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The American Jazz Institute Newsletter

Summer 2003 • Volume 10

Fall concert series at CMC headlines Putter Smith and Mort Sahl; AJI releases Clifford Brown tribute CD featuring Tim Hagans

We invite you to join us at Claremont McKenna College, as we welcome two very special friends of AJI to our Fall concert series. In October, it's acclaimed West Coast bassist Putter Smith. In November, it's the inimitable humorist Mort Sahl, joined by vibraphonist Matthias Lupri, one of New York's brightest young stars.

See page 3 for details on AJI's new CD: "The Clifford Brown Project," an interpretation of the legendary trumpeter's compositions, arranged by Mark Masters and Jack Montrose, and performed by The Mark Masters Ensemble featuring Tim Hagans and a stellar supporting cast.

The Putter Smith Quartet

Jon Winnery, alto; Theo Saunders, piano; Kendall Kay, drums

Saturday, October 11, 8:00pm • Admission Free

Pickford Auditorium, CMC campus, Claremont



Renowned bassist Putter Smith has performed with a long list of jazz greats, a sampling of which includes Thelonious Monk, Art Blakey, Bob Brookmeyer, Matt Murphy, Willie Bobo, Lee Konitz, Buddy Rich, Bob Dorough, Jackie & Roy, Carmen McRae, Blue Mitchell, Art Farmer, Erroll Garner, Joe LaBarbera, Gerry Mulligan, Charlie Haden, T-Bone Walker, Ray Charles, Herb Geller, Barney Kessel, Scott Hamilton, Cecil Payne, Tootie Heath, Shelly Manne, Art Pepper, Toshiko Akiyoshi/Lew Tabakin ... and at AJI concerts in both small group and big band settings.

Smith has recorded six trio albums with Alan Broadbent and is featured on recordings with Larry and Dave Koonse, Karrin Allyson, Warne Marsh, Bill Perkins, Sam Most, Mose Allison, Karen Hammack and Paul Kriebach. He has two albums as leader, "Lost and Found" and "Night Song," both with John Gross and Gary Foster. His own band, Left Coast, recently recorded their first album.

Highly regarded as a composer and educator as well as a great musician, Putter Smith has been on staff at the Musician's Institute in Los Angeles for 20 years. He conducts clinics at colleges nationwide and is a regular guest lecturer in Charlie Haden's improvisation class at the famed CalArts in Valencia. His book, "Improvisation Handbook -- Notes," is in its third printing.

"The Putter Smith Quartet" is a presentation of the Claremont McKenna College Oral History Project. For directions, see page 2.

THE GOALS OF AJI

- To advance and promote jazz music throughout the world.
- To maintain a repertory jazz orchestra to perform new and archival jazz music.
- To educate and expose the public to jazz by live performances and panel discussions.
- To physically house, archive and preserve jazz music: compositions, scores, arrangements, recordings, artwork, photographs, films and other jazz works.
- To seek and attract donations of jazz works with an emphasis on original compositions, scores, arrangements and recordings.
- To make jazz works available for research, study and education.
- To support charitable endeavors that promote and advance jazz music.

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An Evening with Mort Sahl

Opening set :

The Matthias Lupri Quintet

Thursday, November 20, 8:00pm • Admission Free
Pickford Auditorium, CMC campus, Claremont

Mort Sahl has been observing America and its politics for almost six decades. His is a voice that America needs to hear. Always honest and forthcoming, Sahl may tell us things we don't want to hear but he is so compelling that we listen, and listen carefully. Mort Sahl, the father of modern political humor, has helped us come to terms with what is wrong with America and at the same time, what a beacon America can be.

Mort's style is very much the same as a creative jazz musician, and he feels a strong bond with musicians. He is an improviser, open to change during an evening's performance. What Mort does is true to where he believes we should be going as a country, just as a musician plays what he feels -- and hopes that the listener will follow.

"An Evening with Mort Sahl" is sure to be filled with probing and very funny insights on the Middle East, the coming national elections and, of course, California politics.

We need Mort Sahl now more than ever!

Matthias Lupri has created a personalized approach to his instrument and his music -- one that will be recognized even more widely in the future. -- Bill Donaldson, The Jazz Review



Vibraphonist Matthias Lupri is hailed as one of the outstanding forward-thinking young players in today's New York City jazz scene. Born in Germany and raised in the U.S. and Canada, he played drums professionally with blues, rock and country groups well into his early 20s. Once introduced to jazz vibes after hearing a Gary Burton album, Lupri found a new musical expression. "Hearing Gary Burton totally changed my whole approach to music." He enrolled at Boston's Berklee College of Music to study with Burton. He absorbed much of his mentor's vast resources of musical knowledge without being imitative of him.

Lupri's first two albums, as player, composer and leader, reached lofty "top 100" rankings in the jazz sales charts. He has performed and recorded with the likes of Mark Turner and George Garzone, and his groups increasingly appear at clubs and festivals throughout the U.S., Canada and Europe.



AJI is pleased to open "An Evening with Mort Sahl" with The Matthias Lupri Quintet. Featured are Cuong Vu, trumpet, Nate Radley, guitar, Thomson Kneeland, bass, and Jordan Perrison, drums.

"An Evening with Mort Sahl" is a presentation of The American Jazz Institute and the Claremont McKenna College Oral History Project.

AJI concert venues are conveniently located on the campuses of the Claremont Colleges in the Southern California community of Claremont, an hour east of Los Angeles just off the 10 or 210 freeways.
The Putter Smith and Mort Sahl concerts will be held in Pickford Auditorium on the Claremont McKenna College campus in Bauer Center, South Building, 500 East Ninth Street. Adjacent parking north of Bauer Center is free.
For further information, please call the AJI at 626-798-3127.

AJI is now on the web!
We're building a valuable resource for jazz enthusiasts at www.amjazzin.com
* Concerts and events schedule
* Oral histories * Photo gallery
* And of course THE MUSIC!

Many thanks to Terry Lewis and Ron Teeple for the photos in this issue.
Designed and edited by Scott Evans.

AJI presents THE CLIFFORD BROWN PROJECT

A tribute to the legendary trumpet player by
The Mark Masters Ensemble

Trumpet	Tim Hagans	Piano	Cecilia Coleman
Baritone Sax	Gary Smulyan	Bass	Putter Smith
Tenor Sax	Jack Montrose	Drums	Joe LaBarbera
Trombone	Dave Woodley		
Trumpet Quartet	Kye Palmer, Ron King, Marc Lewis and Ron Stout		

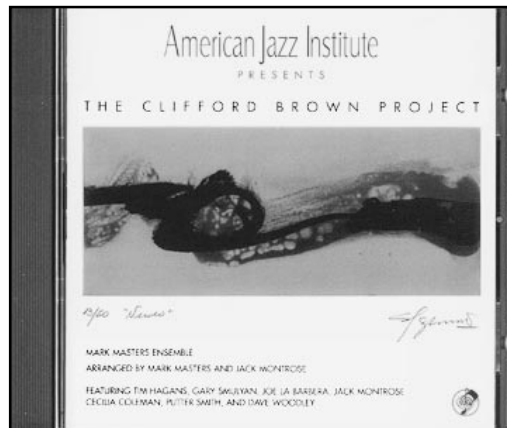
From the liner notes by Gary Foster:

Between the years 1952 and 1956, a musical earthquake occurred. Created by Clifford Brown's stunning music, his short life of 26 years changed, in its own way, the course of jazz music. His musical brilliance, heard on the many recordings made during those five years, gives proof once again that genius takes care of itself. Clifford's originality seemed to effortlessly come out of all the great jazz instrumentalists who preceded him. He left behind several decades of trumpet players who were either consciously dedicated to capturing his style, or who have intuitively incorporated his beauty.

In early 1955, a Pacific Jazz LP entitled "The Clifford Brown Ensemble Featuring Zoot Sims" appeared in the dorm room of my trumpet-playing roommate and myself. Clifford's thrilling playing, heard then for the first time, and Jack Montrose's original settings of Clifford's originals, changed our lives.

Mark Masters is a composer, arranger and record producer. And, under the banner of The American Jazz Institute, Mark has developed a series of concerts most often devoted to acknowledged, but often unsung, master composers and performers of the music. "The Clifford Brown Project" pays tribute to the great trumpet player through striking arrangements, unique orchestrations of his solos, and improvised solos by some of Mark's favorite musicians.

The featured artist here is trumpeter Tim Hagans. Tim is one of the most respected improvisers in today's jazz world and a man who carries forward the traditions of great trumpet players like Clifford Brown. On this recording, all of the ensemble arrangements were written by Mark Masters except three which were written by Jack Montrose for the original Pacific Jazz LP from 1954, noted above. Jack is heard here as a part of the ensemble. Clifford's brilliant solos are played here by a quartet of trumpet players (Marc Lewis, Ron Stout, Kye Palmer and Ron King). Harmonizations of Clifford's solos were made by Mark Masters and the very important work of transcribing the original solos was done by Marc Lewis -- a significant contributor to this project.



Tim Hagans is the featured artist on AJI's newest CD, "The Clifford Brown Project."



The soloists, from left: Gary Smulyan, baritone sax, Dave Woodley, trombone, Tim Hagans, trumpet, and Jack Montrose, tenor sax.

Save a few bucks and order "The Clifford Brown Project" direct from AJI for only \$14

PLEASE PRINT

Name _____

"The Clifford Brown Project": ____ x \$14.00 _____

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Sales Tax: CA addresses add 8.25% _____

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The American Jazz Institute invites your membership

Supporting jazz is what The American Jazz Institute is all about. We need your support to continue presenting outstanding jazz programs such as *The Kenton Era* festival in 1997, *California Cool* festival in 1998, *Kenton's West Side Story* concert in 1999, *The Ellington Effect* concert in 2000, *Kenton Sound* concerts in 1998, 1999 and 2000, and the unique series of concerts jointly presented with Claremont McKenna College.

Your tax deductible membership in any amount comes with the deep appreciation of AJI and the jazz artists that perform for your enjoyment. We hope you'll consider the special benefits of Patron and Artistry Circle membership levels.

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- AmJazzIn newsletter: AJI news and schedules of upcoming concerts and special events
- Souvenir AJI coffee mug
- Advance announcements of upcoming AJI events

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- AJI's newest CD, "*The Clifford Brown Project*"
- Souvenir AJI coffee mug
- Advance announcements of upcoming AJI events

AJI Artistry Circle
\$75 Annual Membership

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- AJI's newest CD, "*The Clifford Brown Project*"
- Souvenir AJI coffee mug
- Souvenir AJI "*California Cool*" T-shirt
- Advance announcements of upcoming AJI events
- Invitations to special "meet the musicians" receptions and other pre-event functions

The American Jazz Institute is a non-profit organization dedicated solely to the enrichment and enhancement of the appreciation of jazz music. From its humble beginning in New Orleans at the turn of the century, jazz evolved into one of America's enduring world contributions, a "universal language" understood by all.

Continuing in this spirit, AJI seeks to preserve this national treasure as well as expand upon it by spotlighting America's great jazz composers, arrangers and musicians -- both firmly established and newly discovered, and from traditional to avant garde.

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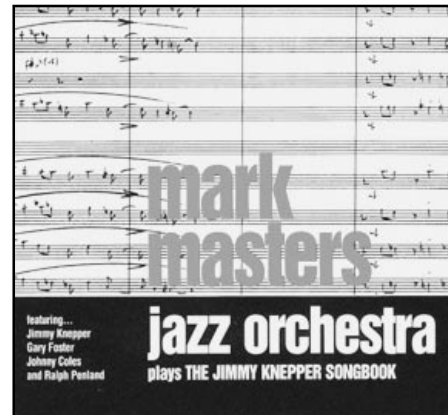
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Jimmy Knepper

November 22, 1927 - June 15, 2003



"The Jimmy Knepper Songbook," presents Jimmy in a performance of his own compositions with the Mark Masters Jazz Orchestra. Featured on the album are Gary Foster, Johnny Coles and Ralph Penland.



Speaking of Miles Davis, Gil Evans said that Miles was a "singer of songs." Trombonist Jimmy Knepper possessed this same unique quality. Sadly, Jimmy died on Sunday, June 15, in West Virginia, while living with his daughter who so lovingly cared for him during his final year. Jimmy suffered from Parkinson's Disease.

Jimmy Knepper was probably best known for his work with Charles Mingus and, after Mingus died, with the Mingus Dynasty. He was an original member of the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Jazz Orchestra and worked frequently with Gil Evans. Jimmy's solo with Evans on the John Benson Brooks song, "Where Flamingos Fly," is one of the finest and most moving solo statements on record. There are countless other marvelous Jimmy Knepper recordings, too numerous to mention.

I sought out Jimmy in 1989 to invite him to come to California for a record I was planning. After that first trip, Jimmy sent me an envelope that contained leadsheets of his own songs. He told me he liked what I had written for our record and asked me to arrange some of his compositions. The result was "The Jimmy Knepper Songbook," a 1993 album featuring Jimmy playing his own songs with my band in Los Angeles. In preparation for the recording, Jimmy and I spoke many times. Each of these conversations was the equivalent of a lesson in songwriting, orchestration and all the intangibles that come too bear on music. These lessons served me well, and continue to shape how I perceive music.

Jimmy Knepper was not a self-promoter. He let opportunities come to him. In looking back over the past twenty-five years, I think at best Jimmy was under-recorded and at worst, neglected as the individual voice that he was. That should not be surprising when considering the music of the past quarter century and who has flourished and why.

We will miss his quiet demeanor, his outspoken way (when prompted), the vast knowledge that he possessed and so willingly shared and, of course, when hearing Jimmy on record or in person, that sound you knew immediately was his.

Jimmy Knepper had a reverence for jazz and its history, and lived the music that way. So long, Jim ...

-- Mark Masters

Memorable moments of the Spring concert season at CMC

February '03: Mark Turner & Friends

The great young tenor saxophonist Mark Turner, along with Gary Foster, Putter Smith and Joe LaBarbera, provided the capacity audience in Pickford Auditorium with many musical highlights. The quartet selected material from the Lennie Tristano-Warne Marsh songbook as well as several standards. Mark was featured on Harold Arlen's "Come Rain or Come Shine" and Gary chose "What's New" as his ballad feature.

Gary Foster, Putter Smith and Joe LaBarbera frequently work together in trio settings, so the addition of Mark Turner, whose style fits so well with them, made the quartet a seamless group. With Putter and Joe providing stellar support, Mark and Gary often engaged in cooperative improvisation -- tossing ideas back and forth -- and playing with the assurance that only gifted creative improvisers can muster. The soft-spoken Mark Turner let his playing speak to the audience. It was an exciting evening of the purest improvisations presented in a natural setting without amplification.



Renowned West Coast artists Gary Foster, alto, Putter Smith, bass, and Joe LaBarbera, drums, are joined by tenor saxophonist Mark Turner, who the New York Times

COMING SOON ON CD: "Mark Turner & Friends" yielded a recording of the highest quality, to be released by AJI in early 2004.



March '03: An Evening with Steve Kuhn

In his first public appearance since major bypass surgery, Steve Kuhn exhibited all the gifts that have made him one of the most original pianists of the past four decades. Steve has all the traits that a major artist must possess. He can swing effortlessly, he can interpret a ballad with the greatest sensitivity and introspection, and he puts his own unique stamp on whatever he plays. In addition to all of the tangibles, Steve has the ability to draw a sound from the piano that few others are capable of.

The first half of the concert focused on Steve's trio, with his regular bassist, David Finck, and Los Angeles-based drummer Peter Erskine. Although Peter had never worked with Steve and David, the three of them quickly found a common musical ground and created wonderful trio jazz for an hour.

The second half of the evening was devoted to a truly unforgettable performance of "The October Suite," Gary McFarland's "third stream" masterpiece. Steve's trio, joined by a string quartet, harp and woodwind quartet, gave a warm and original performance of McFarland's classical-meets-jazz compositions. Originally recorded for Impulse Records back in 1964, "The October Suite" quite remarkably has never been performed live. So it was, nearly 40 years after its recorded debut, the suite was premiered live in Pickford Auditorium on the CMC campus.



Drummer Peter Erskine, center, gives the Steve Kuhn Trio a West Coast touch, joining bassist David Finck, left, and Kuhn for another memorable AJI concert.

April '03: Milcho Leviev, Solo Piano

Milcho Leviev's rich and varied background came to the fore during an evening of brilliant solo piano in Balch Hall on the Scripps College campus. During the past 35 years, Milcho has more than acclimated himself to the country's musical climate. Arriving in the U.S. from Bulgaria in 1970, Milcho fast immersed himself in the LA jazz scene. Experiences with Art Pepper, Dave Holland and a memorable stint with Don Ellis embellished the special talent that Milcho already possessed. The results were on display during his two brilliant sets.

Most of the compositions were Milcho's own, with a few standards mixed in for good measure. His approach to the music was eclectic and free improvisation, his own compositions based on standard chord changes and the classical piano repertoire performed in his own unique fashion.

The concert concluded with Milcho asking for a request. Totally unrehearsed, AJI director Mark Masters suggested "Body and Soul" and, without a pause, Milcho presented the audience with a treatment of the tune like no other -- completely original and spontaneous.

AJI Director Mark Masters hosts Milcho Leviev in a memorable evening of solo piano at Scripps College.

Below, Mark introduces the remarkable tenor saxophonist Mark Turner and his West Coast kindred spirits, Gary Foster, alto, Putter Smith, bass, and Joe LaBarbera, drums. A highlight of AJI's Spring concert series, "Mark Turner & Friends" will soon be available on CD.



La Barbera Quintet at Bridges Hall of Music in Claremont

by Ken Jennings

The American Jazz Institute and Claremont McKenna College began their fall jazz concert season at Bridges Hall of Music in Claremont with an outstanding quintet led by drummer Joe LaBarbera. Along with LaBarbera on drums was trumpeter Clay Jenkins, Bob Sheppard on tenor and occasional soprano sax, pianist Bill Cunliffe and exceptional bassist Tom Warrington. LaBarbera informed us that he has had the same musicians in his band for an impressive 10 years. The concert kept us captivated from beginning to end, thanks to LaBarbera for his interesting selection of tunes and the always-changing solo lineup.

The opening number, "Just In Time," was a preview of what was to come. This up-tempo "outside" arrangement featured great extended solos by everyone. The last several measures were a sort of jam session with everyone playing their own thing. At the end of the selection, LaBarbera quipped, "I played this song every night for eight years with Tony Bennett, but now I play it at MY tempo."

Cunliffe penned several of the compositions performed. "Chick It Out" was his tribute to Chick Corea, "Automaton," a straight eighth feel, and my personal favorite, "Blue Note," with the feel of a Horace Silver original. Cunliffe played with just the right balance of sensitivity and aggressiveness. His flawless technique and superb voicings showed why he is in top demand on his instrument.

Jenkins' solos are always an adventure. His choice of notes and keen rhythmic sense make for very interesting listening. He was most notable on a Thelonious Monk composition, "Evidence," and a beautiful ballad composed by LaBarbera titled "Bella Luci." Here his clear, pure tone showed a sensitive side of this powerhouse trumpet player.

Another ballad composed by LaBarbera, "Kind of Bill," written for Bill Evans, featured Cunliffe on piano and Sheppard on a most impressive soprano sax solo. Shepard's exceptional sound, in all registers on both tenor and soprano sax, was most enjoyable. During his solo in "Evidence," the bass and piano dropped out, leaving Sheppard to show us his full creative expertise.

It all came together thanks to Tom Warrington on bass. Without the solid bottom and cohesiveness between bass and drums, the excitement of the evening would not have happened. You could appreciate the years Warrington and LaBarbera have played together. This was most apparent on the jazz waltz, "Speak Softly." The time, the feel, the bass solos; all were superb.

La Barbera has a long list of credits, from the Bill Evans Trio and Chuck Mangione to the Woody Herman Orchestra. Here he played with his usual musical taste as a supportive accompanist while maintaining the high energy level needed for this explosive group. His solos showed off his impressive technique, and dynamics and phrasing showed off his musical acuity. He soloed on several of the compositions, including an extended solo on Kenny Wheeler's "Smatter." His musicianship shined as he created a solo filled with imagination and intelligence.

To hear this collection of musicians, led by the able LaBarbera, was a treat for all. The audience showed their appreciation with a standing ovation at the end of the concert. You can hear more of LaBarbera and this outstanding quintet on his latest CD, "Joe LaBarbera Quintet LIVE!"

Bill Perkins

July 22, 1924 - August 9, 2003



Perk in his final AJI performance: the April 2002 recording session for a special Lee Konitz CD to be released in 2004.

Bill Perkins was so much a part of the history of jazz on the West Coast that it is unimaginable to think he will no longer be a part of it. Sadly, Perk passed away on August 9th. His battle with poor health was a prolonged one but, remarkably, he remained up to the musical task. During these last few years, Perk told me, "it's the music that keeps me going."

I was fortunate to have spent some time with Perk, musically, over the past ten years. Throughout the various concerts, his playing was always a positive influence on the proceedings, and he brought a dry sense of humor to whatever he was involved in.

While best known as a tenor saxophonist, he was also, in my opinion, the most distinctive baritone saxophonist in Los angeles. I hired Perk several times to play baritone but in deference to him always offered him the opportunity to play one of the tenor chairs. He never failed to tell me he would play whatever I wanted him to.

Perk's playing career was long and varied. His time with Woody Herman's band was during a golden, but less less appreciated, period for Herman. Perk's solo on Ralph Burns' "Early Autumn" is a masterpiece, but unfortunately somewhat overlooked because of the original recording by Stan Getz. He went on to make history with Stan Kenton during the Bill Holman years of the mid 1950s. His solo on Holman's arrangement of Jerome Kern's "Yesterdays" is a true classic.

Bill Perkins was never one to stand still musically. Over the years, Perk became more angular in his approach and Coltrane certainly had an influence on him. Some were perplexed that he didn't continue to play like he did on those early Herman and Kenton records. Those who knew him trusted him and embraced his quest.

Bill Perkins left an impressive legacy on record. That will be only a brief view of what it was like to have known him and heard his impassioned, creative mind at work.

-- Mark Masters

The LA Jazz Oral History Project: An Update

The 2002-03 academic year was very productive for our AJI/CMC Oral History Project. We recorded nine interviews involving 13 interviewees, and acquired 26 hours of invaluable historical information from some of the most knowledgeable and lively contributors in jazz today.

During the spring '03 semester alone, we logged the following interviews:

Mark Turner shared many personal observations about his evolving approach to the music with fellow saxophonist Gary Foster.

Sam Rivers gave a sweeping view of his long and illustrious career, and introduced the young members of his current trio, Doug Mathews and Anthony Cole, who joined in the discussion.

Scott Ellsworth, who has given AJI approximately 300 of his taped interviews from broadcasts on LA radio during the early '70s, responded warmly to the student interviewers. One student is currently working on a senior thesis based in part on transcripts of Scott's interview.

Don Shelton, one of our busiest LA musicians and former member of the Hi-Lo's vocal group, provided many wonderful insights into both the complexities and joys of a professional career in music.

Bob Assunto, a relative of the original creators of the Dukes of Dixieland jazz band, offered a unique perspective on the origins of New Orleans jazz. He was joined by Moses Armstrong (nephew of Louis Armstrong) and Harold Jackson (bassist and long-time member of the famous Ink Spots vocal group). The transcript of this interview was also used as the basis for a senior thesis project.

Eminent jazz chronicler Gene Lees, author of more than a dozen volumes of jazz history and criticism, gave a marvelous set of insights into the history and current condition of jazz.

Steve Kuhn contributed fascinating recollections of the many important historical figures in jazz with whom he has worked.

Milcho Leviev, always humorous, iconoclastic and full of surprises, gave students a highly personal viewpoint of the role that jazz played behind the former Bulgarian "iron curtain" as well as fresh insights into relations between jazz and classical European music, jazz and Western popular music, and between jazz and personal freedom.



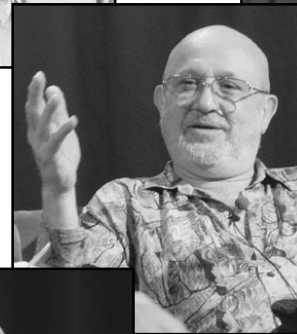
Steve Kuhn interviewed by CMC student Helen Roh



Don Shelton



Mark Turner, above



Bob Assunto

Milcho Leviev, left

Sam Rivers, below



Lee Konitz and AJI Ensemble record new CD for late '03 release

In April 2002, Lee Konitz joined The American Jazz Institute Ensemble for a day in the recording studio. A project that AJI Director Mark Masters had long anticipated finally came to pass. Arrangements of Lee's compositions that Mark had done over the past several years were the starting point. Lee brought the rest. Two of the arrangements, "Thingin'" and "Gundula," both Konitz originals, were done by Mark at Lee's request. The other titles, "Palo Alto," "Lover Man," "317 East 32nd Street," "Dreamstepper" and a blues, "Cork 'n' Bib," were either Konitz tunes or songs that are closely associated with Lee. A stellar supporting cast for the session included Gary Foster, Jack Montrose, Bill Perkins, Bob Enevoldsen, Steve Huffstetter, Putter Smith and Cecilia Coleman.

The CD is planned for release later this year. Details coming in our Winter issue.



AJI goes to college: Announcing the Fall 2003 concert series at Claremont McKenna College

For directions, see page 2.



**The Putter Smith Quartet, featuring
Jon Winnery, alto, Theo Saunders,
piano, and Kendall Kay, drums**
Saturday, October 11, 8:00pm



An Evening with Mort Sahl
Opening set:
The Matthias Lupri Quintet
Vibraphonist Lupri is one of the
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New York City jazz scene.
Thursday, November 20, 8:00pm



ANNOUNCING A MAJOR AJI CD RELEASE:
**"The Clifford Brown Project" featuring Tim
Hagans with The Mark Masters Ensemble**
See page 3

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