

MONK HAZEL--"JAZZ REVIEW"
REEL I [only]
October 28, 1967

INTERVIEWER: Doug Ramsey
NOTES: Richard B. Allen
SUMMARY: Dan Weisman
TYPING: Dan Weisman

[Introductory music by Charlie Parker as announcer welcomes listeners to "Jazz Review," and gives advertisement. Now, here's the man with the opinion, Doug Ramsey.]

Thank you very much Al, DR says. Good evening, everyone. Tonight, during the 50th anniversary year of Monk Hazel in jazz, we're going to talk with Monk about his career. Please stay with us. [Song continues...]

You know, on tenor, MH says, I like more like the [Coleman] Hawkins, and Eddie Miller, [Bud] Freeman school, you know.

We're just discussing John Coltrane with Monk Hazel, DR notes, who has been in jazz since, what was the first year you played professionally?

Well, let's see, MH says. I was eight years old....That must have been 1911....The name of the band that I played with, Doug, it's funny, it was called [Johnny] Fischer's Ragtime Military Jazz Band.

My father, [Charlie Hazel,] was the bass drummer. In those days, they used two drums. My father was the bass drum, and a fellow by the name of [Mike] "Ragbaby" Stevens was the snare drummer.

My father built a harness for me, so that I could carry the snare drum, and we made this Rex Parade, which was the big

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carnival parade even then.

Fischer's band was the only band in the parade that played jazz. All the rest of them played marching music, and things like that....

Fischer, Johnny Fischer, he had a band way back. You might know some of the...heard some of the Brunis boys, and Achille Baquet, he's George Baquet's brother. He was the clarinetist.

Instead of using the B-flat clarinet in parades, he always used the E-flat clarinet, which was much more piercing, and higher--shrilling.

People would...you could hear people holler, here comes Fischer's band for two, or three, blocks away because they could hear the clarinet way up in the air.... They don't use [E-flat clarinets] anymore....

I was eight, and carried a snare drum. We used two snare drums.

And another thing that we did, that they did in Fischer's band. When the band was stopped, and wasn't playing, most of the other bands would just play (imitating) you see.

But, this Ragbaby - that's why they called him Ragbaby - he worked some little things up between he, and I, and my dad. And we'd play (imitating) jazz-like, you know, licks like the kids do now in their high school, and their college bands, you know....

I don't know [if that was the first time such arrangements

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were played.] Papa Laine, but he didn't play, he wasn't union. He was non-union at that time, and he didn't play in the Rex Parade. The Rex Parade was the only parade that used a union band. And always did.

But, I think that Papa Laine played jazz in the parades that he played, but I don't know whether they did that thing with the drum thing like we did, you know, playing the jazz....

[They thought of themselves as musicians doing something different] because they were the only band of that day, and Jack Laine, was the only two bands in town at that time that was doing that.

That's why the name, the Ragtime Military Jazz Band, because they'd play anything. They'd play parades. They played funerals, weddings, anything like that, and then they'd play these all-day picnics where they would play jazz.

But, the instrumentation in those days was much different, Doug, than what it is now. There were no saxophones in those days. A band usually consisted of 10 men. There'd be two trumpets, two trombones. There'd be a baritone, two clarinets, and bass, and the two drums....

[It wouldn't sound like the Olympia, and Onward Brass Bands of today.] No, no, no, nothing like [that] because they used to play. They'd play a six hour job. A picnic would last from 6:00 [p.m.] in the evening to 12:00 [midnight] at night, or all day.

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They'd have all-day picnics.

But, besides jazz, they'd play things like "Tiger Rag," and those kind of things. Besides that, they played pretty, real pretty music. They'd play a lot of waltzes because, in those days, every third dance was a waltz. And they played mazurkas, schottisches, things like that.

Most of them were pretty good musicians, contrary to what a lot of people [who] make you try to believe that they weren't....

[There was no improvisation in set dance pieces.] Those were read. They were just read straight. [Improvisation] came in when they played the jazz tunes.

They wouldn't only play the things like the "Tiger Rag," and "Panama," which was probably number one, number two in those days, and things like that.

"High Society," they played. They would take the popular tunes of the day, and turn them around.

One of the favorite things they used to do. They'd play a waltz, see, and then maybe play four, or five, choruses of waltz.

Then the drummers, the two drummers, would make what you call a turnaround, and they'd take the tempo off...enter a jazz tempo, and swing the same waltz. Like "Let Me Call You Sweetheart," was one of them, they used to that with [double the tempo.] [or change to a 2/4 tempo]

I used to, at one time, I worked in a music store here, and

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But, the white fellows cleaned it up a little bit. It was just like the parade bands of nowadays. It was a little rough, [and was] refined.

They took the rough edges out of it, and the tones. They played more in tune, and things like that.

The spirit was the same. There's no white man in the world will ever capture the rhythm. A lot of us have come close, but there's no white man in the world will ever copy 'cause that Mr. Big [i.e. God] gives you that, and he gave it to them....

I remember [Jelly Roll Morton.] I never [played with him,] but I remember Jelly real well, more in New York than here. Because I was in New York City from [19]28-to-[19]31, and that was just about the latter part of Jelly Roll's [stay.]

I worked with Jack Pettis, and I worked with a band in the Pennsylvania Hotel that Glenn Miller [worked.]

We didn't have any brass. It was a take-off on Rudy Vallee. But, we had, instead of him, we had four saxophones, the trombone, and I doubled on the cornet so I played all jazz. And we had three fiddles, a viola, and four rhythm....

[A dance band] in the Pennsylvania Hotel....Glenn was the only brass. Glenn played a lot of jazz. Glenn played some things with...he made some records with the Mound City Blue Blowers, and quite a bit with [Eddie] Condon when they first came into New York, and [Red] Nichols. The Memphis Five....

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[GM] liked to write, more than anything. I'm going to tell you something that you might not know. But, Glenn Miller has built more bands, more jazz bands than any man in the country.

The first band he built was Ben Pollack's band in which Benny Goodman was at the time, Jimmie McPartland, and all those kind of guys.

The next band he built was Ray Noble's band when he came over here from England which was the best band in the country at the time. He built Claude Thornhill's, I think, his first band. Boy, any number of bands before he ever had a band of his own.

He came to New Orleans when that band was three weeks old. They had broken in Boston, his own band, the only band he ever had. They came here to the Blue Room. They had broken the band in for three weeks in Boston.

I got [Irving] Fazola for him. He didn't have a jazz clarinet player. I got Fazola.

Fazola was in New York working with...Gus Arnheim. And it was a bad band. Faz didn't like it, but he was making [\$]125 a week, which was good money in those days.

So, Glenn and I called him from the Roosevelt [Hotel,] and Glenn could only afford \$90. So he told him, he said, Faz I can only pay you [\$]90 now, but this band is going to be a good band.

So, Faz quit Arnheim, and come down here, and joined Glenn. He wanted me to go with him on drums, but I was making more money

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The most you ever took was a two, or a four, bar break, what you call a solo now. There was never no drum solos like you have today. If you did that [before], they'd come up, and run you off the stand.

But, Krupa came into New York. It's a funny thing, Doug. He played in a show with Red Nichols called "Rain or Shine."

I spent \$6.60 for a ticket to go hear this band, and then this band had Miller, Glenn Miller. Everybody who was big, in those days, was in this pit band. They did a big overture in which they played big band jazz.

Krupa must have had nine cymbals hung up there, and he did these paradiddles, and all like they do now. All these thing come out of the method book, you see, and he did that; and I got so mad after paying my \$6.60 to hear that, that I walked out on that.

Later on, he played at a place called the Hollywood Restaurant with Red, and I went in. I met Gene.

I told him, you know what you're doing. You ruining every kid in the United States because every kid in the United States is going to want to do what you're doing now, and that's exactly the way it turned out.

After him came David Tough, Buddy Rich, and all those kind of fella. It's a different kind.

All we had was, maybe, three basic beats. You had what they

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call the pres roll, you know, and then you had [turning] on top of the cymbal, and then the ride-outs for the last choruses which we all got off the negroes because that's the way they used to play.

But if you didn't have a good press roll, you didn't get a job....

I still don't like [drum] solos. You have to do them nowadays, but I never did go out.

I'll take four bars, or maybe eight bars, but no chorus, or choruses, or anything like that because I still don't think it's...it's not an instrument for a solo. It's not a melodic, you can't get any melody out of it, or anything, although I've heard some boys do some wonderful things.

Pete Fountain had a boy there when I first heard him with Tex Beineke, and he's the only one who ever completely satisfied me because when he took a solo he told a story.

But these fellows, these fellows don't learn a story and, time, and that don't mean a thing to them.

I had a little...boy around here by the name of Paul Ferrara who - he worked with [Al] Hirt for a while - he had pretty good hands, and pretty good feet. He used two bass drums at one time.

Buddy Rich was...I was with Sharkey [Bonano] at the time at the Dream Room, and we were doubling with Buddy Rich. Buddy and I got to talking, and I said did you hear this kid across the

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old friend of mine. Pee Wee, when I first came to New York, he was doing a lot of recording with Nichols and those guys.

And Pee Wee used to mumble in his beard, (imitates) and he stuttered very much, you know, and you could hardly understand him.

So, they had a little sandwich shop, the Lido where we all used to hang around, all the musicians used to hang around on 48th [Street] right off Broadway.

We'd go in there, and Pee Wee'd be talking to me, and sometimes I'd be shaking me head no when I should have been saying yes. Finally he'd get mad, and say, (imitating) aw man, you don't know what I'm talking about. He'd walk off, you know.

And then, the other time, he and Bix [Beiderbecke] were living together...Pee Wee Russell and Bix at the 44th Street Hotel in New York.

They had a little yacht - we used to call them yacht pianos in those days - little 2 1/2 octave piano.

I used to go there around 11:00 [a.m.]. I lived on 53rd and Broadway. I used to go there around 11:00, 12:00, and they'd get up about that time.

And then, after 50 gins sitting on the bed table. They'd get up. They'd go in the bathroom, and Bix would try, and take a swallow, and most of the time the first one wouldn't stay down.

And Pee Wee tried, and he couldn't get it to stay down.

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Well, they keep trying until they got one to stay down. The minute they got one to stay down, they'd throw the whole bottle down...and then Bix would sit down there.

Oh, he played beautiful piano. He made a lot of things like "In the Mist," and all those kind of things. He'd sit down, and play those.

And Pee Wee played some wonderful things. But, one time he'd play erratic, and another time he'd play real pretty, and another time he'd get what Muggsy [Spanier] used to call squawk.

Muggsy made an album one time, and he had one tune on there. He called it "Pee Wee Squawks Again."

But Pee Wee, he was here for quite a while with Louis Prima. They went, and had that place on Bourbon Street they called the Shim-Sham...That's back in the early [19]30's. Pee Wee was around here for about six months. That was before Louis got big, before he got real big.

[MH refers to possible suicide attempts by PWR that is restricted information...]

Next time, I want to play you a record that he and Red Allen made together, DR says, just before Red died; with a rhythm section of young guys in their 20's, very modern players.

It's interesting how well it worked because both of them were so unconventional that they [had] harmonic ideas that fit in with what the young modern players were doing.

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When we came on, you and I were discussing John Coltrane, and we never really got into that, so the people could hear your opinion of Coltrane, in particular, and modern jazz saxophone playing in general.

Well, he does some things, MH notes. I haven't had a chance to dig him very much because he...that poor guy gets to die. I imagine he must have been quite young. Forty years old, DR states. Oh he was that...I didn't think he was that old, MH says.

But, I just started hearing about him in the last five or six years. Before that, it was the Bird [Charlie Parker], and [Coleman] Hawkins, and a lot of those other guys like that. Prez [Lester Young], and all those.

I was very much familiar with them, but I wasn't very familiar with Coltrane. The fact is I don't think I heard him more than once, or twice, until I heard your show.

I listened to the whole show [and I said] I want to find out what this guy does.... Some things he did real nice, and other things, he was a little far out.

Well, some of the earlier things he did, as you heard, DR says, were very melodic, lyrical. Later, he got more frenzied as he got into another kind of music.

Well, you change like that, MH says. I've seen bands do that. I've seen bands make a national reputation playing one style, then the minute they get any money, they change the band

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around, and play altogether different, and they sink.

[Stan] Kenton is one that did that. He got more wild, and more wild as he went.

There's a funny thing about Kenton. I was out in California in [19]34-[19]38 with Austin, Gene Austin, and I went down to Balboa Beach. There were a bunch of boys in a band down there. A fellow by the name of Hank Halstead had the band down there.

A bunch of the boys had been in a band called Ray Miller's that he had left stranded here. They played at the Roosevelt [Hotel in New Orleans.] He left them stranded here, and four or five of the boys--Vido Musso was one of them, Sammy Taylor was the drummer, he wound up with Phil Harris, and four or five of them.

A fellow by the name of Charlie Dupont, and I, kind of helped them out a little bit until they could get some money from California to get back home, you know. They invited me to come down to Balboa to hear the band.

They were playing in a big ballroom. So, they got this great big band, maybe 18 men, and Kenton's playing piano in this band, you see.

Then, a few years later on, he gets this progressive band, and he comes into Sammy's store one night. I got to talking to him, and I asked him...

I said: now, what I want to know is this. I've been

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listening to all this "Artistry in Rhythm," and all this business that you putting out. But, what I want to know is every time it gets to time for you to play, you play like [Earl] Fatha Hines. How come you do that?

He just laughed. He said well, that's the way I play. And I don't think he ever changed. The last time I heard the band, he was still playing like Fatha Hines because that was his idol.

Fatha Hines, in those days, was his idol, you know, and I thought that was so funny. He's got all this progressive music around. I think, at that time, he had [Maynard] Ferguson, and all them bunch of guys. Rossellini, and Paul Desmond I think at the time was with him too. [Bob] Cooper, a bunch of guys, Shelly Mann.

Every time they'd come...I like Shelly [Mann] very much. I like the things he's doing. He's way over my head.

I didn't study much. I studied to read with a piano player. I never did study with a drummer, so I never got out of the Dixieland field, and didn't want to. I played with some big bands when I was younger, but not in that vein...

[DR takes another break and there is a commercial...]

Monk Hazel is our guest tonight on "Jazz Review," DR states. For those of you who may not know, although if you live in New Orleans I don't see how that's possible, Mr. Hazel has been in jazz music 50 years this year as drummer, trombonist, cornetist,

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and also playing the melophone.

Mr. Hazel, we're talking about Coltrane. His former drummer, Elvin Jones, is now on his own, recording with his own groups. I'd like to play you one recording from Elvin's latest album, and ask you to comment on it. Here it is. [Song played...]

Elvin Jones was the drummer there, Monk, and the leader; and a fellow named Hank Mobley, on tenor saxophone; and Thad Jones, Elvin's brother, was on trumpet.

Do you like that kind of drumming? I liked it, there's parts of it that I liked, Doug, MH replies. It reminds me of the way I look at this progressive music, all together.

This is the third change that I've seen. The first was--some people like to call it ragtime.

And then came what they used to, laughingly, call the pure jazz. Some people still do, DR interjects. Yeah, MH continues, some people still do.

Then, it got a little bit more progressive, and a little bit...bop came in then, and that didn't go. The people didn't buy that, at all, because they couldn't understand it. Most of them.

The public, I'm talking about...had an impact on some of [the musicians.]

I tell you, the first time I heard Dizzy [Gillespie] in person. We had been to Toronto, and we had a night off in Chicago, coming back home.

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Julian Laine, who was a trombone player, an old-time trombone player, and I, were walking up and down State Street; and we see this sign up there--Dizzy Gillespie.

I had heard a few of his records. So, I said, let's go in. We went in, and he was walking behind the bar like Shakey ^[Shakey?] used to walk on the bar playing "The Saints" here.

We sat down, and bought a drink; \$2.55 for a drink. He had six men, I think. He had cornet, clarinet, drums, piano, and a guy who played baritone sax, and vibes.

So, they playing for about 20 minutes, and I'm trying to find out what they're playing. I never have found out what they're playing.

The guy who was playing the baritone, and the vibes--he's looking at me, and he's digging us. Finally, after about 20 minutes, he puts the vibes down, and he picks up the saxophone.

He plays eight bars of "How High The Moon," you know, and I yell, thank you. (Laughs.) It was my introduction to Dizzy.

Then, I get to know him a little later. We were working at Roundtable in New York. Tyree Glenn had the band [which] was alternating with us, and Dizzy.

He used to...Dizzy would come in, and they would talk a lot. Dizzy had one of those little round hats...not a beret. This is like a potentate wears in the Shrine. [FEZ]

He was going to go over to some little country in Africa,

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and he was going to be the prime minister over there. It's like Louis [Armstrong] was the one...that Louis come on now, and be the king.

Diz was going to...Tyree's telling me all this, you see. He says, he's going over to be the prime minister of this country. He told me the name of the country, I don't remember.

It didn't work out though, apparently, DR comments. No, it didn't, MH adds. He never did go. Well, Dizzy's an interesting man, DR notes. Yeah, well any of those guys, MH says.

We had the characters in our age too, MH continues. Bix was quite a character. I knew Bix pretty well. Like I tell you more through that...

Then he came down here a couple of times when he was with [Paul] Whiteman. He and Frank Trumbauer were with Whiteman. [cf. Other MH interviews.]

We like to broke the thing up. They did a concert, you see. And there was no jazz at all.

So, after the intermission, we were in the alley on the side. It was the old St. Charles Theater up there. They've torn it down now, I think.

Well, I was delegated to go up, and speak to Whiteman, and tell him that we wanted to hear some Bix and Tram, you see.

I walked up to him, and I told him. I must have said it in a gangster-like way, or something.

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Arnie looks at me, and says... well, he says, I'll tell you, all we're going to do when we go back. We're gonna play "Metropolis," and "An American In Paris;" and Trumbauer going, they used to do them in these shoes, you know, these great big long shoes that clowns in the circuses used...get up on the top of those things, and walk around, you know. That was in the act. [Wilber Hall did a big shoe act with whiskeyman - did Trumbauer too?]

So, I told him. I said, man. I said, we got to have some of Bix and Tram or we gonna break this thing up. Like I say, he must have taken me for a gangster.

When they go back in, they get the band all on the stage, and everything, and he comes out to the footlights and says: ladies and gentlemen, he says, I have had a lot of requests, and a lot of threats. So, Bix and Tram. He turns around, and he tells them, you're on your own, and he walks off-stage, you see.

Roy Bargy was the piano player, one of the piano players at that time. He started vamping "Singing the Blues," you see. They played that, and then they played, about, three or four things, and broke up the house.

But if we hadn't have done that, we wouldn't have got one note of jazz out of the whole thing....That was funny.

[DR puts on Louis Armstrong Orchestra swing version of "Strutting With Some Barbecue..."]

In this "Tiger Rag," thing, MH says, I think it makes it sound like they juiced the sound on midnight on New Year's Eve

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when all the boats on the river, and all the factories, and all used to go and you have a (imitates sound).

We're back, DR interjects. And that would go on for a half-hour, MH adds. We're back now, DR says.

No use asking you who that was because you pegged that right away. Yeah, that's Papa, MH says. That's Louis Armstrong, DR adds. That's Papa Louis, MH notes.

That's a band that people now...when you think of Louis Armstrong now, DR says, I think most people remember the Hot Five, and then later, in the [19]40's, but this was a period.

I'm quite familiar with this big band, MH says because he did a lot of vaudeville with this big band. And there's a funny little story, Doug. He had a young kid about 16, or 17, years old playing lead trumpet.

He had four in that band. Red Allen was one of them. And he had a little young kid. I think his last name was Prince. Leroy Prince or something like that.

Anyway. They always asked Louis why he wouldn't--this kid was one of these high note artists, even way back in those days like Ferguson and those guys turned out later. And they asked Louis, why don't you let the kid go?

And he turned. Well, I'll tell you pops. If I let him play, I wouldn't sound so high. But he was...Louis always did do that. He never did get guys in the band that could outshine him, even

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with the Five, and the Seven; the Hot Five, and the Seven....

He was 20 years ahead....But the minute I heard ["Strutting..."] I figured it was that band. I was so familiar with that band. I played a lot of vaudeville, myself, with a fellow by the name of Jack Pettis. We used to run across Louis every once in a while.

[They take another commercial break...]

Monk Hazel, I want to, DR continues, before we run out of time, I'm happy to announce that Decca is finally beginning to re-release a lot of the good old things that they had in their vaults for years. And this is one of them.

[Plays Duke Ellington on "East St. Louis Toodle-Do..."]

How does that sound to you after all these years? DR asks. Oh, you're going way back, MH replies.

That sounds like it did at the Cotton Club when I first went to New York. He's got...really had some old-timers in that. It's got to be way back, DR notes, because Duke Ellington still had a banjo in the band. That must have gone out about 1930. Yeah, it did, MH adds.

I used to play [at the Cotton Club] quite a bit because at that time everything was in Harlem. They had big clubs downtown, but there was no jazz downtown in New York, at all. Everything was in Harlem.

Jack Teagarden was playing with Benny Pollack. They worked

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at the hotel. They used to get off at 1:00 [a.m.], so Jack and I would run up and get...They had a bunch of these underground places. Bud B.'s, and Susie's, and all, where Willie "The Lion" Smith, and all those; Fats Waller, and all those kind of guys, used to play in these little speakeasies.

Jack and I..Jack used to get a kick out of taking his piano players--like Rube Bloom, and Art Schutt, and those kind of guys. They'd go up there, and The Lion, and Fats, would make monkeys out of them.

I brought a kid one time. I said, I got a kid they won't make a fool out of. This kid was - you might know of him - he finally wound up with Goodman years later.

We brought him up there. His name was Frank Froeba. Frank started playing, you see, so the boss that owned this place...had a glass like this where the kitchen was, and the piano was right underneath this glass.

This boss stuck his head, and he's listening. He hollers to the doorman. Hey, Jabbo, run around the corner, and call Mr. Louis [Armstrong.]

He run around the corner, and called Louis. Louis comes, you see, and then Froeba's sitting on there playing. The first thing you know, Louis asked him if he knew this, and if he knew that, and then they start singing.

They wound up...Louis' pulling on Froeba's hair like that.

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[saying] man, don't you turn white on me. It was funny....Then, the Duke was at the Cotton Club. Louis was at Connie's Inn, and he was also in a show downtown "Connie's Hot Chocolates," which had a bunch of good tunes in.

When people went from club to club, and sat in, and exchanged ideas after hours, DR says. That sort of thing doesn't happen much any more.

No, MH agrees. You don't get that. It's like the rest of the world, Doug. It's dog eat dog, now.

Especially the old-timers, you know. The kids are always trying to shove you out, and we did the same thing when we were kids. I know a couple of guys I shoved out, and that's the way it is.

But, there's no camaraderie or anything like that anymore. The world has changed, and you don't have that in any other field, much less jazz. Anything you get is...everybody's afraid of each other.

[DR plays another Louis Armstrong band with "Swing That Music..."] [Advertisement immediately follows.]

Monk Hazel, it's been a pleasure to have you with us, DR says. It's been a pleasure for me, Doug, MH replies. I like to reminisce like this every once in a while. I don't get much chance to do it anymore....

[DR wants MH, next time, to bring records that he's on to

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play.] You've got a problem there, MH says. I don't have very many of the records I made. I used to have a lot of them, but...you'd be surprised just how few records I do have.

I have one that I would like to [have] you hear. I don't know whether you've heard it. I've got a record that I made under my name with Jumbo [i.e., Al Hirt] and Pete [Fountain,] both, in the band.

At the time, the both of them were working for Miller the Killer [insect exterminators.] They couldn't get a job playing music, and now, today, look at where they are, and look where I am....

This was not too long [ago]...maybe 10-15 years ago, about that. Roy Zimmerman. They were all working for Miller the Killer, and after that they went to work for the Guy Levy, not where he is now, but down one street...the Pier 500.

And then, from then on, they went on up...Shows you how things will change. The more power to both of them.

But, I don't think you ever heard Hirt play real jazz. He plays pretty good jazz on this. You know, a lot of people tell you that Hirt can't play jazz. Don't ever believe that because when I bring this record down, I think you'll like it.

Alright, DR says, let's make a date for two weeks from tonight, and we'll do it again.

If my arthritis and my emphysema permit, MH says, I'll be

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glad to. Good, DR says. We'll look forward to it.

Here's our theme.

[Theme music and sign-off...]

END OF REEL

