

AmJazzIn™

The American Jazz Institute Newsletter

Winter 2001 • Volume 5

Jack Montrose, John La Porta, tributes to Charles Mingus and Gil Evans open AJI season at Claremont McKenna College



The American Jazz Institute has planned a series of diverse and exciting concerts for its 2001 season. These concerts, chosen to supplement and enhance the course offered through Claremont McKenna College, *History of Jazz in the 20th Century*, will bring four special musical guests to the CMC campus during the first four months of 2001. Jack Montrose and John La Porta have writing and performance experiences that date to the 1940s, while Ray Drummond and Tim Hagans are artists whose careers began in the 1960s and 1970s respectively. In addition to the unique skills of Montrose and La Porta, Ray Drummond will bring his virtuosity as a bassist to the Mingus tribute and the genius of Gil Evans will be brought to the fore during the "Sketches of Spain" evening with Tim Hagans.

Jack Montrose & his West Coast Friends Saturday, January 27, 8:00pm • Admission Free Pickford Auditorium, CMC campus, Claremont

Best known as a writer of impeccable taste and unending imagination, Jack Montrose is also a wonderful tenor saxophonist. One can hear the influences of Ben Webster and Lester Young as well as John Coltrane, which is evidence that Jack is always ready for change. After Los Angeles State College (1953), Jack worked with Shorty Rogers, Mel Torme, Red Norvo and Stan Kenton among others. His recorded collaborations with Art Pepper are as legendary as the Lee Konitz-Warne Marsh east coast sessions. Jack wrote the landmark arrangements for the 1954 Clifford Brown west coast date for Pacific Jazz. Recordings on Atlantic, RCA and Pacific Jazz reveal Jack as a leader, arranger, composer and player. As the music scene on the west coast began to change, the 1960s found Jack in Las Vegas working shows with Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr., Dean Martin and many other celebrity performers. Jack continues to write, study and, most importantly, provide memorable listening experiences as a superb improviser.

-- Mark Masters

"Jack Montrose & his West Coast Friends" is a presentation of AJI and the History Department of Claremont McKenna College. This evening of small group jazz will feature Jack Montrose in three settings: quintet, sextet and septet. Also appearing will be Milcho Leviev, Bill Perkins, Joe LaBarbera, Dave Woodley, Putter Smith and special guest Conte Candoli. For concert information and directions, see page 3.

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.

Board of Directors

Mark A. Masters, President
Audree Coke Kenton
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The American Jazz Institute is a tax-exempt non-profit organization pursuant to I.R.C. Section 501(c)(3). Contributions to the AJI are tax deductible.

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PHOTO: RAY AVERY ARCHIVES



Celebrating Mingus

The American Jazz Institute Chamber Ensemble
Special guest: Ray Drummond, bass

Tuesday, February 20, 6:45pm • Admission Free
Cook Athenaeum, CMC campus, Claremont

Charles Mingus was an accomplished bassist and prolific composer. Mingus was quoted as saying “my music comes from the church and Duke Ellington.” His compositional skills were that, and much more. His long recording career bore witness to the many influences on Mingus. Bop, swing, New Orleans, Afro-Cuban and European classical music all found their way onto the Mingus palette.

In the early 1940s Mingus worked with Barney Bigard and Louis Armstrong. In 1946 he joined Lionel Hampton’s band. He received his first major exposure as a member of Red Norvo’s trio in the early 1950s. During the ‘50s he worked with Lennie Tristano, Duke Ellington, Stan Getz, Art Tatum and Bud Powell. In 1955 the Charles Mingus Jazz Workshop was born. Mingus was always drawn to unique musical voices and through the years numerous artists with highly personal sounds participated in the Mingus Workshop, among them Jimmy Knepper, Eric Dolphy, Johnny Coles, Jackie McLean, Roland Kirk, Jaki Byard and Dannie Richmond.

1959 proved to be memorable for Mingus, as his Columbia recordings that year are among the most spectacular in recorded jazz. Mingus compositions from that period are some of his most brilliant, including *Better Git It In Your Soul*, *Fables of Faubus*, *Jelly Roll*, *Boogie Stop Shuffle*, *Far Wells Mill Valley* and his masterpiece, *Goodbye Pork Pie Hat*.

Mingus died in 1979. Through comprehensive reissues of his recordings and the Mingus Big Band in New York, the music of Charles Mingus lives on.

-- Mark Masters

“Celebrating Mingus” is a unique evening of jazz performed by The American Jazz Institute Chamber Ensemble, a nine-piece jazz ensemble joined by renowned bassist Ray Drummond.

An Evening with John La Porta and The American Jazz Institute Big Band

Wednesday, April 11, 6:45pm • Admission Free
Cook Athenaeum, CMC campus, Claremont

John La Porta’s...cool tone and very advanced style (influenced by Lennie Tristano) seemed to be making him the Lee Konitz of the clarinet. He played with the big bands of Bob Chester (1942-44) and Woody Herman (1944-46) but more importantly recorded with Tristano in 1947. La Porta studied with Tristano and six years later was part of the Jazz Composers Workshop with Charles Mingus and Teo Macero, seeking to bring elements of classical music into jazz. La Porta recorded with Mingus in 1954...La Porta led sessions for Debut, Fantasy and Everest during the years 1954-58.

-- Scott Yanow

In addition to his career as a performer, John La Porta has taught during six decades, most notably at the Berklee College of Music in Boston. He is the author of numerous educational texts.

Some highlights of his performing and recording career include clarinet soloist on Igor Stravinsky’s *Ebony Concerto* recorded for the Everest record label. La Porta participated in the 1957 Brandeis Music Festival, an important event in the development of the Third Stream, a school of thought bringing the classical and jazz worlds together musically. John La Porta has recorded with Miles Davis, Charlie Parker, Lester Young, Charles Mingus, Dizzy Gillespie, Max Roach, Ray Brown, Lennie Tristano, Buddy Rich, Fats Navarro and many others.



“An Evening with John La Porta” features AJI’s twenty-piece Big Band, a repertory orchestra of West Coast jazz artists renowned as soloists and ensemble musicians.

Sketches of Spain: Homage to Gil Evans

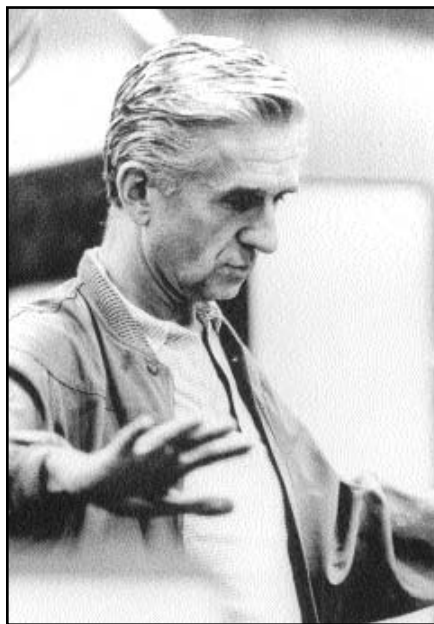


PHOTO: RAY AVERY ARCHIVES

Gil was a thinker and I loved that about him right away.

-- Miles Davis

Evans seems able to hit on endless mixtures of sound that are not only new to jazz writing but to all orchestral music.

-- Jazz Monthly

There have been debates as to who influenced whom, as to whether Gil's triumphs with Miles were ever duplicated with his own orchestra. Needless to say, the music could not have existed without both men considering themselves equals. Miles was given the context to further the reaches of his sound and Gil was given the canvas to paint, and they inspired each other to unforeseen heights. These works stand the test of time and will always be considered the finest music jazz has to offer.

-- Bob Belden

The American Jazz Institute Big Band
Special guest: Tim Hagans, trumpet

Saturday, March 3, 8:00pm • Admission Free
Pickford Auditorium, CMC campus, Claremont

One of the most significant arrangers in jazz history, Gil Evans' three album-length collaborations with Miles Davis (*Miles Ahead*, *Porgy and Bess* and *Sketches of Spain*) are all considered classics.

Gil Evans led his own band in California (1933-38) which eventually became the backup group for Skinnay Ennis. Evans stayed on for a time as arranger for the band. He gained recognition for his somewhat futuristic charts for Claude Thornhill's orchestra (1941-42 and 1946-48) which took advantage of the ensemble's cool tones, utilized French horns and a tuba as frontline instruments, and by 1946 incorporated the influence of bop. Evans met Miles Davis (who admired his work with Thornhill) during this time and contributed arrangements of *Moon Dreams* and *Boplicity* to Davis' "Birth of the Cool" nonet.

After a period of obscurity, Evans wrote for a Helen Merrill session and then collaborated with Miles Davis on *Miles Ahead*. In addition to his work with Miles, Evans recorded several superb and highly original sets as a leader during the era. In the 1960s, among the albums he worked on for other artists, were notable efforts with Kenny Burrell and Astrud Gilberto. After his own sessions for Verve during 1963-64, Evans waited until 1969 to record again as a leader.

Starting in 1970, Evans began playing with his large ensemble on a weekly basis in New York clubs. Other than sketching out a framework and contributing his keyboard, he seemed to let the orchestra largely run itself, inspiring rather than closely directing the music.

Prior to his death, Gil Evans recorded with his "arranger's piano" on duets with Lee Konitz and Steve Lacy. His body of work on a whole ranks with the top jazz arrangers.

-- Scott Yanow

Tim Hagans, an excellent hard bop-oriented trumpeter, was with the orchestras of Stan Kenton (1974-76) and Woody Herman (1977) before moving to Sweden (1977-81) where he played with Sahib Shihab, Ernie Wilkins' Almost Big Band, the Danish Radio Orchestra and Dexter Gordon. After returning to the U.S., he taught at the University of Cincinnati and recorded for the MoPro label. Hagans taught at Berklee (1984-86) and then in 1986 started working with Joe Lovano and Fred Hersch. Since then he has recorded with Bob Belden, Joe Lovano, Rick Margitza, John Hart and the Yellowjackets, and has worked with the big bands of Bob Mintzer and Maria Schneider, and the Gil Evans Orchestra.

-- Scott Yanow

"Sketches of Spain: Homage to Gil Evans" is a presentation of AJI and the Gould Center for Humanistic Studies. The twenty-piece AJI Big Band featuring Blue Note recording artist Tim Hagans will perform the Gil Evans masterpiece "Sketches of Spain" as well as a number of Gil's other orchestral gems.

Pickford Auditorium and the Marian Minor Cook Athenaeum are located in Claremont on the campus of Claremont McKenna College.

Pickford Auditorium is in Bauer Center, south building, at 500 East Ninth Street.

The Athenaeum is at 385 East Eighth Street.

For further information please call the AJI at 626-798-3127.

Coming Up This Year

The 4th annual *Kenton Sound* will celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Stan Kenton orchestra, with special guests and musical rarities highlighting the milestone evening.

Also in 2001, AJI will be pleased to present alto sax legend Lee Konitz in a rare west coast appearance.

Details coming in the Spring 2001 newsletter.

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, annual *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.

AJI Member

\$25 Annual Membership

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

AJI Patron

\$50 Annual Membership

- AmJazzIn newsletter: AJI news and schedules of upcoming concerts and special events
- Video of AJI's "*The Kenton Era*" 1997 jazz festival
- Souvenir AJI coffee mug
- Advance announcements of upcoming AJI events
- Discounts to AJI events

AJI Artistry Circle

\$75 Annual Membership

- AmJazzIn newsletter: AJI news and schedules of upcoming concerts and special events
- Video of AJI's "*The Kenton Era*" 1997 jazz festival
- Souvenir AJI coffee mug
- Souvenir AJI "*California Cool*" T-shirt
- Advance announcements of upcoming AJI events
- Discounts to 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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For further information, phone the AJI offices at 626-798-3127

Memorable moments of the 3rd Annual *Kenton Sound*

Last August 19th at the fabulous Zipper Concert Hall in downtown Los Angeles, The American Jazz Institute again presented the *Kenton Sound*. It was AJI's third annual official tribute to the music and legacy of Stan Kenton. The AJI Orchestra, led by Mark Masters, presented an evening of Kenton music to a packed and appreciative house -- beginning with the quintessential *Artistry in Rhythm*. In the spirit of the innovative Kenton style, the concert featured music from the *Contemporary Concepts* album (arranged by Bill Holman and Gerry Mulligan), the *Standards in Silhouette* album (arranged by Bill Mathieu), music by Willie Maiden written for the 1970s road band and, of course, several of the great Kenton hits.

The orchestra spotlighted four decades of Kenton alumni, among them Bob Curnow, Jack Montrose, Bill Perkins, Jim Amlotte, Ray Reed, Carl Saunders, Mike Suter, Greg Smith, Clay Jenkins and Harold Garrett. Special guest artists included Buddy Childers (trumpet) playing arrangements from the 1953-54 Kenton library, Gary Foster (saxophone) performing Bill Holman's arrangements for the Kenton band, and Mike Pacheco (Latin percussion) joining the orchestra for Ken Hanna's *Bogota* in a tribute to the late Kenton percussionist Ramon Lopez.

Memorable moments, indeed!



Bob Curnow, guest conductor



Guest artist Buddy Childers with
Dean Taba, bass



Clay Jenkins



Guest artists Mike Pacheco,
percussion, and Milcho Leviev,
piano

Greg Smith with Gary Hobbs,
drums, and Bill Perkins, tenor sax





Mark Masters, conductor

On August 19th of last year, The American Jazz Institute brought together many Kenton alumni and west coast mainstays for the 3rd annual *Kenton Sound* in Los Angeles. In addition to guests Buddy Childers, Gary Foster, Mike Pacheco and Milcho Leviev, the concert's success was assured by AJI Orchestra soloists Carl Saunders, Bill Perkins, Jack Montrose, Ray Reed, Greg Smith, Jim Amlotte, Harold Garrett and Clay Jenkins. Drummer Gary Hobbs, with the Kenton band in the mid-1970s, demonstrated why he is so much in demand in the Pacific Northwest. Composer and arranger Bob Curnow conducted throughout the evening and, by now a *Kenton Sound* tradition, premiered a new work in the Kenton vein.

Guest artist Gary Foster, alto sax, and the AJI Orchestra, Mark Masters conducting



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