

CHRIS BARBER

JAZZ &
BLUES BAND

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It is with regret that we have to announce the sad news of the death of Karl Heinz Lyrmann. Karl collapsed on Friday March 31st.. He was 61. Karl was a founder member of the German Jazz Federation. He had first been introduced to jazz whilst in an American POW camp in 1945. Karl had served as a boy soldier towards the end of the war. He began promoting jazz concerts during the early 1950's and organised the first tour of Germany by Ken Colyer in 1957. The following year he arranged the first of Chris Barber's appearances in Germany and had remained Chris' agent(and friend)for that country ever since.

Over-all responsibility for co-ordinating tours in West Germany by Chris Barber's Jazz & Blues Band now rests with Wim Wigt Productions of Wageningen in Holland.

It had been planned that the 'special guest' on the concerts Sun March 26th/ Wednesday March 29th. inclusive was to have been Van Morrison. For reasons best known to himself, Van decided not to participate after all. We were particularly irritated in view of the fact that the initial approach had come from one of his own representatives. However, we are indebted to Zoot Money (who filled the breach at Eastbourne) and Paul Jones who deputised at Newcastle, Hayes and Wavendon. The Paul Jones concerts were particularly successful and enjoyable and Paul has expressed a wish to take part in further Anniversary concerts later in the year. He will unquestionably be accomodated !

The Band appears at a promotional event for Bristol Street Motors in Bromley on Wednesday April 12th.. This is followed by:

THU APR 13: Fairfield Hall:CROYDON:Surrey
35th. Anniversary Concert with special guests
Lonnie Donegan:Monty Sunshine:Jim Bray: Ron Bowden: Beryl Bryden:
Ben Cohen:Ferdie Favagar:Jeremy French Alex Revell.
FAIRFIELD HALL BOX OFFICE: 01 681 0821

FRI APR 14: Albert Hall:BOLTON:Lancs
with special guests.

SAT APR 15: Charnwood Theatre:LOUGHBOROUGH:Leics

SUN APR 16: Leighton Park School:READING:Berkshire

Then follows a tour on the continent of Europe. The next UK period commences on Thursday May 18th. at The Arts Centre:University of Warwick with special guest RORY GALLAGHER. Then:

SAT MAY 20: Empire Theatre:HALSTEAD:Essex

SUN MAY 21: Regent Centre:CHRISTCHURCH:Dorset

WEDNESDAY MAY 31ST, the actual day of the 35th Anniversary of the present band's first ever performance sees the past and present bands appear in a special show at the very venue of that first engagement -London's 100 Club. Tickets are available in advance only. There will be no facility for payment on the night. Tickets are £10.00 from Roger Horton:100 Club:100 Oxford Street: LONDON W1: Tel 01 636 0933. Capacity is strictly limited to the first 400 applicants.

Chris Barber recently visited Dublin to appear as special guest soloist with the Paddy Cole Band. The concert, at the Olympia, was filmed by RTE for transmission sometime this spring. Also taking part was Harry Gold. This feature was repeated in the Dublin newspaper to coincide with Chris' visit.

Jazz 'King' Chris plays the blues

TO JAZZ fans of a certain age, the name Chris Barber recalls the traditional jazz revival of the 1950's and 60's: a strident, ringing sound with banjo chunking out the chordal and rhythmic foundation while the obligatory front line of trumpet, clarinet and trombone play ensemble over the top of it all.

Music for dancing, music for fun, and an accurate recreation of the music of old New Orleans masters like Kid Ory or George Lewis.

Chris Barber successfully steered his band away from the slump which automatically followed the trad jazz boom of the early 60's, the era of Ball, Barber and Bilk.

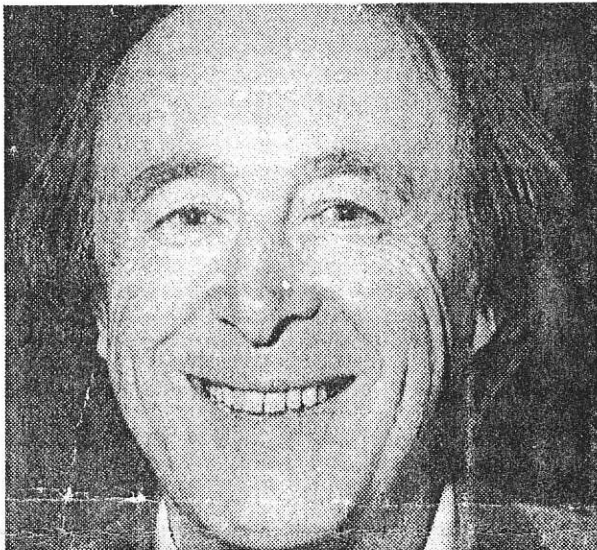
Blues and gospel music permeated more of the repertoire and today Chris has subtly altered the band's title to Chris Barber's Jazz and Blues Band.

The newer look Barber band has played in Ireland, both North and South, many times in recent years, and the concert tonight in the Gaiety Theatre is a follow on from his great success in the National Concert Hall last Autumn.

Chris handles blues vocals

In other years he has played in the Kilkenny Arts Week, the Cork Jazz Festival and again in the N.C.H. in 1983. Gone are the days of Otilie Patterson as the band's vocalist but Chris handles blues vocals himself quite capably and the band can add harmony backgrounds on numbers like "On a Mardi Gras Day" or "Bourbon Street Parade".

The basic instrumentation has changed and the line-up totals eight, offering at any given time permutations of trombone, trum-



CHRIS BARBER . . . trend-setter in the 50's and 60's.

By Bryan Day

pet, clarinet, alto and tenor saxes, two electric guitars or banjo, blues harmonica, bass and drums.

The old "Storyville" repertoire has been extended to include well arranged Ellington-style numbers, usually featuring tearaway solos from saxophonists John Crocker and Ian Wheeler. Often the sight of this line up has offended trad purists and it was way back in 1964 when Chris committed the ultimate heresy by adding an electric guitar to the line up.

John Slaughter's immense blues talent was a sound investment for the band, eager to maintain the current trend of blues and R'n'B.

Today the Chris Barber concept of New Orleans music stretches to the present day Mardi Gras sounds of Dr. John or Professor Longhair and indeed Dr. John, who played in Dublin recently, did tour with the band. Chris himself was

a major catalyst in the popularity of blues in Europe.

Having played in Chicago, he was able to contact many bluesmen and bring them over for solo tours. From 1958 on, names like Muddy Waters, Otis Spann, James Cotton, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee came to Britain to tour with Chris. Then there were the gospel artists, a music very dear to the hearts of Chris Barber and Otilie Patterson, and so Sister Rosetta Tharpe and Alex Bradford also starred with the band.

Chris rarely works with guests now. "No, there are not really many left that I would want to go through all the drama of organising a tour with someone, although I like their work. There are some good people about, still.

"There are some people I'd like to work with. Roebuck Staples of the Staples Singers I've never managed to achieve yet. I'd very much like to get Roebuck over to work with the band. We had a marvellous

time with Alex Bradford in 1974, we're very fond of gospel music and Roebuck's the best."

If, unwittingly, Chris's exploits in blues were helping to dislodge the supremacy of the trad era, Chris never felt any reaction against his music. He remained in huge demand in Europe and Scandinavia and continued to record and develop new influences in the band.

At the end of the 60's he featured a couple of tour-de-force compositions which even incorporated Macedonian folk-dance rhythms! The band had come a long way from its formation in 1954 by Chris and Pat Halcox out of the ashes of the first Ken Colyer band.

Nowadays the band is well represented in the CD market and a new LP is out on Sonet records. They'll probably be selling tonight. Pat Halcox sings the novelty title track of the record, "When it's Thursday night in Egypt, it's half past three in Spain".

Broad concept of trad jazz

The continued success of the Barber band is due to Chris's forward musical thinking, and a broader concept of traditional jazz than the old band formats would allow.

"We've always tried to get a lot into it, not the over simplification of the trad era which was taking just one little bit of what traditional jazz is, and exaggerating that to the nth degree and ignoring all the other musical parts of it. It doesn't mean that the stuff that was there was bad, it was just a small part of the story. We've always thought the whole truth is important, not just nothing but the truth but the whole truth."

CHRIS BARBER.....FOURTY YEARS (OR SO) AGO.....



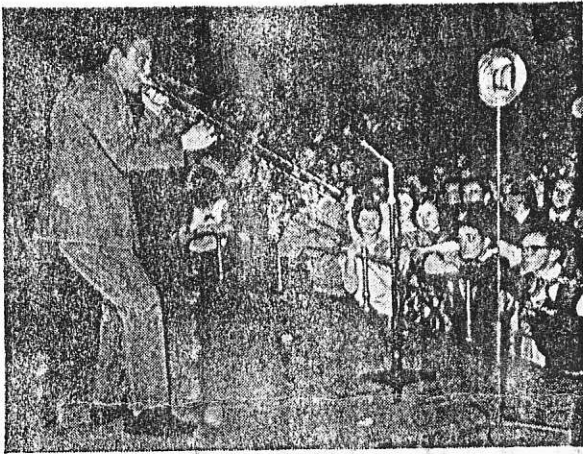
This poor quality original picture, hopefully, enables the reader to discern part of the front line of the first CHRIS BARBER NEW ORLEANS JAZZ BAND formed in 1949. Left to right Chris, Ben Cohen (trumpet), Alex Revill (clarinet) will be joining forces once more, forty years on, for certain dates during the 1989 programme of Anniversary concerts. (Yes, this photo WAS taken in 1949)

April dates for the continental part of the tour are as follows:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| APR 18: Odense:Denmark | APR 24:Mannheim:West Germany |
| Apr 19: Frederikshaven: Denmark | APR 25:Freiburg:West Germany |
| Apr 20: Aalborg:Denmark | APR 27:Hilden:West Germany |
| Apr 21: Viborg:Denmark | APR 28:Oelde:West Germany |
| Apr 22: Paderborn:West Germany | APR 29:Krefeld:West Germany |
| Apr 23: Bad Wildungen:West Germany | APR 30:Mulheim Ruhr:West Germany |

Full venue details for these dates may be obtained from Wim Wigt Productions: P.O. Box 201, Wageningen:Holland. Telephone 010 31 8370 13440 or Fax: 8370 21548.

We have available on special offer a limited number of copies of the Otilie Patterson Album 'Back in The Old Days'. This offer is to subscribers only at £2.50 (inc post & packing). First come, first served. No correspondence and cheques will be returned if over-subscribed. Cheques or P.O.'s payable V.Gibbons to this address.(Albums only.No CD's or tapes).



JAMES ASMAN

THE

CHRIS BARBER BAND

Among my journalist friends happens to be one lean-visaged character who spends too much of his time squatting at the touchline of International football matches, desperately hammering out on his old portable typewriter a continuous stream of excuses for the English teams.

As he said to me the other day (the very picture of despondency): "Whenever I write about soccer I always come up against the bloodiness of English International football—whatever I say about the game, I still have to hunt up yet another alibi for the fact that we are always being soundly trounced abroad."

And I know just what he means, for I have had to squat at the touchline of British Revivalist jazz and try, as best I can, to ignore the boring vacuum which is another name for our local band talent.

A few weeks ago, as part of my job as a record reviewer, I listened to one example of this phenomenon under the imposing title of "Lansdowne Jazz Series—Chris Barber International, Volume One—Barber In Berlin—Chris Barber's Jazz Band with Otilie Patterson". By the time I was three-quarters of the way through I had a splitting headache and a devout wish never to listen to such a cacophony again.

This new long player, recorded I will admit under rather adverse circumstances by Joe Meek and Peter Willemoes at the Deutschlandhalle in Berlin on May 23, 1959, presents a fairly familiar pattern with "Climax Rag", "Maryland, My Maryland", "Chimes Blues" and "Ice Cream", plus a few new items presented in the old guise—"Easy Easy Baby", "Gotta Travel On" and "What's I'm Gotcha".

The ideas and the freshness of the early British pioneers seem now to have disintegrated into a commercially popular and pretty style which—let us be quite honest about this—the Barber band dare not discard and which is becoming a creative quagmire.

I feel that the greatest immediate tragedy of the group, and particularly of

the front line, is that their personal attitude to jazz music as a whole is completely sincere. Barber's own praiseworthy efforts to record a reincarnated Clarence Williams' Washboard Band is only one example of a very genuine enthusiasm and love for the music.

And yet the canker has set in. Here is a band which has carried local jazz out of the backrooms of pubs and into the Royal Festival Hall and the Deutschlandhalle. Here is a band which has brought the mark of popular approval to "Trad" jazz—"Petite Fleur" and "Lonesome" are no accidents. Here, too, is a band which has simplified and standardised New Orleans music and blues for general digestion.

There has never been a single artist who has been able to woo "pop" approval without sacrificing something integral from the original. It is, indeed, the difference between Barber's representation and the original New Orleans jazz that might give us the clue to the faults in this highly successful revivalist group.

The "popular" pattern of the band sound, as it appears to the commercial record buying public, lies squarely (in more senses than one) on the banjo playing of Eddie Smith. For Eddie is no faker—his technique is excellent and he is always able to push the outfit along in an individual way. Within this individuality, however, lies little real jazz feeling, for the danceable lilt produced owes more to popular minstrel shows than to any of the great jazz banjoists.

This is the most obvious fault of all. The band at its best can create a "white" lively lilt but this seldom has much relationship to the elastic swinging beat of a true jazz group.

To untutored ears this likeable syncopation produces the commercial sound which has made the Chris Barber Jazz Band a top selling proposition far outside the jazz clubs and the minor concerts of small provincial promoter-enthusiasts.

Dick Smith's bass and the drums of Graham Burbridge support the banjo

efficiently—I almost wrote mechanically. On the occasions when the noise seems suddenly to lift along, when the front line comes to life, banjo, bass and drums are busy making a "white" two-beat foundation which lacks the loose elasticity and essential movement of a real jazz beat. There is no subtlety.

Chris Barber's trombone playing has always been too calculated for my particular taste, but his growing mastery of the instrument now allows him to participate in more fiery ensembles when he usually elects to play a single riff phrase in staccato fashion as a contrast to the sentimental clarinet and the vehement trumpet. Too often this tromboning remains jerky and sterile without the broader vision and imagination of a good New Orleans tailgate trombonist.

Monty Sunshine is famous, and justly so, for his thick, honey-sweet tone which grew out of a sincere desire, back in the days of the Crane River Jazz Band, to emulate the work of George Lewis. Monty, following the derivative period when all his solos and phrases were borrowed direct from Lewis' records, has retained the rich, smaltzy tone but has now proceeded experimentally along lines of his own.

This, I feel, is an experimental period for him. Divorced by his own desire to end musical apprenticeship from a chosen background, he is now out in a wilderness of his own making. The public demand for lush, over-sentimental solo pieces like "Petite Fleur" has not helped him to find his way—and it must be admitted that he has continually tried to escape this commercial stranglehold. At the moment he seems like an orator who is forced to make speeches but who has lost any real reason for saying anything at all.

If you listen carefully to Monty's improvisations on this particular Berlin tape you will hear that many of the melodic ideas incorporated in his descant phrases are becoming barren and even ugly at times, and this may be part of his personal desire to find a more creative

pattern for himself. I believe, however, that a far more important point lies behind this.

American Negro jazz musicians and the better white players have had the advantage of a natural background upon which they could always rest comfortably and without strain. Their inspirational periods, usually occurring while they are developing as artists, are based on the native folk music behind jazz proper. The blues, the existing examples of pioneer musicians that serve as paragons to the aspiring newcomer, the mass of French, African, European, hillbilly, Creole, Spanish, minstrel and early theatrical music and the language and background of the Southern Negro are but a few of the impulses encouraging good jazz invention.

That is why a New Orleans street crier sounds like a deep Mississippi blues singer, why the coloured Harlem rock 'n' roller has direct links with urban blues-making from the same source and why, even in the Negro churches, one can hear a tailgate trombone, a ragtime piano or a rhythm-and-blues guitar. All this is the natural site upon which jazz, as a native music, builds and re-builds itself from New Orleans marching bands to the avant garde of East Coast experimentation.

The older men of both white and coloured American jazz groups—more obviously in the traditional school

than in the modern or even mainstream idioms—are often playing now like tired old men. Such pioneers as Kid Ory, for example, have been band-leaders for over 60 years. Others, like Louis Armstrong, George Lewis and Muggsy Spanier have been sick and now regard their health of paramount consideration.

The British school is composed of youngsters, green both in age and in experience, and all of them lacking the natural background of folk activity and environment. Too many possess but a fleeting sympathy with jazz proper and more have completely neglected the essential study of Afro-American folk music which has always provided the instinctive accent to the language of jazz improvisation.

If, as I suppose, Monty Sunshine has fallen a victim to this vacuum, he is only one of a very large company—Sandy Brown, Al Fairweather, Humphrey Lyttelton, Acker Bilk and many more.

It is debatable whether the other school, headed by Ken Colyer, is really any more fortunate in this sense for on the one hand we have a conscious imitation and on the other a rather fruitless "originality".

Yet there are musicians in the British field who have managed to retain to a marked degree this rare sympathy for the jazz language.

Bruce Turner is one outstanding figure,

although he suffers continually from bad musical company. Lennie Felix is worthy of mention and one cannot forget Wally Fawkes—and Pat Halcox.

Pat is by far the most rewarding musician in the Barber entourage. Not only does he work as a musical leader but he is able to infuse into his work both logic and force—an excellent combination in a jazz trumpeter.

So we have, in the Chris Barber Jazz Band, a remarkable contradiction. A patterned, simplified Dixieland music which possesses the elusive but deadly ingredient of popular appeal, played in the main by a bunch of devoted jazz lovers. The featured vocals of Otilie Patterson might be said to stress this peculiarity for Otilie combines such a personal appreciation with an equally popular appeal. Despite recent attempts to widen her repertoire she still manages to project a popularised copy of Bessie Smith upon audiences who, in their ignorance and witlessness, fail to appreciate the beauty of the original.

This could be a temporary phase, however. Barber has not yet had a sixth of Ory's bandleading experience—and not even a fragment of his native environment to lean upon. Monty is a mere greenhorn beside the majestic figures of Lewis, Edmond Hall and Albert Nicholas. Pat, too, remains but a promising

infant compared to the great jazz trumpeters.

In the mid-Forties we began reproducing jazz rather haltingly, rather noisily—and without even a lilt to bless the new-born babe. We have gone quite a way in a decade and a half, but the 'sixties still present us with a question mark.

Shall we remember the Chris Barber Jazz Band when 1970 arrives, or will it have sank to the same obscurity that has covered the remains of so much local jazz endeavour—of John Hains, Ken Smiley, Bob Barclay, Eric Lister, George Webb and the Original London Blue Blowers?

Longevity is surely the true mark of artistic importance and remembrance the last and greatest critic of all.



THE BARBER BAND IN-ACTION.

The reader will, hopefully, by now have concluded that this is not a recent article. In fact it is chapter and verse the review by James Asman from the February 1960 issue of Jazz Journal of the 'Barber In Berlin' L.P.! The recent re-issue of that album on C.D and tape prompted us to dig out the review to remind ourselves on just how pompous jazz reviewers were in those days. In that same issue of Jazz Journal there appeared a review by a U.S.A writer of the Band's 1959 American tour. We promise to re-produce THAT review in a future newsletter.

the JAZZ RAG

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LONG GONE LONNIE.....

The concert at Dorking Halls on Sunday June 4th. has included Lonnie Donegan in some advertising. Lonnie WAS due to appear but withdrew some time ago. Monty Sunshine remains on the bill which will also now include original founder members of the 1949 band (Ben Cohen,Jeremy French,Ferdie Favagar,Alex Revill)

HELLO SAILOR
The Band plays in concert at the Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth on Wednesday May 24th.. Tickets will be made available to the general public and the theatre box office can be located via tel: 0804 21429.

In the middle of the UK summer tour there will be a short 'interlude' for three dates in Sweden. They are

Fri Jun 30: Gotenburg
Sat Jul 1: Vadstena
Sun Jul 2: Stockholm (Skeppsholmen)

Full venue details from Wim Wigt Productions whose address, fax and telephone numbers appear elsewhere in this newsletter.

ANOTHER MAJOR LONDON CONCERT.....

There will be a further concert in the Anniversary series at The Royal Festival Hall, London on Thursday June 29th.. The concert will feature the 1949 originals, along with the present band. Tickets will eventually be on sale at the Royal Festival Hall Box Office but early reservations or enquiries can be directed to the promoter John Martin on 01 543 4457 .
