditions of "Joseph, Joseph." Mielke asserts that the 1940s Andrew Sisters



Goudie, Carter, Mielke, Erickson in action at Monkey Inn

hit may derive from Jewish folk music. A specialty of this combo, their monumental performance of June 1961 concludes nearly five hours of music recovered from Monkey Inn. In this performance, Goudie quickly finds inspiration, Erickson unleashes titanic tide of crashing chords, and Mielke's sly plunger-mute solo sums up an inspired performance.

These private tapes of historic public performances offer an intimate view of master musicians woodshedding onstage, playing mostly for themselves while conducting a graduate seminar in jazz improvisation. Coalescing as one voice, Goudie, Mielke, Erickson, Carter, and possibly Blumberg explored the full dynamic musical potential within a few bits of unamplified wood, brass, felt, steel, ebony and skin. Their blended melodic variations, harmonic modulations and

rhythmic syncopations add up to a whole considerably greater than the sum of its estimable parts.

Dave Radlauer, 2015

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

Thanks to Bob Mielke for access to his personal collection and corroboration of the liner notes for this series, which are based on interviews with Bob Mielke and Bill Bardin (trombones), Richard Hadlock (soprano and clarinet), Dave Greer (fan/observer), and correspondence with Jerry Blumberg.

For more recordings of Bob Mielke and Frank "Big Boy" Goudie see Grammercy Records' *The Odd Brilliance of P.T. Stanton, Frank Goudie on the West Coast*, and others from Frisco Jazz Archival Rarities.

Cover photos: Photos of Bob Mielke, Frank Goudie, East Bay, Pioneer Village, 1957-58; and Bill Erickson from the late-1950s. Courtesy Bob Mielke.

Find more about these artists, original research, articles, and audio archives at the [JAZZ RHYTHM](#) website.

Album 1

Track List

Date **Time**

QUARTET:

1. Cakewalkin' Babies (from Home)	8.31.61	4:09
2. Willie the Weeper	2.1.62	4:18
3. Gettysburg March	1.18.62	6:10
4. Sweet Substitute	1.18.62	5:33
5. You're Gonna Lose Your Gal	1.18.62	5:16
6. Nobody Knows	1.18.62	7:45
7. Big Butter and Egg Man	1.18.62	5:53
8. Monkey Rhumba	1.18.62	1:01

QUINTET:

9. I Ain't Gonna Give Nobody None of my Jelly Roll	9.7.61	7:59
10. Careless Love	9.7.61	6:57
11. Up a Lazy River	9.7.61	8:21
12. Diga Diga Doo	9.7.61	7:23
	Total	71:22

Album 2

Track List

QUARTET:

	Date	Time
1. Angry	2.1.62	5:06
2. The Goldigger's Song (We're in the Money)	2.1.62	5:36
3. Creole Love Call	2.1.62	5:31
4. Doctor Jazz	1.18.62	6:01
5. I'm Gonna Sit Right Down and Write Myself a Letter	1.18.62	6:16
6. Sweethearts on Parade	8.31.61	6:34
7. Just a Closer Walk with Thee	8.31.61	5:33

QUINTET:

8. Just a Closer Walk with Thee	9.7.61	7:21
9. Battle Hymn of the Republic	6.31.61	5:17
10. Ice Cream	6.31.61	6:53
11. Joseph, Joseph	6.31.61	7:18
	Total	67:58

Trumpet player unknown, probably Jerry Blumberg.

Frank "Big Boy" Goudie (clarinet), Bob Mielke (trombone), Bill Erickson (piano, leader) and Jimmy Carter (drums). Album 1 Track 5, "You're Gonna Lose Your Gal," Mielke featured. Album 2 Tracks 8 & 11, Add banjo, probably Dick Oxtot.

Recorded at: Monkey Inn, Berkeley, CA, 1961-62

Tapes: Bob Mielke Collection

Photos: Dick Oxtot & Bob Mielke Collections

Re-mastering, production, research & liner notes: Dave Radlauer

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



Grammercy Records and Dave Radlauer present **Frisco Jazz Archival Rarities**: unissued historic recordings of merit drawn from live performances, jam sessions and private tapes. These recovered artifacts of the San Francisco jazz revival offer music previously unavailable, long out-of-print, or revealing unexpected aspects of familiar names. Recorded mostly in the Bay Area 1945-75, this is lost sound from a unique time and place: a boisterous musical culture that created an independent jazz style of its own.

Some recordings contain minor flaws of performance and sound quality. The original sources vary from vivid stereo to limited-range monophonic. While a few tracks are incomplete at start or finish, we hope you will agree they are nonetheless worth having.

Re-mastering, research, and liner notes by Dave Radlauer: award-winning broadcaster, writer and audio engineer presenting vintage jazz since 1982. Transferred and mastered using a J-corder modified Technics reel deck, RME Fireface d/a, Bybee AC filtering, and Pro Tools.

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