

worked—or maybe it was the long and heavy shadow he'd cast over the pit that did the trick. A couple of minutes later we were on the sidewalk. Jimmy's alto was still hanging from his neck. He'd left the case inside and no way was he going back to get it. I'd never seen Cecil quite so crestfallen.

EB: Wow! How did he handle that?

RL: He absorbed the experience and went forward. And in a more determined way. Adversity doesn't defeat Cecil, it energizes and extends him. He makes creative fuel out of adversity—adversity and the experience of an affront, real or perceived. I think he sometimes goes out of his way to place himself in situations that will result in making him angry. Being pissed off focuses and centers him. In this respect I take personal credit for a couple of his best sets.

EB: Am I correct about this? Didn't he approach you at one point about writing his biography?

RL: Where did you hear that?

EB: I don't remember now.

RL: Yeah, in 2005. I did mention it to a couple of people. I wasn't sure that I'd made the right decision. We'd gone to hear [pianist] John Hicks at Sweet Rhythm when that came up. (John was dying—he had just months to live—and he played one of the most exquisitely beautiful sets I've ever heard.) I don't want to dwell too much on why I declined to do the book. It's still something of a sensitive issue for me that involves a lot of stuff I'd rather not get into here. What I *will* say is that I thought such a book needed a first-rate musicologist and that I didn't feel qualified to do it justice. (I told Cecil this and he said he'd "take care of that part." I said, "Yeah, you'll write a hermetic poem that'll only turn more people off.") But that's as far as I want to go about the biography.

EB: Okay. Let's bring this into the present. Who exactly have you been listening to these days?

RL: As I said, I've been listening to a lot of different people. I had a chance to hear the Trio 3 plus [Geri Allen](#) band, with [Oliver Lake](#), Andrew Cyrille and [Reggie Workman](#) at Birdland a while back and I was blown away by it. Of course any band that has Andrew Cyrille playing drums is automatically elevated. I've also been making all the gigs I can by two reed players, Peter and Will Anderson. Identical twins, they're still in their early twenties and I can't say enough about them.

They're Julliard graduates and still doing postgraduate work at Julliard, but there's nothing studied about the way that, as instrumentalists, arrangers and composers, they make music. They're naturals and while essentially into bebop—which they play with a passion, unpredictability and sense of discovery that can make you feel like you're back at the beginning of it at Minton's or Monroe's Uptown House—they can claim an astonishing affinity for the full range of jazz forms and styles, at least up to the "new thing." I've listened to them play all kinds of jazz now and have yet to hear an inauthentic note. They easily hold their own with the best of the Dixieland players. They interpret Monk compositions in a way that I'm sure Monk would have appreciated. They have a solid grip not only on what Miles and [Gil Evans](#) were after in the *Birth of the Cool* period, but on the work of a John Kirby as well.

Along with the depth of knowledge they demonstrate about saxophone players as diverse as [Johnny Hodges](#), [Stan Getz](#), [Hank Mobley](#) and [Gigi Gryce](#), to name just a few, they understand Ellington and—they play ballads with an emotional sophistication that's way beyond their years—they know what to do with a [Billy Strayhorn](#) song. Have I mentioned that they also command their

principle instruments, the clarinet and alto and tenor saxophones, with a stunning authority? I could go on and on about the Andersons. Right now the distinctions between them as musicians are as subtle as the differences in their appearances. It will be fascinating to see how they progress, how they diverge from one another and what they make of their prodigious talents, once they've become centered in their individual identities. But what they're presenting at this point in their development is already substantial and compelling enough to be worthy of preservation. I'm surprised that there's no big-label album yet. I should think that their marketing potential—the twin thing, their age—would be considerable.

EB: I've got to check them out.

RL: Yeah, you do.

EB: Who else?

RL: Actually, a lot of traditionalists. For the past year or so I've been hanging a lot with traditionalists.

EB: You've been hanging with *Republicans*?!

RL: I don't think they're *all* Republicans. Most of them give the appearance of being highly evolved and decent human beings. No, what happened was that my wife, Marianne Mangan, was into this music and she got me to pay attention to it.

EB: Marianne Mangan. I've read some of her stuff. She's good. I knew there was a relationship. I didn't realize you were married.

RL: Much to my irritation, Marianne declined to take my last name. I've been trying to persuade her to at least take my first name, which I think is a perfectly reasonable compromise.

In any event, Marianne, who's frighteningly knowledgeable about this music, got me to listen to it. Yeah, like a lot of people I regarded modern manifestations of traditional and swing era jazz as reactionary and pretty much ignored them. But stripped of that extra-musical baggage there's some extraordinary music being played in these categories by a body of serious, dedicated and very good musicians, and I regret that long-held biases prevented me from finding that out sooner.

EB: Anybody in particular you want to mention?

RL: I've been especially impressed by the trumpeter, cornetist and flugelhornist [Peter Ecklund](#). As we used to put it, he's "saying something" when he plays. I've heard Ecklund now in a number of different contexts. He can remind you, at times, of a host of people from Armstrong to Beiderbecke to [Harry James](#) to [Harry Edison](#) to [Art Farmer](#), but his approach, including a sound that's multi-textured and rich with contrasts, is totally individuated. Just a few notes and you know that it's him. His solos, consistently crafted with wit and intelligence—unerringly *musical*—can be powerfully dynamic and emotive, and his presence in an ensemble always serves to extend the musicians he's working with. In his own group, Blue Suitcase, which has been playing occasionally at the Greenwich Village Bistro on Carmine Street, he draws not only on jazz but on a classical training, extensive experience with rock and pop bands, outstanding song writing and arranging skills, computer technology and a droll sense of humor, to produce music that's inventive, edgy and immediately seductive. He's a genuine artist. The real thing.

EB: OK! Go on.