



Charley is about to leave, a request, taken up by all present, is made for a bottle of whiskey. Charley says, "Have you bastards finished that crate already?"

**STEBBING STUDIO,
MAY 28TH. 2.30 PM.**

"The real work is getting the right sound. The actual recording is the easiest part from our end. It took us about two hours to get the right sound out of my drums." Bruce Hambling sucks on a bottle of beer in between takes of Ian Morris' "Walking In Light". With a booming rhythm section pounding out a basic rock'n'roll beat, Peter Ulrich's voice is belting out the lyrics:

*I see things through a different doorway
Felon committed
Ain't that a crime?*

Peter himself is here in the control room saying, "We're still finding our way around a recording studio." Excepting Ian, that is. Ian has had a great amount of experience in the studio as an engineer, working with Hello Sailor, amongst others. Producer Rob Aickin says, "It could perhaps have been a little bit tighter but it's not bad. How'd you like it, Ian?" "Aw ... you know ... we'll do it again." "Yeah," Rob says, "I'd like to because of that mike. Where's Bruce? ... Ah, Bruce. Look, it needs to be a bit more laid back. Not that it's sloppy, just that it's pushing a bit too hard."

The boys return to their instruments. "Okay," Rob says from inside the control room, "just run through it again. Got your tempo set? Rolling." *I see things through different doorway/felon committed ...*

With only two weeks away from the release of their first album, Th'Dudes are already at work on the follow-up. They've been here since 9 o'clock and will spend the rest of the day and most of the evening here.

After running through the number for the third, or was it fourth, maybe even fifth time, they all sit back again for another listen. *I see*

things through a different doorway ... After playing the tape, Rob says, "I won't keep that even though it's got some good bits. But it wasn't bad."

"Not bad?" says Peter. "Yeah. It's a bit monotonous in parts. You know, it's pretty basic."

"Really?" Peter thinks about this one. "Ha! How about a brass section?" His expression seems to suggest he's joking but there's no doubt that should Th'Dudes want a brass section, they'd get one. "I don't really care anyway," says Dave Dobbyn. "It's all been done before. As long as it sounds like us."

Peter back in the studio, shouts out, "Come on, Rob. We'd better get into it. We're just f**king around. Order us around or something." "Okay. Tape's rolling. Try it again." *I see things through ...*

Both Aickin and the band are happy with the result this time. It's a take. All that remains is to add more drums, the guitar solo, harmonies and maybe keyboards. But that's another day's work. Right now, without even time to crack another coldy, Th'Dudes are running through another song with Rob Aickin readjusting the controls for the next take. And that's where I took my leave from the band, heading home to type this out.

I could perhaps, by way of closing, burble on a bit here about the likelihood of Th'Dudes shifting up into that status slot previously held by Split Enz and currently occupied by Hello Sailor, particularly considering the latter's imminent departure. But Th'Dudes have got some stiff opposition. There's Street Talk and the CBs to contend with.

But, no, I won't get caught in that who's biggest, who's best number. Still, I can't help wondering if, with all this promo about to hit us, there might not be a case of overkill at hand. It's very rare — although there's no reason why this should be — that a band can capture both the school kids and the post-school crowds. Th'Dudes forthcoming promotional campaign seems to be directed at the former and, certainly, their singles belong in the pop camp. I only hope that the older pub crowds don't get frightened off by the commercial aspects of the band's attempts at moving into the NZ Band *Numero Uno* slot. Because, you see, Th'Dudes onstage are very much a tight energetic rock'n'roll band.

The difference between Th'Dudes and struggling bands like Rough Justice is not beer and brandy, just the good fortune to get a manager who will push them, using all the devices available, while the band concentrates on the music.

John Dix

**A BEGINNER'S JAZZ HISTORY
PART II** BY JOHN DIX

The Big Bands

By the time the Thirties rolled around jazz had a foothold in every major American metropolis. Admittedly most of it was of a rather insipid variety but at least the music was being brought to the attention of a larger audience. The rise of jazz ran parallel with another social phenomena — the dance craze.

As Victorian standards were deemed archaic teenagers took to dancing — hitherto a rather sombre activity — as a popular form of recreation. The bands that catered for these young foxtrotters relied mainly on Tin Pan Alley scores but eventually a semblance to jazz, a semi-jazz if you like, developed.

Dance Band leaders like Paul Whiteman and Jean Goldkette actually carved a name for themselves in jazz history by featuring such notable white jazzmen as Bix Beiderbecke, Benny Goodman and the Dorsey Brothers. But naturally it was the Negro dance bands who, in those segregated bandstand days, made the most formidable forays into a new hybrid jazz. Fletcher Henderson, a middle class negro with musical training, was undoubtedly the most influential of these band leaders.

By the mid-Twenties Henderson realised that many of his musicians were out-of-work jazzmen who'd come along for the regular paycheck. Henderson understood that the main difficulty in a dance band attempting to play jazz was on the differing line-ups. The clarinet, a major instrument in jazz, had no real place in the dance hall where the emphasis was on volume, just as the lush mellow tones of the saxophone section were inappropriate to jazz. What Henderson did was utilise the saxophones in much the same manner that the jazzmen used the clarinet, but rather than have the two sections (brass and reeds) play simultaneously he had them play antiphonally. That is, one section played the melody, the other punched out stops and riffs during the pauses. It was a formula that would be widely imitated ten years later.

Then there was Duke Ellington. In the late-Twenties Ellington gained popularity with a series of recordings aimed at the commercial market. Virtually gimmick records the result was dubbed 'jungle music' due to the emphasis on Bubber Miley's growling trumpet and Sonny Greer's powerhouse drumming. Ironically, Ellington, despite setting a high standard through the Thirties, was almost ignored during the Swing Era, and it wasn't until the early Forties when the Swing Boom was at its peak that Ellington released a series of records with a star-studded band that established him as one of jazz's greatest-ever arranger-composers. Composing with his personnel rather than his instrumentation is mind, Ellington gave his sidemen the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities on tailor-made compositions. Ellington transcended the limitations of Tin Pan Alley and the blues (the two main inspirations) to establish himself as a 'serious' composer. Right up to his death in 1974 he was still issuing such notable recordings as *Far East Suite* and he proved his adaptability by recording an album in the Sixties with John Coltrane.

The Swing Era was born in 1935, in typical Hollywood fashion, when the Benny Goodman Band won over the teenage audiences at Los Angeles' Palomar Ballroom following a disastrous national tour during which the band vowed to call it a day after the California gig. There are several reasons why a specific time and place can be ascertained to the birth of Swing. The Chicago-based Goodman band had been broadcasting across the country via the novelty of the radio. Their 'new' music (Fletcher Henderson arrangements incidentally) had little response back east but in California, with its time difference, a much younger audience had been listening. An audience seeking something a little more inspiring than the standard schmaltz of the day.

Within a year there were literally hundreds of bands, most of them easily forgettable, playing in the Goodman/Henderson vein. The record companies, quiet during the depression, snapped up as many bands as they could but only Goodman deserves a special mention here. (for Count Basie see below). There is much snobbery in jazz circles about the worth of white jazzmen but Goodman is almost unanimously recognised, along with Bechet, as being one of the greatest clarinetists. Although his big bands were aimed at the mass market his combos provided some of the finest jazz of the Thirties and it must be pointed out that Goodman laid his career on the line by employing black musicians, virtually unheard of at the time.

There were maybe a dozen band leaders worthy of a mention but let's leave it with Earl 'Fatha' Hines. Hines had been around since the Twenties, was one of jazz's leading pianists and had been leading big bands with relative success since 1929. But he'd failed to capture the mass audience of the Swing bands and in 1942 he decided on a complete personnel change and try once again to crack the market. He was too late. The Big Band era was winding down, the younger musicians were bored with



Count Basie

A glance around the Town Hall revealed a decidedly over-30 audience. Few long-hairs, no punks. Count Basie followed his orchestra on stage to a standing ovation. Seated, he tinkled the keys with the restraint for which his playing has become famous. The doodling intro led into the full ensemble "Sweet Georgia Brown". The show had started. There were no surprises, the soloists all performed with the expertise a man of Basie's stature demands, and the scores were all culled from the Swing period. No surprises, but one hell of a show all the same.

Earlier in the day I caught Basie at the Inter-continental. A spright 75, familiar sea-captain's hat on head, cigar in mouth, Basie's vitality amazed me. I asked him the secret for his long-running success.

"Now why did you ask me that? Success is a word I don't like to fool with. Why didn't you ask me the secret of my happiness? I don't know, it's just my love for music, love for travelling, love for people."

Bill Basie was born in New Jersey in 1904 but moved to Kansas City when he was a teenager. In the late Twenties Basie joined Walter Page's Blue Devils who were all eventually lured into the Benny Moten Band, the most successful band in the territory. Basie assumed command when Moten died suddenly in 1935 and the following year was 'discovered' but talent scout John Hammond. National and later international success followed. Firmly established as the most exciting big band of the late Thirties, the band boasted soloists like Lester Young, singers like Billie Holiday and Jimmy Rushing, and one of the greatest rhythm sections in jazz history: Basie, guitarist Freddy Green (who's still with the band), bassist Walter Page and drummer Jo Jones. A long list of hits ("One O'Clock Jump", "Jumpin' At The Woodshed" etc) established Basie as a key figure in jazz.

Apart from a brief period in the early Fifties, when economical necessity forced him to use a sextet, Basie has continued to utilise a big band long after the style has fallen from fashion. I asked Basie how it felt to be playing the same songs year after year.

"We don't ... Weeelll, I guess we have to play the ones people expect but I've boiled it down to a handful. Ha ha, yeah, sometimes I can hear the guys in the band saying 'Christ, same old songs again.'"

And finally, when will Count Basie stop touring?

"When I'm not able to. Or too tired of it all, which I don't think will ever happen." And I, for one, hope so. The Basie Band has long finished as an innovative force but they are the best reminder of an exciting period in 20th century music. Hopefully, next time a younger audience will be lured to the Basie Beat.

John Dix

RECOMMENDED LISTENING
Count Basie — *The Best of* (MCA-4050)
Duke Ellington — *The Complete Vol. 3 1930-32* (CBS S2V1 88000)
Duke Ellington — *The Duke 1889-1974* (CBS 88077)
Duke Ellington & John Coltrane — *Duke & Trane* (Impulse A30)
Benny Goodman — *Trio, Quartet, Quintet* (RCA LPM1226)
Fletcher Henderson — *1927-36* (RCA 730 584)
Earl Hines — *A Monday Date: 1928* (Milestone MLP 2012)
Various Artists — *This Is The Big Bands* (RCA DPS 2019)

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