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Remembering Left Bank Jazz Society

When I arrived at the cafeteria of Sojourner-Douglass College, the scene could have been something out of one of the music clubs that used to dot Baltimore’s Pennsylvania Avenue: a full band at one end of the room, surrounded by dozens of circular tables filled with spectators dressed in variations of Sunday-best clothing and carrying bottles of white and red wine. I took my seat at a table in front and was soon joined by a Sojourner student—a man in his early thirties—and his 15-year-old son. He had brought him along so he could listen to music that wasn’t “Lil Wayne and other rappers.” He wanted him to listen to jazz.

It was fitting, then, that the show on December 11th was in remembrance of the Left Bank Jazz Society, the part-music-lovers’ club, part-grassroots organization formed in 1964 that for more than twenty years brought great jazz to Baltimore City. Dizzy Gillespie, John Coltrane, Nat Adderley, and Sun Ra, among many others, all played Left Bank shows at the Famous Ballroom. And the cast of musicians on hand for this night’s show read like a billing of jazz all-stars: Warren Wolf on piano; Kris Funn on bass; Craig Alston on saxophone; Robert Shahid on drums; and John Lamkin II on trumpet and French horn.

The band powered through the first



PHOTO BY ANDREW ZALESKI

From left: Craig Alston, John Lamkin II, Eartha Lamkin and Robert Shahid at the remembrance of the Left Bank Jazz Society.

set with a mix of swing, jazz fusion and Afro-Cuban tunes that kept the crowd of more than 100 people mesmerized. The musicianship on display was second-to-none in Baltimore. Wolf’s fingers dexterously danced along the piano keys; Lamkin and Alston, heavyweights of horn music, blasted through solos, playing over bar lines and showing off their repertoire of bebop and hard bop lines. Funn and Shahid proved to be a substantive, and substantial, rhythm section, the issues Funn had with his bass

amplifier notwithstanding. When that first set ended around 7:15, the crowd was energized and enthusiastic.

But to the younger listeners of jazz—I’m speaking of myself and this man’s 15-year-old son, those never previously exposed to the communal ethos of the music—shows like this one can tend to drag. Breaks between sets are too long. Our generation, so accustomed to yelling to each other over loud music at concerts, is entirely confused about the

(continued on page 3)



The Baltimore Jazz Alliance (BJA) is a grass-roots organization of jazz aficionados, musicians, and venues dedicated to enhancing and promoting jazz in Baltimore and the surrounding areas. New members sharing this passion are always welcome as the BJA continues its efforts to build a stronger and better networked jazz scene. Together we can help this music thrive in the region and reward listeners and musicians alike.

BJA Priorities

- To develop new audiences for jazz
- To strengthen communication within the jazz community
- To improve media relations on behalf of the jazz community
- To bring greater visibility to the entire array of jazz offerings in the Baltimore region
- To provide greater access to performance opportunities for Baltimore-area jazz musicians

Visit www.baltimorejazz.com for information about our accomplishments and future goals.

Baltimore Jazz Alliance

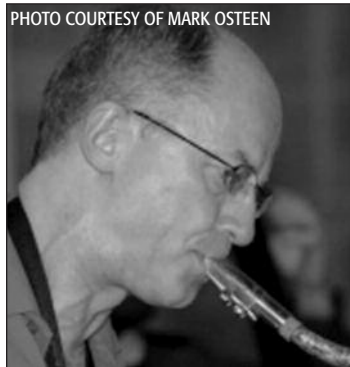
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Please direct your
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BJA in 2011: Challenges and Opportunities



Tom Williams—and provide them with prime performance times. We also planned and carried out our highly successful fundraiser, held on October 23rd at Caton Castle. With the support of our board and of our loyal members, we raised enough money to sustain us and advance our mission for another year.

In 2011 we also submitted our application to receive official 501 (c) 3 non-profit status from the IRS. We believe that once we have obtained this status, opportunities to win grants and find corporate sponsors will expand considerably.

We are always seeking new ways to spotlight local and regional jazz artists. And so, when long-time member Anthony Villa proposed creating a BJA Big Band, we jumped at the idea. Villa's vision of using the band to showcase Baltimore-area composers' original charts became a reality, as weekly rehearsals during the summer of 2011 culminated in a successful concert at Loyola University's McManus Theatre on September 13th. The show featured charts by local luminaries such as the late legend Hank Levy, BJA Board member Todd Marcus, members Phil Ravita, Paul Faatz, and Villa himself. If you'd like to submit a chart for the 2012 edition of the BJABB, please send an e-mail to Anthony at avilla@loyola.edu.

If 2011 was a year of transition for the Baltimore Jazz Alliance, 2012 promises to be a year of opportunity. In the wake of the fundraiser, the board has staked out specific goals for the new year, which include expanding our web and social media presence, creating more benefits for our members, and finding new blood for the board. We are particularly seeking new board members with experience in marketing, web design, grant writing, and in the local music business. If you have such experience and are interested in joining our board, please e-mail our webmaster, Barry Glassman (webmaster@baltimorejazz.com).

Of course, we intend to continue publishing this monthly newsletter—so beautifully produced and edited by Gail Marten—and to sponsor more music at Artscape. We also welcome suggestions from our members. If you have an idea for a BJA-sponsored project, please contact any of our board members, or send an e-mail to the webmaster address above.

We are deeply grateful to our members, and hope that you'll continue to support our mission of bringing this great music to Baltimore. We can't do it without you!

Sincerely,

Mark Osteen

BJA President

BJA WISHES YOU ALL A HARMONIOUS NEW YEAR!

Remembering Left Bank Jazz Society

(continued from first page)

concept of sitting quietly, intently listening. Several times Lamkin and Charles Simmons, President of Sojourner-Douglass College and one of the founders of the Left Bank Jazz Society, implored the audience—who were, overwhelmingly, middle-aged and elderly African Americans—to keep their voices low during the sets. And while everyone sitting in that room agreed that jazz, America's truly original music, needs to be kept alive, the best we could offer up were simple platitudes. (At one point, jazz was compared to Scotch, something we must acquire a taste for; but kids don't drink Scotch.)

Into the second set, though, came a glimpse of an answer. The band, now including vocalist Sheila Ford, plunged into a series of songs that tested their combined musical prowess and Ford's range. At one point, Ford and Funn performed a duet, Funn taking his bass off

The scene could have been something out of one of the music clubs that used to dot Baltimore's Pennsylvania Avenue.



PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN LAMKIN II

the leash for a wild walk as Ford, a hand on her hip, shot an accusatory glance at the bass with which she scatted rhythms. But the hope that many of us who were in that room hold on to—that dream that jazz will undergo a revitalization in this country that will make it once again popular—gained an almost ethereal lift during a rendition of

Dizzy Gillespie, John Coltrane, Nat Adderley and Sun Ra all played Left Bank shows at the Famous Ballroom.



PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN LAMKIN II



Sheila Ford
PHOTO COURTESY OF
JOHN LAMKIN II

Antonio Carlos Jobim's "Dindi." In the middle of the song, Ford began scating words, stretching the limits of her vocal cords as she mimicked the sounds of Alston's and Lamkin's horns, skoo-dap-da-boodop-ing her way through bars of music.

At that moment, I looked left to see the 15-year-old kid bobbing his head, a massive grin on his face. I tapped his father on the shoulder and pointed; he started to grin as well. When the song ended, and a thunderous standing ovation of applause, shouts, and whistles sounded louder than the final notes from the band, that 15-year-old—along with myself—was clapping just as loudly as everyone else. For a minute, this was it—the music in that room—and nothing else really mattered.

"Jazz," Ford said with zest. "You never know what's gonna happen!"

— Andrew Zaleski



PHOTO BY ANDREW ZALESKI

Wolf's fingers dexterously danced along the piano keys; Funn and Shahid . . . a substantive, and substantial, rhythm section.

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Bossalingo founder/guitarist Michael Joseph Harris and bassist Jake Leckie enjoying Didier Proissard's powerful piano solo.



BOSSALINGO cuban heat on a wintery night

On December 9th, Michael Joseph Harris's Bossalingo warmed a near-capacity crowd with their acoustic-guitar-led Latin jazz in the pristine acoustic of An Die Musik's concert room. Following a five-year layoff and a move from DC to Baltimore, Harris has re-launched the band with a new CD, *Steps Beyond*, taking the listener on a Pan-American tour of Latin rhythms. With their initial CD release in 1998 and regular appearances at the Chi Cha Lounge on DC's U Street, the band had a strong following before the lengthy performance sabbatical. This popularity gave them a packed house at November's Blues Alley CD launch.

The Blues Alley show featured Grammy-winning pianist Arturo O'Farrill, director of the Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra. For this first show on Baltimore home turf, Didier Proissard filled the piano slot admirably. The local rhythm section of Jake Leckie (bass) and Mike Kuhl (drums and percussion) kept pace with the intricate arrangements, while adding their own tasteful and original flavors.

The set opener, "The Cats on Sugar Mountain," an original number by leader, composer and guitarist Michael Joseph Harris, displayed his eclectic influences. His classical nylon-string guitar was crisp and articulate, despite a last-minute guitar amp malfunction.

The strength of Harris's compositions lies in the transitions. While his music can deliver a powerful Latin groove, each piece covers a broad dynamic and emotional range. "Until I Reach Out to You," another Harris original, is indicative of the range. Opening with solo acoustic guitar and percussion, the piece unfolded into an Afro-Cuban rumba. Harris's solo shifted from flamenco-influenced lines to a jazz-blues finale, following a lovely, whisper-quiet bass solo from Leckie. For "An Honest Journey," Kuhl delivered one of his



Mike Kuhl adding his percussive touches.

stand-out contributions with a polyrhythmical percussion solo on cajón. Throughout the evening Kuhl's percussive touches and infectious energy were a delight.

Bossalingo's arrangements of unexpected jazz covers, such as John Lennon's "Across the Universe" and "Pure Imagination," from *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*, share equally innovative arrangements. Lennon's melancholy melody was faithfully reproduced before broadening into a full-on jam. "Pure Imagination," perhaps the most unlikely song you would expect to hear in a jazz set, moved from a flamenco feel to a bossa nova, enhanced by Proissard's powerful, high-energy Afro-Cuban piano solo. The band seemed most energized on this piece, with Leckie delivering a spirited, bowed bass solo. Clifford Brown's "Joy Spring" provided a fitting finale—an unrestrained tour de force, bringing the audience to their feet.

This is likely to be the first of many opportunities to see Bossalingo. The virtuosity and enthusiasm of the band, coupled with the melodic Latin arrangements, is a recipe for enjoyment. An Die Musik's listening room ambience provides the perfect stage for their music, which demands an audience willing to invest attention on the music. Bossalingo music pays a good dividend for those willing to lend their ears!

— Ken Avis

LARRY BROWN

Live at the Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival

Live concert DVDs can be a hit-or-miss proposition. Making video that amplifies the performance instead of distracting from it goes way beyond turning on a video camera.

The Larry Brown Quintet's first DVD from 2010's Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival in Rockville, Maryland makes the case for going to the trouble of doing video: the spare, clean film is well worth sitting down to if you're a jazz fan looking to check out a live act from the comfort of the couch. The camera work and production are calm and attentive to the movements of Brown's quintet, a graceful, competent group of professionals. The material is a mix of covers, including "All Blues," "Old Folks" and "Swingin' at the Haven," and originals like Brown's "Duck, Duck, Goose" and very swinging "Nome Sayin'?"

This is music worth listening to (and watching) if you're a fan of straight-ahead jazz. Bassist Kent Miller and drummer Greg Holloway are propulsive and nuanced. Brown's piano work comes into focus in an ample (but not unseemly) number of close-ups. Just as often, there are nice paired shots showing band interaction—Miller and Holloway in lockstep, or sax player Peter Fraize and cornet player Thad Wilson heating things up.

There's a sense of the band in every video frame, which doesn't try to squeeze in too close on fingers or eyeballs. The audience frames a fair number of shots, too, with silhouettes walking by every so often, but it doesn't distract. The only caution I'd make to someone preparing to pop in Brown's DVD is not to adjust your sound when the emcee introduces the band: the mic is much quieter than the performance, and that remains true throughout the show when Brown introduces songs. If you turn it up and toss the remote on a pillow, the next song will blast you. But who wants to hear

DVD REVIEW



More about Larry Brown's award-winning music at:
www.larrybrownjazz.org

talking? There's barely any of it during the show anyway, as it should be.

Considering the most important video criterion of all, performance sound quality, the DVD is a hit. The upright bass is full and warm (even on my modest 5.1 computer speakers), the drums are crisp, and soloists hold sway without drowning out the band. For around \$20, with the cold ones coming from the fridge, this show gives a night out a run for its money.

— Eliot Caroom

writers wanted

BJA members are encouraged to write articles for the newsletter. Relevant articles are assigned to interested, competent writers by the editorial staff. Our focus is mostly on local jazz events and BJA members. Please check recent issues for content and style.

(archives are at baltimorejazz.com)

If you would like to be a contributing writer to our newsletter, please notify the editor at: jazzpalette@gmail.com, and attach a sample of your writing,



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BJA Members now receive a \$2 discount off the general admission price!
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The Baltimore Chamber Jazz Society is a non profit organization and is supported by a grant from the Maryland State Arts Council, an agency dedicated to cultivating a vibrant cultural community where the arts thrive.



RENT EUBIE LIVE!

Eubie Live! is a new state-of-the-art performance venue in Baltimore offering a small, yet intimate setting for music, dance and theater. Eubie Live! provides patrons with a unique ambience reminiscent of the jazz clubs of the 1920's and 1930's on the fourth floor of the Eubie Blake Jazz Institute. Totalling more than 2,000 square feet in area, Eubie Live! comfortably seats more than 100 patrons and is physically challenged accessible. The space includes the latest technologies in sound to give patrons the best performing arts experience possible.

Please call 410-225-3130 for booking opportunities.

★ Special discounts available for BJA members!

JAM SESSIONS

Monday Nights in Canton

Monday night jam sessions at the Red House Tavern, 2239 Essex Street. House piano, drums, and PA system. Hosted by Tom Reyes and friends, featuring the band's Hammond B3 organ. Showtime at 8 pm. (410) 522-0015

Tuesday Nights in Randallstown

Open Jazz Jam Sessions/ Book and Poetry Readings every Tuesday at 6:30-8 pm at the Randallstown Community Center, 3505 Resource Drive. Hosted by Derrick Amin. All musicians and vocalists are welcome. 410-887-0698

Share

If you know of local jam sessions, please share the information with our readers by emailing the details to the editor at: jazzpalette@gmail.com

If you learn of opportunities for music education scholarships or grants, please email the information to the editor at: jazzpalette@gmail.com

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BALTIMORE
OFFICE OF PROMOTION & THE ARTS

The Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts is partnering with GiveCorps, a Baltimore-based website that supports nonprofits in our community. Our GiveCorps project will be featured this week and is raising funds for Bright Starts, which provides free after-school art, music, dance, and theatre workshops for children ages 5-18 from underserved areas.



GIVE CORPS
GIVE LOCAL. GET LOCAL.

GiveCorps is based on the idea of "Give Local. Get Local." It presents the funding needs of different local nonprofits and provides a local coupon as a reward to those who give. GiveCorps may seem similar to other "daily deal" sites, except instead of selling you something, they are giving you something. When you support Bright Starts, you will get a great discount from a local merchant.

How can you help?

1. Log on to givecorps.com learn more about Bright Starts and make a donation to the Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts to bring the arts to these kids.
2. Take a moment to forward this email on to a few friends, family members, or coworkers and tell them why you think after-school art programs are so important to Baltimore City children. Ask them if they'd make a donation in support of Bright Starts.
3. Promote this project through social media such as Facebook or Twitter.

Check out our project
and **DONATE NOW!**



Baltimore Jazz Alliance Big Band

HERE WE GO AGAIN! The Baltimore Jazz Alliance Big Band is ready to start its second exciting year.

After last summer's successful inaugural season, capped off with an exciting concert in September at Loyola University, the band is getting ready to tackle some new challenging charts.

The group, whose mission is to provide area musicians with an opportunity to rehearse and perform works by Baltimore-area composers and arrangers in addition to other great works of contemporary jazz, will rehearse each Tuesday during the summer from mid-June to early September.

The BJA Big Band's summer work will again culminate in a free concert at Loyola University Maryland in September. Additional concerts are also in the works. The BJA Big Band hopes to add an open reading session this year and a composers' competition and prize next year.

Those wishing to apply for membership in the band should contact Villa at the email address below. An mp3 of a recent performance is requested.

The life blood of the band is new music by Baltimore musicians. Composers and arrangers are enthusiastically encouraged to email pdfs and mp3s of their big-band charts to Villa for consideration for this year's concerts. The earlier, the better!

BALTIMORE JAZZ MUSICIANS, come, we welcome you. Be a part of the new big-band music scene in Baltimore. Be a part of the Baltimore Jazz Alliance Big Band. For further information or complete details for sending mp3 and pdfs, please contact Anthony Villa at avilla@loyola.edu.

**The BJA is dedicated to promoting
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Attention Artists!

If you haven't yet nominated yourself or reactivated an earlier submission, now is the time to do so.

Deadline for submissions is January 15th.

Nominate yourself this week in order to be eligible for the final round of b-grant awards and encourage your friends and colleagues to do the same before the deadline.

If you need assistance, send an email to:
thelab@bakerartistawards.org.



BJA NEEDS YOU!

We're always looking for new members. If you enjoy reading our newsletter, please show your appreciation by joining the BJA. If you're a musician, joining will get you on our email list for gigs. If you just love jazz, your membership will help our efforts immeasurably.

The membership form may be found on page 11 of this newsletter or join online at the BJA website.

www.baltimorejazz.com

bja member notes

New Members

Music Lover: Alan Edwards

Musicians: Michael Harris and Dave Ballou

Condolences

BJA extends sincere condolences to Rhonda Robinson on the passing of her father, Reverend Bobby L. Robinson.

Hybrid Jazz

Trish Hennessey is looking for great talent in our region to interview on her radio show *Hybrid Jazz from Trish Hennessey*. The only requirement is to have a CD and a positive outlook. The show will expand to three hours in February. Contact: altcwg@al.com or 410-686-4424.

Volunteers Needed at Eubie Blake Center

Do you have computer and/or people skills? There are opportunities for reliable volunteers of all ages and skills to help at the Eubie Blake Center located at 847 N. Howard Street. Contact Troy Burton at 410-225-3130 or eubieblake@rcn.com.

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Share your news with our readers. Send your announcements to the editor at: jazzpalette.com.

bja member discounts

NEW! Chamber Jazz Society of Baltimore is now offering BJA Members a \$2 discount off the general admission price. Just indicate your affiliation when ordering tickets.

An die Musik offers 10% discount for BJA members for music purchases at the An die Musik record store.

Donna's Restaurant in Columbia offers BJA members 15% off their bill for up to two people during live jazz (Saturdays, 7-9 pm).

Eubie Live! at the Eubie Blake Cultural Center at 847 N. Howard Street offers a discount to BJA members on rentals of its performance and events spaces.

CD, GIG & VENUE REVIEWS

BJA members may send their commercially produced jazz CDs for review consideration to:

BALTIMORE JAZZ ALLIANCE

847 North Howard Street, Baltimore, MD 21201

www.baltimorejazz.com

If you would like to have a gig or venue reviewed, please contact: webmaster@baltimorejazz.com

Bear in mind that we're unlikely to review bands or venues already covered in previous issues.

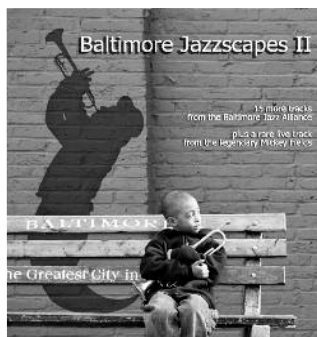


PHOTO IMAGE BY LEO HOWARD LUBOW

Baltimore Jazzscapes II

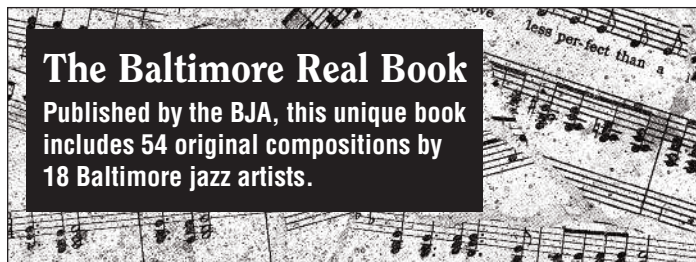
The BJA'S 16 track compilation CD *Baltimore Jazzscapes II*, showcases Baltimore jazz artists performing in formats ranging from piano trios to large ensembles, playing everything from standards to original contemporary jazz.

The new tracks (all but two of them original compositions) on *Jazzscapes*

II testify to the breadth and depth of the contemporary Baltimore jazz scene. *Jazzscapes II* also presents a bonus track by the late Baltimore saxophonist Mickey Fields, an inspired rendering of "Lover Man."

CD available at www.cdbaby.com and numerous retail outlets in Baltimore including:

- AMERICAN VISIONARY ARTS MUSEUM, 800 Key Highway
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 - AN DIE MUSIK, 409 N. Charles Street
 - BALTIMORE SYMPHONY STORE, 1212 Cathedral Street
 - FELLS POINT VISITOR CENTER, 1724 Thames Street
 - JAZZ HOUSE WEST, 6035 Liberty Road
 - RECORD & TAPE TRADERS, 7551 Ritchie Highway, Glen Burnie and 736 Dulaney Valley Road, Towson
 - SOUND GARDEN, 1616 Thames Street, Fells Point
- and by the various band leaders on the disk



Members may purchase copies directly from the BJA for \$8 (20% discount) or at the following retail outlets:

- Appalachian Bluegrass, 643 Frederick Road, Catonsville
- Baltimore Brass & More, 99 Mellor Avenue, Catonsville
- Bill's Music, 743 Frederick Road, Catonsville
- Coffey Music, 31 E. Main Street, Westminster
- Dale Music, 8240 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring
- Dundalk Music Center, 15 Center Place, Dundalk
- Music Go Round ("C" Book only), 10112 York Road, Cockeysville
- Peabody Bookstore, 5 E. Centre Street, Baltimore
- Reisterstown Music Center, 519 Main Street, Reisterstown
- Rosso Music Center, 5600 Ritchie Highway, Brooklyn Park
- Stu's Music, Rt. 140, Westminster
- Ted's Musician Shop, 11 E. Centre Street, Baltimore
- The Guitar Center ("C" Book only), 1524 E. Joppa Road, Towson and 6320 Ritchie Highway, Glen Burnie
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*Gail Marten, Editor/Designer
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Please return this form along with your check to:

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THANK YOU FOR JOINING! Your Membership Makes A Difference.





THE PEABODY INSTITUTE
OF THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

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AT PEABODY**

February 16 and May 2:
Peabody Improvisation and
Multimedia Ensemble (P.I.M.E.)
Gary Thomas, Director

February 17 and April 13
Peabody Jazz Orchestra
Michael Formanek, Director

April 12
Peabody Latin Jazz Ensemble
Tim Murphy, Director

To view the complete calendar, visit
www.peabody.jhu.edu/events

FROM LEFT: GEORGE GERSHWIN, MAX ROACH,
BILLIE HOLIDAY, TITO PUENTE, DUKE ELLINGTON,
MILES DAVIS, AND COUNT BASIE

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