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FIRST HEARINGS IN JAZZ

New Orleans Jazz from Boston

Wilbur de Paris at Symphony Hall

PERSONNEL: Wilbur de Paris (trombone), Sidney de Paris (cornet), Omer Simeon (clarinet), Sonny White (piano), Lee Blair (banjo), Bennie Moten (bass), Wilbert Kirk (harmonica, drums).

Items: "Majorca," "Juba Dance," "Toll Gate Blues," "Wrought Iron Rag," "Cielito Lindo," "Sister Kate," "Banjoker," "Piano Blues," "Farewell Blues."

Recorded in Boston on October 26, 1956.

Here is an enthusiastic group of musicians who are anxious for their music to please and, for the most part, please it does. With a few reservations, this is some of the finest New Orleans Jazz to be heard for a long time.

"Majorca" employs a Spanish rhythm introduction and first chorus against Kirk's harmonica. Simeon takes a fine solo and the motif employed by the piano left hand and bass fiddle is haunting.



In contrast with the Fields' group reviewed a fortnight ago, this recording, also engineered on location, is tops. Listen to the blend of the banjo with the rest of the group and the sizzle of the drums. And that last chorus by Sidney in gutbucket style is perfect.

"Toll Gate Blues" offers the group plenty of scope solowise and in ensemble patterns. An unusual background to the clarinet solo is employed as well as unusual banjo phrasing behind the short bass solo. Pianist White impresses as a musician who believes in and feels the blues, and again Sidney's cornet wins my applause.

"Piano Blues" features White's sincere pianistics and the group as a whole indicates a real feeling for the music. Here are musicians who approach jazz intelligently and who know what they are doing.

With these three tracks I have picked the gems from the session. I do not feel so enthusiastic about the others, but then there are few LPs issued today with every track a winner.

"Juba" showcases Simeon's clarinet; "Rag" is a dull composition and does not build up the interest of "Gate" or "Majorca"; "Banjoker" is in novelty class only; "Kate" is far too ponderous and the harmonica sounds completely out of place; and "Farewell Blues" gets into a rut and results in the least musical contribution of all the tracks.

With the exception of "Farewell" and "Banjoker" I was taken with banjoist Blair. He uses his instrument intelligently and plays an important part in the rhythm section. Sidney de Paris and Sonny White impress me especially, and their work throughout is faultless.

First Playing: Station 2YD, September 14, 9.0 p.m.

The Bill Perkins Octet

Personnel: Bill Perkins (tenor), Bud Shank (alto), Jack Nimitz (baritone and bass clarinet), Stu Williamson (trumpet and valve trombone), Carl Fontana (trombone), Russ Freeman (piano), Red Mitchell (bass), Mel Lewis (drums).

Items: "Song of the Islands," "One Hundred Years from Today," "Zing Zang," "Let Me See," "For Dancers Only," "Just a Child," "As They Revell'd," "When You're Smiling."

Recorded February 9 and 16, 1956.

Ex-Herman and Kenton tenor man Perkins leads this West Coast group through eight numbers which range from very good to boring. I note that the set was recorded on two different days, and I think I can tell just from listening which tracks were made on which days. Four of the items sound full of life, and although they don't jump with enthusiasm, the musicians sound lively and keen (e.g., "Islands"). On the remainder the artists are just playing the arrangements, whipping off the solos with brilliant execution, but without enthusiasm, sounding like a Dave Pell unit (e.g., "Smiling"). Jazz was never created this way. Enthusiasm and spontaneity are the core of any jazz performance.

"Islands," a bright opener, highlights the very pleasant ensemble sound of the group, and arranger Bill Holman makes effective use of the instrumentation both in backing soloists and in ensemble passages.

"See," a Harry Edison original arranged by Perkins, showcases beautifully executed ensemble passages which provide suitable jumping off spots for solos. The ending is novel, featuring as it does Freeman's Basie-inspired piano and Lewis's fine rhythmic drumming. Perkins, especially, sounds at peak and really alive here.

"Dancers" is an interesting lesson in counterpoint writing, but the beat is laboured and when the soloists take over for a series of uninspired choruses the listener's attention wanders.

The reflective mood is maintained on "Years" and "Child," but in my opinion, without "Islands" and "See" the session would be a disappointment. These two make it worth your while to tune in.

First Playing: Station 2YD, September 7, 9.0 p.m.

The Charlie Smith Trio

Personnel: Hank Jones (piano), Oscar Pettiford (bass), Charlie Smith (drums).

Items: "Have You Met Miss Jones," "Body and Soul," "Blues for Sal," "Air-mail Special."

Although the trio is termed the Charlie Smith trio, Smith remains in the background for the most part. He takes one long solo on "Special," Pettiford solos throughout "Body," but most of the music centres around Jones's piano.

"Jones" is a bright opener with Pettiford demonstrating his wide range of ideas as a rhythm bass man and Jones showing ability with both single note style and block chord work. The whole item jumps pleasantly without being outstanding.

After a piano introduction, Pettiford takes over on "Body," presenting the Johnny Green ballad as a bass show-piece. A melodically inventive and technically agile bass man, Pettiford shows extraordinary skill on this one especially.

"Blues," a Thad Jones composition, highlights the group on a modern kick

N.Z. LISTENER, NOVEMBER 8, 1957.