

**Today, in Sav Remzi's** circle of new bohemians, jazz is not just the word, it is the chapter and verse. For his generation there are no other islands to escape to.

"Whenever I say the word 'jazz', everybody's eyes seem to light up," says 26-year-old Remzi, whose jazz club, Red Eye, opened in south London last month. "It's the base of all music today – that's why it's so popular. It's also a music that is warm, sexy, erotic, and heartfelt."

Remzi is not alone in this belief, for although jazz will always be an acquired taste, demanding a very open pair of ears, out of its arcaneness jumps a dynamic and dangerous music; jazz living as the diverse, transcendent "sound of surprise".

This may be a radical period for pop if you are fifteen, but to Remzi, acid house not only lacks weight, but it gives him a profound sense of *déjà vu*. Many of his friends can remember wearing flares and dungarees the first time round. And if rock seems a creatively spent force, heavy metal profoundly Seventies, and classical music too po-faced and square, jazz is the answer.

In many ways Remzi is the quintessential modern jazz fan: young, stylish, switched-on and, as an entrepreneur, as much motivated by the spiritual qualities of the music as by its commercial possibilities. Ten years ago he would have been as enthusiastic about jazz as he was about Demis Roussos, and his experience of jazz clubs limited to a one-off night with Ronnie Scott and his "jokes" ... "Some-

one phoned up last night, asked: 'What time does the show start?' I said: 'What time can you get here?'"

In the Nineties, jazz is everywhere – in restaurants, shops and adverts. Add the attention generated by the London radio station Jazz FM (currently reaching just under 800,000 listeners weekly), plus the burgeoning jazz club scene in the capital – further evidenced by the opening of the ultra-modern Jazz Café in Camden, London's largest jazz club – and the new jazzers have a ready sub-culture to absorb themselves in. And with Ronnie Scott's now booked up weeks in advance and Jazz FM beaming out loud as the only 24 hour-a-day jazz station this side of New York, it is London, many say, that has leapfrogged Paris as Europe's jazz capital.

Yet it has taken more than one cry of revival for British jazz to carve out and strengthen this niche. First picked up by *The Face* in the early Eighties, jazz began to re-assert itself as a cultural force through such dance club DJs as Paul Murphy in London and Colin Curtis in Manchester, and via the new accessibility afforded by the more user-friendly, sharp-suited jazz of such American players as Wynton and Branford Marsalis. Still smarting from the excesses of the Sixties avant-garde and the ponderous fusion of the Seventies, Eighties jazz saw a *rapprochement* with the past and a return to the classic bop form. As US saxophonist David Murray explained: "The music's just got to start to swing again."

Not that jazz hasn't always had a foothold in Britain – the 100 Club in Oxford Street, one of the country's longest-standing venues, first opened its doors in 1947. But not since the Absolute Beginner beatniks of Colin MacInnes's Soho got the message in the late

PHOTOGRAPHS: VAL WILMER; RECORD SLEEVES COURTESY OF BLUE NOTE/EMI

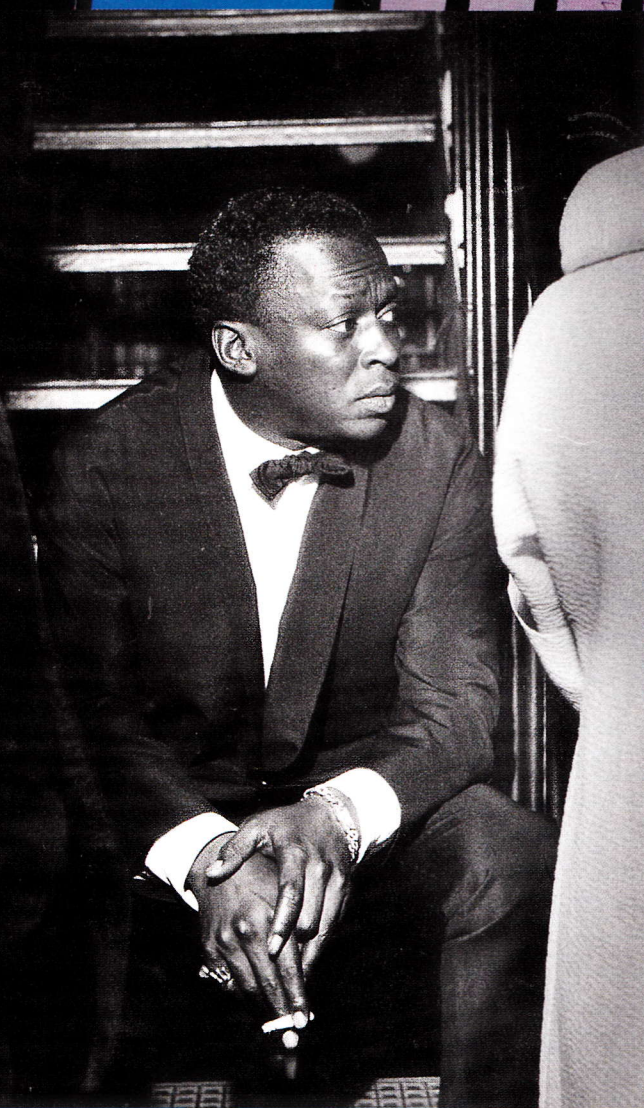
# Cool For Cats

**A new generation of players and clubbers have discarded their trainers to rediscover the style and sass of jazz. Philip Watson reports on the real rhythm of the Nineties**



BURRELL WITH STANLEY TURRENT  
HOLLEY JR/BILL ENGLISH/RAY BARRE

# midnight



Style notes: In the Sixties, trumpeter Miles Davis (above) played as coolly as he dressed, and Babs Gonzales (right) was a singing sensation in sharp suits.



STEREO  
FINEST IN JAZZ SINCE 1939  
BLUE NOTE

Fifties has there been such acute attention.

The arrival of Courtney Pine clinched it. A dynamic combination of musical and street credibility, Pine spearheaded the great British Jazz Revival by being, like his contemporaries in the US, everything a new audience could wish for: black, well-dressed, precociously talented and, most importantly, young.

When his debut LP on Island, *Journey To The Urge Within*, was released in 1986, Pine was just 22 and playing such venues as The Fridge in Brixton – clubs that hadn't hosted jazz before. The album went on to sales of 70,000 – unheard of in a market where moving 5,000 records is still considered miraculous. Rob Partridge, former head of press at Island, refers to the record as “a landmark; the British jazz world's equivalent of *Thriller*”.

And in the media wake, many other young British musicians surfaced – Andy Sheppard, Steve Williamson, Tommy Smith, Jason Rebello, Cleveland Watkiss. Collectively they present an impeccably stylish, highly marketable face of jazz, with Pine seeming as comfortable on *Top of the Pops*, *Wogan*, or ads for Wedgwood dinner plates, as recording music for Alan Parker's *Angel Heart* and the BBC's *The Chain*, and appearing on stage in front of 1,500 people at London's Sadler's Wells.

Yet whatever the resentful cries from the old guard, and the bitter mistrust of jazz's new marketing hype, the style and lifestyle asso-

ciations of the music cannot be ignored.

“The way you look in front of an audience affects the way they receive you. If certain guys can't see that then they're shutting their eyes to something that is common sense,” says 26-year-old saxophonist Williamson, who credits Jean-Paul Gaultier on the sleeve of his debut album *Waltz For Grace*, and who has made an arrangement with Emporio Armani to “campaign” its clothes. He sees his clothes as a reflection of the quality of his music – something that focuses more attention on it, not less. “I don't want people talking while I'm playing; I want to be taken seriously.”

Stressing it was Pine's “world-class talent” that first attracted him, Partridge is also the first to admit that Pine's sartorial sense was a marketing bonus. “Yes, it probably did help that he wasn't 65, balding and an habitual wearer of baggy, woolly jumpers and sandals. Courtney looked very sharp. But that's the tradition; to deny jazz its style is to deny it an awful lot.”

In fact jazz is not just sharp, it stings; it shines and cuts through like a razor. *The* metaphor for style, jazz lives as an urban shorthand for the

whole elusive concept of hip. “Music and life are about style,” says Miles Davis, the undisputed crown prince of hip, in his recent autobiography, and many of the music's icons have born witness to their union.

Ever since the Cotton Club reviews in Harlem in the Twenties and Thirties, jazz has held up an impeccably cool mirror to the world. And the cool world has slinked back. Kerouac, Lenny Bruce and the Beat



**Tuning up: Duke Ellington (top right) takes five with his orchestra. Impulse record sleeves (right), along with those of Blue Note and Prestige, set new standards in design and typography.**



**JULIAN JOSEPH** *London-born pianist Julian Joseph is a graduate of the prestigious Berklee School of Music in Boston, Massachusetts. Strongly influenced by the densely harmonic styles of Herbie Hancock and McCoy Tyner, Joseph has established a significant reputation on both sides of the Atlantic playing with Courtney Pine and Steve Williamson on their debut LPs, and touring the US with the Branford Marsalis Quartet. Joseph is set to grab some of the well-earned limelight himself this March with the release on eastwest of his first album as leader.*



# These joints are jumpin'

Birmingham

**THE CANNONBALL** Adderley Street (021-772 1403). Brum's premier jazz session. From avant-garde to straight ahead. Live sets upstairs on Friday and Saturday, and jam sessions on Wednesday in this lively public house.

Brighton

**OUR THING** Beachcomber Club, 214 Kings Road Arches (0273 202807). Every Friday, from 10pm to 2am, 300 dancers let off to Blue Notes, organ grooves and the Latin jazz selection of DJs Russ Dewberry and Baz Fe Jazz.

Bristol

**THE ALBERT INN** 1 West Street, Bedminster (0272 661968). Live and direct, every Sunday. Enthusiastic, smoky pub ambiance that attracts both modern-day jazzbos and old school bohos. On Tuesdays, hop on a train and savour the intimate live vibe of The Loft in Sawclose, Bath.

**THE COOKER** Floating Dock (0272 293301). Step across the gangplank and slip into the hold of The Thekla. Moored in Bristol's Floating Dock, this booming Friday session has live sets and funky free-style jazz courtesy of DJs Tin Tin and Dr Jam. Arrive early.

Edinburgh

**PLATFORM 1** Caledonian Hotel, Princes Street (031-225 2433). Sink into the armchairs for a cooking straight ahead set from Alex Shaw's trio and hungry guests. Every Saturday lunchtime; eat, drink and get the groove. Living lounge jazz.

Glasgow

**THE HALT BAR** 160 Wordlands Road (041-332 1210). Crowded, hot and smoky – good atmosphere at this residency, every Tuesday, with post-Coltrane jazz.

London

**BASS CLEF** 35 Coronet Street, London N1 (071-729 2476). Opened by British bassist Peter Ind, who played with Lennie Tristano, the Bass Clef features international soloists, weekly jam sessions and weekend Latin/African dance to make this unlikely corner of Hackney jump to life.

Generation; the poets and existentialists of the Left Bank in the Fifties; both are unthinkable without jazz. There is an undeniable urban romanticism at play here, something about jazz that reflects a spirit of non-conformity – of being the outsider.

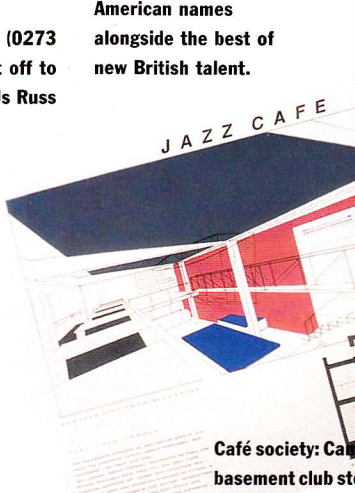
"There's a very independent spirit in jazz because it is such a conscious choice," says Jonathan Abbott, head of communications at Jazz FM. "It shows that you're selective, that you are your own person." And as much as the bohemians have dabbled in the jazz life, no one has lived it more fully than the musicians themselves. "People talk about the way films like *Round Midnight* and *Bird* over-romanticised the lives of jazz players, but they are incredibly romantic it seems to me," says novelist Geoff Dyer, whose new book, *But Beautiful*, to be published next summer by Jonathan Cape, was written in New York and takes jazz and jazz lives as its theme. "The idea of someone like Charlie Parker, Chet Baker

or Art Pepper producing this incredible music when simultaneously their personal lives are being ruined by heroin addiction is romantic."

Certainly, an alarming number of jazz greats, including trumpeter Clifford Brown and bassist Scott LaFaro, have added poignant footnotes to the James Dean, live fast, die young legend by being tragically killed in car accidents in their mid-twenties. And there are few more Chandleresque real-life stories than that of trumpeter Lee Morgan who, at 33, was shot whilst performing at Slugs in New York by his common law wife.

And if the "j" word itself has erotic connotations (originating from "jass", Negro slang for sex), it is also synonymous with rebellion and protest. "In the Sixties, soul-jazz appealed to Mods because of the beat and those sharp suits," says Ted Carroll, director of the jazz independent Ace Records. And, more profoundly, to many American blacks it also represents a reawakening of black culture and

**JAZZ CAFE** 5 Parkway, Camden Town, NW1 (071-284 4358). London's largest and newest jazz venue, Jon Dabner's 500-capacity Camden Café was formerly a branch of Barclays Bank. At a cost of £400,000, it has been designed by architect Tchaik Chassay, who was responsible for the interiors of both the Groucho Club and Zanzibar. Features include a bar by the entrance, table seating near the main stage, an upstairs restaurant and a roof terrace. The venture is a determined attempt to present a healthy mixture of jazz styles in something other than a sweaty, smoky club environment. The venue's musical policy reflects Dabner's intentions: big American names alongside the best of new British talent.



Café society: Camden's Jazz Café (above) is a long way from the smoky basement club stereotype. (Below), the late and great John Coltrane.



**JAZZ CAFE** 56 Newington Green, N16 (071-359 4936). John Dabner's original Jazz Café on Newington Green is a hip and intimate small venue. Its bold musical policy has resulted in the best in local, contemporary and modern jazz; the venue also serves excellent vegetarian food.

**JAZZ 90** Emerald Centre, Hammersmith, W6. Planned as a monthly session, the venue is to be found "on the roundabout next to the tube station", creatively transformed, and has a mega sound system. DJs Gilles Peterson and Sylvester spin hard-core jazz for dancers only. No live bands. Finishes late. For details, check flyers.

## Jazz is not just sharp, it stings and the metaphor for style; an urban shorthand

consciousness: Martin Luther King once drew a close parallel between the jazz musician's struggle for artistic recognition and the black struggle for civil rights.

But for all these enduring associations with style, sex and politics, jazz remains an unstoppable, self-sufficient, infinitely renewable life-force which appeals over and above its cultural baggage. Lovers of the music are in no doubt that it is one of this century's most important, if unrecognised, artforms.

"Jazz is the greatest music in the world," says Courtney Pine. "It's the only music that comes straight from the creator to the audience in a split second." Unsurprisingly, Geoff Dyer agrees: "Jazz is the greatest music of the century – the expressive potential of so many instruments has been more fully explored in jazz than in any other music."

And while the technical proficiency of jazz musicians has never been in question, jazz players have one up on "serious" musicians:

**RED EYE** 227-229 Lewisham High Street, SE13 (081-318 0436). Opened last month, this is south London's first purpose-built jazz venue. D'Soto-designed and open six nights a week.

**RONNIE SCOTT'S** 47 Frith Street, W1 (071-439 0747). Britain's best-known jazz club has survived in Soho for more than 30 years despite the hindrances of stormtrooper doormen, braying expense account diners and the proprietor's jokes. But on a good night Ronnie's is hard to beat for top names in an intimate setting.

**TALKING LOUD, SAYING SOMETHING** Dingwalls, Camden Lock, Chalk Farm Road, NW1 (071-267 4967). Every Sunday afternoon, day turns to night as jazz dancers gather to check the live set and the selections of DJs Gilles Peterson and Patrick Forge.

**VORTEX** Stoke Newington Church Street, N16 (071-254 6516). First-floor wine bar above a bookshop with a good PA and friendly atmosphere, but mind the pillar if you want to see the stage.

#### Manchester

**BAND ON THE WALL** Swan Street (061-832 6625). Thursday night is jazz night in this seedy but endearingly relaxed late-night boozier. Expect visitations from well-known US performers.

**DIJANGOS AT THE STATE** Whitworth Street (061-236 6984) Formerly the legendary Twisted Wheel club. Friday night has early jam session (10.30pm) featuring Mancunian luminaries. Savour free-style jazzy grooves on a sunken dancefloor.

#### Sheffield

**THE LEADMILL** Arts Centre, 6/7 Leadmill Road (0742-754 500). This arts centre hosts the monthly dance jazz session Vouteroonie and on Sunday lunchtimes and the occasional Tuesday features live sets organized by Hurlfield Jazz.

#### Shrewsbury

**JAZZ & ROOTS CLUB** The Buttermarket, Howard Street (0743-241 455). Positive vibes at this straight ahead session that operates in a night-club ambience. Not dance jazz, just jazz.

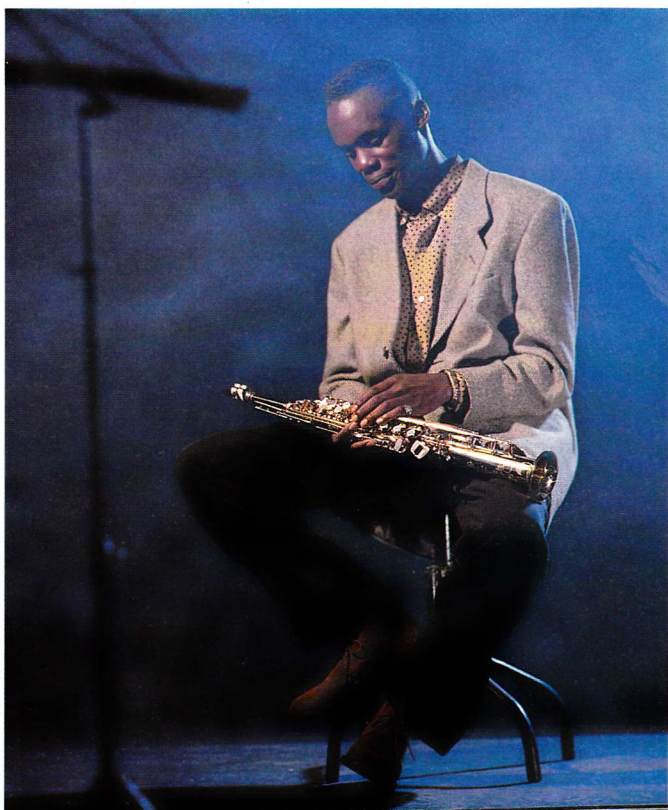
Compiled by Paul Bradshaw

**JASON REBELLO** Main picture right. Once splashed across the cover of jazz magazine *Wire* as "The Youngest Man in Jazz", cherub-faced pianist Jason Rebello has risen rapidly to the top rung. Winner of the British Jazz Awards Newcomer of the Year at nineteen, Rebello has gone on to shine in groups led by Tommy Smith, singer Cleveland Watkiss and former Art Blakey saxophonist Jean Toussaint. Rebello now leads his own band; his recent debut album, *A Clearer View* (Novus), produced by the great American saxophonist and composer Wayne Shorter, fuses all his influences from the funky electric piano work of Herbie Hancock and Chick Corea to the polyrhythms of Latin music and his grounding in classical composition and Chopin.



**TOMMY SMITH** Main picture, left. Brought up on an Edinburgh housing estate, at sixteen Smith won a scholarship to the Berklee School of Music. He graduated to play with vibraphonist Gary Burton and then formed his own quartet. The American experience had its effect, confirming and shaping Smith's skills, as well as earning him a Blue Note recording contract, but he still has to discharge stylistic debts to both Coltrane and Norwegian saxophonist Jan Garbarek. A mixture of stately, folkish themes and fast, tricky tempos, Smith's most recent album, *Peeping Tom*, illustrates both the limitations and the large potential.

Bird lives: Charlie 'Bird' Parker, leading light of bebop.



**Backstage beat:** Tenor saxophone player Eddie 'Lockjaw' Davis (top) straightens up his act; trumpeter Lee Morgan (centre) inspects the legendary Art Blakey's close shave; and saxophonist Eddie 'Cleanhead' Vinson makes sure his image lives up to his name.

it, when you hear the bittersweet melancholy of Miles Davis's trumpet playing, or the inimitable, oddball shapes and spaces in the music of pianist Thelonious Monk, you know you are hearing something very direct. And this century has no more spiritual, searching piece of music than John Coltrane's prayer-like offering, *A Love Supreme*.

It is this individualism that makes jazz so compellingly personal. "Jazz is a very direct, emotional music," says Richard Cook, "not something deliberately shaped for radio, TV or as the routine entertainment most popular music is. It's a musician talking directly to me, playing right in my face, and that's what I value and want to hold onto most."

And no music is more steeped in its own tradition than jazz. A music that simultaneously looks forwards and backwards, jazz's powers of tradition and innovation give it a fascinating history of change and progression and a profoundly twentieth-century aesthetic. Few artforms are so diverse. Today, jazz gives you so many access points you'd have to be a cultural ostrich to miss them.

It means anything from the electro-funk of Miles Davis to the neo-Sinatra crooning of the 22-year-old Harry Connick Jr, the street rap of A Tribe Called Quest, and the soundtrack of Spike Lee's jazz film *Mo' Better Blues*. Go back further and you have the entry points of Sting's *Dream of the Blue Turtles*, Joni Mitchell's *Mingus*, Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* – even

Matisse's painted paper cut-outs.

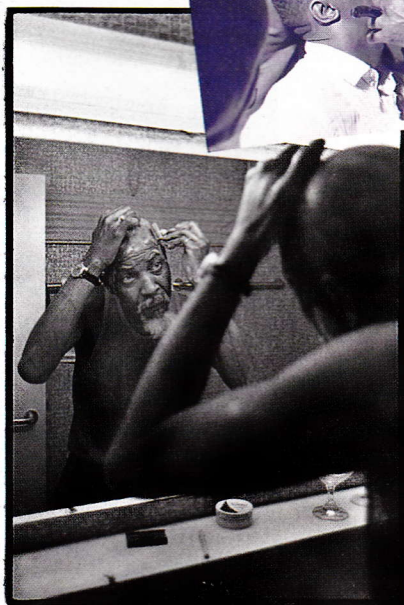
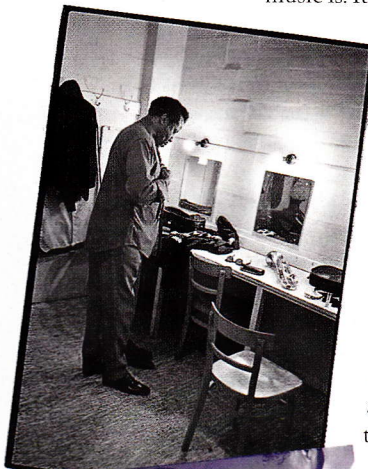
But for all this virtuosity and diversity, jazz still retains something elemental: its groove, its swing. And it's this complex groove that has sustained and replenished the original jazz dance scene. Jazz FM director and DJ Gilles Peterson's Sunday afternoon sessions at Dingwalls in Camden have, he says, never gone below an audience of 400 in three years. "Jazz is music for the body and the mind," he says. "It makes a lot of connections and a lot of sense to audiences who also go to rap, house and acid gigs."

It is in all of these things – quality, emotion, dedication and swing – that jazz's current appeal lies. In the new Jazz Age, after a soul-destroying decade for the individual and his karma, the spirits are dancing once again.

"There is a home for the spirit in jazz, and in a period of mind-numbing banality in popular music and culture, jazz's straining towards a higher pitch of expressivity is an important defence of what is human," says Geoff Dyer. Jimmy Porter, the angry young man in John Osborne's play *Look Back In Anger* put it more directly: "Anyone who doesn't like real jazz, hasn't any feeling either for music or people." ■

**STEVE WILLIAMSON** *Steve Williamson's curve has risen fast. His early London appearances suggested just another young British saxophonist booked on Coltrane and fumbling in Courtney Pine's wake.*

*But there was spirit in the splash, and a keen intelligence too. Sensibly, Williamson took his time over his debut album, A Waltz for Grace (Verve), and the results were as sharp as the Gaultier threads he sports on its cover. (These days, he wears Emporio Armani.) His strengths, likely to be lasting, are his newfound self-confidence, his tone – on tenor, imposing and distinctive – and his compositional abilities. Of all his peers, Williamson is the most likely to break new ground.*



the ability to improvise. Although some of the most gifted composers of Western music – Bach, Beethoven, Mozart – were themselves skilful improvisers, and while improvisation is a part of flamenco and Indian music, it is its essential presence as the lifeblood of jazz that gives the music its overwhelming strength and appeal. "The element of improvisation locks up the whole equation for me,"

says Richard Cook, music critic and editor of the jazz magazine *Wire*. "Jazz is one of the rare artforms that doesn't conform to a set of principles. It's about surprise, and it's about fucking up what's going on. It's a profoundly disordering experience."

And it can take a jazz player a lifetime to order, shape and refine this art; to develop a sound which is unique. But when you do hear