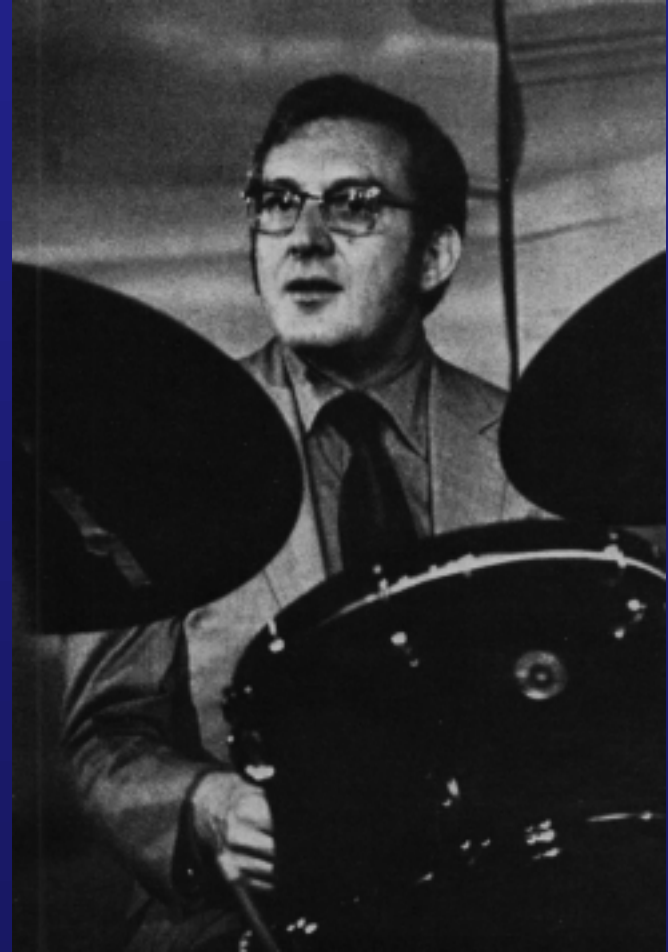
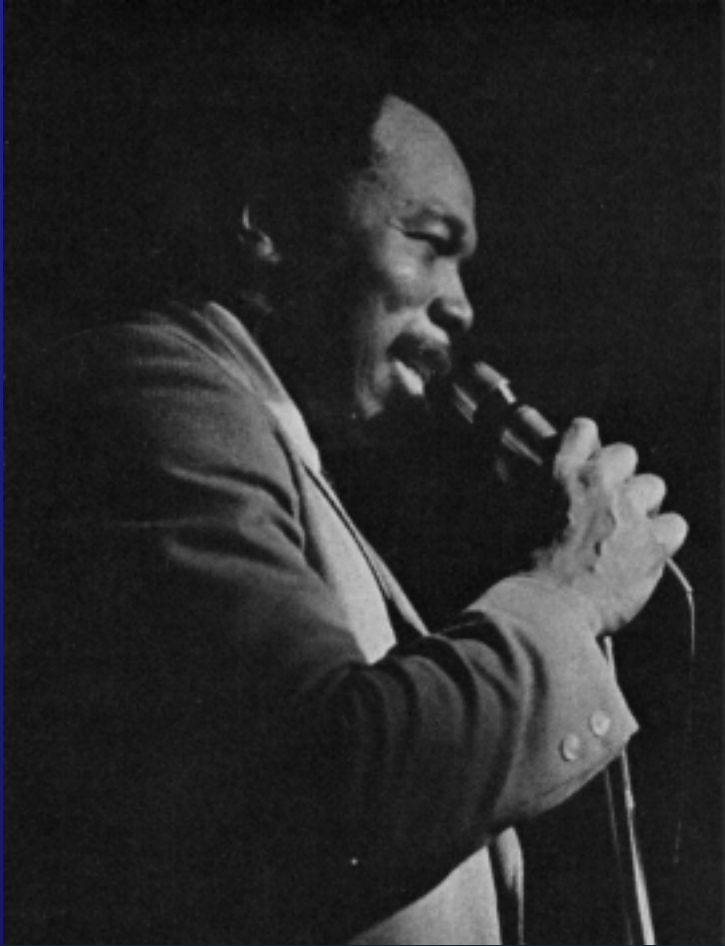


Thad Jones and Mel Lewis



Thad Jones and Mel Lewis

We're just two lucky guys

As co-leaders of this band, would you say it had a special significance at the present time?

Jones: Well, there really is no particular significance attached to the band, other than the fact that we just want to play good music for people, and play it as well as we know how. We want to present our music to the people, and we hope they enjoy it as much as we enjoy playing it for them. That would have to be it, and I'm sure Mel will agree with me on that.

Lewis: Yes—we're all men that have been in the music business a long time; we've all been on the road with other bands, and have done a lot of nice things in the past, work-

ing for other people. We've—as they say. . .

Jones: We've paid our dues.

Lewis: And we all came to New York, settled down, and fell into the studio situation. All of a sudden we've realised that life is getting shorter, and we never have stopped wanting to play.

Jones: To play good—and even better than good. Just to continually do better all the time, and improve upon whatever performances we've given with our past associates.

Lewis: Above all, we want to play; for the rest of our lives, actually. It's something you never want to stop doing. And the only way something like that can be done is: somebody has to take the bull by the horns. That's what Thad and I did; and we

grabbed all our friends—people we love, admire and respect as musicians, that we like to play with. We said: “Come on; you come with us, you know.

Jones: But you know what? I have to sort of embellish that. We weren't all friends, in the beginning. We were acquaintances who respected each other as individuals and musicians. The friendship came through our association together with our band. And it developed into such a beautiful, strong thing.

Lewis: This is really a friendly band, actually. Everybody's become quite attached to each other. There's no separation of several guys here and several guys there; everybody's in it together and sort of hangs with each

other. It's a togetherness band. But they're all men.

Jones: That's first; if they weren't men, they wouldn't be able to perform the way they do on their instruments, or the way they do socially.

Lewis: We like to feel that this band represents musical maturity. Each man knows what's happening; he's paid his dues, he's learned, and he's reached a certain point. Of course, there's no such thing as ever knowing it all; you're always learning. But every man is a master in his own right; he knows his job. And that's so important today.

Jones Knowledge by itself is a beautiful thing, but there has to be that additional factor of accumulation. The knowledge that you have means nothing unless you can constantly add to it; otherwise it'll stagnate and just remain dormant. This is the way the guys are, in our band.

It sounds like we're bragging, doesn't it?

Lewis: Well, we are bragging, in a way.

Jones: Oh, these guys are so beautiful. You wouldn't believe it. I stand behind what I say: this is the most beautiful bunch of men that I've ever been associated with in my life. Without a shadow of a doubt.

Lewis: I would say the same thing.

Jones: This takes in everything that we've talked about, or want to talk about. Everything that we want to do and have done. It's fantastic.

Lewis: I don't think any two guys could be as lucky as Thad and I, as far as having something that you can be proud of till your dying day. The kind of thing you dream about. And most people would never attempt it, because they'd figure: "Oh, it couldn't happen." But it can. We've proved it—to ourselves, anyway. If somebody else doesn't believe it, it

doesn't matter; we know it, and we're two of the happiest guys in the world right now.

Jones: We've both been sidemen in other bands for practically all of our musical lives; we've never really done the things that we wanted to do as individuals. When you play with somebody else, you always try to fit that particular mould, to give what is in you to give within whatever's going on. I worked for that band-leader; I gave him what he wanted. This is the type of attitude that I've come to expect; otherwise you'll never be able to give one hundred per cent of you. And any band must do this, in order to be an orchestra, to play as one.

Lewis: What makes it nice, too, for the fellows that are with us is that they do it automatically. They're conforming to us, like we always tried our best to please the person we worked for and to do what they had

in mind. But to do what we have in mind isn't taking as much effort from the men we have in the band, because we know that they happen to do these things. In other words, they're doing what they really want to do. So they don't have to bend that far—or to bend at all, actually.

Jones: Every concept that we have in mind fits them as individuals, and also as people that play collectively as sections. We're very compatible.

Lewis: Like our lead trumpet; Snooky's a founder member. He's our man.

Jones: He's only the greatest first trumpet player in the world.

Lewis: But he already plays the way we want. He doesn't have to try to play that way; he's our favourite. And Al is the greatest back-up man for Snooky; you couldn't want a better one.

Jones: You couldn't *find* better.

Lewis: The same goes for Jerome, the lead alto. They all play our way.

Jones: These are our idols, the people we've wanted to hear work together as soloists and section-men for all these years.

Lewis: And they in turn are playing, in the kind of music that Thad writes, just what they like most.

Jones: Yet I never write anything to fit any particular person. All they do is interpret the music their way, and their way will fit the concept of the band. Whatever they want to play is beautiful. If the adjustment must be made on the rest of the band's parts, then that will be made. Or if the soloist's part must be adjusted, that will be done. With no sweat. It's as easy as that. That's what I mean by compatibility.

Lewis: As you've probably noticed, the rhythm section adjusts to each soloist. We never do anything behind anybody that would be uncom-

fortable for him. Every soloist in this band plays differently, as well as marvellously, and in our backgrounds we get into different grooves behind the various guys.

And Thad is part of our rhythm section, too. You know, he conducts the rhythm section in such a way, when he hears some patterns that'll fit beautifully behind what a guy is playing, he'll signal; so the three of us just open up our eyes and watch him. Oh, sometimes we get all messed up, and we laugh. We have so much fun, just trying to come up with something new each time, that'll give the soloist a good boot just at the right time.

No arrangement is ever the same twice; it's a different version every time we play it.

Jones: That's the beauty of the whole thing, because we don't have to do it the same way every time. We can always change it, because

Mel is such a superb musician. As a drummer, he's a horn player and a section player, in that he knows how to construct, to form and to mould things into a pattern. And this is so helpful in what I'm trying to do out there. In fact, we sort of give each other little eye signals. He'll drop an eye on me every now and then, and I know he's saying: "Well, that won't work."

Lewis: He popped one on me to-night. I couldn't fall into it, and I was trying.

Jones: It cracks us up every time it happens, because we know that we tried to get it and that time it didn't work. Next time. . .

Lewis: It'll happen. We don't know when we're going to try it again, but we'll make it next time. It's always a laugh: "I just can't find it—forgive me. I'll go along the way I'm going; I can't fall into, that's all." But better we have fun trying, though.

So you'd say that the band constitutes a fruition of all our earlier experiences. As well as knowing how to run a band, you know how not to run a band.

Jones: Well, we haven't turned our back on anything.

Lewis: We're learning all the time, and I think now we both realise what some of the people we worked for went through. We also know, having been sidemen for them, that we have our own ideas on, say, their approach to the musicians. But then again, times were a little different then. Things have changed since Thad and I got off the road. It's not the same situation in today's music scene. Back in those days we were on the road every night, playing mostly dances—and we were in jazz bands.

Jones: Yes, we did a fantastic amount of one-nighters. This

doesn't necessarily have to be a touring band, although it is at the moment. Most of the year it isn't—but we'd love it to be. I love travel, and I think a band really gets itself together on the road.

Lewis: But I've got to emphasise one thing here. We are not a rehearsal band. We're an organised, living, working band. We don't even rehearse; we play every week.

Jones: We have never been a rehearsal band. The band wasn't formed just to rehearse. This is a point we've discussed many times.

Lewis: We were tagged with that in the beginning, because that's what we were thought to be. Naturally, when we first organised four years ago, all we did was rehearse. But, actually, we only had four rehearsals and then we went to work, and the band has been working ever since.

Jones: Six rehearsals.

Lewis: All right, six—I take it back. Still, you have to rehearse before you start. Now we rehearse very rarely—only when we have new music.

Jones: We used to call midnight rehearsals—and nobody missed.

Lewis Everybody'd be there. They'd be putting in their whole day at work; they finished rehearsing at four or five in the morning, got

home at six and had to be back in their studio jobs by nine or ten a.m. And it wouldn't matter to them at all.

Crescendo Vol.8, No. 3, P 20, Oct. 1969

Our happy band by **THAD JONES...**

The band is really sounding at its best now, I think, because we've maintained this actual personnel for more than a year now; so we've all sorta melded together. The communication is running much stronger now, the sound is big, and all the cats in the band like working together.

As for the reports of our going full-time—well, in actuality, the band always has been a full-time proposition. But lately we've changed agencies, and our new agent has gone all out one hundred per cent to get the band bookings. So far he's done just a magnificent job. On this particular trip, for instance, we will have been working on the Continent and in Great Britain for a total of five weeks and one day. And

that's a very extended tour for a big band; also our longest stay in Europe.

Out of that, we're doing three weeks here in London—the extra week at Ronnie's being due to the Isle of Man Festival postponement. We were very sorry to read about the tragedy. I'm very sympathetic with the promoter; it must have been a great blow to him, but perhaps he can re-establish it for next year. I think it would be a marvellous thing. Anyway, it's always good to sit down in one place for three weeks. I appreciate that very much; you don't get a chance to do that normally. You know, situations being what they are, it's best for a band to be constantly moving, and one-nighters seem to be about the best way to

really maintain a band. As I said—so far it's worked out pretty well.

Our visit to Russia was absolutely fantastic. We spent five weeks there, playing six cities. And each one was so outstanding—the response to the band was overwhelming. The people were so friendly, in giving; you know, they reached out to us as we reached out to them with the music. It was just a wonderful experience for everybody in the band—and I hope it was for the people in Russia, too. We made a lot of friends there, and we've sorta maintained contact with them for the past year. For someone who'd never been there before, such as myself and quite a few of the other members of the orchestra, it was a very exhilarating

rating thing to happen. Very heart-warming.

We haven't made any live recordings lately. We had hoped to do that here, but unfortunately contracts were held up legally, and there seems to have been a sort of a shift in the power structure in different places; I understand it's going on all over. This creates a delay for us that doesn't really do too much good. It hasn't harmed us to a great degree so far, but not having a record on the market in time can be a little bit harmful to you.

Because, you know, we recorded an album called "Suite For Pops". Which, incidentally, included a tune written by Gary McFarland, who died shortly after the record was made. A tragic loss—because he was such a great writer, such a brilliant musician. He had started writing a suite for the band, called "Toledo By Candlelight", and we

just have the first movement of it, that we maintain in our repertoire. It's a great piece of music; we felt that it deserved to be part of the

"Suite For Pops", being representative of the band's sound. Gary was a great fan of ours; he had worked with Mel and I when we were with Gerry Mulligan, and he wrote quite a few things for that band. So we got to be pretty good friends.

Yes, "Suite For Pops" is in memory of Louis Armstrong, representing his way of life, and perhaps a short history of what his life may have been like. Although we didn't come in too much personal contact with him; I first met him many years ago, but our trails hardly ever crossed while we were on the road. Even with Basie; he and Basie were great friends, but I think we came in contact with one another maybe twice during the nine years that I

was with Count Basie. However, we all respected, admired and loved him, and the Suite was a tribute to him.

Unfortunately, though, the album hasn't been released. It would have been on A&M, but it won't be, because they decided—for whatever reason—to cancel all of their jazz artists. And a lot of people know of this album; they keep asking me, but I can't tell them anything, as regards a definite release date. Which becomes embarrassing—and it makes me angry.

I think we'll record with this line-up fairly soon. As a matter of fact, practically the same personnel was on the "Suite For Pops" album; the direction that things seem to be going in right now is that it will probably be released through another company. So we'll just have to wait and see. I hate to say that

again—I've said it too many times already!

I'd say the style of the band is pretty well established now. Whatever music we play, it's gonna come out a certain way. Once you get a group of musicians working together over a certain period of time, they automatically phrase things specifically enough to indicate the band's style. So it doesn't matter what we're playing—the style, the identity comes through. And the freedom? Definitely—that'll never change.

I see definite signs of greater acceptance for an out-and-out jazz band. The very fact that bands like Basie, Ellington, Woody Herman, Stan Kenton have been able to sustain themselves over a number of years has really encouraged a lot of younger musicians to the extent that they feel that there is a future for them in music. And there's so many

musicians coming out of schools now, and they have to have a place to play. While they're in school, big bands are what they are orientated in. If there are no bands around, they eventually go into rock bands. That's why you've found such a high quality of rock music in, I'd say, the last two years. They're really very accomplished jazz musicians playing it. So, with the maintenance of these bands, and the formation of new ones all the time, the quality of the big bands will gradually become higher and higher. And you'll find a lot more bands just popping up, seemingly out of nowhere.

These are truly dedicated players, who love the music that they're involved in; they've been trained to do this, and they've applied themselves very diligently. They want to find the vehicle to express what it is that they have in their heads. Like,

what I have in my head, in my ears, heart and mind, I have to surround myself with. And I'm pretty sure they feel the same way. I can't count the number of musicians that I've had coming to me, asking if there's an opening in the band. But right now, our personnel is pretty well set; so I have to tell them, unfortunately, there isn't, and I can't even give them the hope of a possibility.

In the future there will be a lot more bands being formed—you can count on it. The future of big bands is on the rise. For instance, in North Texas State they have seventeen bands. That's a phenomenal number of musicians—all interested in jazz and all very, very good. I'm very optimistic. As a matter of fact, I've never been a pessimist, as far as music is concerned. There's always something out there, in front.

. . . and MEL LEWIS

I'm happier than ever with the band —I think it's the best we've ever been. We've got the same personnel we had last time we were here—that's a year-and-a-half ago—except for Butter Jackson. He's having some dental work done, and that's the only reason he's not here. Although his replacement is a marvellous player, a young musician who's probably a future member of this band, if and when somebody leaves. His name is Steve Turre—it's a Mexican-Italian name. Or Italian-Mexican—I'm not sure which.

I believe I'm playing stronger now. As I want to, because it's a harder bag, you know; the band swings harder than we've ever done. It's still very loose and relaxed, as it's always been; it's not stiff, by any

means. I guess we're all playing with a little more drive. Yet we can be as subtle as we always were, too.

Most of my jazz work is done with this band now. But I've been playing a lot of jazz lately, doing a lot of small group work. When I say a lot, I mean more than usual, more than ever, but it's still intermittent. First call is still the big band—which is working a lot more than it ever did. Things are really happening for us now. It's looking up-and-up; I feel pretty happy about it. I think our time has finally come.

It's been a long, hard climb, but I think we've gotten there. I mean, we're not at the top, as regards acceptance, but we're probably one of the best at what we do and, for the size of the audience,

we've got more people on our side now.

We're going to continue and continue with this, because it's our love. It's what we always wanted; it's keeping Thad and myself young, and all of us happy. When Thad and I went into it, people thought we were crazy. These are dumb years to be starting big bands. Neither one of us have what you'd call any money. But we've gotten a lot of help from people,—who believed in us, who'd just jump in and say or do the right things. A lot of the writers, and all that, have all jumped on our bandwagon, and been kind to us. That's been important. Whereas so many other people have paid for that, when they don't really deserve it sometimes. Of course, some do. But

we can't afford press agents, and things like that, who can keep your activities in the paper every day, make you a household name. It's much slower this way.

Also there's been our refusal to do real commercial things. Our

commerciality is mostly the fun and the laughs; we have a lot of humour in this band—which is not contrived. It's actually just fun. We have some little bits we do, that have come along, that we think the audience enjoys, but we haven't sacrificed our

music for it—and that's usually what you have to do to make it. It's the last thing in the world we're gonna do.

And a word from the oldest member **CLIFF WEATHER**

There are four or five of us, I think, who have been with Thad and Mel since the band's inception. But somehow, the timbre of the band never seems to change. Even though we've replaced a lot of men, we have great men all the time. The key factor almost always is Thad's writing. Well, Bobby Brookmeyer wrote some charts, too; they play the same charts in the same way. It may also be due to the fact that we don't get

an influx of more than one or two men at one time; so they're taken along with the mainstream as they come in.

Yes, you can safely say I'm the oldest member of the band—way oldest. I'm seventy. I have a hard time feeling that way, but when I look at the calendar I have to admit it. I started professionally back when I was eighteen or twenty—that's a

lot of years. I've had such a variegated career.

You know, it's a funny thing, though—I really don't consider that the old days were the best days. It seems to me that these are the good old days. Oh, I remember humorous things that happened to me when I was younger, and sometimes a bunch of the guys get around and want to know something about '35 or '45, the different bands, and dif-

ferent situations you've been confronted with. But I certainly don't regret getting old—because it hasn't hit me yet.

I'm still healthy, and physically my playing power hasn't diminished—that's for sure.

As a matter of fact, I have to work less hard now to keep in shape. When I was younger I was noted for being a high trombone player, and there's a lot of pressure on you when you're playing first chair all the time. I played first trombone on the Lucky Strike Hit Parade radio and TV show for twenty-five years. But I've found, with the bass trombone, since you're in the low register most of the time, that there isn't that worry and tension of high playing. There is the tension of the fact that it's sort of become a glamour instrument lately; they feature bass trombone quite a bit—in its own scope, not so much a solo part. It

plays a very important part in the band.

While I was playing all these high solos, I thought to myself: “Boy, wouldn't these sound great down an octave?” I'd been on CBS staff for fifteen years, when the Garry Moore Show came in, and they needed a fourth trombone. But we didn't have one on the staff. And the contractor said to me: “Do you think you'd like to play bass trombone?” I said: “I'd love to.” So I bought one, and that's how it happened; I've been so happy with it ever since. Made more money, too!

The change-over was good for me—particularly with this band. It isn't as if you're playing in a symphony, or a staff orchestra, where you have certain things that you know are difficult, and if you miss them it isn't good. Because every note you play under those conditions is an audition almost.

But now, everything is cool. You can clam the hell out of anything, and all it is is a big joke. Thad knows that nobody feels worse about a mistake than the man who made it; so he never leans on anybody, and nor does Mel. We just kid each other about it—really it isn't that important. You can't play fifteen to twenty thousand notes every night, and have them all right.

Originally, all I did was straight work—with the Firestone Orchestra, the Wallenstein, Howard Barlow, Andre Kostelanetz, Percy Faith. I was playing first trombone on all those big-selling Columbia records by Andre Kostelanetz.

Kostelanetz is a demanding conductor—if you don't play well. But if you play well, he's the easiest guy in the world to get along with. I don't mean only as far as your capabilities are concerned, but your attention, and your desire to play well.

That's all he wants, for a band to be businesslike—not to kid around, tune up, or to freeload, as we call it. Everybody's there to make a buck, and we don't have any illusions about setting the world on fire, as far as new-type jazz or anything. Although Kosty *did* inaugurate a really new type of music, with his concert arrangements of Gershwin, Richard Rodgers and so forth.

But he's an exceptional man, as regards recording. I remember he was one of the first men to use a single microphone at the other end of the studio, with only one mike up in the orchestra for close-up purposes—and usually that was only used for things like cup mutes or a sub-tone clarinet. It was his contention that the band should balance itself. His favourite saying was: "If you can't hear the soloist, you're playing too loud." And that band

actually played very softly—that's why the engineers had so much control over it. It gave me a very keen sense of dynamics.

I think a band playing softly is a beautiful thing. Unfortunately people don't want to listen to it—they'd rather keep quiet themselves. But we do it in this band a great deal.

Thad is a fabulous director. And he knows every nuance of every arrangement in the book. As does Mel—he's very remarkable that way, as a drummer, too. In fact, he's one of the few drummers I know like that—he knows all the brass figures, everything. It's really remarkable. I was amazed, the first time I played with him—the first drummer I ever knew do that. He's very musical.

Once there were marked divisions between jazz players and straight players. Not any more—be-

cause the jazz players have learned enough to respect the straight ones, and the straight men have heard jazz players perform in a way that they can't. Or maybe could, but they don't. So there's a deep mutual respect. I have deep respect for symphony men. Of course, my problem is: in symphonic circles I'm known as a jazzman; in jazz circles I'm known as a long-hair!

Another very good jazz band I worked with was Vic Schoen, who had the Patti Page show. But almost any good radio or TV orchestra is turned into a jazz band by the charts that come through. If they're with the Supremes or Peggy Lee, or anybody with great charts, those orchestras can play that way, too. The idea is to be pliable, and be able to accept all different kinds of music.

Crescendo Vol 12, No. 3, P 20, Oct. 1973

“It’s unlike any other big band ever. . . “
EARL GARDNER, lead trumpet with Mel Lewis

This book (The Mel Lewis Jazz Orchestra) is gruelling in a lot of respects, but it doesn’t compare to the books of Buddy Rich or Woody Herman—they’re different style books. I mean, I don’t think I could have played all the lead on those bands; there were a whole lot of other things that had been established. Like when Jon Faddis is playing the lead with Thad and Mel—I can’t do what Jon does; not too many people can. With Woody, Dave Stahl was another great lead player, and I couldn’t do what he does either. As for Buddy’s band, they had so many different cats going through the band—I’m not one

of those kind of lead men, that scream up around double C and do that all night. I stay in a certain range, and I can pound for a while.

Yes, it is a demanding book—but there are spaces in charts. The funny thing about the book. . . in certain spots. . . when we come in on an ensemble thing, you’re pumping, and blowing your brains out for thirty–two bars; then you’ll get a break, where at least you get some blood back in your chops, till you come back in on the next thirty–two bars. Thad’s charts are usually like that—they give you a little bit of space here and there. Whereas the way Brookmeyer writes—his are

constant, and there’s not much place to stretch out; everything’s pretty much more structured.

So there’s all kinds of different things in the book involving different ways of playing. It’s demanding but it’s fun. Sometimes Mel says: “Let’s call an easy set.” We sit there saying: “That’s impossible—there is no easy set on this band!” He says: “We’ll give you a break—we won’t call anything hard.” Well, I’d defy him to make up a set of tunes that aren’t hard. What he thinks isn’t hard—it’s still hard. “Let’s do this one—this isn’t too hard on you is it?” “Not as hard as some, but it still kills me. It’s hard to keep your

chops up for this gig—for me, anyway. Because I'm the kind of player that has to play—I'm not a big practitioner or anything. When I have the time off, I don't sit around and practise. Besides, practice chops are different from gig chops. If I practised for three hours a day, I could get to a certain level, but it's still not like playing a gig until I've done that.

I had a month when Mel had gone to Europe and the band wasn't playing at all. I'd sit there and practise—put in an hour or two hours every day. After a month, you get to the gig, and your chops feel great for maybe two or three tunes; then, all of a sudden— “But they felt great—what happened?” You have to, like, get your sea legs.

It's like when we come out on the road. The first couple of days on the road, your chops will feel all right; then, as it goes on, they start feeling stronger and stronger. By the

end of the tour—or not even that long; maybe after about four days or so—they're feeling great, and you feel like you can play anything. Then the tour's over, you go back to New York, and hopefully you're doing some gigs and stuff. So you're still playing, but it's not nearly the same thing; it's falling short. I play third trumpet on this Broadway show—it's got nothing to do with this thing. But it's playing—it's better than sitting at home doing nothing.

Sure, I'd love to do more with Mel. Not so much on the road, but just in general. It'd be great if this band could work three or four times a week in town or something, you know. But I guess it's a pipe dream—unless Mel opens up a club of his own!

The problem time was after Thad left—of course, we had always been known as the Thad Jones/Mel

Lewis Orchestra. For a couple of years, you'd see people and they'd say: “I heard the band broke up.” “I don't know, but we're still playing at the Vanguard on Monday.” It was kind of rough; Monday nights would be really slow, because people didn't think the band was still together. But Mel kept it going, and made the band the focal point. He was not out front; he was laying it down and swinging, and we were just riding on top of him. He was going with us, and we were going with him just playing, having a good time, and the band developed.

This band as it is now has basically been the same personnel for about five years. As you know, there's always a big turnover in bands. It speaks for Mel and for the music—it's a musicians' band. The public—they like the band, but they don't understand the stuff as much, maybe, as the musicians. They all

say: “Hey, I’d like to sub on the band some time. “

It’s different—it’s like a family really. I’ve been on the band for twelve years; our lead alto, Dick Oatts, and another saxophone player, Richie Perry, got on the band about a year after me. As for lead trombone John Mosca, he’s been on around fourteen years; Earl McIntyre, the bass trombonist, has been there for fifteen or sixteen—he and Mosca are the two senior members of the band at this point. Yes, it’s a family band; it’s unlike any other big band ever, I think.

All Mel wants to do is play drums and swing. He’s always going to be a sideman—he’s a rotten leader! He’s one of the guys—that’s it. Which is great, but when it comes down to business it’s not that great! It was just the same way with him and Thad—both of them were rotten at business. All they cared about was

playing. Meanwhile, whoever was handling the business didn’t know what they were doing. When you get to a town, and there’s no hotel reservations for the band, that’s not so good! But the band’s great, and it’s fun to play—sometimes it doesn’t seem like it, but it is.

Getting it on to a record is another thing. The live ones at the Vanguard come closest, but, even so, it’s hard to do that. The only way is: you’ve got to hear the band live; you have to see the band in action—up there acting crazy, jumping around, and just enjoying it most of the time. You don’t really capture the band on records; it’s not the same—it’s not really recording the band. When we record, the band sound good, but it’s not that feel, that energy. The best place to hear the band is at the Vanguard on Monday nights, when everybody’s loose and relaxed, and we haven’t played

together for a week; so we get in there, and just scream and wail. Or on the road, after we’ve been out for a few days. To capture the essence, you’ve got to hear the band in person.

When you’re recording, if something messes up, you stop and fix it here, fix it there, change the balance—and it loses the impact, the spontaneity. I haven’t really listened to any of the albums we’ve done. I listen to them once—like, after we get a tape or something—and then I won’t listen to it again, because it just isn’t the same.

This band lives with its charts; after we learn them and develop them they sound totally different. We did this live album in Montreal—Don Menza did all these Herbie Hancock tunes, and we only got the charts maybe two weeks before we recorded the album. If you listen to the album and then go and

hear the band play the same charts now, we play them quite differently now. Because we learned it, we know how the chart goes, and the phrasing's different. If I listened to the record now, I would point out a lot of spots: "Oh, we don't play this like that any more." You've got to live with a chart for a while.

The last album we did, we had pretty much played the charts for a few months before we recorded them; so they're much more together. Even so, there are still little changes here and there that we've made: "Let's do it this way now." So, from a record, it's hard to know what the band sound like.

Most of the music I play away from the band is not inferior—it's just different. It's programme music; it serves its purpose, and you play it. There's nothing that compares to playing this music, although you can come close—you can have a good

time. I did a week at the Blue Note with Gene Harris Big Band that was fun, because he had done this great "Tribute To Basie" album. I'd never heard of Gene Harris. They were saying: "He played with the Three Sounds"—I never heard of them either.

I was playing lead—it was supposed to be me and Faddis, Laurie Frink and Glenn Drewes. We did the rehearsal, and Faddis was out of town; he wasn't going to make it for the first couple of days, and I played lead. As I said, it was all Basie stuff, and Basie's—like, that's the hand. And from the first tune we hit, it was just great. That was the closest band I've played with to this—I had almost as much fun playing wise. Musically, it was nothing complicated or anything just straight-ahead stuff. Frank Wess had done the charts, and it was very enjoyable.

But playing a Broadway show, you're not going to swing. You're playing music behind whatever's happening up onstage. The orchestra is an important part of it, but it's not the featured thing. They don't want you to out-front too much; so you can only get into it in a limited way. It's just a different style.

I do a TV show in New York, Saturday Night Live—it's like a rock 'n' roll band. It's one trumpet, three saxes and one trombone—a great band, considering. With Steve Turre on trombone and Alex Foster on alto, it's like a small jazz band also. Anyhow, I'm into pop music—I like: funk and stuff like that; it's not like I'm just a total jazz freak. I grew up on *Tower Of Power* and *Blood, Sweat And Tears*. In fact, I probably knew more about that than jazz at that time. When I first started playing with the band, I was like a fish out of water, because I'd never

listened to that much jazz per se. It was pretty much split up, and more towards rock and funk than the jazz thing. I said to myself: “I think you should start learning a little bit more about this stuff.”

Musically, jazz is more complicated and more intricate, but the other stuff is fun to play. And I mean, it’s good—Blood, Sweat and Tears was a great band, with good arrangements that were demanding in their own respect. I’m into all kinds of stuff. I can get into some of the rap stuff even—I can listen to it for maybe five minutes, and that’s

enough already. Basically, if it’s good, that’s all I care about—if it’s not bull. . . I can’t listen to bull. I have an open mind—I’ll listen, check it out and see what happens.

Sure, Quincy Jones has written some great stuff. For a while, he got into the funk thing, and started putting out stuff like “Body Heat” and “The Dude”. It was simple, but the music was great—I wore out a bunch of his tapes. It swings, in its way; you can still get that two and four in there. You can still hear it, if you don’t just close off and say: “Oh, this isn’t jazz—so I don’t want

to hear it. “ Just groove on it; don’t try and analyse it, because it’s all feel. If it feels good, then—cool.

Repetitive? Oh, yeah—that’s what it’s about, though. It’s about that hook—that’s what gets it over. It serves its purpose: you go to a party and people want to dance and just groove—you can’t dance to “Cherry Juice”, but you can dance to “The Dude”. It just depends upon the situation.

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