land, is capable of the lilting humor of Dixieland at its best, when it is burly and boisterous and wonderfully ribald all at once. George Brunies' tailgate flatulence is amusing in those ways. Whole choruses of ODJB records and ensemble sections of New Orleans Rhythm Kings records are delightful in such a fashion, in knockdown and dragout choruses, at the ends of performances, the so-called ride-outs, and again in the turbulence and tumult and general good humor of a well-performed "Clarinet Marmalade" or "Jazz Band Ball" or "Ostrich Walk." These are the qualities that the white New Orleans musicians had, which became the Dixieland canon: humor sometimes tongue-in-check, sometimes burlesque, and a pleasant nostalgia that sometimes became a more meaningful sorrow. Whatever the final limitations of their style, the music that these musicians brought to Chicago was rich in at least two of the eternal emotions.

Chapter 9

DIASPORA

Thou . . . shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. (Deuteronomy 28:25.)

The keelboats couldn't have done it. They were only forty to eighty feet long and seven to ten feet across, and they had very few passenger cabins—when they had any at all. It took three or four months to get upstream from New Orleans to Louisville, though the return trip could be made in a month. The keelboatmen of the first decades of the nineteenth century were characters all right; they flung themselves against the river, they danced, they fiddled, they flirted, they fought anybody and everybody —Indians, river pirates, and townsmen. They produced a great legendary figure, Mike Fink, the king of the keelboatmen, and they carried one of the important early strains of American music a long way. The keelboatmen did well by the boating songs and the levee songs, but there weren't enough of them, and their boats were too small, to carry a freight as heavy as jazz, or even its musical ancestors, the spirituals and the worksongs and the minstrel melodies. But the steamboats were big enough and went far enough often enough; they were the logical vehicles of jazz dispersion.

When the *New Orleans* left Pittsburgh for the Gulf of Mexico, in 1811, the steamboat arrived on the Mississippi River. By the middle of the 1820s a hundred or more steamboats were chugging along the Mississipi and the other rivers of the Middle West. By the late 1830s the

steamboat route reached along the upper Mississippi to what is now St. Paul; excursions became popular all along the Mississippi—splendid day's outings, more varied and energetic in their entertainment than any other obtainable. Depending on which excursion you took and from where, you might see Indians and the beginnings of new settlements, and if there wasn't adequate entertainment on the boat you could always go ashore to dance and sing and laugh or watch others do so. The Mississippi steamboats were handsome; they had their own distinctive architecture and interior decoration. Mark Twain, whose *Life on the Mississippi* fixed the riverboat forever in American literature, was fervent about the look of the boats. The cabins were hospital-white, with that antiseptic shine that only sailors know how to get, carried right down to the porcelain knobs on all the doors. There were filigree work and gilt, the glittering prisms of chandeliers, and in the ladies' cabins, as Twain described them, "pink and white Wilton carpet, as soft as mush, and glorified with a ravishing pattern of gigantic flowers." Although frayed a little here and there, not quite so glittering, the white streaked a bit, most of this luxury was preserved in the steamboats of the first decades of the twentieth century, and businessmen who took the long trip or families who boarded for short excursions still expected remarkable entertainment and got it.

The names of the first New Orleans jazz musicians to play the riverboats are unknown today. But sometime about the end of the first decade or the beginning of the second of the twentieth century, a band we know something about began to play the boats. The leader was "Sugar Johnny," a powerful cornetist whose playing in all senses of the word sent him to early retirement and obscurity. He was done for by drink and ladies and those loud bursts of sound that only the most disciplined brassman can get away with. He had two capable men, Roy Palmer on trombone and Laurence Dewey on clarinet; Louis Keppard on guitar, Wellman Braud on bass, and Minor Hall on drums. Braud was a St. James, Louisiana,

boy who had played violin in string trios at the Terminal House and Tom Anderson's Annex in Storyville. Hall—not to be confused with the other famous New Orleans drummer of that name, Fred "Tubby" Hall—made his biggest splash a few years later with King Oliver's band in Chicago; he was nicknamed "Ram." Sugar Johnny's band settled in Chicago in 1916, after doing its share of the vaudeville circuit, and added, on piano, Lil Hardin, a smart young woman from Memphis who had come to Chicago to finish the work in music she had begun at Fisk University and had been lured away from her classical studies by jazz.

The biggest of the riverboat orchestras, and the most important for jazz, was put together in St. Louis by the pianist Fate Marable. Essentially a dance and show band, Marable's often made room for the most distinguished of New Orleans musicians—Louis Armstrong, Pops Foster, Johnny St. Cyr, Baby Dodds, and Picou. Known at times as the Jaz-E-Saz Band, this group swung vigorously down the river. Davey Jones, who played the mellophone, a curious combination of French horn and cornet, moved around that sweet and soft instrument almost as fast as Louis Armstrong did on the cornet. Percie Sud is recalled by Duke Ellington as a cornetist who "ended up by stealing everybody's stuff, so slick was he," but Louis played too much to steal more than fragments. One of the stories about Louis's playing with Marable, almost certainly true, was that he used to start playing his choruses at Alton, Illinois, fifteen miles out of St. Louis, and would still be playing them when the boat tied up at the St. Louis dock. Boyd Atkins, who played soprano sax and clarinet with Fate for a while, is famous for his authorship of "Heebie Jeebies," which he and Lionel Hampton freshened in later years, and for at least one record side with Louis Armstrong, his riverboat colleague, "Chicago Breakdown," on which he played the soprano.

All the strands were tied together in Chicago. The riverboats brought one crew of New Orleans musicians; others came and went by other means, and eventually settled

down. Before Sugar Johnny's group settled down at the Dreamland Cafe, George Filhe, the New Orleans trombonist who in 1913 had arrived in Chicago as a cigarmaker, organized a six-piece band at the Fountain Inn in 1916. Like so many of the other bands of the period, Filhe's group played at the Arsonia Cafe after it had finished its regular job at the Fountain. In 1916 Emanuel Perez took a five-piece band into the Deluxe Cafe on State Street near Thirty-fifth, the crossroads of the jazz world in Chicago. After hours Perez's New Orleans quintet played at the Pekin theater-cabaret, up on State near Twenty-sixth Street, home for fifteen years before that of every kind of Negro entertainment—the drama, the musical revue, vaudeville, dance bands, and singers and jazz groups. The best of these bands, the one that really set the jazz pace, was the one that the bass player in the Original Creole Band, Bill Johnson, formed in 1918.

The Original Creole musicians found themselves in Chicago in 1918 after a long tour with the *Town Topics Revue,* which the Shuberts had sent on the road. They had all they could take of the road and, like musicians in dance bands many years later, looked around for jobs that would permit them to remain in one place, namely Chicago, for a long time. Johnson found a job at the Royal Gardens Cafe on Thirty-first Street near Cottage Grove. He took two men who had played with the Original Creoles, Jimmy Noone and trombonist Eddie Venson, added pianist Roddy Taylor and New Orleans drummer Paul Barbarin. Then he sent down to jazz's home town for his cornetist, Joe Oliver. Oliver was an after-hours doubler too; in the early morning he went into the Dreamland Cafe, where he played with Sidney Bechet and Weldon Braud and others come up from the Crescent City. In 1920 Oliver made the famous move to the Dreamland with Johnny Dodds and trombonist Honore Dutrey, the bass player Ed Garland, Fate Marable's drummer Minor Hall, and the pianist who had joined Sugar Johnny in Chicago, Lil Hardin. In 1921, in California, where Oliver spread the jazz word, Baby Dodds replaced Hall

on drums. In the middle of 1922 Louis Armstrong left the Jaz-E-Saz riverboat band to settle down with King Oliver; with him jazz came to stay in Chicago.

They were all there. Freddie Keppard and Jimmy Noone were playing together at the Royal Gardens in 1920, and two years later joined Doc Cook, originally Charles L. Cooke, about a mile north at the Dreamland Cafe. In 1922 there were a lot of fine bands around the south side of Chicago, the Negro section. At the Red Mill Cafe trumpeter Tommy Ladnier, trombonist Roy Palmer, and pianist Teddy Weatherford, Earl Hines' idol, were the better half of a six-piece band. Bands that never recorded, like Junie Cobb's, with the clarinetist Darnell Howard, later a fixture in the Earl Hines band and in Chicago clubs, were playing viable jazz in the New Orleans tradition. Trumpeters very well spoken of by those who heard them, such as Bobby Williams and Willie Hightower, Bob Shaffner and Cliff Matthew, were carrying on the heroic traditions of New Orleans cornetists, were receiving something like adulation from their friends, but never a record contract. W. C. Handy and Jelly Roll Morton joined forces long enough about this time to make some Midwestern tours out of Chicago, but not to record.

At the ballrooms and the parks and the municipal pier, indoors and outdoors, big bands were playing concert music and dance music and giving the New Orleans soloists their share of free rides. Charles Elgar's Creole Band played the Dreamland Ballroom for five years until 1922, and when he moved on to the Green Mill, on the north side, Doc Cook took over with men like Freddie Keppard and Jimmy Noone in his band. Cook, who had been in charge of the music at Riverview Park from 1918 to 1921, stayed four years at Dreamland before moving on for a little more than three at the White City Ballroom, where he was the object of the musical affection of most of the young white jazzmen growing up in Chicago in the decade between 1920 and 1930. But the biggest of these big band leaders was Erskine Tate at the Vendome Theatre from 1918 to 1929. His musicians' names read

like a roll call of the best in Chicago in that decade: Freddie Keppard and Louis Armstrong and two other celebrated trumpeters, Ruben Reeves and Jabbo Smith; pianists Teddy Weatherford, the man to whom he meant so much, Earl Hines, and Fats Waller; clarinetists Darnell Howard, Buster Bailey, and Omer Simeon. The swinging Vendome syncopaters took over the stage for shows as long as two hours between movies and showed their audiences how a band as large as fifteen pieces could retain the improvisatory spirit of New Orleans jazz. Some of that quality is evident in the single record made by the band in 1926, "Stomp Off, Let's Go," and "Static Strut."

Along with the brilliant Negro jazz bands, from 1914 on the founding fathers of white Dixieland were playing around Chicago. First there was Tom Brown and His Jass Band; then came the Nunez-Lada group, and shortly afterward the Original Dixieland Band. Full fruition of this music came when the original members of the New Orleans Rhythm Kings met clarinetist Leon Rappolo in Davenport, Iowa, and succeeded in bringing him with them to open at Friars' Inn.

After the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, one more white band held the stage as jazz made its way from the brothel to the box office. This was the Wolverines' Orchestra, organized in late 1923. It played in New York in 1924, at the Cinderella Dance Hall, at which time Bix Beiderbecke, its star, went over to the Balconades to hear the Original Dixielanders, and Red Nichols went over to the Cinderella to hear Bix. But their story is a part of Bix's and must be dealt with later, in that context.

The blues singers came through Chicago from time to time too, and sometimes stayed for long runs. Probably more than any other group, these singers sent jazz down the main streets and back lanes, into the front parlors and hall bedrooms of America. Looking at them and listening to them, it wasn't hard to see and hear the majesty so often imputed to these women. Almost as soon as they began to record in 1923, they found a huge

audience, sympathetic, moved, if not always aware of the size of the contribution.

Mamie Smith was the first to record, in 1920, with Johnny Dunn's Original Jazz Hounds, a fair group with a singer who was better than fair. But Ma Rainey, who didn't come to records until 1923, was the first of the giants and the mother of them all. She was thirty-seven in 1923 and a veteran of the tent shows, the cabarets, and the meeting houses, all the places where one sang on the Negro circuit. A plump woman with a rich, round voice, Gertrude Rainey never left the meaning of her blues lyrics to the imagination. She banged home her sad, usually sexual tale, when she was "Countin' the Blues," chanting the Frankie and Johnny saga in "Stack O'Lee Blues," pointing out that "Yonder Comes the Blues," singing about such varied boy friends as those in "Titanic Man Blues," "Icebag Papa," or "See See Rider," the famous Negro characterization of a male low-life, that no-good who battens on women.

Ma Rainey had a pupil who, not uniquely, eclipsed her teacher. Ma found this pupil, Bessie Smith, on one of her trips with a traveling show through Tennessee. Student and teacher worked well together; the result was the most magnificent of all the blues voices. From Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith learned the intricacies of blues singing, the carefully placed two-bar fill-ins and introductions, the little melodic variations, the tricks of voice and rhythmic accent, the twists of phrase with which to untwist the double meanings. Bessie was not shy before the crudest facts of life, but she had more to sing about. Her heart went into the plaints addressed to God ("Salt Water Blues," "Rainy Weather Blues," "Back Water Blues," "Cemetery Blues," "Golden Rule Blues") and to man ("Mistreatin' Daddy," "Careless Love," "Do Your Duty," "Sweet Mistreater," "A Good Man Is Hard to Find"). Perhaps the most famous of her records is the two-part "Empty Bed Blues," full of an almost terrifying loneliness. But no one record is Bessie's best; of her more than one hundred and fifty records, more than half are masterpieces.

In a voice that, differently trained, would have been superb in opera, she often gives the stature of art to commonplace blues. And for her, too, some of the best musicians of the twenties and early thirties played their very best: Louis Armstrong, Joe Smith, Jimmy Harrison, Coleman Hawkins, Fletcher Henderson, James P. Johnson, Jack Teagarden, and Benny Goodman all appear behind her and stay tastefully though inventively back of her. The suggestion of awe in their playing is understandable; Bessie Smith in a recording studio, as on a stage, was the Empress of the Blues her publicity called her. She strode the boards the way she rode her voice, with that overwhelming certainty that only the very great, no matter what the field, can assert. Her death in 1937 in Mississippi, when there was some doubt about taking her to a white hospital," echoed the tragedy of the lives she had sung so imperially.

There were four other Smith girls, none of them relatives of each other or of Bessie, who sang the blues and sang them well: Clara Smith, Laura Smith, Trixie Smith, and the first of them, Mamie Smith. Ida Cox, like Ma Rainey, made many records with Lovie Austin, the woman pianist, and her Blues Serenaders; Ida deserves the implied compliment. Bertha Hill, better known as "Chippie," was accorded the handsome assistance of such musicians as Louis Armstrong, Johnny Dodds, and Richard M. Jones; her throaty extravagances were also deserving. Not quite as much can be said for the other singers of the blues who were supported by fine jazz musicians—such women as Sippie Wallace, Lillie Delk Christian, Alberta Hunter, Victoria Spivey, and Ethel Waters. The first records made by Ethel Waters in 1925, are more distinguished for the backing by the lovely cornet of Joe Smith, with sometime solos by such men as Buster Bailey and Coleman Hawkins, than they are for her singing. Her real quality can be assayed by her 1932 record with Duke Ellington, "I Can't Give You Anything but Love" and "Porgy," in which her rich tones and insinuating vibrato make good tunes into better. There is more of the same on the coupling she made in 1933 with

Benny Goodman, "I Just Couldn't Take it, Baby" and "A Hundred Years from Today." The kind of thing she does in these records, and that Adelaide Hall did in hers with Ellington, is the result of the application of the blues personality to the ballad. Softened some, and a good deal more sentimental, jazz appeared in the popular song. It infiltrated so much of the entertainment world that it become difficult to tell where jazz left off and commerce began. In singing popular ballads, many jazz singers balanced their musical accounts and made listening to trivial songs a pleasure.

The great commercial overhauling of jazz was only suggested and barely begun in the early twenties. Nevertheless, it was by increasing transfusions of box-office plasma that jazz made its way around the country. For about another decade the best of the instrumentalists were able to maintain their integrity because their music was still taking shape. The Chicago youngsters who roamed the South Side in search of jazz instruction were able to exploit much of what they learned when they played in clubs run by gangsters and other overlords of the Prohibition era who were not too commercially demanding. In the same way, New Orleans musicians far from home in California and New York brought a fresh commodity to audiences who demanded little to go with their liquor except the beat and the new sound, which these musicians undeniably had. Still the big bands were growing, the bands that sweetened their jazz or made it symphonic, and musicians like Bix Beiderbecke, seeking fairly profitable and regular employment, had to join them. The synthesis of the various New Orleans jazz strains was being made with that same curious combination of backroom secrecy and brazen outdoor openness that attended the making of bathtub gin and open-still corn whisky. The Jazz Age was upon us, and nobody but the court jesters of the period, the jazzmen who played the music after which it was named, had any glimmering of what it was about.

Chapter 10

THE JAZZ AGE

Jazz was written about in the 1920s chiefly as a symbol, a symbol and a symptom and a handsomely crunchy epithet with which one could dismiss either the era itself or one group of its volatile citizens. The group was not always the same. Sometimes it was the inhabitants of Fitzgerald's Princeton and the Ritz-Carlton Hotel and long, sleek cars. Sometimes it was T. S. Eliot and/or Irving Berlin, who were interchangeable in several of the jazz categories of the time. Sometimes it was John Dos Passos, John Howard Lawson, E. E. Cummings, H. L. Mencken, Sinclair Lewis, Al Jolson, Fanny Brice. Sometimes the Italian Futurists. Sometimes the Jews. Sometimes the radio industry. Only occasionally was it the Negroes (also only occasionally granted the dignity of a capital N). And every now and then "Jazz" meant the music itself, but only every now and then, for the music itself was not much discussed. Jazz was not to be analyzed; it was to be accepted as an American symbol, as *the* American symbol, and what it symbolized was unmistakable— ". . . as unmistakably American as the sound of a jazz band." The simile was H. L. Mencken's.

As early as 1921 cries of "Enough," "No more!" and "Jazz is dying" were raised in all quarters, from the musical magazines to the literary weeklies, monthlies, and quarterlies. Clive Bell summed up the literary attitude succinctly in his piece, *"Plus de Jazz,"* which appeared in his American outlet, the *New Republic,* in 1921. *"Plus de*

Jazz!" No more jazz! Bell attributed the exclamation to an obscure journalist sitting with "perhaps the best painter in France" and "one of the best musicians . . . in a small bistro on the Boulevard St. Germain." Bell recorded the talk among the three because "Jazz is dying, and the conversation . . . is of importance only as an early recognition of the fact." Yes, he added, "Jazz is dead—or dying, at any rate—and the moment has come for someone who likes to fancy himself wider awake than his fellows to write its obituary notice." Whereupon he modestly did so, listing the characteristics of the deceased: ". . . a ripple on a wave . . . its most characteristic manifestation is modern painting [but] only the riff-raff has been affected."

"Italian Futurism," Bell declared, "is the nearest approach to a pictorial expression of the Jazz spirit. The movement bounced into the world somewhere about the year 1911. It was headed by a Jazz band and a troupe of niggers [sic], dancing. Appropriately it took its name from music—the art that is always behind the times. . . . Impudence is its essence, . . . impudence which finds its technical equivalent in syncopation: impudence which rags." Then he cited "the determination to surprise" and its "grateful corollary—thou shalt not be tedious," acknowledging the brevity of "the best Jazz artists" as "admirable," reminiscent "of the French eighteenth century." However, "Jazz art is soon created, soon liked, and soon forgotten. It is the movement of masters of eighteen." No irony or wit is in jazz, but "childish" fears and dislikes "of the noble and the beautiful. . . . Niggers can be admired artists without any gifts more singular than high spirits; so why drag in the intellect?" Bell admitted a ten-year domination of music and literature by jazz and again cited the Italian Futurists as the only painters to have been affected by the movement, evidenced in "their electric-lit presentation of the more obvious peculiarities of contemporary life and their taste for popular actualities."

In underlining the impudence, determination to surprise,

and brevity of jazz, Bell touched upon genuine qualities of the art. In suggesting that the Futurists were its pictorial representatives, he was on less secure ground and his "electric-lit" image did not support his argument as effectively as would have a description of the adumbral lines which surrounded Balla's dogs and Marinetti's figures, the syncopated movement of the Futurists.

He had an easier time with Stravinsky. "Technically, too, he has been influenced much by nigger rhythms and nigger methods. He has composed ragtimes. So, if it is inexact to say that Stravinsky writes Jazz, it is true to say that his genius has been nourished by it." And "the Jazz movement has as much right to claim him for its own as any movement has to claim any first-rate artist. Similarly, it may claim Mr. T. S. Eliot—a poet of uncommon merit and unmistakably in the great line—whose agonizing labors seem to have been eased somewhat by the comfortable ministrations of a black and grinning muse." Eliot's jazz qualities, it appears, are his "demurely irreverent attitude," his prim insolence, his "playing the devil with the instrument of Shakespeare and Milton," his provocative use of the emotion of surprise—"like Stravinsky, he is as much a product of the Jazz movement as so good an artist can be of any." However, "Eliot is too personal to be typical of anything, and the student who would get a fair idea of Jazz poetry would do better to spend half an hour with a volume of Cocteau or Cendrars. In prose I think Mr. Joyce will serve as a, perhaps, not very good example; . . . with a will, he rags the literary instrument: unluckily this will has at its service talents which though genuine are moderate only." Virginia Woolf "is not of the company" but "Jazz has its master" in Stravinsky, "its *petits maîtres*—Eliot, Cendrars, Picabia, and Joyce . . . and *les six* . . . chaperoned by the brilliant Jean Cocteau."

In sum, Bell offered two major conclusions: (1) "He, at any rate, who comes to bury Jazz should realize what the movement has to its credit, *viz.*, one great musician, one considerable poet, ten or a dozen charming or inter-

esting little masters and mistresses, and a swarm of utterly famous creatures who in all good faith believe themselves artists." (2) "The age of easy acceptance of the first thing that comes is closing. Thought rather than spirits is required, quality rather than colour, knowledge rather than proficience, intellect rather than singularity, wit rather than romps, precision rather than surprise, dignity rather than impudence, and lucidity above all things: *plus de Jazz.*"

Waldo Frank made the broadest sweep in his outline of the jazz movement. "Jazz music" (jazz was still an adjective to its derogators, only occasionally a noun), said Frank, "is the art which is part reflection and apology of our chaos and part rebellion from it." He cited Irving Berlin and asserted in the next sentence, "Alike is the poetry of T. S. Eliot. . . . Aristocratic sentiment, a vague oriental wisdom are subtly disarrayed to bear the mood of a meager modern soul. Aesthetically and culturally, there is little to choose between the best of Berlin and 'Mr. Prufrock' or 'The Waste Land.' " Frank went on in his 1929 *Rediscovery of America*—and here the prefix should be removed, for these were surely initial discoveries, if not inventions: "In this group also belong the works of John Dos Passos and John Howard Lawson. . . . Lawson is as satisfied to let his characters shout Revolution, as Al Jolson to mutter Mammy." A remarkable comparison, quickly succeeded by another: "A better performance, but still of the same class, is the 'Him' of E. E. Cummings . . . In this play, as in his lyrics, Cummings has found for the popular dance and jazz an equivalent in terms of the highest impressionistic art of Europe"—hence, really, no equivalent at all. "The nostalgia of T. S. Eliot and Berlin is feeble; it is the refrain, dissolved in our world, of early nineteenth-century romantics (Musset and Nerval—Schubert and Robert Franz). . . . Of this class also is the rhetorical art of H. L. Mencken. To understand his appeal one must thing of Jolson shouting Mammy, of Miss Brice's Yiddish Indian, of the vaudeville performer, Cummings, who at the sight of a girl in a

bathing suit, tears off his shirt, devours his straw hat and breaks a grand piano. . . . The art of Sinclair Lewis is of this family. . . . His tune is plaintively self-suffering, rather than sadistic."

Frank explains it all. "Its dominant trait justifies calling it 'the family of jazz'; for the trick in jazz dance or song, the jazz comic strip, the jazz vaudeville stunt, of twisting a passive reflex to our world into a lyrical self-expression is in all these arts. Eliot and Berlin, Cummings and Lewis have the same appeal. The fact that some have a small audience and some a large, is due to mere difference in their idioms: another proof of the essential likeness of all American 'atoms'—high-brow or low. Devotion to our chaos underlies and directs the shallower rebellion from it. Servitude is perhaps the precise word. In ideal and emotion, these men are measured by the dissolute world from which they yearn to escape. Their nostalgia is but the perfume of decay. Their art reflects what they hate because *they* are reflections; its lyric glow is our world's phosphorescence."

One could describe Eliot's demurely irreverent attitude" and his "mood of a meager modern soul" in support of one's vigorous association of his poetry and the jazz movement, but the actual direct influence of jazz on his working method was never delineated, though there were few stronger influences in his rhythms. From *The Waste Land:*

> O O O O that Shakespeherian Rag—
> It's so elegant
> So intelligent.

Only occasionally did Eliot indicate so strongly the early source of his rhythms of ragged futility. No other poem reflects the influence as clearly as *The Waste Land,* but surely the last lines of "The Hollow Men" are a kind of jazzed-up nursery rhyme:

> This is the way the world ends
> This is the way the world ends

> This is the way the world ends
> Not with a bang but a whimper.

The use of lower-case letters, set in jagged lines, words broken in halves and quarters to maintain a regular beat, suggests a taste for jazz syncopation on the part of E. E. Cummings, if something less than the full-scale avowal of jazz faith with which Waldo Frank debited him.

Hart Crane, who wrote most of his cryptic descriptions of modern tragedy in a slum bedroom overlooking the Brooklyn Bridge, with jazz records spinning a comparative consonance to his verbal dissonance, shows no immediate musical influence, but one of his most frightening images springs from the "family of jazz" and its mechanical apparatus:

> The phonographs of hades in the brain
> Are tunnels that rewind themselves . . .

When Carl Sandburg and Vachel Lindsay used the music, they called it by its name. It runs through Sandburg's verse in syncopated rhythms, repetitive patterns, obviously drawn from jazz; it appears at its clearest—and worst—in the crude sentimentality of his "Jazz Fantasia." Lindsay, at his best, managed what Louis Untermeyer called "an infectious blend of rhyme, religion, and ragtime." He loved to chant his own poetry and left directions as marginal notes for his long poems, indicating either dramatic action or the rise and fall and emotional quality with which he wanted various sections to be read or sung or chanted. He snapped his rhymes, exterior and interior, with the one-two precision of a Dixieland band's marching beat; he rolled his vowels with the fervor of a revival meeting, having taken much inspiration from both bands and musicians and revivalist singers and shouters. His Negro Sermon, "Simon Legree," concluded on a jazz note:

> And old Legree is fat and fine:
> He eats the fire, he drinks the wine—

Blood and burning turpentine—
Down, down with the Devil;
Down, down with the Devil;
Down, down with the Devil.

His Study of the Negro Race, "The Congo" ("Being a memorial to Ray Eldred, a Disciple missionary of the Congo River") opens like a jazz lyric; its rhythmic refrain acknowledges a New Orleans source:

Fat black bucks in a wine-barrel room,
Barrel-house kings, with feet unstable,
Sagged and reeled and pounded on the table,
Pounded on the table,
Beat an empty barrel with the handle of a broom,
Hard as they were able,
Boom, boom, BOOM,
With a silk umbrella and the handle of a broom,
Boomlay, boomlay, boomlay, BOOM.

Then, on the next "Boomlay, boomlay, boomlay, BOOM," an explanation:

A roaring, epic, rag-time tune
From the mouth of the Congo
To the Mountains of the Moon.

Directions for the reading of "The Daniel Jazz" cite "a strain of 'Dixie' " and "a touch of 'Alexander's Ragtime Band.' " And the form suggests the blues as the work spins itself out in a series of tercets directly related to the lyrics Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey sang.

Whatever Lindsay's failures, one of his conspicuous successes was his keen understanding of the primitive jazz forms, his adaptation of the devices of the spiritual, the folk song, and the blues, sprung on the meter of the jazz band.

The Negro poets who won such a large audience for their work, good, bad, and indifferent, in the intense days of the so-called Negro Renaissance, smack in the middle of the twenties, also caught some of the feeling for jazz

that was so much a part of their lives. Most of them accepted it cheerlessly, as most of them accepted the world of prejudice into which they had been born. James Weldon Johnson, the senior member of the group, told a tough tale in his three books, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man, Black Manhattan,* and *Along This Way,* published in 1912, 1930, and 1933, respectively—told it with compassion and concern for oppressor as well as oppressed. In his poetry he caught some of the rhythmic movement of his own people, especially in the seven sermons in verse that made up his 1927 volume, *God's Trombones,* but here, as in his song-writing collaborations with his musician brother, J. Rosamund Johnson, his most direct influence was the spiritual, for he came of the generation that felt its strongest tie to the old South, its first American home, in the spiritual.

There was more of the new Harlem in Claude McKay, a Jamaican who came to the United States in 1912, rose through the occupations available to Negroes (Pullman porter, waiting on table, acting as busboy and kitchen helper) to a position of some importance in the radical literary movements of the twenties, most prominently as associate editor of *The Liberator.* His novels, *Home to Harlem* (1928) and *Banjo* (1929), caught some of his new home and its instruments; a sonnet, written in 1921, "The Harlem Dancer," said much about the clubs in which jazz was played in New York:

Applauding youths laughed with young prostitutes
And watched her perfect, half-clothed body sway;
Her voice was like the sound of blended flutes
Blown by black players upon a picnic day.
She sang and danced on gracefully and calm,
The light gauze hanging loose about her form;
To me she seemed a proudly swaying palm
Grown lovelier for passing through a storm.
Upon her swarthy neck black, shiny curls
Profusely fell; and, tossing coins in praise,
The wine-flushed, bold-eyed boys, and even the girls,
Devoured her with their eager, passionate gaze;

But looking at her falsely smiling face,
I knew her self was not in that strange place.

The writing was self-conscious, adorned with bromidic ornament, flushed with social protest, and almost academic demur which every Negro was expected to file in his creative activity, whether he wrote novels or poetry, painted, composed music, or simply flung his hips at his partner's pelvis as they laced legs and raced feet around "The Home of Happy Feet," the Savoy Ballroom uptown in New York, or its opposite number of the same name in Chicago.

Aaron Douglas, who was the official graphic artist for the New Negro movement, spilled blacks and whites and grays across his lithographs in cartoon-like action, setting a lynch rope carefully over the heads of an undulating dancer and a saxophonist whose body was twisted in imitation of the dancer. Langston Hughes commented with expert bitterness on the relations of the white man and the Negro in his novel, *Not without Laughter* (1930), which could best be explained—both the title and the story—by a line from the introductioin to his second volume of poems, *Fine Clothes to the Jew* (1927): "The mood of the *Blues* is almost always despondency, but when they are sung people laugh."

Hughes' first book was the traditional slim volume of verse, *The Weary Blues,* published in 1926. He used the A-A-B blues lyric form for all it was worth, and a lot more, converting its three-line simplicity into a six-line stanza, and killing some of his best lines with approximations of Negro dialect that suggested Ku Klux Klan caricatures and motion-picture and theater stereotypes far more than the writing of a sensitive Negro poet. At his best he caught some of the most winning irony of the migrant Negro, properly expressed in the blues structure:

Once I was in Memphis,
I mean Tennessee,
Once I was in Memphis,
I mean Tennessee,

But I had to leave 'cause
Nobody there was good to me.

His pictures of jazz life were less adroit, missing the understatement that sparked his most distinguished blues of weariness. The usual people:

Charlie is a gambler
An' Sadie is a whore.

Play that thing,
Jazz band!
Play it for the lords and ladies,
For the dukes and counts,
For the whores and gigolos . . .

The usual sounds:

So beat dat drum, boy!

He made that poor piano moan with melody.

The usual message:

To keep from cryin'
I opens ma mouth an' laughs.

You know that tune.
That laughs and cries at the same time.

Won't be nothin' left
When de worms git through.

Critic Russel Blankenship called him "a jazz singer crooning in modern parlance the old, old woes of the black man. Much of his poetry sticks in one's memory just as a haunting jazz phrase flashes again and again into the mind."

Countee Cullen, the most sophisticated in background, in use of words, in choice of subject, of the Negro poets, left no "haunting jazz phrase," but he did manage some startling images, notably the tree in the South.

(And many others there may be
Like unto it, that are unknown,
Whereon as costly fruit has grown.)
It stands before a hut of wood
In which the Christ Himself once stood—
And those who pass it by may see
Nought growing there except a tree,
But there are two to testify
Who hung on it . . . we saw Him die.
Its roots were fed with priceless blood.
It is the Cross; it is the Rood.

With the last lines of *The Black Christ,* written at the very beginning of 1929, Countee Cullen ended the era of the New Negro. With poetry such as this, the Negro's work was within a few volumes of being accepted as something less than freakish; literacy was no longer quite so remarkable, even in this subject people. But recognition of the Negro's most effortless product, his least self-conscious expression, was still a long way off in 1929. His flowing articulation was only aped and mimicked and distorted by the white man until well into the thirties; Benny Goodman and the Swing Revolt waited another six years.

Typical of the cold shoulder and rough treatment accorded jazz in the twenties, as a musical expression rather than a symbol of futility and fashion, was the attitude of Paul Rosenfeld. After James Huneker, only Rosenfeld had the equipment and the equilibrium, the ease and the warmth, necessary to receive all the arts in America at once—all but jazz, that is. In his *Port of New York,* Rosenfeld paid eloquent attention to the 1924 arts and artists, fourteen of whom he toasted in as many chapters and an epilogue, as evidence of "the movement of life in America . . . an America where it was good to be." In his *Musical Chronicle,* covering activity within the art of notes and chords from 1916 to 1923, the principal interest was European, radiating from the music of D'Indy, Bloch, Casella, Milhaud, Strauss, Mahler, Prokofiev, Bartok, and Schoenberg, among others, with a nod in the direction of one of Rosenfeld's favorite American composers, Leo Ornstein. When he summed up the philosophy of the first book and the narrative of the second, in a brief volume in Lippincott's One Hour Series, *An Hour with American Music,* Rosenfeld made a definitive statement about jazz. His feeling was so strong that he opened his book with a seventeen-page castigation of jazz, the first of eight chapters and almost an eighth of the book.

"American music is not jazz," Rosenfeld wrote. "Jazz is not music. Jazz remains a striking indigenous product, a small sounding folk-chaos, counterpart of other national developments." He explained what music is—"the representative work, say, of Bach and Beethoven, Mozart, Wagner and Brahms, primarily is what jazz from the beginning is not: the product of a sympathetic treatment of the sonorous medium. *Music* is a chain of temporal volumes released by sensitive manipulation of an instrument . . . In works like the last sonatas and quartets of Beethoven, the fantasias and fugues of Bach, *Tristan und Isolde* of Wagner, the logic is so universal that we have the impression these pieces existed since the beginning of the world, and must persist till doomsday." The product he recommended might possibly be "still small in worth," Rosenfeld admitted, "But it exists; it swells. New creative talents appear with every year; and while they may yet seem uncertain and anything but overwhelming, they have added a new interest and excitement to life, filling it with the vibrance of gathering powers." He was describing the music of Edgar Varese, Carlos Chavez, Aaron Copland, Roy Harris, and Roger Sessions. Yet every one of his words could be applied just as well to the jazz musicians and singers whose careers and art were just then taking shape. In the light of the subsequent performances of the composers he named who were working in classical forms, and of the jazzmen working at the same time toward the organization of a new music, it could more convincingly be said that the *hot* musicians had surely "added a new interest and excitement to life, filling it with the vibrance of gathering powers," while their confreres, working in more traditional forms, out of borrowed molds, created

no more than "a striking indigenous product, a small sounding folk-chaos, counterpart of other national developments."

The twenties were the *Wanderjahre* for jazz. There were no important jobs anywhere, and everywhere people mistook Paul Whiteman and Irving Berlin and Al Jolson and Ted Lewis and Cole Porter and Vincent Lopez for jazz artists. Fletcher Henderson pieced together enough work as an accompanist for blues singers, a composer of sorts, and an arranger of more than sorts to rise above failing record companies and the mistaken impressions of white audiences. He had a band of considerable strength by 1924, one that set a style and made a lot of reputations and came most completely into its own under the aegis of Benny Goodman and an entirely different set of musicians when Benny built the Kingdom of Swing around Fletcher Henderson's music in 1935 and 1936. Duke Ellington commuted from Washington, D.C., to New York until he managed to strike a Harlem club-owner's fancy in 1923, and a substitute's job at the Cotton Club in 1927 finally made fact of what had been four years of Harlem fancy.

Louis Armstrong had been building a reputation since 1922, when he made his debut in Chicago with Joe Oliver's band at the Lincoln Gardens, until 1928, when he came to New York to stay. He was something of a legend among musicians and enough of a name among Negro and white followers of jazz to draw crowds wherever he played. The Immerman brothers, who ran Connie's Inn up in Harlem for white tourists, put him at the head of Luis Russell's band. Between 1922, when Satchmo left New Orleans, and 1928, when he arrived in New York, he had accomplished much.

Fletcher Henderson, Duke, and Louis dominated the jazz of the twenties along with pianist Earl Hines and a few youngsters out of Chicago and near-by Midwestern towns and cities. The youngsters, most of them anyway, were helped along by their connections with the big names of the time, the pseudo-jazzmen with whom the music of jazz was irresistibily associated in the twenties. Bix

Beiderbecke made a reputation of a sort as a cornetist with the Wolverines from 1923-1925. He was helped along by one brief hitch in Chicago with Charlie Straight's band at the Rendezvous, and a lot more by the year he spent with Frankie Trumbauer's band in St. Louis, which ended with the hiring of both Bix and Tram (Trumbauer) by Jean Goldkette for the hot section of his sweet-and-hot combination. A year with Goldkette, who had a name, and Bix was hired by Paul Whiteman, who had the biggest name of them all.

Paul Whiteman, called "Pops," sometimes called "Fatho'," played a paternal role in the jazz of the period, a role he was highly conscious of and which his associates and employees accepted so completely they called him by his two nicknames as automatically as they called Charles Lindbergh "Lindy," Clara Bow the "It Girl," George Herman Ruth "Babe," and Mary Louise Cecilia Guinan "Texas." In the late twenties his fatherly domain included some of the most distinctive sounds in jazz, those produced by Bix, by Jimmy and Tommy Dorsey, Joe Venuti, and Eddie Lang. His singers included the Rhythm Boys, the threesome from which Bing Crosby emerged, and Mildred Bailey. And those of his musicians who were not distinguished jazzmen at least had a large reputation as such; Red Nichols and Frankie Trumbauer were more famous as recording artists than the talented musicians they hired to play under them, but it was for the performances of Bix, Venuti, and Lang that discriminating people bought and held on to Nichols and Trumbauer records. Whiteman needed the subsidiary reputations of his musicians and singers to maintain his holding-company position as King of Jazz, but it wasn't Bix or Nichols or Trumbauer, Bing or Mildred Bailey who built that position for him, and none of them did much more than fill out the gigantic shadows cast by the Fatho's Gargantuan figure. The man who succeeded in making Whiteman King of Jazz was just as synthetic a jazz musician, but his music was compounded of a substance immediately and unyieldingly engaging to the American people. From February 12,

1924, When George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* was introduced by Whiteman at New York's Aeolian Hall, the two men were indissolubly associated in the public mind. Their positions at the heads of their professions were assured, the bandleader's for at least another eleven years, the composer's for more than a quarter of a century.

Whiteman, who had made his first trip to Europe in 1923, was well aware of the snob appeal added to his music by that successful tour only three years after starting his band. For the Aeolian Hall concert he underscored that appeal many times. The auditorium itself was, of course, one of the two major concert halls in New York, consecrated, like Carnegie Hall, to classical music. But merely bringing jazz into more respectable surroundings wasn't enough; it had to have the right sponsors. These were more easily forthcoming than Whiteman had at first hoped. "While we were getting ready for the concert," he explained in 1926 in his book, *Jazz*, "we gave a series of luncheons for the critics, took them to rehearsals and explained painstakingly what we hoped to prove. . . ." What they hoped to prove was "the advance which had been made in popular music from the day of discordant early jazz to the melodious form of the present. . . . [that] modern jazz . . . was different from the crude early attemps—that it had taken a turn for the better." The critics were doubtful, at the rehearsals anyway, but a long list of distinguished musicians, financial and literary figures, doubtful or not, were willing to lend valuable aid. "I trembled," Whiteman said, "at our temerity when we made out the list of patrons and patronesses for the concert. But in a few days I exulted at our daring, for the acceptances began to come in—from Damrosch, Godowsky, Heifetz, Kreisler, McCormack, Rachmaninoff, Rosenthal, Stokowski, Stransky. We had kindly response, too, from Alda, Galli-Curci, Garden, Gluck and Jeanne Gordon. Otto Kahn and Jules Glaenzer agreed to represent the patrons of art on our roster and the prominent writers we asked were equally obliging. These included: Fannie Hurst, Heywood Broun, Frank Crowninshield, S. Jay Kaufman, Karl

Kitchin, Leonard Liebling, O. O. McIntyre, Pitts Sanborn, Gilbert Seldes, Deems Taylor and Carl Van Vechten."

According to Whiteman, the concert cost eleven thousand dollars and he lost "about seven thousand dollars on it . . . I didn't care. It would have been worth it to me at any price." He was quite right. The sugar coating which had been carefully applied to all the jazz on the program—and there wasn't much to begin with—went down well with the audience there that night and with the critics. Popular songs like "Whispering" and "Limehouse Blues," "Alexander's Ragtime Band" and "A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody," a suite of four serenades written for the concert by Victor Herbert, dance versions of "The Volga Boatmen" and "To a Wild Rose," with symphonic outbursts between choruses—such music was custom-tailored for any audience. There was nothing "crude" about it, nothing strident to betray its origin in the "discordant early jazz"; there was no mistaking Whiteman's point; he had proved what he had hoped to prove—"the advance which had been made in popular music . . . to the melodious form" of Berlin, MacDowell, Herbert, and Gershwin.

The *Rhapsody in Blue*, along with four piano numbers composed or arranged and played by Zez Confrey, represented the most serious attempt to concertize jazz. Confrey, whose listeners found most engaging the tinkly trills and rippling arpeggios of his "Kitten on the Keys," simply adapted some of the more obvious bravura embellishments of Liszt, Leschetizky, Tausig, and other nineteenth-century composers of musical melodrama to a few of the more obvious devices of ragtime. Gershwin, who went along with Confrey in his mating of the surface tricks of two musical forms, was a little bolder in his selection. The *Rhapsody* shows some influences from the early writing of Debussy, and Ferde Grofé, who orchestrated Gershwin's piano score for him, went farther along Impressionist lines; that brought Gershwin's classical line almost up to date for New York's audiences and critics, to whom Stravinsky was frightening and Schoenberg unthinkable in 1924. To justify his image—"in blue"—Gershwin em-

ployed the blues scales from time to time, dipping into flattened thirds and sevenths, against their natural intonation or directly after, and suggesting the blues thereby; Grofé added more to the jazz conviction of the *Rhapsody* with his use of the brass smears and "dirty" reed inflections then much favored by jazz musicians. A merger of jazz and the classics had been effected, as far as Whiteman and his audiences were concerned, and the press looked on as cheerfully as it did at the acquisition of new companies by Standard Brands and General Foods, or the combination of automobile manufacturers into industrial empires like General Motors.

The *Herald's* W. J. Henderson said, "Mr. Gershwin's composition proved to be a highly ingenuious work, treating the piano in a manner calling for much technical skill and furnishing an orchestra background in which saxophones, trombones and clarinets were merged in a really skillful piece of orchestration. If this way lies the path toward the development of American modern music into a high art form, then one can heartily congratulate Mr. Gershwin on his disclosure of some of the possibilities. Nor must the captivating cleverness of Zez Confrey be forgotten. . . ." For the *Tribune's* Lawrence Gilman, "Mr. Whiteman's experiment was an uproarious success. This music conspicuously possesses superb vitality and ingenuity of rhythm, mastery of novel and beautiful effects of timbre." But "How trite and feeble and conventional the tunes are, how sentimental and vapid the harmonic treatment." Deems Taylor of the *World* criticized "the occasional sacrifice of appropriate scoring to momentary effect and a lack of continuity in the musical structure" but found "at least two themes of genuine musical worth" and "a latent ability on the part of this young composer to say something in his chosen idiom." Olin Downes, in the *Times*, had much to say for "remarkably beautiful examples of scoring for a few instruments," for music that was "at times vulgar, cheap, in poor taste, but elsewhere of irresistible swing and insouciance and recklessness and life; music played as only such players as these may play it

like the melo-maniacs that they are, bitten by rhythms that would have twiddled the toes of St. Anthony." Gilbert Gabriel of the *Sun* thought the *Rhapsody* justified its title because of "a degree of formlessness in the middle section. But the beginning and the ending of it were stunning. The beginning particularly, with a flutter-tongued, drunken whoop of an introduction that had the audience rocking. Mr. Gershwin has an irrespressible pack of talents."

The success Gershwin had tasted in 1919 when Al Jolson sang his song "Swanee" in the musical comedy *Sinbad* was very large financially, gratifying theatrically, but not of the quality or the size of the fame and favor he enjoyed after the *Rhapsody*. His *Concerto in F*, written to Walter Damrosch's commission and first performed by that conductor with the New York Symphony Orchestra in 1925, bore the marks of its piecemeal composition: Gershwin had written more than he needed, and he chose and rejected measures on the basis of a performance of the manuscript by musicians he hired to run it through for him in a theater rented for the occasion. Like the *Rhapsody*, the *Concerto* was most moving in passages devoted to the nostalgic tunes Gershwin turned out with facility. Its orchestration, Gershwin's own, took another step from the dance band toward the symphony orchestra. He essayed his most adventurous step in *An American in Paris*, four years later, in which the lessons the composer had learned from intense listening to the music of Ravel and *les six* were poorly applied to an undistinguished set of themes—using French taxi horns and another fine blues melody.

Constant Lambert, contemplating the effects of symphonic jazz ten years after the *Rhapsody in Blue* had made its debut, summed up his impressions by running down Gershwin's work. "The composer, trying to write a Lisztian concerto in jazz style, has used only the non-barbaric elements in dance music, the result being neither good jazz nor good Liszt, and in no sense of the word a good concerto. Although other American composers, and even

Gershwin himself, have produced works of greater caliber in this style, the shadow of the *Rhapsody in Blue* hangs over most of them and they remain the hybrid child of a hybrid. A rather knowing and unpleasant child too, ashamed of its parents and boasting of its French lessons. It would be hard, as well as unnecessary, to dispute Lambert's disappointed dismissal of this progenitor of a large musical family, one of the members of which was Vladimir Tostoff's *Jazz History of the World,* played at one of Jay Gatsby's "intimate" large parties. "When the *Jazz History of the World* was over, girls were putting their heads on men's shoulders in a puppyish, convivial way, girls were swooning backward playfully into men's arms, even into groups, knowing that someone would arrest their falls." However much the meager nature of Gershwin's music may have eluded critics and audiences trained to listen to tradional composers, its effect upon them was essentially the same as Vladimir Tostoff's *Jazz History of the World's* upon the Great Gatsby's swooning girls. Within a few years an annual Gershwin concert was a certain sell-out at the Lewisohn Stadium summer concerts of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, and then at the summer concert series around the country.

There were other Gershwins, other Tostoffs. Without exception, they were siphoned off by the movies and radio, in both of which the demand for new composers and arrangers was insatiable. Al Jolson's *The Jazz Singer* in 1927 put words and music in the mouths of screen actors and actresses and set a sound track alongside the flickering frames. Scales were ascended and descended as flights of stairs were ascended and descended, great pseudo-jazz crescendi accompanied the swelling of tears, sudden mock-syncopated sforzandi announced dramatic twists and turns. The scoring was brighter and larger and infinitely more varied than the tinny adaptations of Rossini, Waldteufel, and Ethelbert Nevin with which organs and pianos had set scenes and closed them, described everything from the pop of Lon Chaney's limbs in and out of their sockets to the smack of a Theda Bara kiss; but nothing in the opulence of the new movie music could hide its essential likeness in emotional and tonal range to the music of the movie console. Subtlety was simply out of the question. In 1928 it was estimated that twenty million people went to the movies every day, and, right or wrong, twenty million people were not interested in the delicate perceptions of cinema jazz composers.

Radio listeners were not so numerous as moviegoers in 1928, but the development of the communication channels Guglielmo Marconi had discovered was as impressive to chart as attendance at the film palaces. From 1920's few thousand sets, crudely put together by home engineers, the industry had filled demands for seven million by 1928. From 1920's one station, KDKA in Pittsburgh, the number of transmitters had grown to close to a thousand eight years later, even after Congress had withdrawn many licenses because of practice "not in the public interest." There were millions of sets, many more millions of listeners; the blare of a prizefight commentary, the scream of a murdered woman in a detective drama, the yawp of political speeches, and wow of static were almost commonplace sounds in American homes. Even more familiar sounds to radio listeners were the voices of popular singers and the lilt of dance bands; in the early days of broadcasting, music, and particularly popular music, was the standard fare. The time on ten small stations in 1928 was divided this way: of a total of 294 hours, 28 were devoted to talks, 77 to serious and semi-serious music, 189 to what was then called "syncopation." On ten large stations, the proportion inclined even more dizzily in favor of "harmony and rhythm": of 357 hours in toto, 56 went to talks, 42 to "classics and semi-classics," 259 to the music of such exotic organizations as the South Sea Islanders, the A. & P. Gypsies, the Anglo-Persians, the Cliquot Club Eskimos, the Ipana Troubadours, the Happiness Boys, Rudy Vallee, and Roxy and His Gang. The quality was poor, the pretension bold, the confusion abundant. "All over the country the trombones blare and the banjos whang and the clarinets pipe the rhythm," Charles Merz,

in *The Great American Bandwagon*, described radio in 1928. "Oom-pah-pah, oom-pah-pah, I got the blue-hoo-hoos, I got the blue-hoo-hoos, I got the oom-pah-pah, the oom-pah-pah. . . . If it is true that from twenty to thirty million Americans are listening in on the radio every evening, then for a large part of that evening they are listening in on the greatest single sweep of synchronized and syncopated rhythm that human ingenuity has yet conceived. This is our counterpart of the drum the black man beats when the night is dark and the jungle lonely. Tom-tom." Twenty years later such a description of the music of Ipana and Cliquot Club, of Roxy, Vallee and A. & P. Gypsies seemed silly. But jazz was not jazz in the twenties; it was everything else.

Jazz was "the hopeless comment of the 'Beale Street Blues'" to Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald, when he substituted the real thing for the cotillion orchestra and polite quartet that accompanied high sociey drags. But above all, jazz was the new anthem for Fitzgerald, a rallying cry for millions of Jazz Age Americans, as the song written by the ancestor after whom he'd been named had aroused hundreds a hundred and fifty years before. Jazz achieved its meaning in the pages of Fitzgerald's novels and in a few of the lines between lines of the social and literary arbiters of the time. It wasn't understood by its listeners, most of whom preferred the synthetic product of Paul Whiteman, the nasal reductions of Rudy Vallee, the tinkly distillations of toothpaste troubadours, to the ruder, richer, more demanding, and often more delicate music of the men who really played jazz and the women who sang it. A chronicle of jazz in the Jazz Age not only can but must, much of the time, neglect the music itself, for the music itself remained virtually undiscovered until the Swing Renaissance of the middle thirties, when Salvation Army stockpiles and cellar bins yielded the considerable beauty sometimes slipped, more often slugged, into record groves by Duke and Smack and Pops, by Bix and the Dorseys, a blues singer named Bessie Smith, and a kid clarinetist out of Chicago named Benny Goodman.

Jazz was hopeless comment, unmistakably American; it was impudence, it was Stravinsky, Eliot and Joyce, Irving Berlin and E. E. Cummings; the refrain of early nineteenth-century romanticism dissolved in our world, the perfume of decay, an autumn wind high in the lonesome treetops, "a roaring, epic, ragtime tune," more often Gershwin than Ellington; the symbol of an era caught between illusion and disillusion, an ode to futility, and unmistakably the sound of Americans. Futility was the subject of odes in the twenties, and jazz played the tunes of despair and destruction of a culture passing with elaborate gestures into desuetude. But just on the brink of limbo, with something really hideous, the Great Depression, before them, the American people followed a jazz spiritual's advice, to "look down, look down, that lonesome road," and discovered insight where earlier there had been only timid perception in perdition, wealth, in the most vivid of popular song images, amid poverty. There was valuable self-criticism along with the withering contempt of the nay-sayers; there was valid self-respect along with the willful exaggeration of the yea-sayers. If one could forget that Bruce Barton had made Jesus the founder of modern business and the Apostles the first great advertising men, one could look back to a literature that was coming alive, rising impressively out of the sloughs of adolescent despair. If one could distinguish H. L. Mencken from Jolson shouting "Mammy," the girth of Whiteman from the dimension of Armstrong, take jazz directly rather than in symphonic synthesis, then one could hear a vital native music basking the first grunts and sighs and meaningful communication on the level of art. "Out of a picture-frame," Paul Rosenfeld said, and it is permissible to add, out of some magazines and a few books and a pile of phonograph records, "there comes an intimate address to the American in us. . . . We may not know it; but the long prelude to the new world is over; the curtain is about to be rung up."

Chapter 11

CHICAGO

The most far-reaching and positive contributions to jazz in the twenties were made in Chicago. One must go there to see and hear what had become accepted, and to discover how the changes that were being made took shape all around the confounding, clumsy, crudely elegant, and brilliantly shabby town.

First of all, of course, there was the diaspora—the early attempts at migration from New Orleans, most of them doomed; the later trips up the river when finally Louis Armstrong made the music stick. After 1910, the Original Creole Band came; it returned before World War I and made a small impression, mostly on local musicians who weren't as good as their competitors from the South. Jelly Roll Morton was making a career for himself, some of it musical, during various stays in Chicago. Sugar Johnny and Minor Hall, Roy Palmer, Wellman Braud, and Lil Hardin played around town, apart and together. Sidney Bechet and King Oliver and Paul Barbarin played at the Dreamland Cafe and the Royal Gardens. Freddie Keppard was a distinguished representative of "N'Orying," one of the few who did not play at any time with the big bands. Some of the big bands were minstrel shows organized as orchestras, some of them theater orchestras; some of them, like their successors all over America, were mixed outfits that played all kinds of popular music. Louis Armstrong put in some time with Carroll Dickerson and Erskine Tate, who led two of the biggest; and Sidney

Bechet ornamented Will Marion Cook's thirty-six-piece band, which also featured twenty banjos!

King Oliver and Louis Armstrong played together and separately, and together and separately made the most decisive impact upon Chicago musicians. When Jimmy Noone and Johnny Dodds and Earl Hines also began playing in Chicago, the influence was complete, and jazz in Chicago was set to go the several ways that New Orleans performers at their best suggested and invited.

The key year in many ways for Chicago musicians was 1922. That was the year Louis joined King Oliver; it was the year that Bix Beiderbecke began to play around Chicago at various little joints; the New Orleans Rhythm Kings were ensconced at Friars' Inn; Muggsy Spanier was blowing around town, a kid with talent, sitting in with established older men and with other talented youngsters; the Goodman kids, Benny and Harry, were beginning to show some jazz skill and were earning money from time to time on their instruments, Benny most notably as an imitator of Ted Lewis; and finally, in this impressive list, five students at Austin High School on the West Side put themselves together as a band—Jimmy McPartland on cornet, his brother Dick on banjo and guitar, Jim Lannigan on piano and bass, Bud Freeman on C-melody sax, and Frank Teschemacher on clarinet. Before many years had passed they were joined by the Goodmans, Dave Tough (whom they picked up at Lewis Institute), Floyd O'Brien (whom Dave Tough picked up at the University of Chicago), Mezz Mezzrow, Fud Livingston, Jess Stacy, Jack Teagarden, Red McKenzie, Eddie Condon, Joe Sullivan, and Gene Krupa. These musicians were all part of the Chicago picture at one time or another; to attempt to separate the pure voices from the contaminated, as "Chicago style" enthusiasts have so often done, is to end up with all of Frank Teschemacher's bad notes and crippled phrases and none of the drive that he and his Austin Gang associates communicated so attractively.

Tesch is alternately a bore and an unforgivable noise in many of his recorded performances, but simultaneously he

is a "swinging fool," to use an expression which, like the music, sprang as much from his playing as anybody else's in the late twenties and early thirties when the beat began to take over and big bands became the inevitable consequence of the fascination with heavy time. Well, the big time was Tesch's, and Benny Goodman picked it up as much from him as from the general drive around him. The big time was also the Austin kids' and their friends'. Two-beat music was moving out for a lot of musicians; the sure way to prove it is to listen to the records made by the Chicago Rhythm Kings and the Cellar Boys, to the Charles Pierce sides and the Chicago dates played by Red McKenzie and Eddie Condon. The new jazz was in steady four/four time, or moving toward it, away from the heavy syncopations of weak and strong beats. The new jazz that was Chicago's jazz was compounded of many strains, so many strains that even the old beat had to change to make way for them, and the bands had to get bigger and the music had to face a period almost as much of torture as of joy before the accomplishment which made a good deal of it, if not all, worth while.

It was Tesch who turned a bunch of enthusiastic record listeners into jazz musicians. The Austin gang used to spend its spare moments across the street from the high school at a drugstore called Spoon and Straw. Four of the five high school boys were violinists of a sort; Lawrence Freeman, Bud to his friends, wasn't sure whether he was a tap dancer or a drummer. All of them were positive that some of the most exciting music they had ever heard was on the records of the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, which they listened to with an attention they never paid to their high school teachers. These records were impressive sides that Rappolo, Brunies, and their associates had made in the studios of the Starr Piano Company in Richmond, Indiana, for the Gennett label. Tesch convinced his fellow schoolboys that "Tiger Rag" and "Tin Roof Blues" and "Shimme Shawabble" were within their reach. He showed them how much he could do with "Clarinet Marmalade" and "The Maple Leaf Rag" and convinced them that there was something they could do too. When Dave Tough, who really was a drummer, showed Bud Freeman that his instrument was the C-melody saxophone and not the traps, they had formed a band.

The band the kids made, with Dave North now on piano, they called the Blue Friars, after the inn which was the playing home of their idols, the Rhythm Kings. They picked up a few jobs around town and in the summer of 1924, their first playing year as a group, they went to work at Lost Lake, not far from Chicago. When they came back to Chicago in the fall, there were no jobs until Jimmy McPartland found a promoter, Husk O'Hare, to front them and to find them work. O'Hare was no musician but he got them work, including some time on radio station WJJD, where they were known as O'Hare's Red Dragons. When they went to work at the White City Ballroom, where Doc Cook later took over with his big band, they took the name of Husk O'Hare's Wolverines, after the band with which Bix was making his reputation. They added Dave Tough's friend Floyd O'Brien on trombone, and filled out the band for Saturday night performances with Mezz Mezzrow or Fud Livingston—which gave them a three-man saxophone section. What they played together was obviously more than ordinarily effective jazz; most of the good jazz musicians around Chicago came in at one time or another to listen, to enthuse, and to encourage. The band returned the compliment in whatever time they could find before or after work; they went all over town, listening to Louis and Jimmy Noone and Johnny Dodds, to Bix when they could, to Earl Hines, and to all the other fine musicians who were making Chicago the center of jazz in the 1920s.

On weekends the band opposite them at White City was Sig Myers' Orchestra. Not distinguished as a whole for its personnel or performance, the Myers band did have Arnold Loyocano, who had originally come from New Orleans with Tom Brown's band, on bass, and Muggsy Spanier on cornet. Muggsy, christened Francis, was the man. Born in Chicago on November 9, 1906, by 1924 he

had done a vast amount of gigging around and playing short and long engagements with first rate jazzmen. He had teamed up for a while with Bix and had listened with an avid ear to Joe Oliver, Keppard, and Louis, all of whom influenced his driving cornet. When Jimmy McPartland left to take over Bix's job in New York with the original Wolverines, Muggsy Spanier replaced him with O'Hare's Wolverines. Jimmy, a cornetist of lovely tone and matching ideas, was the only logical man to replace Bix; Muggsy, a cornetist of searing tone and punchy phrase, was, as it turned out, the only logical man to replace Jimmy.

After the White City job Tesch and Muggsy took most of the band into the Midway Garden, a few blocks away at Sixtieth Street and Cottage Grove. Jim Lannigan and Bud Freeman joined Art Kassel, who led a commercial outfit, in which tinkly sounds passed for jazz; however, it offered some compensation besides money to its new musicians in the men who sometimes played with the band, such men as the Rhythm Kings' pianist Elmer Schoebel and bass player Steve Brown, and clarinetists like Danny Polo and Benny Goodman. Jess Stacy joined Muggsy and Tesch one night, and they had a fine new pianist. Jess came from Cape Girardeau, Missouri, where he had worked in a music store, listened with rabid attention to Fate Marable's band, with Louis and the Dodds brothers, when it came to town on the steamboat *Capitol*, and later had played on the *Capitol* himself with Tony Catalano's Iowans from Davenport. Jess, a quiet and sensitive musician, followed the Chicago pattern in his listening to and learning from Earl Hines. All of Tesch's band listened and learned; as often as possible they sat in with the great jazzmen, where they played or where they lived.

Muggsy and Tesch jammed frequently with Wingy Manone and Eddie Condon. Wingy, born Joseph Manone in New Orleans in 1904, picked up the name by which he is best known when an early accident took one of his arms. After a wandering trumpet career in the South, he came to Chicago in 1924 and settled down at the Cellar, where he was often joined in jam sessions by other jazz

[illegible] Condon, born a year later than Wingy in Goodland, Indiana, came to Chicago ten years later with the family he joined so amusingly in his autobiography, *We Called It Music*. He started playing the banjo before he got to high school, and by the time he hit the upper grades he was already playing jobs. In 1921 he went to stay with his brother Cliff in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and the day after he arrived he went to play with a band led by Bill Englepian, who was a businessman but liked music so much he had a dance band. Then Eddie moved on to Waterloo, Iowa, where one Hollis Peavey wanted "to play jazz music" and needed a banjo for the band he was forming. Eddie played up and down the northern Mississippi—Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa—with Peavey's Jazz Bandits and then was offered a job in Syracuse, New York, playing with Bix Beiderbecke and Pee Wee Russell. It was an exciting assignment; through Bix's playing Condon first realized the size of jazz. Just before they left Chicago, Pee Wee and Eddie accompanied Bix to the Friar's Inn, where Bix sat in. Then, says Eddie, "It happened." He suddenly realized that all music was not the same, "that some people play so differently from others that it becomes an entirely new set of sounds." After the Syracuse job Eddie came back to Chicago, a veteran at seventeen, to play with various groups around town, with college boys, with the Austin gang and others who joined Wingy Manone at the Cellar, at the Three Deuces, at all the other places where white musicians were allowed to play.

Joe Sullivan became the regular pianist with the Chicago musicians. At seventeen, in 1925, he had already picked up a substantial musical education at the Chicago Conservatory of Music and in speakeasies, smoky back rooms, musicians' amateur and gansters' professional ginmills. He had a keen ear and a honky-tonk touch, and he soaked up the several piano-playing traditions of the New Orleans professors and the Sedalia and St. Louis ragtimers, Earl Hines' piano transformations of trumpet styles, and the alternately dapper and delirious rumbles of the boogie-woogie pianists. In Joe's playing, so vital a part of the

so-called Chicago-style records, all these strains met and were woven into a handsome jazz tapestry.

Boogie woogie was at its vigorous best in Chicago in the middle twenties. Jimmie Yancey, in a sense the founding father of boogie woogie, had settled down in Chicago after a singing and dancing career that took him as far as a command performance before King George in London. He was much in demand for rent parties, those paradoxically joyous occasions when eviction was eluded by passing the hat to sympathetic celebrants. He rolled all around the town, on his feet and on the piano keyboard, and picked up a lot of imitators and a few capable students. Pine Top Smith, who learned his tremulous trade from Yancey, gave the whole species a name in his 1928 recording of "Pine Top's Boogie Woogie." In that famous record he gave the chords of the tonic and the dominant a noisy ride and in his accompanying patter explained a dance that was to be performed to the music, with an audible leer to his words, making clear the sexual meaning of the music. There is no question that the atmosphere in which boogie woogie was played was stimulating to the gonads, but it is difficult to hear the atmosphere in the music, except with verbal suggestion. In spite of its rolling rhythms and multiple climaxes, boogie woogie is essentially a virtuoso exploitation of the polyrhythms of ragtime, a series of bass rumbles and treble tremolos that sometimes mask melodic and harmonic commonplaces. There is charm and humor in the playing of Yancey, Pine Top, and their successors, but not necessarily a sexual enchantment. There is also a kind of bordello flavor in the playing of Pine Top and such of his contemporaries as Will Ezell, "Speckled Red" (Rufus Perryman), Montana Taylor, Hersal Thomas, Romeo Nelson, Turner Parrish, Cow-cow Davenport, Jimmy Blythe, Lemuel Fowler, and the still-active "Cripple Clarence" Lofton. But in the best of them, Yancey, Meade Lux Lewis, Albert Ammons, and Pete Johnson, the abiding quality is of a tricky and witty pianism.

Ammons and Lewis were both drivers for the Silver

Taxicab Company in 1924, both apprentice blue pianists, both beginning to get the boogie-woogie beat. They both played the house parties and the jug celebrations; they both were formidable pianists and rent-party entertainers. Ammons became a band pianist as well as a soloist and made lots of trips into the South, on one of which he brought the Chicago transformation of Storyville piano back to its home ground, New Orleans. Lewis drifted away from music and became a car washer in a Chicago South Side garage. Both were rediscovered in 1935, when John Hammond, single-handed, brought boogie woogie back and, with Ammons' help, found Lewis in a garage. Both were brought back to records in January 1936, Albert with his fine Club De Lisa band, Meade Lux Lewis as a celeste and whistling soloist. In these records they demonstrated their rhythmic skill, showing how much could be done within the rigid confines of boogie woogie. Listening to them, one could hear the triumphant part played in jazz by rhythm. Listening to them, one could feel the massive influence of rhythm upon musicians in Chicago in the twenties.

Rhythm was the boss in Chicago jazz. Under the successive ministrations of the New Orleans immigrants and the West Side natives, jazz moved from a few fixed syncopations to a wealth of rhythmic devices. The accents within the jazz measure moved from two weak and two strong to an even four. Phrases, choruses, whole performances were better integrated because of the rhythmic change. It was almost as if these jazzmen, building a new art, were aware of rhythm as the Irish poet William Butler Yeats understood it:

> The purpose of rhythm, it has always seemed to me, is to produce the moment of contemplation, the moment when we are both asleep and awake, which is the one moment of creation, by hushing us with an alluring monotony, while it holds us waking by variety, to keep us in that state of perhaps real trance, in which the mind liberated from the pressure of the will is unfolded in symbols.

The Chicago musicians never articulated their understanding of rhythm in quite such terms, but there was in them as in Yeats a kind of belief in the mysticism of "the beat." Without ever falling into the trance of the African tribe or the Irish poet, they were able to free their minds from the pressure of musical consciousness, in order to do as Yeats suggested the artist do—"seek out those wavering, meditative, organic rhythms, which are the embodiment of the imagination, that neither desires nor hates, because it has done with time, and only wishes to gaze upon some reality, some beauty." The beat became a second nature; it did hush with "an alluring monotony" and hold awake with variety. The rhythmic breadth of the Chicago musicians can be heard in the first records made together by Muggsy and Tesch.

Charles Pierce was a South-Side butcher in Chicago who loved jazz and implemented that love by using the money he made from meat to support a first-rate jazz band which played weekends and made records. In October 1927 Pierce took Muggsy and Tesch and seven other musicians, including himself on saxophone, into the Paramount Studios in Chicago to make their memorable "Bull Frog Blues," "China Boy," and "Nobody's Sweetheart." On all these sides there is a drive, the rhythmic integration stringing solos together. There is more of the same on the November and December dates made by a more select group of musicians. Under the name of the Jungle Kings, Muggsy combined with Tesch, Mezz Mezzrow on tenor sax, Joe Sullivan, Eddie Condon, Jim Lannigan on tuba, George Wettling on drums, and Red McKenzie as the vocalist, to make "Friars Point Shuffle" and "Darktown Strutters' Ball." Wettling was a well-trained and experienced drummer from Topeka, Kansas, who had studied some of the finer technical points of jazz with Mezzrow in Chicago. McKenzie was a St. Louis bellhop who played a comb with tissue paper over it and made appealing noises alongside the kazoo played by Dick Slevin and the banjo played by Jack Bland in the Mound City Blowers, with Frankie Trumbauer on alto sax on some of his record

[illegible] and Eddie Lang on guitar on others made in 1924. Unfortunately, none of McKenzie's happily influential singing appears on these records.

Red McKenzie, a dapper little man whose tongue was [illegible] with words as well as with hair combs, had come to Chicago with his Blue Blowers as a novelty threesome, to [illegible] Rodemich's successful band. In that year, 1924, [illegible] Jones, the most able and best equipped of the leaders of sweet bands, got the Blue Blowers a Brunswick recording date, and Brunswick took them from there to Atlantic City, where Red met Eddie Lang. The Blue Blowers played the Palace in New York in the summer of 1924 and then went to London to play a date at the Stork Club there. Back in America, Red did pretty well, playing around the country. A friendly, amusing, and talented man, he made many friends, among them recording officials. He arranged the first date on Okeh for Bix Beiderbecke, Eddie Lang, and Frankie Trumbauer, the date at which they recorded their inspired "Trumbology" and their lovely "Singin' the Blues." He also arranged their date for Paramount in October of that same year, 1927, and in December, the Okeh date made by McKenzie and Condon's Chicagoans. For that last date Jimmy McPartland was back, having had a couple of years' run with the Wolverines, of which he became nominal leader in 1925, and having played a great deal around Chicago, using many of the original Blue Friars musicians. Bud Freeman, by this time an adept at tenor sax, Tesch, Joe Sullivan, Jim Lannigan, and Gene Krupa joined Condon—but not McKenzie, who neither played nor sang on any of the sides.

They played "Nobody's Sweetheart" again, as well as "Sugar," "China Boy," and "Liza." They played with the exuberance inevitable at such a reunion of musicians. Standing on soapboxes, they poured all they had learned into the recording microphone, and it was much. The beat was almost an even four-four; the ensemble was both loud and clean. Gene Krupa, then just moving into the select circle, was a native Chicagoan who showed at

eighteen, as later, a considerable technical skill but a heaviness as well. Frank Teschemacher, who scored several of the ensemble passages, showed, especially in the brilliant middle passage of "Nobody's Sweetheart," that he was moving along in his jazz ideas and had gone past the point at which only unscored improvisation was acceptable.

There was more of the same spirit and skill and progress in the next date made by these musicians, on the fourth of April, 1928, under the name of the Chicago Rhythm Kings. The personnel differed in the substitution of Muggsy for Jimmy, Mezz Mezzrow for Bud, and the addition of McKenzie as a vocalist. Again the ensemble and the soloists worked brilliantly together; again Tesch's thinking dominated the sides. Here Tesch's inspiration, as well as his occasional clumsiness, can be heard; here is his uninhibited drive which carried every other musician along with him. And on these sides, too, is Red's appealing voice, that languorous vibrato, that refashioning of the ballad line which could make even of a pallid melody a touching, poignant tune.

Recording was opening up in the second half of the twenties; the record companies were finding an ever increasing audience for their wares. In 1926 sales of records in America reached a dizzying new high of 151,000,000 disks. In Chicago, on June twelfth of that year, the Consolidated Talking Machine Company (Okeh Records) celebrated the phenomenal success of records with a "Cabaret and Style Show" at the Coliseum. For about ten thousand people, Okeh's Chicago recording manager, the pianist Richard M. Jones, gathered together the stars of his label. There were the big bands—Carroll Dickerson's Sunset Cafe Orchestra, Charlie Elgar's Arcadia Ballroom Band, Dave Peyton's Peerless Theatre Orchestra, Doc Cook's Dreamland Ballroom Orchestra, Erskine Tate's Vendome Syncopaters. Al Wind brought down his Dreamland Cafe band, King Oliver the Plantation Cafe Orchestra, and Louis Armstrong led his Hot Five through an actual recording as the climax of the evening, after Butterbeans

[illegible] Lillie Delk Christian, Chippie Hill, Lonnie [illegible] and Richard M. Jones had demonstrated their individual talents as singers and instrumentalists. Earlier in the year there had been an "Okeh Race Records Artists [illegible]" at the same Coliseum. In September 1927 twelve leading bands played a glittering program until five o'clock in the morning at Riverview Park Ballroom. The record industry's success had built a large and clamoring audience for jazz. When, in 1928, Tesch, McKenzie and Condon, Joe Sullivan, Jimmy McPartland, Bud Freeman, Jim Lannigan, and Gene Krupa went to New York to play with Red Nichols, it was natural that they should record with a variety of bands. Tesch made his remarkable "Dixie Me Sha-Wabble" and "One Step to Heaven" with Ben Pollack's orchestra, with Red Nichols on trumpet, Miff on trombone, Sullivan, Condon, and Krupa. Then Condon made a date under his name with Tesch, Sullivan, and Krupa. Finally Tesch was invited to play with a band assembled under the famous recording name of the Charleston Dandies, consisting of Nat Natoli on trumpet, Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, Don Redman, George Thomas, Frank Signorelli, and Stan King. He appeared on one side, the famous "Cherry," playing tenor sax.

With the records came fame of a kind, and with the fame a variety of job offers. Jimmy McPartland joined Ben Pollack, who had also snared Benny Goodman some years earlier when Benny was playing in California. Jim Lannigan joined the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, which recognized his ability on the bass. Tesch went to work with Jan Garber's Guy-Lombardo-style band, no fair outlet for his talents, although he later made two good sides with Ted Lewis, along with Muggsy Spanier and George Brunies. When the depression came in 1929, the great years of Chicago jazz were over, although Tesch continued to play until his death in 1932. With the coming of radio the name-band era inaugurated during the peak recording years was fully under way. Popular tunes, novelty acts, and the bands associated with them had caught the public's fancy, and there wasn't much of an audience

for the little groups that played the big jazz. Tesch spent most of the last three years of his life playing with bands like those of Garber and Lewis.

In the last years of the Hoover administration there were still some jobs, still some record dates. In October 1929 Tesch made two sides with Elmer Schoebel and his Friars Society Orchestra, playing "Copenhagen" and "Prince of Wails." The next year, in January 1930, he made "Wailin' Blues" and "Barrelhouse Stomp" with the Cellar Boys, Wingy Manone's band, with Bud Freeman on tenor sax, Charlie Melrose on piano and accordion, and George Wettling on drums. Two years later, in January 1932, he was playing in a little band under the trumpeter Wild Bill Davison. But he was not long for the band of this world. One night he and Wild Bill were driving to work in a leisurely fashion. A truck crashed into their car, throwing Tesch clear of the machine but killing him on the spot, while Wild Bill was only dazed.

Tesch's earlier colleagues accepted his death as an inevitable tragedy. Cruel fate, they felt, had killed the man as it had killed his music three years earlier.

Chapter 12

BIX

Many of the great men of jazz died prematurely, but almost all of them had brought their music to maturity before they died. Not so Bix Beiderbecke. Bix lived twenty-eight years, and even before he died he had passed into legend. There was something about the little round head in the little round face, something about the quality of his tone and the character of his melodic ideas that hit all the men who played with him and many who listened so hard that they awarded him a kind of immediate immortality. But he did die—young and only half-grown as a musician.

By 1938, when Dorothy Baker's highly fictionalized best-selling life of Bix, *Young Man with a Horn,* was published, he had taken on some of the qualities of a minor god, and to many musicians he was and still is jazz incarnate. The last paragraph of *Young Man with a Horn* begins, "The sun was in Rick's face," as if to indicate that when he died a kind of special light shone down from Heaven for him, and as Rick had this golden quality in the book, so did his progenitor's playing, according to the hosts of musicians and fans who have kept the name of Bix Beiderbecke alive. To see them sit around a phonograph and listen to beat-up copies of old Paul Whiteman records on which Bix plays, or to some of Bix's own records in even worse condition, is to watch men transfixed.

Leon Bismarck Beiderbecke ("Bix" was an abbrevi-

ation of his middle name) was born in Davenport, Iowa, on March 10, 1903. From a background that was steeped in music, Bix caught the fervor early. He came of a wealthy German-American family, which was in the lumber business. His sister was a pianist, and his mother played both the piano and the organ; Bix took piano lessons as a matter of course, and his parents fondly believed he would be a concert pianist. When his Uncle Al, a Davenport band leader and cornetist, visited his family, Bix insisted on being taught the rudiments of the horn. Uncle Al didn't take him seriously, but Bix bought himself a cornet and began to play it anyway.

Like the Chicago kids who congregated at the Spot and Straw, Bix had an ice-cream-parlor headquarters, Maher's, where he could usually find his cornet when he had absent-mindedly misplaced it. All his life Bix was absent-minded. As Eddie Condon later recalled, he was always losing his cornet or stepping on it—"I can't remember how many horns he'd run through." He even dressed absent-mindedly, and often had to borrow a coat or a tux because he had forgotten his own. Condon described his old friend as "a guy with a nonchalant, almost vacant look on his face, with his hat way back on his head, just about ready to topple down."

At high school in Davenport, Bix thought and dreamed cornet when he wasn't playing one. When he had the horn in his possession, he sped out to Poppie Gardens, near Geneseo, Illinois, in his Ford touring car, to sit in with the Carlisle Evans band and, even in those beginning days, impress them. When the riverboat *Capitol* steamed into Davenport, Bix would jump on board and get up steam himself on the calliope. When Louis and the Dodds boys played he listened intently, then went home to try out their ideas for himself. Emmett Hardy, who played in some of the white riverboat bands, was also an influence, contributing, some say, the concept of sweet round tone that Bix made into a vital jazz trumpet and cornet tradition.

His parents, no longer quite so set on a concert career

for Bix, sent Bix to Lake Forest Academy in the Chicago suburb of the same name in 1921. He spent almost a year at Lake Forest, and before he left had aroused something more than the academic interest of the headmaster. He was the creator and leader and star of the school band, incredibly popular among the students, but he was out before the school year was out. He used to sneak downtown when he could to play with musicians and soak up jazz when the girls they left. He was outstanding as a music student, but wasn't interested in any other subject. He spent much of his time on campus listening to Original Dixieland Jazz records and particularly picking out Nick LaRocca's cornet solos. Before he was asked to leave school he knew most of the standard Dixieland jazz numbers and many of LaRocca's original ideas.

Shortly after leaving Lake Forest he took his first professional job, on a Lake Michigan excursion boat that traveled between Chicago and Michigan City (for a while this band had young Benny Goodman, in short pants, playing a little clarinet). From the excursion boat job and jobs around Chicago came the personnel of the Wolverines, a small outfit which followed the amended Dixieland instrumentation—a tenor saxophone added to the basic horns, cornet, clarinet, and trombone.

Founded by pianist Dick Voynow, the Wolverines adopted their name for a job they got late in 1923 at a roadhouse near Hamilton, Ohio, the Stockton Club. Bix played cornet, Jimmy Hartwell was the clarinetist, Al Gande the trombonist, and George Johnson played the instrument foreign to New Orleans jazz, the tenor. The rhythm section consisted of Bobby Gillette on banjo, Min Leibrook on bass, and Bob Conzelman (soon replaced by Vic Moore) on drums, in addition to Voynow.

The Wolverines with Bix achieved a degree of popularity at Mid-western university dances and did fairly well in some theaters around Indiana, Ohio, and Kentucky, as well as at odd dance halls and ballrooms. Their Stockton Club job came at the beginning of one of the noisiest and bloodiest of the Prohibition gang wars. A fight among

bootleggers and their gun-happy friends started at the [illegible] on New Year's Eve 1923. To cover the frightening [illegible] the Wolverines played "China Boy" loud and furious [illegible] more than an hour. The story of Bix's succession of [illegible] laxed choruses in this bloody and roaring setting is a [illegible] part of his legend.

At the University of Indiana the band was so popular it played ten weekends in a row, giving pleasure to many especially to Hoagy Carmichael, who was an undergraduate there, and, as a member of the campus band, was beginning his own career as pianist, singer, and composer. On one of the band's appearances at the university, Hoagy got them to play at the Kappa Sigma house on the afternoon of the evening they were to play for the fraternity dance. Bix didn't pick up his cornet for more than four notes—a break in a chorus of the "Dippermouth Blues" King Oliver's classic—but such four notes! Hoagy, describing the great moment, exults:

> The notes weren't blown—they were hit, like a mallet hits a chime, and his tone had a richness that can only come from the heart. I rose violently from the piano bench and fell exhausted, onto a davenport. He had completely ruined me. That sounds idiotic, but it is the truth. I've heard Wagner's music and all the rest, but those four notes that Bix played meant more to me than everything else in the books. When Bix opened his soul to me that day, I learned and experienced one of life's innermost secrets to happiness—pleasure that it had taken a whole lifetime of living and conduct to achieve in full.

When Vic Berton, who was a drummer and booker around Chicago, heard the Wolverines, he quickly booked them into theaters in the Indiana-Kentucky circuit and got them a two-month job at the Municipal Beach Pavilion in Gary, Indiana, where many Chicagoans could hear them. During this engagement Bix concentrated as much on piano as on cornet. Before the band went to the beach, in 1924, it made its first records in a crude studio in Richmond, Indiana; the walls were of boards, electrical

[illegible] stuck out everywhere, and a large horn protruded through a velvet drape under the ornate letters which proclaimed the studios those of Gennett Records. In March the band made "Jazz Me Blues" and "Fidgety Feet," in May, "Oh, Baby," "Copenhagen," "Riverboat Shuffle," and "Susie." Bix's eloquent performances stuck out on those records like the plugs and the wire on the studio walls. When the summer was over the band made three more sides, "I Need Some Pettin'," the title of which employed a newly coined name for a very old practice; the transformed quadrille "Tiger Rag," a New Orleans and Chicago jazz classic; and the tune that celebrated a place, "Royal Garden Blues."

In October 1924 the band made its entry into New York, one that was hardly triumphal. It played at the Cinderella Dance Hall off Times Square, then as in later years the acme of ten-cents-a-dance emporia. Bix left the band while it was in New York, but not before Red Nichols had come to pay homage with his ear and later with his cornet, and not before Bix had made some more records with the Wolverines, two with George Brunies on trombone, "Sensation" and "Lazy Daddy," two without him, "Tia Juana" and "Big Boy," on which Bix played piano.

Bix went from the Wolverines in New York back to Chicago, where he played some with the Charles Straight orchestra and jobbed around town a bit. (The exchange was even. Jimmy McPartland went from Chicago to New York to join the Wolverines.) He played an Indiana prom with the Jean Goldkette band. He did a week at the Riviera Theatre in Chicago, billed with Frank Quartel; the two of them played trumpet and concertina as the Pepper Boys. Their act was right in the old vaudeville tradition; Bix sat at the bottom of the stage and blew up to Frank, or vice versa. They did as much posing as playing. Bix was doing his serious playing where he did his listening, at the Apex where Jimmy Noone and Earl Hines were, at the Sunset Cafe where Louis was, at the clubs and theaters where Bessie Smith sang, and at all the other places where

you could hear and sometimes play with the great [illegible]. There is a story about a night when Bix and Louis played a Battle of Cornets over on the South Side. After hearing Bix, the story goes, Louis put down his horn and cried, saying he could never play like that.

In the course of his happy wanderings around Chicago Bix made a couple of sides with some friends, Min Leibrook and Vic Moore from the Wolverines, the trombonist Miff Mole, the composer-pianist Rube Bloom, and the man most insistently paired with Bix after this date in December 1924, Frank Trumbauer. Under the name of the Sioux City Six, they did "I'm Glad" and "Flock o' Blues" for Gennett. In March of the next year Bix and Tommy Dorsey and the clarinetist Don Murray took a rhythm section with them into the Gennett studio to play "Davenport Blues," in honor of Bix, and "Toddling Blues."

In September 1925 Bix joined Frank Trumbauer's band at the Arcadia Ballroom in St. Louis. For almost a year he made at least a hundred dollars a week; this was big money for him and good money for most musicians of the period when a hundred dollars had a large negotiable value. With Trumbauer he formed a lasting musical attachment; they made many records and personal appearances combining Bix's cornet and the leader's C-melody or alto saxophone. With Trumbauer, Bix played concerts and explored some of the resources of French Impressionist music, which influenced his piano playing and writing considerably, though not his cornet. He began to fool around with short piano pieces, pastiches strongly reminiscent of Debussy and Ravel; some of these later emerged as "In a Mist," "Flashes," "In the Dark," and "By Candlelight"; of these he recorded only "In a Mist," also known as "Bixology," which he did as a piano solo.

The French Impressionist composers and their American disciples and imitators made a great impression upon Bix's generation of jazz musicians. When Frank Trumbauer recalls his days with Bix he remembers the Impressionist music.

[illegible] a young man with a horn. Not responsibile for the [illegible] literary attempts to describe a beat-it-down, jivin' cat, [illegible] everyone might think constituted the immortal personality of [illegible] Bix that I knew.

He was an intelligent young man, a fast thinker, and well [illegible] in many things, and, much to the surprise of many people, he was an ardent student of Debussy, Stravinsky, [illegible] Scott, and Eastwood Lane—knew their symphonies like [illegible] jitterbugs know their Goodman, studied them and loved them and, strange to say, understood them. We sat for many hours with Bix at the piano, playing his conception of Eastwood Lane's *Adirondack Sketches*, of which "The Land of the Loon" was his favorite, and also mine, and if you have heard "In a Mist" or "Candlelight," you can readily realize the musical influence inspiring his work.

When Frank recalls Bix's playing he describes it in Impressionist terms, reminiscent of the outdoor scenes of Monet and Renoir, suggestive of the warm natural colors of the poet Paul Verlaine. Whatever his execution in detail, Frank's intention—and Bix's—is the same as that of the Impressionists.

To describe in print the work of Bix is almost like trying to describe the color in the beautiful flowers that we see all around us, or the beautiful clouds we see in the sky, or the [illegible] leaves in the fall [which] make an impression so indelible on our minds. Still, these things relatively have an association with anything artistic. You just can't measure it with a yardstick.

It was another sixteen years before the impact of Impressionism was again so directly felt in jazz. Much of the music of radio and movie studio orchestras in the twenties and thirties sprang from Debussy and Ravel and their American imitators. Paul Whiteman's so-called symphonic jazz and Andre Kostelanetz's swollen scores borrowed from Impressionist sources. So did the music Johnny Richards composed for Boyd Raeburn's band in the mid-forties, and Stan Kenton's tone poems for piano and orchestra are in the same tradition. But improvised jazz with a steady beat didn't go right to Bix's inspiration, the

Impressionists, until the formulators of bebop did their first playing at Minton's in 1941. It's interesting to speculate upon Bix's possible arrival at music like bop perhaps a full decade before Charlie Christian, Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker—if he had kept his health and lived.

In the spring of 1926 Jean Goldkette offered both Bix and Frank jobs in his large orchestra, and the offer was too good to turn down. It was a good band, for a semi-symphonic dance band, and it offered a musician the freedom to blow some of the time, Bill Challis's knowing arrangements, and some capable colleagues, as well as the money. Don Murray, a fair clarinetist, was the reed soloist. Ray Ludwig and Fred Farrar played able trumpet, and Sonny Lee played somewhat better trombone. He was soon to be replaced by just as good a man, Bill Rank. Steve Brown, the Original Dixielander, was on bass, and Irving Riskin, whom everybody called Itzy, played the piano and made the jokes. Chauncey Morehouse was the drummer and he justified his imposing names in his complicated approach to the hides. Later he fooled around with a scale full of tuned drums and mastered the talking and singing scalar beats.

Bix was growing rounder all the time, in face and body and cornet sound. He was the natural leader of the jazz group Goldkette sported within his big sweet band and enough of a pianist to be featured in the sweet outfit too. Of the two sections, the jazz was clearly the better, with Bix and Frank, Pee Wee Russell on clarinet, Sonny Lee, Ray Ludwig, Itzy, and Chauncey. But on records it was the big band that drew attention. Bix played on all the records from the fall of 1926 to the fall of 1927 but took only two solos, on "Slow River" and "Clementine (from New Orleans)." On such sides as "My Pretty Girl" his legato cornet could be heard through the staccato jerks and snorts of the ensemble, and his fans listened hard for those moments of grace.

On "Clementine" Bix's colleagues almost matched him. Eddie Lang, the guitarist, had come to the band from his native Philadelphia via the Dorsey Brothers' Scranton

[illegible] the Mound City Blue Blowers, and a variety of [illegible] around Atlantic City and New York; he was a quiet [illegible] with a loud guitar voice, well trained musically as a [illegible] and well equipped intuitively. Eddie's swinging [illegible] stayed close to Bix in style and authority through the Goldkette months. So did the swooping fiddling of Joe Venuti, like Lang an Italian who had grown up in Philadelphia. Joe's birth at sea en route to the United States was a splendid subject for his quick and unstoppable wit, which was both loud and funny in its articulation. He had joined his four strings to Eddie's six in Philly, then had moved with his compatriot to the Scranton Sirens, and had come to Goldkette just before Bix.

Another of the considerable Goldkette talents was Danny Polo, a clarinetist of wide playing experience who joined up for the February 1927 records. Danny's playing then was strictly Storyville—notes of short valuation tied together in skipping phrases reminiscent of Piccou, suggestive of Dodds and Bechet. New Orleans was the major influence then; the Trumbauer alto sax hopped and skipped and jumped, and so did Don Murray's clarinet and the Goldkette reeds as a team. Frank Teschemacher's drive had not yet been heard enough nor understood nor imitated.

Bix's roommate when they were both playing for Goldkette was the pianist Itzy Riskin. Itzy's firmest impression of Bix was of a great musician and a great person, not of a virtuoso cornetist. "He was the most easy-going guy I ever met. . . . As long as I knew him, I never heard Bix say a bad word about anybody! Even without his playing you could love and admire him for that alone. . . . He certainly was the greatest natural musician and the grandest guy any of us will ever know."

About Bix's ability on the cornet, Itzy had qualifications. "There were probably scores of cornetists who, technically speaking, could play rings around Bix, but there never has been one or will be one who can approach him when it comes to innate musicianship on his horn."

But Itzy made a philosophical judgment. "After all," he said, "there's a big difference between being a straight, perhaps almost soulless instrument, and a person whose very soul breathes music that's translated so beautifully through the medium of a horn. Bix's heart was far above of his lips." As further evidence, Itzy offered Bix's piano playing:

> That Bixian feeling pervaded through the man's piano playing as well. His improvisations were the most moving passages I've ever heard. I remember one night in an Indiana cafe after work when Bix hit a chord that was so beautiful that somebody (I think it was Hoagy Carmichael) became so excited that he threw a chair at him!
>
> Funny thing about Bix's piano playing: he could play only in the key of C and he had great difficulty in reading—something which he seldom bothered to do anyway. And don't get the idea that Bix was the greatest reader in the world when it came to cornet, either. He was, I should say, only an average reader, if that.

While the Goldkette band was in Cincinnati Bix's failings as a sight reader or any other kind of reader of music were embarrassingly demonstrated. Bix and some of his colleagues were invited to listen to a band of youngsters who were proud of the accuracy of the transcriptions of Goldkette records their talented arranger had made. There the records were, note for note, right on the nose. After they had played a while they asked Bix to sit in. Bix agreed, as Itzy said, "in his usual gracious manner." The performance went along, and Bix sounded fine with the imitation Goldketters until they came to a jazz cornet passage. Bix stopped. The band stopped. He couldn't make anything out of the notes before him. The notes were his, notes he had improvised and which the arranger had copied down accurately, but Bix couldn't read what he himself had created.

Bix was an unorthodox cornetist. Self-taught, he followed his own dictates in fingering the horn, and he raised all the parts written for his instrument from its own key,

[illegible] to the piano key, the simple center and beginning [illegible] the evolution of keys, C major. Even if he had been able to read well, his need to transpose everything into [illegible] could have played havoc with his playing, and if he had mastered the problem of sight-reading, his fingering would have gotten in his way. Too, his C-major predilection gave him a concept of pitch that verged on the [illegible] tone formulations of the Schoenberg school of composers. He thought in terms of the C-major octave [illegible] the accidentals, sharped or flatted notes; it was inevitable that he should warm to the augmented chords [illegible] whole-tone scale of Debussy and Ravel, steps toward the eventual dissolution of fixed tonality, of thinking in terms of key.

The Goldkette band broke up in 1927—too many [illegible] and too many expensive musicians; it was [illegible] impossible to meet the payroll. Though Goldkette himself continued to lead bands in late airings out of [illegible] and to make some additional appearances, his great years were over. Adrian Rollini, the bass saxophonist and fountain-pen virtuoso (he actually played [illegible] of a sort on a made-over fountain pen), took many [illegible] ex-Goldkette musicians to New York for the opening of a new club, the New Yorker. Bix, Venuti, Lang, the pianist Frank Signorelli, Chauncey Morehouse, Bill [illegible], and Fred Farrar went into the club, which lasted for all of two weeks. When it closed they all joined Paul Whiteman, who was better able than Goldkette to support such well-paid names. Bix went into the four-man trumpet section, sitting with Charlie Margulies, the technician of the group, with Henry Busse, whose speech with a German accent seemed to be reflected in his playing [illegible], and with Goldy Goldfield, the roly-poly little man who was the comedian in the band. Bix was paid three hundred dollars a week apart from records, a lot of money then or now as a regular salary for a musician.

Bix made many records with the Great White Father; on some you can hear him play beautiful solos; on others his lovely tone stands out as brass lead; on still others he

is unnoticeable. He pops up for moments just as Whiteman's other stars do. On "San" and "Mississippi Mud," "From Monday On," "You Took Advantage of Me," "Sugar," "Coquette," "Changes," "Ol' Man River," and "Back in Your Own Backyard," Bix played with Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, Eddie Lang, and Joe Venuti again. On "San" he and the Dorseys all played trumpet. On some of his forty-five sides with the band Bix did not try; the quality of the songs varied a great deal. On about a third of the sides he was working with songs that had already or were to become jazz classics, tunes especially notable for their chords or melodic lines, tunes easily adaptable to solo or ensemble jazz. These are the songs noted, in which the quality of his associates was brought into play alongside Bix, and the Whiteman band justified its reputation and income.

A portion of Whiteman's "Sweet Sue," a twelve-inch record, gives us one of Bix's best solos. After a muddy concerted ensemble, a treacly celeste and violin, and a whispered tenor vocal, Bix sails in with authority and full rhythmic spread, but with all the measured sweetness that doesn't change the mood so much as enhance it. But one can't go to the Whiteman or the Goldkette records to hear the Bix about whom Hoagy Carmichael, Frank Trumbauer, and Itzy Riskin raved. This man appears on the Frankie Trumbauer records for Okeh and on his own sides for the same label. Under Trumbauer's leadership he made over forty sides, some of which have become jazz classics. These include the 1927 "Singin' the Blues," the exquisite "I'm Coming, Virginia," "Way Down Yonder in New Orleans," and "For No Reason at All in C," on which Bix played both cornet and piano. On "Wringin' and Twistin' " he again played the two instruments in a trio that included Trumbauer and Eddie Lang. On "Cryin' all Day," a neglected Trumbauer record, all of the simple, handsomely constructed beauty of Bix's cornet moves solemnly in solo and more vigorously in the ensemble. Of the records he made under his own leadership in 1927 and 1928, six are first-rate of their kind: "Royal Garden

Blues," "Goose Pimples," "Thou Swell," "Louisiana," "Wa-da-da (Everybody's Doing It Now)," and "Ol' Man River." On all of these records the prevailing spirit and style is Dixieland, in which Bix's soft tone and subtle phrasing stand out almost as much as a glockenspiel would; but there is no doubt that Dixieland jazz was what Bix liked and what he wanted to play, whether or not his own style was best suited to it. On "Sorry," "Somebody Stole My Gal," "Thou Swell," and "Since My Best Gal Turned Me Down" Bix can be heard at his Dixie best.

Bix was a heavy drinker. There are stories of great bouts, of great drunks and great hangovers. After a couple of years of Whiteman, he was often an unreliable musician. Whiteman sent him on a cure at the end of 1929. He was out of the band for a year—but at full salary. As Trumbauer explained, praising his old boss, "in the case of illness, not only Bix, but various other members of his organization too numerous to mention, received full salary, and this group includes myself, for all the time off, and were met with a hearty handshake and 'I hope you're feeling better' when they returned again to the Whiteman fold." But the cure didn't cure Bix. He returned to the band for a short while, then left again, trying as unsuccessfully to play radio jobs as he was trying to quit drinking. He had never been a fast reader, and there was just enough in radio to be played at sight or at second seeing to keep him from relaxing and indeed from playing satisfactorily. At times he was in such poor health he could play nothing faster than half-notes—his lips wouldn't function. By the spring of 1931 he was a physical if not a mental wreck. He played the Camel cigarette radio program one night and couldn't make it and never played it again. He played four nights with the Casa Loma orchestra and didn't do much better. From the piano in his room in the Forty-fourth Street Hotel he led many drunken parties, improvising, imitating, and playing lots of music. Babe Ruth was sometimes in attendance; he was close to Bix and affectionate about his cornet

playing as Bix was about Babe's ball playing. As many musicians as could squeeze into the room gathered there.

In 1930 he made his last recordings, five led by Hoagy Carmichael and another three under his own name with Joe Venuti, Benny Goodman, Pee Wee Russell, Jimmy Dorsey, and Gene Krupa. Of the Carmichael sides, two feature Benny Goodman, one Tommy Dorsey and Duke Ellington's growl trumpeter Bubber Miley, one Bud Freeman on tenor sax, one Jimmy Dorsey on clarinet, one Jack Teagarden on trombone; Eddie Lang was the guitarist and Gene Krupa the drummer on most. The Carmichael sides include two of Hoagy's most famous songs, "Rockin' Chair" and "Georgia on My Mind." The other three sides were indifferent novelties sparked by Teagarden, Jimmy Dorsey, Venuti, and Lang.

Bix kept busy through the spring and early summer of 1931, auditioning for a European job and making promises to himself to straighten out. But he never did straighten out. In June 1931, his health ruined by drinking, he insisted on playing a job at Princeton, which was too much for him. He came down with a severe cold. It deepened into pneumonia. On August 7, 1931, he died.

Paul Whiteman paid an expansive tribute to his former employee a number of years after Bix's death. "Bix was not only the greatest musician I've ever known but also the greatest gentleman I've ever known," Whiteman said. "But hang it, I can't tell you why." Maybe, he continued, it was because "Bix was just one marvelous guy, quiet, unassuming, never worrying much about anything, and taking everything as it came." Whiteman explained that Bix was extremely polite. When he came down from the stand he'd exclaim to the kids waiting there to greet him, "Well, how's everything down there?" And he'd accompany the words with his warm, almost bashful smile. He was nice to everybody. "Despite his greatness, he was anything but a big-headed, fluff-you-off fellow." That was part of his great gentlemanliness. There was also the dimension of his musicianship. "Somehow or other he gave you the impression that he was constantly striving

for something that was just out of his reach. His continual searching for some sort of ultimate created almost a mystic halo about him—it gave you the feeling that there was a genius who knew of something beautiful to strive for and that, even though he might never reach it, he was far above you merely because he could sense that beauty for which he was reaching. . . . And I just can't describe that tone, those notes and phrases, and, least of all, the feeling with which he played. To me, there's never been a soloist like him, and let me tell you, I'd give my right arm if I could live to hear another Bix. I think my arm's safe, though!"

Extravagant? Perhaps. But all the reports check. Compare Whiteman's words and Trumbauer's and Carmichael's and Riskin's. Speak to one of Bix's intimate friends, such as Jimmy McPartland, who knew him well off and on during the great playing years from 1924 to 1931. Jimmy in those days could drink as much as Bix; in 1951 he still could play as well as Bix, not just in imitation of him. Jimmy doesn't reach so obviously for the unreachable, but the sound is Bix's and the ideas come from some of the same sources. "That was the only way for us," Jimmy said. "Maybe we thought we saw it when we were drunk. Sometimes we even heard it when we played. It was elusive, beyond our grasp, but we knew it was there and we knew that it went something like that—like the way Bix played it." That way was a fertile compound of a jazz beat and a round and beautiful tone that never accepted distorted sound or a rough edge on a note as real. It was one of the important ways of jazz. It brought into the music a concern for constructed beauty that was as attractive on the surface as within.

Chapter 13

NEW YORK

For a long time New York has been a symbol to a large proportion of Americans of all that's wicked and woeful in the world. For almost as long it has been the center of art in America, but, its decriers will tell you, only because of its banks and bankers. Gotham is one of New York's many names, and Gotham was a village in England whose people were proverbial for their follies. Wall Street is one of New York's many streets, and Wall Street is an avenue whose people are proverbial for their moneybags—some of them worn right under the eyes. But New York has other names and other streets.

To the jazz musician the dearest of the names for the big town is the Apple; the apple has been for centuries a symbol of special endearment as well as Eve's temptation in the Garden of Eden. New York is the apple of many a musician's eye. Most cherished of New York streets for musicians was Fifty-second Street, *the* street for many years. And there are other sanctified thoroughfares: Lenox and Seventh Avenues for several blocks here and there uptown in Harlem, where the various ballrooms have been or are ensconced; One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street, where the bands have blown at the Harlem Opera House and still blow at the Apollo; Broadway, where the big presentation houses give stage room to a fair share of jazz, and Birdland carries on still for forlorn Fifty-second Street. All of this adds up to a considerable hot geography; jazz has had several homes in Gotham. For more than thirty years jazz has matured

in New York, and for twenty of the thirty with growing distinction.

A detailed examination of New York jazz does not yield a "style" in the sense that chroniclers have defined the styles of New Orleans or Chicago or Kansas City jazz, and yet something very close to a music that is New York's own emerged in the forties and fifties. The movement that is variously labeled "progressive" or "modern" or "new" jazz is a New York movement. Its motion spins from the early steps of musicians in Kansas City and St. Louis, Chicago, Tulsa, and Pittsburgh, but its permanence was established in New York. Here bop was born; here Lennie Tristano made his home and organized his school; here the sounds we lump together and call "cool," because they are so relaxed and restrained, so unlumpy, found adherents and skilled representation. Jazz musicians came to New York to make experiments and stayed, and so did the principle of experimentation in jazz. The keynote of jazz in New York has been experimentation.

But first an audience has to be found. Traditionally the leader of American cities in the arts, as well as in population figures, New York was a sad fourth or tenth or twentieth in taking up jazz when that ill-clad, ill-housed, ill-fed music first offered itself.

While Gotham had had vision in spotting new writers and painters, and had even extended a sort of refuge to the modern classical composers, it was purblind to the efforts of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band and King Oliver and the other pioneers in jazz. These men did all right in their native New Orleans, and then all the way up the Mississippi River to Chicago. But New York was content with a desultory ragtime and the music of revues and operettas.

In Harlem there were a few men of distinction who knew how to kick a tune and why, who played in the bordellos and the boîtes—the first not nearly so numerous as in New Orleans, the second not nearly so glamorous as in Paris. Bubber Miley, who is credited as the inventor of the growl style of trumpet playing, was playing uptown

at the beginning of the 1920s. Jimmy Harrison, a gifted trombone player, was around. So were Edgar Sampson and Benny Carter. Charlie Johnson was beginning his fifteen-year engagement at Smalls' Paradise, with a band that sheltered most of the great names in Harlem at one time or another.

But downtown it was Victor Herbert and Irving Berlin and "Typhoon," "foxiest of fox trots." The Original Dixieland Jazz Band came to Reisenweber's in 1917 and played the "Tiger Rag" and the "Sensation Rag" and the "Ostrich Walk." But in 1917, though they were regarded as "interesting" attractions, Nick LaRocca's trumpet and Larry Shield's clarinet didn't catch New Yorkers' fancies particularly. The band's records sold; "Livery Stable Blues" went over a million copies; you still get worn ODJB disks in scrap drives. But it was London, not New York, that really went wild over the New Orleans gang. When they finished their tour abroad they came back to more receptive audiences.

Then Harlem really woke up. Mamie Smith was singing the blues with a fine little band at the Garden of Joy, One Hundred and Fortieth Street and Seventh Avenue, atop a huge rock. Count Basie was playing piano in a little band at Leroy's. Tricky Sam was playing trombone at the Bucket of Blood. And there were the pianists: James P. (Johnson), Willie the Lion (Smith), and Seminole, "whose left hand was something to listen to," Duke Ellington says. Fats Waller was a baby musician then, in the early 1920s. Bessie Smith's imperial command of the blues was being established in Harlem theaters and cafes.

Clarence Williams came to New York after the First World War and published songs ("Royal Garden Blues," for example) and got himself a couple of record dates—the Blue Five—and he was in. W. C. Handy and William Pace organized a record company—Black Swan—and got themselves a great star, Ethel Waters, and then a pianist, Fletcher Henderson, and then a bandleader—Fletcher Henderson again—and they were in, for a while anyway.

Before Ethel Waters there were two Negro entertainers who captured New York, Bert Williams and Florence Mills. In a sense, Williams set the style. He was *the* minstrel man; though Negro, he performed in blackface. His characterizations satisfied the stereotyped public conception of the Negro: he was the "darky" from the "Deep Souf"; he was "coal black Joe." That he was also a great deal more escaped the notice of most of his audiences. After all, he came from the West Indies, whence came so many servants and day laborers and that funny corruption of the British accent. After all, he wore tattered clothes and a beat-up stovepipe hat and huge bedraggled shoes with flapping soles. He was respected, he was a headliner, but nobody except his own people and a few sensitive whites made a serious attempt to understand him and his background and what he was doing. It was not much bruited about that his grandfather had been the Danish consul in Antigua, where Williams was born, and that his name was his grandfather's. His large audiences at the Ziegfeld Follies from 1910 to 1919 did not know that he studied with the brilliant pantomimist Pietro during summers in Italy. Few knew that he had at least a passing skill on all the musical instruments. But he was a successful comedian, even in the Negro musicals of 1903 *(In Dahomey)*, 1906 *(Abyssinnia)*, and 1909 *(Mr. Lode of Koal)*. When he made his debut in the 1910 Follies, the same edition of the Ziegfeld beauty contest in which Fannie Brice made her first appearance away from burlesque, he found an attentive audience but few admirers who penetrated the façade of what the dramatic critic Bide Dudley called a "slouch Negro."

Critic George Lemaire described Bert Williams' "great art, his sureness of vocal method and his perfection of pantomime":

> He had very eloquent hands, which even the grotesque cotton gloves could not hide.
>
> I am sure that if Bert Williams had suddenly found himself deaf and dumb he would have been able to command the high place that he held in the theater just the same, because of his

thorough mastery of pantomime. I have seen him silently rise from his chair, while a group of us were sitting, and go to a door, admit a lady in gesture, order a whole dinner, with various bits of comedy to the waiter, pay the check and escort her out. It would be a perfect gem in its completeness. He could turn his back on his audience and convey more than thousands of actors can do with every trick known to show business.

Heywood Broun detailed one of Bert Williams' great narratives, a ghost story:

We could see the old Negro feverishly turning the pages of the Bible. The cats from the fireplace took form before our eyes. Sparks dripped from their jaws and wind howled outside the cabin. All this was built by a tall man, his face clownishly blackened with burnt cork, who stood still, in the center of the stage, and used no gesture which traveled more than six inches. The first cat came out of the fireplace and paused to eat some live coals. It was a friendly little cat. The next cat, the size of a Saint Bernard, ate some coals, spat out the sparks, and said "When are we gwine to begin?" The third cat, as big as a Shetland pony, and slobbering fire, made the same inquiry, to which the other two replied, in unison, "We cain't do nothin' till Martin comes." At which point the old preacher said, "When Martin gits here, you tell him I was here, but I'm gone."

His skills were handsomely framed in the Ziegfeld Follies by such lovely ladies as Lilyan Tashman, Ina Claire, Peggy Hopkins Joyce, and Marion Davies. In his last Follies, in 1919—dated for the next year as all the Ziegfeld Follies were—his co-stars were Eddie Cantor, W. C. Fields, Eddie Dowling, Marilyn Miller, Charles Winninger, Ray Dooley, Van and Schenck, and Fannie Brice. Even in such select company he shone; through the outrageous dialect and the ridiculous get-up spoke the melancholy voice of the American Negro.

In the early twenties Florence Mills was the enchanting symbol of the spells Negro entertainers could weave over white audiences in New York. The "Little Blackbird," as

she was known in Harlem, came downtown with the variously attractive Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake musical, *Shuffle Along*. The cast was exciting, the singing and dancing different from anything hitherto heard or seen downtown, but only the individual stars, the team of Miller and Lyles, and Florence Mills, duplicated their uptown success. Florence Mills brought her graciousness and warmth to another all-Negro revue, *Dixie to Broadway*, an 1924; its seventy-seven performances almost tripled the run of *Shuffle Along* on Sixty-third Street. She became the great attraction at the Plantation Club at Fiftieth Street and Broadway, where Duke Ellington heard her. Later, when Duke came to write three Portraits of Great Negro Personalities of the Theater—Bert Williams, Bill Robinson, and Florence Mills—he saved the softness and the sweetness for her, rescoring Bubber Miley's lovely melody, "Black Beauty," which had served Duke as a piano solo, for Harold Baker's rich trumpet and the full band.

Ethel Waters first came downtown as Florence Mills' substitute. She was twenty-three in 1923, when she moved into the Plantation and almost single-handedly made "Dinah" into a kind of national anthem. She has often told the story of her childhood, most recently in her autobiography, *His Eye Is on the Sparrow*. Illegitimate, part of a large family, impoverished almost to extinction, she had the worst of Chester and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She has summed up her experience in three sentences: "I've stolen food to live on when I was a child. I was a tough child. I was too large and too poor to fit, and I fought back." Her formal education was in the hands of nuns; her informal in the back streets frequented by prostitutes, and later, when she was sixteen, in a second-class Philadelphia hotel where she worked as chambermaid and laundress for $4.75 a week. Talked into going on the stage by two neighborhood boys, she made her first appearances singing the blues in Negro theaters. After an apprenticeship in the Negro clubs through the South, she found a series of club jobs in Harlem, where she made a

considerable reputation for herself, not only with her nominal Negro audience but with white pub-crawlers who came uptown—a few to admire, more to gape and to get drunk. She described her work in those years for the columnist Earl Wilson: "When I was a honky-tonk entertainer I used to work from nine until unconscious. I was just a young girl and when I tried to see anything but the double meaning in songs, they'd say, 'Oh, my God, Ethel, get hot!' " The serious songs, as she explained, were all for Florence Mills. When she moved to the Plantation, she took advantage of the new opportunity, not so much to sing "serious songs" as to add her distinctive throb to the torchy ballads then in vogue.

When Ethel Waters, capitalizing on her Plantation Club success, took a band out on the road to accompany her in one-night and longer appearances, she sent for Fletcher Henderson. He was the logical man to organize the band; he knew everybody who was anybody worth speaking of musically, and besides most of the good musicians played for him sooner or later. He had them on the record dates he led or supervised; they played for him either at the Roseland Ballroom or at the Club Alabam, both on Broadway.

Fletcher, son of a Cuthbert, Georgia, schoolteacher, had studied chemistry at college. But music was irresistible to him; and his command of the piano and of all the forms of jazz and popular music was equally irresistible to those who heard him and hired him when he came to New York just after the First World War. In 1919 he went into Roseland for the first time; he kept coming back until 1935. When the Black Swan record company, for which he had done all kinds of odd accompanying and superising jobs, broke up, he moved his several talents into other record studios. With some of the brilliant men of his dance band, cornetist Joe Smith, trombonist Big Charlie Green, clarinetist Buster Bailey, banjoist Charlie Dixon, he accompanied Ma Rainey on the Paramount label. Alone or with one or more of his musicians, he backed Bessie Smith on almost fifty of her epochal Columbia sides. Alone, he made three piano solo sides for Black Swan, and then ten times as many orchestra records for the same label and for Emerson, Edison, Paramount, and Puritan.

With his Club Alabam orchestra he began his properly famous series of recordings for Vocalion and associated labels. His trumpets, Howard Scott and Elmer Chambers, were notable chiefly for their contributions to the concerted ensemble drive. The rest of his personnel reads like a Who's Who of Harlem jazz for the next two decades. Charlie Green played the trombone—funny trombone, less like Kid Ory than like George Brunies. Don Redman fitted his long face and little body beside the suave figure of Coleman Hawkins; his alto sax was the brilliant counterpart of Hawk's tenor. Fletcher led the band from his piano, his moon face and gentle smile a trademark. The rhythm section consisted of banjoist Charlie Dixon, bassist Bob Escudero, and drummer Kaiser Marshall. On and on the records came. Louis Armstrong filled out the trumpet section in 1924, and in the same years Buster Bailey added his clarinet to the saxes of Don and Hawk. The next year the two Smiths, Russell and Joe—no relation—replaced Chambers and Scott; when Louis left, the brass was reduced to a two-man trumpet section until Rex Stewart joined in the spring of 1926. At the end of that year Jimmy Harrison came in on trombone. In 1927 Don Redman left, not to be replaced satisfactorily until the next year when Benny Carter became Fletcher's star soloist. When Benny joined the band Joe Smith was out, suffering from the paresis that killed him at an early age. Bobby Stark was the new trumpeter. Benny Morton was in on trombone for a while and was later replaced by Claude Jones; neither recorded with the band in 1929—there wasn't much record work either before or right after the crash. The New Orleans trumpeter Tommy Ladnier was in for a while too, in 1926 and 1927.

No one record of this great Henderson era deserves to be commended above the others, though the eight sides reissued by Columbia in its series of Hot Jazz Classics

albums offer a fair sampling of the quality of the band. In that album the inevitable sweetness of Joe Smith's cornet and trumpet can be heard on "What-Cha-Call-Em Blues" and "Snag It," although there is a better representation of his sound and ideas in his recording of "I Want a Little Girl" with McKinney's Cotton Pickers. Louis's participation in the Henderson band can be sampled in the aforementioned blues, in the superb vehicle he fashioned along with King Oliver, "Sugar Foot Stomp" and in "Money Blues." In the last, the size and splendor of Coleman Hawkins on the saxophone can be heard, as well as on the 1927 "Hop Off" and in two sides made with the 1932-33 edition of the band, "King Porter Stomp" and "Can You Take it?" On those sides, with the exception of the last, Bobby Stark's searing trumpet rides through along with Hawk, suggesting some of the characteristic drive of Henderson's brass section. More of the same can be heard, with Rex Stewart, Charlie Green, Joe Smith, Hawkins, and Fats Waller featured, in Fletcher's own composition, "Stampede."

Drive was the overwhelming point of Fletcher Henderson's music. And there was plenty of competition to establish the point, each soloist vying with the others in half-serious and sometimes dead earnest instrumental battles. Fletcher scored his arrangements to give the same quality to section choruses, so that brass and reed phrases sounded like spontaneous solo bursts. With this band, the exciting reiteration of two- and four-bar phrases, usually built on a blues pattern, became a basic big-band jazz formula. All of this drive and reiteration had become ordinary jazz currency by the time swing appeared, but none wrote it better than Fletcher, which is why Benny Goodman sent for him when the Goodman band was on its way to success.

Few bands afterward could boast such soloists. Don Redman poured his perky personality into his alto; Benny Carter gave that instrument breadth and inimitable variety. Rex Stewart, like Big Green, was a humorist, but he could also play with the vigor that Bobby Stark showed

or the sweetness of Joe Smith. Jimmy Harrison and Benny Morton were stylists; for them the trombone was sometimes witty but more often poignant.

The great figure in the Henderson band was Coleman Hawkins. Until Lester Young came along with Count Basie, there was only one way to play tenor sax, the way Hawk played it. Just two men recaptured the Hawkins flavor, Chu Berry and Ben Webster; to them came naturally the Hawkins sound, audible breathing and great swoops of swollen phrase tied together with a languorous vibrato that gave their tenor jazz both piquancy and power. Hawk's suaveness of appearance and smoothness of language cried for Continental appreciation, which they received when he moved to Europe for five years in 1934. He spoke in a round deep bass-baritone voice, usually using few words but carefully pointed. When he wanted to he could be charming; he was also capable of a high seriousness, and his conversation sometimes took a learned musical turn. He began to study cello in 1912 at the age of five, after rudimentary piano instruction by his mother. At nine he took up the tenor saxophone, and in three years at Washburn College in Topeka, Kansas, he was a zealous student of all the technical branches of music—harmony, counterpoint, composition. Surely his early mastery of the cello in St. Joseph, Missouri, where he was born, played a significant part in the development of that large lovely mellow tone he affected on the tenor. Certainly his playing experience at Washburn and with local bands in Topeka was an excellent preparation for his first professional job of consequence with Mamie Smith's Jazz Hounds, whom he joined in Kansas City in 1923. He spent about a year accompanying Mamie, one of the blues-singing Smith girls, playing alongside trumpeter Bubber Miley and making with him and others dozens of sides for Okeh backing Mamie. In 1924, when Mamie's Jazz Hounds arrived in New York, Hawk joined Fletcher.

Smack, as Fletcher has been called since his college days, when he had a roommate named "Mac," had a remarkably well-educated band. Don Redman was born

in 1900 at Piedmont, West Virginia; he picked up the trumpet at three, played in a kids' band at six, and began to study the piano at eight. At Storer College he studied all the instruments and, like Hawk, addressed himself seriously to the problems of traditional music. He studied some more, privately and at conservatories, in Boston and Detroit before he joined Fletcher Henderson in 1925.

Benny Carter, who replaced Don Pasquall, who had replaced Redman, was also a college man. Benny was born in New York City in 1907, went to Wilberforce University, where he did not specialize in music but did play in the college band led by Fletcher's pianist brother, Horace. His professional experience before joining Smack included a short stretch with Duke Ellington. Buster Bailey, christened William in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1902, was a music student in high school, and later, when he moved to Chicago, had several private teachers, the most important of whom was Franz Schoepp, the Chicago Symphony clarinetist who also taught Benny Goodman. Before joining Fletcher, Buster played with W. C. Handy's orchestra and the Vendome Theatre orchestra under Erskine Tate for three years from 1919 to 1922. Trumpeters Rex Stewart and Bobby Stark were both fine musicians and conversationalists; their early education and experience, in Washington and New York respectively, peppered their rich talk of music and musicians.

Fletcher Henderson and his musicians made a large niche for themselves in jazz history. They also helped bring New York alive to jazz.

Duke Ellington helped too. He came to New York in 1923. He and Sonny Greer, "a very fly drummer," as all his Ellington associates called him, and Toby Hardwick came up to New York from Washington, D.C., with Wilber Sweatman's band, one of the first important colored organizations. The work wasn't so good or so regular, and there was a lot of free time for free playing at the uptown cafes. Duke used to walk the streets with a pianist named only Lippy ("Lippy had heard so much piano that he couldn't play any more"), and James P. and Fats and

the Lion, and walk and walk and ring doorbells. Lippy would get the bunch into homes where there were pianos. And they would play. All night long they would play, Duke and Fats and James P. and the Lion. The days, when they should have earned money, were not as good as the nights, when they didn't want to earn money but just wanted to play and did.

Duke went back to Washington until, a few months later, he was able to reorganize his own band for a short session at Barron's in Harlem. Then came the Hollywood Club, downtown, in September of 1923. Its name was soon changed to the Kentucky Club, the South having a certain cachet on Broadway in night-spot names, because the South was where the music came from and Broadway was waking up to the music. After four years at the Kentucky Duke was a name on Broadway. The Cotton Club was the next step, and Duke was a name in America. There were records for Victor, under the band's right name, and for Columbia and Brunswick and Melotone as the Jungle Band, and Joe Turner and His Men, and Sonny Greer and His Memphis Men, and the Harlem Footwarmers. There was radio, first over WHN locally in New York and then, with a nod of thanks to Ted Husing, over CBS, throughout America. New York was finally aware of jazz, and the great jazz was beginning to come from New York.

The white bands of distinction were later in arriving. Paul Whiteman played the Palais Royal from 1920 to 1923, but that wasn't the great Whiteman band, it was only the first. Paul Specht had some pretty good men in his popular outfits, and Red Nichols was with George Olsen. Vincent Lopez was ensconced at the Hotel Pennsylvania from 1919 to 1924. And there was a lot of good booking time and money for the bands that rented out by the evening; that's where Meyer Davis broke in, and that's how Jan Garber got his start. Fred Waring was just emerging with the Pennsylvanians. And from the same state came the Scranton Sirens, with two boys who blew more than any sirens New York had ever heard—

Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey. Eddie Lang came into that crew after a while too, to play some magnificent guitar.

From these groups and others some great men were poured into the record vats. Red Nichols took over, and so did Phil Napoleon; the trumpeters led the record dates then; they played the instrument of jazz authority. Napoleon's Original Memphis Five (1923 to 1928) played some fair-to-middling music, with Jimmy Lytell's clarinet and Frank Signorelli's piano impressive, and Milfred Mole (better known as Miff), a Long Island boy, a talented, well-trained trombonist. Miff had a couple of dates himself, with his Molers, which was the toothsome name they thought of for pick-up crews he led.

But over and above Napoleon and Mole, as leaders, there was one great white record-dater, Ernest Loring Nichols. The Nichols group was called the Five Pennies. With penetrating music, the Nichols band called the turn on New York and American jazz for many years after 1925. The Dorseys and Fud Livingston and Miff were among Red's first recruits. Then, in later years, came Benny Goodman and Joe Sullivan and Jack Teagarden and Glenn Miller, as the Ben Pollack band, on from Chicago in 1927, contributed its share. Nichols made so many records that nobody up at Brunswick or its successor, Columbia, ever really knew exactly how many, or whether they were all issued, or if not, where some of those discarded masters were. Nichols became a great name on records; his Pennies incubated the jazz bands of ten years later; the fairly tight, routinized Nichols sessions set the style for the men who stepped out of and away from these dates to become the biggest bandsmen of them all, Tommy Dorsey and Jimmy Dorsey and Benny Goodman and Glenn Miller.

There was lots of music in Red Nichols' home in Ogden, Utah, where he was born in 1905: his father was a professor of music at Weber College. Red's first instrument was the cornet, which he began to play at the age of four; at five he was good enough to play in public. He left the Culver Military Academy in Indiana, where he had

studied some music, to play trumpet in the George Olsen band. He left Olsen to join Johnny Johnson and come to New York to play at the Pelham Health Inn in 1923. When Johnson went to Florida, Red took over the band, which had some fine jazz musicians in it. He started to record with Sam Lanin's Red Heads, named after the Nichols sorrel top, in February 1925, and later, without Lanin's sponsorship, the band became known on records as the Redheads. The headwork was impressive: there was Red's head, pianist Arthur Schutt's, Jimmy Dorsey's, and Miff Mole's. Miff had made his instrumental beginnings on the violin and then the piano and had played trombone with the Original Memphis Five for a couple of years before he and Red put their heads together in such dance bands as Johnny Johnson's, Sam Lanin's, Roger Wolfe Kahn's, and all the Nichols organizations, on and off records. Miff's was a sensitive melodic style; his sweet phrases complemented Red's more vigorous lines handsomely, adding variation to the New Orleans–Chicago trumpet-trombone patterns. Miff was the old man in the band, twenty-six when they first began to record; his was a steadying and an enriching influence.

Red Nichols' records are the counterparts in distinction and quantity of Fletcher Henderson's sides. Under many recording names, Red introduced some of the most distinguished white jazz musicians to a large listening public. Besides the Redheads, and his most familiar recording group, Red Nichols and His Five Pennies, Red led bands under the names of the Louisiana Rhythm Kings, the Wabash Dance Orchestra, the Charleston Chasers, the Hottentots, the Midnight Airdales, the Arkansas Travelers, Red and Miff's Stompers, The Goofus Five, and the New York Syncopaters. The dates Miff Mole led were signed Miff Mole's Molers.

Pee Wee Russell, born Charles Ellsworth, Jr., in St. Louis in 1906, came from the University of Missouri and Chicago small bands to make his first appearance on records with Red in 1927 in "Ida" and "Feelin' No Pain." Babe Russin came from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and

engagements with the California Ramblers and Smith Ballew, to play tenor sax with Red Nichols. Adrian Rollini, norminally a bass saxophonist, introduced his "goofus" on the same date on which Pee Wee first recorded. The goofus, which was adopted as a recording name for dozens of sides, was a Rollini invention, a kind of toy instrument with the look of a saxophone and the sound of a harmonica or concertina. Dick McDonough and Carl Kress were Red's regular guitarists and set a high standard for all future rhythm sections; Eddie Lang made many sides with Red too, setting a standard for solo guitar that was not even approached again until Charlie Christian appeared with Benny Goodman's Sextet. The Chicago musicians appeared often with Red: the drummers Dave Tough and Gene Krupa, the pianist Joe Sullivan, and the tenor saxist Bud Freeman. The Dorsey Brothers also popped up on many sides, especially Jimmy, who surely made his most lasting contribution on Nichols' records, playing a kind of darting, devilish, driving clarinet. Fud Livingston, a clarinetist much like Jimmy Dorsey in his playing manner, and Benny Goodman were frequently featured. When the trumpet section was enlarged for records, Manny Klein and Charlie Teagarden added their mellifluous sounds. Arthur Schutt made his first record appearances on piano with Nichols and established a lasting reputation as a technically facile and generally resourceful pianist, a reputation which led him to Hollywood studio bands. But the biggest and the best of Red's associates, apart from Miff, was Jack Teagarden.

Weldon John Teagarden was born in Vernon, Texas, in 1905, of a part-Indian family. He began to play trombone when he was seven, worked some with his father in the cotton-gin business and as a garage mechanic in Oklahoma City, then went to San Angelo, Texas, to work as a motion-picture projectionist. In his time off from the projection booth he played with local bands, sitting in on jam sessions as often as he could find them. He moved to San Antonio, Texas, to play with a band at the Horn Palace, and then in 1921 joined Peck Kelly's Bad Boys in Houston, playing with the legendary leader-pianist, Pee Wee Russell, and Leon Rappolo at various times. He was a happy man with a feeling for jazz that amounted to an addiction; he used to carry around Louis Armstrong's records of "Cornet Chop Suey" and "Muskrat Ramble" in his instrument case or under his overcoat, and would play them any time he got within sight of a phonograph. He loved to play and played with such contagious warmth that audiences loved to hear him. With Willard Robison's band in Kansas City and with his own outfit in Wichita Falls, Kansas, with Doc Ross and with the St. Louis bands of Herbert Berger and Johnny Youngberg, Jack blew his lusty jazz and his melancholy ballads. There were always lots of jokes and lots of liquor and such incidental good times as that ride down Santa Monica's streets when the Doc Ross band was known as Ranger Ross's Texas Cowboys and Jack gave credence to the name by his secure seat in the middle of the saddle of a white horse, his trombone over the pommel and his chaps bright red. When Jack came to New York in 1927 he was immediately snapped up for records by Willard Robison, Roger Wolfe Kahn, Sam Lanin, and Red Nichols. In 1928 he joined the Ben Pollack band but continued to record with Red as often as possible. The Red Nichols records would be a significant ornament in jazz if only for Jack's salubrious trombone solos.

The quality of the various Red Nichols recording outfits can be established by listening to the sides in the albums Decca has issued in its Brunswick Collectors Series, now transferred to long-playing records. These include the justifiably famous "Ida," "Peg o' My Heart," "Indiana," "Dinah," "Shim-Me-Sha-Wabble," "Tea for Two." On "The Sheik of Araby" Jack Teagarden demonstrates his way with melodic improvisation in two choruses after he has interrupted a saccharine singer. Benny Goodman swings through "China Boy," "The Sheik," the "Wabble," "Indiana," "Dinah," and also enlivens "Peg"; Jimmy Dorsey warms "Buddy's Habits," "Boneyard Shuffle," "Washboard Blues," "That's No Bargain," "Tea

for Two" and "I Want to Be Happy." Teagarden is on all eight sides of the first volume, and needless to say, Red is on all the sides. The size of Red's contribution must not be measured only by the quality of the musicians he brought to records or by the effective, sketchy ensemble writing or by the generally fine performance of his musicians; Red's own playing is a considerable part of the accomplishment of these records. For reasons difficult to ascertain, his playing has often been disparaged. But the most casual hearing of his records makes clear why he was given so many record dates, became so popular, and drew so many distinguished musicians to play with him. He played ballads with a sweetness that suggests Bix Beiderbecke, although it is not of that unique excellence. He plowed his way through jazz figures with a brass authority and rhythmic integrity worthy almost of Louis Armstrong. He was neither a Bix nor a Louis, but he was close enough to each to deserve high praise, and both as a soloist and a leader he maintained jazz standards over hundreds of sides that few other recording musicians could equal.

As the twenties became the thirties, New York took over for the nation in earnest. Jean Goldkette came through with his band, the first really big one with good musicians in it, Bix Beiderbecke and Bill Rank and Frank Trumbauer and Don Murray. Jean Goldkette left New York with precious few of the good musicians. Paul Whiteman took most of them, including Bix and Bill and Frank. Wingy Manone came up to New York with Jack Teagarden. Jack Teagarden left New York with Ben Pollack and he too ended up with Paul Whiteman.

Paul Whiteman had sensed that there was something up around 1924, when he gave the *Rhapsody in Blue* concert at Aeolian Hall. From then on he recruited from the jazz ranks and organized a more capacious and varied music. From his big outfit, which never played much besides the abortive product they used to call "symphonic jazz," there came the little bands that made the records, Bix's and Frankie Trumbauer's. The New York jazzmen

all played with Nichols, and were joined by such itinerant Chicagoans as Gene Krupa and Joe Sullivan and Pee Wee Russell and Bud Freeman, who had left Windy City jazz followers in their debt for a lifetime and come to settle in New York.

An attitude, if not a style, was born and prospered. There is an identity to New York jazz at least comparable with that of the New Orleans and Chicago product, perhaps more striking than that of Kansas City. The vivid coloring of the New York music is not alone from jazz, as it comes close to being in the Kansas City picture. It has been so much around and about, like the sidewalks and the lamp posts, as almost to escape notice and elude chronicling. Clearly, however, New York is central to this history: without it, some major jazz causes would have had minor effects, and this music would have been without its constantly experimenting laboratory.

Chapter 14

THE CRASH

The future of the United States looked more than good in 1928; according to the members first of Calvin Coolidge's cabinet and then of Herbert Hoover's, we were entering a "new economic era." The fantasy life of the nation was peopled with millionaires and set in country clubs and great manor houses, and since so many did get rich quick there was no reason why everybody couldn't. But on Tuesday, October 29, 1929, in the course of 16,410,030 transactions, the average prices of 50 leading stocks fell almost 40 points. Thousands who had bought on margin were not able to support their purchases in the unprecedented and frantic unloading of stocks, and they were wiped out. The country was entering a five-year period of deep depression, and although the dreams were of manor houses and country clubs, reality refused to adjust itself to fantasy. Keeping pace with zooming unemployment, the slums grew larger and jazz musicians found themselves without jobs.

The full flush of American fantasy life was not really discovered until the depression. Escape was the order of the day from 1929 to 1934. The detective story, which had done very well from 1926 to 1929, did much better from 1930 to 1934. Sound had been added to motion pictures in 1926, and in 1927 dialogue had been added in Al Jolson's *The Jazz Singer*. In 1932 the three-color process called Technicolor was as much a reality as the sound track. With words and music and color, motion pictures were able successfully to circumvent "problems."

American audiences wanted no part of their troubles when they sank into movie-palace horsehair, nor did they want a music that deserted their narcotized retreats. America wanted the music that was played in the country clubs of its dreams, and it got it.

There had been successful purveyors of country-club music, soft, sometimes sedate, sometimes bouncy, before the depression. Art Hickman gained a large following with that kind of music during the years of the First World War. Isham Jones and George Olsen led such bands, and Paul Whiteman began his career with such an outfit in Hickman's bailiwick, California, in 1919. Vincent Lopez added what seemed to be a virtuoso exploitation of the piano to the festivities; Ted Lewis did business with a battered top hat and a tooth-clenched, insistent question, "Is everybody happy?"; Ben Bernie led his band with a cigar and through his Boardway talk made his audiences feel they were a part of the glamorous life of show business in New York. There was showmanship in these bands and innocuous well-sugared sound, but never so sweet as when Guy Lombardo and Rudy Vallee took over in the first years of the depression.

Guy Lombardo began his career in London, Ontario, where his Italian parents presented him with almost enough brothers to fill out a dance band. He found his first audiences through a Cleveland radio station and built his huge following through radio when he was ensconced a few years later at the Granada Restaurant in Chicago. There was some appeal in the name of the band, the Royal Canadians, a happy bit of nomenclature in the days when H.R.H. the Prince of Wales was almost as popular as His Honor, the princely James J. Walker, Mayor of New York City. There was more appeal in the music itself, a shrewdly mixed anodyne topped with a generous helping of saccharine saxophone. There have been many explanations of the sound of the Lombardo saxes—that the reeds are ingeniously notched by the saxophonists, that a special kind of paper is inserted under the reeds; several disgusted musicians have sug-

gested that the bells of the saxophones are filled with everything from warm milk and melted butter to thick molasses and corn whisky. Guy himself insists that his success comes from his choice of songs, songs whose abounding sweetness or novelty tricks assure their catching on with the public. But the writing for and playing of his saxophones must be credited as the chief causes of his commercial glory. Insensitively sharp and out of tune, yes, but also soft and at least on the edge of mellowness, the Lombardo saxophones effected a change not only in popular taste but in jazz as well. Few bands were untouched by the Lombardo sounds after Guy's opening at the Hotel Roosevelt in New York in 1930. Although they rejected his ricky-ticky beat with distaste and made great fun of his flea-bite cymbal-beat codas, Harlem bands adopted his saxophone voicing almost to a saxophone man. Louis Armstrong did not hesitate to name Guy Lombardo's as one of his favorite bands.

The enormous favor which Rudy Vallee enjoyed after 1929 resulted from his satisfying the same would-be country-club audience that Guy Lombardo serenaded. The Vagabond Lover, as Rudy came to be known, rested with a more conventional merging of violins and saxophones, a gentle joining of related colors that soothed audiences and supplied his megaphone murmurings with a subdued background. Like Lombardo's, Rudy Vallee's success came through his radio broadcasts, and radio saved him later when there was no longer a public clamor for "crooning" and his considerable skill as a *conferencier* could take over. The emphasis he and others put upon his college background at the University of Maine and at Yale was almost justified, for he analyzed his depression audiences and the music they wanted with the cool precision of a good academic mind and the equally cool practicality of a good businessman. Of jazz he said:

> I knew that the vogue for "hot" bands was really appreciated only by musicians and by a few individuals who were interested in "hot" band arrangements and who at places where these bands performed were of a nature to allow this music to work them into a frenzy of dancing. I knew also that to play "hot" music one must have brass. *Although I do enjoy* this so-called "hot" music, when properly rendered, and get as great a kick as any musician out of Red Nichols, Frank Trumbauer, Joe Venuti, Eddie Lang and other masters of that style, I realized that it was over the heads of the vast majority of people who, after all, are those who buy the records and sheet music.

Of the choice and performance of his repertory, he said:

> The clever orchestra leader is he who makes his program up of a few sweet soft tunes, with occasional vocal choruses among the instrumental, followed by a wild peppy tune played ever so softly because *pep* is not *volume* and loud raucous notes have never delighted the ear of anyone.

He kept all of these things in mind when he moved from the Heigh-Ho Club to the Villa Vallee and from the smaller vaudeville circuits to the Palace Theatre and ultimately the Paramount Theatre, "the theater that has always been my goal to appear in, once we had entered into showdom."

As a result of Rudy Vallee's spectacular success, the vocalist became a necessary adjunct of a dance band, even one that was primarily concerned with improvised jazz. At first all dance-band singers imitated Vallee's use of the megaphone, which he painstakingly explained he used only because, "although my voice is very loud when I speak or shout, yet when I use it musically it is not penetrating or strong, and the megaphone simply *projects the sound in the direction* in which I am singing." One of those who adopted the megaphone was Will Osborne, who was helped considerably by Rudy himself. Others, because they were unable to imitate Vallee or because they had singing personalities of their own or, in a few cases, because they had the taste and skill, extended the range of crooning and converted what was essentially an enfeebled and sometimes nasalized singing style into something

closer to the jazz tradition. Such singers were Bing Crosby and Russ Columbo, who in 1931 competed with each other for the public's fancy over the rival CBS and NBC radio networks. The fullness of their baritone voices and the richness of their intuitive untrained musicianship were handsomely employed in the exploitation not only of the plug songs of the moment but also of the tunes which were beginning to become classics in jazz and popular music. Bing had lived and worked with Bix Beiderbecke and the other distinguished musicians of Paul Whiteman's jazz days. Russ had played violin in the Gus Arnheim band at the Cocoanut Grove in Los Angeles when Bing was singing there. Their natural voices were so much alike that at times they were indistinguishable from each other. Their personalities, however, were not the same: the Crosby charm was compounded of an irrepressible wit and a romantic undertone, the collegian's balance of the comic spirit and seriousness; the Columbo enchantment was all romantic to fit his dark attractions, much like those of Rudolph Valentino. Bing Crosby went on to become the most magnetic musical personality America ever had. Russ Columbo died young, when a hunting gun he was cleaning went off accidentally and killed him instantly. The effect of their jazz-inspired singing was to act as a kind of reagent to the dominating treacle of Guy Lombardo and Rudy Vallee in the early thirties.

Ben Pollack arrived in New York at about the same time that Rudy Vallee did, in 1927. Rudy had graduated from Yale; Ben had graduated from Chicago and California jazz, by way of the New Orleans Rhythm Kings and countless dance bands. Gil Rodin joined the first Pollack band in California at the Venice Ballroom when Ben took over Harry Baisden's orchestra; Gil nurtured the Pollack band through its tumultuous Chicago days, bringing Harry and Benny Goodman into the organization and acting as referee in numerous disputes between the two Bens. Pollack himself was responsible for bringing Glenn Miller up and for maintaining a driving Dixieland beat he had developed in his days with Paul Mares,

Leon Rappolo, and George Brunies. He had been one of the first drummers to drop the novelty effects, the cowbells and the gourds and the wood-blocks, to concentrate on keeping the rhythm steady and the beat inspiring. All of Ben Pollack's band benefited from his craft, his extensive and intensive experience, and his good taste. As a result, his Chicago band, at its peak at the Southmoor Ballroom, was a swinging wonder—even without Benny Goodman, who had left to rejoin Art Kassel, with whom he was always sure of enough money and regular work to support his large family. Benny rejoined, after some of Gil Rodin's typical persuasive eloquence, in time to make the first records with the Pollack band. Glenn Miller, who was impressed with the sound of the Roger Wolfe Kahn band, convinced Pollack that the addition of two violins would make an effective ornament for the first sides, and Al Beller, Ben's cousin, was hired along with Victor Young, the lantern-jawed prodigy who rose very quickly as arranger, composer, and leader of record dates, after his short stint with Pollack. Those first two sides were in fact an uninteresting capitulation to Glenn's commercial instinct, but thereafter not a Pollack side was recorded without some fine solo jazz.

Just before the band got to New York, after stays at the Rendezvous and the Black Hawk in Chicago, Benny Goodman, his family obligations once more on his mind, along with his differences with the sturdy little drummer-leader, left again, to join Isham Jones. In New York Gil Rodin again went on the prowl for good musicians and this time came up with two of the players who had impressed him so in the Charles Pierce and McKenzie-Condon recordings, cornetist Jimmy McPartland and saxophonist Bud Freeman. Jimmy remained with Pollack for several years; Bud left after a few months. The quality of the band's personnel, however, remained uniformly high. When Glenn Miller decided that he wanted to play at New York's Paramount Theatre with Paul Ash, who had briefly fronted the Pollack band in Chicago, and wouldn't go to Atlantic City for the band's Million Dollar

Pier engagement, Jack Teagarden was hired. The Pollack musicians were jamming musicians, and they sat in with little bands all over New York. On one of their jaunts around Manhattan Island they heard Jack for the first time, playing with Wingy Manone, with whom he had made the migration to New York from Texas. They decided Teagarden was a must. So was Frank Teschemacher, who was in town between jobs. And Benny Goodman came back again, the lure of New York having overcome his latest reticence to play with Pollack. On that Atlantic City job, the Pollack saxes thus were the three reed giants of the Austin High gang: Benny, Tesch, and Bud. When Gil Rodin had recovered from a tonsillectomy, however, Tesch left the band to go back to Chicago.

The Pollack band was a playing band. Whether at the Million Dollar Pier or at the Park Central Hotel or the Silver Slipper in New York, it had few considerations except those of jazz. The band played all the tunes that Vallee sang and Lombardo mellowed, but with the vitality and the freshness that musicians like Benny Goodman, Jimmy McPartland, and Jack Teagarden could not help bringing even to the sleaziest tunes. When they weren't recording for Victor with their leader, Jack and Benny and Jimmy were making records for Perfect and Cameo under the name of the Whoopee Makers, and for Brunswick with song publisher Irving Mills, who labeled the band organized to exploit his tunes as his Hotsy-Totsy Gang. They also made sides with Jack Pettis, the tenor saxophonist who had been a member of the New Orleans Rhythm Kings with Ben Pollack. Through all these many sides the Chicago organization of jazz sounds obtained; following the practice of the ODJB and the Rhythm Kings, of the various Teschemacher outfits and Bix's little bands, it was each man for himself in the ensemble and all by himself when his solo came up. Without any permanent arranger of Fletcher Henderson's caliber, the Pollack musicians, whether playing with Ben or as a recording collective, relied chiefly on their own large

individual talents. The big band arrangements were simply skeletons to be filled out by the soloists, and so by the most elementary conversion of soloists' phrases to band sections, the Pollack orchestra, and Bob Crosby's band after it, managed to retain all the small Dixieland band flavor with two and three times as many musicians.

The Ben Pollack band developed into the organization Bob Crosby later fronted when swing became the thing, after Benny Goodman and Jimmy McPartland had left. Both musicians quit when they were heavily censured by Pollack for leaving dust on their shoes after a handball game they had played on the Park Central roof just before the nightly show at the hotel. They were replaced by two men Jack Teagarden recommended, his cornetist brother Charlie and clarinetist Matty Matlock, who was then playing with a band in Pittsburgh. Ray Bauduc had come in on drums when Ben decided he wanted only to front the band, because he said he was "sick and tired of having people come up to the band and ask when Ben Pollack's going to come in." Nappy Lamare had been taken out of a small relief band at the Park Central when Dick Morgan, Pollack's original guitarist, quit. Eddie Miller, who had been playing alto with Julie Wintz's band, took over Babe Russin's chair; Russin had been in for a short time in place of the original man in the chair, Larry Binyon, and then decided that, like Glenn Miller, he didn't want to leave New York. So the nucleus of the Bob Crosby band was formed when Ben Pollack went out on the road in 1933. Charlie Spivak and Sterling Bose joined on trumpets, and Joe Harris came in on trombone when the band was playing at the Chicago Chez Paree. After a New England tour the band came back to Billy Rose's huge Casino de Paree, went down to the Hollywood Dinner Club in Galveston, Texas, and ended up at the Cotton Club in Los Angeles, where it broke up on November 1, 1934; Ben made some noises about cutting down the brass section and finally decided that he wanted to settle down in California.

The best arranger Ben Pollack ever had writing for him

was Don Redman. The ex-Henderson alto saxophonist had been with McKinney's Cotton Pickers in Detroit in 1927; in 1928 and the next year he provided a fine batch of manuscripts for Pollack. As few others in the history of jazz, he was able to satisfy the fantasy-minded public's conception of melodious dance music and at the same time to provide jazz musicians with swinging figures upon which to improvise. As few others during the dog days, he kept jazz alive.

When William McKinney asked Don Redman to come out to Detroit in 1927 to take over the musical direction of his band, the Cotton Pickers were best known as a show band. They cut up a great deal and made some stabs at glee-club arrangements but had little in the way of musical distinction. Don took over at the Greystone Ballroom, following the Jean Goldkette band when it went on the road. He brought Bob Escudero (bass, tuba), Cuffey Davidson (trombone), and Prince Robinson (sax) into the band, and added his muscular arranging touch to a library badly in need of reshaping. The showmanship of the band remained a great asset, but it was put on a musical footing.

The earliest records made by McKinney's Cotton Pickers show the band's sharp coming of age under Redman. The fine jazz it was beginning to play is obvious in "Milneberg Joys"; its supply of ballad manuscript from Redman is illustrated by "Cherry." Soloists of great quality were still limited at this point, however, except for the trombone of Claude Jones, Don's own supple efforts on alto and clarinet, and the tasteful, resourceful trumpet of John Nesbitt, who was also an able arranger. When Joe Smith joined, the band assumed importance, ranking with Duke's and Fletcher's. On "Gee Ain't I Good to You" you can hear some typically lovely Joe Smith cornet and a typically simple and charming vocal by Don, and you can appreciate Don's always maturing arranging powers. His scoring for the saxes was growing more colorful, his brass was beginning to sound like the powerhouse sections of the swing bands.

The Cotton Pickers did good business at the Greystone. They did so well, in fact, that when they had to fulfill recording dates with Victor in New York or Camden only Don and Joe Smith were permitted to leave the band. So Don started organizing recording dates in New York under the name of McKinney's Cotton Pickers, and a couple of times as the Chocolate Dandies, featuring such stellar jazzmen as Coleman Hawkins, Benny Carter, Fats Waller, the Dorsey Brothers, and Tesch. He hastily put together arrangements for these men, and some fine records were made. "If I Could Be with You One Hour Tonight" and "Baby, Won't You Please Come Home?" made in 1930, with their lovely sax chorus introductions, illustrate the pattern of the Redman arrangement. Just about always he opened with a chorus by the saxes, prepared the way for the vocal with a trumpet or trombone solo, scored some easy riffs back of the singer, and either carried the singer to the end of the arrangement or climaxed the vocal with a clean rideout ensemble chorus. "Rocky Road," one of the best of the McKinney records, departs interestingly from this pattern. Like "I Want a Little Girl," it is a superb showcase for the talented trumpet of Joe Smith, who plays on this side in his vaunted growl style. Redman himself sings one of his most appealing vocals and plays a fine alto chorus. The whole gets a fine beat, building to its key saxophone chorus after the middle vocal. There are beautiful or provocative moments on almost every McKinney record made under Redman's musical direction. He tried out every sort of scoring, soloists against one or two or three sections, guitar introductions, celeste interludes, straight ballads or ballads with a spirited rhythmic background. Don himself played and sang his high-pitched, infectious vocals just often enough to be marked as an all-around musician of distinction. As a result of such scoring and playing, the forceful McKinney Cotton Pickers of 1928 to early 1931 were to all who heard them at the Greystone in Detroit, or on records, an inspired band.

While at the Greystone with McKinney, from 1927 to

1929, Don was also doing some arranging for the Ben Pollack and Louis Armstrong bands and some recording with the latter organization in Chicago. Don made a routine of traveling to the Windy City once every week or so to bring in a new arrangement for Pollack and to rehearse it with the band when it was in town; after several hours with Pollack he would rush over to work with Louis at the Savoy Ballroom, and then to record with the seven-piece Armstrong Savoy Ballroom Five. Louis recorded three originals of Don's, "Save It, Pretty Mama," "Heah Me Talkin' to Ya" and "No One Else but You."

Since he was doing all this work for other leaders, Don decided in 1931 that he wanted his own band. A man of quick decision, he picked himself and his horn up and left McKinney forever; he also left behind him a fine home in Detroit. The Cotton Pickers never again sounded so good, even during their brief moment under the recording supervision of Benny Carter.

For the nucleus of his new band Don took over the Horace Henderson orchestra. He had added to it several times in several sections by the time he opened at Connie's Inn for his first engagement in October 1931. When he made his first sides in September and October, the band was an impressive organization, showing the subtleties and size of Redman's growth as arranger and leader. These initial sides were the bizarre "Chant of the Weed," the powerful "Shakin' the African," and the delightful "I Heard" and "Trouble, Why Pick on Me." Few of the subsequent records by the Redman band ever eclipsed the popularity and success of "Chant of the Weed" and "I Heard," but almost all of Don's recorded work achieved respect and admiration among fellow musicians, and he continued to produce work of even quality. The saxophone choruses remained experimental, distinguished by difficult but delightful unison and harmonized voicings.

Soon after its formation the band played several weeks of the Chipso air commercial with the Mills Brothers and then toured the country as part of the Mills Brothers unit.

Harlan Lattimore was Don's vocalist from 1931 through 1935 and made a few appearances later on. Lattimore was an excellent baritone; his warmth and phrasing, mixed with Bing Crosby's singing manner, set the style that has since become accepted for all male singers with a band that has any jazz feeling. Harlan projected his feeling with taste and never muffed the meaning of words or music to exhibit one of his vocal elaborations. "Underneath the Harlem Moon," "Tea for Two," "If It's True," "Lazybones," and "Lonely Cabin" were his hits. On them you hear his languorous vibrato articulated in handsome masculine tones.

The chief soloist of the Redman band, outside of Don himself, was Benny Morton. His soulful trombone and flow of ideas dominated record after record made by Redman until 1937. His sweet tone and subdued playing complemented the style of Sidney DeParis on trumpet excellently. Bob Carroll on tenor, Claude Jones on trombone, Shirley Clay on trumpet, Edward Inge on alto, and Horace Henderson and Don Kirkpatrick on piano were other soloistic assets of the band.

Don was reunited with Ben Pollack when they both played Billy Rose's theater-restaurant, the Casino de Paree, in 1934. By then the Redman band had seen its best years; it retired almost exclusively to theaters, with one last year at the downtown Connie's Inn that later became the Cotton Club, and some one-nighters. But Don's writing remained consistent. He developed his swing choirs, the first to sing "jive" lyrics against the straight background of standard songs ("Stormy Weather," "Exactly Like You," "Sunny Side of the Street," "The Man on the Flying Trapeze") with Benny Morton supplying the straight backgrounds on trombone. A short session with the short-lived Variety label of Irving Mills produced the best of his swing choir work, and some work before and afterward for Vocalion also showed the inspired Redman arranging pen at work. In its last two years, 1938 and 1939, and into part of 1940, his band recorded for Victor and Bluebird, showing off fewer soloists, more and