Down Melody Lane

BAD ERROR

A couple of issues ago "DOWN BEAT" carried an article by Mike Levin which said that Duke Ellington's band had deteriorated so much that he should disband before his reputation was ripped to shreds.

Since the musicians have been ripping Levin apart for this article. It is very gratifying to note that the top names in the orchestra business have come to the defense of Ellington, branding Levin for shoddy journalism.

One suggestion made by Barry Ulanox was that Levin be dismissed from his writing duties. This is not practical. Levin wrote his article as a criticism of Ellingtons music. He wrote what he believed and just because musicians and others don't happen to agree with what he had to say, there is no reason to want him to retire from the writing business.

Suggestions like this show an unhealthy trend. It is gradually becoming so that you can hardly speak your mind, especially if you happen to disagree with the current trend of thought. Criticism is healthy and desirable, both from the writers and the readers, but when the suggestion is made to the effect that one should retire because his criticism happened to rub the readers the wrong way, then the situation becomes unhealthy and undesirable.

I agree that Mike Levin made a bad error in suggesting that Ellington retire, but Ulanox made a worse error by suggesting that Levin retire from the writing business.

DIZZY IN DEBT?

Dizzy Gillespie is being sued for $17,300 by his former personal manager, Milt Shaw. Shaw and Dizzy split nine months ago and Shaw claims that he is owed this amount in commissions. He claims that this amount represents commissions due him before and after the split. Shaw also wants the seven year contract fulfilled, claiming that it has four years to go.

CAPITAL ARTISTS

I happened to hear the Selah Jubilee Singers, a local outfit, over the radio Saturday morning. The jockey introduced the record as their first recording for Capitol, proudly indicating that the boys have gone bigtime. Race was not mentioned once. The jockey was just happy to report that a local group was now recording for a big record outfit.

The Jubilaires, featured on the Amos and Andy show, have just signed to record for Capitol. The combo, comprised of Willie Johnson, John Jennings, George McFadden, and Ted Brooks, was first formed in Florida and is one of the nation's finest singing groups.

ELLA QUENS

Ella Fitzgerald is due to open at the Million Dollar Theatre in Los Angeles on July 5. She will get $2,500 for a week of singing. Her husband, Ray Brown, is expected to backstop her with his combo.

TRIO INCREASES

The King Cole Trio is going to become a quartet. Jack Constanzo, formerly of Stan Kenton, is due to join the Trio and make his western debut with the boys when they cross Texas this month. He plays the bongo drums.

After playing one-nighters in Dallas, Austin, Houston, and San Antonio, Nat and his group will be the attraction at the Casbah Club on the far south side of Los Angeles. It is also likely that the boys will be seen on video. They were a big success on teevee shows in Gotham this spring.

GIVES OUT

At long last Louis Jordan is broke. He was scheduled to open at the Oriental Theatre in Chicago on July 21, but cancelled the date because Oriental thought he was tired and wanted to take a vacation during that time. At present they are playing a week's engagement at the Hippodrome in Baltimore.

FRISCO BRIGHTENS

Ralph Gleason reports that the jazz picture in Frisco will brighten when Ella and Nellie open there on July 13. Ella opens for a week at the Tivoli and Nellie for two weeks at Ciro's.

Gleason groans because Ella won't be backed by her husband's trio.

BIG MONEY

Remember when King Cole's Trio and the Hal Singers Sextet came through this section about three weeks ago?

Well, they completed a series of 22 one-nighters and made more money than any musical attraction has made in Southern territory in a long time. The group grossed about $38,-000 for their work.

CONTEST

Capitol Records is running a song writing contest. If you feel that you can write lyrics to popular songs as good or better than those you hear on the radio, then here is your chance.

A group of Capitol Artists have written new melodies with no lyrics, and all you have to do is to get an album of these "Song Without Words" from your music shop, listen to the music and then get busy writing the lyrics.

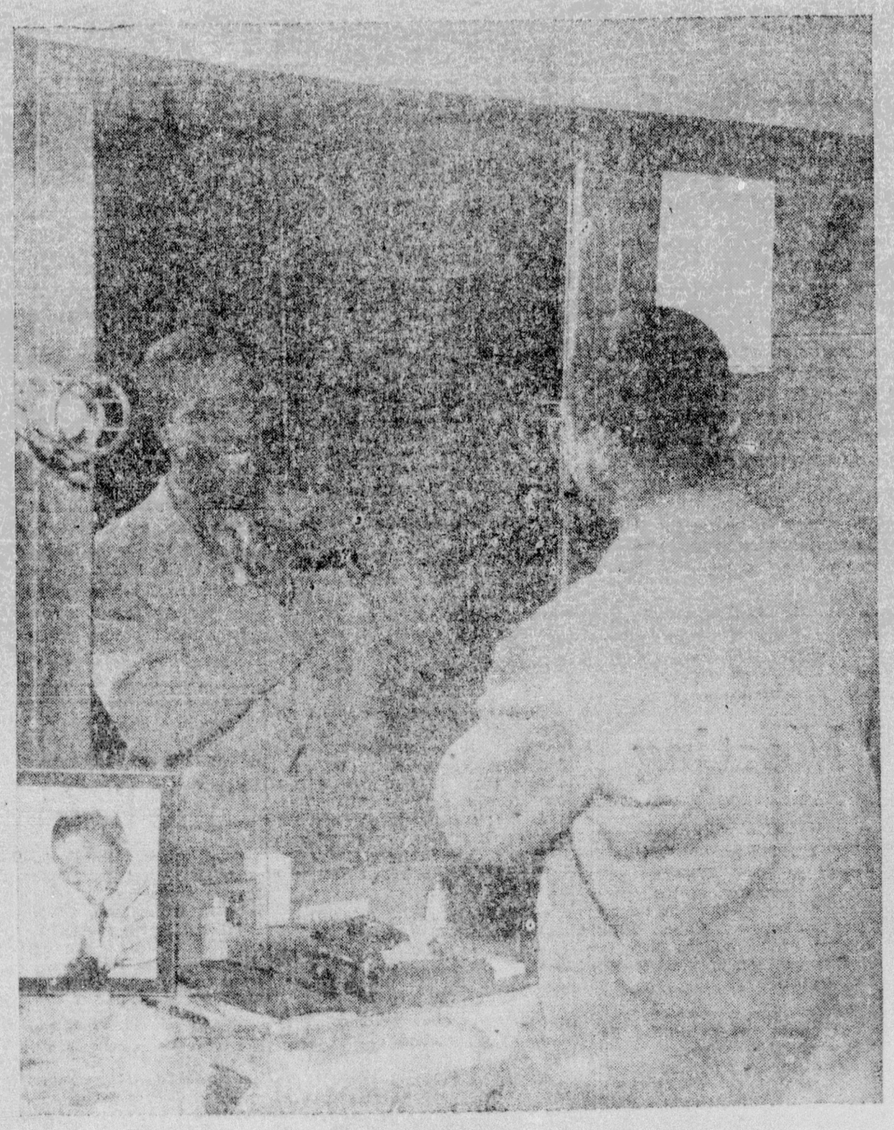
The rewards? For each winning lyric you will be offered a regular songwriter contract and $1000 cash advance against contract royalties. If your songs become hits, you will make much more money. The winning lyrics will be recorded by Capitol artists and then will be played by the nation's disc jockeys and bands.

Here is your opportunity to become a successful song writer. Haul out those love poems you have written for the "special" people and set them to music. If you enter the contest, be sure to let me hear from you.

—CLARENCE HUNTER

CONCERT A SELL OUT

PARIS — Paris' famed Palais de Chaillot was filled to standing room capacity June 13th when Marian Anderson gave her second sell-out concert there since May 5th. Miss Anderson, whose debut here fifteen years ago endeared her for all time to the French capital, sang works by Bach, Beethoven, Massenet and American Negro spirituals.



TIRED, WILL REST — Louis Jordan has cancelled his job at the Oriental Theatre in Chicago which was due to open July 21. The reason given was that he was tired and wanted to take a vacation during that period. He and the Tympan Five (there are now nine members in his combo) are rounding out a weeks engagement at the Hippodrome in Baltimore.

"DEAR RUTH" PRESENTED AT ATLANTA UNIV.

ATLANTA — Choosing the Norman Krasna vehicle "Dear Ruth" to open its sixteenth season, the Atlanta University Summer Theatre, under the direction of Baldwin W. Burroughs, gave three performances of this rollicking comedy, June 23, 24, and 25, before large audiences in Howe Memorial Hall, on the campus of Spelman College.

In the cast were Mary Ella Smith, Georgia Allen, Jane Hunter, Lincoln Blakeney, Ella Mae Gaines, Fred E. C. Holmes, J. Preston Cochran, Rosalie Slack, and Walter H. Clements. Donald R. Todd was technical director for the production.

Other offerings during the season will include "Nosh" by Andre Obey and "Dr. Faustus" by Christopher Marlowe.

Mr. Burroughs, who is directing the summer theatre activities at Atlanta University, is a former director of drama at Tillotson College. He has been director of the University Players, dramatic organization of Atlanta University, Morehouse College and Spelman College, and at various times he has been connected with the Atlanta University Summer Theatre as asstant director and as actor. He is a graduate of Northwestern University and at the present time is a candidate for the M. F. A. degree at Yale University.

BILLIE HOLIDAY STILL LOVES MANAGER LEVY

Broke and alone, Billie Holiday has decided to get back to work. Miss Holiday is alone because her manager, John Levy, left her in San Francisco before she faced trial on a dope charge. The songstress is out of her arrest on January 22.

Her version of the arrest goes like this: "I turned all my life over to John. He took all my money. I owed no one any money. We were supposed to get married on January 22. John came back from Los Angeles. We had been arguing about money."

While Levy was unpacking his suitcase, the telephone rang. Immediately afterwards, Billie says that she was handed a package and told to get rid of it. After taking it, she went into her room and Levy closed the door behind her. In her room, someone grabbed her and threw her against the wall and before she knew it she had been charged with the possession of dope.

BLACK EYE

Miss Holiday came to the trial with a black eye and claimed that Levy gave it to her the night before he left. "You should see my back," she added. "And he took my silver blue mink coat — 18 grand worth of coat. He said he was going to give it to his sister to take care of for me. I got nothing now and I'm scared."

The three day trial convinced the jury that the package of opium had been planted on Billie just before the narcotics men raided her apartment. She was acquitted.

MY MAN

Despite the fact that Levy framed her, Billie still loves him.

In an interview with Ralph J. Gleason of "Downbeat," Billie said: "If he (Levy) was to walk in the room this minute, I'd melt. He's my man and I love him."

RATING THE RECORDS

NEW FACES FOR OLD FRAMES — Six of Victor's leading pop recording artistst are out on waxings with revamped treatments of some oldies which are really good for a couple of plays. Heading the bunch are the Four Tunes, newest vocal instrumental unit doing their second two sides for Vitor.

Featuring Ace Harris, former Erskine Hawkins pianist-composer of "After Hours," the Tunes soothing is sing and play I'M THE GUY. Paired is the oldie MY LAST AFFAIR, in which a high pitched melodic voice carries the refrain. Nice item to hear, good group to keep an eye on.

Erskine Hawkins and his ork get gway on a refurbished ROSE ROOM in mellow vine fashion, with Henry Heywood holding down on clarinet, the brasses moving in and out and some keyboard fingering tying all ends together. The side bears an unmistakeable resemblance to Benny Goodman waxing, but Haywood is no B. G. Good listening though. Mate is the blued ditty TELL IT TO ME (IF IT TAKES ALL NIGHT LONG), handled vocally by Jimmy Michell.

"Cabbage" is the Jesse Stone and crew principal talk for Victor, under the name of COLE SLAW, with Jesse doing the vocal chore. Paired is the novelty DO IT NOW, in jump tempo.

On the bop fence are Charlie Ventura and his Bop for the People, Johnny Moore's Three Blazers, and the great Diz G. Gillespie. Ventura and the ensemble get away amusingly on their new sound revival of BARNEY GOOGLE, with Charlie singing the "goo-goo-googly eyes" in vibes. Paired is a venture into the Ventura sax technique on the oldie SMOKE ETS IN YOUR EYES.

Diz Gilespie put a new sound to the familiar "bop" standard of I SHOULD CARE, using an insistent feverish and sensuous rhythm and searing trumpet rides to back the Johnny Hartman vocal. Mate is a new Gillespie item, SWEDISH SUITE, inspired by his recent European trip. The item mixes the Afro-Cuban influence with a haunting melody to convey the impression of Swedish crags.

Oscar Moore gets around nicely on the Irving Berlin oldie WHAT DOES IT MATTER while Brother Johnny's Three Blazers weave a catchy support. In bop tempo with jazz switches is the novelty treatment of an old nursery lullaby BOY A BYE BABY.

NITELIFE IN N. Y.

BY ALVIN MOSES

CANADA LEE may be importantly cast in a video series now that JOHN HOUSEMAN, proxy of the newly-formed Media Productions corporation is operating on the eastern seaboard. . . If was Mr. Houseman you perhaps remember who as president of the Mercury theatre supervised and thought-up the hold-ups of Canada Lee, Orson Wells, Bill Cheer and many others who have successfully ridden "lane's horse". . . As with a continual contract for new talent, the head of Media feels that radio and stage stars are often heard but rarely seen. . . Television gleams as a future star-studden heaven with new hope in that expansive field for colored stars who have made places in radio and the professional theatre.

"HOME OF THE BRAVE" receives our weekly praise and if you have not seen it yet arrange to do so.

UNUSUAL QUESTIONS: Dear Al Moses, Somehow, we of the Beaux Arts club of Boston feel you have few equals as both writer-and-researcher. This holds true with us in fields other than the theatre, concert hall, political-arena, etc. Will you settle this for us please? Who were the biblical characters who departed this earth without being buried and has the grave of Moses, Israel's deliverer, ever been located by the great men who sought to do so? Rebecca Smythe, Boston, Mass.

ANSWER: Elisha (in a chariot of fire) Enoch, who walked with God and was-no-more. Moses' burial pot has never been located.

SARAH VAUGHN's singing of "Tonight I Shall Sleep at Bop City" has white-nite-club lovers raving over her as the best song-stylist of any period. . . ETHEL WATERS, are you okay? Ruth Snowden of Duluth, Minn., wrote me to that effect?? LENA HORNE is toying with the idea to spend 12 month in Paris as star of her own nitery to be housed in the Rothschild-owned teatre of that name. — Please done leave us-bee-yaw-te-full doll.

JEAN CARSON, last seen on Broadway with Oscar Homolka's "Brave" and who a short while ago was selected as one of the 12 most promising personalities of the '49 theatre. This as one of the plays we advised our readers to see in our last freshie chat.

BERRY BROTHERS, long regarded as one of America's finest dance units, are now a part of the colossal cast of Olsen and Johnson's $500,000 fun festival — "Funzapoppin" which opened on Thursday at Madison Square garden. Whirlwind dances with precision steps that send your blood racing along the spine as do the Nicholas Brothers their nimble dancing feet have graced the stages of the top musicals. . . THE BLUES ANGEL, one of New York's better nitespots, feature the song-styling of IRENE WILLIAMS, (among others) daughter of Clarence Williams, known to other Harlemites as a theatrical producer and song writer and publisher. Some of the numbers his little girl sings are, "St. Louis Blues," "Do I Love You" and "Lavander Blue."

FINLAND HONORS — The little country of Finland has awarded Marian Anderson with two of its highest honors, the "White Rose," and the "Marshal Manneriaim' medals. They were presented to the international contralto at an Embassy reception here last week.

Miss Anderson is currently touring the concert cities of Europe for the first time since 1938.

NOTED SOPRANO TO BE FEATURED AT HAMPTON

HAMPTON, Va. — Soprano Ellabelle Davis, just back from a triumphant tour of Europe, will sing in a return engagement at Hampton Institute in one of the highlights of the annual Arts of the Theatre Festival in Ogden Hall, July 25-29.

Miss Davis, who scored a tremendous hit at Hampton in a winter concert just before leaving for the more than 60 appearances she made on the Continent and in the British Isles, will sing on Thursday night, July 28. The entire line-up for the week end — rated by the sponsors as the best group of summer arts festival attractions Hampton has had — includes:

Monday, July 25 — The nationally known Barter Theatre players, of Abingdon, Va., in the sprightly F. Hugh Herbert comedy, "For Love or Money."

Tuesday, July 26 — A recital by dance satirist Iva Kitchell, whose takeoffs on the ballet and the modern dance have received writeups in several national magazines.

Wednesday, July 27 — Joyce Renee, brilliant young violinist.

Thursday, July 28 — Ellabelle Davis, who since her Town Hall debut only five years ago has become an internationally famous concert soprano.

Friday, July 29 — William Saroyan's "The Beautiful People," directed by James W. Butcher, Jr., of the drama staff of Howard University and produced by Hampton's summer faculty and students.

The Arts of the Theatre festival, begun in 1945, is an expansion of the college theatre festival idea, exploring the related effectiveness of the various theatre arts — drama, cinema, music, dance.

Canadians Hear "Chi-Chi" Girl

NEW YORK — Rose ("Chi Chi") Murphy is conceded by many to be the most unique artist to rise to fame in the recent two years. She has a distinctive style all her own, that sets a new precedent wherever she appears.

Miss Murphy has just closed a three months stay in New York where she was a tremendous success. While here she finished a six week engagement at the Blue Angel.

Preceding the Blue Angel date she was held over several weeks at the Capitol Theatre 50th Street and Broadway, co-starring with Art Mooney Orchestra and James Barton star of "Tobacco Road." Miss Murphy opens this week at Brandt's Inn, Burlington, Ontario, famous Canadian summer resort.

Those who have see or heard Rose Murphy will note her three way operation — playing the piano, she sings and has a tap rhythm on a special sounding board that adds up to a trio band formation. She holds her audience spellbound. Her artistry at the piano is said to be equalled to the late Fats Waller, and music critics rave over her with praise and admiration.

Jesse Lasky, Hollywood motion picture executive who visited her at the Blue Angel said "Miss Murphy is heartwarming and one of the most wonderful performers I ever heard."

From the moment Rose Murphy sits down at the piano, music virtually pours from her as she performs. Miss Murphy is in no sense a conventional pianist-singer. She scarcely sings at all, in fact; she repeats, in a tiny soprano voice, enough of the lyrics of a song to prove it has them; then she breaks out with the "chi-chi-chi-chitty-chi-chi" nonsence which gave birth to her nickname and great reputation, "The Chi-Chi Girl."

During a recent engagement in Florida, the Miami Daily News columnist, Dick Lowe, commented, "Rose Murphy plays the piano as only a Negro can do it, with an incredible perfection of rhythm

SAY YOU SAW IT IN THE CAROLINIAN

TO BRIGHTEN SAN FRANCISCO JAZZ PIC — Nellie Lutcher is slated to open at Ciro's for two weeks on July 13. She and Ella Fitzgerald will be opening on the same date in the same town. Ella opens at the Tivoli. Both these singers will brighten the jazz picture in Frisco.

Singer, Author Rap Bias in U. S.

PARIS (ANP) — Musical star Josephine Baker and novelist Richard Wright, American Negroes now making their home in France, deplored the bias in the United States and contrasted it with the freedom they are finding in France.

They gave their candid opinion on the topic of bias after reading that Dr. Ralph J. Bunche refused a post as assistant secretary of state because he would have to undergo the humiliation of jim crow in Washington, D. C., if he accepted.

At the age of 43, Miss Baker is drawing capacity crowds at the Folies Bergere with her dancing and singing. Speaking of her most recent trip to the United States in 1948, Miss Baker declared:

HORRIFIED

"I had forgotten how things were. I hadn't even thought of myself as a colored woman for years. I was absolutely horrified by what I saw."

Wright said, "I certainly do not approve of the conditions that compelled Ralph Bunche to turn down the state department job, but it was the right thing for him to do. It may make a few of his fellow Americans understand how extremely touch life can be for Negroes."

Of France he said:

"I find that I can do better work in many respects here in France than I could at home. I think I can see the racial problem with better perspective."

Wright, who quit the Communist party in 1943 after being a party member for 10 years, deplored the political activities of Paul Robeson. "He is only speaking for himself," Wright said.

He feels that more wealthy Negroes should come to France. He related:

"I should think they would enjoy living in a country where they can go anywhere and do anything and be treated like everybody else. I can't understand it," he added, referring to the idea that Negroes seemingly are not attracted to Paris.

MUSICIANS SLATE L. A. CONVENTION

LOS ANGELES (ANP) — The National Association of Negro Musicians, Inc., will hold its 28th annual convention in Los Angeles, Aug. 21-25. Special study groups and musical programs as well as regular business will be features of the meeting.

The five day program will be climaxed with the National Artists' concert featuring soprano Ellabelle Davis and pianist Hazel Harrison as soloists. The Hollywood Bowl symphony orchestra will premiere William Grant Still's new "Arcnaic Ritual." Izler Solomon will be guest conductor.

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I Shot Jesse James
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SHORT SUBJECT
NEWS OF THE DAY

TUESDAY, JULY 12
Henry Fonda, John Carradine
IN
GRAPES OF WRATH
COMEDY CARTOON
WORLD OF NEWS

WEDNESDAY & THURSDAY, JULY 13-14
Montgomery "Red River" Clift
IN
THE SEARCH
SPORTS REEL
MOVIETONE NEWS
AND CHAPTER 9
SON OF ZORRO

FRIDAY & SATURDAY JULY 15-16
TOPS IN DOUBLE FEATURES!
Franchot Tone, Andy Devine
IN
Trail of the Vigilantes
AND
Tom Conway, Robert Armstrong
IN
Criminal Court
ALSO CHAPTER 8
DEVIL HORSE