



NEW BLACK EAGLE JAZZ BAND

INTERNET HAND DODGER

INTERNET HAND DODGER #4

October 2009

INTRODUCTION

Finally, we have our fourth newsletter or, as we prefer to call it, Hand Dodger. We hope you enjoy the format and the content and we welcome suggestions for future content – we can cover anything except the deep, dark family secrets of band members. Please note that this Hand Dodger will be published every 7th Thursday or so, sometimes! Please note the sometime!

UPCOMING SCHEDULE

At present we are signing up gigs for 2010 and if any of you have any suggestions for a concert in your area we would love to hear from you. We are already committed to perform at the Amazing Things Art Center in Framingham, MA in late January for a Mardis Gras dance in early February in South Weymouth, MA; at the Simple Things Coffee House in Nashua, NH in mid May at the Mount Gretna Playhouse in early August; for the Falmouth Historical Society in Late July and at the Fruitlands Museum in Harvard, MA in late August.

We continue to play at J.P. O'Hanlon's Irish pub on the second Thursday of each month. Details of time, location and contact information are posted on our web site or use this link – <http://www.jpohanlons.com/>

As our schedule for 2010 fills out details will be posted to our web page.

RECENT PERFORMANCES

We have just returned from playing at the Arizona Classic Jazz Festival and we featured Hal Smith on drums and Bob Sundstrom on Banjo – neither Pam nor Peter were able to make the trip. It was a beautifully run festival, they really looked after the musicians and we were videotaped and with any luck expect to have a DVD available shortly.

We have had our usual busy summer with return concerts at Deertrees Theater and Boothbay Opera House in Maine; our 30th appearance at the Mount Gretna Playhouse in Pennsylvania; Music Mountain in Connecticut; and in Massachusetts at Maudslay State Park, The Falmouth Historical Society, the Homegrown Coffee House and the South Shore Music Conservatory.

Sherborn Inn, XXth September – We had a good crowd and many old friends from the Sticky Wicket days showed up

Private Party, Chilton Club, Boston – 9th October 2009 – This was an unusual evening playing for the 50th Anniversary of a couple who used to come hear us at the Stick Wicket – way back. We had to limit ourselves to 5 pieces because of space limitations and so we were in a Hot Five format. John Clark was on Clarinet and Soprano Sax and held up his end with ease.

Just before we got to play it was explained to us that we would be playing “When I’m Sixty-Four” behind a bunch of grandchildren. I figured out a key in which to play the number. The good news was that the kids found the key I had chosen to be just right. We had two rehearsals before the gig started and the kids did it differently each time.

PROJECTS UNDERWAY

Tony and Peter have been working away reissuing our older LPs on CD with additional tracks from the same recording sessions. CLASSIC JAZZ is now available and will be followed by FANTASIES and ON THE ROAD as soon as we can find and restore the original tapes. If you were to see the stuff in Peter’s basement you would have a much better idea of the difficulties that we face in reissuing these old recordings.

Tony has been speaking to Bob Erdos of Stomp Off Records and has a verbal agreement to enable us to reissue some of our LP recordings on the Stomp Off label. Tony is hot on the trail of the original session tapes and will report any progress in the next Hand Dodger.

We are also gathering material for a 40th Anniversary CD set and have already obtained source material and permissions to include tracks from the Breda Jazz Festivals of 1976 and 1980. We also have our hands on the master tape for the session recorded at the Central City Jazz Festival back in the 1970s. The search continues!

We are finding so much good material that we may issue another CD in the “*On The Road*” series.

RECENT CD RELEASES

Limited Edition CDs

Our latest Limited Edition reissue is **CLASSIC JAZZ** which was originally issued as an LP by Philips of Eindhoven, Netherlands back in the late 1970s. It featured sides recorded at WGBH (PBS) studios in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1976 and 1978 and was only printed once - the deal with Philips was for just one pressing. We have managed to find the original master tapes, had them baked to rescue them and transferred to digital media.

The resultant CD features all the original tracks plus 5 additional tracks from the original sessions – *Working Man Blues*, *Skeleton In The Closet*, *Rent Party Blues*, *Love Songs Of The Nile* and *Shake It & Break It*. All tracks feature the original New Black Eagle Jazz Band – we hope you enjoy it as much as we enjoyed making it.



NOTHING BUT THE BLUES – the much delayed blues recording has finally hit the streets.

This was a much delayed project, mainly due to Tony’s wife being ill, but we finally pulled it together. We were very pleased to have Duke Robillard as a guest on acoustic guitar for five of the selections. The CD includes – *Yellow Dog Blues*, *Mahogany Hall Stomp*, *Misty Morning*, *When The Sun Goes Down* and others.

We would like to thank Butch Thompson who wrote the liner notes and also Bert Thompson who contributed this review of the CD.

CD REVIEW

by Bert Thompson

NEW BLACK EAGLE JAZZ BAND—NOTHING BUT THE BLUES (OWN LABEL: BE(CD)2013). Playing time: 62m. 51s.

Misty Morning (b); Mahogany Hall Stomp (b); Riverside Blues (a); Sonora’s Blues (c); Choo Choo Ch’Boogie† (a); Tia Juana Man (b); When the Sun Goes Down* (b); Don’t Start No Stuff* (a); Sportin’ Life‡ (d); Yellow Dog Blues (a); Nothing Blues* (e); Steal Away (a); KC Moan* (a); Joe Avery’s Piece (a).

Recorded in Concord, Massachusetts, Apr. 26, 2009.

Personnel: (a) Tony Pringle, cornet, vocal*; Bill Novick, clarinet, alto sax, vocal†; Stan Vincent, trombone; Bob Pilsbury, piano, vocal‡; Peter Bullis, banjo; Barry Bockus, string bass; Bill Reynolds, drums.

(b) as (a) but Duke Robillard, guitar, replaces Bullis.

(c) Novick, clarinet, and Pilsbury, piano.

(d) Pilsbury, piano; Pringle, cornet; Robillard, guitar.

(e) as (a) plus Robillard, guitar.

Like “jazz,” the term “blues” does not admit of a single, precise, concise definition. Contrary to what some people believe, blues are not necessarily slow and mournful; as Billie Holiday said in an introduction to a blues number she was about to sing, “There are sad blues and there are happy blues.” One can also add that there are slow blues and fast blues—and even medium tempo blues. There are so-called “classic” 12-bar blues and the perhaps more often encountered 16-bar blues (but interestingly these proportions are reversed on this album as ten of the fourteen tunes are 12-bar blues). The New Black Eagles embrace all of these variations on this thematic album dedicated to the blues. (There was a previous one for “gospels.” Will “country” be next?)

For good measure the band also engaged the services of Duke Robillard, the blues guitarist from Rhode Island, who is well known in blues circles as leader of several bands, including Roomful of Blues, and member of some others. He has recorded over 60 albums, as soloist and as leader of his own bands and with other bands and artists, many of these albums being on the Rounder and Stony Plain labels. All of the other members are, to use Condon’s term, the “usual suspects,” except for Reynolds’ substituting for Pameijer on drums. However, since he has subbed on numerous other occasions, he fills in seamlessly.

The opening track, Ellington’s Misty Morning, a medium tempo blues, immediately sets the tone. The pulse of the rhythm section is awesome. Bockus’ string bass and Robillard’s chording on acoustic guitar (which he plays throughout the CD), coupled with Pilsbury’s piano and Reynolds’ subtle drumming provide a solid platform for the front line. The piece opens with two ensemble choruses, followed by muted cornet and clarinet solos. Robillard then plays a couple of masterful single string choruses, followed by piano, and then the ensemble out-choruses, which end with a concise retard.

After this most satisfying opening, the listener is then regaled for the rest of the 60-odd minutes with a musical feast. As the tune list shows, there are those numbers that are familiar and those that are less so, among the latter being Sonora’s Blues, an original by Billy Novick, and Nothing Blues, a composition by my fellow Scot, the late clarinetist Sandy Brown. On this recording of this tune, a cooker, Robillard is joined by Bullis on banjo, making a 5-man rhythm section,

which rocks behind the front line and Pringle's vocal. Don't Start No Stuff may look unfamiliar, but on hearing it one will recognize Shake That Thing—which, however, has different lyrics. Another seldom-heard piece is the Blythe/Dodds composition Steal Away, which is not to be confused with the spiritual Steal Away [Home to Jesus].

Butch Thompson has contributed the useful liner notes we have come to expect from him. He presents some interesting insights on the blues and the band's approach to them, as well as data on each of the tunes on the album. To sum up, this is a CD that will appeal to all traditional jazz aficionados.

Ordering information can be found at the band's web site: www.black eagles.com. It may also be available from specialist dealers.

For those of you who might like to view a short video from the blues recording session follow the link below to You Tube. The recording session was recorded in Ruth Schwab's Wunderbar Bar in Concord, Massachusetts. The room was originally intended as a recording studio, but after her husband passed away Ruth had it converted to be a bar. Wunderbar!

We had invited Ron L'Herault to the recording session to take some photos for used with the CD packaging and found he had also shot a video of us recording Nothing Blues. The sound was not good, but Tony managed to substitute the sound from the CD track and uploaded the completed video to You Tube. It is well worth a viewing – we think!

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KmdWA_7qNg4

While you are at You Tube you will notice that there are quite a few other videos of us on You Tube. Enjoy!

BAND MEMBER MEMOIRS

We thought it would be of interest to some readers of our newsletter to learn how each of us got started playing jazz. After we exhaust this vein we will offer other memories or insights gained from our musical experiences, and maybe those some of our fans, over the years.

Our first two offerings were from Tony Pringle and Peter Bullis respectively, and now, finally, we have Bob Pilsbury's epic complete with pictures.

Bob Pilsbury – My Jazz Years Before The Black Eagles

To this day when people at a NBEJB EVENT say to me, yeah, but what are you doing in real life, I most always reply this is my real life - playing music.

I remember playing the piano at age 5. The first piece I played was called Robin in a Cherry Tree; Do Re Me Fa So Do Re Me Fa So So Do. When I became six I drove my parents crazy by doing all kinds of humming with a ziz-a-z'z sound. At seven, I started taking piano lessons in the Newton (Massachusetts) Public School System. At age eight, I started private lessons with J. Lillian Vandevere. I studied with her for seven years learning theory and ear training. She had plays at the end of each year - I was usually the captain of the ship or whatever.

My family would go to Maine for the summer starting when I was a baby. During these summers, I was treated to a great deal of music from my father, my Aunt Alice and my cousin Jack. Occasionally my uncle Vic and a neighbor would join in. It was all piano with some vocals, most notably from my cousin Jean. What a joy!! This took place every summer. I found out later that cousin Jack had played on cruise ships in the summer months when he was a student at Dartmouth. He played with The Barbary Coast, a large student orchestra. He had an enormous stretch with his left hand and could reach a twelfth without rocking and rolling.

At age ten I started listening to some 78 recordings, especially one from my surrogate Auntie Mill, Jingle Bells by Fats Waller. I have never forgotten it; it was so much fun. I did not notice his tremendous technique, but I was more concentrated on him being a funny man. At age thirteen, I taught myself how to play the clarinet and fairly soon, I was playing in the Newton School band system with a guy named Blake Tennent. Swing music was the popular music back then and I played clarinet in Blake's band and later with Dick Sely. At age fifteen, I studied with a guy named Joe Delelis who taught me Grieg's Piano Concerto in A Minor.

I continued playing on saxophone and clarinet in the high school band. At age sixteen, I had my own band, The Victorians. The drummer was Johnny Lonsbury who died of cancer, but I will never forget that he had a recording of I Can't Believe that You're in Love with Me by the Chocolate Dandies with Colman Hawkins, Roy Eldridge and Benny Carter who played such a beautiful unforgettable chorus. I also started taking popular piano lessons from Phil Saltman. He had his own system of teaching and taught me to improvise. At age seventeen, I graduated from Newton High School and enrolled at Dartmouth College. I auditioned for THE BARBARY COAST ORCHESTRA, (that cousin Jack played in) not making it on piano, but on saxophone because I knew how to play the jumping way the saxophones played on Basie's One O'Clock Jump even though I didn't know all the notes on the instrument.

One semester into my freshman year at Dartmouth, I was drafted into the Army in March of 1945 and went to the Philippines where I organized a 58 piece army

marching band from scratch using Filipino scouts. We played for then General Dwight Eisenhower. I can still see him in my minds eye. When I came back to Dartmouth College at age twenty-one, I joined three other men - Windy Winship (sax and clarinet), Al Kate (trombone) and Dick Wright (trumpet) and had the joy of playing small band ensemble jazz with them. I listened to many V discs which featured big band orchestras and small Dixieland or swing groups. As time went on I reorganized the other big band at Dartmouth – an eleven piece group named THE GREEN COLLEGIANS and I also founded a six piece Dixieland band named THE SULTANS. Both bands traveled weekends to many colleges in the New England area.



In the summer of my sophomore year, I continued as a cocktail type piano player in the bar of the SQUAW MOUNTAIN INN, Greenville Junction, Maine. There was a beautiful small waterfall in the bar and I used a small chord book and my memory to entertain patron requests. The summer of my junior year brought me

to THE TWIN MOUNTAIN HOUSE in New Hampshire, where I played solo piano in the lounge. I also played with two musicians from the University of New Hampshire and played in two different Trios with them. One was a concert group with violin and cello. The other was a dance band with saxophone (the violinist) and bass (the cellist). I continued to learn a lot about music, improvising and entertainment.

As I learned about and listened to more of the recorded evidence of all the jazz pianists, I became aware that my dad's style sounded like Earl Father Hines. I finally said to him, your piano playing sounds so much like Father Hines, he replied, Who is he? He wasn't kidding like he used to; he just was not a self-conscious jazz musician.



When I graduated from Dartmouth College, (in 1950) I went to The Prompton Lakes in New Jersey and there I played with Frank Gilroy, a trumpeter, at ZUKE'S RESTAURANT. The other musicians were Rusty Jackman on trombone, Ham Carson on clarinet and Tom Ruggles on drums. Frank Gilroy eventually wrote a play that won a Pulitzer Prize and later on he wrote a cult movie called THE GIG in which summering college boys played along with pros at a summer resort in the Catskills and exposed the relationships between musicians, management, staff and guests.

In the fall of 1950, I was called back into the army and was sent to Korea as a first lieutenant. After fulfilling my duties in Korea, I lived for a brief spell in New

York City where I played at the THREE DEUCES, sat in and played a set for Don Frye at Jimmy Ryans. I listened to Jimmy Archey's Band, a great band with Dick Wellstood on piano. I played a lot with Red Allen. Later he came to a club, here in Boston, called the SAVOY CAFE where I had taken my first wife on a date; was she impressed after Red greeted me effusively !!



Another jazz club in New York was THE PLAZA, run by Jack Crystal who also owned the Commodore Music Record Store and is the father of Billy Crystal. Jack told me never become a musician because it doesn't pay enough. One of my great remembrances of going to The Plaza was that most of the time Jack would say five dollars please but then there was the one time that Willy the Lion didn't show. Jack then said, Bob, good to see you. If you can play for Willy tonight I'll pay you ten dollars. I, of course, jumped at that opportunity. He didn't know I would have done it for nothing (not now but then). It was really a great, great experience. I have forgotten a lot of the places I played with many guys - Hank Lawson, Big Sid Catlett, Hot Lips Page, Eddie Barefield, Cozy Cole, and Jimmy Crawford, the drummer with the Jimmy Lunceford band back in the 30's. When I came back from Korea, he jumped across a big table and put his arms around me and said man, you're home safe. Just one of the many experiences that are so earth shaking that you never forget.

I'd like to back track a bit to write a little about various recordings reed man Ham Carson and I did while playing in New York City and what a great time that was while I was still in the army after I came back from Korea. We recorded for the Record Changer label; the tune was Clarinet Marmalade. In addition to Ham and

me, the others on the recording were Rusty Jackman (trombone) and Bob Rickstad (drums).

After final discharge from the army I joined Leroy Parkins' EXCALIBER JAZZ BAND at THE SOUTHWARD INN at Orleans, on Cape Cod.. At first there was myself, Leroy Parkins on clarinet, bass sax and flute, drummer Al Ezer, and Jim Wheaton, a trumpet player from Dartmouth College, who also played bass. The next three summers the EJB had myself on piano, Frank Gallagher who played with the Boston Pops on bass, Tommy Benford (who played and recorded with Jelly Roll Morton) on drums, Dick Wetmore on cornet and Cas Brosky on trombone. Dick's real instrument was violin. When Dick died about five years ago, there was a great moment of sadness for me because he was a wonderful friend and a great musician, On trombone was Cas Brosky whom I later played with in more bands than anyone else (Mel Dorfman's All Stars, The Dick Creedon Band, Leroy Parkins' Excaliber Jazz Band and as a substitute for Stan Vincent in The New Black Eagle Jazz Band). Cas even wrote out for a Belgian trombone player (and also played) Stan's solo chorus on the NBEJB's recording of Keyhole Blues.

Later Leroy Parkins got a job in New York City, and I took the whole band to another venue, the SANDY POND in Yarmouth - on Cape Cod. The name changed to the FOG CUTTERS. The only substitute was on bass - I hired a seventeen year old kid named Roger Kellaway who was the older brother of one of my piano students. Roger, of course, is best remembered as the composer of TV's ALL IN THE FAMILY theme song. We had a great time that summer - we had the customers literally hanging from the rafters. Starting in the fall, I became heavily involved with the music business in Boston.

We now proceed to the decade that is sort of like the sixties (in my lexicon from 1958 through 1971). It was in 1958 I stopped playing steadily with the Excalibur Jazz Band doing only a couple of TV appearances from 1958 through 1963. I joined MEL DORFMAN and his ALL STARS (All Stars is a way of saying you can hire anybody you want to hire so we don't have to name all the other band members). There were two trombone players at different times - Cas Brosky and Joe Fine - Dick Wetmore played the cornet all the time there and my wonderful friend Don Kenny was on Bass. I worked with him a great deal from 1952-2002. Through the years 1973-2003, he played a lot with The Black Eagles.

In addition to the preceding, there are two other places in which I had the great pleasure of making music: a restaurant in Duxbury (MA) and LENNIES ON THE TURNPIKE in Danvers (MA). In Duxbury, I played solo piano from 1961 through 1971 for two different owners; the first one was Bob Woods at MARY HACKETT'S REATAURANT After about a year or so, Bob Woods died and David Wells bought the restaurant and changed the name to FIDDLERS GREEN. He

called me up and said, I want you to play at my restaurant - the customers are all asking for you. I could not refuse and the job occasionally featured special guests like Bobby Hackett and Edmund Hall.

I even spent time playing with a band at a club in Boston's Combat Zone - IZZY ORT'S Golden Nuggett - enough said about that. I also found time over several years to attend classes at the New England Conservatory of Music.

In 1962 I began playing a couple of solo weekends at The VILLAGE in Danvers. I played there probably for a couple of months, and then leader Dick Creedon asked me to join his wonderful band there. Dick was on cornet, Cas Brosky on trombone, Stan Monteiro on saxophone and clarinet, Wally Livingston on bass and Dave Markel on drums. That band played on Friday and Saturday nights at The VILLAGE GREEN and played a lot of Dixieland music mainly for dancing. It was one hell of a good band. When the Village Green stopped hiring our band in 1971, people in the audience said there would never be a band like this one to which I replied, oh yes there will. I didn't know then that I was really talking about The NEW BLACK EAGLE JAZZ BAND. It was Dick's policy to hire special guests like Pee Wee Russell, Vic Dickerson, Bobby Hackett and many others.

Before I conclude the recitation of my pre-Black Eagle years, I must write about Mae Arnette and Jimmy Rushing. I met Mae through clarinetist Stan Monteiro. She was a great blues singer and entertainer. Her blues singing was authentic and gutsy. I did several concerts backing her. Most important, I played solo piano at a party celebrating a significant birthday. I happened to be the only white at the party. One of the guests said, for a fey cat you play the blackest piano. I first heard Jimmy Rushing with Count Basie way back in 1942 when I skipped school to hear him with the Basie Band. I remember him singing Mr. Five by Five. In 1960 I started a five year joy-filled once-a-year-week as his Boston piano player along with Stan Monteiro (reeds), Allan Dawson (drums) and Tony Eira (bass). What a privilege! Sometime I'll fill you in on how my ex-wife (Ruth Pillsbury) got me the gig. I'm forever grateful to her for that.

Oh yes, during the late Sixties, I attended Harvard University and obtained a Master's Degree in Psychology and became a practicing psychologist. Even with this degree and a practice, I still prefer to refer to myself as a musician. My specialty is substance abuse and group relationships and dynamics. I guess I can now say that as a musician, I am a pretty good psychologist.

In the late summer of 1971, I played at a country club in Manchester-by-the-Sea Massachusetts with a pickup band that also included tubaist Eli Newberger who on the very next day related to the NBEJB that I was the man to hold the piano chair in the newly formed NEW BLACK EAGLE JAZZ BAND. I knew most other members in the NBEJB and a rehearsal was scheduled for an audition. A conflict

arose, in the form of a NBEJB gig on board the Peter Stuyvesant moored at Anthony's Pier 4 Restaurant on Boston Harbor. The rest is history. Almost.

LOOKING BACK

Back in 1992 We were booked to appear at Phil & Lee Carroll's Atlanta Jazz Party and needed a bass player. Peter discovered that both Bob Haggart and Milt Hinton would be there. Peter called Milt first to see if he would play half of our sets. Milt replied that he would be happy to play all of our sets and so it was arranged.

The music was great the whole weekend. Milt was such a professional turning his hand to New Orleans material with ease and also having a good time. What a player and what a gentleman! We were also fortunate to have our friend Butch Thompson present at the festival and he joined the band for a set much to our pleasure and that of the audience. Butch happens to be one of our favorite clarinet players.



The high point was when Milt called out to take a solo on one of the New Orleans style tunes. For the first chorus he slapped every note, on the second he double slapped the notes and, after calling for another chorus, he triple slapped the bass. The crowd was on its feet and the applause was deafening. What a trip!

We also came by a cassette recording of the session by John and Mary Etta Bitter and had permission from Milt's estate to issue a CD. The quality of the recording was not really up to standard, but the music itself was fantastic and playing it always brings back memories of a wonderful experience.

The CD can be had for a special price when ordering with other NBEJB CDs.



FINAL COMMENTS

Well there it is. We are not sure that we have anything to add at this time. The next Hand Dodger will come in early spring of 2010 and we will publish our 2010 schedule and any updates on our various projects.

We have also started a Facebook page for the band. At the moment it is pretty slim, but fans can post photos or comments and once we get used to the whole idea we will try to be interactive with folks who post stuff. It's a learning experience. Tony says don't expect Twitter support.

BAND CONTACT INFORMATION

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A list of our currently available recordings can be found at -

<http://www.black eagles.com/cgi-bin/online-orderform.asp>

Samples of our music can be heard at –

<http://www.black eagles.com/downloads.html>