

Excepting the defiance of boxer Jack Johnson in the second decade of the century, American blacks who found themselves in the public eye endeared themselves to white society by "keeping their place" and acting like good little niggers. Joe Louis and Louis Armstrong, the two most famous negroes of the Thirties both kept up the Uncle Tom role. Then along came the be-boppers and shot the hell out of that concept of the servile negro.

Be-bop was much more than a musical revolution, it was the birth of black consciousness as we now know it. It was Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, and later Miles Davis and Charlie Mingus, who paved the way for the Black Panthers, Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali twenty years later.

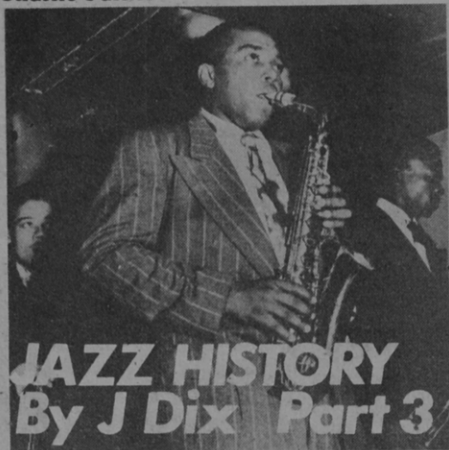
Although eventually white musicians were accepted as formidable bop players (notably Al Haig and Red Rodney), in the early years there was a deliberate attempt to exclude whites from the music. The be-boppers created their own *hep* language, adopted the Islamic religion, dressed in an outrageous fashion and, of course, played a form of jazz so fast, intricate and advanced that the swing musicians had no option but to sit back and watch jazz progress without them.

If you accept the thesis that there is a major cultural upheaval every seven or eight years (to enable each new generation to find their own heroes and institutions) then the bop rebellion was inevitable. Although almost all of the boppers gained their initial experience in the swing bands, it was not their bag. There was a growing movement, as yet unnamed and without direction or leadership, which invaded the big bands of the early Forties. The be-bop founders, notably Parker and Gillespie, all had bad reputations for insubordination, continually being reprimanded for clowning around on the stand, playing confusing experimental solos, being sloppily attired or displaying a distinct lack of interest.

When the Earl Hines Band fell apart in 1943, Hines' vocalist, Billy Eckstine, formed a big band utilising the 'modernist' school of players, including Parker and Gillespie. But there was a definite lack of discipline with so many rebels in the one band and it soon disintegrated (later Gillespie would overcome the problem of a bop big band).

By 1945 Parker and Gillespie had formed their own combo and established themselves at the vanguard of the bop movement (I'll return to these two in later columns). While Bird and Dizzy were experimenting with the Eckstine band, there were other musicians making groundwork for the forthcoming revolution. Minton's, a club on New York's Fifty-

Charlie Parker



second Street, had a house band which included two bop pioneers, drummer Kenny Clarke and pianist Thelonius Monk. The policy at Minton's was for visiting musicians to drop in for the after-hours jam sessions to see if they could compete with the regulars.

Virtually every instrument had its revolutionary practitioner with the rise of bop: drummers Clarke and Max Roach shifted the ground beat from the bass drum to the ride cymbal; pianists Monk and Bud Powell placed more emphasis on the right hand; the bassist, influenced by Ellington's Jimmy Blanton, pushed the instrument more to the fore; the electric guitar found prominence in the hands of Charlie Christian; and, of course, every trumpet-player wanted to play like Dizzy, while everybody, on every instrument dreamt of blowing like Bird.

Because of a Musicians' Union ban on recording between 1942-44 there are, unfortunately, very few records available to trace the formative years of the bop players. So the bulk of the classic bop recordings were made from 1945 up to the Fifties, by which time the limitations of the form had run its course.

Some of the boppers went on to dominate Fifties jazz, notably Miles Davis (who served his apprenticeship with the Parker Quintet) and Monk. The late Ralph Gleason, one of the great jazz critics, said, "The be-bop era was not a beginning but a brilliant ending to a style." Maybe, but while Miles, Mingus and Monk would now turn their back on pop music as vehicles for their music, they did owe bop something important. For if the original jazzmen played for fun and the swing-men played for entertainment, the boppers were the first to play jazz for art's sake.

RECOMMENDED LISTENING

Dizzy Gillespie — *The Greatest Of*, (RCA LPM-2398)

Charlie Parker — *The Complete*, (BYG 529 129)

Various Artists — *Jazz At Massey hall* (Fantasy 86003)

NEXT MONTH: MODERN JAZZ

FRAMED BY W.DART

HALLOWEEN

Director: John Carpenter

Cinema is an art of the genre — the western, the musical, the horror film, all exist for a new director to come along and transform them by dint of his skill and vision. And of all three genres it is probably the horror film which allows the most scope for cinema's 'bag of magic tricks'. Yet, New Zealand gets so few of the interesting horror films being made these days, and it is only through the Auckland Film Festival that we got a film like George A Romero's *Night of the Living Dead*. And it is thanks to the AFF that *Halloween* made its first appearance here.

John Carpenter is the current darling of the overseas cineastes and his career has been a rather quizzical one, his first film being the 1974 *Dark Star*, a quirky sci-fi effort which started as a University film exercise and eventually extended into a \$60,000 project (still nowhere near the *Star Wars* budget). And from over yonder comes those tantalising reports of his *Assault on Precinct 13*, which we will see God knows when.

Halloween is a classic exercise in the 'edge of the seat' subgenre. A psycho killer escapes from the asylum and proceeds to systematically terminate a succession of teenagers as they unwittingly wander into his territory. So the film is a series of vicious knifings growing ever more and more graphic until there is the final harrowing showdown between killer and heroine, Jamie Lee Curtis (the daughter of Tony Curtis and Janet Leigh).

If I describe it as elegant, there are those who will think this encroaches on its power to t-e-r-r-i-f-y. No way, says yours truly who screamed at one point in the movie. But there is a balletic grace to Carpenter's prowling camera work, as there is in his constant shifts of focus, allowing the audience to see tantalising glimpses of the 'bogey man' lurking and waiting. Elegant too are the incorporation of extracts from *The Thing* and *Forbidden Planet* on the television which Curtis and her babysitting charges are watching unaware that, over the road, her friends are being systematically slaughtered.

Nice ironies too like the choice of Halloween for this Walpurgisnacht — creating characters who unwittingly think that the gurgling victim on the phone is just someone pranking or a lurking presence in a closet is just a practical joke. And best of all when Curtis escapes and screams for assistance the neighbours ignore her pleas thinking that she, too, is just in the traditional trick or treat mood. And so for a movie which is both trick and treat — try *Halloween* ... with a friend.

IT LIVES AGAIN

Director: Larry Cohen

A nice little exercise in sci-fi horror with three mutant flesh-eating babies threatening the life and security of us poor earthly mortals. Political overtones (the new master-race) and religious undertones (the new Messiahs) make for effective reverberations beyond the surface of the film.

Larry Cohen, a director we have yet to see much of in this country, gives us a cool and dispassionate view of middle class America threatened by something outside of its own terms of reference. The progressively horrifying attacks of the monster are stunningly staged and all in all, a most thoughtful film. Of

course, you will probably end up catching it in the local fleapit at a midnight endurance session ... but then that is about the only way you will see Jeff Lieberman's *Squirm*.

PRETTY BABY

Director: Louis Malle

A friend once said to me that what appealed most to him about the works of Jean Genet was the absolute absence of sentimentality, and the same could apply to this elegant view of life in a New Orleans brothel, circa 1910. To make a frank film about a 12 year old girl's initiation into whoredom without transcending the bounds of taste is a feat indeed, but then Malle handled the tricky subject of incest in *Murmur of the Heart* with infinite tact and sympathy.

The film is not without its flamboyance, mainly in Frances Faye's raddled old madam, looking more and more hideous with each new wig. Brooke Shields is lovely, and Good God, even Keith Carradine registers as a person. And with the lashings of the Scott Joplin-Louis Chauvin *Heliotrope Bouquet* on the soundtrack who could want for more?



Bates & Hurt, *The Shout*.

THE SHOUT

Director: Jerzy Skolimowski

With its origins in a Robert Graves' short story, *The Shout* is Skolimowski's first film for a number of years and with a fairly name-studded cast (Alan Bates, John *Midnight Express* Hurt, Susannah York) he offers a quiet study of the ambiguity of sanity. Is Alan Bates indeed an over-the-top-loony or can he really perpetrate an aboriginal death-shout?

What we have is an edgy film, with interesting portrayals of various english types — the whole film as it were, is framed with a cricket match at the local asylum. Add to this a central painting by Francis Bacon and a character who seems to be something of the village Mike Oldfield, it certainly doesn't lack colour. Skolimowski deserves a success, if nothing else for the opportunities he gave Diana Dors in *Deep End*, and who knows this could be it.

FILM FUN

The Clash have completed their work in *Rude Boy*, a feature film that takes a humorous look at the British punk scene. The movie is produced, written and directed by John Hazen and David Mingay, who are best known for their film on painter David Hockney, *A Bigger Splash* ... on a different musical front the *Bee Gees* filmed their recent Oakland, California concerts for possible release. The movie will be a 70mm production with dolbyized sound ... French filmmaker Robert Bresson, now 78, is preparing the script for his next film, *Money* ... while fellow countryman Louis Malle, whose *Pretty Baby* had an international impact, is to direct *Never Cry Wolf*, an outdoor adventure to be shot in Canada's Yukon area ... Jack Nicholson is to star in the third remake of *The Postman Always Rings Twice* the James M. Cain thriller ... Director Ridley Scott currently riding a wave of acclaim with huge box-office success of *The Alien*, is now signed to make *The Knight* ... and US releases are now scheduled for Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* in August while Michael Cimino's *Heaven's Gate* should open in December.

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