NORMAN GRANZ AND HAROLD DAVISON PRESENT

AN EVENING WITH ELLA FITZGERALD AND THE OSCAR PETERSON TRIO

ELLA FITZGERALD AND HER QUARTET ELLA FITZGERALD TOMMY FLANAGAN piano JIMMY HUGHART bass GUS JOHNSON drums LES SPANN guitar

THE OSCAR PETERSON TRIO OSCAR PETERSON piano RAY BROWN bass ED THIGPEN drums

About a week before I started writing these notes, I received the acetate of a new album by Ella Fitzgerald. It was called 'Ella on Broadway', and consisted of songs from fairly recent American musicals that Ella had never recorded before. Some of the songs were from very famous shows, like *My Fair Lady* or *The Pajama Game* or *Damn Yankees*. One or two others were strange to me in my British insularity, and I did not know where the songs had come from at all. But they all had about them a certain quality, a pedigree that was common to them all, and it is that pedigree which is so fascinating when listening to or discussing the art of Ella Fitzgerald.

There was a time, when the world was young, when judgement on a song was a simple affair. Either you thought the song was good, or you thought it was bad, or you thought it was indifferent. On rare occasions, when Gershwin or Porter had been in the vicinity, you thought something was great, but whatever you thought, it was all straightforward and uncomplicated.

Today all that far-off simplicity is gone. Double-think and intellectual duplicity dominate every judgement of popular music. On the face of it everything is in chaos. Standards have vanished, the world's ear has become all screwed up, and nobody ever writes songs like they used to. It all looks like a bewildering upheaval of the known laws of the Universe.

In fact it is nothing of the kind. There is still such a thing as a good song and still such a thing as judgement of a good song. It is simply that today there are two separate worlds of popular music. One of them caters for those who are not worth catering for, and the other is the real world of song, the old one, with true melody, intelligible lyrics and some sense of artistic standard. It is this world that is fighting for its life, and its most potent weapon in the fight is the voice and career of Ella Fitzgerald.

In the last few years, the bulk of Ella's recording career and much of her concert stage time has been devoted to the rendition of the great songs of Broadway. My only regret that she has achieved it all is that never again will I be able to hear her sing for the first time songs like *Soon*, *Ship Without a Sail*, *Now It Can Be Told* and dozens more. But for the attention of Ella to these songs and others like them, nobody would have heard of them today, apart from a tiny minority of enthusiasts who hunt good old songs as prospectors hunt gold.

People tend to forget just how many irrelevant factors go to make up the kind of song known as a Standard. To rescue even one from oblivion is a feat any singer may be proud of. To rescue dozens is quite unprecedented in the history of popular music, and it is this crusade that has crowned the Fitzgerald career. As an example of the kind of factors which enter into the life of a popular song, I repeat, very briefly the history of one of the numbers revived by Ella in her five-volume set, 'The George Gershwin Song Book'.

In 1918 Ira Gershwin was working as a desk clerk at an establishment called the St. Nicholas Baths ('Russian or Turkish, for Ladies and Gentlemen'). He was twenty-two years old and had never really decided on any particular career. His younger brother George was already embarked, but Ira was still pottering about, scribbling verses and composing an occasional short story or two-line quip. The Baths being a commercial experiment of Gershwin Senior, there was plenty of opportunity for riding hobby horses in working hours,

and one day in June, Ira started to work on an idea for a lyric which he tentatively called *The Great American Folk Song*.

He showed the completed version to his brother and the collaboration began. Twenty versions were written and discarded before the final amended draft was arrived at, with the slightly changed title *The Real American Folk Song*. George Gershwin at this time was accompanist to the singer Nora Bayes, and soon she was featuring the song in a revue called *Ladies First*. After six or eight weeks it was dropped in favour of something new, and that was that. In his autobiographical digression on the art of putting words to music, 'Lyrics on Several Occasions', Ira Gershwin make the point about *The Real American Folk Song* that (*a*) it earned him nothing, and (*b*) that after the Bayes episode the song lay fallow for FORTY YEARS.

Apart from its historical interest as the first fully professional lyric achieved by Ira Gershwin, *The Real American Folk Song* has many virtues to recommend it, and the fact that it could lie neglected for forty years makes one stop and wonder how many other songs of the same class might not be buried beneath similar mountains of gross neglect. When you write a song as a beginner in 1918, and nothing more is heard of the song by the 1950s, you are entitled to assume that the song is dead forever. You would, however, be quite wrong.

In the multi-album recording 'Ella Fitzgerald Sings the George Gershwin Song Book', there stood *The Real American Folk Song*, placed in an ideal setting, and sung with faultless precision. It is impossible for that song ever to be buried again, because it has been included in one of the definitive anthologies of Gershwin's music. And it is only one of many. In the same set there appears a song by Ella called *Stiff Upper Lip*, a half-forgotten piece from a film called *A Damsel in Distress*. The lyric was packed with vocabulary from the novels of P. G. Wodehouse.

'Pip-pip', 'toodle-ooh', 'stout fella', etc. What is important to the student of the art of wedding words to music is that Wodehouse remains the most underrated lyric writer in the history of modern Musical Comedy, and that Ira Gershwin, who has often acknowledged his debt, and Hammerstein's, and Lorenz Hart's, to Wodehouse, showed, in *Stiff Upper Lip*, how one master could pay tribute to the art of another. But for the Ella Fitzgerald revival of the song in the Gershwin Song Book, it is highly improbable that any of us who grew to adulthood during and after the last war would ever have heard of *Stiff Upper Lip*.

I know that there are very many other facets of Ella Fitzgerald's art that have nothing to do with the history of the Broadway musical. Her jazz-orientated background with the Chick Webb Orchestra, her natural gift for harmonic sequences, her freak range,

Photo Roll Ambor

her astonishing consistency. But all this has been written about at length many times before, and the work she has done in preserving the forgotten masterpieces of Broadway is something which is so often overlooked, even by the most zealous Fitzgerald fan.

And now to return to my starting point, the album, 'Ella on Broadway'. It was composed of numbers from the shows that appeared in the years of supposed decline of the popular song. Probably there is some truth in the theory. But it is not entirely true that no good songs are written any more. The value of the Fitzgerald recordings is that they give the listener ideal conditions under which to make comparisons. The Song Books gave us the vintage Broadway composers in Utopian musical conditions. Albums like 'Ella on Broadway' do the same thing for some more recent writers, and if the standard on the new album is not as consistent as that of the Song Books, it must be remembered that the Song Books covered whole lifetimes and were an anthology of the very best over a thirty of forty year period. But on the new album there were at least two songs that belonged with the vintage productions of the halcyon days. One was *Warm All Over*, from Frank Loesser's score to *Most Happy Fella*, and the other was called *Somebody, Somewhere*. I know neither the composer's name nor the show for which the song was written, but what I do know is that at certain points in the melody there are

distinct Gershwinian overtones, in the way that certain chromatic chords in the harmony make themselves prominent in the melodic line, only once or twice, but enough to be effective, and reminiscent of a Gershwin song like *That Certain Feeling*.

In this way Ella Fitzgerald's singing, especially on record, shows the attentive listener how the tradition by which Broadway has always produced a rich fund of quality popular songs, still continues today. If we sometimes think the tradition is dead, if we sometimes tend to hang down our heads and bemoan the passing of a minor but delightful art form, it is not because the tradition itself is dead, but because another tradition, and another kind of Popular Song Business, has stolen the thunder of the real thing. Possibly the popular song as perfected by Gershwin, Rodgers and Hart, Porter and the rest of them, really is a dying art. But every now and again, on the Ella albums, there occurs a small moment, perhaps only a single song, perhaps only half a chorus, maybe even four or six bars, mere fragments captivating enough to make us stop and wonder whether our obituaries have not been composed too hastily, and that one day after all, the dream of so many musicians and enthusiasts will come true, and 'real Music' will come back again.

As regular followers of the Ella Fitzgerald tours in Britain will possibly remember, I have composed the notes for many of Ella's concert performances in this country, besides writing literally dozens of sleeve notes

ELLA FITZGERALD photograph by Rolf Amber

for Fitzgerald albums. One good friend of mine, a fellow jazz-writer, recently described what I had written as 'rolling out yards of flannel', which reveals a surprising lack of perception. There are many ways by which a writer may compose a programme note or a sleeve note, on an artiste he does not particularly admire. There are a dozen avenues of evasive action. That is why real praise is well-meant and perfectly sincere when it does appear, at least in my own notes. It seems to me that there has never been a better singer of the intelligent song than Ella Fitzgerald.

The almost unnoticed rephrasing of a word or a syllable, allied to the technical command, enable her to produce readings of songs that are at the same time typical of the composer and typical of Ella, too. The 'Harold Arlen Song Book', rather eclipsed in publicity value by the earlier volumes in the Song Book series, had one example of this. There was a song, once again half-forgotten, from an old Tony Martin film.

The song was *Written in the Stars*, and when arriving at the phrases 'shall be done', 'by my side', and 'in your hand', Ella embellishes the written phrase ever so slightly, so that the aura of a lullaby is instilled into the original. Later in the same performance, in singing phrases like 'it shall be done', 'you are the one' and 'I'll never be free', Ellas executes the words as a jazz instrumentalist would play them, sliding up to the pitch of each top note instead of hitting it flush in the face. Probably all this is instinctive on Ella's part. It is extremely unlikely that she sits down first and tries to divine the writer's intention. She has a natural feeling for the sounds of words and combinations of words which would make it possible for her to achieve a brilliant and wholly satisfying reading of a song even if she did not understand the meaning of the lyric. It is a kind of built-in sensitivity for words and music, especially the sound of words rather than their literal meaning.

Whenever an album appears in the shops, those of us who gaze at its seductive glossy cover and its beguiling notes, should always remember that the finished product reflects the tastes not merely of the artiste, who may secretly hate what she is singing, but of several people, and particularly one person, the man who has the last word as to the choice of material. Now the recording and concert career of Ella Fitzgerald over the last ten years has been distinguished for a higher standard of quality in the choice of material than that of any popular artiste in the world. A sweeping statement, but perfectly true for all that. It is not very difficult to guess who it is that conceived the idea of the Song Book series, or the inclusion on most albums of vintage songs or new songs which promise one day to be vintage material.

I have had several conversations with Norman Granz about the declining art of popular songwriting. Sometimes I get the impression that he is even more pessimistic than I am about the prospects for the future, which, believe me, is very difficult. The surprising thing from my own personal point of view is this. It is hardly ever that one comes across another person with exactly the same ideas about exactly the same material. When I saw the first Sing Book, I thought to myself, 'That's impossible. I thought of that once, but I never told anybody because it was an idle dream. Who's going to buy old numbers from shows none of the young people have ever heard of ?' Granz, however, was that rare thing, a man with the same kind of impractical respect for the greatest songs, and the power to put his respect on to the grooves of a mass-produced record. I suspect that many of songs that Ella records and sings in concert reflect Granz's personal tastes. I talked to him once or twice about the Gershwin Song Book, and was appalled by the amount of pre-recording date strategy that went into

the operation. The sifting through Gershwin's notebooks, amendments to existing lyrics kindly undertaken by Ira Gershwin, the narrowing down of the field to about seventy songs, sixty-odd of which finally got into the five-album set. There was a year of planning and discussion, balancing of programmes and consideration of possible treatments before the album even got started in the studios. One year in which the project was tackled as a project of this rare nature ought to be tackled but hardly ever is, as a combination of military exercise and labour of love.

One day some vicious enemy of mine may decide to make an anthology of all the thousands of words I have written about Ella Fitzgerald. The aim will be to show how I repeat myself. But then Ella Fitzgerald repeats herself, too. She is perfect every time. The anthology, which praise be, may never come into existence, would show that I have harped on the facts that Ella sings all the best songs, that she rephrases at times with a marvellous subtlety that must be instinctive, since nobody could work out such delicate touches on a drawing-board, that she is always in tune, that she has a range that is equal to any kind of musical contingency, and that she can make an ordinary, thirty-two bar popular song sound better than it really is.

I once said, and am repeating myself again, that if I had the choice of one artiste to record one song that I had written, I would plump for Ella. The reason is that she comes closest of all singers to striking the impossible balance between respect for the intentions of the composer and respect for her own creative impulses. Inside the head of every songwriter lurks the Platonic ideal of the song he has just written. In this ideal version, every phrase is embellished in just the right way, every breath is unobtrusive, every word is given its true meaning, and every musical phrase is perfectly rounded. Ella is the one that can do all this, and the Song Books are the proof of this. Her visits to Britain are now an annual event. So far as I am concerned, she can come once a week if she wants to.

Photo: Amber

In the early spring of 1953 the waters round the coast of Britain rose with a biblical fury and swept across the land, rendering many people homeless. At the time of this catastrophe, the British and American Musicians' Union had still not broken the deadlock regarding the exchange of jazz musicians. Flood Relief suddenly became the most respectable Good Cause in the book. At this time Jazz at the Philharmonic was in Europe, and Norman Granz offered the entire unit free, for a concert in London to raise money for the Flood Relief Fund.

And that was how I got my first sight of Oscar Peterson. At that time, local musicians felt angry at the ban on importing American jazz attractions, and for a very good reason. It was not a question of economics, but of art. The jazz musician knows that if he becomes too strictly isolated from the centre of the action, his own playing will suffer from lack of influence and inspiration. That is why the Flood Relief Concert at the Gaumont State, Hammersmith, in March, 1953, was a major event for every musician in London. For many of us, it was our first sight of great jazzmen in action.

The second half of the concert, the American half, opened with the Peterson Trio. Peterson came on stage and plunged straight into a medium-tempo blues. I give the details as carefully as possible because it was for me an extraordinary moment. The atmosphere of the theatre changed immediately. In the space of four bars Peterson set a beat and created an exhilarating mood. The music sounded much less inhibited than anything I remembered from our own pianists, and this was the most interesting thing of all about Peterson's first few choruses. The technique and the melodic trade-marks, the little mannerisms of style, these were already familiar to us through recordings, but the physical presence and the great power were what had such an overwhelming impact.

Peterson has been back to Britain several times since then, although there has been an unusually long interval between this present tour and his last. At first people were inclined to group him with Ella Fitzgerald, as one of the appurtenances of her vocal act, but since he started to take his own spot with his own trio, this misconception has largely evaporated. In view of some of the current developments in jazz, his visit could not be more timely, a remark I will explain in due course.

Peterson's background is unusual, perhaps unique, for he never graduated slowly as a public figure in the jazz world. One moment he was an obscure Canadian player, the next an international soloist. Perhaps it did not occur quite as starkly as that, but Peterson imposed his presence more quickly than any other musician I can call to mind. He was born in Montreal in 1925, and began classical studies on the piano when he was six. At fourteen he won a local amateur competition, and started to appear on local radio shows. The first sign that the outside world was beginning to notice him came in 1944, when Jimmy Lunceford made him an offer, which he did not accept, preferring to go on with his chores in one of the best known of the Canadian dance bands, the Johnny Holmes Orchestra. It was not for another five years that Peterson made the big step.

Peterson's career seems to have been a crusade by Norman Granz, who brought him into New York in September, 1949, to join the JATP show. It was Granz who began recording him, giving him the kind of mass exposure that make an international reputation, since when, so far as the analyst, the critic, the gossip-writer is concerned—nothing. Peterson became established many years ago as one of the great pianists in jazz history, and a very strong case could be made out on his behalf today to show he is the best jazz pianist alive. But the actual details of his career have been simplicity itself.

When he first became a major attraction with Granz's touring shows, Peterson used a trio with the instrumentation of piano, bass and guitar. Ray Brown and Irving Ashby were the other two members of the Peterson trio, Ashby being succeeded through the years by Barney Kessell and Herb Ellis. In 1959 Peterson finally changed the formula by dropping the guitar and bringing in Ed Thigpen on drums to make up the conventional three-man rhythm section. Since then the personnel has remained unchanged. And that is all one can state in the way of statistics, apart from the fact that Peterson sometimes sings and has recorded a series of albums in which he treats some of the best-known pieces of the great Broadway composers.

But from the purely musical point of view there is much to be said about Peterson, and a great deal to be written of his style. In general, British critics have not accepted Peterson in quite the enthusiastic terms one might have expected. There is probably no musical reason for this, as acceptance or rejection of a visiting musician is not very closely connected with music at all. But whether people notice it or not when faced with the challenge of writing about Peterson's style, he is the latest in a long line of great jazz pianists, and the heir to a tradition which is today already more than thirty-five years old.

In the late 1920s there developed two distinct piano styles in jazz. Of course the division was not watertight. In affairs of art, no divisions ever are. But in a loose way, there developed two distinct approaches to jazz piano, the Stride school, led and personified by James P. Johnson and Willie 'The Lion' Smith, with Duke Ellington and Fats Waller among the star pupils; and the Trumpet-Piano style, made famous by Earl Hines during the partnership with Louis Armstrong.

The Stride pianists concentrated on strength of rhythm, which made them into virtual one-man bands, and the expression of melodic ideas through the medium of harmonic thought. It was in the latter department that they differed so fundamentally from the pianists of the Hines school, whose most spectacular mannerism was the brilliance of the right hand, which played extended single-note phrases with as much lucidity and attack as could be achieved on the instrument. Or, to put it another way, the pianist attempting to emulate Hines would play patterns that

might easily be transposed to an instrument which could only play one note at a time, hence the phrase 'Trumpet-piano'.

Hines was a true dazzler with an incandescent right hand matched only by the brilliance of his smile. It is often forgotten that Hines, and more than one of his followers, had left hands every bit as subtle and as strong as the Stride pianists, but it has always been the right hand that has attracted the attention. When Hines left Armstrong it was Teddy Wilson who replaced him. Wilson was more mannered than Hines, more polite, more sophisticated. He had a gift for melodic phrase-making as marked as any pianist in jazz history, and although his approach was a natural extension of Hines' innovations, Wilson was a great original. When the new modernism of the early 1940s asserted itself, naturally it adapted the old Hines methods rather than those of James P. Johnson.

The complexity of modern harmony made it virtually impossible to play the old Stride style, whereas the flying fingers of the right hand carving out a single melodic line seemed made for modernism. In this sense there was a very clear relationship between the Hines-Wilson school and the neologisms of players like Bud Powell and Al Haig, whose right hands wove patterns whose contours sounded strange because of the stranger harmonies on which they were based, but whose method of building the phrase itself was identical to that of Hines and the trumpet-style pianists.

Since the experimental days of Powell and Haig, Modern jazz has become a much less ferocious affair. The old bitterness between camps has vanished, if indeed, it ever existed outside the minds of those who wrote about it. Today we are learning the lesson that differentiation of styles and schools is not the vital affair we once believed it to be. Modern jazz phrases have now become absorbed into the main body of jazz vocabulary, and no modernist today is embarrassed about reproducing some of the old naivete of pre-war jazz.

In a way Peterson typifies this freedom from pigeon-holes. He had best be described loosely as a modern pianist, but really the phrase means nothing very much. Peterson incorporates into his playing influences as disparate as those of Hines and Bud Powell, Fats and Teddy Wilson, although admittedly in varying proportions. He also has something authentically his own which, because it is musically valid, cannot be described through the medium of words. He is the kind of musician who is the end-product of fifty years of jazz evolution rather than the flower of one particular era or fashion. In other words, Peterson, like many other great jazz creators, is an eclectic. I have already said how he can dip into the past when the mood takes him, and I have also suggested that he belongs in the long line of linear creators whose piano playing might almost be transposed on to trumpet, and there is one particular performance of Oscar Peterson's which proves both these points in just about the most charming and delightful way possible.

On December 28th, 1943, Lester Young made some quartet sides with Johnny Guarnieri, Sid Catlett and Slam Stewart. It was a happy session, and appropriately enough, one of the sides cut was *Sometimes I'm Happy*, yet another of those Youmans songs which makes a great deal out of strictly rationed thematic material. (*I Want to Be Happy, Tea For Two, I Know That You Know, Great Day* are others.) The Lester Young solo on *Sometimes I'm Happy* was one of those remarkable affairs which occur rarely in jazz, when the improvisor achieves such poise and detachment, and manages so well to blend the surprise of impromptu composition with the calculations of a more formal writer, that the resulting solo endows itself with an independent life. A fragment of jazz improvisation

RAY BROWN

accidentally acquires the permanence and dignity of a formal composition. The most famous example of this is probably *Singing the Blues*, where Bix Beiderbecke wove a cornet pattern so exquisite as to have become a compulsory set piece for every trumpeter in the idiom ever since. The Lester solo on *Sometimes I'm Happy* is in the same class, especially at the end, where Lester quotes at length from *My Sweetie Went Away*, and moulds a simple-sounding little paraphrase which seems innocuous enough, but has an amazing habit of sticking in the mind and becoming something memorable.

In 1962 a new album was issued of the Oscar Peterson Trio. I cannot remember its title because I was too busy listening to the music. But there it was, *Sometimes I'm Happy*, played by the Peterson Trio, with the opening piano chorus reproducing the Lester

Photographs by Rolf Ambor

OSCAR PETERSON

ED THIGPEN

Young solo of twenty years before, verbatim. The effect was extraordinary to anyone acquainted with the original Young performance. Rather like seeing a long-cherished landscape through a new window.

When I read the sleeve notes, I felt even better about Peterson's tribute to Lester Young, for that is what it was meant to be. Not only had Peterson plagiarised Lester, but he had openly stated he had plagiarised Lester, and gave as his reason the unanswerable one that the Lester fragment in question was such a pearl that it deserved to be played again, if only to remind people exactly how masterful Lester was at that kind of thing.

Peterson's re-echoing of Lester's *Sometimes I'm Happy* has several implications, each of them more interesting than the other. To the theorist addicted to the habit of drawing firm conclusions from shaky premises, the fact that Peterson should revive a Lester solo and transcribe it to piano is almost too much to bear, and off the theorist goes, like Leacock's knight, who got on his horse and rode off furiously in all directions. The first, and obvious theory to be worked out is that, here, in perfect form, is the demonstrable proof that Peterson belongs in the line of succession started by Earl Hines. Not only is he a trumpeter (or saxophone) style pianist, but he actually does what the name of the style suggests. He takes the label literally and actually does transcribe a solo originally conceived for a single-note instrument.

More important is the fact that Peterson is not embarrassed to draw on all eras and all styles should he feel that his own approach has something to gain.

Lester, despite all the reams written about him in the post-Parker era, was never a modernist in the sense

that Dizzy or Monk were modernists. Indeed, Lester's great achievement lay in the very fact that he was not a modernist, that he managed to create such fresh and beautiful effects from a harmonic vocabulary hardly broader than that employed by the Chicagoans. This did not bother Peterson, or indeed anyone else with ears to hear and imaginations to conceive. There is much more sympathy between Peterson and Young than there is between Peterson and many of the ultra-modern ultra-experimentalists of today, who are chronologically at least, more likely contemporaries of Peterson's than Lester is.

The Oscar-Lester affinity is shown in another way when they play together. It is part of the pianist's function to feed chords to the blowing soloists, which is why the pianist should always be thinking along the same wave-length as the other horns. If there is a disparity of harmonic outlook, then the resulting jazz will not be entirely comfortable. Lester was always very sure what kind of a harmonic feed he required.

He wanted basics, and preferred themes which moved in the old cycle of resolving sevenths. Peterson is capable of subtleties far beyond this, but in playing typical Lester stock themes like *Indiana* and *Just You, Just Me*, he fed Lester to perfection, even though when it came to his own solo, he included a few devices which might have been regarded as outrageous solecisms in the days when Lester was with Basie.

The sides with Lester are remarkable for the way they demonstrate how Peterson injects life and vitality into everyone around him. As Lester states the theme, the piano accompaniment is prompting, prodding, urging, hinting, with a rhythmic insistence that will not be denied. Lester sounds like a boy again, and it is largely the influence of Peterson that brings about this rejuvenation. It is great jazz piano playing, and does not stop when the piano solo stops. Peterson is the dynamo that sparks everything off.

The same thing seems to happen whoever Peterson plays with. The most recent duet of his to appear on record in Britain was the album 'Very Tall', on which Oscar plays with Milt Jackson as if the two of them had been musical partners for years. And the same expansiveness that encompasses different individual styles also encompasses different musical worlds.

The Peterson recording of 'My Fair Lady' left the famous one (which shall remain anonymous) so far behind that one can only despair at the taste of those who bought the routine album and overlooked the Peterson version.

In the last reckoning Jazz is a feeling for a certain rhythmic pulse, allied to a certain instinct for phrasing notes and groups of notes in a certain way. No words can describe it, but Peterson is one of those you know all about after only a few bars. When you hear Peterson at his best, you are at the very heart of the whole question what is Jazz? Peterson is jazz, and there is nothing that gets in his way. Indeed, so insistent is his playing that in the past, at moments when I was harassed beyond endurance by the task of hearing perhaps twenty new albums in two days and forming snap judgements on them, I likened Peterson to a steamroller that flattens out any given object into the same Petersonian shape. The remark was meant as a stricture at the time I wrote it, but looking back at it from this distance of time, I see that it was, in a way, the highest compliment anybody could pay a jazz musician. It is another way of saying that Peterson gives everything he touches the Peterson treatment, that whatever material he chooses, and in whatever musical environment he plays it, the result is intensely personal.

The recollection of any aesthetic experience must always be a vague thing. I can no longer remember what Oscar Peterson sounded like that Sunday morning in March, 1953, when he started playing the Blues at the Gaumont State, Kilburn. But I do remember, very clearly, what I felt like when Peterson began to play. The feeling was the kind of thrill that only the authentic jazz artiste with a touch of greatness can ever give. Peterson has given it to me many times since.

OSCAR PETERSON photograph by John Anstil

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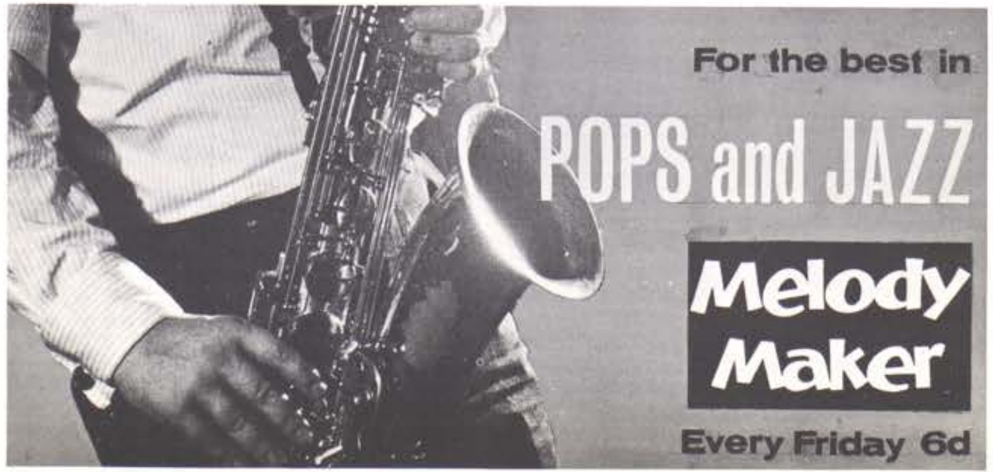

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PROGRAMME NOTES BY BENNY GREEN

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